

THE ETERNAL EXAMPLE

The Covenant

QUOTATIONS | STORIES | REFLECTIONS



QUOTATIONS

O ye friends of God!

Do ye know in what cycle ye are created and in what age ye exist? This is the age of the Blessed Perfection and this is the time of the Greatest Name! This is the century of the Manifestation, the age of the Sun of the Horizons and the beautiful springtime of His Holiness the Eternal One!

The earth is in motion and growth; the mountains, hills and prairies are green and pleasant; the bounty is overflowing; the mercy universal; the rain is descending from the cloud of mercy; the brilliant Sun is shining; the full moon is ornamenting the horizon of ether; the great ocean-tide is flooding every little stream; the gifts are successive;

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the favors consecutive; and the refreshing breeze is blowing, wafting the fragrant perfume of the blossoms. Boundless treasure is in the hand of the King of Kings! Lift the hem of thy garment in order to receive it.

If we are not happy and joyous at this season, for what other season shall we wait and for what other time shall we look?

This is the time for growing; the season for joyous gathering! Take the cup of the Testament in thy hand; leap and dance with ecstasy in the triumphal procession of the Covenant! Lay your confidence in the everlasting bounty, turn to the presence of the generous God; ask assistance from the Kingdom of Abha; seek confirmation from the Supreme World; turn thy vision to the horizon of eternal wealth; and pray for help from the Source of Mercy!

Soon shall ye see the friends attaining their longed-for destination and pitching their tents, while we are but in the first day of our journey.

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas

A Covenant in the religious sense is a binding agreement between God and man, whereby God requires of man certain behaviour in return for which He guarantees certain blessings, or whereby He gives man certain bounties in return for which He takes from those who accept them an undertaking to behave in a certain way. There is, for example, the Greater Covenant which every Manifestation of God makes with His followers, promising that in the fulness of time a new Manifestation will be sent, and taking from them the undertaking to accept Him when this occurs.

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There is also the Lesser Covenant that a Manifestation of God makes with His followers that they will accept His appointed successor after Him. If they do so, the Faith can remain united and pure. If not, the Faith becomes divided and its force spent. It is a Covenant of this kind that Baha'u'llah made with His followers regarding 'Abdu'l-Bahá and that 'Abdu'l-Bahá perpetuated through the Administrative Order...

From a letter written by The Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 23 March 1975

*H*is Holiness Abraham, on Him be peace, made a covenant concerning His Holiness Moses and gave the glad-tidings of His coming. His Holiness Moses made a covenant concerning the Promised One, i.e. His Holiness Christ, and announced the good news of His Manifestation to the world. His Holiness Christ made a covenant concerning the Paraclete and gave the tidings of His coming. His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad made a covenant concerning His Holiness the Báb and the Báb was the One promised by Muhammad, for Muhammad gave the tidings of His coming. The Báb made a Covenant concerning the Blessed Beauty of Bahá'u'lláh and gave the glad-tidings of His coming for the Blessed Beauty was the One promised by His Holiness the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a promised One who will become manifest after one thousand or thousands of years.

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He likewise, with His Supreme Pen, entered into a great Covenant and Testament with all the Bahá'ís whereby they were all commanded to follow the Center of the Covenant after His departure, and turn not away even to a hair's breadth from obeying Him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in Bahá'í World Faith

*A*s to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, a specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past: It is the ordination and appointment of the Center of the Covenant. By this appointment and provision He has safeguarded and protected the religion of God against differences and schisms, making it impossible for anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief. To ensure unity and agreement He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world, including the interpreter and explainer of His teachings, so that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according to his own view or opinion and thus create a sect founded upon his individual understanding of the divine Words...

My purpose is to explain to you that it is your duty to guard the religion of God so that none shall be able to assail it outwardly or inwardly.

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If you find harmful teachings are being set forth by some individual, no matter who that individual be, even though he should be my own son, know, verily, that I am completely severed from him. If anyone speaks against the Covenant, even though he should be my son, know that I am opposed to him. Those who speak falsehoods, who covet worldly things and seek to accumulate the riches of this earth are not of me. But when you find a person living up to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, following the precepts of the Hidden Words, know that he belongs to Bahá'u'lláh; and, verily, I proclaim that he is of me. If, on the other hand, you see anyone whose deeds and conduct are contrary to and not in conformity with the good pleasure of the Blessed Perfection and against the spirit of the Hidden Words, let that be your standard and criterion of judgment against him, for know that I am altogether severed from him no matter who he may be. This is the truth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace

Today the dynamic power of the world of existence is the power of the Covenant which like unto an artery pulsateth in the body of the contingent world and protecteth Bahá'í unity.

The Bahá'ís are commanded to establish the oneness of mankind; if they cannot unite around one point how will they be able to bring about the unity of mankind?

The purpose of the Blessed Beauty in entering into this Covenant and Testament was to gather all existent beings around one point so that the thoughtless souls, who in every cycle and generation have been the cause of dissension, may not undermine the Cause. He hath, therefore, commanded that whatever emanateth from the Centre of the Covenant is right and is under His protection and favour, while all else is error.

Praise be to God, thou art firm in the Covenant and the Testament.

Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Walk, therefore, with a sure step and engage with the utmost assurance and confidence in the promulgation of the divine fragrances, the glorification of the Word of God and firmness in the Covenant. Rest ye assured that if a soul ariseth in the utmost perseverance and raiseth the Call of the Kingdom and resolutely promulgateth the Covenant, be he an insignificant ant he shall be enabled to drive away the formidable elephant from the arena, and if he be a feeble moth he shall cut to pieces the plumage of the rapacious vulture.

