

**SHOGHI EFFENDI:**

**THE RANGE AND**

**POWER OF HIS PEN**

‘Alí Nakhjávání

CASA EDITRICE BAHÁ’Í





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## Foreword

Some 90 youth from 25 countries, mainly European, participated in the last of the three World Order courses given at Acuto during the month of February 2006.

The purpose of this course was to consider the wide range of the works of Shoghi Effendi, both in English and in Persian/Arabic, and cast a panoramic and cursory glance over the contents of each of his major writings. The beloved Guardian, in the course of his blessed ministry, provided the friends and the general public with a reliable survey of the significant and historical Bahá'í events of the Heroic Age, an overview of the stages enabling the current Administrative Order of the Faith to become the nucleus and pattern of the future institutions of world society, and a unique and authentic translation into English of the fundamental Writings of the Founder of the Faith. Through the power of his inspired pen Shoghi Effendi also succeeded in carrying the Community of the Most Great Name from its modest and rudimentary beginnings to a stage of development enabling it to be a potent instrument, well-equipped to realize and put into effect the exalted ideals which distinguish the divine message of Bahá'u'lláh.

‘Alí Nakhjavání



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## Introduction

Violette and I lived as adult Bahá'ís during the period of the Guardianship. We had the privilege of being in Shoghi Effendi's presence, meeting him and listening to him in Haifa. We had the joy of participating in his plans. I hope to be able to convey to you something of the station of Shoghi Effendi, his personality, the power of his pen, and the influence that he has had on the Bahá'í community.

It is impossible to make any study of the writings of the Head of a religion without arriving first at an understanding, however inadequate, of the functions of the occupant of that office and the scope of the authority conferred upon him. It is important to appreciate that Shoghi Effendi's entire literary output was devoted to matters related to the Faith.

The Faith during the time of Shoghi Effendi was in its infancy. I am sorry to say it, but we are still very immature. Shoghi Effendi often referred to the immaturity of the Bahá'í community. He was like a champion tennis player. He was the champion of the world and was faced with children who like to play some tennis. He stood there and taught us how to hold the racket and how to hit the ball. We thought he was another adult Bahá'í, except that he was related to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb through his lineage. We really did not know who he was. In fact, Shoghi Effendi seems to have even concealed his own true station.

The institution of the Guardianship was created by 'Abdu'l-Bahá through the provisions of His Will and Testament. His half-brother, Muḥammad-'Alí, who was to succeed Him, had disqualified himself by breaking the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, thus placing himself outside the pale of the Faith. This matter became

clearly evident to the generality of the friends when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked what was then to be expected after His passing. He replied: *‘As to the question ye have asked me, 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 unraveled’* (WOB 150).

This secret was disclosed when the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was read. The friends became aware that Shoghi Effendi was to be the Successor, as he was *‘the Light that after My passing shineth from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance’* (WTA 3). He is also referred to as *‘that primal branch’* (WTA 3), *‘the blest and sacred bough’* (WTA 3), *‘the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all . . . His loved ones must turn. He is the expounder of the words of God’* (WTA 11).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá goes on to say, *‘The sacred and youthful Branch [is] . . . under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty, [and] under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One [the Báb] . . . Whoso obeyeth him not . . . hath not obeyed God . . . Whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God’* (WTA 11). As a crowning statement we read this ringing call: *‘Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind’* (WTA 3). It became clear therefore that such interpretations of the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh as were given by the pen or at the instruction of Shoghi Effendi, just like the interpretations written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, were to be regarded as being as binding, in terms of their validity, as Bahá’u’lláh’s sacred Text.

It is in this light that the Universal House of Justice chose to include in the introductory paragraphs of its Constitution the following statement: ‘The provenance, the authority, the duties, the sphere of action of the Universal House of Justice all derive

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from the revealed Word of Bahá'u'lláh which, together with the interpretations and expositions of the Centre of the Covenant and of the Guardian of the Cause – who, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, is the sole authority in the interpretation of Bahá’í scripture – constitute the binding terms of reference of the Universal House of Justice and are its bedrock foundation’ (CUHJ 4). The Bahá’í world has had thirty-nine years of Scripture revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and a total of sixty-five years of inspired interpretation by His two Authorized Interpreters.

It must be remembered that, with the passing of Shoghi Effendi, authorized interpretation of Bahá’í scripture came to an end. However, this does not mean that individual interpretations, provided they are labelled as such, are forbidden. On the contrary, these are encouraged and regarded as a healthy exercise, mentally and spiritually, in our continuous strivings to study our teachings with a ‘*searching eye*’ (TB 157).

In this connection the Universal House of Justice has written: ‘A clear distinction is made in our Faith between authoritative interpretation and the interpretation or understanding that each individual arrives at for himself from his study of its teachings. While the former is confined to the Guardian, the latter, according to the guidance given to us by the Guardian himself, should by no means be suppressed. In fact such individual interpretation is considered the fruit of man’s rational power and conducive to a better understanding of the teachings, provided that no disputes or arguments arise among the friends and the individual himself understands and makes it clear that his views are merely his own. Individual interpretations continually change as one grows in comprehension of the teachings. As Shoghi Effendi explained: “. . . The more we read the Writings, the more truths we can find in them and the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous”’ (MUHJ 88).

In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh refers to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in at least two verses. The first verse is well known: ‘*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* (KA ¶121). In the Kitáb-i-‘Ahd, Bahá’u’lláh refers to this verse and comments, ‘*The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]*’ (TB 221).

In the second verse we read the following concerning the interpretation of Bahá’u’lláh’s own Writings: ‘*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*’ (KA ¶174). This verse of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas envisages a situation where a question is put to the Branch of the Sacred Lote Tree for interpretation. The Branch – we can assume that the Branch applies not only to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but could be applicable to Shoghi Effendi as well – would then interpret and explain what was not clearly understood from the text of the Holy Writ. The Guardianship, we could well say, was thus indirectly anticipated in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

One of the Bahá’ís, who later became a martyr, ‘Alí-Muḥammad Varqá, (the grandfather of our present Hand of the Cause, Dr Varqá) wrote to Bahá’u’lláh, saying that he understood the first verse, but not the second. Bahá’u’lláh answered him in a Tablet which exists at the Bahá’í World Centre. Bahá’u’lláh did not say it meant only ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, nor did He say that it referred to all of the future Branches. What He actually stated was that He meant ‘*two Branches*’. What Bahá’u’lláh had in mind was not something perpetual. For authorized interpretation He had *two* Branches in mind. At that time, everyone thought that the second Branch was Muḥammad-‘Alí because he was the Greater Branch, while ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was known as the Most Great Branch. However, after the passing of Bahá’u’lláh, Muḥammad-‘Alí broke the Covenant. The mystery is that Bahá’u’lláh included Muḥammad-‘Alí in the Kitáb-i-‘Ahd as a successor to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Surely He knew what was to become of him. Why did Bahá’u’lláh still put him in His Will?

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The same question can be asked of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Why did He mention successors to Shoghi Effendi if He knew that there weren’t going to be any?

The wonderful thing is that Shoghi Effendi makes a remarkable point in ‘The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh’. He writes: ‘*A study of the provisions of these sacred documents will reveal the close relationship that exists between them, as well as the identity of purpose and method which they inculcate*’ (WOB 4). In other words, the method used by Bahá’u’lláh in the Kitáb-i-‘Ahd was also used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His Will and Testament. They used the same method. It was, we could well assume, for the testing of the believers, in order to see who would stay firm in the Covenant and who would waver. We could conclude that they knew what was going to happen, yet they put such stipulations in their Wills, quite probably, as I said, for the purpose of testing the believers.

In *The Priceless Pearl*, written by Rúhiyyih Khánum, we read about the memoirs of Dr Falscheer, a German doctor in Haifa. She was in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when Shoghi Effendi came into the room as a young boy. He went out after paying his respects to his Grandfather, and then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells Dr Falscheer: ‘*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*’ (PP 12). It becomes clear that Bahá’u’lláh knew that His second son, Muḥammad-‘Alí, would not be faithful to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and so He told the Master that He would have to choose another Branch as His successor. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had no sons to appoint, so He chose Shoghi Effendi, His grandson.

With reference to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’u’lláh has made statements to unveil the station of the Most Great Branch. He states, for example: ‘*We pray God to illumine the world through Thy knowledge and wisdom*’ (WOB 135); ‘*Render thanks unto God . . . for . . . through Him every mouldering bone is*



*quickened. Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God . . .*' (WOB 135).

Thus, we see that in addition to answering queries calling for the interpretation of the Holy Writ, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was also destined to illumine the world through His knowledge and wisdom. The same two aspects are also seen in the writings of Shoghi Effendi. He would write in response to specific questions, as well as when he was moved to give his explanations of the verities of the Faith, his analyses of the conditions in the world, his description of the stages that the Faith and the world must traverse in order to attain their respective states of maturity, and his exposition of the vision of the future Bahá'í civilization.

It should be of interest to us that 'Abdu'l-Bahá chose to define His own function as 'Interpreter' of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings. The word He used was 'Mubayyín'. The function of a Mubayyín is 'tabyín' (pronounced 'tabyeen') which means interpretation. The two words 'Interpreter' and 'Mubayyín', particularly in Persian/Arabic, have both a restrictive meaning and a broad one. The restrictive sense is when the meaning of a specific sacred text is disclosed in clearer terms, while the broader application is when an unprompted exposition is made of the implications of the revealed statements. It is highly noteworthy that Shoghi Effendi, in translating the word 'Mubayyín', uses two terms, namely '*interpreter*' and '*expounder*' (WTA 11). 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote inspired treatises such as *A Traveller's Narrative* and *The Secret of Divine Civilization* without being asked. They were unsolicited, as were all of the talks He gave during His travels to the West. Shoghi Effendi also wrote, as just stated, many things that were not in response to direct questions.

When a mandate or authority is assigned to an office or an institution in the Cause, we must be sure that the capacity and power to execute that mandate is also bestowed. In defining his own function as a 'Mubayyín', the Guardian wrote: '*[T]he Guardian has been specifically endowed with such power as he may need to reveal the purport and disclose the implications of*

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*the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá'* (WOB 151). He is, in fact, telling us that he could read the Mind of Bahá'u'lláh and that of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

He has also added that such a power enables him *'to take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations'* (WOB 148). In other words, Shoghi Effendi could see how the Faith was going to advance and he could visualize how the world would develop over a series of generations. God had given him the power to do this. These are verities that Shoghi Effendi has recorded in *'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh'*. But he has almost concealed them in such a way that the reader does not realize that they are right there. This is why I mentioned that he seems to be concealing his own true station.

Furthermore, in a letter dated 4 March 1948, written on his behalf, in which Shoghi Effendi is commenting on the importance of sending full reports of Bahá'í troublesome difficulties, we read the following: *'[H]e often senses a situation or condition without having any detailed knowledge of it'* (UD 449). Does an ordinary person have this kind of perception? He, nevertheless, has added that full reports must be sent anyway.

In *Some Answered Questions*, there is a chapter about infallibility. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that there are two kinds, essential infallibility and acquired or conferred infallibility. The possessor of essential infallibility has the power of revelation, while the possessor of conferred infallibility receives inspiration. He explains this truth by using the Sun as an example. The Sun does not have to acquire its light from another source; it has essential light. The Moon, however, receives its light from the Sun; it has conferred light. According to this metaphor, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the Moon, which receives light, or inspiration, from the Manifestation of God. Shoghi Effendi would have been horrified if we said that he was a second Moon. Bahá'u'lláh has given to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the title of *'Him round Whom all names revolve'* (TB 225). Therefore, Shoghi Effendi regarded himself as a satellite, revolving around the Moon, the Centre of the Covenant.

This satellite received light directly from the Sun, for it is written in the Will and Testament that '*The sacred and youthful branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of the Exalted One*' (WTA 11). Accordingly, the Universal House of Justice is another, separate satellite, receiving inspiration and guidance directly from the Sun of this Dispensation.

Indeed, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *Some Answered Questions*, while commenting on the nature of 'acquired or conferred infallibility', succinctly points out that if God does not protect the vehicle chosen for such infallibility it would be neither '*fitting nor worthy of God*' (SAQ 172). This means that it would be unworthy of God, if He did not send His illumination, His inspiration, His direction, His guidance to the individual or institution which we are required to obey, be it 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice.

The Cause will be the object of opposition and of attacks by enemies of the Faith, both internally and externally, and we have to know how to defend the Cause. We have to understand that the foundation of the Cause is on very strong and firm grounds – unassailably firm. And this is why 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that the power of the Covenant is the axis, the pivot of the oneness of mankind. The oneness of mankind is the principle that all humanity is one and all the races are one. This concept has a pivot. That pivot is the power of the Covenant. He puts the two together, the Covenant and the oneness of humanity. In this Cause the Covenant has a pivot and the pivotal centre today is the Universal House of Justice. The reason why we know that there will be unity in the world is because of the institution of the Universal House of Justice, the focal centre of the Faith. This centre is set on a firm foundation in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, the Mother Book of the Bahá'í Revelation. No one can ever change it. If the enemies of the Faith want to attack the

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Covenant, they may try but they shall not succeed. It is strongly and firmly grounded. It is the Instrument that will bring about the final Most Great Peace and the Bahá'í World Civilization. The more you think about it, the more you will understand it, the more you will be able to defend it, and the greater will be your services to the Cause in the future.

