

PROOFS OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE WILL AND TESTAMENT OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ
PREPARED BY HAND OF THE CAUSE 'ALI AKBAR FURŪTAN

There is more than a grain of truth in the saying "History repeats itself", and the account of the recurrent crises in the annals of the Bahá'í Faith amply demonstrates this fact.

Consider the major crisis which broke out when Bahá'u'lláh declared His Mission some years after the martyrdom of the Báb - a crisis which was no less grave than the persecutions which raged around the Herald of our Faith and His disciples. Again after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, when it became known that He had appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Centre of His Covenant, a similar crisis no less severe than the former was precipitated through the rebellion of Muhammad 'Alí, supported by a formidable band of old and new Covenant-breakers, including members of the Holy Family. Then once again when 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away and Shoghi Effendi was declared the appointed Guardian of the Faith, the remnants of the Covenant-breakers and other betrayers, untaught by the ignominious defeat of the past adversaries, made abortive attempts to undermine the Faith and misrepresent its character. And yet once more when Shoghi Effendi passed away and the Universal House of Justice came into being the dwindling group of Covenant-breakers and some ignorant and short-sighted persons conspired to disrupt the institutions of the Cause by their infamous machinations, but utterly failed in their purpose.

In all these recurrent events two facts stand out invariably clear and unmistakable: one is the triumph and the ascendancy of the Cause of God and the evidence of its capacity to surmount any crisis, and the other is the defeat and disgrace of the betrayers and enemies of the Faith and the eventual frustration of their designs.

Now consider today, more than 50 years after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, when the fame of the Cause of God is noised abroad, when the evidences of the development of the Faith, as foreshadowed in the Holy Writings, are resplendent in all regions like the midday sun - in such a period it is hardly believable that some misguided persons are once again busily engaged in a campaign of vilification against the Cause. This time their aim is to challenge the validity of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and to take up once more the same discordant tune which some 50 years ago was voiced by a deluded American woman and soon died away. They fondly hope that by so doing they may provoke a new crisis in the Cause as was done by the former enemies, and thereby sap the loyalty of the faithful and create a breach in the ranks of its supporters.

In the following statement some explanations are given about the Master's Will and Testament, trusting that they may prove helpful in refuting the charges brought against the Faith by the enemies.

I. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

This historic Document, which in some of its aspects may be regarded as supplementary to Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Laws and as the Charter of the New World Order, was entirely written in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own hand and is signed and sealed by Him. It was revealed during the darkest days of His incarceration in 'Akká, at a time when the intrigues and machinations of the Covenant-breakers were at their height and severe restrictions had been imposed on the Bahá'í community in 'Akká following the arrival of the Turkish Commission of Inquiry. In the text of the Will itself 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly refers to those turbulent times in these words:

"O dearly-beloved friends! I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour's life is lost to me. I am thus constrained to write these lines for the protection of the Cause of God and the preservation of His Law."

During those dark hours which were fraught with manifold perils and tribulations 'Abdu'l-Bahá took every care for the preservation and the safe-keeping of this precious Document. The following passage in the Will clearly affirms this:

"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."

II. A glimpse at the events which transpired after the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

1. The publication of the Will and Testament

(The first part of this section is mainly based on the eye-witness accounts of a number of distinguished believers who were in Haifa at the time of the passing of the Master, such as Mr. and Mrs. Bosch, Mr. Yusif Vujdáńí, Dr. Lutfu'lláh Ĥakím, and Mr. Badí' Bushrú'í.)

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away on 28th November 1921, Shoghi Effendi was in England. In fact he had already been recalled home at the express instruction of the Master but the letter came to his hand too late, when He had already passed away. Shoghi Effendi arrived in Haifa on December 29th, and a few days later when he had somewhat recovered from the agonizing grief, a group of nine men, consisting of seven members of the Master's family and two Persian friends, were summoned to a meeting where the text of the Master's Will and Testament was presented to them by the Greatest Holy Leaf, and its contents were read aloud. Then Mr. Vujdáńí was instructed to prepare several true copies of the Will which were carefully checked with the original Document before they were sent to various Bahá'í centres. Again on January 3rd the Greatest Holy Leaf invited nineteen Bahá'ís to a meeting at the home of the Master where the whole text was shown and read to them. Once more on the 7th of January, which marked the fortieth day of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension, a memorial meeting was held at the Master's house and in spite of the heavy rain which fell on that day, a large number of Bahá'ís and notables, including the Governor of Haifa, took part in this meeting. At that gathering, following speeches in praise and admiration of the departed Master, the provisions of the Will were publicly announced and the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Faith and the Head of the Bahá'í World Community was openly declared to all those present. On the same day the Greatest Holy Leaf sent the following telegram to Persia: "Tíhrán Davāchí - Will and Testament forwarded Shoghi Effendi Centre Cause".

2. The response accorded to the Will and Testament by the friends

When the photostat text of the Will reached the Spiritual Assemblies and the friends in Persia and elsewhere, it received unflinching recognition and acceptance everywhere and evoked a sense of loving submission in the hearts of the friends towards its provisions. In fact, during the twenty-nine years of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry the friends in the East had become intimately familiar with the style and character of His inimitable handwriting through the unnumbered Tablets which day and night streamed from His divinely propelled Pen. Indeed, so prolific had been the volume of the writings in His own hand that it is only fair to say that at the time of His passing there was hardly any Bahá'í home in Persia where there were no samples of His handwriting, either in the form of original Tablets or their photostatic prints.

