

Center of the Covenant: Tablet to Mason Remey, interview

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The time has come when the Bahais of the West should understand what is intended by "The Center of the Covenant;" therefore we are pleased to publish in this issue the article from the pen of Charles Mason Remey, "Abdul-Baha, the Center of the Covenant." A tablet regarding this important subject was recently revealed by Abdul-Baha through Mr. Remey. We publish it herewith.

Tablet to Mr. Remey

by Abdu'l-Bahátrans. Ahmad Sohrab

To his honor Mr. Remey - Upon him be

BAHA'O'LLAH-EL-ABHA!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter was received and I was informed of its contents. Explain the matter according to the following Teachings, and do not add one word thereto:

His Holiness Abraham-Upon him be Peace! - took the Covenant of His Holiness Moses and gave the glad-tidings of His appearance. His, Holiness Moses took the Covenant of the Promised One, His Holiness the Christ, and gladdened the world with the glad-tidings of His Manifestation, His Holiness the Christ took the Covenant of the "Paraclete" - which means His Holiness Mohammed - and announced the glad-tidings of His Appearance. His Holiness Mohammed took the Covenant of His Holiness the Bab, and the Bab was, the Promised One of His Holiness Mohammed, for He gave the good news of His Coming. His Holiness the Blessed Perfection BAHA'O'LLAH - was the Promised One of His Holiness the Bab. The Blessed Perfection has prophesied of the coming of a Promised One after one thousand years, or after thousands of years. That Personage is the Promised One of the Blessed Perfection, and He will [p. 17] appear after one thousand years or after thousands of years. Likewise with the trace of the Supreme Pen He has taken a great Covenant and Testament from all the Bahais, that after His Departure they must obey the Center of the Covenant and must not deviate one hair's breadth from obedience to him. He has commanded in the most explicit term in two instances in the Book of Akdas and He has appointed most unmistakably the interpreter of the Book.

In all the Tablets, especially the chapter of "Branch," whose meanings are all Abdul-Baha - that is, "the Servant of Baha" - everything that is necessary is revealed from the Supreme Pen. As Abdul-Baha is the interpreter of the Book, he says that the chapter of "Branch" means Abdul-Baha, it refers to the servitude of Abdul-Baha and nothing else.

In brief, one of the special favors of this dispensation of His

Holiness BAHĀ'O'LLĀH which is not seen in past Manifestations is this: - that He has left no place for difference. For in His own Day, with the Trace of His own Supreme Pen He has taken a Covenant and a Testament. He has pointed to the one who should be looked upon as authority by all, He has shown the interpreter of the Book and has closed the doors of outside interpretation.

Everyone should thank God that in this Blessed Cause He has tranquilized all and has left no place for hesitation. Therefore obedience and submission must be shown and the face turned completely to him (the Center of the Covenant).

Restrict discussion to this and do not exceed thereto, so that it may become the cause of fellowship and the remover of differences.

Upon thee be BAHĀ-EL-ABHĀ!

(Signed) ABDUL-BAHĀ ABBĀS.

Translated by M. Ahmad Sohrab
Montclair, N. J., June 24, 1912.

Notwithstanding that BAHĀ'O'LLĀH pointed to the one who should be looked upon as authority by all and named the interpreter of His Words, leaving no place for difference and misunderstanding, yet it is known that shortly after the departure [death] of BAHĀ'O'LLĀH difficulties arose. The following interview between Badi'u'llah [brother of Abdul-Bahā] and Howard MacNutt at the home of Abdul-Bahā in Akka, Syria, January 10, 1905, is a presentation of this important subject of "The Center of the Covenant" from another standpoint. It is printed in the STAR OF THE WEST at the request of Abdul-Bahā:

Interview with Badi'u'llah by Howard MacNutt

Another afternoon, Badi'u'llah came in to see us. Our conversation had been upon "loyalty to the Covenant." After the interpreter had explained our views, Badi'u'llah listened gravely for a while, then said:

"Nine days after the ascension of the Blessed Perfection, [BAHĀ'O' LLĀH] the Kitab-el-Ahd [Book of the Covenant] was read. After a few days Mohammed Ali Effendi [brother of Abdul-Bahā and Badi'u'llah] and a part of the family withdrew from Abbas Effendi [Abdul-Bahā]. The other members of the family were instigated by words of Mohammed Ali to the effect that the Blessed Perfection had written in the Kitab-el-Akdas [Book of the Laws] that no Manifestation should appear for one thousand years and that Abbas Effendi was taking the title of "Manifestation" to himself. This was the cause of the breaking away of part of the family, including myself.

"Afterwards I saw some of the actions of Mohammed Ali and realized that the reason he had withdrawn from Abbas Effendi was not on account of the words of BAHĀ'O'LLĀH in the Kitab-elAkdas but that it had been occasioned by his own feelings. And I saw too that these actions were not consistent with the commands and writings of the Blessed Perfection. From this I saw and knew clearly that the cause of his withdrawal had been hatred of Abbas Effendi.