### *Outline of contents*

The number of communications and/or titles authored by Shoghi Effendi during his ministry consists of 11,345 items in English, 12,308 items in Persian/Arabic, and over 9,000 cabled messages, making a grand total of more than 32,000 items. These figures have been released by the World Centre and represent such items as the Archives Office has in its possession. The numbers are periodically revised as more items are found and sent to the World Centre.

The above figures, particularly those in English, include such titles as *God Passes By*, 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh' and 'The Unfoldment of World Civilization'. These publications, although they are lengthy, are counted as one item each. In contrast, a letter of encouragement to an individual believer of one or two paragraphs is also reckoned as one item. As to his cables – some are brief, others may run into a number of pages. This is especially true when the postal service was uncertain and Shoghi Effendi felt that a cabled message would be a safer and faster method of communication. Items of correspondence from Shoghi Effendi also include letters written on his behalf by his secretaries.

As the table of Contents, indicates the present material covers Shoghi Effendi's pre-Guardianship period, his translations of sacred and other texts, his own major works in English, his writings in Persian and Arabic, some sundry comments and a conclusion.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. How can we systematically and realistically increase our love for Shoghi Effendi?**

A. Two things are important: we should learn more about Shoghi Effendi's life. The best and most comprehensive book to read on the subject is *The Priceless Pearl*, the gift of Rúhíyyih Khánúm to the Bahá'í world. Every one of us should read this book and, through it, get closer to the spirit of Shoghi Effendi. We should also read Shoghi Effendi's own writings. You should not consider his writings as you would consider an article in the newspaper. You read the paper and then you throw it away, but his writings are something that should remain with you for your entire life. There are many meanings and implications in the writings of Shoghi Effendi. As we read them prayerfully, we try to understand the intent of what he has written. We will thus get closer to the spirit of Shoghi Effendi, and will love him ever more.

**Q. The statement of Bahá'u'lláh regarding the two Branches in His Tablet to 'Alí-Muḥammad Varqá seems to provide evidence that there will be no future Guardian after Shoghi Effendi. In reading the letters of the Universal House of Justice about this subject, I have not found any reference to this Tablet. Is this the case and why? Was this reference brought to the attention of Mason Remey when he was consulting with the Custodians?**

A. Neither the Hands of the Cause nor the House of Justice found it necessary to refer to this particular Tablet. Everything was very clear already. Mr Remey was probably not aware of this Tablet.

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**Q. When considering the beloved Guardian as the central pivot of the Covenant, would you consider him to be the pivot of the Lesser Covenant or of the Greater Covenant?**

A. According to Shoghi Effendi, the Greater Covenant is the Covenant that each Manifestation makes with His followers that there will be a future Manifestation and that they must recognize Him. The Lesser Covenant is within each Dispensation. It is a Covenant about loyalty to the Successor or Successors of the Manifestation. When we talk about Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice as central pivots of the Covenant, we are referring to the Lesser Covenant.

**Q. What are your feelings about the period from 1957 to 1963, between the Guardian's passing and the election of the first Universal House of Justice?**

A. This was a difficult period. It was overshadowed by grief for the loss of Shoghi Effendi. There were no doubts in the minds of Bahá'ís that for the period in question the direction of the Faith should be left to the Hands of the Cause. Nevertheless, there was a feeling of loss. We had people at the helm who had been appointed by Shoghi Effendi, yet there was a feeling that we had lost the source of infallible guidance. The Hands were telling us that they were not an infallible body. However, there was also a positive side. There was a deep feeling throughout the whole Bahá'í world that the only and best thing the friends could do was to carry out the last wishes of Shoghi Effendi, and to show their loyalty to him by making greater efforts to win the Ten Year Crusade. The number of pioneers that left their homes after the passing of Shoghi Effendi far surpassed the number that left before it. His passing had released powerful energies within the hearts of the friends. It may be that God had ordained for Shoghi

Effendi to die at the midway point of the Crusade in order to create a new desire in the friends to make sacrifices for him.

The Hands wrote a letter to the Bahá'í world that clearly stated that Shoghi Effendi had not appointed a successor as Guardian and that he had not left a will. Every conscientious believer thought very deeply about what would happen. There were many questions and opinions but the friends had to put them aside and wait for the Universal House of Justice. In 1958 the Hands wrote to the friends, '*We call upon all the believers . . . to desist from all further speculation on the future development of the institutions of the Faith – speculation which can only give rise to those very differences of interpretation forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and against which they repeatedly warned us*' (MoC 101). They wanted us to remain united so that we could carry out the Plan at hand.

**Q. What exactly did you mean when you said that the interpretations of the Guardian are binding in terms of their validity?**

A. They are interpretations by the authorized Interpreter and Expounder of the Faith. They are binding on us and cannot be disregarded, unlike, say, a pilgrim's note or an interpretation by a distinguished Bahá'í, which are not at all binding.

**Q. Was Shoghi Effendi only infallible when he was interpreting? Is it possible that statements he made about the future will not be fulfilled? A fellow in my home community believes that the answer to these questions is yes in both cases. What do you think?**

A. Nowhere in the Writings, does it say that Shoghi Effendi was inspired, infallible and in receipt of divine guidance only when he was interpreting. The contrary is true. Referring to the House of Justice and the Guardian, it is written that '*Whatsoever they*

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*decide is of God'* (WTA 11). This is the opposite of limiting his divine guidance to interpretation alone. He himself has written, in 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh', that he has been given the power to view developments over several generations. The idea that Shoghi Effendi was only guided when he was interpreting, or that the Universal House of Justice is only guided when it is legislating, is wrong. We have to be 100 per cent sure that both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice are under the protection of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. This is the reason why this Faith is so well founded and firmly established. This is why it is that this Faith that can establish the unity of the world and the Most Great Peace and inaugurate the world civilization.

**Q. Can you please comment on the infallibility of Shoghi Effendi in relation to the letter written on his behalf to a believer dated 17 October 1944, saying '*The infallibility of the Guardian is confined to matters which are related strictly to the Cause and interpretation of the teachings; he is not an infallible authority on other subjects, such as economics, science, etc. When he feels that a certain thing is essential for the protection of the Cause, even if it is something that affects a person personally, he must be obeyed, but when he gives advice, such as that he gave you in a previous letter about your future, it is not binding; you are free to follow it or not as you please*' (MUHJ 546, n.1)?**

A. This letter makes a distinction between two points. Let us suppose that the Guardian has told one of the friends that his presence in a particular town or city is detrimental to the interests of the Cause and that he instructs him to move somewhere else. This is, in fact, what happened when the Guardian asked local Bahá'ís in Haifa to settle somewhere else. An instruction of this kind from the Guardian must be unquestionably obeyed, because it was issued for the sake of the protection of the Cause.



Let us suppose, on the other hand, that an individual asked for the Guardian's advice on where he should pioneer to or what subjects he should study at university. In such instances, the advice he gave was not binding and the believer was free to follow the advice or not.

**Q. The Universal House of Justice clearly indicates that it is not invested with the power of interpreting the Writings. Why is it, then, that Bahá'ís write to the Supreme Institution asking for interpretation?**

A. Shoghi Effendi and the House of Justice have both written clearly that authorized interpretation is the prerogative of the Guardian, and authorized legislation is the exclusive right of the Universal House of Justice. These are two specific fields, interpretation and legislation. Shoghi Effendi adds '*Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other*' (WOB 150). What does that mean? This means that we have been given a promise that the Guardian will never infringe upon the right of the Universal House of Justice to authorized legislation and that the Universal House of Justice will never infringe upon the sacred domain of authorized interpretation.

A legitimate question we may have in this regard concerns the instructions that Shoghi Effendi gave us about the Administrative Order. Was not that legislation? Was he infringing upon the domain of the Universal House of Justice? We must look carefully at what Shoghi Effendi has written. At the beginning of his Guardianship, when he started giving us instructions about how to form our Assemblies and so on, he often wrote that his instructions should be followed pending the election of the Universal House of Justice, which will review the situation at that time. In other words, he was saying that as there was no Universal House of Justice yet, and as 'Abdu'l-Bahá had appointed him as the Head of that House, he will be guiding us in

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administrative affairs for the time being. He was not infringing upon the sacred domain of the House of Justice. The Universal House of Justice itself has written that it will not provide us with authorized interpretations, but in order to legislate, it has to know what Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi have already written. Before it legislates, it takes the sacred text of Bahá'u'lláh, and its authorized interpretation, into consideration. Of course, this process involves an element of elucidation. When an Assembly asked Shoghi Effendi: 'How will the Supreme Tribunal be formed and operate?' he replied that this would require the elucidation of the Universal House of Justice. This means that legislation is required, legislation which of necessity must have at its heart an elucidation. The elucidation will be in the form of legislation to determine the functions of the tribunal, the manner in which it should be elected or selected, and how it should operate. The legislation is not about what we should believe, merely about what we must do. The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, and those of the Interpreters, form the basis of our beliefs and inner convictions. In order to find out more about the operation of the Administrative Order we must turn to the Universal House of Justice. It will tell us what to do and how to do it.



## I

### Extracts from Shoghi Effendi's writings during the pre-Guardianship period

At the time when Shoghi Effendi was just a child, he had the longing that 'Abdu'l-Bahá would address a Tablet to him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá acceded to the wish of His grandson, and wrote him the following: *'He is God! O My Shoghi, I have no time to talk, leave me alone! You said "write" – I have written. What else should be done? Now is not the time for you to read and write, it is the time for jumping about and chanting "O My God!", therefore memorize the prayers of the Blessed Beauty and chant them that I may hear them, because there is no time for anything else'* (PP 8).

On another occasion, according to Rúhíyyih Khánum, 'Shoghi Effendi entered the Master's room, took up His pen and tried to write. 'Abdu'l-Bahá drew him to His side, tapped him gently on the shoulder and said, *"Now is not the time to write, now is the time to play, you'll write a lot in the future"* (PP 9).

When, in the summer of 1918, Shoghi Effendi graduated from the American University in Beirut with a Bachelor of Arts degree, a new chapter opened before him, and he witnessed the fulfilment of his highest aspiration: that of serving 'Abdu'l-Bahá as His secretary. From that summer till the spring of 1920, he placed himself at the service of his beloved Grandfather. As far as we know, the first translation he made of one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets was dated 12 December 1918. It is published in *Star of the West*, Volume 10.

Shoghi Effendi's work consisted of translating into Persian letters sent from the West addressed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and writing down the answers 'Abdu'l-Bahá dictated to him. Before the answers were sent to the friends in the West, he would translate them into English and attach his rendition to the original Tablet. In addition, Shoghi Effendi maintained a personal correspondence with some of his close friends and also kept a diary in which he recorded important events at the World Centre, news of Bahá'í developments elsewhere, as well as his own thoughts and feelings about the Faith and the Holy Land. The diary has not been published yet. It only covers the 18 months during which he served as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's secretary. He never kept a diary after he was appointed as Guardian. The entire copy is in the International Archives, and we can hope that at some appropriate time in the future it will be published, as may be determined by the Universal House of Justice.

In order to give us a glimpse of the type of work in which he was engaged, selections have been made from his translations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets, and extracts taken from a few of his letters as well as from his diary. These are set out below.

#### **A. Specimens of translations of Tablets revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

*Every imperfect soul is self-conceited and thinks of his own good. But as his thoughts expand a little he will begin to think of the welfare and comfort of his family. If his ideas still more widen his concern will be the felicity of his fellow citizens; and if still they widen he will be thinking of the glory of his land and of his race. But when ideas and views reach the utmost degree of expansion and attain the stage of perfection then will he be interested in the exaltation of humankind. He will be then the well-wisher of all men and the seeker of the weal and prosperity of all lands. This*

*is indicative of perfection.* (27 December 1918, SW Vol. 10, No. 1, 11)

*If the mass of women in Europe and all those in America had been enfranchised throughout all the states, undoubtedly they would not agree to war. At present this war has made millions of children fatherless and millions of fathers and mothers destitute of sons; this war has snatched from pitiable sisters their brethren; this war has turned millions of women widows and destitute of husbands; this war has made cities desolate; this war has brought confusion and chaos in millions of villages; this war has made the very foundations of mankind quake and quiver.* (9 January 1919, SW Vol. 10, No. 3, 39)

*My hope is that day by day thou mayest be more confirmed and may serve to the best the world of humanity; that thou mayest adore mankind and ignite in every heart the lamp of guidance, may serve the world of morality so that human realities may be freed from the gloom of the world of nature which, in essence, is purely animal in character, and may be illumined with the light of the divine realm.* (17 March 1919, SW Vol. 10, No. 3, 44)

#### **B. A sampling of letters Shoghi Effendi wrote**

I am so glad and privileged to be able to attend to my Beloved's services after completing my course of Arts and Sciences in the American University of Beirut . . .

The past four years have been years of untold calamity, of unprecedented oppression, of indescribable misery, of severe famine and distress, of unparalleled bloodshed and strife, but now that the dove of peace has returned to its nest and abode a golden opportunity has arisen for the promulgation of the

Word of God . . . This is indeed the Era of Service. (SW Vol. 9, No. 17, 194–5)

Every day carries with it fresh tidings and happy news. From the Far-Eastern lands, the center of news has shifted today to Persia, in the Middle East, and thence to the extreme West in the U.S. of America. Many telegrams have arrived, and each contributed its share of consolation and solace . . .

