

## **Day of the Covenant**

(To be used as part of the opening remarks by the MC)

In the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, the Book of Covenant, Bahá'u'lláh describes the Covenant as “a shield protecting the temple of the Cause of God from assaults of the Covenant-breakers. The institution of the Covenant tests the faithfulness of the believers, separating the good from the evil. It also provides the means for preserving the unity and ensuring the healthy development of the community. During His ministry Bahá'u'lláh Himself was the protector of His own Cause. The continuation of the Covenant, the most vital instrument for safeguarding and strengthening the foundation of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh after His ascension, was established through the revelation of the Kitáb-i-'Ahd. What was only implicit in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas was now made explicit in the Kitáb-i-'Ahd: the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá' as the Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh was announced to the believers. The passage “Turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from his Ancient Root”, revealed in the former book, was now clearly stated to mean 'Abdu'l-Bahá'. Bahá'u'lláh unequivocally affirms “The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch.”

This clear appointment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá' as the Centre of the Covenant safeguards the unity of the Bahá'í community and protects it against schism and all manner of division. Similarly, the appointment of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice by 'Abdu'l-Bahá' in His Will and Testament perpetuates the process of protection until the end of the Bahá'í Dispensation. No other religion, including that of the Báb, has brought into being an instrument designed so to ensure the unity of its community. Through the institution of the Covenant, the mighty stronghold of the Cause of God has remained invincible in spite of the powerful assaults launched against it over a long period by the Covenant-breakers. For example, Mírzá Muhammad-'Ali' and his supporters viciously attacked the Cause of God with such ferocity that the opposition against the faithful in previous Dispensations fades into insignificance compared to it. In spite of this, the Covenant-breakers failed miserably and the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh triumphed.

**(Adib Taherzadeh, The Child of the Covenant)**

## Excerpts from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá'

O thou who art firm in the Covenant! ...The point at issue is clear, direct and of utmost brevity. Either Bahá'u'lláh was wise, omniscient and aware of what would ensue, or was ignorant and in error. He entered, by His supreme pen, into such a firm Covenant and Testament with all the Bahá'ís, first with the Aghsán, the Afnán and His kindred, and commanded them to obey and turn toward Him. By His supreme pen He hath explicitly declared that the object of the following verse of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is the Most Great Branch:

'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.' Its meaning briefly is this: that after My ascension it is incumbent upon the Aghsán, the Afnán and the kindred, and all the friends of God, to turn their faces to Him Who hath branched from the Ancient Root.

He also plainly saith in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas: 'O ye people of the world! 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.' Addressing all the people of the world He saith: 'When the Mystic Dove flieth away from the orchard of praise to the Most Supreme and Invisible Station—that is, when the Blessed Beauty turneth away from the contingent world towards the invisible realm—refer whatever ye do not understand in the Book to Him Who hath branched from the Ancient Root. That is, whatever He saith is the very truth.'

And in the Book of the Covenant He explicitly saith that the object of this verse 'Who hath branched from this Ancient Root' is the Most Mighty Branch. And He commandeth all the Aghsán, the Afnán, the kindred and the Bahá'ís to turn toward Him. Now, either one must say that the Blessed Beauty hath made a mistake, or He must be obeyed. 'Abdu'l-Bahá' hath no command for the people to obey save the diffusion of the fragrances of God,

the exaltation of His Word, the promulgation of the oneness of the world of humanity, the establishment of universal peace, and other of the commands of God. These are divine commands and have nothing to do with 'Abdu'l-Bahá'. Whoever wisheth may accept them, and anyone who rejecteth them may do as he pleaseth.

... know that the (Bahá'í) unity cannot be maintained save through faith in the Covenant of God.

Thou hast the desire to travel that thou mayest spread the fragrances of God. This is highly suitable. Assuredly divine confirmations will assist thee and the power of the Covenant and Testament will secure for thee triumph and victory.

