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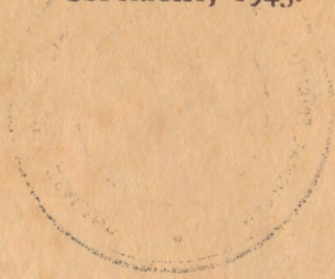
A COMMENTARY
ON THE
WILL & TESTAMENT
OF
‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

BY
David Hofman

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GEORGE RONALD

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CIVILISATION is the social expression of the human spirit. In every age this spirit first becomes articulate in a Gospel or "Book," and every age requires its own voice to cry its latent ideals in the wilderness of confusion—that period of transition from one social era to another.

The Bahá'í Faith has been called the spirit of this age, and Bahá'u'lláh, its Author, is acclaimed by His followers as the Messenger of God for to-day. His revelation deals directly with the problems of the age, spiritually and practically.

The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His son, constitutes the "indissoluble link" between the Revelation itself and the world order which that Revelation is destined to promote.

"The creative energies released by the Law of Bahá'u'lláh, permeating and evolving within the mind of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have, by their very impact and close interaction, given birth to an Instrument which may be viewed as the Charter of the New World Order which is at once the glory and the promise of this most great Dispensation." (Shoghi Effendi in "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.")

No human being would claim to-day, to understand fully the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. To us, "the generation of the half-light," is given only a dim perception of its major features—the main institutions, the most brilliant light and the darkest shade, a clouded vision of the whole and only an intimation of the subtle and hidden relationships between the component bodies.

But because of this we are also given the opportunity to probe that mystery, to seek, in the ever increasing light of this wondrous dawn, to discover more and more of the picture, to attain, by experience of the society which Bahá'u'lláh's almighty Spirit has already raised, and by striving to pierce the mystery of His Revelation, a clearer vision of that Divine Order of which the Will and Testament is the Charter.

In order to obtain this fuller understanding, it is necessary to approach the Will as one would approach a great work of art; free of all objective conceptions, shapes, colours, institutions, methods, free particularly of any expectation and of the "tales of the past." It is essential to appear, not looking for confirmation of anything of one's own, but waiting only to see what the Author has to say.

With this attitude ever in mind, we may consider the social and political theory of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, which is to operate through the provisions and institutions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is summed up in the word Theocracy, or, as an earlier dispensation had it, "God Himself shall rule His people." Such a system can neither be entirely democratic, nor aristocratic, nor autocratic. It must, and does, rest on different sanctions and operate through different channels, without, however, discarding what has been found good in human experience.

No modern people will ever think of God as an incarnate Being, administering world affairs from some earthly capital. The conception of Theocracy therefore, in its true sense of rule by the Will of God, is not new to human imagination and hope, but it is definitely new (and as yet remains unknown) to conscious experience. The greatest efforts of peoples, whether exemplified in the once mighty system of Christendom, based on the undoubted primacy of Peter and reinforced by whatever the Roman genius had to offer, or in the slow and empirical growth of the British Constitution, or in the painstaking efforts of the framers of the American Constitution, cannot be said to bear that stamp of perfection which must characterise Theocracy. Nor indeed can it be expected that they should, since such a system is only practicable to a generally mature society. And humanity even now stands only at the gate of that condition, unable to put away its youth and advance joyfully to its destiny.

The attributes of God exist in perfection only in His Manifestation. *"Whoso hath seen me hath seen the Father"; "when I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee, I am moved to proclaim to all created things 'verily I am God!'; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay!"* Therefore, as long as the Manifestation dwells with men, the Will of God may be known without fear of pollution from the channel through which it is revealed. Only seldom, however, is the Manifestation called upon to administer the social order which His Revelation creates.* The problem, therefore, is to protect the word and to find adequate and safe channels for the continuous flow of Divine guidance, after the ascension of the Prophet. This is an essential condition of Theocracy, the sine qua non without which

*Notably in the case of Muhammad.

any order, no matter how good, lacks the ultimate sanction of the authentic interpretation of the "Book." Little wonder that Muhammad should characterise His Book and His Family (among whom was 'Alí, the appointed successor) as the greatest gifts which He left to His followers. It is upon the Book, the written Word, and its interpretation as authorised by its Author, that a theocratic state must rest.