Early this morning I was ushered into His Holy presence, and there facing the Beloved on the sofa, enwrapped in His mantle with masses of supplications scattered around Him, I sat, the pen in my hand, putting down the words that flowed from His lips. (26 December 1918, BBM 62)

Supplications are flooding and pouring out incessantly. Mighty and numerous are the Tablets revealed every day. Often I am kept working at my desk and translating Tablets till past midnight. But still I am happy and grateful . . . (12 June 1919, SEO 45)

My esteemed friend Sir Herbert Samuel advises me to write you inquiring about admission as a non-collegiate student at Balliol College or any other college at Oxford University. My sole aim is to perfect my English, to acquire the literary ability to write it well, speak it well and translate correctly and eloquently from Persian and Arabic into English. My aim is to concentrate for two years upon this object and to acquire it through the help of a tutor, by attending lectures, by associating with cultured and refined literary circles and by receiving exercises in Phonetics. I would be much obliged if you could help me along that line. (11 June 1920, SEO 61)

I am delighted with the exquisite Tablet you have received and I am afraid my modest version has failed to convey the charm and force of the original. (11 August 1921, SEO 114)

Your interest in my work of translation has encouraged me a great deal and my hope is that I shall in the near future realize my aspiration of rendering adequately and forcibly the words of Baha'u'llah and the Master into English. (30 September 1921, SEO 116)

I have been of late extremely busy with my work and hope to give soon the final touch to my rendering of the Hidden Words . . . What a difficult task translation is! The more you work on it the more difficult it appears. There is simply no end to it. You can go perfecting the art ad infinitum. My only ambition however at present is to achieve a certain relative success by improving on the previous translations and if I attain this aim I am fully satisfied. (1 November 1921, SEO 127)

### **C. Extracts from Shoghi Effendi's Diary**

Change and not decay has been of late the outstanding feature of the town and life of Haifa. Signs of improvement, promises for a bright and flourishing future, indications of far-reaching plans that shall raise the town from its present unattractive, commonplace situation to a first class enviable position are everywhere abounding. But first and foremost stands the repeated promises and alluring forecasts which the Beloved, whenever an opportunity presents itself, declares to His friends and attendants. Only last night at the meetings of friends and pilgrims, did He unveil the possibilities and the profound changes that shall give Haifa a predominant position in Syria – nay rather in the Near East. Bringing into



sharp and vivid contrast the atmosphere of Lebanon with that of the Blessed Mountain of God, Mount Carmel, the Beloved praised highly the unique position of the latter, the spirituality which pervades it, the view of the neighbouring blue sea, a clear and azure sky, a lovely coastal plain and a magnificent range of hills, sand dunes and mountains which it unfolds and particularly the historic and religious memory which clusters around it. Tourists, remarked the Beloved, on their pilgrimage to the Holy Land will make it their favourite Shrine, will tarry a time on its glorious summit and will sojourn on its lovely slopes. Etymologically taken, Carmel separates into two words 'Carm' and 'Il' which denote the Vineyard of God, and moreover said the Beloved it has been recorded in the Scriptures, 'The Lord verily is the Splendour of Carmel.' On this blessed Mount, monuments, temples, asylums, hospitals, pilgrim-houses, orphanages, hospices, educational institutions, Mashrekul-Azkars shall be erected. Its universities will flourish and its educational, cultural center shall attract hundreds and thousands of scholars and of truth-seekers. Every span of it shall thrive and prosper, the melody of praise and thanksgiving, the hymns of prayer and supplication shall rise from it and shall ascend the Supreme Concourse. Carmel will become a center of material, cultural and spiritual activities. (30 June 1919, RD 9/11/05)

When the Lord [Lamington] inquired whether the Beloved is planning to undertake a voyage in the near future the reply was to the effect that, circumstances permitting, He is intending to go to Ishqabad where the Universal [H]ouse of Worship had been magnificently erected, its doors flung open to representatives of all creeds and denominations and gathering within its walls friends, numerous in number, active in service and zealous in faith and character. From there He may proceed to the Far East, to Japan and the mid

Pacific Islands and thence via India back to the Holy Land.  
(17 July 1919, RD 9/11/05)

The garden immediately surrounding the Beloved's abode is blooming with verdure and flowers. The grove as well as the rose-garden have indeed turned into a delectable Paradise. Over three thousand mandarines sparkle like unto fire from among the leaves of young trees that bend under the weight of their clusters of fruit. The alleys are adorned on each side with rain-drenched roses of varied colors. The balustrade is almost concealed from view so extensive and rich have become the branches and the off-shoots of the ivy. The white rose bushes seem indeed to be covered with spots and masses of snow reflecting the lights of the sun so much as to dazzle the eye. The fragrance that embalms the air, the freshness that one encounters around himself, the sight of the trees that seem from afar to be set on fire, the violets, modest yet betraying by their scent their presence, the [j]asmine, lily and rose all combine to make the rose garden a favourable place on such a sunny afternoon as the one we had today, for the Master to dictate the Tablets to His dear friends all over the world. (16 January 1919, RD 9/11/05)

Just before sunset, I was ordered by the Beloved to walk up to the Holy Tomb and offer a prayer of devotion and thanksgiving on His behalf. I instantly put on my walking boots, took hold of my cane and ascended the Holy Mount. The wind that was violently blowing softened down to a pure and fragrant breeze which heralded the approach of springtime; the mighty, and I venture to add matchless, view that was unfolded to my eyes as I ascended higher and higher the green and verdant slopes of Carmel; the spirituality that imbued the atmosphere; the stillness, save the distant roar of the waves, that added greatly to the Majesty and the imposing serenity of the surroundings; the beautiful sight of

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the blossoming almond trees that surround the Holy Tomb; the fragrant smell of the rain-drenched roses that reminded the pilgrim of his approach to the door of the Tomb; all made me forget my care, my concerns and my anxieties. The environment was elevating, the thought that amid such a scene, I was to offer a prayer on behalf of the Beloved thrilled and moved me from within and made me realise what an insignificant speck of dust did I figure at the foot of His Throne. I prayed the best I could and begged guidance, protection and capability from Him who had sent me to this hallowed Spot. (4 March 1919, RD 9/11/05)

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá before the passing of Bahá'u'lláh are regarded as authoritative and binding on the Bahá'ís. Was this because of the station conferred on 'Abdu'l-Bahá by the Súriy-i-Ghuṣn and the Kitáb-i-Aqdas? If so, why are the writings of Shoghi Effendi before the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá not regarded as binding, since the station of Guardian was conferred on him by the Will and Testament while he was still a very young child?**

A. No, the reason why we regard all the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as authoritative is not because they were written after the revelation of the Súriy-i-Ghuṣn or the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. These Tablets recognized the high station that He always had. He wrote on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh while in Baghdád, even before the revelation of the Súriy-i-Ghuṣn. Basically, the reason why the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and of Shoghi Effendi are treated differently is because they had different stations from each other. Let us contrast the person, the soul, the reality of Shoghi Effendi with that of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the Mystery of God. He shared certain qualities and powers that the Manifestation of God had. His equal cannot be found anywhere else in religious history. Take for example Islam. Imám 'Alí was the successor of Muḥammad. Shoghi Effendi tells us not to compare the station of Imám 'Alí with that of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, because His was even higher. Nor are we to compare Him to Saint Peter. The Master was unique, as He was also the perfect Exemplar. In contrast, Shoghi Effendi has written, *'No Guardian of the Faith, I feel it my solemn duty to place on record, can ever claim to be the perfect exemplar of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh or the stainless mirror that reflects His light'* (WOB 151). Shoghi Effendi used to sign his letters with 'Your true brother'. He wanted to say that he was with us, working together with us in the divine vineyard. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also sometimes said that He

was working with the Bahá'ís as a co-worker. However, this was to show us that He was the Servant of Bahá'u'lláh, not because He was equal to us in any way. He was not known as 'Abdu'l-Bahá before the passing of Bahá'u'lláh. Until then, He was known as the Most Great Branch. 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Servant of Bahá) was the title that He Himself adopted after the passing of Bahá'u'lláh. This was to refute the accusation of Muḥammad-'Alí that He had claimed to be a Prophet. When He signed His letters to the West in English He would write 'a-B-a'. He used small letters for 'Abdu'l and 'Abbás, but He used a capital B for Bahá.

**Q. Did Shoghi Effendi contribute to translations prior to the Guardianship, such as *The Hidden Words* published in Cairo in 1921?**

A. Whenever Shoghi Effendi contributed to a translation his name usually appeared in the translation credits, even if he was only one of the contributors. For example, in some *Star of the West* volumes there are Tablets translated by a team, consisting of Shoghi Effendi, Dr Zia Baghdadi and Dr Esslemont. Their three names were printed in brackets at the end of the Tablets. Shoghi Effendi, as far as I know, did not contribute to the translation of *The Hidden Words* by Mrs Stannard, published in Cairo in 1921.

## II

### Works produced during the initial period of the Guardian's ministry

After the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Bahá'í world was waiting with bated breath to witness not only the personality and behaviour of His successor, but the style, tone and spirit of Shoghi Effendi's writings. At the time of Bahá'u'lláh's Ascension, the friends in the East had already seen evidences of the mighty and inspired pen of the Most Great Branch, through such dissertations as *The Secret of Divine Civilization* and *A Traveller's Narrative*. But Shoghi Effendi, because of both his youthful age and the brief period of his literary output prior to 1921, was, for the most part, not fully established as an author in the eyes of the generality of the believers in the East and West.

The letters of Shoghi Effendi immediately after he learned about the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá have a quality of anguish as well as hope about the future. It is clear that he was feeling his way in the discharge of his new responsibilities. He would often ask the friends to pray for him so that he would not fall short of the standard of servitude expected of him by the beloved Master.

#### A. Early letters

In the letters written at the very outset of his ministry, Shoghi Effendi invariably in his closing paragraphs makes mention of the '*Ladies of the Household*' of the Master, who joined him in his greetings to the friends. As time went on, we see that in such

letters he only makes mention of the Greatest Holy Leaf. This practice was, of course, also stopped, after her passing in 1932.

The first letter we have on record is one he wrote to a fellow Bahá'í student in London, while he was still in that city and was moving to stay with Dr Esslemont in his home. In this precious letter he writes as follows:

*The terrible news has for some days so overwhelmed my body, my mind and my soul that I was laid for a couple of days in bed almost senseless, absent-minded and greatly agitated. Gradually His power revived me and breathed in me a confidence that I hope will henceforth guide me and inspire me in my humble work of service. The day had to come, but how sudden and unexpected. The fact however that His Cause has created so many and such beautiful souls all over the world is a sure guarantee that it will live and prosper and ere long will compass the world! I am immediately starting for Haifa to receive the instructions He has left and have now made a supreme determination to dedicate my life to His service and by His aid to carry out His instructions all the days of my life.*

*. . . The stir which is now aroused in the Bahá'í world is an impetus to this Cause and will awaken every faithful soul to shoulder the responsibilities which the Master has now placed upon every one of us.*

*The Holy Land will remain the focal centre of the Bahá'í world; a new era will now come upon it. The Master in His great vision has consolidated His work and His spirit assures me that its results will soon be made manifest.*

The letter ends with the phrase: '*With prayer and faith in His Cause, I am your well-wisher in His service, Shoghi*' (PP 40–1).

The second statement we have from him is a message written on 6 January 1922, conveying his greetings to a gathering of Bahá'ís and notables of the City of Haifa, to commemorate

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the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In this message we read the following:

*The shock has been too sudden and grievous for my youthful age to enable me to be present at this gathering of the loved ones of beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá . . . I venture to hope that we his kindred and his family may by our deeds and words, prove worthy of the glorious example he has set before us and thereby earn your esteem and your affection. May His everlasting spirit be with us all and knit us together for evermore! (PP 47)*

On 19 January 1922, he wrote his first letter to the Bahá'ís of Persia. In it he made reference to the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to the sorrows this event had entailed, and to the need to work together in promoting the Faith. Towards the end of this brief letter he made a request of the friends, the gist of which is as follows:

*My perpetual request of His ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] faithful friends is that they should pray that I will remain steadfast in my resolve [to execute the Master's last wishes] so that, God grant, this weak and worthless plant may acquire such strength and worthiness as to enable it to bear fruit and, in this way, bring joy and gladness to the hearts of the friends. (TAW, Vol. 1, 1)*

This idea of a plant bearing fruit is a reference to a statement by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament, in which He states:

*It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi . . . that no dust of despondency and sorrow 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. (WTA 25)*



To obtain further insight into the tenor and tone of the Guardian's letters during this initial period, a number of extracts from his correspondence are reproduced below:

*Ours is the duty to strive by day and night to fulfill our own obligations and then trust in His Guidance and never failing Grace. Unity amongst the friends, selflessness in our labors in His Path, detachment from all worldly things, the greatest prudence and caution in every step we take, earnest endeavor to carry out only what is His Holy Will and Pleasure, the constant awareness of His Presence and of the example of His Life, the absolute shunning of whomsoever we feel to be an enemy of the Cause . . . these, and foremost among them is the need for unity, appear to me as our most vital duties, should we dedicate our lives for His service. (21 January 1922, BA 16)*

*HOLY LEAVES COMFORTED BY AMERICAN UNSWERVING LOYALTY AND NOBLE RESOLVE. DAY OF STEADFASTNESS. ACCEPT MY LOVING CO-OPERATION. (22 January 1922, in a cablegram to the American Bahá'ís)*

