

Bahá'í Sacred Writings, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, #487

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Effendi from Persian



All praise to Him Who, by the Shield of His Covenant, hath guarded the Temple of His Cause from the darts of doubtfulness; Who by the Hosts of His Testament hath preserved the Sanctuary of His Most Beneficent Law and protected His Straight and Luminous Path, staying thereby the onslaught of the company of Covenant-breakers, that have threatened to subvert His Divine Edifice; Who hath watched over His Mighty Stronghold and All-Glorious Faith, through the aid of men whom the slander of the slanderer affecteth not, whom no earthly calling, glory and power can turn aside from the Covenant of God and His Testament, established firmly by His clear and manifest words, writ and revealed by His All-Glorious Pen and recorded in the Preserved Tablet.

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; upon the offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, the twigs of the Celestial Tree, they that in the Day of the Great Dividing have stood fast and firm in the Covenant; upon the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God that have diffused widely the Divine Fragrances, declared His Proofs, proclaimed His Faith, published abroad His Law, detached themselves from all things but Him, stood for righteousness in the world, and kindled the fire of the love of God in the very hearts and souls of His servants; upon them that have believed, rested assured, stood steadfast in His Covenant and followed the Light that after my passing shineth from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance—for behold! he is 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.

O ye beloved of the Lord! The greatest of all things is the protection of the True Faith of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Cause and service unto His Word. Ten thousand souls have shed streams of their sacred blood in this path, their precious lives they offered in sacrifice unto Him, hastened wrapt in holy ecstasy unto the glorious field of martyrdom, upraised the Standard of God's Faith and writ with their life-blood upon the Tablet of the world the verses of His Divine Unity. The sacred breast of His Holiness the Exalted One (may my life be a sacrifice unto Him) was made a target to many a dart of woe, and in Mázindarán, the blessed feet of the Abhá Beauty (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) were so grievously scourged as to bleed and be sore wounded. His neck also was put into captive chains and His feet made fast in the stocks. In every hour, for a period of fifty years, a new trial and calamity befell Him and fresh afflictions and cares beset Him. One of them: After having suffered intense vicissitudes, He was made homeless and a wanderer and fell a victim to still new vexations and troubles. In 'Iráq, the Day-Star of the world was so exposed to the wiles of the people of malice as to be eclipsed in splendour. Later on He was sent an exile to the Great City (Constantinople) and



TRANSLATION



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thence to the Land of Mystery (Adrianople), whence, grievously wronged, He was eventually transferred to the Most Great Prison ('Akká). He Whom the world hath wronged (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) was four times banished from city to city, till at last, condemned to perpetual confinement, He was incarcerated in this prison, the prison of highway robbers, of brigands and of manslayers. All this is but one of the trials that have afflicted the Blessed Beauty, the rest being even as grievous as this.

And still another of His trials was the hostility, the flagrant injustice, the iniquity and rebellion of Mírzá Yaḥyá. Although that Wronged One, that Prisoner, had through His loving-kindness nurtured him in His own bosom ever since his early years, had showered at every moment His tender care upon him, exalted his name, shielded him from every misfortune, endeared him to them of this world and the next, and despite the firm exhortations and counsels of His Holiness the Exalted One (the Báb) and His clear and conclusive warning: "Beware, beware, lest the Nineteen Letters of the Living and that which hath been revealed in the Bayán veil thee!"—yet notwithstanding this, Mírzá Yaḥyá denied Him, dealt falsely with Him, believed Him not, sowed the seeds of doubt, closed his eyes to His manifest verses and turned aside therefrom. Would that he had been content therewith! Nay, he even attempted to shed the sacred blood (of Bahá'u'lláh) and then raised a great clamour and tumult around him, attributing unto Bahá'u'lláh malevolence and cruelty towards himself. What sedition he stirred up and what a storm of mischief he raised whilst in the Land of Mystery (Adrianople)! At last, he wrought that which caused the Day-Star of the world to be sent an exile to this, the Most Great Prison, and sorely wronged, and in the West of this Great Prison He did set.

O ye that stand fast and firm in the Covenant! The Centre of Sedition, the Prime Mover of mischief, Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí, hath passed out from under the shadow of the Cause, hath broken the Covenant, hath falsified the Holy Text, hath inflicted a grievous loss upon the true Faith of God, hath scattered His people, hath with bitter rancour endeavoured to hurt 'Abdu'l-Bahá and hath assailed with the utmost enmity this servant of the Sacred Threshold. Every dart he seized and hurled to pierce the breast of this wronged servant, no wound did he neglect to grievously inflict upon me, no venom did he spare but he poisoned therewith the life of this hapless one. I swear by the most holy Abhá Beauty and by the Light shining from His Holiness the Exalted One (may my soul be a sacrifice for Their lowly servants), that because of this iniquity the dwellers in the Pavilion of the Abhá Kingdom have bewailed, the Celestial Concourse is lamenting, the Immortal Maids of Heaven in the All-Highest Paradise have raised their plaintive cries and the angelic company sighed and uttered their moanings. So grievous the deeds of this iniquitous person became that he struck with his axe at the root of the Blessed Tree, dealt a heavy blow at the Temple of the Cause of God, deluged with tears of blood the eyes of the loved ones of the Blessed Beauty, cheered and encouraged the enemies of the One True God, by his repudiation of the Covenant turned many a seeker after Truth aside from the Cause of God, revived the blighted hopes of Yaḥyá's following, made himself detested, caused the enemies of the Greatest Name to become audacious and arrogant, put aside the firm and conclusive verses and sowed the seeds of doubt. Had not the promised aid of the Ancient Beauty been graciously vouchsafed at every moment to this one, unworthy though he be, he surely would have destroyed, nay exterminated the Cause of God and utterly subverted the Divine Edifice. But, praised be the Lord, the triumphant assistance of the Abhá Kingdom was received, the hosts of the Realm above hastened to bestow victory. The Cause of God was promoted far and wide, the