The unique and peerless feature of the Bahá'í Revelation is that for the first time in history, full and undeniable provision has been made for the protection of the Word and for the continuity of Divine guidance, without in the least constricting that creative force latent in every human soul, and which, when evoked by the Word of God, is the motivating power of civilisation. Far from hampering the operation of this mighty force, the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh provides for its fullest expression, and by eliminating "economic" fear, offers it greater scope and a longer period of effective strength. In addition it provides adequate channels for its direction and the overshadowing guidance of the Covenant, so that the excesses and wastefulness and confusion common to the early days of a new vitality, are avoided. Reference is made to such times as the Renaissance, or, on a lesser scale, the settlement of the West in America.

The institutions provided by the Bahá'í Revelation to guard the Book from interpolation and to keep open the channel of Guidance, are the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice, the "twin pillars" of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The Guardian as interpreter of what is in the Book, and the Universal House of Justice as legislator on matters not provided for in the Book, are *"both under the care and protection of the 'Abhá Beauty,' under the shelter and unerring guidance*

of His Holiness, the Exalted One." The close spiritual relationship between these two institutions is commented on later, although it is clearly apparent that this is one of the features of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order at present shrouded in mystery, a mystery which experience and the passage of time will do more to clarify than present meditation.

The Guardianship is another mystery whose full significance will only be discovered by later generations. To us it means, from our own experience, unity, preservation, and an ultimate authority, but to future generations it may mean both more and less. Less because the Universal House of Justice will be fully established and active, and able to exercise those functions which now devolve upon the Guardian; more, by virtue of the reinforcement of the institution through the full development of all the other component parts of the Bahá'í World Order, and because of the extension of its activity from the inspirer, champion and beloved guide of a small and struggling world community, to the full exercise of its duties and prerogatives as one of the twin pillars sustaining the single social order of the planet.

But we may say something of the significance of this mighty institution in the light of historical experience. In any highly developed, and therefore complex, modern state, guarantee has had to be created or developed for the protection of the constitution. In England the constitution (elusive and indefinable) is guaranteed by the monarchy. The king is the guarantor of the rights and freedom of the individual and the upholder of constitutional authority. In America the Supreme Court fulfils this function.*

*This is the only similarity of the institutions.

It is apparent that the most politically mature peoples have realised and tried to meet, the need for safeguarding the basis of their society. Warned by historical experience, where every covenant has eventually been broken, every order eventually corrupted, man still seeks the assured foundation and the house built upon a rock.

This basic need is filled in the Order of Bahá'u'lláh through the unique institution of the Guardianship. Not only is the Guardian the channel of Divine guidance, but he is the protector, the "Guardian of the Cause of God." The Book, the "Mother Book" from which this mighty order springs, claims him as its guardian and interpreter, and no other may serve. The Guardian is under the protection of the Manifestation of God, and therefore through him *"the mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe."*

Beyond this the author does not wish to go at present, other commentary on the Guardianship being too nebulous for assured expression.

Here then, based on the inviolable sanction of the Word of God, Divine guidance is given to man in respect of interpretation of what has already been revealed, and in respect of whatever additions to the Book are necessary for the transaction of affairs. It is from these complementary functions of the two main institutions that the flexibility of the Administrative Order is derived. For the interpretation of the Guardian may vary in application (never in principle) while the House of Justice is specifically empowered to repeal and modify its own laws, which form no part of the Book.

The various agencies for bringing this guidance to bear on the energy generated by the action of the creative Word on the souls of men, are dealt with in the

text. It is desired to stress here that the guidance and the energy meet in the same institutions and operate through the same channels. This is the spiritual process implied when it is said that Bahá'í institutions are not solely political, social, judicial or religious. They are all these things at the same time, organic, complex, highly developed, mature institutions, and therefore exceedingly difficult to establish and their mysterious operation exceedingly difficult to understand, as the present world community of Bahá'ís knows to its pain and its joy.