*How intensely I feel the urgent need of a thorough regeneration to be effected within me, of a powerful effusion of strength, of confidence, of the Divine Spirit in my yearning soul, before I rise to take my destined place in the forefront of a Movement that advocates such glorious principles. I know that He will not leave me to myself, I trust in His guidance and believe in His wisdom, but what I crave is the abiding conviction and assurance that He will not fail me. The task is so overwhelmingly great, the realization of the inadequacy of my efforts and myself so deep that I cannot but*

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*give way and droop whenever I face my work . . . (6 February 1922, PP 43)*

*Your . . . letter reached me in the very midst of my sorrows, my cares and afflictions . . . the pain, nay the anguish of His bereavement is so overwhelming, the burden of responsibility He has placed on my feeble and my youthful shoulders is so overwhelming . . . I am enclosing for you personally the copy of the dear Master's Testament, you will read it and see what He has undergone at the hands of His kindred . . . you will also see what a great responsibility He has placed on me which nothing short of the creative power of His word can help me to face . . . (February 1922, PP 48)*

*Ah bitter remorse of having missed Him – in His Last Days – on this earth, I shall take with me to the grave no matter what I may do for Him in future, no matter to what extent my studies in England will repay his wondrous love for me. (February 1922, PP 31)*

*At this grave and momentous period through which the Cause of God in conformity with the Divine Wisdom is passing, it is the sacred duty of every one of us to endeavour to realize the full significance of this Hour of Transition, and then to make a supreme resolve to arise steadfastly for the fulfilment of our sacred obligations. (5 March 1922, BA 17)*

*How keenly I feel at this challenging hour in the history of the Cause the need for a firm and definite determination to subordinate all our personal likings, our local interests, to the interests and requirements of the Cause of God! Now is the time to set aside, nay, to forget altogether, minor considerations regarding our internal relationships, and to present a solid united front to the world animated by no other*

*desire but to serve and propagate His Cause.* (5 March 1922, BA 18)

*Does not 'Abdu'l-Bahá wish us, as He looks down upon us with loving expectation from His glorious Station, to obliterate as much as possible all traces of censure, of conflicting discussions, of cooling remarks, of petty unnecessary observations that impede the onward march of the Cause, that damp the zeal of the firm believer and detract from the sublimity of the Bahá'í Cause in the eyes of the inquirer?* (5 March 1922, BA 19)

*This servant, after that grievous event and great calamity, the ascension of His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Abhá Kingdom, has been so stricken with grief and pain and so entangled in the troubles (created) by the enemies of the Cause of God, that I consider that my presence here, at such a time and in such an atmosphere, is not in accordance with the fulfilment of my important and sacred duties.*

*For this reason, unable to do otherwise, I have left for a time the affairs of the Cause both at home and abroad, under the supervision of the Holy Family and the headship of the Greatest Holy Leaf until, by the Grace of God, having gained health, strength, self-confidence and spiritual energy, and having taken into my hands, in accordance with my aim and desire, entirely and regularly the work of service I shall attain to my utmost spiritual hope and aspiration.* (Circa May 1922, BA 25)

*May I at the very outset of this, my very first letter to you, convey to your hearts in words, however inadequate but assuredly deeply felt and sincere, a measure of my burning impatience during my days of retirement to return speedily and join hands with you in the great work of consolidation that awaits every earnest believer in the Cause of*

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*Bahá'u'lláh. Now that happily I feel myself restored to a position where I can take up with continuity and vigour the threads of my manifold duties, the bitterness of every disappointment felt time and again in the course of the past weary months at my feeling of unpreparedness, have been merged in the sweetness of the present hour when I realise that spiritually and bodily I am better equipped to shoulder the responsibilities of the Cause. (December 1922, PP 66)*

*True, my task is immense, my responsibilities grave and manifold, but the assurance which the words of the all-wise Master give me in my work is my shield and support in the career which is now unfolding itself to my eyes. (20 December 1922, PP 67).*

*To have been unable, owing to unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances, to correspond with you ever since you entered upon your manifold and arduous duties is to me a cause of deep regret and sad surprise . . . I am however assured and sustained by the conviction, never dimmed in my mind, that whatsoever comes to pass in the Cause of God, however disquieting in its immediate effects, is fraught with infinite Wisdom and tends ultimately to promote its interests in the world. (23 December 1922, PP 67)*

*Are we to be carried away by the flood of hollow and conflicting ideas, or are we to stand, unsubdued and unblemished, upon the everlasting rock of God's Divine Instructions? . . . [A]re we to believe that whatever befalls us is divinely ordained, and in no wise the result of our faint-heartedness and negligence? (1923, PP 74).*

*[The Will of God is] at variance with the shadowy views, the impotent doctrines, the crude theories, the idle imaginings,*

*the fashionable conceptions of a transient and troublous age . . . (1923, PP 74)*

*The time has come for the friends . . . to think not as to how they should serve the Cause, but how the Cause should be served. (1923, PP 74)*

Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum's insight is penetrating when she describes the quality of Shoghi Effendi's letters during the first two years of his ministry. She writes: 'With the passing of 1923 one could almost say that the winged Guardian emerged from the chrysalis of youth, a new being; the wings may not yet be fully stretched, but their beat gains steadily in sweep and assurance as the years go by until, in the end, they truly cast a shadow over all mankind' (PP 73).

#### **B. Translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament**

Seventeen days after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, accompanied by Lady Blomfield, arrived in the Holy Land with a broken heart, a weary body and strained nerves. It was in this condition that he had to assume the extraordinary responsibility that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had placed on his shoulders. He stayed in the same room that he had occupied during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which was adjoining the Master's bedroom where He passed away. We can well assume that one of his first acts was to read the text of the Will and Testament. He subsequently set himself the task of translating this remarkable document into English. After a short while he had to transfer his residence to the home of one of his aunts, which was adjacent to the Master's house, where he could have a quieter atmosphere in which to work.

Here was this 24-year-old youth, who had to translate, for all time, the provisions of a document which he later described as one of the two '*Charter[s] of a future world civilization*' (GPB

328). While he was doing this seminal work, he also had to make sure that photostatic copies of his Grandfather's Will or reliable transcripts were made and duly sent to different Bahá'í communities throughout the East. Sentence by sentence, he had to translate the story of the sufferings endured by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the disloyalty and rebellion of His half-brother, Mirzá Muḥammad-'Alí, and the Master's prediction of the frustration of all his hopes and those of the people who followed him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also expressed in His last wishes a call to all the friends to arise unitedly to disperse far and wide and to follow the heroic example of the Disciples of Jesus Christ. In this self-same document 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses His desire for martyrdom, and utters His prayers for the repentance and forgiveness of His enemies. On more practical matters, the Master outlined the responsibilities and powers devolving on the Guardian of the Faith, including his appointment of the Hands of the Cause of God, and specified the scope of the duties and functions of the Universal House of Justice, as well as stipulating the method of the election of this Supreme Body.

Shoghi Effendi has given us the gist of the contents of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament in the following concise and comprehensive summary:

*The Document establishing that Order [Administrative Order], the Charter of a future world civilization, which may be regarded in some of its features as supplementary to no less weighty a Book than the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; signed and sealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá; entirely written with His own hand; its first section composed during one of the darkest periods of His incarceration in the prison-fortress of 'Akká, proclaims, categorically and unequivocally, the fundamental beliefs of the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh; reveals, in unmistakable language, the twofold character of the Mission of the Bab; discloses the full station of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation; asserts that 'all others are servants unto*

*Him and do His bidding'; stresses the importance of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; establishes the institution of the Guardianship as a hereditary office and outlines its essential functions; provides the measures for the election of the International House of Justice, defines its scope and sets forth its relationship to that Institution; prescribes the obligations, and emphasizes the responsibilities, of the Hands of the Cause of God; and extolls the virtues of the indestructible Covenant established by Bahá'u'lláh. That Document, furthermore, lauds the courage and constancy of the supporters of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant; expatiates on the sufferings endured by its appointed Center; recalls the infamous conduct of Mirzá Yahyá and his failure to heed the warnings of the Báb; exposes, in a series of indictments, the perfidy and rebellion of Mirzá Muḥammad-'Alí, and the complicity of his son Shu'á'u'lláh and of his brother Mirzá Badí'u'lláh; reaffirms their excommunication, and predicts the frustration of all their hopes; summons the Afnán (the Báb's kindred), the Hands of the Cause and the entire company of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh to arise unitedly to propagate His Faith, to disperse far and wide, to labor tirelessly and to follow the heroic example of the Apostles of Jesus Christ; warns them against the dangers of association with the Covenant-breakers, and bids them shield the Cause from the assaults of the insincere and the hypocrite; and counsels them to demonstrate by their conduct the universality of the Faith they have espoused, and vindicate its high principles. In that same Document its Author reveals the significance and purpose of the Huqúq'u'lláh (Right of God), already instituted in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; enjoins submission and fidelity towards all monarchs who are just; expresses His longing for martyrdom, and voices His prayers for the repentance as well as the forgiveness of His enemies. (GPB 328)*

As the Covenant-breakers in North America falsely assumed that the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the West would be shaken and weakened through the passing of the Centre of the Covenant, and the friends, particularly in North America, were subjected to a wave of tests and trials, Shoghi Effendi decided that he would give them the translated text of the Will in two stages. Prior to sending the complete version, he made some selections and shared these with the communities in the West, to prepare the friends for a fuller understanding of the document. This version was soon followed by the entire text.

To the friends in both the East and the West, Shoghi Effendi repeatedly pointed out that there were hidden implications and mysteries deposited in the provisions of the Will that would be disclosed gradually with the passage of time. The friends initially could not see what mysteries Shoghi Effendi was referring to, as, for the most part, they considered the document to be a straightforward statement focusing on the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the Master's successor, the imperative need for the friends to rally around him, and to protect the Cause under his direction and spread it abroad throughout all nations, so that vast multitudes would enter the Faith of God.

In one of his letters commenting on the provisions of the Will, the Guardian stated that it would take a hundred years for the implications of the Will and Testament to be fully and generally understood. He stated that the friends should '*trust to time, and the guidance of God's Universal House of Justice, to obtain a clearer and fuller understanding of [the Will's] provisions and implications . . .*' (23 February 1924, BA 62).

Although the explicit text of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá provides for two possibilities for the election and operation of the Universal House of Justice, namely one with a living Guardian as its Head, and one without his direct participation, the Bahá'ís during Shoghi Effendi's ministry generally did not imagine that he would be the first and last Guardian during this Dispensation. In this connection it must be



borne in mind that, in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh envisages the termination of the line of 'Branches' (Aghsán) to precede the establishment of the House of Justice: '*After Him [the Manifestation], this authority shall pass to the Aghsán, and after them to the House of Justice – should it be established in the world by then . . .*' (KA ¶42). Despite this provision in the Most Holy Book, the idea that the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the House of Justice had to literally coexist in order for the House of Justice to discharge its duties persisted in the minds of the believers. It was only after the passing of Shoghi Effendi that the Universal House of Justice clarified this issue for the friends.

### C. Preparing the text of *The Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*

In addition to his strenuous work on the translation of his Grandfather's Will and Testament, Shoghi Effendi felt that the Bahá'í world was waiting to receive details of the events that led to the Master's ascension. He therefore, with the help of Lady Blomfield, compiled all the data that was available to him on this subject. The document that was produced was entitled *The Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, and had a subtitle which read, 'Compiled by Shoghi Effendi and Lady Blomfield'. It was first published in England in 1922. Shoghi Effendi immediately sent a copy of the English text to the Local Assembly of Tehran (there was no National Spiritual Assembly at that time) and asked that its contents be translated into Persian and disseminated among the friends in the East.

The document is in the form of a letter dated 19 January 1922, and is signed '*Sitarih Khánum (Lady Blomfield)*' and then '*Shoghi*'. ('Sitarih' in Persian means 'star'. The full title is a name that was given to Lady Blomfield by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to express His appreciation for her services to the Cause.) This letter, which consists of some 50 pages, gives details of what transpired immediately before the Master's passing. It also quotes one of the prayers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a Tablet to the

friends in America, in which He yearns to take His flight to the Kingdom. The prayer is as follows:

*Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! (O Thou the Glory of Glories) I have renounced the world and the people thereof, and am heart-broken and sorely afflicted because of the unfaithful. In the cage of this world, I flutter even as a frightened bird, and yearn every day to take my flight unto Thy Kingdom.*

*Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá! Make me to drink of the cup of sacrifice and set me free. Relieve me from these woes and trials, from these afflictions and troubles. Thou art He that aideth, that succoureth, that protecteth, that stretcheth forth the hand of help. (ACC 458)*

The letter goes on to quote what the friends had heard from 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the last weeks and days of His life, all of which clearly indicates that He knew very well that the time of His taking leave from this world of dust was drawing nigh. This is followed by a description of the impressive procession of notables of the country who participated in the funeral cortège, including the High Commissioner of Palestine, the Governor of Phoenicia, chief officials of the government, consuls of various countries resident in Haifa, heads of different religious communities, and a host of the heart-broken friends, in all about ten thousand in number. The booklet contains an account of the procession walking up from the Master's house to the site of the Shrine on Mount Carmel, and extracts of speeches delivered on that memorable occasion.

