

Covenant and Administration

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The excerpts appearing on the following pages have been compiled from the Bahá'í Sacred Writings, from the letters and writings of Shoghi Effendi, from statements approved by Shoghi Effendi, and from the Proclamation of the Hands of the Cause of God.

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH..... 44

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS OF REFERENCE SOURCES

Advent Advent of Divine Justice, by Shoghi Effendi

A.S.M. America's Spiritual Mission, "Divine Plan"

Teaching Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, 1916-1917

B. Admin. Bahá'í Administration, letters of Shoghi Effendi, 1922-1932

B. Community Bahá'í Community, compiled by the N.S.A., 1947

B. Proc. Bahá'í Procedure, compiled by N.S.A. (out of print)

B.S. Bahá'í Scriptures (compilation, out of print)

B.W.F. Bahá'í World Faith, collection from the
Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá

Chall. Reqts. [Ed. - see p. 11 in an online version] Challenging
Requirements, by Shoghi Effendi, 1947

D.B. Dawn Breakers (Nabils Narrative)

Gl. Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

G.P.B. God Passes By, by Shoghi Effendi, 1944

M.A. Messages to America, letters of Shoghi Effendi, 1932-1946

P.D. The Promised Day is Come, by Shoghi Effendi, 1941

P. & M. Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh

Promulg. U. P. Promulgation of Universal Peace, talks by
`Abdu'l-Bahá in the United States

W.O.B. World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, letters of Shoghi Effendi,
1929-1936

W. & T. Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá

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THE COVENANT

"For this divine Covenant is an institution of the Lord."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet,
Star of West, Vol. VIII, p. 223.

"So firm and mighty is this Covenant that from the beginning of time until the
present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like... It is
indubitably clear, that

the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the
Covenant...The lamp of the Covenant is the light of the world, and the words
traced by the

Pen of the Most High a limitless ocean...The power of the Covenant is as the
heat of the sun which quickeneth and promoteth the development of all created
things

on earth. The light of the Covenant, in like manner, is the educator of the
minds, the spirits, the hearts and souls of men."

-- Words of `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in God Passes By, pp. 238-239.

"...Today, the Lord of Hosts is the defender of the Covenant, the forces of the Kingdom protect it, heavenly souls tender their services, and heavenly angels promulgate and spread it broadcast. It is considered with insight, it will be seen that all the forces of the Universe, in the last analysis serve the Covenant..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. XI, p. 242.

" For firmness in the Covenant will preserve the unity of the religion of God and the foundation of the religion of God will not be shaken."

`Abdu'l-Bahá from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. VIII, p. 223.

"Everything (in the world) is subject to corruption; but the Covenant of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions."

`Abdu'l-Bahá from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. IV, p. 170.

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THE COVENANT

I. THE GREAT OR "ANCIENT" COVENANT OF GOD

Since time immemorial God has covenanted with His people that He would not leave them to themselves alone but would send them Teachers or Prophets with unerring guidance to assist and help them, to lead them to true knowledge and to show them the path of nearness to Him. This is the Great Covenant, the Ancient Covenant of God through which God has unfailingly released His regenerating Power, which has recreated all things and which has educated man enabling him to build an ever-advancing civilization. Each of His Manifestations in turn has always foretold the Prophets or Teacher to come after Him.

"The golden thread of the Covenant runs through and connects the religious Dispensations of the past. The Old Testament means the Old Covenant: the New Testament means the New Covenant."

Study Outline on the Covenant (1948), p.12

"God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 79-80

A. THE COVENANTS OF GOD REGARDING SUCCESSION OF THE PROPHETS

"Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send to the peoples of the earth hath been entrusted with a Message, and charged to act in a manner that would best meet the requirements of the age in which He appeared."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 79

The following are a few of numerous references containing the Covenants of God regarding the succession of Prophets to be sent to the world to renew His everlasting Covenant and to guide men to the light of understanding.

(From World Order Magazine, Vol. VIII, p.32)

ADAM Gen. II 15-17

NOAH Gen. IV: 18, IX: 8-17

ABRAHAM Gen. XV: 18, XVII: 1-9, XXII: 17-18

I Chron. XVI: 15-25

Acts III: 25

Psalms CV: 9-10

Qur'án II: 118-130, p.350 (Rodwell's Trans.)

Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 356

a - Issac renews - Gen. XVII: 18-22, XXVI: 2-5

b - Jacob renews - Gen. XXVIII: 11-22

MOSES Exodus XIX: 1-6, XXIV: 1-18, XXXI: 16, III: 15

Deut. IX: 15

Qur'án II: 77, p. 346 (Rodwell's Trans.)

a - Joshua renews - Joshua I: 1-9

b - David renews - Psalms LXXXIX: 3-5, 19-37

II. Sam. XXIII: 1-5

c - Jeremiah renews - Jer. XI: 1-8

JESUS Heb. XII 24, VIII: 5-13

MUHAMMAD Qur'án IV: 57-83, pp. 417-420 (Rodwell's Trans.)

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The BĀB Prayers and Meditations., pp. 128-129, 306, 85-86

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh., p. 126

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Gleanings., pp. 127-128, 331-332

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh., p. 137

Prayers and Meditations., p. 284

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 113

B. THE COVENANT MADE BY THE MANIFESTATIONS CONCERNING THE FUTURE PROPHETS

"The divine Prophets are conjoined in the perfect state of love. Each One has given the glad tidings of His successor's coming and each successor has sanctioned the One Who preceded Him. They were in the utmost unity, but Their followers are in strife."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 222

"His Holiness Abraham, on Him be peace, made a covenant concerning His Holiness Moses and gave the glad-tidings of His coming. His Holiness Moses made a covenant concerning the Promised One, i.e. His Holiness Christ, and announced the good news of His Manifestation to the world. His Holiness Christ made a covenant concerning the Paraclete and gave the tidings of His coming. His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad made a covenant concerning His Holiness the Báb and the Báb was the One promised by Muhammad, for Muhammad gave the tidings of His coming. The Báb made a Covenant concerning the Blessed Beauty of Bahá'u'lláh and gave the glad-tidings of His coming for the Blessed Beauty was the One promised by His Holiness the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a promised One who will become manifest after one thousand or thousands of years. He likewise, with His Supreme Pen, entered into a great Covenant and Testament with all the Bahá'ís whereby they were all commanded to follow the Center of the Covenant after His departure, and turn not away even to a hair's breadth from obeying Him."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet (Archives)*, cited in *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 358

Every Prophet has covenanted with His people that they accept and follow the coming Manifestation who would be the reappearance of His own reality.

The following are a few references containing such covenants (From *World Order Magazine*, Vol. VIII, p.32):

MOSES Deut., XVIII: 15-19, XXXIII: 2

JESUS John, XV: 26, XVI: 7

Matt., XXIV: 25

II. Peter, III: 1-12

MUHAMMAD Qur'án LIV: 53-56 (page 79), III: 75 (page 394)

THE BÁB *Prayers and Meditations.*, pp. 84-86, 285-286

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh., pp. 100-101

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH *Gleanings.*, p. 346, 373-374

The Kitáb-i-Iqán, pp. 12-13

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh., pp. 132, 167, 116-117, 124-126

`Abdu'l-Bahá (regarding future Manifestations) - *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.*, p. 111

Prophecies of the Báb about Bahá'u'lláh (cited by Shoghi Effendi)

"Today the Bayán is in the stage of seed; at the beginning of the manifestation of `Him Whom God shall make manifest' its ultimate perfection will become apparent...."

-- From Persian Bayán, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 100

"Ere nine will have elapsed from the inception of this Cause," He more particularly has stated, "the realities of the created things will not be made manifest. All that thou hast as yet seen is but the stage from the moist germ until We clothed it with flesh. Be patient, until thou beholdest a new creation."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 29*

"The Bayán deriveth all its glory from `Him Whom God shall make manifest.'"

-- From Persian Bayán, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 100

"...O Thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee: I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days."

From *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá*, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 101

* "Year Nine" is 1269A.H. or 1853-1853A.D. (see *God Passes By*, p. 104)

II. THE NEW COVENANT - THE COVENANT OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH

"All through the Holy Books is to be found the promise of a still newer Covenant that would be made in the Latter Days. This is the Covenant of the 'Day of God'."

Study Outline on the Covenant (1948), p.12

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake...But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Jeremiah 31:31-34

"The Lord, the All-Glorified," He has moreover declared, "hath, beneath the shade of the Tree of Anísá (Tree of Life), made a new Covenant and established a great Testament... Hath such a Covenant been established in any previous Dispensation, age, period or century? Hath such a Testament, set down by the Pen of the Most High, ever been witnessed? No, by God!"

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in *God Passes By*, p. 238

"The Revelation which, from time immemorial, hath been acclaimed as the Purpose and Promise of all the Prophets of God, and the most cherished Desire of His Messengers, hath now, by virtue of the pervasive Will of the Almighty and at His irresistible bidding, been revealed unto men. The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 5

"With each and every Prophet, Whom We have sent down in the We have established a separate Covenant concerning the `Remembrance of God' and His Day..."

-- The Báb, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 126

"The time foreordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled. Out of Zion hath gone forth the Law of God, and Jerusalem, and the hills and land thereof, are filled with the glory of His Revelation. Happy is the man that pondereth in his heart that which hath been revealed in the Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Meditate upon this, O ye beloved of God, and let your ears be attentive unto His Word, so that ye may, by His grace and mercy, drink your fill from the crystal waters of constancy, and become as steadfast and immovable as the mountain in His Cause."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 12-13

"The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regarded as signaling through its advent the coming of age of the entire human race. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet."

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 163

A. THE GREAT, THE ANCIENT COVENANT FULFILLED BY BAHÁ'U'LLAH

"In His Name who shines forth from the Horizon of Might! Verily the Tongue of the Ancient gives glad tidings to those who are in the world concerning the appearance of the Greatest Name, and who takes His Covenant among the nations. Verily, He is Myself; the Shining-Place of My Identity; the East of My Cause; the Heaven of My Bounty; the Sea of My Will; the Lamp of My Guidance; the Path of My Justice; the Standard of My Love. The one who hath turned to Him hath turned to My face and is illumined through the lights of My Beauty; hath acknowledged My Oneness and confessed My Singleness. The one who hath denied Him hath been deprived of the Salsibil of My Love, of the Kawthar of My Grace, the cup of My Mercy and of the Wine by which the sincere ones have been attracted and the monotheists have taken flight in the air of My Compassion, which no one hath known except him whom I have taught the matter revealed in My Hidden Tablet."

Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í Scriptures, (Out of Print), p. 255, sec.527.

The following is the Guardian's explanation of the excerpt (above):

It should be made clear to every one reading those extracts that by the phrase "the Tongue of the Ancient" no one else is meant but God, and that the term "the Greatest Name" is an obvious reference to Bahá'u'lláh, and that "the Covenant" referred to is not the specific Covenant of which Bahá'u'lláh is the immediate Author and `Abdu'l-Bahá the Center but that general Covenant which, as inculcated by the Bahá'í teaching, God Himself invariably establishes with mankind when He inaugurates a new Dispensation. "The Tongue" that "gives," as stated in those extracts, the "glad-tidings" is none other than the Voice of God referring to Bahá'u'lláh, and not Bahá'u'lláh referring to `Abdu'l-Bahá.

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 137 (Dispensation)

"...The Prophetic Cycle hath, verily, ended. The Eternal Truth is now come. He hath lifted up the Ensign of Power, and is now shedding upon the world the unclouded splendor of His Revelation."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 60

"The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh should indeed be regarded, if we wish to be faithful to the tremendous implications of its message, as the culmination of a cycle, the final stage in a series of successive, of preliminary and progressive revelations. These, beginning with Adam and ending with the Báb, have paved the way and anticipated with an ever-increasing emphasis the advent of that Day of Days in which He Who is the Promise of All Ages should be made manifest."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 103

"A Revelation, hailed as the promise and crowning glory of past ages and centuries, as the consummation of all the Dispensations within the Adamic Cycle, inaugurating an era of at least a thousand years' duration, and a cycle destined to last no less than five thousand centuries, signaling the end of the Prophetic Era and the beginning of the Era of Fulfillment..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 100

1. Prophecies Concerning the Next Manifestation

"...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..."

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í News*, No. 80, p. 5, col. 1.

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"Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying impostor. We pray God that He may graciously assist him to retract and repudiate such claim. Should he repent, God will, no doubt, forgive him. If, however, he persisteth in his error, God will, assuredly, send down one who will deal mercilessly with him."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p32 [Ed. - now at par. 37], cited in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 132

2. Two Forms of Bahá'í Covenant

"As regards the meaning of the Bahá'í Covenant: 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 [Abdu'l-Bahá]. 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..."

Shoghi Effendi, through his Secretary, Bahá'í News, No. 80, p.5, col. 1

B. THE "LESSER COVENANT" - WITH THE BELIEVERS

1. Bahá'u'lláh's Appointment of `Abdu'l-Bahá as the Center of the Covenant

"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."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, in The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p63 [Ed. - now online as par. 121], cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 134

"It is incumbent upon the Aghsán, the Afnán and My Kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch. Consider that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book: '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.' The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch [Abdu'l-Bahá]. Thus have We graciously revealed unto you Our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Powerful."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, in Kitáb-I-`Ahd [Ed. - p. 221 in online version], cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 134

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"When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, in The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p82 [Ed. - now online as par. 174], cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 134

"There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá 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. Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork!...

A Word hath, as a token of Our grace, gone forth from the Most Great Tablet--a Word which God hath adorned with the ornament of His own Self, and made it sovereign over the earth and all that is therein, and a sign of His greatness and power among its people ..."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, in Tablet of the Branch, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 135

"In accordance with the explicit text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh hath made the Center of the Covenant the Interpreter of His Word-- a Covenant so firm and mighty that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 136

"In the Book of Aqdas, He has given positive command in two clear instances and has explicitly appointed the Interpreter of the Book. Also in all the Divine Tablets, especially in the Chapter of The Branch--all the meanings of which mean the Servitude of `Abdu'l-Bahá, that is `Abdu'l-Bahá--all that was needed to explain the Center of the Covenant and the Interpreter of the Book has been revealed from the Supreme Pen. Now as `Abdu'l-Bahá is the Interpreter of the Book He says that the "Chapter of The Branch" means `Abdu'l-Bahá, that is, the Servitude of `Abdu'l-Bahá, and none other."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet (Archives), cited in Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 358-359

a. Purpose of This Covenant

Inasmuch as great differences and divergences of denominational belief had arisen throughout the past, every man with a new idea attributing it to God, Bahá'u'lláh desired that there should not be any ground or reason for disagreement among the Bahá'ís. Therefore, with His own pen He wrote the Book of His Covenant, addressing His relations and all 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;

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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." The purpose of this statement is that there should never be discord and divergence among the Bahá'ís but that they should always be unified and agreed...