Energy is generated from the mass, guidance is diffused from the top; the two, mingling in the arteries of this organic order and spreading throughout its nervous system, constitute its life force.

It should be borne in mind that the Will and Testament is an integral part of Scripture and can no more be divorced from the rest of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's utterances than can any part of the creative Word from the whole Revelation. It should be remembered too that the Master's other statements on the functions of Houses of Justice, on consultation, on the general conduct of affairs, on the rights and obligations of individuals, are of equal importance to the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. But the Will and Testament is the clear and authentic charter of this Order; it establishes its institutions and defines its relationships.

Through this document the rights of all are protected, authority is upheld and power delegated. It is no less than the charter of world civilisation, the Bill of Rights of all mankind.

In the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, power and initiative are vested in the people. The power is expressed through the control of all local affairs by the

local House of Justice—a body elected from the residents in each locality, which must present its records periodically (every 19 days) and seek the advice, opinions and comment of the community which it serves. Initiative is evoked by the direct injunction of Bahá'u'lláh on each individual to engage in *“some one occupation, such as arts, crafts, trades, professions and the like.”* *“We have made this, your occupation, identical with the worship of God, the True One.”*

It is also a basic teaching of Bahá'u'lláh that whatever is given by God—His Revelation, Guidance, Knowledge—is in direct proportion to the receptive capacity of mankind. Therefore to some extent—certainly within the space of one dispensation—man is the arbiter of his own destiny. For the gifts and bounties available are conferred according to his efforts. *“Whoso maketh efforts for us, him will we cause the faithful spirit. . . .”* So that the only limit set to the outward expression of the sovereignty of the Manifestation, is the state of development of man's power to respond to the Word of God. This power is his highest faculty, and in this dispensation it reaches maturity. This motivating power of society, arising from the people, remains vested in the people by the institutions and ordinances of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Manifestation of God is the Source of all. Through Him power and initiative are evoked in the mass of mankind. Through His Covenant, specifically centred in 'Abdu'l-Bahá interpretation and protection is given. Through the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Covenant is preserved and extended for the whole length of the dispensation. Authority and Divine guidance are vested in the House of Justice, and guarantee and Divine guidance are vested in the Guardian. A close relationship is revealed between the component and integral parts of the World Commonwealth.

This then is Theocracy. Power and initiative evoked by the Word of God; authority conferred by the Word of God; guarantee and guidance given and maintained by the Word of God. Everything rests on the creative Word and God Himself rules His people.

Such a comprehensive and unquestionably authorised system is new to human experience. Neither the Christian Faith, nor Islám, can claim the written, undisputable authority of the Manifestation of God for any system within their folds. Consequently their socially creative power is paralysed by the spirit of modern criticism, and they are unable to make any significant contribution to the reorganisation of world society. Sincere and altruistic as is the desire of many within these Faiths, and of many in the other great religious systems of the planet, those very systems arrest the vision of their members at their own borders, so that there is small hope of their aspirations being realised, save through the Most Great Covenant whose promise is enshrined within their Holy Books.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will and Testament is divided into three parts, each apparently written at different times, the last two some time later than the first part. It is a matter of inference that parts two and three were added by the Master after two particularly flagrant violations by the traitorous members of His own Family. Part I has the following note at the end: *“This written paper hath for a long time been preserved underground, damp having affected it. When brought forth to the light, it was observed that certain parts of it were injured by the damp, and the Holy Land being sorely agitated it was left untouched.”*

Parts 2 and 3 each recount fresh violations of the Covenant and dwell upon the importance of preserving the Faith. The Guardian and the Universal House of Justice are mentioned in each part.

Some conception of the trials which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá faced may be gathered by a single perusal of the Will; from such sentences as this: *“O dearly beloved friends! I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour’s life is lost to me.”* Under such conditions the Master’s only thought was for the friends and the preservation of the Faith. He prays for both, sends His love and confers His blessing, and ends with mention of the Guardian.