It further cites a number of passages from reports in such newspapers as *The Morning Post*, the *New York World*, and the *Times* of India. Telegrams sent by His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State, the Council of Ministers in Baghdád, the High Commissioner for Egypt, the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, the Theosophical Society in London, one of the renowned professors of the University of

Oxford, and Bahá'í communities throughout the world are enumerated. An account is given of the memorial feast that was held, in conformity with local customs, on the fortieth day after the Master's passing, at which over six hundred of the people of Haifa, 'Akká, and adjoining regions in Palestine and Syria attended, and reference is made to the assemblage of over a hundred poor and needy who were also fed on that day. The letter finally describes the gathering in the large, central hall of the Master's house, where speeches were delivered in appreciation of the work and life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The last section consists of extracts from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Turning from the text of the Will to other Tablets revealed by the Master, the letter gives extracts from a number of His writings which indicate the glorious unfoldment of God's Holy Cause, including two Tablets revealed by Him in interpretation of Daniel's prophecy about the 1335 days. In one of these Tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicates that the 1335 days specifically refer to the lapse of a century from the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission in Baghdád (i.e. 1963.) At such a time, 'Abdu'l-Bahá adds, *'will the Teachings of God be firmly established upon the earth, and the Divine Light shall flood the world from the East even unto the West. Then, on this day, will the faithful rejoice'* (PA 50).

The document ends with the prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá which is recited as the Tablet of Visitation in His Shrine. Immediately prior to this Tablet is the quotation of these most touching words of the Master:

*I am waiting, waiting, to hear the joyful tidings that the believers are the very embodiment of sincerity and truthfulness, the incarnation of love and amity, the living symbols of unity and concord. Will they not gladden my heart? Will they not satisfy my yearning? Will they not manifest my wish? Will they not fulfil my heart's desire? Will*

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*they not give ear to my call? I am waiting. I am patiently waiting.* (ACC 406)

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. You have said that the House of Justice receives guidance from the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Is it such that, when you have the meeting, you feel something special, or is it imperceptible?**

A. This question has been put to me many times. And I am sure it is a question asked to ex-members of the House of Justice, wherever they may be. It is asked by pilgrims when they go to Haifa and meet House members. Everyone wants to know what happens in the meetings of the Universal House of Justice. Firstly, the members of the Universal House of Justice work as nine brothers. These brothers sincerely and deeply love one another. There is a deep love binding them together and to the Cause of God. The meaning of this love and this bond is that the happiness of one is the happiness of all, and the distress of one is the distress of all. When something happens which is a source of joy to one of the members, it becomes a source of joy for the rest. If there is a source of sadness for an individual member, again it is a source of sadness for the rest. This, I think, is something that does not have to occur only in Haifa. It is something that can occur and should occur everywhere in the world, wherever we have consultative Bahá'í bodies, whether they are Local Assemblies, National Assemblies, committees, Counsellors etc. It is this spirit of love that you read about in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which have been compiled for us by Shoghi Effendi and published in the book *Bahá'í Administration*. One of the first prerequisites is love among the members.

Another very important condition, which has been laid down by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, is this: '*They should consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High, and as beholding Him Who is the Unseen*'. That means when the members enter the Council Chamber they feel that they are sitting in the presence of

Bahá'u'lláh. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, this applies to all the Houses of Justice, wherever they may be. It is one of the important requirements of Bahá'í consultation. 'Abdu'l-Bahá' has given us other conditions. When we offer our views, we should have purity of motive. What is purity of motive? That is, the members should think to themselves, 'Why am I here? I am here to serve the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. I am here to promote and to protect the interests of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. I am not here for myself. I am here for Bahá'u'lláh. If I speak, I should be aware Bahá'u'lláh is listening to me. When I speak I should speak for Him, not for myself.' This purity of motive is itself like a magnet. It attracts divine confirmations, whether the consultation is on the local, the national, the continental or international level. 'Abdu'l-Bahá' has written: *'In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness . . . Should they endeavor to fulfill these conditions the Grace of the Holy Spirit shall be vouchsafed unto them, and that assembly shall become the center of the Divine blessings, the hosts of Divine confirmation shall come to their aid, and they shall day by day receive a new effusion of Spirit'* (BA 22-3).

The difference between the Universal House of Justice and every other kind of consultative body is that 'Abdu'l-Bahá' has written in His Will and Testament: *'That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant'* (WOB 149). Bahá'u'lláh Himself has given this promise: *'God will verily inspire them [members of the Universal House of Justice] with whatsoever He willeth, and He verily is the Provider, the Omniscient'* (WOB 149).

There is an explicit guarantee that God will protect the decisions of the Universal House of Justice, whether they are

made by unanimous or majority vote. However, when it comes to the National and Local Spiritual Assemblies, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said *‘should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness’* (BA 22). There is something wonderful about this Faith that protects it from harm. It is unique to Bahá’í consultation. A letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi explains it very well: *‘The Assembly may make a mistake, but, as the Master pointed out, if the Community does not abide by its decisions, or the individual Bahá’í, the result is worse, as it undermines the very institution which must be strengthened in order to uphold the principles and laws of the Faith. He tells us God will right the wrongs done’* (CC Vol. II, 58). This does not exist anywhere else, whether in previous religions or in secular institutions. It means that if a decision is influenced by the ego, the personal interests or the prejudices of the Assembly members, God will make sure that this decision is corrected eventually. How does He do this? Ever since I turned 21 years old, I have been a member of Local Assemblies and then National Assemblies. I have seen this thing happen so many times in my own lifetime. If the decision taken during consultation is the right one, it will usually be easy and joyful to implement. But if the decision is a wrong one, the Assembly will find it extremely difficult to implement. There will be all kinds of problems. At the next meeting, these problems are discussed and a new decision made. The Finger of God interferes to stop the implementation of the wrong decision. This is, I think, what is meant by ‘God will right the wrongs done’.

**Q.** *‘The Hands of the Cause of God must elect from their own number nine persons that shall at all times be occupied in the important services in the work of the guardian of the Cause of God . . . and these, whether unanimously or by a majority vote, must give their assent to the choice of the one whom the guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor’* (WTA 12). Why didn’t the Guardian call upon the Hands of

**the Cause to create this body of nine? Was it because he knew that he wasn't going to have a successor?**

A. The questioner has given the answer already. I think this is a very good answer. Shoghi Effendi had appointed the Hands of the Cause, but he never called on them to elect nine to come to Haifa. He appointed four to be there as a nucleus to work with him. There were 27 Hands of the Cause and they were to choose nine from among themselves to come to Haifa. Among their functions was to give their assent, by secret ballot, to the Guardian's choice of successor. He had no son himself and all the other Branches (Aghṣán) had become Covenant-breakers. The son of Jináb-i-Samandari, a very dear Bahá'í, was in Haifa in 1957, towards the very end of Shoghi Effendi's life. He wrote to me a letter after his pilgrimage. He said that towards the end of his pilgrimage, Shoghi Effendi had turned to him and told him: 'Look! There are no more Aghṣáns!' After Shoghi Effendi passed away we realized that by 'There are no more Aghṣáns', he must have meant that there was no one he could appoint as his successor, because the successor had to be a Ghuṣn (Branch).

**Q. What was the prophecy of Daniel and why did Shoghi Effendi refer to it so often in his writings?**

A. The verse in the book of Daniel is as follows: '*Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days*' (Dan. 12: 12). Many of the biblical scholars could not understand the meaning of this verse. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was asked about the prophecy of Daniel, He provided an explanation. He said that the beginning of the 1335 days should be the year when the Prophet Muḥammad left Mecca and went to Medina. Hijrah means the flight of Muḥammad from Mecca. He started His mission in the year 610 AD. For 12 years He was in Mecca, after which, in 622 He left Mecca, escaped from the persecutions and went to Medina, an adjoining city. He resided



there from 622 until 630. Then, for the last two years He returned to Mecca. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is telling us to start counting the 1335 days from the date of the Hijrah, of the flight of Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina, which was the beginning of the Muslim calendar. The Islamic calendar uses AH (after Hijrah) in contrast to the Christian AD (Anno Domini). In the Bible references are made to days, but these are interpreted as years. The year 622 plus 1335 equals 1957. This was the year when Shoghi Effendi passed away, at the midpoint of the Ten Year Crusade.

The Declaration of Bahá’u’lláh was in Baghdád in 1963. *‘The “hundred lunar years,” destined to immediately precede that blissful consummation (1335 days), announced by Daniel in that same chapter, had commenced’* (GPB 151). A hundred lunar years is equal to 97 solar years. Ninety-seven plus 1863 equals 1960. In other letters, Shoghi Effendi interpreted the century as 100 solar years. One hundred plus 1863 equals 1963. When Shoghi Effendi passed away in 1957, it was the midway point of the Ten Year Crusade. In the course of 1960, the International Bahá’i Council was elected by all the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world, the first global election in religious history. In April 1961 the first elected International Bahá’i Council was formed. In 1963 a second election took place, this time for the Universal House of Justice itself. In his letters, Shoghi Effendi is referring to this date, 1963, as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Daniel, which coincided with the election of the Universal House of Justice. This was based on the following statement made by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *‘Now concerning the verses in Daniel . . . these days must be reckoned as solar . . . years. For according to this calculation a century will have elapsed from the Dawn of the Sun of Truth, then will the teachings of God be firmly established upon the earth, and the Divine Light shall flood the world from the East even unto the West. Then, on this day, will the faithful rejoice’* (MUHJ 738). That is what Shoghi Effendi was referring to when he wrote about Daniel’s prophecy. It was only after his passing that the Bahá’is realized that the

source of the rejoicing and celebration at the fulfilment of the prophecy would be the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963.

**Q. Soon after his appointment as Guardian, Shoghi Effendi summoned many prominent believers to the World Centre to consult on the formation of the Universal House of Justice. What happened at that meeting? If he knew that he was not going to form the House of Justice, what was the purpose of the meeting?**

A. Rúhíyyih Khánum wrote a wonderful message on the occasion of the twenty-fifth year of the Guardianship, in 1946. The title of this wonderful message is 'Twenty-five years of the Guardianship'. In this message, Rúhíyyih Khánum explains that after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921, the older believers as well as his own family were urging the Guardian to establish the Universal House of Justice. They were telling him that he was young, very much alone, and in need of help. They also urged him to appoint Hands of the Cause, so that they, as well as the Universal House of Justice, would be able to help him. Rúhíyyih Khánum explains that Shoghi Effendi knew very well that this was not possible. Firstly, the time had not come for the appointment of Hands. Shoghi Effendi waited 30 years before he formally appointed any Hands to help him. Secondly, Shoghi Effendi explained that the Universal House of Justice was like a dome. It could not be suspended in mid-air. He had to lay the foundations of the Administrative Order, and then he had to erect the pillars to support the dome. However, because the idea of establishing the House of Justice and the appointment of Hands was prevalent at the time, in his wisdom, he decided to invite some of the veteran believers to consult with him. They did not come, as far as I know, all at once, to sit down together and consult. They came at different times. They were Mr Mountfort Mills from the United States, Mr Hippolyte Dreyfus from France

and Mr Fádíl-i-Mázindarání from Iran. He spoke to them, asked their opinion and in turn must have provided his own opinion. He later explained that it was too early for the election of the Universal House of Justice. This is my understanding of these very important events of that time.

**Q. The Guardian has written that we should shun whomsoever we feel to be an enemy of the Cause? How are we to decide who is an enemy of the Cause. Aren't we supposed to associate with all people with love and kindness?**

A. It is important to observe that there are two types of enemies of the Cause: those from within and those from without. An enemy of the Cause from without could be a government, an organization or an individual who is not a Bahá'í. For example, you could certainly say that the government of Iran has been an enemy of the Cause for several decades. These enemies try to obstruct the growth of the Faith. There will be many more such enemies in the future, as the Faith becomes stronger.

Then there are Covenant-breakers, who are internal enemies of the Faith. These Covenant-breakers are identified by the Head of the Faith, which then asks us not to have association with them. Nobody has the authority to call someone a Covenant-breaker except the Head of the Faith. When the Head of the Faith has come to the conclusion that an individual should be regarded as a Covenant-breaker, it informs directly the National Assemblies or the Boards of Counsellors. We are asked in the Writings to pray for them, so that they may realize their mistakes and come back to the Faith. However, we should not associate with them because they will eventually poison our hearts. This is the clear instruction that we have in the Writings. Every effort would have been made to help them, before they were declared Covenant-breakers.

If you know somebody who is antagonistic and inimical towards the Faith, we should leave them alone and not associate

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with them. Unfortunately, it has happened in the past that external enemies of the Faith have used spies. They would send in young people, whom they would pay, to come and mix with the Bahá'ís, to pretend that they wanted to become Bahá'ís, and then to join the community. Subsequently, they would take all the information about where the meetings were held and go back to their own society to feed the information for fresh attacks. This has happened and will continue to happen. This is why Shoghi Effendi warns the National and Local Assemblies to be very careful. He could see that opposition would come, wave after wave. As the Faith becomes stronger, these waves of persecution will become higher and mightier, but the Faith will be strong enough to withstand these onslaughts, and eventually these waves will die out, while the ship of the Cause will continue to sail.