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 317

Therefore, you must read the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh. You must read the Tablet of the Branch and regard that which He has so clearly stated. Beware! Beware! lest anyone should speak from the authority of his own thoughts or create a new thing out of himself. Beware! Beware! According to the explicit Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh you should care nothing at all for such a person. Bahá'u'lláh shuns such souls.

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 323

"To ensure 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. The Book of the Covenant or Testament of Bahá'u'lláh is the means of preventing such a possibility, for whosoever shall speak from the authority of himself alone shall be degraded. Be ye informed and cognizant of this...."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 451

"Were it not for the protecting power of the Covenant to guard the impregnable

fort of the Cause of God, there would arise among the Bahá'ís, in one day, a thousand different sects as was the case in former ages. But in this Blessed Dispensation, for the sake of the permanency of the Cause of God and the avoidance of dissension amongst the people of God, the Blessed Beauty (may my soul be a sacrifice unto Him), has through the Supreme Pen written the Covenant and the Testament; He appointed a Center, the Exponent of the Book and the annuller of disputes. Whatever is written or said by Him is conformable to the truth and under the protection of the Blessed Beauty. He is infallible. The express purpose of this last Will and Testament is to set aside disputes from the world."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet (Archives), cited in Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 357-8
"To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, an instrument divinely ordained, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself, was clearly indispensable. That instrument Bahá'u'lláh had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 237-238

"To the people of Faith, the clear appointment of the Center of the Cause, after the departure of the Manifestation, is considered the most important point in religious matters, as it is the greatest channel which connects the servants of God with Holy and Divine Truth."

Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl, Bahá'í Proofs, p. 108

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b. Station of `Abdu'l-Bahá as Center of the Covenant

i. Interpreter of the Word of God

"I am according to the explicit texts of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and the Kitáb-i-`Ahd the manifest Interpreter of the Word of God... Whoso deviates from my interpretation is a victim of his own fancy."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 138

"My station is the station of servitude--a servitude which is complete, pure and real, firmly established, enduring, obvious, explicitly revealed and subject to no interpretation whatever... I am the Interpreter of the Word of God; such is my interpretation."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 133

ii. The Shield and Shelter for All Mankind

"We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind," He, in yet another Tablet, affirms, "a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth, a stronghold for whosoever hath believed in God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. God grant that through Thee He may protect them, may enrich and sustain them, that He may inspire Thee with that which shall be a wellspring of wealth unto all created things, an ocean of bounty unto all men, and the dayspring of mercy unto all peoples."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, Tablet to `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 135-136

iii. The Mystery of God

"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 by 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."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 134

"But if any soul asks concerning the station of this servant, the answer is -- `Abdu'l-Bahá. If he inquires after the meaning of the Branch, the answer is -- `Abdu'l-Bahá. If he desires to know the significance of the verse regarding The Branch, the answer is -- `Abdu'l-Bahá. If he insists upon the explanation of the meaning of the Branch extended from the Ancient Root, the answer is -- `Abdu'l-Bahá."

`Abdu'l-Bahá from *Tablet, Star of West*, Vol. VIII, p. 186; also p. 212

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"According to the clear text of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and other tablets, the Center of the Covenant is the remover of difficulties, for he is the interpreter of the Book. Not one soul has the right to say one word of his own account, or to explain anything or to elucidate the text of the Book, whether in public or private..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá from *Tablet, Star of West*, Vol. VIII, p. 223

c. Difficulty of Understanding the Station of `Abdu'l-Bahá

"...it would be indeed difficult for us, who stand so close to such a tremendous figure and are drawn by the mysterious power of so magnetic a personality, to obtain a clear and exact understanding of the role and character of One Who, not only in the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh but in the entire field of religious history, fulfills a unique function. Though moving in a sphere of His own and holding a rank radically different from that of the Author and the Forerunner of the Bahá'í Revelation, He, by virtue of the station ordained for Him through the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, forms together with them what may be termed the Three Central Figures of a Faith that stands unapproached in the world's spiritual history. He towers, in conjunction with them, 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 a period than a full thousand years, can ever hope to rise..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 131-132

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 transgresses against Me. He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favored servants...We have sent Him down in the form of a human temple. Blest and sanctified be God Who createth whatsoever He willet through His inviolable, His infallible decree. 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."

Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet of the Branch, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 135

Prayer of Bahá'u'lláh

"Thou knowest, O my God, that I desire for Him naught except that which Thou didst desire, and have chosen Him for no purpose save that which Thou hadst intended for Him. Render Him victorious, therefore, through Thy hosts of earth and heaven...Ordain, I beseech Thee, by the ardor of My love for Thee and yearning to manifest Thy Cause, for Him, as well as for them that love Him, that which Thou hadst destined for Thy Messengers and the Trustees of Thy Revelation. Verily, Thou art the Almighty, the All-Powerful."

-- Revealed for `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p.

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d. This Covenant Unique and Unknown in Previous Dispensations

"In former cycles no distinct Covenant was made in Writing by the Supreme Pen; no distinct personage was appointed to be the Standard differentiating falsehood from truth, so that whatsoever he said was to stand as truth and that which he repudiated was to be known as falsehood. At most, His Holiness Jesus Christ gave only and intimation, a symbol, and that was but an indication of the solidarity of Peter's faith. When he mentioned his faith, His Holiness said, 'Thou art Peter' - which means rock - 'and upon this rock will I build my church.' This was a sanction of Peter's faith; it was not indicative of his [Peter] being the expounder of the Book, but was a confirmation of Peter's faith.

"But in this Dispensation of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) among its distinctions is that He did not leave people in perplexity. He entered into a Covenant and Testament with the people. He appointed a Center of the Covenant. He wrote with His own pen and revealed it in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Book of Laws, and Kitáb-I-`Ahd, the Book of the Covenant, appointing Him (`Abdu'l-Bahá) the Expounder of the Book. You must ask Him (`Abdu'l-Bahá) regarding the means of the texts of the verses. Whatsoever He says is correct. Outside of this, in numerous Tablets He (Bahá'u'lláh) has explicitly recorded it, with clear, sufficient valid and forceful statements. In the Tablet of the Branch He explicitly states: Whatsoever the Branch says is right, or correct; and every person must obey The Branch with his life, with his heart, with his

tongue. Without His will, not a word shall anyone utter. This is an explicit text of the Blessed Beauty. So there no excuse left for anybody. No soul shall, of himself, speak anything. Whatsoever His (`Abdu'l-Bahá's) tongue utters, whatsoever His pen records, that is correct; according the explicit text of Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of the Branch."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of West, Vol. III, No. 14, p. 9

"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..."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 451

"Written entirely in His own hand...this unique and epoch-making Document [Kitáb-I-`Ahd], designated by Bahá'u'lláh as His 'Most Great Tablet', and alluded to by Him as the 'Crimson Book' in His 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf', can find no parallel in the Scriptures of any previous Dispensation, not excluding that of the Báb Himself. For nowhere in the writings of the Author of the Bábi Revelation, do we find any single document establishing a Covenant endowed with an authority comparable to the Covenant which Bahá'u'lláh had Himself instituted."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 238

"In short, one of the specific teachings of this cycle of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh which has not been manifest during the former cycles, is that His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh left no opportunity for a difference (division). For in His blessed Day He made a Covenant and Testament with the traces of the Supreme Pen and explained the One to whom all should turn; and He explicitly pointed to the Interpreter of the Book, and thus closed

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all doors to interpretations. We must offer thanks to God, for He gave us rest (peace) in this blessed cycle, and left no occasion for anyone to hesitate (doubt). All must therefore obey and be submissive and wholly turn themselves to the one appointed by Him, i.e. the Center of the Covenant."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of West, Vol. VIII, p. 187

"So firm and mighty is this Covenant that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 146 (Disp.).

2. `Abdu'l-Bahá's Covenant with the Believers

a. His Appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the First Guardian of the Line of Guardians

Excerpts from the Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá:

"Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest upon that primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree, grown out, blest, tender, verdant and flourishing from the Twin Holy Trees; the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas...for behold! he the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees. Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind."

Complete text p.3 (Bahá'í Administration., p. 3)

"O my loving friends! After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghsán (Branches), the Afnán (Twigs) of the Sacred

Lote-Tree, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abhá Beauty to turn unto Shoghi Effendi - the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Tress and the fruit grown from the union of the two offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, -as he is the Sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the Aghsán, the Afnán, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn. He is the expounder of the words of God and after him will success the first-born of his lineal descendants."

Complete text, p.11 (Bahá'í Administration., p. 6)

"O ye beloved of the Lord! It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing. He that is appointed must manifest in himself detachment from all worldly things, must be the essence of purity, must show in himself the fear of God, knowledge, wisdom and learning. Thus should be 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.

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"O ye the faithful loved ones of `Abdu'l-Bahá! It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi, the twig that hath branched from and the fruit given forth by the two hallowed and Divine Lote-Trees, that no dust of despondency and sorrow may stain his radiant nature, that day by day he may wax greater in happiness, in joy and spirituality, and may grow to become even as a fruitful tree.

"For he is, after `Abdu'l-Bahá, the guardian of the Cause of God, the Afnán, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him. He that obeyeth him not, hath not obeyed God; he that turneth away from him, hath turned away, hath turned away from God and he that denieth him, hath denied the True One. 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. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.

"The Glory of Glories rest upon you!"

Complete text, pp.25-26 (Bahá'í Administration., p. 12)

"...The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God..."

Complete text, p.11 (Bahá'í Administration., p. 7)

"O ye that stand fast in the Covenant! When the hour cometh that this wronged and broken-winged bird will have taken its flight unto the celestial concourse, when it will have hastened to the Realm of the Unseen and its mortal frame will have been either lost or hidden neath the dust, it is incumbent upon the

Afnán, that are steadfast in the Covenant of God, and have branched from the Tree of Holiness; the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God, (the glory of the Lord rest upon them), and all the friends and loved ones, one and all to bestir themselves and arise with heart and soul and in one accord, to diffuse the sweet savors of God, to teach His Cause and to promote His Faith. It behooveth them not to rest for a moment neither to seek repose. They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime and travel throughout all regions. Bestirred, without rest and steadfast to the end they must raise in every land the triumphal cry 'O Thou Glory of Glories!' (Yá- Bahá'u'l-Abhá), must achieve renown in the world wherever they go, must burn brightly even as a candle in every meeting and must kindle the flame of Divine love in every assembly; that the light of truth may rise resplendent in the midmost heart of the world, that throughout the East and throughout the West a vast concourse may gather under the shadow of the Word of God, that the sweet savors of holiness may be diffused, that faces may shine radiantly hearts be filled with the Divine spirit and souls be made heavenly.

"In these days, the most important of all things is the guidance of the nations and peoples of the world. Teaching the Cause is of utmost importance for it is the head corner-stone of the foundation itself..."

Complete text, p.10 (Bahá'í Administration., pp. 5-6)

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b. Succession of Guardians

By "the hereditary principle and the law of primogeniture" (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 147) "he [Shoghi Effendi] is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Will and Testament., p. 11.

"O ye beloved of the Lord! It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing. He that is appointed must manifest in himself detachment from all worldly things, must be the essence of purity, must show in himself the fear of God, knowledge, wisdom and learning. 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) choose another branch to succeed him."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Will and Testament., p. 12. (Bahá'í Administration., p. 8)

"The Hands of the Cause of God 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. The election of these nine Hands of the Cause of God and 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. This assent must be given in such wise as the assenting and dissenting voices may not be distinguished (secret ballot)."

Complete text, p.12 (Bahá'í Administration., p. 8)

"The statement in the Will of `Abdu'l-Bahá does not imply that the Hands of

the Cause of God have been given the authority to overrule the Guardian.
`Abdu'l-Bahá could not have provided for a conflict of authority in the Faith.
This is obvious, in view of His own words, which you will find on page 13 (p. 11 of 1944 U. S. edition) of the Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá. "The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God.....It is incumbent upon.....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. He that opposeth him hath opposed the True One,' etc."
(Letter to an American believer from the Guardian through his secretary, June 6, 1954, published in Bahá'í News, February 1955.)
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III. QUALIFICATIONS OF BAHAI FAITH AND PRACTICE

The Word "Covenant Defined

"i. God's promise of a blessing to be fulfilled on the performance of a condition. ii. A divine ordinance designed to govern the relations between God and man."

(Funk & Wagnall's New Dictionary.)

"The promises of God as revealed in the Scriptures, conditioned on certain terms on the part of man, as obedience, repentance, faith, etc."

(Webster's New International Dictionary)

A. THE BELIEVERS - PARTY OF THE COVENANT

"O party of the Covenant! Verily, the Beauty of El-Abhá hath promised the most great assistance to the beloved who are firm in the Covenant and to confirm them through the mightiest power...Adhere to the hem of the robe of the Lofty One and do your best to spread the Covenant of God..."

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. I, p. 1.

"...according to the irrefutable texts, He has taken from us a firm covenant that we may live and act in accord with the divine exhortations, commands and lordly teachings."

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. I, p. 42.

"The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Day Spring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof, hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behooveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him who is the Source of Divine inspiration."

-- Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 330-331. (Bahá'u'lláh, Introductory Words to Kitáb-i-Aqdas [Ed. - now online as par. 1], in Star of West, Vol. IV, p. 298.)

B. THE GUARDIAN'S STATEMENT CONCERNING QUALIFICATIONS OF BELIEVER

"Regarding the very delicate and complex question of ascertaining the qualifications of a true believer...I would only venture to state very briefly and as adequately as present circumstances permit the principal factors that must be taken into consideration before deciding whether a person may be regarded a true believer or not." And he continues: "Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner [the Báb], the Author [Bahá'u'lláh], and True Exemplar [`Abdu'l-Bahá] of the Bahá'í Cause, as set forth in `Abdu'l-Bahá's Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Bahá'í administration throughout the world..."

-- Bahá'í Administration., p. 90 (Incorporated as Article II, By-Laws of National Spiritual Assembly.)

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1. The True Believer Destined for a High Station

"The station which he who hath truly recognized this Revelation will attain is the same as the one ordained for such prophets of the house of Israel as are not regarded as Manifestations 'endowed with constancy.'"

Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 111; see also *Advent of Divine of Justice*, pp. 63-64.