We now come to the text.

The opening paragraph serves as introduction to the high theme which is to follow, and reveals its main outline. That outline is the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh

“All praise to Him . . .,” this refers to Bahá’u’lláh, *“... Who by the shield of His Covenant hath guarded the Temple of His Cause from the darts of doubtfulness. . . .”* The Covenant, which shields the Faith from schism and protects it from the violators, is inseparable from the name of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, whose Will and Testament is as essential a part of it as is the Will and Testament of Bahá’u’lláh.

The main theme of the Covenant is protection of the Word and the continuity of Divine guidance. In the Testament of Bahá’u’lláh this theme has a single expression, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Greatest Branch, the Centre of the Covenant. In the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá it has two expressions, the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice.

This second paragraph bears much meditation. In itself it is a complete statement, perfectly constructed and fitting into the whole Will and Testament as an integral unit. It begins with the Guardian and ends with the Guardian, but not before every member of the great world order, destined to rise on this Charter, has been included. *"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 "primal branch" is Shoghi Effendi; the Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree is the Manifestation of God (specifically Bahá'u'lláh in this instance) and the Twin Holy Trees are Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, Shoghi Effendi being descended from both houses, that of the Báb through his father, that of Bahá'u'lláh through his mother.

This is the first mention of the Guardian, and follows immediately upon the praise to Bahá'u'lláh and His Covenant. Note the tender and loving language which the Master uses, and then consider the next part of this long sentence: *"The most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the twin surging seas. . . ."* This is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's testimony to the first Guardian. The Twin surging Seas again designate Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. We may note here that throughout Bahá'í Scripture, the Divine Lote Tree, the Ocean, the Nightingale, are symbols of the Manifestation of God, and that whenever the twin symbols are used, reference is made to the two Manifestations of this Dispensation, Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb.

The statement now continues with mention of others in the Faith upon whom *"salutation and praise"* is invoked. *"... the offshoots of the Tree of Holiness,"* that is Bahá'u'lláh's children; *"... the twigs of the Celestial Tree,"* descendants and members of His Family and of that of the Báb; *"... they that in the day of the*

Great Dividing have stood firm in the Covenant." This refers to the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh when many sought leadership and violated the explicit written Covenant. The great dividing was between those who were steadfast and the violator, and bears no reference whatever to a schism. As time has shown, the Covenant flourished and the violators came to nothing. Next are the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God, those who have spread the Message and "*stood for righteousness in this world, and kindled the Fire of the love of God in the very hearts and souls of His servants.*" Finally "*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.*" Here is a definite assurance that after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Divine guidance will be given through the Guardian, a written statement made even more explicitly later, unique in the religious history of the world.

The paragraph closes: "*Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind.*" How great is this passage, how perfect in composition, how beautiful in design. Opening with the theme of the Guardianship, continuing throughout the whole body of believers, it returns easily and smoothly to its theme, carries it to a great crescendo, stops, and then concludes with that thunderous chord, "*Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind.*"

Some comment is necessary on the term "*all mankind.*" Not only the believers, but every human being is under the shadow of the Guardian. This is not difficult to realise when we understand that the Manifestation of God is the Tree upon which all human beings are the

leaves. We all belong to that Tree, consciously, unconsciously, or even unwillingly. The Manifestation is the Lord of the Age and "*all else are servants unto Him and do His bidding.*" Direct from the Manifestation by His explicit will, through the centre of the Covenant, the light of Divine guidance continues to shine through the Guardian, and will do so until God is again manifested "*in the noble form of the human temple.*"

All development is of the spirit. The milestones of progress . . . what we call events . . . are reached first in the spiritual world and later objectified in human affairs. Thus the sovereignty of Christ was a spiritual fact at the time of His Manifestation, but there was a lag of some hundreds of years before human consciousness caught up with it. It is so to-day with the sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh, and therefore with the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi.