"The brother of the wife of Mohammed Ali, Mirza Majded-din, was sent by Mohammed Ali to Damascus with a letter for the Governor of Damascus. In that letter Mohammed Ali wrote a complaint against Abbas Effendi. This messenger was also instructed to tell the Governor by word of mouth certain things which would injure the Cause further for Abbas Effendi. The letter and messages were duly delivered to the Governor-General of Damascus. In twenty-five days the messenger returned. Just about that time a telegram came from the Sultan to the Governor-General of Beirut who telegraphed it to the Governor at Akka: "Abbas Effendi and his brothers shall not be allowed to go outside the city." I was deeply grieved by these happenings.

"After thinking over the matter carefully I concluded that the best course would be for Mohammed Ali and all the family to come here to Abbas Effendi and reach some understanding so that discord and disunion might no longer exist. I thought they should come themselves and ask for the truth of these rumors set afloat by Mohammed Ali concerning Abbas Effendi. I myself came first to Abbas Effendi and told him what I wanted to accomplish. Then I went to Mohammed Ali and said "Do come with me to Abbas Effendi so that all the terrible trouble may cease." All the family were happy about this proposal of mine, except Mohammed Ali himself. I spoke a great deal to him and tried to persuade him to follow my advice but without success. I have written out in detail all the conversations I had with Abbas Effendi upon these matters. What I am giving you today is but a brief synopsis of them.

"After hearing my words Mohammed Ali spoke a great deal to his family and those who followed him, uttering falsehood and thus driving them further and further away from the prospect of unity. When I finally realized that reconciliation and harmony were impossible I was so deeply grieved that I became very ill. When I recovered I wished to leave Akka and determined to do so if I could secure permission. I wrote to the Governor-General of Beirut asking that I "might be removed from this prison to another prison as the conditions were [p. 18] so distasteful to me here." I took a copy of this letter. Although this prison was the best of all homes to me on account of the Blessed Perfection's life here, yet I was so miserable I wished to leave at any sacrifice. By the way, all I ever heard Abbas Effendi say proved the rumors set afloat by Mohammed Ali to be false and untruthful. After I had written to the Governor-General of Beirut, I wrote to the Sultan, copying this letter also. There is a prison on the Island of Rhodes where criminals and offenders are sent. In my letter to the Sultan I asked that I might be sent to it. I forwarded this letter to a man in Constantinople asking him to present it to the Sultan.

"Afterwards I saw Abbas Effendi and learned that he did not sanction this action, so I wrote immediately to the man in Constantinople, saying, "Do not deliver the letter." I also wrote to the Governor-General of Beirut countermanding my wish to be removed from Akka. If the letter had been delivered to the Sultan it might have been too late to change the result. The prisoners at Rhodes are mostly Jews and Turks. As time went on I found it

impossible for me to remain with Mohammed Ali. Finally I went to talk with him again. Accompanying me as a witness to the conversation was Seyd Ali, a brother of a son-in-law of Abbas Effendi. I said to Mohammed Ali, "If you will go with me to Abbas Effendi, come and go with me now." He said, "I will not go." I then took my family and left the house.

"I have written two accounts regarding this matter, - one brief, another in full detail, beginning at the time of the Ascension of the Blessed Perfection. The short one has been translated into English; the long one is not yet translated (January, 1905). The latter account explains everything fully and clearly shows that Mohammed Ali's action and behavior was not on account of his love for the Blessed Perfection but on account of his personal feelings and jealousy.

"Since I came to Abdul-Baha with my family, fifty men and women have come back to him in love and loyalty. Five or six returned after a few days; and only day before yesterday five others came to him, - about fifty in all. The adherents to Mohammed Ali do not number fifty all told. In Akka there are two, in Haifa three, in Teheran one and in other places a few. Only this small number remain in support of him. And why is this so? Because it was not for the Glory of God but for his own personal motives that Mohammed Ali acted so.

"The Blessed Perfection said, "My Cause is to unite men and bind them together; and those who violate this command step away from the protecting Shadow of My Word." He commanded that we must sow the seeds of love in our hearts, not the thorns of hatred. Therefore if any of the sons of the Blessed Perfection follow His Word they are under the Shadow of His Command and Protection; and if not, they are afar off. For example, if the Sultan has a Governor who obeys the Sultan it is the duty of the people to love and obey him because he himself is obedient. I wish this explanation to be perfectly and clearly understood in America. In the Persian Hidden Words, BAHÁ'O'LLÁH says: "O Friend! In the garden of the heart plant only flowers of love and cling to the Nightingale of Love and yearning."

"All must know and realize that he who says that which is not in accordance with the Words of the Blessed Perfection or speaks that which causes discord to arise in human souls is assuredly not one of the servants of God and a follower of the Blessed Perfection. It is impossible for a true lover to desire to harm his beloved. If he does that which injures his loved one it is evident that his love is not true. The sign of a true lover is that all his actions aim to please his beloved. The first quality of a real lover is that he sacrifices his own desire for the wish and desire of his beloved. Mohammed Ali has followed his own will and desire and has left the Will and Desire of the Beloved. This is why he failed and fell."