"Consider ye what doors His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has opened before you, and what a high and exalted station He has destined for you, and what bounties He has prepared for you! Should we become intoxicated with this cup, the sovereignty of the globe of earth will become lower in our estimation than the children's plays. Should they place in the arena the crown of the government of the whole world, and invite each one of us to accept it, undoubtedly we shall not condescend, and shall refuse to accept it."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet, America's Spiritual Mission, "Divine Plan" Teaching Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá 1916-1917.*, p.23 [Ed. - pp. 50-51 in online version]; *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 425

a. Attainment of Supreme Station Dependent upon Certain Conditions

i. Firmness in the Covenant

"The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God. For the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh from the doubts of the people of error. It is the fortified fortress of the Cause of God and the firm pillar of the religion of God. Today no power can conserve the oneness of the Bahá'í world save the Covenant of God; otherwise differences like unto a most great tempest will encompass the Bahá'í world. It is evident that the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant and nothing else...Therefore, in the beginning one must make his steps firm in the Covenant -- so that the confirmations of

Bahá'u'lláh may encircle from all sides, the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse may become the supporters and the helpers, and the exhortations and advices of `Abdu'l-Bahá, like unto the pictures engraved on stone, may remain permanent and ineffaceable in tablets of the hearts."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet, America's Spiritual Mission, "Divine Plan" Teaching*

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá 1916-1917., p. 23-24 [Ed. - pp. 51-52 in online version]; Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 425-426

ii. Fellowship and Love

"The second condition: Fellowship and love amongst the believers. The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other...This is the wisdom for the appearance of the Holy Manifestations! When the most great bestowal reveals itself in the hearts of the believers, the world of nature will be transformed, the darkness of the contingent being will vanish, and heavenly illumination will be obtained. Then the whole world will become the Paradise of Abhá, every one of the believers of God will become a blessed tree, producing wonderful fruits."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, America's Spiritual Mission, "Divine Plan" Teaching Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá 1916-1917., p. 24 [Ed. - pp. 52-53 in online version]; Bahá'í World Faith, p. 426

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iii. Promotion of the Faith

"The third condition: Teachers must continually travel to parts of the continent, nay, rather, to all parts of the world, but they must travel like `Abdu'l-Bahá, who journeyed throughout the cities of America. He was sanctified and free from every attachment and in the utmost severance..." "The aim is this" The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, America's Spiritual Mission, "Divine Plan" Teaching Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá 1916-1917., pp. 24-25 [Ed. - pp. 53-54 in online version]; Bahá'í World Faith, p. 426-427

"It is known and clear that today the unseen divine assistance encompasseth those who deliver the Message. And if the work of delivering the Message be neglected, the assistance shall be entirely cut off, for it is impossible that the friends of God receive assistance unless they be engaged in delivering the Message."

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. II, pp. 390-391.

b. Evidences of Firmness

"O ye cohorts of God! If you observe that a soul has turned his face completely toward the Cause of God, his intention is centralized upon the penetration of the Word of God, he is serving the Cause day and night with the utmost fidelity, no scent of selfishness is inhaled from his manners and deeds, and no trace of egotism or prejudice is seen in his personality - nay rather he is a wanderer in the wilderness of the love of God, and one intoxicated with the wine of the knowledge of God, occupied wholly with the diffusion of the fragrances of God, and attracted to the signs of the Kingdom of God; know ye of a certainty that he is confirmed with the powers of the Kingdom, assisted by the Heaven of Might; and he will shine, gleam and sparkle like unto the morning

star with the utmost brilliancy and splendor from the horizon of the everlasting gift. If he is alloyed with the slightest trace of passion, desire, ostentation or self-interest, it is certain that the results of all efforts will prove fruitless, and he will become deprived and hopeless."

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. I, p. 42.

Firmness in the Covenant means obedience so that no one may say, 'this is my opinion,' nay rather he must obey that which proceeds from the Pen and Tongue of the Covenant."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, in Tablet, Star of West, Vol. IV, p. 174

"Endeavor, therefore, that ye may scatter and disperse the army of doubt and error with the power of the Holy Utterances. This is my will and this is my counsel. Do not quarrel with anybody, and shun every form

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of dispute. Utter the Word of God. If he accepts it the desired purpose is attained, and if he turns away leave him to himself and trust to God. Such is the attribute of those who are firm in the Covenant."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, in Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 265

"O ye beloved of the God, know that steadfastness and firmness in this new and wonderful Covenant is indeed the spirit that quickeneth the hearts which are overflowing with the love of the Glorious Lord; verily, it is the power which penetrates into the hearts of the people of the world! Your Lord hath assuredly promised His servants who are firm and steadfast to render them victorious at all times, to exalt their word, propagate their power, diffuse their lights, strengthen their hearts, elevate their banners, assist their hosts, brighten their stars, increase the abundance of the showers of mercy upon them, and enable the brave lions (or teachers) to conquer.

"Hasten, hasten, O ye firm believers! Hasten, hasten, O ye steadfast! Abandon the heedless, set aside every ignorant, take hold of the strong rope, be firm in this Great Cause, draw light from this Evident Light, be patient and be steadfast in this wise Religion! Ye shall see the hosts of inspiration descending successively from the Supreme World, the procession of attraction falling incessantly from the heights of heaven, the abundance of the Kingdom of El Abhá outpouring continually and the teachings of God penetrating with the utmost power, while the heedless are indeed in evident loss."

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. II, pp. 442-443

"Iscaiot must not be forgotten; the Divine sheep must constantly be guarded against devouring wolves; the light of the Cause of God must be protected from contrary winds by means of a chimney; the oppressed fowls must be shielded against the birds of prey; blooming roses should be saved from the outstretched hands of injustice and the lambs of God must be fortified against the fierce claws of ravenous animals."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet (Archives), Bahá'í World Faith, p. 357

C. NECESSITY FOR FIRMNESS IN THE COVENANT

1. To Preserve the Unity of the Faith

" The aim of the appearance of the Blessed Perfection...was the unity and agreement of all people of the world. Therefore, my utmost desire, firstly, is the accord and union and love of the believers, and after that of all the

people of the world..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet (Archives), Bahá'í World Faith, p. 402

"...This New World Order, whose promise is enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose fundamental principles have been enunciated in the writings of the Center of His Covenant, involves no less than the complete unification of the entire human race..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 162

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"Today the most important affair is firmness in the Covenant, because firmness in the Covenant wards off differences."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of West, Vol. III, No. 14, p. 9; also Vol. XII, p. 227

"...Therefore, the hope is entertained that thou wilt be assisted under all conditions, for today that which is most important is firmness in the Covenant and the Testament and otherwise Bahá'í unity will not be preserved. If Bahá'í unity could be preserved through something else, undoubtedly the Blessed Beauty would have commanded it."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 268

"Be sure, therefore, that if the believers are not united in the Will of God they will not be assisted. This is especially necessary because all of them are under the tent of the Covenant in this Revelation. There is strength only in unity. Under one tent there is union and harmony. The Covenant of God in this day of manifestation is a lifeboat and ark and ark of salvation. All true followers of the Blessed Perfection are sheltered and protected in this ark. Whoever leaves it, trusting in his own will and strength, will drown and be destroyed. For the Blessed Perfection left no possibility for discord, disagreement and dissension. The Covenant is like the sea and the believers as the fishes in the sea. If a fish leaves the water it cannot live. There is nothing to equal, nothing so effective as the Covenant of God to bring about and continue unity..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá as quoted in "Ten Days in the Light of Acca," p. 48, in Star of West, Vol. VIII, p. 222

"...Misunderstanding cannot be eliminated by any power save that of the Covenant...All previous books are subordinate to this Book of the Covenant...consider that if the friends remain firm in the Covenant, will there be any misunderstanding among them? No, by God! Except those souls who have an evil intention and are thinking of leadership and forming party...these souls are themselves at present among the pioneers of violation. This is because of their personal motives for they had thought of securing leadership and wealth..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, pp. 235-236

"We have no other aim save the protection of the Fortified Fortress of the Cause of God. We must guard this Fortified Fortress from the attack of the thoughtless ones. Hence we must all turn our faces to the appointed Center in order that the Bahá'í Unity might be preserved; otherwise in one year the Bahá'ís would be divided into a thousand sects. We entertain no other object except the safety of the Cause of God!"

2. To Insure Victory and Attract the Bounties of God

"So firm and mighty is this Covenant that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like."

"Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this holy cycle shall gradually appear and be made manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth and the dayspring of the revelation of its signs."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 146

"Today no soul has any station or enjoys any title except the soul who is firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament, who entirely forgets himself and is released from the world."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. VIII, p. 218

"Today whoever is firm in the Covenant shall become ignited like unto a candle in the assemblage of the world and the confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá shall encircle him from all directions."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. VIII, p. 219

"Rest ye assured that if a soul arises in the utmost perseverance and raises the Call of the Kingdom and resolutely promulgates the Covenant - be he an insignificant ant - he shall be enabled to drive away the formidable elephant from the arena, and if he be a feeble moth he shall cut to pieces the plumage of the rapacious vulture."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 265

"Be ye assured with the greatest assurance that, verily, God will help those who are firm in His Covenant in every matter, through His confirmation and favor, the lights of which will shine forth unto the east of the earth, as well as the west thereof. He will make them the signs of guidance among the creation and as shining and glittering stars from all horizons."

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. I, p. 83

"...Whoever is firm in the Covenant and the Testament is today endowed with a seeing eye, and a responsive ear and daily advances in the divine realm until he becomes a heavenly angel."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 251

Prayers for Firmness in the Covenant

"Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! I implore Thee by Them Who are the Tabernacles of Thy Divine holiness, Who are the Manifestations of Thy transcendent unity and the Day-Springs of Thine inspiration and revelation, to grant that Thy servants may not be kept back from this Divine Law which, at Thy will and according to Thy pleasure, hath branched out from Thy most great Ocean. Do Thou, then, ordain for them that which Thou didst ordain for Thy chosen ones and for the righteous among Thy creatures, whose constancy in Thy Cause the tempests of trials have failed to shake, and whom the

tumults of tests have been powerless to hinder from magnifying Thy most exalted Word - the Word through which the heavens of men's idle fancies and vain imaginations have been split asunder. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the

All-Glorious, the All-Knowing."

Bahá'u'lláh, Prayers and Meditations., p. 27

"Bring them together again, O Lord, by the power of Thy Covenant and gather their dispersion by the might of Thy Promise, and unite their hearts by the dominion of Thy Love; and make them love each other so that they may sacrifice their spirits, expend their money, and scatter themselves for the love of one another. O Lord, cause to descend upon them quietness and tranquility! Shower upon them the Clouds of Thy Mercy in great abundance, and make them to characterize themselves with the characteristics of the Spiritual! O Lord, make us firm in Thy noble command, and bestow upon us Thy Gifts through Thy Bounty, Grace and Munificence.

"Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Merciful, and Benevolent."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of West, Vol. IV, p. 240

IV. COVENANT-BREAKING

"...Now, that the true Faith of God may be shielded and protected, His Law guarded and preserved and His Cause remain safe and secure, it is incumbent upon everyone to hold fast unto the Text of the clear and firmly established blessed verse...He said: - 'Should he for a moment pass out from the shadow of the Cause, he surely shall be brought to naught.' Reflect! What stress He layeth upon one moment's deviation: that is, were he to incline a hair's breadth to the right or left, his deviation would be established and his utter nothingness made manifest...

"What deviation can be greater than breaking the Covenant of God! What deviation can be greater than interpolating and falsifying the words and verses of the Sacred Text...What deviation can be greater than calumniating the Center of the Covenant himself! What deviation can be more glaring than spreading broadcast false and foolish reports touching the Temple of God's Testament!...What deviation can be more infamous than the vain and feeble interpretations of the people of doubt! What deviation can be more wicked than joining hands with strangers and with the enemies of God! "

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Will and Testament., Complete text, pp. 6-7

"His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh covenanted, no that I (`Abdu'l-Bahá) am the Promised One, but that `Abdu'l-Bahá is the Expounder of the Book and the Center of the Covenant; and that the Promised One of Bahá'u'lláh will appear after one thousand or thousands of years. This is the Covenant which Bahá'u'lláh made. If a person shall deviate, he is not acceptable at the Threshold of Bahá'u'lláh. In case of difference, `Abdu'l-Bahá must be con-

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sulted. They must resolve around his good pleasure. After `Abdu'l-Bahá, whenever the Universal House of Justice is organized it will ward off differences."

Star of West, Vol. XII, p. 228

"The sacred and youthful branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice, are both under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God;

whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled against God; ...whoso denieth him hath denied God;...whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God. May the wrath, the fierce indignation, the vengeance of God rest upon him! The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God. It is incumbent upon 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. He that opposeth him 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. Beware, beware, lest the days after the ascension (of Bahá'u'lláh) be repeated when the Center of Sedition waxed haughty and rebellious and with Divine Unity for his excuse deprived himself and perturbed and poisoned others. No doubt every vainglorious one that purposeth dissension and discord will not openly declare his evil purposes, nay rather, even as impure gold, would he seize upon divers measures and various pretexts that he may separate the gathering of the people of Bahá. My object is to show that the Hands of the Cause of God 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. How often hath grievous error been disguised in the garb of truth, that it might sow the seeds of doubt in the hearts of men!"

Will and Testament., Complete text, pp. 11-12 (Bahá'í Administration., pp. 7-8)

"O ye the faithful loved ones of `Abdu'l-Bahá! It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi, the twig that hath branched from and the fruit given forth by the hallowed and Divine Lote-Trees, day by day he may wax greater in happiness, in joy and spirituality, and may grow to become even as a fruitful tree.

"For he is, after `Abdu'l-Bahá, the guardian of the Cause of God, the Afnán, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him. He that obeyeth him not, hath not obeyed God; he that turneth away from him, hath turned away, hath turned away from God and he that denieth him, hath denied the True One. 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. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error. "The Glory of Glories rest upon you!"

Will and Testament.(end), Complete text, pp. 25-26 (Bahá'í Administration., p. 12)

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"...Carnal desires are the cause of differences as it is the case with

violators. These do no doubt the validity of the Covenant, but selfish motives have dragged them to this condition. It is not that they ignore what they do - they are perfectly aware and still they exhibit opposition.

"In short, the ocean of the Covenant is tumultuous and wide. It casts ashore the foam of violation and thus rest ye assured..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 246

Words of Bahá'u'lláh Quoted by `Abdu'l-Bahá

"O ye servants!...do not follow self; break not God's Covenant and violate not His Testament. Proceed with perfect steadfastness and with heart, soul and tongue, turn unto Him, and be not of the thoughtless..."

Star of West, Vol. XIII, p. 22; also Bahá'í World Faith, p. 434

"Those who have broken the Covenant of God, notwithstanding His commands, and have turned away, they are the people of error before the Most Opulent, the Exalted!"... "Those who have been faithful to God's Covenant are the highest ones in the sight of the exalted Lord. Those who have become negligent are of the people of fire in the sight of thy Lord, the Beloved, the Independent."

Star of West, Vol. XIII, p. 23; also Bahá'í World Faith, p. 435

A. RESULTS OF VIOLATION OF THE COVENANT

"Now consider the body of the faithful believers: If any one member severs his connection with the Center of the Covenant - from Whom all receive their spiritual force - he ceases to be a living and active member of the body; and, again, if he be not working and performing his function in the Kingdom, the supply of spiritual sustenance flowing to him from the Center of the Covenant will be diminished in proportion as he fails to perform his work."