'Abdu'l-Bahá continues by urging the friends to protect the Faith of God, a duty which can be accomplished, as He states later, by "*obedience to him who is the Guardian of the Cause of God.*" He recounts the martyrdoms of the early believers and some of the afflictions heaped upon Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. "*Ten thousand souls . . .*"; a constant perusal of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings leads one to feel that the term is not intended exactly, but means a great number.

The Will continues with an account of the base treason of Yahya, Bahá'u'lláh's half-brother, a tale known only too well by those who have wept for the afflictions of the Blessed Beauty. The dark story is not complete however; by no means. Muhammad 'Alí, the "*centre of sedition,*" the "*prime mover of mischief*"; Badí'u'lláh, too weak for constancy in faith or treason; Shuá'u'lláh, "*in concert with others,*" plot and scheme and work mischief with all their might, motivated by black hatred

deep in their miserable natures which impels them to oppose the Light of God and to attempt to destroy the Centre of the Covenant. The story of their countless machinations is surely without equal. Little wonder the Master sought refuge with the Almighty Father Whose Light found so perfect an expression in Him. *"... Graciously assist me, through my love for Thee, that I may drink deep of the chalice that brimmeth over with faithfulness to Thee and is filled with Thy bountiful Grace. . . . Lord! Shield Thou from these Covenant breakers the mighty stronghold of Thy Faith and protect Thy secret sanctuary from the onslaught of the ungodly. Thou in truth art the Mighty, the Powerful, the Gracious, the Strong."*

He next proclaims that Muhammad 'Alí is *"cut off from the Holy Tree"*; expelled from the community of the believers, for whom He reveals a prayer. *"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 Cause and, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, make them manifestations of Thy glorious signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Day-spring of Thy Divine Unity, gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy Holy Kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thine all swaying power that cometh from Thy realm of glory. Thou art the All-Bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious."*

Now, having established the Guardianship, and exposed the violators (whose crimes He concealed when they affected only Himself), He exhorts the friends in the strongest language to engage in teaching the Cause far and wide, *"that throughout the East and the West a vast concourse may gather together 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." "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." And in the midst of such activity He wishes the friends "to achieve renown in the world wherever they go." On another occasion He said, "I desire for you distinction."

"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."

The remainder of Part I delineates the main features of the Administrative Order. The Guardian is named and appointed. All the "branches," "twigs," "hands," and believers must "turn unto Shoghi Effendi . . . as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God." "He is the expounder of the Words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants." Thus the authority of the interpreter, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is conferred upon the Guardian. (The succession is amplified later.)

Immediately following this the Guardian is declared to be "under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) under the shelter and unerring guidance

of His Holiness, the Exalted One" (the Báb). The command of obedience to the Guardian and to the Universal House of Justice, which is under the same protection and guidance, is as strong and emphatic as anything found in the Master's Writings, and the passages require constant reading to allow their forcefulness to sink in.

The succession is established, calling into the picture another institution, that of the Hands of the Cause of God. The Guardian must, in his own lifetime, nominate his successor (previously designated as his first born son). The Hands of the Cause of God are to elect nine from their own number, and this body of nine, by secret vote, must approve of the Guardian's nomination, unanimity or majority vote prevailing. Should they not uphold the nomination, the Guardian must appoint "*another branch to succeed him.*" This means a descendant of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Hands of the Cause are all appointed by the Guardian, men and women of exalted spiritual character. 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes them thus: Their duties 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.*"

The whole body of the Hands of the Cause is under "*the direction of the Guardian of the Cause of God,*" but the small body of nine which they elect from among themselves "*shall at all times be occupied in the important services in the work of the Guardian of the Cause of God.*" Thus the Guardianship has an attendant

body of helpers, elected from the spiritual aristocracy of mankind, and the Guardian also has at his direction spiritually exalted characters throughout the planet, wherever he may be guided to appoint them.