**Q. *'Gradually His power revived me and breathed in me a confidence that I hope will henceforth guide me and inspire me in my humble work of service'* (PP 40). Did Shoghi Effendi write this before or after reading the Will and Testament?**

A. The above extract is from a letter written by Shoghi Effendi while he was still in London. My understanding is that while Shoghi Effendi was still in London the cable from the Greatest Holy Leaf arrived saying that Shoghi Effendi was the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and Head of the Universal House of Justice. This was the cable that the Greatest Holy Leaf sent all over the world. Thus, he must have read that message and known that he was to be the Guardian. However, he did not know the exact nature of the contents of the Will. He had to arrive in the Holy Land, before He could read it for himself.

**Q. What was Shoghi Effendi's relationship to the Greatest Holy Leaf? How did it influence him?**

A. If, soon after the passing of the Master, there was anybody who really understood Shoghi Effendi, it was the Greatest Holy Leaf. She was conscious of what a mystery he was. She was aware of the potentialities God had endowed him with. I have often said that Shoghi Effendi's physical parents were Mírzá Hádí and Díyá'íyyih Khánum, the daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but that his true father was 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his true mother was the Greatest Holy Leaf. They loved this child so much, for they knew who he really was.

I can still vividly recall the Greatest Holy Leaf in the presence of Shoghi Effendi. Though she was no less than the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh and the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, she showed the utmost respect in the presence of Shoghi Effendi, who was only in his twenties at the time. If she was ill and lying feverish in bed, and he entered the room, she made an extreme effort to sit up in her bed. Such was the degree of reverence she, who truly knew him, had for him.

One must bear in mind that when Shoghi Effendi took on the role of Guardian, at the age of 24, there were very illustrious Bahá'ís in the East and in the West who had distinguished themselves during the days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There was even a Hand of the Cause living in Iran, who had been appointed by Bahá'u'lláh. Shoghi Effendi's early letters show an interesting pattern. His humility is combined with his gradual yet decisive assertion of the needs of the Faith and the duty of the Bahá'ís. The situation was very different from the time after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. All of the friends were aware that 'Abdu'l-Bahá would succeed Him. They were conscious of the references made to the Master in the Súriy-i-Ghuṣn and the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

**Q. *'The time has come for the friends . . . to think not as to how they should serve the Cause, but how the Cause should be served'* (1923, PP 74). Could you please elaborate on what the Guardian was conveying here?**

A. Although this quote is only two lines long, in my view, it stands out remarkably from among the writings of the Guardian. It was written in 1923, when he was about 26 years old. My understanding of it is this: don't make yourself the centre of the universe. Those of us who think about how we can serve the Cause could easily make our own well-being our number one priority. If we make the well-being of the Cause our number one priority then we will think about what the Cause needs us to do for it. Shoghi Effendi suggests the time has come for the friends to start to think in this way, because we are now living in the Formative Age and the Cause has many needs.

In this connection, I would like to share with you an episode I observed when I was about 14 or 15. A big cat came near a hen surrounded by little chicks. The mother hen became furious and attacked the cat, conscious that its intention was to catch one of the chicks. The cat could have also attacked the hen, yet she risked her own life for the sake of the chicks. That's when I asked myself: 'If the hen is willing to risk her life for the chicks, should I not do the same for the Cause of God, the most precious thing on earth?' And I think this relates to this sentence by Shoghi Effendi. We should put the Cause first in our lives; it is the most precious thing we have from God on earth today. The sentiment is similar to the attitude of a mother towards her baby. Everything comes after the baby, even her own life. Shoghi Effendi is telling us to make the Cause of God the centre of our lives; we shouldn't expect the Cause of God to revolve around us, we should revolve around the Cause.

### III

## Translations

### A. Role of Mr George Townshend

The Guardian used the editorial services of a few friends whose grasp of the English language he appreciated. ‘Shoghi Effendi’, Rúhíyyih Khánum writes, ‘was tolerant and practical in his approach to his own work. For years he sent his translations and manuscripts to George Townshend, whose command and knowledge of English he greatly admired’ (PP 204).

George Townshend was an Episcopalian minister of Anglo-Irish background. He became a Bahá’í in 1921. From 1926 onwards he lent his editing services to Shoghi Effendi, collaborating on such works as *The Dawn-Breakers* and *God Passes By*, as well as making suggestions on the draft translations of *The Hidden Words*, *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, *Prayers and Meditations*, and *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. He finally renounced his orders in 1947, and in 1951 was appointed to the rank of Hand of the Cause.

The working relationship between the Guardian and Mr Townshend began when, in February of 1926, George wrote a letter to Shoghi Effendi offering his editorial services on the translation of the Hidden Words: ‘I have been told that you invited Miss Rosenberg to Haifa to help in translating work . . . I am encouraged by this to offer now my services, such as they are, in this kind of work. Having myself no knowledge of Persian and being a clergyman resident in Ireland, my help can not be

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anything better than advice as to English idiom and grammatical structure' (GT 55–6).

The Guardian immediately wrote back expressing his appreciation for the offer, and included with his letter the first part of his translation of the Hidden Words. Later, after Townshend's corrections had been received, Shoghi Effendi wrote to him in a personal note: '*Miss Rosenberg and myself (I wish you were with us also!) have carefully altered the text in the light of your suggestions and I trust that it [the Hidden Words] will soon be published in London*' (GT 58).

Shoghi Effendi continued to ask Townshend for 'final touches' to his literary output for a total of 18 years. The Guardian was particularly reliant on George's assistance when the pressures of his other commitments prevented him from giving the fine-tuning of the manuscript all the time he would have wished. A letter to Townshend written on Shoghi Effendi's behalf by his secretary, dated 29 December 1943, explains this situation: '*Had he had more time at his disposal he could have, naturally, devoted more of it to putting the finishing touches on his manuscript . . . [U]nfortunately . . . the work of the Cause is so great and so pressing that he lacks the advantages enjoyed by most authors of being able to devote themselves whole-heartedly and single-mindedly to their task*' (GT 70–1).

In his book on the life of George Townshend, David Hofman elaborates on this relationship: 'The collaboration between the Guardian and George on this great work [*God Passes By*] followed the normal pattern already established between them . . . Their *modus operandi* was for the Guardian to send the first typewritten pages of the work in hand, with a description of it and his request for George's services' (GT 69–70).

Despite the value he placed on such editorial input, the final decision regarding the form and content of the work always rested with Shoghi Effendi. Hofman underlines this fact: 'However much he turned to George for advice on syntax, "englishing", polishing and refining of style, idiomatic usage and



the like, he [the Guardian] was the final arbiter who decided whether to adopt, reject or amend any or all of George's editorial suggestions' (GT 81).

## **B. Translations of Sacred Texts – listed chronologically**

### *1. The Hidden Words*

Shoghi Effendi described Bahá'u'lláh's Hidden Words as an '*outstanding contribution . . . to the world's religious literature*' occupying a '*position of unsurpassed pre-eminence among the ethical Writings of the Author of the Bahá'í Dispensation*', a '*collection of gem-like utterances . . . with which Bahá'u'lláh was inspired, as He paced, wrapped in His meditations, the banks of the Tigris*', and a '*dynamic spiritual leaven cast into the life of the world for the reorientation of the minds of men, the edification of their souls and the rectification of their conduct*' (GPB 140).

The book was revealed about 1858, '*partly in Persian, partly in Arabic, . . . originally designated the "Hidden Book of Fáṭimih," and . . . identified by its Author with the Book of that same name, believed by Shī'ah Islām to be in the possession of the promised Qá'im, and to consist of words of consolation addressed by the angel Gabriel, at God's command, to Fáṭimih, and dictated to the Imám 'Alí, for the sole purpose of comforting her in her hour of bitter anguish after the death of her illustrious Father*' (GPB 140). In one of His Tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá exhorts the friends not only to read this book, but to act in accordance with its precepts. In another Tablet He points out that if Bahá'u'lláh had revealed only the Hidden Words, and nothing else, it would be adequate guidance for the human race. He even urged the friends to memorize passages from the book.

There is little question why the Guardian would choose this work to be the first of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh to be translated by him for the benefit of the friends in the West. Even

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while he was in Oxford, he tried his hand at translating portions of the Hidden Words. One of the British friends, Ethel Rosenberg, served Shoghi Effendi in a secretarial capacity soon after the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The Guardian consulted with her regarding his translation, and invited suggestions for the improvement of the English text. As earlier stated, when George Townshend heard of Ethel Rosenberg’s contribution, he offered his own services in this field of activity and the offer was warmly welcomed by Shoghi Effendi. This is why, when *The Hidden Words* was first published in 1927, the frontispiece stated ‘*translated by Shoghi Effendi, with the assistance of some English friends*’. Some years passed, and the Publishing Trust thought that the latter part of the phrase was no longer appropriate, so they suggested to Shoghi Effendi to remove it. He approved this and it has been omitted from later editions.

This remarkable collection opens with a brief introduction by Bahá’u’lláh Himself, in which He describes the Hidden Words as ‘*the inner essence*’ of what was previously ‘*revealed unto the Prophets of old*’. Part one of the book consists of 71 stanzas originally revealed in Arabic, while the second part, translated from the Persian, consists of 82 stanzas, followed by a closing paragraph. In this ending, Bahá’u’lláh declares that with this book ‘*the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established*’. It is sometimes said that the Hidden Words is only a statement of Bahá’u’lláh about ethics and morality, but it is much more. The roots of the social teaching are there as well.

A Bahá’í author, in evaluating the English rendering of the Hidden Words by Shoghi Effendi, has written that it provides ‘a clear, understandable, and beautiful text, [in] . . . a proper style of English befitting scripture that . . . evoke[s] in the reader the attitude of reverence and respect reserved for a religious text’ (VSE 134).

There is an excellent résumé of the contents of the Hidden Words in the *Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá’í Faith*:

In it [the Hidden Words] Bahá'u'lláh assures the reader of God's love. God has made human beings noble, and they should cleanse their hearts so that they might find the divine light within themselves. The human heart is God's home and the human spirit his place of revelation. This is their natural station, but human beings busy themselves with the world ('that which perisheth'), and thus lose sight of their true natures. Instead, they should commune with God and free themselves from the 'prison' of self and the 'fetters' of worldly attachments. They should bring themselves to account each day; sorrow only at their separation from God; not fear death; follow divine law; submit themselves to God; accept trials for God's sake; ready themselves for martyrdom; neither fear abasement nor rejoice in prosperity; not vaunt themselves over the poor (who are God's trust), but rather bestow God's wealth upon them; not breathe the sins of others, nor exalt themselves over others, nor commit iniquity; eschew covetousness, envy and malice; be forbearing with others; avoid fellowship with the ungodly; distinguish themselves by their deeds; plant only 'the rose of love' in the garden of the heart; and work to support themselves. They should know that a 'new garden' had appeared, inhabited by heavenly beings. They should seek to learn the mysteries of its love and wisdom. God is always close to them, but they heedlessly ignore him. They should seize their chance before the 'fleeting moment' of their lives is ended. (CEBF 181)

A photostatic copy of the Arabic Hidden Words in the exquisite handwriting of Bahá'u'lláh is on display in the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh in Bahjí.

## 2. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*

Shoghi Effendi describes this work in the following words: ‘*A model of Persian prose, of a style at once original, chaste and vigorous, and remarkably lucid, both cogent in argument and matchless in its irresistible eloquence, this Book, setting forth in outline the Grand Redemptive Scheme of God, [the Kitáb-i-Íqán] occupies a position unequalled by any work in the entire range of Bahá’í literature, except the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá’u’lláh’s Most Holy Book*’ (GPB 138–9). The Guardian also refers to the book as a ‘*unique repository of inestimable treasures*’, possessing an ‘*unsurpassed pre-eminence among the doctrinal*’ Writings of Bahá’u’lláh (GPB 139).

Shoghi Effendi’s English translation of this work was first published in 1931. The great Bahá’í Persian scholar, Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl, used to say that as a non-believer, after reading the Íqán, he could not fully grasp the greatness of this work. However, when he began rereading it, with the eye of faith, he could discover infinite pearls of wisdom concealed within the shells of the revealed words. While ostensibly demonstrating to the eldest uncle of the Báb, in reply to his specific questions, the truth and validity of the Báb’s spiritual station as the Promised One of Islam, Bahá’u’lláh also implicitly discloses in this book or Tablet His own station, at a time when He would soon openly declare His divine Mission. Upon receiving the Tablet, the uncle of the Báb was very impressed, but he did not immediately become a follower of the Faith. Some time later he did, however, become a very devoted Bahá’í.

In a letter to an individual believer, written on his behalf, Shoghi Effendi states that in the Íqán, ‘*Bahá’u’lláh gives the keynote and explains some of the outstanding passages [of the scriptures of the past] hoping that the friends will continue to study the Sacred Books by themselves and unfold the mysteries found therein*’ (CC Vol. I, 212). In another letter, also written on his behalf, he explains that ‘*The friends, and particularly those*

*who wish to become competent and useful teachers, should indeed consider it to be their first duty to acquaint themselves, as thoroughly as they can, with each and every detail contained in this Holy Book [the Kitáb-i-Íqán], so that they may be able to present the Message in a befitting manner. It is the Guardian's hope, therefore, that those among the believers who have thus far and for some reason or another, failed to make a serious study of this important work will be stimulated to do so, and will as a result deepen their comprehension of the essentials of the Faith'* (Letter dated 7 August 1934).