Mason Remey, article approved by `Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of West, Vol. IV, p. 242

"...These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean, which is one of its inseparable features, but the ocean of the Covenant shall surge and

shall cast ashore those dead bodies for it cannot contain them. Thus it is seen that the ocean of the Covenant has surged and surged until it has thrown out the dead

bodies - the souls that are deprived of the Spirit of God and are lost in passion and self and are seeking leadership. In fine, this froth of the ocean shall not endure

and shall soon disappear and vanish, while on the other hand the ocean of the Covenant shall eternally surge and roar."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 265

"...Today every wise, vigilant and foresighted person is awakened, and to him are unveiled the mysteries of the future, that nothing save the power of the Covenant is able to stir and move the hearts of humanity...The Covenant of God is like a vast and fathomless ocean. A billow shall rise and surge therefrom and shall cast ashore all accumulated foam..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 153

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1. Covenant-Breakers Cut Themselves Off From the Cause of God

"His Holiness Christ did not exercise despotism in the case of Judas Iscariot

and His own brothers, - but they separated themselves."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Bahá'í World Faith, p. 438

"Jude, servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James...: For there are certain men crept in unawares...denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not...Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain...and perished in the gainsaying of Core [Korah]...clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead...Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

Jude, verses 1, 4-5, 11-13

2. Expulsions and Reinstatement of Covenant-Breakers

The believers are requested to study the following statement by the Guardian, and grasp its meaning. By our understanding of it we can avoid confusion and division of opinion in any future cases that may arise. The passage is taken from the Guardian's letter of April 11, 1949, written through his secretary to the NSA:

"The Guardian, like the Master before him, has not considered it advisable to as yet permit any person or Assembly to put another person out of the Cause of God. There is sharp distinction between depriving a believer of his voting rights, which is severe disciplinary measure and not a spiritual sanction, and pronouncing a former believer to be a truly spiritually diseased soul, a soul in the condition the Master referred to when, in His last cable to America before His ascension, He said: ' he who sitteth with a leper catcheth leprosy'. The Guardian has, within the last few years, considered the National Assemblies strong enough to wield the instrument of sanction in the sense of depriving a Bahá'í of his voting rights. But no one but himself can pronounce a person to be in the diseased condition we call 'Covenant-breaking', and no one but he can reinstate a Covenant-breaker. No National Assembly has been given this right and cannot, therefore, review the question or reinstate any one. All any National Assembly can do is to report to the Guardian if they are approached by a Covenant-breaker, and then the Guardian will take action. It is a pity that some of the Western friends, with remarkable naiveté, do not grasp the fact that there is absolutely nothing keeping those who have broken the Covenant, whether Bahá'u'lláh's or the Master's, out of the Cause of God except their own inner spiritually sick condition. If they were sound, instead of diseased, and wanted to enter the service of the Faith, they would apply direct to the Guardian and he would be able to judge of their sincerity and, if sincere, would welcome them into the ranks of the faithful as he did with Sydney Sprague. Unfortunately, a man who is ill is not made

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well just by asserting there is nothing wrong with him! Fact, actual states, are what count. Probably no group of people in the world have softer tongues, or proclaim more loudly their innocence, than those who in their heart of hearts, and by every act, are enemies of the Center of the Covenant. The Master well knew this and that is why He said we must shun their company, but pray for

them. If you put a leper in a room with healthy people, he cannot catch their health; they are very likely to catch his horrible ailment."

Bahá'í News, No. 220 (June, 1949), p. 2

B. NECESSITY OF SHUNNING COVENANT-BREAKERS

"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. O friends! It behooveth you to call to mind with tenderness the trials of His Holiness, the Exalted One, and show your fidelity to the Ever-Blest Beauty. The utmost endeavor must be exerted lest all these woes, trials and afflictions, all this pure and sacred blood that hath been shed so profusely in the Path of God, may prove to be in vain."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Will and Testament., Complete text, p. 20

"O thou dear maid-servant of God!

"Thy letter was received and the contents became know...Thou hadst asked some questions; that why the blessed and spiritual souls, who are firm and steadfast, shun the company of degenerate persons. This is because, that just as bodily diseases like consumption and cancer are contagious, likewise the spiritual diseases are also infectious. If a consumptive should associate with a thousand safe and healthy persons, the safety and health of these thousand persons would not affect the consumptive and would not cure him of his consumption. But when this consumptive associates with those thousand souls, in a short time the disease of consumption will infect a number of those healthy persons. This is a clear and self-evident question.

"Likewise, if a thousand magnanimous persons associate with a degraded one, the perfection of those souls will not affect this debased person. On the contrary, this means person will become the cause of their going astray..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. XII, p. 233

"...In short the point is this: `Abdu'l-Bahá is extremely kind, but when the disease of leprosy, what am I to do? ... one must protect and safeguard the blessed souls from the breaths and fatal spiritual diseases, otherwise violation, like the plague, will become a contagion and all will perish..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablet, Star of West, Vol. XIII, p. 25; also Bahá'í World Faith, p. 438

"O ye beloved of the Lord! Strive with all your heart to shield the Cause of God from the onslaught of the insincere, for souls such as these cause the straight to become crooked and all benevolent efforts to produce contrary results."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Will and Testament., (Complete Text) pp. 21-22 (Bahá'í Administration., p. 11)

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" The foundation of the Kingdom of God is laid upon justice, fairness, mercy, sympathy and kindness to every soul. Then strive ye with heart and soul to practice love and kindness to the world of humanity at large, except to those souls who are selfish and insincere. It is not advisable to show kindness to a person who is a tyrant, a traitor or a thief because kindness encourages him to

become worse and does not awaken him. The more kindness you show to a liar the more he is apt to lie, for he thinks that you know not, while you do know, but extreme kindness keeps you from revealing your knowledge."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet (Archives), Bahá'í World Faith, p. 412

Words of Bahá'u'lláh quoted by `Abdu'l-Bahá

"Endeavor to your utmost to protect yourselves, because Satan appears in different robes and appeals to everyone according to each person's own way, until he becomes like unto him (Satan), then he will leave him alone...Be informed by these utterances and shun the manifestations of the people of hell...

"The greatest of degradation is to leave the Shadow of God and enter the shadow of Satan."

Star of West, Vol. XIII, pp. 20, 22; also Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 431, 434

"...This is a hidden information of which we have informed the chosen ones lest they may be deprived of their praiseworthy station by associating with the embodiments of hatred. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all the friends of God to shun any person in whom they perceive the emanation of hatred for the glorious Beauty of Abhá, though he may quote all the heavenly utterances and cling to all the Books...Protect yourselves with the utmost vigilance, lest you be entrapped in the snare of deception and fraud."

Star of West, Vol. XIII, pp. 20; also Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 430-431

Prayer by `Abdu'l-Bahá

"O God, my God! Shield thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion, protect them with the watchful eye of Thy loving kindness from all rancor, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy Cause and, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, make them the manifestations of Thy glorious signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Dayspring of Thy Divine Unity, gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy Holy Kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thy all-swaying power that cometh from Thy Realm of Glory. Thou art the All-Bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious!"

-- Will and Testament., (Complete Text) p. 9 (Bahá'í Administration., p. 5); also, Bahá'í Prayers (1949), p. 62 [Ed. - p. 135 in online version].

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V. PROTECTION OF THE COVENANT

"The Covenant is an Orb which shines and gleams forth unto the universe. Verily, its lights will dispel darkness, its sea will cast out the froth of suspicion upon the shores of perdition. Verily, naught in the world can resist the power of the Kingdom. Should all mankind assemble, could they prevent the sun from giving its light, the winds from their blowing, the clouds from their showers, the mountains from their firmness or the stars from their beaming? No! by the Lord, the Clement. Everything (in the world) is subject to corruption, but the Covenant of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of West, Vol. VI, p. 107

"...Thou hast written that in view of the questions of violation thou art perturbed. There is no occasion for perturbation for the Blessed Beauty

[Bahá'u'lláh] has closed all doors of error and doubt and has entered with all the friends into a Covenant and a Testament..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, pp. 233-234

"...the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh from the doubts of the people of error. It is the fortified fortress of the Cause of God and is the firm pillar of the religion of God. Today no power can conserve the oneness of the Bahá'í world save the Covenant of God; otherwise differences like unto a most great tempest will encompass the Bahá'í world. It is evident that the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant and nothing else."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, America's Spiritual Mission, "Divine Plan" Teaching Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá 1916-1917., p.23 [Ed. - p. 51 in online version]; Bahá'í World Faith, p. 425

"Iscariot must not be forgotten; the Divine sheep must constantly be guarded against devouring wolves; the light of the Cause of God must be protected from contrary winds by means of a chimney; the oppressed fowls must be shielded against the birds of prey; blooming roses should be saved from the outstretched hands of injustice and the lambs of God must be fortified against the fierce claws of ravenous animals.

"Were it not for the protecting power of the Covenant to guard the impregnable fort of the Cause of God, there would arise among the Bahá'ís, in one day, a thousand different sects as was the case in former ages. But in this Blessed Dispensation, for the sake of the permanency of the Cause of God and the avoidance of dissension amongst the people of God, the Blessed Beauty (may my soul be a sacrifice unto Him), has through the Supreme Pen written the Covenant and the Testament; He appointed a Center, the Exponent of the Book and the annuller of disputes. Whatever is written or said by Him is conformable to the truth and under the protection of the Blessed Beauty. He is infallible. The express purpose of this last Will and Testament is to set aside disputes from the world."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet (Archives), Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 357-358

Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh to `Abdu'l-Bahá

"...And this Covenant is the Ancient Covenant, the Illuminator of the horizons...It is the Testament and the Covenant and it is mentioned in...all the early Books and in the later Tablets...It is the holy fragrance of His Holiness, the Creator, and the Breaths of Life of the garden of the Creator. It is the strong fortress; therefore it is a sure shelter for all created beings, and in brief, it is the sum of all sacred writings, ancient and modern!"

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. VIII, pp. 213-214

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"O Thou My Greatest Branch! ... Verily, we have ordained Thee the Guardian of all the creatures, and a Protection to all those in the heavens and earths, and a Fortress to those who believe in God, the One, the Omniscient! ... I beg of Him to water the earth and all that is in it by Thee..."

Star of West, Vol. IV, pp. 239

VI. POWER OF THE COVENANT

"The power of the Covenant is as the heat of the sun which quickeneth and promoteth the development of all created things on earth. The light of the Covenant, in like manner, is the educator of the minds, the spirits, the hearts and souls of men."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in God Passes By, p. 239

"Verily, God effecteth that which He pleaseth; naught can annul His Covenant; naught can obstruct His favor nor oppose His Cause! He doeth with all His will that which pleaseth Him and He is powerful over all things!"

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. III, p. 598.

"It is indubitably clear that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in God Passes By, p. 238

"Know this for a certainty that today the penetrative power in the arteries and nerves of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant...There is no other power like unto this. Consider what a transformation has been effected since my first visit [to New York 1912]. This has been made possible through the power of the Covenant."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of West, Vol. XI, p. 121

"Although in the body of the universe there are innumerable nerves, yet the main artery, which pulsates, energizes and invigorates all beings, is the power of the Covenant. All else is secondary to this. Nobody is assisted and confirmed save that soul who is firm. Consider it well that every soul who is firm in the Covenant is luminous, like unto a candle which emanates its light on those around it. While every wavering soul is an utter failure, frozen lifeless, dead yet moving. This one proof is sufficient..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. XI, p. 308

"...Today the stirring power that exhibits itself throughout all regions is the power of the Covenant which, like unto the artery, beats and pulsates in the body of the world. He who is firmer in the Covenant is more assisted, just as ye are manifestly witnessing how firm souls are enkindled, attracted and confirmed..."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 233

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"Today, the Lord of Hosts is the defender of the Covenant, the forces of the Kingdom protect it, heavenly souls tender their services, and heavenly angels promulgate and spread it broadcast. If it is considered with insight, it will be seen that all the forces of the Universe in the last analysis serve the Covenant."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. XI, p. 242

"For this divine Covenant is an institution of the Lord. The Blessed Perfection, in all the tablets, books, epistles and supplications, has begged confirmation for and praised and commended those who are firm in this Covenant and Testament, and has asked the wrath of God and woe and desolation unto the violators.

"For firmness in the Covenant will preserve the unity of the religion of God and the foundation of the religion of God will not be shaken."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. VIII, p. 223

"So firm and mighty is this Covenant that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like." "It is indubitably clear, that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant." "Know thou, that the 'Sure Handle' mentioned from the foundation of the world in the Books, the Tablets and the Scriptures of old is naught else but the Covenant ." "The lamp of the Covenant is the light of the world, and the words traced by the Pen of the Most High a limitless ocean." -- `Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in God Passes By, p. 238.

"The confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá shall descend uninterruptedly upon those souls who are firm in the Covenant. Thou hast well observed that every firm one is assisted and aided and every violator is degraded, humiliated and lost...This Covenant is the Covenant of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. Now its importance is not known befittingly, but in the future it shall attain to such a degree of importance that if a king violates to the extent of one atom he shall be cut off immediately."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. IV, p. 240

"Take the cup of the Testament in thy hand; leap and dance with ecstasy in the triumphal procession of the Covenant! Lay your confidence in the everlasting bounty, turn to the presence of the generous God; ask assistance from the Kingdom of Abhá; seek confirmation from the Supreme World; turn thy vision toward the horizon of eternal wealth; and pray for help from the Source of Mercy!"

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. III, p. 642.

Words of Bahá'u'lláh

"O ye beloved of God! Repose not yourselves on your couches, nay bestir yourselves as soon as ye recognize your Lord, the Creator, and hear of the things which have befallen Him, and hasten to His assistance. Unloose your tongues, and proclaim unceasingly His Cause. This shall be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of the future, if ye be of them that comprehend the truth."

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 330

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Words of `Abdu'l-Bahá (in His last Tablet to the American Bahá'ís

"O ye friends of God! `Abdu'l-Bahá is day and night thinking of you and mentioning you, for the friends of God are dear to Him. Every morning at dawn I supplicate the Kingdom of God and ask that you may be filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit, so that you may become brilliant candles, shine with the light of guidance and dispel the darkness of error. Rest assured that the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom will continuously reach you.

"Through the power of the divine springtime, the downpour of the celestial clouds and the heat of the Sun of Reality, the Tree of Life is just beginning to grow. Before long it will produce buds, bring forth leaves and fruits and cast its shade over the East and the West. This Tree of Life is the Book of the

Covenant."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. XIII, p. 19; Bahá'í World Faith, p. 429

Words of Bahíyyih Khanum, sister of `Abdu'l-Bahá, known as the Greatest Holy Leaf

"Although the hearts of the people of Bahá are intensely burning on account of the great calamity (of the ascension of `Abdu'l-Bahá), and the sobbing and sighing of the friends have reached the ears of the Supreme Concourse and the Hosts of Holiness in the Abhá (Most Glorious) Paradise, yet, because this day is the day of service and this hour is the hour of diffusing the fragrances, the friends of God must, like a bright flame, arise in service to the Cause of God and surpass one another (in service). They should be like penetrating meteors, expelling every disloyal Covenant-breaker, in order that in the Preserved Tablet of God, that they may be recorded with the group who has fulfilled the Covenant and Testament of God."