In the light of the foregoing, the matter of the authenticity of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will, and the fact that it was written in His own hand and repeatedly sealed and signed by Him, was and is so clear, patent and unmistakable that no one in the East, not even His most implacable opponents such as Muhammad 'Alí, the arch-enemy, or Badí'ulláh, or the crafty Madjdid-Dín who constantly instigated the other Covenant-breakers against 'Abdu'l-Bahá, none of them or others who bitterly opposed Shoghi Effendi following the ascension of the Master, ever hinted at the possibility of the Will's being a forged document, notwithstanding the fact that an appreciable part of this Document dealt with the enumeration of their evil deeds and intrigues.

Let no one imagine that it was only the old band of Covenant-breakers who desisted from challenging the genuineness of the Will. Of those malicious enemies who threw in their lot with the remnants of the Covenant-breakers following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing and whose shameless attacks against the Cause were even fiercer than the former opponents, such as Fá'iq in Egypt, Áváríh, Níkú, Sálíh of Marághih, and Shaykh Hasan Burushiki, who imputed the most infamous denunciations to the person of the Founders of the Faith and to its institutions, none ever dared to question the authenticity of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, because its genuineness was so clear and self-evident to friend and foe alike that to reject it as a forged document would have been tantamount to denying an undisputed fact.

Another perfidious enemy of the Cause who rebelled against the authority of the Guardian is the notorious Subhí, who came from a well-known Persian Bahá'í family and for a number of years served the Master as His secretary. However, soon after His ascension, he arose in opposition to the Faith and launched a prolonged and widespread campaign of shameless vilification, not only against the Guardian and the institution of the Guardianship but also against the exalted person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, bitterly denouncing the sacred beliefs and principles of the Faith. And even this inveterate enemy who for many years exerted himself to undermine the foundation of the Cause, never questioned the validity of the Will.

Throughout the length and breadth of the entire Bahá'í world the only person who ever denounced the Will as a forged document was an American woman named Mrs. White. She was entirely unfamiliar with the Persian language and script and her misguided effort, apart from causing the defection of some early believers in Germany, failed altogether in its purpose.

One of the distinguishing features of the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá with which the Persian friends are perfectly familiar is His unique style and mode of expression which is characteristic of Him and Him alone. This familiarity of the friends with His style also made them fully confident that the whole text of this divine Charter was undoubtedly inscribed by the same untiring Pen from which such an enormous volume of writings had, for no less than twenty-nine years, unceasingly streamed.

It should also be borne in mind that the provisions of this Document are fully confirmed and substantiated by scores of historic evidences, some of which are given below by way of example.

(a) In 1902 an American believer wrote to the Master saying that according to the prophecies in the Bible (Isaiah 11:6) when His ministry came to an end "a little child shall lead them" and she asked the Master if that child existed and was living then. In answer to this question 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed the following Tablet:

"O Maidservant of God!

"Verily, that child is born and is alive and from him will appear wondrous things that thou wilt hear of in the future. Thou shalt behold him endowed with the most perfect appearance, supreme capacity, absolute perfection, consummate power and unsurpassed might. His face will shine with a radiance that illumines all the horizons of the world; therefore forget this not as long as thou dost live inasmuch as ages and centuries will bear traces of him.

Upon thee be greetings and praise

'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás'

(b) Long before 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away three friends from Persia asked Him about his successor. In answer He wrote:

" ... Know verily that this is a well-guarded secret. It is even as a gem concealed within its shell. That it will be revealed is predestined. The time will come when its light will appear, when its evidences will be made manifest, and its secrets unravelled."

(c) Dr. Yúnis Khán, who for years acted as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's secretary and interpreter, writes in his book "My Reminiscences of the Nine Years in 'Akká" that one day in 'Akká he said to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that according to what was heard the Master had said that the one who was to appear after Him had already been born. After a pause 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "Yes, this is true." In reply to a further question He replied: "The triumph of the Cause of God is in his hands."

(d) Towards the end of His life 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed the Spiritual Assembly of Tíhrán to register the deeds of all Bahá'í-owned real estate and properties in Persia in the name of "Mírzá Shoghi Rabbani who is the son of Mírzá Hádí Shírází" and "is in London".

(e) On 13th October 1921, only forty-seven days before His passing, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote these words on the margin of a Tablet He had revealed that day in honour of the then Trustee of the Huqúqu'lláh, Hájí Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikáni: "For the edification of the friends I am enclosing herewith a letter hastily penned by Shoghi Effendi, the sincere, the humble, the submissive servant of the Blessed Beauty".

(f) The following is the gist of the reminiscences of a German woman doctor, named Dr. J. Fallscheer, who lived in Haifa in the days of the Master and occasionally attended the ladies of His household. A part of her reminiscences appears in the German Bahá'í magazine "Sonne der Wahrheit". Having referred to Shoghi Effendi as "My future Elisha", 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to her:

"Bahá'u'lláh, the Great Perfection - blessed be His words - in the past, the present and forever - chose this insignificant one to be His successor, not because I was the first born, but because His inner eye had already discerned on my brow the seal of God.

"Before His ascension into eternal Light the blessed Manifestation reminded me that I too - irrespective of primogeniture or age - must observe among my sons and grandsons whom God would indicate for His office. My sons passed to eternity in their tenderest years, in my line, among my relatives, only little Shoghi has the shadow of a great calling in the depths of his eyes."

In brief, when the actual text of the Master's Will and Testament was published after His passing, the Bahá'í friends, particularly in the East, readily perceived that its provisions were in full accord and perfect harmony with the relevant historic events and evidences which they had known before; therefore they submitted to this divine authority and turned to the appointed Guardian with such ardent love, such wholehearted and sustained devotion that the enemies of the Cause were confounded and saw no chance or ground for themselves to question the validity of the Master's Will and Testament.