call of the True One was noised abroad, ears in all regions were inclined to the Word of God, His standard was unfurled, the ensigns of Holiness gloriously waved aloft and the verses celebrating His Divine Unity were chanted. 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 revealed about him. None other transgression greater than his can be ever imagined. He (Bahá'u'lláh) sayeth, glorious and holy is His Word: "My foolish loved ones have regarded him even as my partner, have kindled sedition in the land and they verily are of the mischief-makers." Consider, how foolish are the people! They that have been in His (Bahá'u'lláh's) Presence and beheld His Countenance, have nevertheless noised abroad such idle talk, until, exalted be His explicit words, He said: "Should he for a moment pass out from under 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 to the left, his deviation would be clearly established and his utter nothingness made manifest. And now ye are witnessing how the wrath of God hath from all sides afflicted him and how day by day he is speeding towards destruction. Ere long will ye behold him and his associates, outwardly and inwardly, condemned to utter ruin.

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, even as testified and declared by Mírzá Badí'u'lláh! What deviation can be greater than calumniating the Centre 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 grievous than decreeing the death of the Centre of the Covenant, supported by the holy verse "He that layeth a claim ere the passing of a thousand years ...", whilst he (Muḥammad-'Alí) without shame in the days of the Blessed Beauty had advanced such a claim as this and been confuted by Him in the aforementioned manner, the text of his claim being still extant in his own handwriting and bearing his own seal. What deviation can be more complete than falsely accusing the loved ones of God! What deviation can be more evil than causing their imprisonment and incarceration! What deviation can be more severe than delivering into the hands of the government the Holy Writings and Epistles, that haply they (the government) might arise intent upon the death of this wronged one! What deviation can be more violent than threatening the ruin of the Cause of God, forging and slanderously falsifying letters and documents so that this might perturb and alarm the government and lead to the shedding of the blood of this wronged one, such letters and documents being now in the possession of the government! What deviation can be more odious than his iniquity and rebellion! What deviation can be more shameful than dispersing the gathering of the people of salvation! 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!...

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 rancour, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy care 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!

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 savours of God, to teach His Cause and to promote His Faith. It behoveth 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 the 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 savours 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 cornerstone of the foundation itself. This wronged servant hath spent his days and nights in promoting the Cause and urging the peoples to service. He rested not a moment, till the fame of the Cause of God was noised abroad in the world and the celestial strains from the Abhá Kingdom roused the East and the West. The beloved of God must also follow the same example. This is the secret of faithfulness, this is the requirement of servitude to the Threshold of Bahá!

The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the Divine Guidance, till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that Beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!

O my loving friends! After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghşán (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-Trees 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 Aghşán, 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 succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants.

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; whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath 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 members of the House of Justice, upon all the Aghṣán, 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 Centre of Sedition. Beware, beware, lest the days after the ascension (of Bahá'u'lláh) be repeated when the Centre 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, will 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!

O ye beloved of the Lord! It is incumbent upon the Guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own lifetime him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing. 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) 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.

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 must be carried either unanimously or by majority from the company of the 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 (i.e., secret ballot).

O friends! The Hands of the Cause of God must be nominated and appointed by the Guardian of the Cause of God. All must be under his shadow and obey his command. Should any, within or without the company of the Hands of the Cause of God, disobey and seek division, the wrath of God and His vengeance will be upon him, for he will have caused a breach in the true Faith of God.

The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God are to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things. They must manifest the fear of God by their conduct, their manners, their deeds and their words.

This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the Guardian of the Cause of God. He must continually urge them to strive and endeavour to the utmost of their ability to diffuse the sweet savours of God, and to guide all the peoples of the world, for it is the light of Divine Guidance that causeth all the universe to be illumined. To disregard, though it be for a moment, this absolute command which is binding upon everyone, is in no wise permitted, that the existent world may become even as the Abhá Paradise, that the surface of the earth may become heavenly, that contention and conflict amidst peoples, kindreds, nations and governments may disappear, that all the dwellers on earth may become one people and one race, that the world may become even as one home....

O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor depriveth himself of God's grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers. So intense must be the spirit of love and loving-kindness, that the stranger may find himself a friend, the enemy a true brother, no difference whatsoever existing between them. For universality is of God and all limitations earthly. Thus man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone. The light of the sun shineth upon all the world and the merciful showers of Divine Providence fall upon all peoples. The vivifying breeze reviveth every living creature and all beings endued with life obtain their share and portion at His heavenly board. In like manner, the affections and loving-kindness of the servants of the One True God must be bountifully and universally extended to all mankind. Regarding this, restrictions and limitations are in no wise permitted.

Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, goodwill and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá, that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancour may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you, show your fidelity unto them; should they be unjust toward you, show justice towards them; should they keep aloof from you, attract them to yourselves; should they show their enmity, be friendly towards them; should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls; should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful!

And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's Faith and the well-wishers of all mankind. By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one. Unto this body all things must be referred. It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text. By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved and the Guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body. Should he not attend in person its deliberations, he must appoint one to represent him. Should any of the members commit a sin injurious to the common weal, the Guardian of the Cause of God hath at his own discretion the right to expel him, whereupon the people must elect another one in his stead. This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them. The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.