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Endeavour, therefore, that ye may scatter and disperse the army of doubt and of error with the power of the holy utterances. This is my exhortation and this is my counsel. Do not quarrel with anybody, and shun every form of dispute. Utter the Word of God. If he accepteth it the desired purpose is attained, and if he turneth away leave him to himself and trust to God.

Such is the attribute of those who are firm in the Covenant.

Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O thou who art gazing unto the Center of the Covenant—may God confirm thee!

I supplicate God, beseech Him and pray to Him that He may deliver the souls from the deluge of tests and kindle the lamp of sincerity in the midst of the hearts. As to thee—O thou who art sincere in the Cause of God, looking unto the Kingdom of God and uttering the praise of God! —thank thou Him for that by reason of which He hath made thee wholly faithful in His Cause, kindled thy heart with the fire of the Testament, illumined thy mind with the light and conveyed unto thy spirit the glad-tidings of the breaths of the Holy Spirit in the world of effulgence. Therefore, roll up thy sleeves to serve the Covenant, make the hearts firm in the Covenant of the beloved Lord,

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create harmony and agreement among the believers and impart to them the glad-tidings of the confirmation which they will receive from God if the differences of opinion be removed and if they unite and agree, be firm in spreading the fragrance of God, divulging the traces and chanting the signs of God. Verily, I send thee good news of the confirmation which thou shalt receive, the like of which was never seen by the eyes in those regions, and of the success, the lights of which will brilliantly shine in those regions—if thou wilt arise with all thy power to assist the Testament of God and to serve the Covenant of God.

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas

O ye who are holding fast unto the Covenant and Testament!
This day, from the realms of the All Glorious, from the Kingdom of Holiness where hosannas of glorification and praise rise up, the Company on high direct their gaze upon you. Whensoever their gaze lighteth upon gatherings of those who are steadfast in the Covenant and Testament, then do they utter their cry, 'Glad tidings! Glad tidings!' Then, exulting, do they lift up their voices, and shout, 'O ye spiritual communion! O ye gathering of God! Blessed are ye! Glad tidings be unto you! Bright be your faces, and be ye of good cheer, for ye cling to the Covenant of the Beloved of all the worlds, ye are on fire with the wine of His Testament. Ye have plighted your troth to the Ancient of Days,

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ye have drunk deep from the chalice of loyalty. Ye have guarded and defended the Cause of God; ye have not been a cause of dividing up His Word; ye have not brought His Faith low, but have striven to glorify His Holy Name; ye have not allowed the Blessed Cause to be exposed to the derision of the people. Ye have not permitted the Designated Station to be humbled, nor been willing to see the Center of Authority discredited or exposed to mockery and persecution. Ye have striven to keep the Word whole and one. Ye have passed through the portals of mercy. Ye have not let the Blessed Beauty slip from your minds, to fade unremembered.'

Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

*M*ake firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strengthen Thou our hearts in Thine obedience. Turn our faces toward the beauty of Thy oneness, and gladden our bosoms with the signs of Thy divine unity. Adorn our bodies with the robe of Thy bounty, and remove from our eyes the veil of sinfulness, and give us the chalice of Thy grace; that the essence of all beings may sing Thy praise before the vision of Thy grandeur. Reveal then Thyself, O Lord, by Thy merciful utterance and the mystery of Thy divine being, that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls—a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds—that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendor.

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Lord! These are servants that have remained fast and firm in Thy Covenant and Thy Testament, that have held fast unto the cord of constancy in Thy Cause and clung unto the hem of the robe of Thy grandeur. Assist them, O Lord, with Thy grace, confirm them with Thy power and strengthen their loins in obedience to Thee.

Thou art the Pardoner, the Gracious.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in Bahá'í Prayers

O compassionate God! Thanks be to Thee for Thou hast awakened and made me conscious. Thou hast given me a seeing eye and favored me with a hearing ear, hast led me to Thy kingdom and guided me to Thy path. Thou hast shown me the right way and caused me to enter the ark of deliverance. O God! Keep me steadfast and make me firm and staunch. Protect me from violent tests, and preserve and shelter me in the strongly fortified fortress of Thy Covenant and Testament. Thou art the Powerful. Thou art the Seeing. Thou art the Hearing.

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O Thou the Compassionate God. Bestow upon me a heart which, like unto glass, may be illumined with the light of Thy love, and confer upon me thoughts which may change this world into a rose garden through the outpourings of heavenly grace.

Thou art the Compassionate, the Merciful. Thou art the Great Beneficent God.

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas



STORIES

*I*n the many years of my residence at the threshold of the Master's presence, I often wondered how and by what means was that Blessed Personage able to solve the manifold problems created by the raging storms of adversity and hardship? How was He able, in matters large and small, to act with such dignity, composure and unwavering focus as to appear as though He had absolutely nothing else to do?

One dark night, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá paced up and down the long front hallway of the reception room, relaxing and easing the stresses of a busy day, He asked me the following question. 'Do you know how I administer this Faith?'

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Then He said, 'I pull the sails of the ship firmly and fasten the ropes tight. I locate my destination and then by the power of my will I hold the wheel and head out. No matter how strong the storm, no matter how dangerous the threat to the safety of the ship, I do not change course. I do not become agitated or disheartened; I persevere until I reach my goal. If I were to hesitate or change direction at the sight of every danger, the Ark of the Cause of God would surely fail to reach its destination.'

Dr Yunus Khan, Memories of Nine Years in Akka



REFLECTIONS

What is the Covenant? What is the purpose of the Covenant?

How does following the example and guidance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá relate to the Covenant? How does our love for one another relate to the Covenant?

What can we do to ensure that we stay firm and steadfast in our services to humanity and the Cause of God?



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