There is nothing in the Will and Testament from which to infer that the Hands of the Cause have any political, social, or economic privilege. They are spiritual advisers and teachers and must obey the Houses of Justice like any other believer. It may be meant that they are to be supported from Huqúq (see below) as this money is to be expended "*for the diffusion of the fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Word, for benevolent pursuits and for the common weal,*" which are the duties of the Hands of the Cause. The Guardian's interpretation will decide that, but in any case the non-ecclesiastical character of the Faith is not changed, since the direction of affairs, administration of the House of Worship, meetings and celebration of festivals and anniversaries, remain the inviolable right of the Houses of Justice in each locality.

The purpose for which all these forces are to be mobilised is "*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. Should differences arise they shall be amicably and conclusively settled by the Supreme Tribunal, that shall include members from all the governments and peoples of the world.*"

Here is the first, and only mention of this important institution in the Will and Testament. A World Court of arbitration, Supreme Tribunal, drawing its members

from all nations will, as the Guardian has already written "adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system."

Throughout the Will and Testament, as indeed throughout all 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings, there breathes that ideal of boundless love, of reconciliation, amity and universality, of which He was the perfect Exemplar. This is nowhere more apparent than in this mighty Charter, where the intrigues and hatred of the Covenant breakers have to be exposed, and the organism kept healthy by their expulsion. However strong and vehement the Master's denunciation of the violators of the Covenant, there is only prayer and forgiveness for the oppressors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The breakers of the Covenant are consigned to the wrath of God, but for these same people, the contemptible enemies of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, there is only this: *"O my Lord! Have mercy upon them, shield them from all afflictions in these troubled times and grant that all trials and hardship may be the lot of this Thy servant that hath fallen into this darksome pit. . . . O God! my God! lowly, suppliant and fallen upon my face, I beseech Thee with all the ardour of my invocation to pardon whosoever hath hurt me, forgive him that hath conspired against me and offended me, and wash away the misdeeds of them that have wrought injustice upon me. . . ."*

His prayers for the believers and the Cause are fervent and simple. For protection from self and passion, for safety from the violators. He now exhorts them: *"O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives 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, good-will and friendliness; that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá, that ignorance, enmity, hate and 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 to them, should they be unjust towards you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourself, 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."

This quotation will serve to remind us that the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh is no mere system to be laid over a dead society. Its motivating force, its life, its breath, is the love and service of God; the Administrative Order is the Divinely appointed scheme by which the mature expression of such spiritual force may find its fullest expression.

'Abdu'l-Bahá deals next with the House of Justice, explaining that He means the Universal House of Justice "*which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error.*" This refers to its establishment by Bahá'u'lláh Himself and to its being under the same protection and guidance as overshadow the Guardian. "*It must be elected by universal suffrage*"; a direction later specified to mean that the members of the National Houses of Justice must constitute the electorate of the supreme Universal House. The Master states the qualities which the voters must consider when electing this world government. "*Its members must be the 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.*"

The close and indissoluble relationship between the two "Pillars" of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order, the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice, is now more clearly revealed than formerly, when they were linked together "*under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One.*" The Guardian, whose duty of interpretation has already been laid down, is appointed permanent head of the Universal House of Justice. He must attend its deliberations or send someone to represent him. He has "*at his own discretion, the right to expel*" any member who commits a sin "*injurious to the common weal.*" The

obvious comment is that the guidance which is given to the institution does not descend to individuals by right of membership. Only the Guardian has this individual protection. The House of Justice, however, has its own defined functions, upon which the Guardian may not encroach. *"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. . . . This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them."* The House of Justice deliberates on all matters not in the Book, and legislates, majority vote prevailing. The Guardian has one vote and no power of veto. Should he believe an adopted measure to be contrary to the spirit of the Faith, he will most certainly ask for a reconsideration, and it is impossible to imagine the House of Justice not seeking the true spiritual foundation of the matter in consultation with the Guardian.

It is noteworthy too that just as both institutions receive the same Divine care and protection, so the Guardian, by virtue of his membership, partakes of the authority vested in the House of Justice, although he has no individual legislative power.