Star of West, Vol. XIII, p. 82

Prayer of `Abdu'l-Bahá

"O God! Assist me with the hosts of the Supreme Concourse and make me firm and steadfast in the Covenant and Testament. I am weak in the Covenant and Testament; confer upon me strength. I am poor; bestow upon me wealth from the treasures of the Kingdom. I am ignorant; open before my face the doors of knowledge. I am dead; breathe into me the Breath of Life. I am dumb; grant me an eloquent tongue, so that with fluent _expression I may raise the Call of Thy Kingdom and quicken all of them in firmness to the Covenant. Thou art the Generous, the Giver and the Mighty."

`Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet, Star of West, Vol. X, p. 272

Words of Shoghi Effendi in letter (February 23, 1924) to the American Bahá'ís
"...We are called upon by our beloved Master in His Will and Testament not only to adopt it [New World Order] unreservedly, but to unveil its merit to the world. To attempt to estimate its full value, and grasp its exact significance after so short a time since its inception would be premature and presumptuous on our part. We must trust to time, and the guidance of

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God's Universal House of Justice, to obtain a clearer and fuller understanding of its provisions and implications. But one word of warning must be uttered in this connection. Let us be on our guard lest we measure too strictly the Divine Plan with the standard of men. I am not prepared to state that it agrees in principle or in method with the prevailing notions now uppermost in men's minds, nor that it should conform with those imperfect, precarious, and expedient measures feverishly resorted to by agitated humanity. Are we to doubt that the ways of God are not necessarily the ways of man? Is not faith but another word for implicit obedience, whole-hearted allegiance, uncompromising adherence to that which we believe is the revealed and expressed will of God, however perplexing it might first appear, however at variance with the shadowy views, the impotent doctrines, the cruse theories, the idle imaginings, the fashionable conceptions of a transient and troublous age? If we are to falter or hesitate, if our love for Him should fail to direct us and keep us within

His path, if we desert Divine and emphatic principles, what hope can we any more cherish for healing the ills and sicknesses of this world?"

Bahá'í Administration., pp. 62-63

"For such benefits, for such an arresting and majestic vindication of the undefeatable powers inherent in our precious Faith, we can but bow our heads in humility, awe and thanksgiving, renew our pledge of fealty to it, and, each covenanting in his own heart, resolve to prove faithful to that pledge and persevere to the very end, until our earthly share of servitude to so transcendent and priceless a Cause has been totally and completely fulfilled."

Shoghi Effendi, end of "A God-Given Mandate," in "Messages to America," p. 104

"That the Cause associated with the name of Bahá'u'lláh feeds itself upon those hidden springs of celestial strength which no force of human personality, whatever its glamour, can replace; that its reliance is solely upon that mystic Source with which no worldly advantage, be it wealth, fame, or learning, can compare; that it propagates itself by ways mysteriously and utterly at variance with the standards accepted by the generality of mankind, will... become increasingly manifest as it forges ahead towards fresh conquests in its struggle for the spiritual regeneration of mankind."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 51

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Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh

"All praise, O my God, be to Thee Who Art the Source of all glory and majesty, of greatness and honor, of sovereignty and dominion, of loftiness and grace, of awe and power. Whomsoever Thou willest Thou causest to draw nigh unto the Most Great Ocean, and on whomsoever Thou desirest Thou conferrest the honor of recognizing Thy Most Ancient Name. Of all who are in heaven and on earth, none can withstand the operation of Thy sovereign will. From all eternity Thou didst rule the entire creation, and Thou wilt continue forevermore to exercise Thy dominion over all created things. There is none other God but Thee, the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.

"Illumine, O Lord, the faces of Thy servants, that they may behold Thee; and cleanse their hearts that they may turn unto the court of Thy heavenly favors, and recognize Him Who is the Manifestation of Thy Self and the Day-Spring of Thine Essence. Verily, Thou art the Lord of the worlds. There is no God but Thee, the Unconstrained, the All Subduing!"

Prayers and Meditations., pp. 94-95

"O our God! We beg of Thee by the King of Names, and Maker of heaven and earth, by the rustling of the leaves of the tree of Life, and by Thine utterances, through which the realities of things are drawn unto us, to grant that unity in the love of God may be speedily established throughout the world; that Thou wilt guide us always and unmistakably to whatever Thou wouldst have us to do, and that we may ever be strong and fully prepared to render instant, exact and complete obedience."

Bahá'í Prayers (1929), p. 33 [Ed. - mentioned here as unauthenticated].

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THE WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF

`ABDUL-BAHA

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THE WILL AND TESTAMENT OF `ABDUL-BAHA

The Will and Testament `Abdu'l-Bahá "extols thee virtues of the indestructible Covenant established by Bahá'u'lláh....summons the Afán (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 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..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 328

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THE WILL AND TESTAMENT OF `ABDUL-BAHA

Indissoluble Link Between the Apostolic and Formative Periods of the Faith And the Golden Age to Come

"It was `Abdu'l-Bahá Who, through the provisions of His weighty Will and Testament, has forged the vital link which must for ever connect the age that has just expired with the one we now live in - The Transitional and Formative period of the Faith - a stage that must in the fullness of time reach its blossom and yield its fruit in the exploits and triumphs that are to herald the Golden Age of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 98

"...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."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 325

Fills Certain Gaps Left by Bahá'u'lláh in His Writings

"...he who reads the Aqdas with care and diligence will not find it hard to discover that the Most Holy Book itself anticipates in a number of passages the institutions which `Abdu'l-Bahá ordains in His Will. By leaving certain matters unspecified and unregulated in His Book of Laws, Bahá'u'lláh seems to have deliberately left a gap in the general scheme of Bahá'í Dispensation, which the unequivocal provisions of the Master's was filled..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 4

Cannot be Divorced from Bahá'u'lláh

"...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 and the One Who was its vehicle and chosen recipient.

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. Bahá'u'lláh's inscrutable purpose, we must ever bear in mind, has been so thoroughly infused into the conduct of `Abdu'l-Bahá, and their motives have been so closely wedded together, that the mere attempt to dissociate the teachings of the former from any system which the ideal Exemplar of those same teachings has established would amount to a repudiation of one of the most sacred and basic truths of the Faith."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 144

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Designed for Unification and Triumph of the Faith

"...We stand indeed too close to so monumental a document to claim for ourselves a complete understanding of all its implications, or to presume to have grasped the manifold mysteries it undoubtedly contains. 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...To them alone will be revealed the suitability of the institutions initiated by `Abdu'l-Bahá to the character of the future society which is to emerge out of the chaos and confusion of the present age..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 144

"In this weighty and incomparable Document its Author discloses the character of that 'excellent and priceless heritage' bequeathed by Him to His 'heirs'; proclaims afresh the fundamental purpose of His Revelation; enjoins the 'peoples of the world' to hold fast to that which will 'elevate' their 'station'... stresses the sublimity of man's station; discloses the primary aim of the Faith of God; directs the faithful to pray for the welfare of the kings of the earth...singles out as His special domain the hearts of men; forbids categorically strife and contention;" bids obedience to `Abdu'l-Bahá, and "concludes with an exhortation calling upon the faithful to 'serve all nations,' and to strive for the 'betterment of the world.'"

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 239-240

The Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá - Charter of New World Order

"... It was at an hour of grave suspense...that He penned His Will and Testament, that immortal Document wherein He delineated the features of the Administrative Order which would arise after His passing, and would herald the establishment of that World Order, the advent of which the Báb had announced, and the laws and principles of which Bahá'u'lláh had already formulated. It was in the course of these tumultuous years that, through the instrumentality of the heralds and champions of a firmly instituted Covenant, He reared the embryonic institutions, administrative, spiritual, and educational, of a steadily expanding Faith in Persia, the cradle of its Administrative Order..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 268

"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

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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 of the Hands of the Cause of God; and extols the virtues of the indestructible Covenant established by Bahá'u'lláh..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 328

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
OF
BAHA'U'LLAH

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
OF BAHA'U'LLAH

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH

"Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 332

"...the precepts laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 331

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH

FOREWORD

"It should be remembered by every follower of the Cause that the system of Bahá'í administration is not an innovation imposed arbitrarily upon the Bahá'ís of the world since the Master's passing, but derives its authority from the Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá, is specifically prescribed in unnumbered Tablets, and rests in some of its essential features upon the explicit provisions of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. It thus unifies and correlates the principles separately laid down by Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá, and is indissolubly bound with the essential verities of the Faith. To dissociate the administrative principles of the Cause from the purely spiritual and humanitarian teachings would be tantamount to a mutilation of the body of the Cause, a separation that can only result in the disintegration of its component parts, and the extinction of the Faith itself."

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 5

"The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day."

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 156

"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 Islámic 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..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 326

"No sooner had the provisions of that Divine Charter, delineating the features of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh been disclosed to His followers than they set about erecting, upon the foundations which the lives of the heroes, the saints and martyrs of that Faith had laid, the first stage of the framework of its administrative institutions. Conscious of the necessity of constructing, as a first step, a broad and solid base upon which the pillars of

that mighty structure could subsequently be raised; fully aware that upon these pillars, when firmly established, the dome, the final unit crowning the entire edifice, must eventually rest..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 330

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Given Constitutional (Legal) Basis by Declaration of Trust and By Laws

"The initial step taken in that direction was the drafting and adoption of a Bahá'í National constitution, first framed and promulgated by the elected representatives of the American Bahá'í Community in 1927, the text of which has since, with slight variations suited to national requirements, been translated into Arabic, German and Persian, and constitutes, at the present time, the charter of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, of the British Isles, of Germany, of Persia, of Iraq, of India and Burma, of Egypt and the Súdán and of Australia and New Zealand. heralding the formulation of the constitution of the future Bahá'í World Community; submitted for the consideration of all local Assemblies and ratified by the entire body of the recognized believers in countries possessing national Assemblies, this national constitution has been supplemented by a similar document, containing the by-laws of Bahá'í local assemblies, first drafted by the New York Bahá'í community in November, 1931, and accepted as a pattern for all local Bahá'í constitutions. The text of this national constitution comprises a Declaration of Trust, whose articles set forth the character and objects of the national Bahá'í community, establish the functions, designate the central office, and describe the official seal, of the body of its elected representatives, as well as a set of by-laws which define the status, the mode of election, the powers and duties of both local and national Assemblies, describe the relation of the National Assembly to the International House of Justice as well as to local Assemblies and individual believers, outline the rights and obligations of the National Convention and its relation to the National Assembly, disclose the character of Bahá'í elections, and lay down the requirements of voting membership in all Bahá'í communities."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 335

In a letter (Feb. 27, 1929) to the National Spiritual Assembly, concerning the situation of the Bahá'ís in Egypt, the Guardian wrote:

"I have insisted that the provisions of their constitution should, in all its details, conform to the text of the Declaration of Trust and By-laws which you have established, endeavoring thereby to preserve the uniformity which I feel is essential in all Bahá'í National Constitutions."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 11

"The Declaration of Trust... marks yet another milestone on the road of progress along which you are patiently and determinedly advancing. Clear and concise in its wording, sound in principle, and complete in its affirmations of the fundamentals of Bahá'í administration, it stands in its final form as a worthy and faithful exposition of the constitutional basis of Bahá'í communities in every land, foreshadowing the final emergence of the world Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future. This document, when correlated and

combined with the set of by-laws...will serve as a pattern to every National Bahá'í Assembly, be it in the East or in the West, which aspires to conform, pending the formation of the First Universal House of Justice, with the spirit and letter of the world-order ushered in by Bahá'u'lláh."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, pp. 134-135

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I. CHARACTERIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Divine in Origin and Authority.....Universal in Scope

"...Bahá'u'lláh... has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these He, as well as `Abdu'l-Bahá after Him, has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy. These are destined to be a pattern for future society, a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth. Not only have they revealed all the directions required for the practical realization of those ideals which the Prophets of God have visualized, and which from time immemorial have inflamed the imagination of seers and poets in every age. They have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world.

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 19-20

"Bahá'u'lláh in His Book of Aqdas, and later `Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will--a document which confirms, supplements, and correlates the provisions of the Aqdas--have set forth in their entirety those essential elements for the constitution of the world Bahá'í Commonwealth"

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 19

"...the Cause associated with the name of Bahá'u'lláh feeds itself upon those hidden springs of celestial strength which no force of human personality, whatever its glamour, can replace;...its reliance is solely upon that mystic Source with which no worldly advantage, be it wealth, fame, or learning can compare; that it propagates itself by ways mysterious and utterly at variance with the standards accepted by the generality of mankind, will, if not already apparent, become increasingly manifest as it forges ahead towards fresh conquests in its struggle for the spiritual regeneration of mankind...."

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 51-52

"...this Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Bahá'u'lláh has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances. Therein lies the secret of

its strength, its fundamental distinction, and the guarantee against disintegration and schism. Nowhere in the sacred scriptures of any of the world's religious systems, nor even in the writings of the Inaugurator of the Bábí Dispensation, do we find any provisions establishing a covenant or providing for an administrative order that can compare in scope and authority with those that lie at the very basis of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 145

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Its Broader Aspects and Wider Implications

"...The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day. The Source from which it derives its inspiration is no one less than Bahá'u'lláh Himself. Its shield and defender are the embattled hosts of the Abhá Kingdom. Its seed is the blood of no less than twenty thousand martyrs who have offered up their lives that it may be born and flourish. The axis round which its institutions revolve are the authentic provisions of the Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá. Its guiding principles are the truths which He Who is the unerring Interpreter of the teachings of our Faith has so clearly enunciated in His public addresses throughout the West. The laws that govern its operation and limit its functions are those which have been expressly ordained in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The seat round which its spiritual, its humanitarian and administrative activities will cluster are the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its Dependencies. The pillars that sustain its authority and buttress its structure are the twin institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice. The central, the underlying aim which animates it is the establishment of the New World Order as adumbrated by Bahá'u'lláh. The methods it employs, the standard it inculcates, incline it to neither East nor West, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither rich nor poor, neither white nor colored. Its watchword is the unification of the human race; its standard the "Most Great Peace"; its consummation the advent of that golden millennium--the Day when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the Kingdom of God Himself, the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh.

