

# Not to Depart From the Writings or to Be Misled by Those Who Do

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Partial translation



## Not to Depart From the Writings or to Be Misled by Those Who Do

*"Assist ye, O My people, My chosen servants who have arisen to make mention of Me among My creatures and to exalt My Word throughout My realm. These, truly, are the stars of the heaven of My loving providence and the lamps of My guidance unto all mankind. But he whose words conflict with that which hath been sent down in My Holy Tablets is not of Me. Beware lest ye follow any impious pretender. These Tablets are embellished with the seal of Him Who causeth the dawn to appear, Who lifteth up His voice between the heavens and the earth. Lay hold on this Sure Handle and on the Cord of My mighty and unassailable Cause."*<sup>1</sup>

*"Whoso interpreteth what hath been sent down from the heaven of Revelation, and altereth its evident meaning, he, verily, is of them that have perverted the Sublime Word of God, and is of the lost ones in the Lucid Book."*<sup>2</sup>

*"Take heed lest the world beguile you as it beguiled the people who went before you! Observe ye the statutes and precepts of your Lord, and walk ye in this Way which hath been laid out before you in righteousness and truth. They who eschew iniquity and error, who adhere to virtue, are, in the sight of the one true God, among the choicest of His creatures; their names are extolled by the Concourse of the realms above, and by those who dwell in this Tabernacle which hath been raised in the name of God."*<sup>3</sup>

*"Be watchful lest the concerns and preoccupations of this world prevent you from observing that which hath been enjoined upon you by Him Who is the Mighty, the Faithful. Be ye the embodiments of such steadfastness amidst mankind that ye will not be kept back from God by the doubts of those who disbelieved in Him when He manifested Himself, invested with a mighty sovereignty. Take heed lest ye be prevented by aught that hath been recorded in the Book from hearkening unto this, the Living Book, Who proclaimeth the truth: "Verily, there is no God but Me, the Most Excellent, the All-Praised." Look ye with the eye of equity upon Him Who hath descended from the heaven of Divine will and power, and be not of those who act unjustly."*<sup>4</sup>

---

1. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 117

2. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 105

3. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 71

4. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 134



*"O people of Bahá! Each one of the ordinances We have revealed is a mighty stronghold for the preservation of the world of being. Verily, this Wronged One desireth naught but your security and elevation."*<sup>5</sup>

"Religion is the light of the world, and the progress, achievement, and happiness of man result from obedience to the laws set down in the holy Books."<sup>6</sup>

***"Whoso interpreteth what hath been sent down from the heaven of Revelation, and altereth its evident meaning***

In several of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh affirms the distinction between allegorical verses, which are susceptible to interpretation, and those verses that relate to such subjects as the laws and ordinances, worship and religious observances, whose meanings are evident and which demand compliance on the part of the believers.

As explained in notes 145 and 184, Bahá'u'lláh designated 'Abdu'lBahá, His eldest Son, as His Successor and the Interpreter of His Teachings. 'Abdu'lBahá in His turn appointed His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to succeed Him as interpreter of the holy Writ and Guardian of the Cause. The interpretations of 'Abdu'lBahá and Shoghi Effendi are considered divinely guided and are binding on the Bahá'ís.

The existence of authoritative interpretations does not preclude the individual from engaging in the study of the Teachings and thereby arriving at a personal interpretation or understanding. A clear distinction is, however, drawn in the Bahá'í Writings between authoritative interpretation and the understanding that each individual arrives at from a study of its Teachings. Individual interpretations based on a person's understanding of the Teachings constitute the fruit of man's rational power and may well contribute to a greater comprehension of the Faith. Such views, nevertheless, lack authority. In presenting their personal ideas, individuals are cautioned not to discard the authority of the revealed words, not to deny or contend with the authoritative interpretation, and not to engage in controversy; rather they should offer their thoughts as a contribution to knowledge, making it clear that their views are merely their own."<sup>7</sup>

***"refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock***

Bahá'u'lláh invests 'Abdu'lBahá with the right of interpreting His holy Writ (see also note 145)."<sup>8</sup>

***"It is inadmissible that man, who hath been endowed with reason, should consume that which stealeth it away.*** There are many references in the Bahá'í Writings which prohibit the use of wine and other intoxicating drinks and which describe the deleterious effect of such intoxicants on the individual. In one of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh states:

---

5. Baha'u'llah, Words of Paradise

6. Abdul-Baha, The Secret of Divine Civilization

7. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no.130

8. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 184

*Beware lest ye exchange the Wine of God for your own wine, for it will stupefy your minds, and turn your faces away from the Countenance of God, the All-Glorious, the Peerless, the Inaccessible. Approach it not, for it hath been forbidden unto you by the behest of God, the Exalted, the Almighty.*

‘Abdu’lBahá explains that the Aqdas prohibits “both light and strong drinks,” and He states that the reason for prohibiting the use of alcoholic drinks is because “alcohol leadeth the mind astray and causeth the weakening of the body.”

Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, states that this prohibition includes not only the consumption of wine but of “everything that deranges the mind,” and he clarifies that the use of alcohol is permitted only when it constitutes part of a medical treatment which is implemented “under the advice of a competent and conscientious physician, who may have to prescribe it for the cure of some special ailment.””<sup>9</sup>

***“turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root***

Bahá’u’lláh here alludes to ‘Abdu’lBahá as His Successor and calls upon the believers to turn towards Him. In the Book of the Covenant, His Will and Testament, Bahá’u’lláh discloses the intention of this verse. He states: *“The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch.”* The *“Most Mighty Branch”* is one of the titles conferred by Bahá’u’lláh on ‘Abdu’lBahá. (See also notes 66 and 184.)”<sup>10</sup>

“Aghṣán” (plural of Ghuṣn) is the Arabic word for “Branches.” This term is used by Bahá’u’lláh to designate His male descendants. It has particular implications not only for the disposition of endowments but also for the succession of authority following the passing of Bahá’u’lláh (see note 145) and of ‘Abdu’lBahá. Bahá’u’lláh, in the Book of His Covenant, appointed ‘Abdu’lBahá, His eldest son, as the Center of His Covenant and the Head of the Faith. ‘Abdu’lBahá, in His Will and Testament, appointed Shoghi Effendi, His eldest grandson, as the Guardian and Head of the Faith.

This passage of the Aqdas, therefore, anticipates the succession of chosen Aghṣán and thus the institution of the Guardianship and envisages the possibility of a break in their line. The passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 precipitated the very situation provided for in this passage, in that the line of Aghṣán ended before the Universal House of Justice had been established (see note 67).”

<sup>11</sup>



---

<sup>9</sup>. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 144

<sup>10</sup>. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 145

<sup>11</sup>. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 66