**('Abdu'l-Bahá')**

## Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá'

“An attempt I strongly feel should now be made to clarify our minds regarding the station occupied by 'Abdu'l-Bahá' and the significance of His position in this holy Dispensation. 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, fulfils 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. To degrade His lofty rank by identifying His station with or by regarding it as roughly equivalent to, the position of those on whom the mantle of His authority has fallen would be an act of impiety as grave as the no less heretical belief that inclines to exalt Him to a state of absolute equality with either the central Figure or Forerunner of our Faith. For wide as is the gulf that separates 'Abdu'l-Bahá' from Him Who is the Source of an independent Revelation, it can never be regarded as commensurate with the greater distance that stands between Him Who is the Center of the Covenant and His ministers who are to carry on His work, whatever be their name, their rank, their functions or their future achievements. Let those who have known 'Abdu'l-Bahá', who through their contact with His magnetic personality have come to cherish for Him so fervent an

admiration, reflect, in the light of this statement, on the greatness of One Who is so far above Him in station.....

.... we should not by any means infer that 'Abdu'l-Bahá' is merely one of the servants of the Blessed Beauty, or at best one whose function is to be confined to that of an authorized interpreter of His Father's teachings. Far be it from me to entertain such a notion or to wish to instil such sentiments. To regard Him in such a light is a manifest betrayal of the priceless heritage bequeathed by Bahá'u'lláh to mankind. Immeasurably exalted is the station conferred upon Him by the Supreme Pen above and beyond the implications of these, His own written statements. Whether in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the most weighty and sacred of all the works of Bahá'u'lláh, or in the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, the Book of His Covenant, or in the Suriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch), such references as have been recorded by the pen of Bahá'u'lláh -- references which the Tablets of His Father addressed to Him mightily reinforce -- invest 'Abdu'l-Bahá' with a power, and surround Him with a halo, which the present generation can never adequately appreciate.

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.

"When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended," proclaims the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, "turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root." And again, "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."

In the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, moreover, Bahá'u'lláh solemnly and explicitly declares: "It is incumbent upon the Aghsan, the Afnan 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."

In the Suriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch) the following verses have been recorded: "There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntaha 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.

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

...'Abdu'l-Bahá', writing in confirmation of the authority conferred upon Him by Bahá'u'lláh, makes the following statement: "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."

**(Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh)**

## **Excerpts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh**

**“O Thou Who art the apple of Mine eye! My glory, the ocean of My loving-kindness, the sun of My bounty, the heaven of My mercy rest upon Thee. We pray God to illumine the world through Thy knowledge and wisdom, to ordain for Thee that which will gladden Thine heart and impart consolation to Thine eyes....”**

**(From a Tablet in Bahá'u'lláh's handwriting addressed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá'. Translated by Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh)**

**"We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind, 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 quoted in Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh)**

**"Praise be to Him Who hath honoured the Land of Ba (Beirut)** through the presence of Him round Whom all names revolve. All the atoms of the earth have announced unto all created things that from behind the gate of the Prison-city there hath appeared and above its horizon there hath shone forth the Orb of the beauty of the great, the Most Mighty Branch of God -- His ancient and immutable Mystery -- proceeding on its way to another land. Sorrow, thereby, hath enveloped this Prison-city, whilst another land rejoiceth ... Blessed, doubly blessed, is the ground which His footsteps have trodden, the eye that hath been cheered by the beauty of His countenance, the ear that hath been honoured by hearkening to His call, the heart that hath tasted the sweetness of His love, the breast that hath dilated through His remembrance, the pen that hath voiced His praise, the scroll that hath borne the testimony of His writings."

**(Bahá'u'lláh quoted in Adib Taherzadeh: The Covenant of  
Bahá'u'lláh)**

## **Tablet of Visitation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá'**

***Whoso reciteth this prayer with lowliness and fervor will bring gladness and joy to the heart of this Servant; it will be even as meeting Him face to face.***

**He is the All-Glorious!**

O God, my God! Lowly and tearful, I raise my suppliant hands to Thee and cover my face in the dust of that Threshold of Thine, exalted above the knowledge of the learned, and the praise of all that glorify Thee. Graciously look upon Thy servant, humble and lowly at Thy door, with the glances of the eye of Thy mercy, and immerse him in the Ocean of Thine eternal grace.