A concise and authoritative précis of the contents of this outstanding work of Bahá'u'lláh is found in *God Passes By*. The Guardian writes:

*Within a compass of two hundred pages it proclaims unequivocally the existence and oneness of a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and almighty; asserts the relativity of religious truth and the continuity of Divine Revelation; affirms the unity of the Prophets, the universality of their Message, the identity of their fundamental teachings, the sanctity of their scriptures, and the twofold character of their stations; denounces the blindness and perversity of the divines and doctors of every age; cites and elucidates the allegorical passages of the New Testament, the abstruse verses of the Qur'án, and the cryptic Muḥammadan traditions which have bred those age-long misunderstandings, doubts and animosities that have sundered and kept apart the followers of the world's leading religious systems; enumerates the essential prerequisites for the attainment by every true seeker of the object of his quest; demonstrates the validity, the sublimity and significance of the Báb's Revelation; acclaims the heroism and detachment of His disciples; foreshadows, and prophesies the world-wide triumph of the Revelation promised to the people of the*

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*Bayán; upholds the purity and innocence of the Virgin Mary; glorifies the Imáms of the Faith of Muḥammad; celebrates the martyrdom, and lauds the spiritual sovereignty, of the Imám Ḥusayn; unfolds the meaning of such symbolic terms as 'Return,' 'Resurrection,' 'Seal of the Prophets' and 'Day of Judgment'; adumbrates and distinguishes between the three stages of Divine Revelation; and expatiates, in glowing terms, upon the glories and wonders of the 'City of God,' renewed, at fixed intervals, by the dispensation of Providence, for the guidance, the benefit and salvation of all mankind. Well may it be claimed that of all the books revealed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, this Book alone, by sweeping away the age-long barriers that have so insurmountably separated the great religions of the world, has laid down a broad and unassailable foundation for the complete and permanent reconciliation of their followers. (GPB 139)*

### *3. Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*

This impressive compilation of the fundamental teachings of the Author of our Faith comprises 165 selections and was first published in 1935. The Bahá'í world cannot adequately thank the beloved Guardian for this inestimable gift of translating vital and significant portions of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

The title was chosen by Shoghi Effendi himself. In a letter written on his behalf, he points out that his purpose was to provide 'to the believers a befitting and authoritative rendering of the fundamental teachings of the Cause regarding God, soul, creation, the nature of Divine Manifestations and similar subjects' (GT 74). When Queen Marie of Romania read the book, given to her through Martha Root, she expressed her gratitude to Shoghi Effendi for this 'wonderful book, every word of which is precious to me, and doubly so in this time of anxiety and unrest' (PP 219). Martha Root has also reported that the Queen had told

her, regarding the contents of the *Gleanings*, that ‘even doubters would find a powerful strength in it, if they would read it alone, and would give their souls time to expand’ (PP 219).

In a letter to the American National Assembly dated 13 May 1935, the Guardian gives a list of the subjects incorporated in the translations to facilitate the preparation of an index. The list is as follows:

- Unity of Prophets
- Power of the Word of God
- Reference to the next Manifestation
- Nature of Divinity
- Unity of God
- Power and influence of the Cause
- Justice and the Bahá’í Teachings
- Personality and station of Bahá’u’lláh
- Phenomenon of sleep and the worlds of God
- Prophets as Divine physicians
- The maturity of the world and the Bahá’í Faith
- Refutations of attacks on the Cause
- The doctrine of atonement
- Isaiah’s prophecy
- Obedience to kings and governments
- The passing of the old world order and the birth of the new one
- Fate and predestination
- Chastity and righteousness
- References to Tehran
- References to the House of Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdád
- Tablet of fasting
- Importance of the ordinances and laws of God
- The love of God and its significance
- Reference to Ashraf’s mother
- Meaning of Divine unity
- Station of a true believer

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- Universal script, language and peace
  - Transmutation of metals and the Divine elixir
  - Moderation in liberty and civilization
  - Life after death
  - Innate capacity of individuals
  - Degradation of the Shi'ahs
  - The nature of man's creation
  - Immortality of the soul
  - The nature of death
  - Perseverance of the believers
  - Identity of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh
  - Relations of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths
  - Importance of teaching and its requirements
  - Tablet to the Letter of the Living (extracts)
  - Tablet to Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Azíz and his ministers (extracts)
  - The Book of God is the divine Balance
  - Spread of irreligion
  - Divine Revelation is progressive
  - Station of Christ and significance of His crucifixion
  - Significance of Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment
  - Reference to Manifestations before Adam
  - Bahá'u'lláh and the 'Ulamas of Iraq
  - Bahá'u'lláh addressing the kings of the earth
  - Doctrine of pantheism
  - Inequality of men
  - References to the Jordan and Holy Land
  - Nature of liberty
  - Miscellaneous exhortations
  - Prayers
- (SBWC, 10 June 2005)



#### *4. Prayers and Meditations*

One of the distinctions of the Bahá'í Faith is that it has hundreds of prayers revealed by its Founder, and a similar number by the Centre of the Covenant, in addition to the prayers revealed by the Báb, which are sprinkled throughout His Writings. This volume, consisting of 339 pages and comprising 184 supplications of various categories revealed by the pen of the Author of the Faith, was published in English in 1938, under the title *Prayers and Meditations* – a designation chosen by Shoghi Effendi himself.

When Shoghi Effendi sent his manuscript to George Townshend for his input, Townshend was so overwhelmed by the volume, and the uniqueness and beauty of these devotional Writings that he wrote back to the Guardian: 'It is very wonderful. Nothing like it in the world' (GT 76). Shoghi Effendi's former professor at the American University of Beirut wrote: 'The translation of deep and poetic thoughts, such as those in the *Prayers and Meditations*, requires an enormous amount of hard work . . . I have told you before how much I marvel when I see the quality of English that you use' (PP 219).

Most of the prayers in this volume were originally revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in Arabic, and perhaps a score or so were written in Persian. They can be roughly divided into four categories: first, those revealed for special occasions, such as the Obligatory Prayers, the Prayer for the Dead, prayers for Riḍván and Naw-Rúz, for the Fast, and for the Intercalary Days. A second category consists of prayers suitable for reading on anniversaries related to Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, including the Tablet of Visitation. The greatest number of prayers falls into the third category, including prayers for the morning, when travelling, for children, for protection, guidance, thanksgiving, praise of God's gifts, detachment, nearness to God, obedience, unity, steadfastness, assistance, forgiveness, and spiritual advancement. This category also includes prayers for departed souls, for healing, and for the victory of the Faith. The final category consists of

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pure meditations of Bahá'u'lláh, covering such subjects as His contemplation of God's bountiful grace, His own plight in the hands of His opponents, and reflections on His evanescence in the face of God's compelling Will. This category of meditations seems to be primarily meant for personal reflection. Some of them are long; the longest one covers 22 pages.

Cases have been reported of people who felt they did not have the capacity, or possibly willingness, to believe in the existence of an All-Merciful God, who, after pondering the contents of this volume, developed the inner sensitivity of accepting the reality of a Divine Creator, and recognized the need to turn humbly in supplication to Him, seeking guidance, protection and assistance.

### *5. Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*

Revealed in 1891, this 181-page Tablet was Bahá'u'lláh's last major work. The 'Wolf' was a title given by Bahá'u'lláh to Shaykh Muḥammad Báqir, who was responsible for the harassment of Bábís and Bahá'ís in Isfahán, and particularly the killing of two brothers in that city, the 'King' and 'Beloved' of martyrs. The 'son of the Wolf', Shaykh Muḥammad Taqí, not only supported these tyrannical acts, but was often willing to participate in the execution of his father's oppressive religious decrees.

Shoghi Effendi, referring to the Epistle, states that in this Tablet, which was the last outstanding Tablet revealed by Him, Bahá'u'lláh '*calls upon that rapacious priest to repent of his acts, quotes some of the most characteristic and celebrated passages of His own Writings, and adduces proofs establishing the validity of His Cause*' (GPB 219). Rúḥíyyih Khánum describes this Tablet as occupying 'a special position of its own in the literature of our Faith' (PP 222). In one of his cables, Shoghi Effendi expressed the hope that the study of this major work of Bahá'u'lláh would '*contribute further enlightenment deeper understanding verities on which effective prosecution*

*teaching administrative undertakings ultimately depend'* (PP 221).

A summary of the contents of this Tablet is given in the *Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*, as follows: 'Bahá'u'lláh called on the shaykh to repent of his wrongdoing and beseech God's forgiveness; declared his own mission to be God's cause; summarized some of his own teachings and cited passages from his own earlier works; noted the transforming effect he had had on the Bábís (turning them away from sedition to goodly deeds); called for protection for his followers from religious persecution and martyrdom; presented biblical prophecies fulfilled by his coming; [and] lamented the behaviour of Şubḥ-i-Azal and his followers . . .' (CEBF 133).

The receipt of the Epistle only inflamed the fury of the shaykh. There is little doubt that the Manifestation of God would have known what the reaction to His call would be, especially on the part of such a despicable character. We can well assume that Bahá'u'lláh's intention may have been to provide for believers and seekers alike an anthology of His major pronouncements during His Ministry. One of the distinctive features of this Tablet is that Bahá'u'lláh quotes passages from Writings He had previously revealed, as indicated by the Guardian above.

The nature of revelation has been described by Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of Wisdom, in which He says that whenever He wishes to quote from what is revealed or written in the past, there appears '*before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world and is revealed in the Holy Books and Scriptures*' (TB 149). It might not to be unwarranted to infer that whenever He was quoting from previously revealed Tablets, He would essentially rereveal them at the given time. This conclusion would seem to be confirmed by the fact that, in more than one case, a slight difference of wording, but not of meaning, exists between the two versions of the text. Shoghi Effendi, when rendering his translations, took notice of these changes, and adjusted his own English text accordingly.

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### *6. Translated passages selected from the Writings of the Central Figures of the Faith included in Shoghi Effendi's letters and other works*

In 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets, we sometimes come across quotations of passages revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in support of subjects the Master is addressing. This practice was followed by Shoghi Effendi, and indeed raised to the level of a consummate skill. He was wont to quote liberally from the Writings of the Central Figures of the Faith whenever he felt that those passages would either confirm or shed a new light on his theme.

Three of the Guardian's major works have the distinction of quoting profusely from the Writings: these are the *Advent of Divine Justice*, *The Promised Day is Come*, and *God Passes By*. Some of these passages had already been translated in previous works, such as *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. However, quite a number were renderings shared with the friends for the first time. Of this latter category we find the greatest number in *The Promised Day is Come*. Of particular interest are the quotations included by him towards the end of *The Advent of Divine Justice*. These nine pages of citations consist of a series of paragraphs, each of which treats a separate subject. Some of the themes are as follows: the blessedness of individual services, the importance of God's mighty Day, the omnipotent power of God's Revelation, the heedlessness of the world and its godless civilization, the adversities and oppositions ordained for the Bahá'í community, the need to arise to teach, to scatter and to proclaim the Faith of God, and the promise that a new race of men would rise to ensure the victory of the Faith.

### **C. Comments on Shoghi Effendi's genius in his translation work**

In *Star of the West*, Vol. 14, we read a note from the editor of this periodical reminiscing about his pilgrimage in Haifa in 1919.

He writes, 'When we were sitting in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá one evening in Haifa in the autumn of 1919, He spoke of the need of a great Bahá'í translator, like Fitzgerald, whose masterful translation made famous the poems of the Persian poet, 'Umar Khayyám' (SW Vol. 14, No. 8, 250).

There is an immature and indeed faulty conception in the teachings promulgated by the churches in Christianity to the effect that after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, in the wake of the Pentecostal episode, His disciples were suddenly blessed by the gift of speaking in other tongues. According to the Bible, '*tongues like as of fire*' (Acts 2: 3) came and sat on the heads of these disciples, and when they came out of the meeting, they found that they could speak in all tongues. It is the belief of some of the churches that this gift allowed them to spread abroad the teachings of Christ in many lands by enabling the disciples to speak in the language of the local people. The metaphorical style used in this passage has been, unfortunately, misunderstood. Certainly what was meant by 'tongue' was the ability of the Disciples to adapt their teaching to the degree of receptivity of the people. It was the gift of wisdom in their utterance rather than linguistic capacity which was intended. Webster's dictionary defines one of the meanings of the word 'tongue' as: 'the manner or quality of utterance, with respect to the sense of what is expressed or the intention of the speaker'.

In this Dispensation, we see that 'Abdu'l-Bahá needed a translator to interpret the talks He delivered in the West. There is, for instance, a little notebook on display in the International Archives Building which includes words in English with their phonetic pronunciation, as well as their meaning, written in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own hand. It is also known that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was able to say a few simple sentences in English during His Western tours, but as stated above, He needed an interpreter for His major talks.

It is in this light that we have to understand the plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá not only to send Shoghi Effendi to school to learn

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languages other than his own, but eventually to send him to one of the colleges of Oxford University to perfect his English. During the period when he was in England, in personal letters to some of his friends Shoghi Effendi made such comments as these:

I have been immersed in my studies – all having as an end a better ability in translating the words of Baha’u’llah and a fuller knowledge and better expression in expounding its principles. (*The Chosen Highway*, and SEO 77)

I am engaged in this land, day and night, in perfecting myself in the art of translation . . . I do not have a moment’s rest. Thank God that to some extent at least the results are good. (PP 37)

God be praised, I am in good health and full of hope and trying to the best of my ability to equip myself for those things I shall require in my future service to the Cause. My hope is that I may speedily acquire the best that this country and this society have to offer and then return to my home and recast the truths of the Faith in a new form, and thus serve the Holy Threshold. (PP 37)

These quotations indicate the degree of importance Shoghi Effendi attached to his studies in Oxford. Nevertheless, in his initial efforts at translation he depended a great deal on such of his English friends as Lady Blomfield and Ethel Rosenberg to assist him.