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 156-157

"...This Administrative Order, as it expands and consolidates itself, will ... demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 144

Its Vital Necessity

"...the Spirit breathed by Bahá'u'lláh upon the world, and which is manifesting itself with varying degrees of intensity through the efforts consciously displayed by His avowed supporters and indirectly through certain humanitarian organizations, can never permeate and exercise an abiding influence upon mankind unless and until it incarnates itself in a visible Order, which would bear His name, wholly identify itself with His principles, and function in conformity with His laws..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 19

Distinguishing Features and Characteristics

"...Unlike the Dispensation of Christ, unlike the Dispensation of Muhammad, unlike all the Dispensations of the past, the apostles of Bahá'u'lláh in every land, wherever they labor and toil, have before them in clear, in unequivocal and emphatic language, all the laws, the regulations, the principles, the institutions, the guidance, they require for the prosecution and consummation of their task. Both in the administrative provisions of the Bahá'í Dispensation, and in the matter of succession, as embodied in the twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh can summon to their aid such irrefutable evidences of Divine Guidance that none can resist, that none can belittle or ignore. Therein lies the distinguishing feature of the Bahá'í Revelation. Therein lies the strength of the unity of the Faith, of the validity of a Revelation that claims not to destroy or belittle previous Revelations, but to connect, unify, and fulfill them..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 21-22

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"A word should now be said regarding the theory on which this Administrative Order is based and the principle that must govern the operation of its chief institutions. It would be utterly misleading to attempt a comparison between this unique, this divinely-conceived Order and any of the diverse systems which the minds of men, at various periods of their history, have contrived for the government of human institutions. Such an attempt would in itself betray a lack of complete appreciation of the excellence of the handiwork of its great Author. How could it be otherwise when we remember that this Order constitutes the very pattern of that divine civilization which the almighty Law of Bahá'u'lláh is designed to establish upon earth? The divers and ever-shifting systems of human polity, whether past or present, whether originating in the East or in the West, offer no adequate criterion wherewith to estimate the potency of its hidden virtues or to appraise the solidity of its foundations."

"The Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, of which this vast Administrative Order is the sole framework, is, both in theory and practice, not only unique in the entire history of political institutions, but can find no parallel in the annals of any of the world's recognized religious systems. No form of democratic government; no system of autocracy or of dictatorship, whether monarchical or republican; no intermediary scheme of a purely aristocratic order; nor even any of the recognized types of theocracy, whether it be the Hebrew Commonwealth, or the various Christian ecclesiastical organizations, or the Imámate or the Caliphate in Islám--none of these can be identified or be said to conform with the Administrative Order which the master-hand of its perfect Architect has fashioned."

"This new-born Administrative Order incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, without being in any sense a mere replica of any one of them, and

without introducing within its machinery any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess. It blends and harmonizes, as no government fashioned by mortal hands has as yet accomplished, the salutary truths which each of these systems undoubtedly contains without vitiating the integrity of those God-given verities on which it is ultimately founded."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 152-153

"...the distinguishing character of the Bahá'í Revelation does not solely consist in the completeness and unquestionable validity of the Dispensation which the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá have established. Its excellence lies also in the fact that those elements which in past Dispensations have, without the least authority from their Founders, been a source of corruption and of incalculable harm to the Faith of God, have been strictly excluded by the clear text of Bahá'u'lláh's writings..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 22

"The Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh must in no wise be regarded as purely democratic in character inasmuch as the basic assumption which requires all democracies to depend fundamentally upon getting their mandate from the people is altogether lacking in this Dispensation. In the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, in the enactment of the legislation necessary to supplement the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas,

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the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should be borne in mind, are not, as Bahá'u'lláh's utterances clearly imply, responsible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them. They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience. They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision. "God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth," is Bahá'u'lláh's incontrovertible assurance. They, and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation. Moreover, he who symbolizes the hereditary principle in this Dispensation has been made the interpreter of the words of its Author, and ceases consequently, by virtue of the actual authority vested in him, to be the figurehead invariably associated with the prevailing systems of constitutional monarchies."

"Nor can the Bahá'í Administrative Order be dismissed as a hard and rigid system of unmitigated autocracy or as an idle imitation of any form of absolutistic ecclesiastical government, whether it be the Papacy, the Imámate or any other similar institution, for the obvious reason that upon the international elected representatives of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the Bahá'í writings. Neither the Guardian of the Faith nor any

institution apart from the International House of Justice can ever usurp this vital and essential power or encroach upon that sacred right. The abolition of professional priesthood with its accompanying sacraments of baptism, of communion and of confession of sins, the laws requiring the election by universal suffrage of all local, national, and international Houses of Justice, the total absence of episcopal authority with its attendant privileges, corruptions and bureaucratic tendencies, are further evidences of the non-autocratic character of the Bahá'í Administrative Order and of its inclination to democratic methods in the administration of its affairs."

"Nor is this Order identified with the name of Bahá'u'lláh to be confused with any system of purely aristocratic government in view of the fact that it upholds, on the one hand, the hereditary principle and entrusts the Guardian of the Faith with the obligation of interpreting its teachings, and provides, on the other, for the free and direct election from among the mass of the faithful of the body that constitutes its highest legislative organ.

"Whereas this Administrative Order cannot be said to have been modeled after any of these recognized systems of government, it nevertheless embodies, reconciles and assimilates within its framework such wholesome elements as are to be found in each one of them. The hereditary authority which the Guardian is called upon to exercise, the vital and essential functions which the Universal House of Justice discharges, the specific provisions requiring its democratic election by the representatives of the faithful--these combine to demonstrate the truth that this divinely revealed Order,

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which can never be identified with any of the standard types of government referred to by Aristotle in his works, embodies and blends with the spiritual verities on which it is based the beneficent elements which are to be found in each one of them. The admitted evils inherent in each of these systems being rigidly and permanently excluded, this unique Order, however long it may endure and however extensive its ramifications, cannot ever degenerate into any form of despotism, of oligarchy, or of demagoguery which must sooner or later corrupt the machinery of all man-made and essentially defective political institutions."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 153-154

Its Root Principles

(1) The spirit and the instrumentality (the Administrative Order) function with complete reciprocity.

(2) The spirit and the instrumentality (the Administrative Order) are indispensable to each other.

(3) The right of the individual to self-expression.

"Let us also remember that at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 63

(4) The Bahá'í Administrative Order is not an economic but a divine system.

"...The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as

it consists of the application of spiritual principles to our present day economic system. Bahá'u'lláh has given us a few basic principles which should guide future Bahá'í economists in establishing such institutions as will adjust the economic relationships of the world."

Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) p.22

(5) Its foundation is the principle of consultation.

"Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 63

(6) "...the administration of the Cause is to be conceived as an instrument and not a substitute for the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh...it should be regarded as a channel through which His promised blessings may flow, that it should guard against such rigidity as would clog and fetter the liberating forces released by His Revelation..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 9

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Structure

"...Conscious of the necessity of constructing, as a first step, a broad and solid base upon which the pillars of that mighty structure could subsequently be raised; fully aware that upon these pillars, when firmly established, the dome, the final unit crowning the entire edifice, must eventually rest;... the pioneer builders of a divinely-conceived Order undertook, in complete unison, and despite the great diversity in their outlook, customs and languages, the double task of establishing and of consolidating their local councils, elected by the rank and file of the believers, and designed to direct, coordinate and extend the activities of the followers of a far-flung Faith."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 330

"...the twin pillars that support this mighty Administrative Structure--the institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice..."

"It should be stated, at the very outset, in clear and unambiguous language, that these twin institutions of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh should be regarded as divine in origin, essential in their functions and complementary in their aim and purpose. Their common, their fundamental object is to insure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings. Acting in conjunction with each other these two inseparable institutions administer its affairs, coordinate its activities, promote its interests, execute its laws and defend its subsidiary institutions. Severally, each operates within a clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction; each is equipped with its own attendant institutions--instruments designed for the effective discharge of its particular responsibilities and duties."

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 147-148

"The sacred and youthful branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice, to be universally elected and established, are

both under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled against God; whoso opposeth him hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them hath contended with God..."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Will and Testament., (Complete Text) p. 11, Bahá'í Administration, p. 7

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II. LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

`Abdu'l-Bahá: "These Spiritual Assemblies are aided by the Spirit of God. Their defender is `Abdu'l-Bahá. Over them He spreadeth His Wings. What bounty is there greater than this?" "These Spiritual Assemblies," He, in that same Tablet has declared, "are shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and the lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From them the spirit of life streameth in every direction. They, indeed, are the potent sources of the progress of man, at all times and under all conditions."

-- Cited in God Passes By, p. 332

"The various Assemblies, local and national, constitute today the bedrock upon the strength of which the Universal House is in future to be firmly established and raised..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 63

"The Lord hath ordained," is Bahá'u'lláh's injunction in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas, "that in every city a House of Justice be established, wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá (9) [Ed. - now online as par. 30], and should it exceed this number, it doth not matter. It behoveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men, and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together, and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly. Thus hath the Lord your God commanded you. Beware lest ye put away that which is clearly revealed in his Tablet. Fear God, O ye that perceive."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas [Ed. - now online here], cited in Bahá'í Administration, p. 21 and God Passes By, pp. 331-332

"...Designated as "Spiritual Assemblies"--an appellation that must in the course of time be replaced by their permanent and more descriptive title of "Houses of Justice," bestowed upon them by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation; instituted, without any exception, in every city, town and village where nine or more adult believers are resident; annually and directly elected, on the first day of the greatest Bahá'í Festival by all adult believers, men and women alike; invested with an authority rendering them unanswerable for their acts and decisions to those who elect them..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 331

Future Importance

"...The importance, nay the absolute necessity of these local Assemblies is manifest when we realize that in the days to come they will evolve into the local Houses of Justice, and at present provide the firm foundation on which the structure of the Master's Will is to be reared in future."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 37

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Spiritual Requisites of Members

"The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them. In this day, assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity. Obedience unto them is essential and obligatory. The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. If after discussion, a decision be carried unanimously, well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá cited in Bahá'í Administration, pp. 21-22

Spiritual Responsibilities

"...It behooveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly. Thus hath the Lord your God commanded you. Beware lest ye put away that which is clearly revealed in His Tablet. Fear God, O ye that perceive."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas [Ed. - now online as par. 30], cited in Bahá'í Administration, p. 21

"...The members of these Assemblies, on their part, must disregard utterly their own likes and dislikes, their personal interests and inclinations, and concentrate their minds upon those measures that will conduce to the welfare and happiness of the Bahá'í Community and promote the common weal."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 41

"The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught. The second condition:--They must when coming together turn

their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honored

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members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority. It is again not permitted that any one of the honored members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously, though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced. In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness.... If this be so regarded, that assembly shall be of God, but otherwise it shall lead to coolness and alienation that proceed from the Evil One."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá cited in Bahá'í Administration, p. 22

"They should never be led to suppose that they are the central ornaments of the body of the Cause, intrinsically superior to others in capacity or merit, and sole promoters of its teachings and principles. They should approach their task with extreme humility, and endeavor, by their open-mindedness, their high sense of justice and duty, their candor, their modesty, their entire devotion to the welfare and interests of the friends, the Cause, and humanity, to win, not only the confidence and the genuine support and respect of those whom they serve, but also their esteem and real affection. They must, at all times, avoid the spirit of exclusiveness, the atmosphere of secrecy, free themselves from a domineering attitude, and banish all forms of prejudice and passion from their deliberations. They should, within the limits of wise discretion, take the friends into their confidence, acquaint them with their plans, share with them their problems and anxieties, and seek their advice and counsel. And, when they are called upon to arrive at a certain decision, they should, after dispassionate, anxious and cordial consultation, turn to God in prayer, and with earnestness and conviction and courage record their vote and abide by the voice of the majority, which we are told by our Master to be the voice of truth, never to be challenged, and always to be whole-heartedly enforced. To this voice the friends must heartily respond, and regard it as the only means that can insure the protection and advancement of the Cause."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 64

"When confronted with evidences of unhappiness, whether directed against the Assembly or against members of the community, the Spiritual Assembly should realize that its relationship to the believers is not merely a formal constitutional body also that of a spiritual institution called upon to manifest the attributes of courtesy, patience and loving insight. Many

conditions are not to be remedied by the exercise of power and authority but rather by a sympathetic understanding of the sources of the difficulty in the hearts of the friends. As `Abdu'l-Bahá has explained, some of the people are children and must be trained, some are ignorant and must be educated, some are sick and must be healed. Where, however, the problem is not of this order but represents flagrant disobedience and disloyalty to the Cause itself, in that case the Assembly should consult with the National Spiritual Assembly concerning the necessity for disciplinary action."

N.S.A. of U.S., in Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) p.43
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Authority

They are "invested with an authority rendering them unanswerable for their acts and decisions to those who elect them."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 331

"It is incumbent upon every one not to take any step without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and they must assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding and be submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered and well arranged. Otherwise every person will act independently and after his own judgment, will follow his own desire, and do harm to the Cause."

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá cited in Bahá'í Administration, p. 21

"Assemblies and not individuals constitute the bedrock on which the Administration is built. Everything else must be subordinated to and be made to serve and advance the interests of these elected custodians and promoters of the Laws of Bahá'u'lláh."

Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í News, No. 80, p. 6

Election

"And, now that this all-important Work may suffer no neglect, but rather function vigorously and continuously in every part of the Bahá'í world; that the unity of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh may remain secure and inviolate, it is of the utmost importance that in accordance with the explicit text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, in every locality, be it city or hamlet, where the number of adult (21 years and above) declared believers exceeds nine, a local "Spiritual Assembly" be forthwith established. To it all local matters pertaining to the Cause must be directly and immediately referred for full consultation and decision..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 37

Contrary to the ways of the world, Bahá'í elections are approached in a spirit of prayer without preliminary electioneering or nominating of candidates. Before the ballots are cast, prayers should be read and all participating ask for guidance in selecting those best fitted to serve. In this regard the Guardian wrote:

"...Let us recall His explicit and often-repeated assurances that every Assembly elected in that rarefied atmosphere of selflessness and detachment is, in truth, appointed of God, that its verdict is truly inspired, that one and all should submit to its decision unreservedly and with cheerfulness."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 65

"...the elector ... is called upon to vote for none but those whom prayer and reflection have inspired him to uphold. Moreover, the practice of nomination, so detrimental to the atmosphere of a silent and prayerful election, is viewed with mistrust inasmuch as it gives the right to the majority of a body that, in itself under the present circumstances, often constitutes a minority of all the elected delegates, to deny that God-given right of every elector to vote only in favor of those who he is conscientiously convinced are the most worthy candidates. Should this simple system be provisionally adopted, it would safeguard the spiritual principle of the unfettered freedom of the voter, who will thus preserve intact the sanctity of the choice he first made."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 136

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"These local Spiritual Assemblies will have to be elected directly by the friends, and every declared believer of 21 years and above, far from standing aloof and assuming an indifferent or independent attitude, should regard it his sacred duty to take part conscientiously and diligently, in the election, the consolidation and the efficient working of his own local Assembly."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 39

"In order to avoid division and disruption, that the Cause may not fall a prey to conflicting interpretations, and lose thereby its purity and pristine vigor, that its affairs may be conducted with efficiency and promptness, it is necessary that every one should conscientiously take an active part in the election of these Assemblies, abide by their decisions, enforce their decree, and cooperate with them wholeheartedly in their task of stimulating the growth of the Movement throughout all regions..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 41

"The various Assemblies, local and national, constitute today the bedrock upon the strength of which the Universal House is in future to be firmly established and raised. Not until these function vigorously and harmoniously can the hope for the termination of this period of transition be realized. It devolves upon us whose dearest wish is to see the Cause enter upon that promised era of universal recognition and world achievements, to do all in our power to consolidate the foundations of these Assemblies, promoting at the same time a fuller understanding of their purpose and more harmonious cooperation for their maintenance and success."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 63

When the requisite conditions exist the local group of Bahá'ís is obligated to establish a Spiritual Assembly. This is not an optional matter. There is only one date when a local Spiritual Assembly can be formed and that is on April 21 of any year. As the Bahá'í calendar consists of days which begin and end at sunset rather than midnight, the time, the time to form an Assembly is after sunset on April 20 and before sunset on April 21.