Lord! He is a poor and lowly servant of Thine, enthralled and imploring Thee, captive in Thy hand, praying fervently to Thee, trusting in Thee, in tears before Thy face, calling to Thee and beseeching Thee, saying:

O Lord, my God! Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones, strengthen me in my servitude to Thee, illumine my brow with the light of adoration in Thy court of holiness, and of prayer to Thy kingdom of grandeur. Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance of Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me. Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones, and grant that I may offer up my soul for the earth ennobled by the footsteps of Thy chosen ones in Thy path, O Lord of Glory in the Highest.

With this prayer doth Thy servant call Thee, at dawntide and in the night-season. Fulfil his heart's desire, O Lord! Illumine his heart, gladden his bosom, kindle his light, that he may serve Thy Cause and Thy servants. Thou art the Bestower, the Pitiful, the Most Bountiful, the Gracious, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

**(‘Abdu'l-Bahá’, Compilations, Bahá’í Prayers)**

## Excerpts from the Tablet of the Branch

...Enter, O people, beneath the shelter of the Word! Then drink therefrom the choice wine of inner significances and utterances; for therein is hidden the kawther of the glorious One and it hath appeared from the horizon of the Will of your Lord, the Merciful, with wonderful lights.

Say: Verily, the ocean of pre-existence hath branched forth from this most great Ocean. Blessed, therefore, is he who abides upon Its shores, and is of those who are established thereon. Verily, this most sacred temple of Abhá--the Branch of Holiness hath branched forth from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá. Blessed is whosoever sought shelter beneath it and is of those who rest therein.

Say: Verily, the branch of command hath sprung forth from this root which God hath firmly planted in the ground of the will, the limb of which has been elevated to a station which encompasses all existence. Therefore, exalted be He for this creation, the Lofty, the Blessed, the Inaccessible, the Mighty!

O ye people! Draw nigh unto It, and taste the fruits of Its knowledge and wisdom on the part of the Mighty, the Knowing One. Whosoever will not taste thereof shall be deprived of the bounty, even though he hath partaken of all that is in the earth--were ye of those who know.

Say: Verily a word hath gone forth in favor from the most great Tablet and God has adorned It with the mantle of Himself, and made It sovereign over all in the earth and a sign of His grandeur and omnipotence among the creatures; in order that through It, the people shall praise their Lord, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Wise; and that, through It, they shall glorify their Creator and sanctify the self of God which standeth within all things. Verily, this is naught but a Revelation upon the part of the Wise, the Ancient One!

Say: O people, praise ye God, for its Manifestation, for verily it is the most great favor upon you and the most perfect blessing upon you; and through Him every moldering bone is quickened Whosoever turns to Him hath surely

turned unto God, and whosoever turneth away from Him hath turned away from My beauty denied My proof and is of those who transgress. Verily, He is the remembrance of God amongst you and His trust within you, and His manifestation unto you and His appearance among the servants who are nigh. Thus have I been commanded to convey to you the message of God, your Creator; and I have delivered to you that of which I was commanded. Whereupon, thereunto testifieth God, then His angels, then His messengers, and then His holy servants.

Inhale the fragrances of the Riḍván from His roses and be not of those who are deprived. Appreciate the bounty of God upon you and be not veiled therefrom--and, verily, We have sent Him forth in the temple of man. Thus, praise ye the Lord, the Originator of whatsoever He willeth through His wise and inviolable Command!

Verily, those who withhold themselves from the shelter of the Branch are indeed lost in the wilderness of perplexity and are consumed by the heat of self-desire, and are of those who perish.

Hasten, O people, unto the shelter of God, in order that He may protect you from the heat of the Day whereon none shall find for himself any refuge or shelter except beneath the shelter of His Name, the Clement, the Forgiving! Clothe yourselves, O people, with the garment of assurance, in order that He may protect you from the dart of doubts and superstitions, and that ye may be of those who are assured in those days wherein none shall ever be assured and none shall be firmly established in the Cause, except by severing himself from all that is possessed by the people and turning unto the holy and radiant Outlook....

**(Bahá'u'lláh)**