These twin pillars of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, acting in close harmony, yet within clearly defined spheres, ensure the continuity of Divine guidance not only with respect to interpretation of the revealed Word, but also with respect to the practical application of the spiritual principles of the Faith to world affairs, as well as to legislative on those matters which Bahá'u'lláh has "deliberately left" out of "the body of His legislative and administrative ordinances." Authority therefore is vested in the House of Justice, according to the Will of Bahá'u'lláh and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Guarantee, or guardianship, comes from the

Guardian by virtue of his interpretation of the Word of God, the bedrock on which the whole structure is raised. We have already shown that power and initiative reside in the mass of believers—in the people—who constitute the seedbed of human development.

This paragraph about the House of Justice concludes with a statement which penetrates deep into the muddle and confusion of modern administration, and yet bears that stamp of deep wisdom, simplicity. *"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."**

The executive body is composed in part of the National and Local Houses of Justice, but there will undoubtedly be a permanent executive service, such as some countries already have, and such as the League of Nations has already foreshadowed in its committees on nutrition, drug and white slave traffic, wage standards, education, and in the secretariat of its own council.

The mandate of the Universal House of Justice is clear and definite. It must deliberate upon *"all problems that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book. Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the text itself."* But in spite of such

*For 'Abdu'l-Bahá's further discussion of the relationship between these two functions see His essay on politics, published in English as *"The Mysterious Forces of Civilization."*

compelling authority bestowed upon it, its enactments are not in the same station as the Word of God, a distinction which the Master clearly upholds and of which he shows the implication. The decisions and laws formulated by the House of Justice may be abrogated by the House of Justice, whereas the text of the Book remains supreme and inviolate throughout the Dispensation.

The membership of the House of Justice will change, but the institution is created by Bahá'u'lláh. The Guardian, by virtue of his permanent membership, gives to it that continuity of vision and disinterestedness which is so strong a feature of monarchy.

The National House of Justice, or "secondary" House as it is termed in the Will, is Abdu'l-Bahá's own contribution to the institutions of the world order. The Universal and Local Houses were designed by Bahá'u'lláh, but it is the Master who institutes the intermediary or secondary body. *"... 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."*

"Huqúq," or the fixed money offering ordained by Bahá'u'lláh is to be offered *"through the Guardian of the Cause of God, that it may be expended for the diffusion of the Fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Word for benevolent pursuits and for the common weal."* The amount is not mentioned here (actually it is one nineteenth of income after expenses have been deducted) but the Master tells the friends that God is independent of all created things, and that this offering is a favour from Him which *"causeth the people to become firm and steadfast and draweth Divine increase upon them."*

The machinations of Muhammad 'Alí and his fellow conspirators were a constant source of danger to the Master, and at one time He was constrained to write the following: *"This wronged one hath in no wise borne, nor doth he bear a grudge against anyone; towards none doth he entertain any ill-feeling and uttereth no word save for the good of the world. My supreme obligation, however, of necessity, prompteth me to guard and preserve the Cause of God. Thus with the greatest regret I counsel you saying: Guard ye the Cause of God, protect His Law and have the utmost fear of discord. This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them). 'His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Báb) is the Manifestation of the unity and Oneness of God and the forerunner of the Ancient Beauty. His Holiness the Abhá Beauty (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence. All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding.'"*

The final sentence is a direct repudiation of the charge which the violators made, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, by claiming to be in the same station as the Manifestation, proved Himself an impostor according to the terms of Bahá'u'lláh's Will, which stated clearly that after Him no Manifestation should appear for a full thousand years. (It is interesting to note their time honoured method of using certain sentences for perverted ends whilst utterly ignoring the main substance.) It was a few of the Master's own followers, who in their immaturity and overwhelming love, unwittingly lent assistance to this charge, by insisting on the same station for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Whom they had seen and to Whom they had delivered their hearts, as for Christ and Bahá'u'lláh Who were remote, and could not even in imagination surpass their

perfect Master. It is an understandable view. The child models its unknown Father in heaven upon its known father, and many have mistaken the perfect expression for the reality. It is understandable even in view of the Master's repeated statements to the contrary, although here understanding falls short of charity, for there is surely something of egotism in maintaining one's own opinion at the cost of regarding the statements of the Centre of the Covenant as veils to shield the Truth from unworthy ones. Be that as it may, it lent some countenance to the violators, who were not slow to wrest whatever support they could from the fact of a few devoted believers regarding 'Abdu'l-Bahá as Christ. Thus the Cause of God suffers as much, or more, "from the unwisdom of its friends" as the Guardian puts it, than from the hatred of its enemies.