Therefore, on April 21 a Spiritual Assembly Bahá'í Community should be established as follows:

(1) Where there are exactly nine declared believers, these believers should form themselves into an assembly by mutual agreement and should elect by secret

ballot by majority vote* the Spiritual Assembly. The nine receiving the highest number of votes constitute this body.

*Plurality is "an excess of votes over those for any other candidate for the same office" (Webster's Dictionary), no matter how scattered; majority is "the number greater than half."

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On Dissolution and Formation of Local Assemblies

(3) "In connection with your Assembly's two actions regarding the formation and dissolution of Spiritual Assemblies: The Guardian approves of your first action, which he understands is only for this last year of the first Bahá'í Century, as, of course, in the future Assemblies will be formed only during the month of April. As to the second action, however, any Assembly which is dissolved must immediately report to the national secretary, who must always keep an up to date list of Assemblies. Any dissolved Assembly cannot be reconstituted until the time of election in April. This is the general principle which must be followed in the future. In this last year of the Century, however, any Assembly that is dissolved may be reconstituted as soon as the number of believers reverts to nine again."

Shoghi Effendi, through his Secretary, to the National Spiritual Assembly, April 13, 1944 (Bahá'í News, No. 171, p.3).

Election of Officers

The member of the newly elected Assembly who receives the highest number of votes will call the meeting of the Assembly for the Election of officers.

(Bahá'í Community, (compiled by N.S.A., 1947) p.37

"The officers of the Spiritual Assembly shall consist of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, and such other officers as may be found necessary for the proper conduct of its affairs. The officers shall be elected by a majority vote of the entire membership of the Assembly taken by secret ballot."

By-Laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly, Art. VII.

Duties of Officers of Spiritual Assemblies

(1) The duty of the Chairman is to direct the Secretary when to call the meeting; to preside at the Assembly meetings and conduct and orderly discussion and vote. The Chairman has the same obligation and right to vote on each issue as the other Assembly members but should not at any time take upon himself dictatorial authority in any form..

(2) The Vice-Chairman acts as Chairman and assumes his duties in the event the Chairman is out of town or unable to serve.

(3) The Secretary takes the "Minutes" and reads them back to the Assembly for approval at each subsequent meeting; records the recommendations of the Community during the consultation period of the Feasts; carries on the correspondence of the Assembly; receives the mail and presents all these communications to the Assembly and its meetings. He will also present to the Community, at the Feast gatherings, certain correspondence as directed by the Assembly.

(4) The Treasurer is responsible for the keeping of the local Fund and for rendering his report at each local Assembly meeting and every Feast.
National Teaching Committee (U.S.), Bulletin 101.

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Calling of Meetings

"A meeting of the Spiritual Assembly is valid only when it has been duly called, that is, when each and every member has been informed of the time and place. The general practice is for the Assembly to decide upon some regular time and place for its meetings throughout the Bahá'í year, and this decision when recorded in the Minutes is sufficient notice to the members. When the regular schedule cannot be followed, or the need arises for a special meeting, the Secretary, on request by the Chairman or any three members of the Spiritual Assembly, should send due notice to all members."

N.S.A., Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) p.37

Suggested Order of Business of Assembly Meetings (Bahá'í Procedure., 37)

Opening prayer.

Reading and approval of Minutes of previous meeting.

Presentation by Secretary of letters received by the Assembly since its last meeting and of any and all recommendations duly adopted by the community

at the previous Nineteen Day Feast.

Report of the Treasurer.

Report of the various committees.

Unfinished business.

New business, including conferences with members of the Community and with applicants for enrollment as members of the Community.

Closing prayer.

Functions

"The various functions of the local Spiritual Assembly, and its nature as a constitutional body, are duly set forth in Article VII of the By-Laws of the National Assembly, and are more definitely defined in the By-Laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly, approved by the National Spiritual Assembly and recommended by the Guardian. Each local Spiritual Assembly, and all members of the local Bahá'í Community, shall be guided and controlled by the provisions of those By-Laws."

N.S.A., Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) pp.36-37

These functions are threefold: executive, legislative and judicial.

The local Spiritual Assemblies are "invested with an authority rendering them unanswerable for their acts and decisions to those who elect them; solemnly pledged to follow, under all conditions, the dictates of the "Most Great Justice" that can alone usher in the reign of the "Most Great Peace" which Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed and must ultimately establish; charged with the responsibility of promoting at all times the best interests of the communities

within their jurisdiction, of familiarizing them with their

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plans and activities and of inviting them to offer any recommendations they might wish to make; cognizant of their no less vital task of demonstrating, through association with all liberal and humanitarian movements, the universality and comprehensiveness of their Faith; dissociated entirely from all sectarian organizations, whether religious or secular; assisted by committees annually appointed by, and directly responsible to, them, to each of which a particular branch of Bahá'í activity is assigned for study and action; supported by local funds to which all believers voluntarily contribute..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 331

"The matter of Teaching, its direction, its ways and means, its extension, its consolidation, essential as they are to the interests of the Cause, constitute by no means the only issue which should receive the full attention of these Assemblies. A careful study of Bahá'u'lláh's and `Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets will reveal that other duties, no less vital to the interests of the Cause, devolve upon the elected representatives of the friends in every locality.

"It is incumbent upon them to be vigilant and cautious, discreet and watchful, and protect at all times the Temple of the Cause from the dart of the mischief-maker and the onslaught of the enemy.

"They must endeavor to promote amity and concord amongst the friends, efface every lingering trace of distrust, coolness and estrangement from every heart, and secure in its stead an active and whole-hearted cooperation for the service of the Cause.

"They must do their utmost to extend at all times the helping hand to the poor, the sick, the disabled, the orphan, the widow, irrespective of color, caste and creed.

"They must promote by every means in their power the material as well as the spiritual enlightenment of youth, the means for the education of children, institute, whenever possible, Bahá'í educational institutions, organize and supervise their work and provide the best means for their progress and development.

.....

"They must undertake the arrangement of the regular meetings of the friends, the feasts and the anniversaries, as well as the special gatherings designed to serve and promote the social, intellectual and spiritual interests of their fellow-men.

"They must supervise in these days when the Cause is still in its infancy all Bahá'í publications and translations, and provide in general for a dignified and accurate presentation of all Bahá'í literature and its distribution to the general public."

-- Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 37-38

Consultation with members of the Community on things of a personal nature should be brought the Spiritual Assembly and not to the Nineteen Day Feast. Bahá'í Community, pp. 31-32

"During such consultation with individual believers, the Assembly should

observe the following principles; the impartiality of each of its members with respect to all matters under discussion; the freedom of the individual Bahá'í to express his views, feelings and recommendations on any matter affecting the interests of the Cause, the confidential character of this consultation and the principle that the Spiritual Assembly does not adopt any resolution, or make any final decision, until the party or parties have withdrawn from the meetings."

N.S.A., Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) p.43

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Committees

"...In whatsoever locality the Cause has sufficiently expanded, and in order to insure efficiency and avoid confusion, each of these manifold functions will have to be referred to a special Committee, responsible to that Assembly, elected by it from among the friends in that locality, and upon whose work the Assembly will have to exercise constant and general supervision."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 39

"...the whole machinery of assemblies, of committees and conventions is to be regarded as a means, and not an end in itself; that they will rise or fall according to their capacity to further the interests, to coordinate the activities, to apply the principles, to embody the ideals and execute the purpose of the Bahá'í Faith..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 9

"Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 63

Admission of New Believers

"The Spiritual Assembly, in the fulfillment of its obligations and responsibilities under this Corporation, shall have exclusive jurisdiction and authority over all local activities and affairs of the Bahá'í community...It shall be charged with the recognition of all applicants requesting membership in the local Bahá'í community..."

By-Laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly, Art. III.

"...the principle factors that must be taken into consideration before deciding whether a person may be regarded a true believer or not"

are given by the Guardian, as follows:

Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í Cause, as set forth in `Abdu'l-Bahá's Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Bahá'í administration throughout the world--these I conceive to be the fundamental and primary considerations that must be fairly, discreetly and thoughtfully ascertained before reaching such a vital decision. Any attempt at further analysis and elucidation will, I fear, land us in barren discussions and even grave controversies that would prove not only futile but even

detrimental to the best interests of a growing Cause. I would therefore strongly urge those who are called upon to make such a decision to approach this highly involved and ever-recurring problem with the spirit of humble prayer, and earnest consultation, and to refrain from drawing rigidly the line of demarcation except on such occasions when the interests of the Cause absolutely demand it.

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 90

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"...Upon the local Assemblies, whose special function and high privilege is to facilitate the admission of new believers into the community, and thereby stimulate the infusion of fresh blood into its organic institutions, a duty no less binding in character devolves. To them I wish particularly to appeal, at this present hour, when the call of God is being raised throughout the length and breadth of both continents in the New World, to desist from insisting too rigidly on the minor observances and beliefs, which might prove a stumbling block in the way of any sincere applicant, whose eager desire is to enlist under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh. While conscientiously adhering to the fundamental qualifications already laid down, the members of each and every Assembly should endeavor, by their patience, their love, their tact and wisdom to nurse, subsequent to his admission, the new-comer into Bahá'í maturity, and win him over gradually to the unreserved acceptance of whatever has been ordained in the teachings..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America, p. 11

"...Allegiance to the Faith cannot be partial and half-hearted. Either we should accept the Cause without any qualification whatever, or cease calling ourselves Bahá'ís. The new believers should be made to realize that it is not sufficient for them to accept some aspects of the teachings and reject those which cannot suit their mentality in order to become fully recognized and active followers of the Faith. In this way all sorts of misunderstandings will vanish and the organic unity of the Cause will be preserved."

-- Shoghi Effendi, cited in Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) p.18

"...The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Day Spring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof, hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behoveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration."

-- Bahá'u'lláh, Introductory Words to Kitáb-i-Aqdas [Ed. - now online as par. 1], cited in Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 330-331
Local Bahá'í Fund

"The institution of the local Fund, in every center where the administrative

structure of the Faith has been erected, should be assiduously developed."
Shoghi Effendi, *Challenging Requirements* (1947), p. 9 [Ed. - see p. 11 in an
online version]

"It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of
Bahá'u'lláh who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and
generously for the increase of that Fund.

-- Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 41-42

Meaning of Bahá'í Feasts

"Whenever such an entertainment [Feast of Remembrance] is arranged through
spiritual sentiments, shining faces and merciful hearts, it is a "Lord's
Supper'. For this

brilliancy of the Kingdom of 'Abhá will shine and the spirituality of
'Abdu'l-Bahá become manifest. This is that 'divine table' (or food) of which
mention is made in

the prophecies: 'On that day they shall gather together at the divine table';
and 'people shall come from the East and West and arrive in His Kingdom.'"

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. II, pp. 421-422.

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"This Feast was established by His Highness the Báb, to occur once in nineteen
days. Likewise, the Blessed Perfection hath commanded, encouraged and
reiterated it. Therefore, it hath the utmost importance. Undoubtedly you must
give the greatest attention to its establishment and raise it to the highest
point of importance, so that it may become continual and constant. The
believers of God must assemble and associate with each other in the utmost
love, joy and fragrance. They must conduct themselves (in these Feasts) with
the greatest dignity and consideration, chant divine verses, peruse instructive
articles, read the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, encourage and inspire each other
with love for the whole human race, invoke God with perfect joy and fragrance,
sing the verses, glorifications and praises of the Self-subsistent Lord and
deliver eloquent speeches. The owner of the house must personally serve the
beloved ones. He must seek after the comfort of all and with the utmost
humility he must show forth kindness to everyone. If the Feast is arranged in
this manner and in the way mentioned, that supper is the "Lord's Supper', for
the result is the same result and the effect is the same effect."

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. II, pp. 468-469.

Nineteen Day Feast

"From Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 'The Nineteen Day Feast was inaugurated by the
Báb and ratified by Bahá'u'lláh, in His Holy Book, the Aqdas, so that people
may gather together and outwardly show fellowship and love, that the Divine
mysteries may be disclosed. The object is concord, that through this fellowship
hearts may become perfectly united, and reciprocity and mutual helpfulness be
established. Because the members of the world of humanity are unable to exist
without being banded together, cooperation and helpfulness is the basis of
human society. Without the realization of these great principles no great
movement is pressed forward.'"

'Abdu'l-Bahá, London, cited in *Bahá'í News*, No. 33)

"The Nineteen Day Feast has been described by the Guardian as the foundation of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. It has to be conducted according to the following program: the first part, entirely spiritual in character, is devoted to readings from Bahá'í Sacred Writings; the second part consists of general consultation on the affairs of the Cause. The third part is the material feast and social meeting of all the believers, and should maintain the spiritual nature of the Feast.

"Bahá'ís should regard this Feast as the very heart of their spiritual activity, their participation in the mystery of the Holy Utterance, their steadfast unity with another in a universality raised high above the limitations of race, class, nationality, sect, and personality, and their privilege of contributing to the power of the Cause in the realm of collective action."

N.S.A., Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) p.40 (Bahá'í Community, pp. 28-29).

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"A matter of vital importance at this meeting is consideration of national and international Bahá'í affairs, to strengthen the capacity of the community to cooperate in promotion of the larger Bahá'í interests and to deepen the understanding of all believers concerning the relation of the local community to the Bahá'í World Community...

"Upon each member of the community lies the obligation to make his or her utmost contribution to the consultation, the ideal being a gathering of Bahá'ís inspired with one spirit and concentrating upon the one aim to further the interests of the Faith."

N.S.A., Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) p.41 (Bahá'í Community, p. 30).

"Individual Bahá'ís are to find in the Nineteen Day Feast the channel through which to make suggestions and recommendations to the National Spiritual Assembly. These recommendations are offered first to the local community [during the consultation period of the Feast], and when adopted by the community come before the local Assembly, which then may in its discretion forward the recommendation to the National Spiritual Assembly accompanied by its own considered view...

"The local Bahá'í community may adopt by majority vote any resolution which it wishes collectively to record as its advice and recommendation to the [local] Spiritual Assembly...

"The Secretary of the Assembly records each resolution adopted by the community, as well as the various suggestions advanced during the meeting, in order to report these to the Spiritual Assembly for its consideration. Whatever action the Assembly takes is to be reported at a later Nineteen Day Feast."

N.S.A., Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) pp.41-42 (Bahá'í Community, pp. 30-31).

"Only members of the Bahá'í community and visiting Bahá'ís, including

declared youth members, may be present.

N.S.A., Bahá'í Community, p. 29.

"Attendance at Nineteen Day Feasts is not obligatory but very important, and every believer should consider it a duty and a privilege to be present on such occasions."

Letter to an American believer from The Guardian through his secretary,
December 15, 1947.

Consultation

"The principle of consultation, which constitutes one of the basic laws of the Administration, should be applied to all Bahá'í activities which affect the collective interests of the Faith for it is through cooperation and continued exchange of thoughts and views that the Cause can best safeguard and foster its interests. Individual initiative, personal ability and resourcefulness, though indispensable are, unless supported and enriched by the collective experience and wisdom of the group, utterly incapable of achieving such a tremendous task."

Shoghi Effendi., Bahá'í News, Nov. 1933, p. 3.

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"Shoghi Effendi firmly believes that consultation must be maintained between the N.S.A. and the entire body of the believers, and that such consultation, while the Convention is not in session, can best be maintained through the agency of the local Assemblies, one of whose essential functions is to act as intermediaries between the local communities and their national representatives. The main purpose of the Nineteen Day Feasts is to enable individual believers to offer any suggestions to the local Assembly which in its turn will pass it to the N.S.A.. The local Assembly is, therefore, the proper medium through which local Bahá'í communities can communicate with the body of the national representatives."

Shoghi Effendi., Bahá'í Procedure compiled by N.S.A (out of print) pp.11-12

"The institution of the Nineteen Day Feast provides the recognized and regular consultation on the part of the Community, and for consultation between the Spiritual

Assembly and the members of the Community. The conduct of the period of consultation at the Nineteen Day Feasts is a vital function of each Spiritual Assembly."

Bahá'í Community, p. 27.

"Matters of personal nature should be brought to the Spiritual Assembly and not the Community at the Nineteen Day Feast..."

Bahá'í Community, pp. 31-32.

"Let us also remember that at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views..."

"Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true

Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, pp. 63-64

Calendar

"The Báb, the Primal Point of a new creation, brought humanity into a new division of time in calendar of nineteen months. All through our past history the months of the year and the days of the week have borne the names of pagan feasts and Roman holidays. The Báb swept these ancient landmarks away and replaced them by the Qualities of: Splendor, Glory, Beauty, Grandeur, Light, Mercy, Perfection, Names, Might, Will, Knowledge, Power, Speech, Questions, Honor, Sovereignty, Dominion, and Loftiness. Meditating upon these sublime attributes, man is enabled to gaze beyond the curve of time, wherein the swing and change of planetary movement exists, to the eternal qualities that stabilize the soul. As the seasons return with their quaternary beauty, as the seed sacrifices to the mystery of the harvest, we see reflected in the mirror of the physical world the spiritual

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springtime when the Word of God is planted in the heart of man by the coming of God's Messengers.

"The cycle of the year ends with a period of nineteen days of fasting to prepare for the coming of Naw-Ruz, the New Year. When both the physical and spiritual beauty blend and we advance to another year in which to mature the soul and prepare for the everlasting Kingdom."

From Note Z, to Traveller's Narrative, p. 421

"The Bahá'í year consists of 19 months of 19 each (i.e., 361 days), with the addition of certain 'intercalary days' (four in ordinary and five in leap years) between the eighteenth and nineteenth months in order to adjust the calendar to the solar year, The Báb named the months after the attributes of God. The Bahá'í New Year, like the Persian New Year, is astronomically fixed, commencing at the March Equinox (March 21), and the Bahá'í era commences with the year of the Báb's declaration (i.e., 1844 A.D. 1260 A.H.).

"In the not far distant future it will be necessary that all peoples in the world agree on a common calendar.

"It seems, therefore, fitting that the new age of unity should have a new calendar free from the objections and associations which make each of the older calendars unacceptable to large sections of the world's population, and it is difficult to see how any other arrangement could exceed in simplicity and convenience that proposed by the Báb."

Bahá'í World, Vol. X, p.425

Bahá'í Feasts, Anniversaries and Days of Fasting (from Bahá'í World, Vol. X)

Feast of Ridván (Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh) April 21 - May 2, 1863

Feast of Naw-Ruz (Bahá'í New Year), March 21

Declaration of the Báb, May 23, 1844

Day of the Covenant, November 26
 Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, November 12, 1817
 Birth of the Báb, October 20, 1819
 Birth of `Abdu'l-Bahá, May 23, 1844
 Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, May 29, 1892
 Martyrdom of the Báb, July 9, 1850
 Ascension of `Abdu'l-Bahá, November 28, 1921
 Period of the Fast, nineteen days beginning with the first day of the month of 'Alá', March 2
 Holy Days on Which Work Should be Suspended:
 The first day of Ridván
 The ninth day of Ridván
 The twelfth day of Ridván
 The anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb
 The anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh
 The anniversary of the birth of the Báb
 The anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh
 The anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb
 The feast of Naw-Ruz
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Nineteen Day Feasts:

Month	Arabic Name	Translation	First Days
1st	Bahá	Splendor	March 21
2nd	Jalál	Glory	April 9
3rd	Jamal	Beauty	April 28
4th	Azamat	Grandeur	May 17
5th	Nur	Light	June 5
6th	Rahmat	Mercy	June 24
7th	Kalimát	Words	July 13
8th	Kamál	Perfection	August 1
9th	Asmá	Names	August 20
10th	Izzat	Might	September 8
11th	Mashiyyat	Will	September 27
12th	Ilm	Knowledge	October 16
13th	Qudrat	Power	November 4
14th	Qawl	Speech	November 23
15th	Masá'il	Questions	December 12
16th	Sharaf	Honor	December 31
17th	Sultán	Sovereignty	January 19
18th	Mulk	Dominion	February 17
19th	'Alá'	Loftiness	March 2

"The Bahá'í day starts and ends at sunset, and consequently the date of the celebration of Bahá'í feasts should be adjusted to conform to the Bahá'í calendar time. For further particulars on this subject you should refer to the section entitled 'Bahá'í Calendar' in The Bahá'í World.

"The Guardian would advise that, if feasible, the friends should commemorate

certain of the feasts and anniversaries at the following time:

"The anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb on May 22, at about two hours after sunset.

"The first day of Ridván, at about 3:00 P.M. on the 21st of April.

"The anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb on July 9 at about noon.

"The anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, on May 29 at 3:00 A.M.

"The ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá on November 28, at 1:00 A.M.

"The other anniversaries the believers are free to gather at any time during the day which they find convenient."

Bahá'í Community, pp. 33-35

Prayer for Assemblies

"Whenever ye enter the council chamber, recite this prayer with a heart throbbing with the love of God and tongue purified from all but His remembrance, that the All-powerful may graciously aid you to achieve supreme victory:

"O my God! O my God! We are servants who have sincerely turned our faces unto Thy grand face, severed ourselves from all else save Thee in this great day and are assembled together in this glorious meeting,

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of one accord and desire, and unanimous in thought to promulgate Thy Word amid Thy creatures. O my Lord! O my Lord! Suffer us to be signs of guidance, standards of Thy manifest Religion throughout the world, servants of Thy Great Covenant - O our exalted Lord! - appearances of Thy oneness in Thy Kingdom, the El-Abha, and stars which dawn forth unto all regions. O Lord! Make us as seas rolling with the waves of Thy great abundance, rivers flowing from the mountains of Thy glorious Kingdom, pure fruits on the tree of Thy illustrious Cause, plants refreshed and moved by the breeze of Thy gift in Thy wonderful vineyard. O Lord! Cause our souls to depend upon the signs of Thy Oneness, our hearts to be dilated with the bounties of Thy Singleness, so that we may become united as are ripples on a waving sea; become harmonized as are the rays which shine forth from a brilliant light; so that our thoughts, opinions and feelings become as one reality from which the spirit of accord may be diffused throughout all regions.

Verily Thou art the Beneficent, the Bestower! Verily Thou art the Giver, the Mighty, the Loving, the Merciful!

-- `Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 2

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III. NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

Formation

"Regarding the establishment of "National Assemblies," it is of vital importance that in every country, where the conditions are favorable and the number of the friends has grown and reached a considerable size, such as America, Great Britain and Germany, that a "National Spiritual Assembly" be immediately established, representative of the friends throughout that country."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 39

"It would be impossible at this stage to ignore the indispensability or to overestimate the unique significance of the institution of the National Spiritual Assembly--the pivot round which revolve the activities of the believers throughout the American continent. Supreme is their position, grave their responsibilities, manifold and arduous their duties..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 87

In God Passes By the Guardian speaks of National Spiritual Assemblies as "the pivots round which all national undertakings must revolve... Resting on the broad base of organized local communities, themselves pillars sustaining the institution which must be regarded as the apex of the Bahá'í Administrative Order..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 332

Election

"It is expressly recorded in `Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings that these National Assemblies must be indirectly elected by the friends; that is, the friends in every country must elect a certain number of delegates, who in their turn will elect from among all the friends in that country the members of the National Spiritual Assembly..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, pp. 39-40

Members are elected annually, "according to the principle of proportional representation, by delegates representative of Bahá'í local communities assembled at Convention during the period of the Ridván Festival..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 332.

National Convention

"...How great the privilege, how delicate the task of the assembled delegates whose function it is to elect such national representatives as would by their record of service ennoble and enrich the annals of the Cause! If we but turn our gaze to the high qualifications of the members of Bahá'í Assemblies, as enumerated in `Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets, we are filled with feelings of unworthiness and dismay, and would feel truly disheartened but for the comforting thought that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all-conquering spirit of His grace and power. Hence it is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 88

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"...The seating of delegates to the Convention, i.e., the right to decide upon the validity of the credentials of the delegates at a given Convention, is vested in the outgoing National Assembly, and the right to decide who has the voting privilege is also ultimately placed in the hands of the National Spiritual Assembly, either when a local Spiritual Assembly is for the first time being formed in a given locality, or when differences arise between a new

applicant and an already established local Assembly. While the Convention is in session and the accredited delegates have already elected from among the believers throughout the country the members of the National Spiritual Assembly for the current year, it is of infinite value and a supreme necessity that as far as possible all matters requiring immediate decision should be fully and publicly considered, and an endeavor be made to obtain after mature deliberation, unanimity in vital decisions. Indeed, it has ever been the cherished desire of our Master, `Abdu'l-Bahá, that the friends in their councils, local as well as national, should by their candor, their honesty of purpose, their singleness of mind, and the thoroughness of their discussions, achieve unanimity in all things. Should this in certain cases prove impracticable the verdict of the majority should prevail, to which decision the minority must under all circumstances, gladly, spontaneously and continually, submit.

"Nothing short of the all-encompassing, all-pervading power of His Guidance and Love can enable this newly-enfolded order to gather strength and flourish amid the storm and stress of a turbulent age, and in the fulness of time vindicate its high claim to be universally recognized as the one Haven of abiding felicity and peace."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 80

"Hitherto the National Convention has been primarily called together for the consideration of the various circumstances attending the election of the National Spiritual Assembly. I feel, however, that in view of the expansion and the growing importance of the administrative sphere of the Cause, the general sentiments and tendencies prevailing among the friends, and the signs of increasing interdependence among the National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world, the assembled accredited representatives of the American believers should exercise not only the vital and responsible right of electing the National Assembly, but should also fulfill the functions of an enlightened, consultative and cooperative body that will enrich the experience, enhance the prestige, support the authority, and assist the deliberations of the National Spiritual Assembly. It is my firm conviction that it is the bounden duty, in the interest of the Cause we all love and serve, of the members of the incoming National Assembly, once elected by the delegates at Convention time, to seek and have the utmost regard, individually as well as collectively, for the advice, the considered opinion and the true sentiments of the assembled delegates. Banishing every vestige of secrecy, of undue reticence, of dictatorial aloofness, from their midst, they should radiantly and abundantly unfold to the eyes of the delegates, by whom they are elected, their plans, their hopes, and their cares.

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They should familiarize the delegates with the various matters that will have to be considered in the current year, and calmly and conscientiously study and weigh the opinions and judgments of the delegates. The newly elected National Assembly, during the few days when the Convention is in session and after the dispersal of the delegates, should seek ways and means to cultivate understanding, facilitate and maintain the exchange of views, deepen

confidence, and vindicate by every tangible evidence their one desire to serve and advance the common weal. Not infrequently, nay oftentimes, the most lowly, untutored and inexperienced among the friends will, by the sheer inspiring force of selfless and ardent devotion, contribute a distinct and memorable share to a highly involved discussion in any given Assembly. Great must be the regard paid by those whom the delegates call upon to serve in high position to this all-important though inconspicuous manifestation of the revealing power of sincere and earnest devotion.

"The National Spiritual Assembly, however, in view of the unavoidable limitations imposed upon the convening of frequent and long-standing sessions of the

Convention, will have to retain in its hands the final decision on all matters that affect the interests of the Cause..."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, pp. 78-80

"...Were the National Spiritual Assembly to decide, after mature deliberations, to omit the holding of the Bahá'í Convention and Congress in a given year, then they could, only in such a case, devise ways and means to insure that the annual election of the National Spiritual Assembly should be held by mail, provided it can be conducted with sufficient thoroughness, efficiency and dispatch. It would also appear to me unobjectionable to enable and even to require in the last resort such delegates as cannot possibly undertake the journey to the seat of the Bahá'í Convention to send their votes, for the election of the National Spiritual Assembly only, by mail to the National Secretary... It should, however, be made clear to every elected delegate-- who should be continually reminded--that it is a sacred responsibility and admittedly preferable to attend if possible in person the sessions of the Convention, to take an active part in all its proceedings, and to acquaint his fellow-workers on his return with the accomplishments, the decisions and the aspirations of the assembled representatives of the American believers.

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 91

"Concerning the status of members of the N.S.A. at Convention sessions, the Guardian feels that the members both of the incoming and the outgoing Assemblies should be given the full right to participate in the Convention discussions. Those members of the N.S.A. who have been elected delegates will, in addition to the right of participation, be entitled to vote..."

Bahá'í Procedure, p. 85

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"Concerning the status, rights and prerogatives of the Annual Bahá'í Convention, the Guardian wishes to make it quite clear to all the believers that this annual meeting of the delegates is by no means a consultative body all through the year; that its twofold function of electing the body of the National Spiritual Assembly, and of offering any constructive suggestions in regard to the general administration of the Cause is limited to a definite period...Shoghi Effendi firmly believes that consultation must be maintained between the N.S.A. and the entire body of the believers, and that such consultation, while the Convention is not in session, can best be maintained

through the agency of the local communities and their national representatives..."

Shoghi Effendi, through his Secretary, Bahá'í Procedure, p. 84

Authority of the National Spiritual Assembly

"This National Spiritual Assembly, which, pending the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, will have to be re-elected once a year, obviously assumes grave responsibilities, for it has to exercise full authority over all the local Assemblies in its province, and will have to direct the activities of the friends, guard vigilantly the Cause of God, and control and supervise the affairs of the Movement in general."

-- Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 40

As set forth in the "Declaration of Trust and By-Laws"

— Covenant and Administration (Used by permission of the curator)