The Will concludes with a re-statement of its major theme—the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi. "*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 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 Afván, the Hands 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 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 Centre 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."

The sentence "*to none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular convictions*" cannot be lifted from its context and applied to anything else but the succession. Indeed such a statement in any other setting would be a direct contradiction of the Bahá'í principle of consultation and a complete denial of the God given right of free speech. It refers only to the appointment of the first Guardian, about which no-one must quibble. By now, of course, all likelihood of such a thing is past, but the pitiful experiences of Abdu'l-Bahá proved only too clearly how the darkness in human nature is ever on the watch to take advantage of a sudden hiatus, caused by the removal from mortal sight of such a Figure as the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh. He wished to prevent a repetition of those dreadful days. History proves that He did so, and the Covenant which revolved around Him, was not broken. Violated by many, as traitors are counted, by few as the faithful are numbered, the mighty stronghold remained "impregnable and safe," unbroken and unimpaired in its efficacy as a shelter for all mankind. Rather did it gain in strength through the casting off of inorganic elements, but at the cost of such tribulation to the Founders of the Faith as only the Holy Ones can bear.

We may wonder what happens to "Judas" in each dispensation. What of the mob that cries "crucify

Him"; that assembles on the roof tops of Tabriz to watch His execution; that howls for blood and is hardly calmed by His bastinado; the mob that picks up stones to hurl at Majesty in chains. These qualities are manifested during each revelation, and must be, in order that the victory over death may be won again by that transcendant "*pure and stainless soul*," the Manifestation of God. The vessels of darkness doubtless are broken; so that the Light may enter. "*Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*"

For those who sin against the Holy Ghost, that is recognise the Truth and receive its light, and then set themselves against it with the power which it has given them, we are told in the Gospel there is no forgiveness. To the Bahá'í, eternity means the duration of a dispensation, at the end of which time there is a "new heaven and a new earth" and "all things are made new." Maybe this tortured being, conscious of God but excluded from "heaven" is given another chance at the day of judgment, when the Lord of the Age purifies all things.

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The more frequently one reads the Will and Testament the more is one intrigued and delighted by its artistic and æsthetic qualities. Its construction, form, design and unity all proclaim it the work of a creative, superbly balanced mind—as between the subjective values and objective forms. Written under stress and difficulty it never loses that mysterious quality which can elevate a painting or musical work to the realm of art.

Briefly the main design is the kingdom of God on earth; the theme, stated immediately after the introduction is Divine protection and guidance, a theme which has two phrases, the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice, a theme which is repeated in each part of the work, which is perceptible in the many variations (principles of action and subsidiary institutions) and is itself expanded and developed in the main body of the work. It provides the closing sentence of the document. Dramatic value and contrast are provided by the opposition of the violators, a shade so black and strong as to "*threaten to subvert the Divine edifice itself.*" Over all is the glory of Bahá'u'lláh, and throughout, in the repetition of the major and minor themes, in the trials and persecutions of the Great Ones, in the all-conquering love showered on friend and foe alike, breathes that spirit of harmony and high drama, the Day and Night of the cosmos, which, by the creation of form in wood or stone, paint or music, language or social order, we humans strive perpetually to enshrine.

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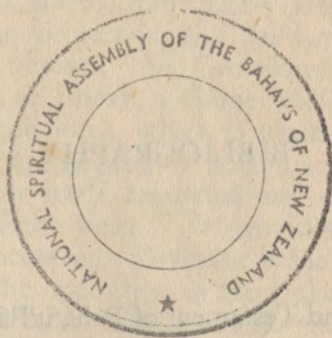
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