As we have already indicated, his earliest translation work was his rendering of the full text of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá into English. Likewise, we have seen that in drafting *The Passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, he found it necessary to translate several passages from the Master’s utterances. It should be remembered that even during this early period Shoghi Effendi

was fully aware of the intention of the Authors whose Writings he was interpreting. For example in his rendering of the text of the Will and Testament, we find the following sentence: '[The Ḥuqúq] *is to be offered through the guardian of the Cause of God, that it may be expended for . . .*' (WTA 15).

In the original Persian, the word translated here as 'through' is 'raji'-bi', which normally means 'reverts to'. However, in the context of the Master's Will, Shoghi Effendi chose to translate this term as 'through', possibly with the intention of drawing the attention of the friends to the fact that he, as Guardian, was merely the vehicle through which this fixed offering was to be dispensed at that particular time.

While Shoghi Effendi was in London, he tried his hand at translating the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, rendering passages from the Hidden Words, various Tablets and Bahá'u'lláh's letters to the kings and rulers. He would send his translations to deepened and well-seasoned British Bahá'is, or to one or two of his professors, for their input on the quality of his work.

However, when he returned to the Holy Land after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, as stated above, he found that his first duty was to translate into English the full text of the Master's Will and Testament. One can well imagine how difficult and challenging this task must have been, as he was so deeply afflicted by the loss of his Grandfather. The modesty of Shoghi Effendi is immediately apparent when the reader notices that throughout the Will, 'guardian' is spelled with a small 'g', and likewise, the word 'branch', when applied to himself, is lower-cased. This modesty must have been combined with his wisdom in not giving the impression to the friends in the West that he was in any way claiming the same station as 'Abdu'l-Bahá. However, 13 years later, when he was writing 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh', and it was necessary to quote from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will, we see that passages referring to himself as 'Guardian' or 'Branch' are capitalized – perhaps because he must have felt that

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the friends in the West had by then understood the exalted position of the Office he was occupying.

In *The Priceless Pearl*, Rúhíyyih Khánum relates that Shoghi Effendi told her, in reference to his position as Head of the Universal House of Justice, that although he had substituted the milder term of ‘member for life’ in his rendering of the Master’s Will, the exact translation would have been ‘irremovable’. We can never confidently assume we know what Shoghi Effendi’s motivation was, as it could have been a combination, again, of both modesty and wisdom (PP 203–4).

A set of prayers which the friends in the East read on the occasion of memorial gatherings, known as ‘the Exalted Words’ (Kalimát-i-‘Áliyát), revealed by Bahá’u’lláh in both Arabic and Persian, should be mentioned in this discussion. The arrangement of these prayers is such that the text is revealed first in Arabic, followed by a rendition by Bahá’u’lláh Himself in the Persian tongue. The series is revealed in this way, in pairs, first in Arabic, then in Persian. Bahá’u’lláh, however, does not content Himself with a simple translation: the tone of the prayers is equally elevated and exalted in both languages. We may assume that Shoghi Effendi could have been inspired to follow the example of Bahá’u’lláh, except that he was now translating from an oriental language, with its particular imagery, into a western tongue.

In his prefatory note to the text of his translation of the Kitáb-i-Íqán, we read the following two sentences:

*This is one more attempt to introduce to the West, in language however inadequate, this book of unsurpassed pre-eminence among the writings of the Author of the Bahá’í Revelation. The hope is that it may assist others in their efforts to approach what must always be regarded as the unattainable goal – a befitting rendering of Bahá’u’lláh’s matchless utterance. (KI vii)*



Shoghi Effendi is not saying that the original is clear and his translation is not. He is saying that he will never be able, and no one will ever be able, to approach that matchless excellence which is the utterance of Bahá'u'lláh. The original has that special quality. The quotation has nothing to do with the clarity of his translation, it is about the majesty of Bahá'u'lláh's style.

One of my associates, who is himself a scholar and expert translator, once wrote me the following comment on the quality of Shoghi Effendi's translations:

[H]is translations set a new standard of excellence in the field which was not only relatively speaking better than anything that had gone before it, but which stood on its own merits side by side with the finest scriptural expressions in the English language, far transcending any rendering that had yet been made of the Muslim scriptures. So eloquent, natural and stirring was the language, so beautiful the thoughts expressed, so memorable and poignant the turns of phrase, so vivid and powerful the imagery, that it was possible for the English reader temporarily to forget [it] was something not originally revealed in his own tongue. (MH 30/5/96)

Unlike all other translators of Bahá'í scripture before him, Shoghi Effendi, in his capacity as Interpreter or Expounder of the Writings, had the unique capacity, during his ministry, not only to translate but actually to unveil before our eyes the Author's full intention in writing the text. It is because of this consideration that Shoghi Effendi invariably advised National Assemblies in non-English-speaking lands to use his translations as a basis for their renderings in other languages. In order to grasp the implications of this basic fact a few examples are given below:

1. In Persian and Arabic, short vowels are not included in the regular alphabet. Thus a word could be read in more than one

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way, and the sense would be deduced from the context of the sentence. Two such words in the Arabic are ‘uqáb’ and ‘iqáb’. In some previous translations of the Persian Hidden Words, the translators assumed that the intention of Bahá’u’lláh was ‘uqáb’, meaning ‘eagle’. Shoghi Effendi’s translation indicates that Bahá’u’lláh had in mind ‘iqáb’, meaning ‘retribution’. Thus we read in Persian Hidden Words, No. 63: ‘*O YE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD! Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity is following you, and that grievous retribution awaiteth you.*’ The early translations referred to a dangerous ‘eagle’ pursuing the people of the world.

2. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the text about the ‘Order’ of Bahá’u’lláh, when read word for word, reads as follows: ‘Order has been upset by reason of this most great order, and arrangement of things has been changed because of this new way – a way that the people of the world have not yet seen.’ The friends in the East, and indeed the scholars among them, understood this verse to refer to the style and format of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, as being different or distinct from the order of verses revealed in past religious scriptures. When, in 1934, Shoghi Effendi produced his translation, it was clear that the ‘order of things’ was a reference to ‘mankind’s ordered life’, and that the ‘new order’ was Bahá’u’lláh’s new World Order. Thus we could read, ‘*The world’s equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind’s ordered life hath be revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System – the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed*’ (KA ¶181).

3. On page 168 of *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, there is a passage the original of which is in the Persian language. If translated word for word, it would read something like this: ‘The beginning and the end, as well as stillness and motion, is manifest. In this day the beginning is seen in the end,

and motion has arisen from stillness.’ Many of the friends in Persia had great difficulty in comprehending Bahá’u’lláh’s intention, and different understandings developed among them, until Shoghi Effendi’s translation appeared in *Gleanings*: ‘*He Who is both the Beginning and the End, He Who is both Stillness and Motion, is now manifest before your eyes. Behold how, in this Day, the Beginning is reflected in the End, how out of Stillness, Motion hath been engendered*’ (Gls LXXXV).

4. In the paragraph immediately preceding the penultimate paragraph of the Tablet of Aḥmad, we read: ‘*Learn well this Tablet, O Aḥmad. Chant it during thy days . . . God hath ordained for the one who chants it . . .*’ and in the penultimate paragraph, we read: ‘*Should one who is in affliction or grief read this Tablet . . .*’. In the paragraph before the penultimate one, Bahá’u’lláh twice exhorts Aḥmad to ‘chant’ the Tablet, whereas in the penultimate paragraph, the exhortation is to ‘read’ the Tablet. For the average Persian or Arabic reader, the two ‘chants’ and the final ‘read’ are all derivatives of the root ‘to read’. However, Shoghi Effendi as Interpreter chose to translate the first occurrences of this derivative as an act of chanting. It is interesting that the two ‘chants’ occur in the paragraph where reference is made to the ‘*reward of a hundred martyrs and a service in both worlds*’, whereas the word ‘read’ is in connection with someone who is in affliction or grief. Could it be that chanting calls for a form of ecstatic transport and an inner sense of rapture, which would be closer to the state of surrendering our will to the Will of God?

5. In *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 340, reference is made to the ‘lesser’ and ‘greater worlds’: ‘*The All-Merciful hath conferred upon man the faculty of vision . . . Some have described him as the “lesser world,” when, in reality, he should be regarded as the “greater world.”*’ In *Prayers and Meditations*, on p. 49, we find another reference to the two

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worlds, but in this case ‘Lesser’, ‘Greater’ and indeed ‘Worlds’ are all capitalized: ‘*Wishing to reveal Thyself, Thou didst call into being the Greater and Lesser Worlds, and didst choose Man above all Thy creatures, and didst make Him a sign of both of these worlds . . .*’.

We are bound to infer that the capitalization used by Shoghi Effendi carries the essential element of interpretation. It is useful to remember that in the Guardian’s translations, he always employs upper case to denote God and His Manifestations. However, in other situations, such as when he is referring to the human race, he uses lower case. There is no system of capitalization in either Persian or Arabic. This is something peculiar to many of the western languages, including English. Even the French have some reservation about using too many capitals. They don’t use them often. But in English it is not so! In the Authorized translation of the Bible the translators have made much use of capitalization. This is the nature of the language. When Shoghi Effendi was translating into English, he used all the tools of the language. Then, into this frame, which consists of the grammatical regulations and the syntactical regulations, he pours in his interpretation. Sometimes it is majuscule, sometimes it is minuscule, and thus we have the benefit of his interpretation. A foolish person or a foolish publisher would say ‘Oh, there is a mistake here. Obviously capitalization should always be used.’ Then they would probably check with some Persian Bahá’í or non-Bahá’í or an Arab and they would see that it is the same word! This is why the manuscripts of Shoghi Effendi’s translations are precious! In the Archives Building is kept everything which he wrote, whether by hand or using his typewriter. They are preserved there, so that they remain intact. There we can verify that there is capitalization in one case and not in another.

The original word used by Bahá’u’lláh in both the passage from *Gleanings* and that from *Prayers and Meditations* is ‘insan’, which means ‘man’. The Guardian understood the statement in *Gleanings* to refer to man as a member of the human

race, whereas from the context of the original in *Prayers and Meditations* he concluded that the word ‘insan’ was a reference to the Manifestation of God (Gls CLX and PM XXXVIII). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Some Answered Questions*, clarifies the distinction between these two stations in the following words:

*[T]his terrestrial globe at one time did not exist, and at its beginning man did not appear upon it. But from the beginning which has no beginning, to the end which has no end, a Perfect Manifestation always exists. This Man of Whom we speak is not every man; we mean the Perfect Man. (SAQ 196)*

It would be helpful to compare extracts from two early translations by others of the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, in order appreciate the degree of excellence that characterized Shoghi Effendi’s renditions:

1. An English translation of the Hidden Words was published by the Cairo Bahá’í Assembly in 1921, just prior to the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The translation was made by Mrs J. Stannard, and was considered in the West as being the best rendition thus far of this major work of the Blessed Beauty. The translation of Arabic Hidden Word number 3 reads: ‘O Son of Man! In my ancient and eternal Being, knew I my love in thee, therefore did I create thee, and laid on thee My Image, and revealed to thee My Beauty.’ Shoghi Effendi’s rendering of this stanza is as follows: ‘*O SON OF MAN! Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty*’ (HW Arabic, No. 3).

2. At a time when E.G. Browne was still well-disposed towards the Faith, he translated the Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh to Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh. We set out below the rendition this well-

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known English scholar, who had studied both Persian and Arabic thoroughly, made of this Tablet, and Shoghi Effendi's translation of the same passage.

E.G. Browne's version reads: 'O King, verily I was as (any) one amongst mankind, slumbering upon my couch. The gales of the All-Glorious passed by me, and taught me the knowledge of what has been . . . This is a leaf which the breezes of the Will of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Extolled, have stirred. Can it be still when the rushing winds blow? No, by the Lord of the Names and Attributes! Rather do they move it as they list (for) Being belongeth not to Non-entity in presence of the Eternal . . . O King, look with the gaze of justice upon thy servant; then decide according to the right concerning what hath befallen him' (TN 395).

Shoghi Effendi's translation is as follows: '*O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been . . . This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list. The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding . . . Look upon this Youth, O King, with the eyes of justice; judge thou, then, with truth concerning what hath befallen Him*' (SLH 98).

The friends all over the world, and more particularly throughout the English-speaking West, should be grateful to the Blessed Beauty that through the operation of His All-Compelling Will, He provided for His '*sacred and youthful branch*' the '*primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree*' to be not only the Head of His Faith after 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but also the peerless translator and interpreter of the Holy Writ (WTA 11 and 3).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. If knowledge is a light that God casts into the heart of whomsoever He willeth, and we know that the Manifestation has not undertaken any schooling, why is the gift of language not conferred upon these suns and their moons?**

A. I don't know. But it is important to remember that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not a Manifestation of God. Bahá'u'lláh was a Manifestation of God. One of Their powers of the Manifestations of God is that They are '*omniscient at will*' (UD 449). This means that They know whatever They want, whenever They want. Bahá'u'lláh has written: '*Thou knowest full well that We perused not the books which men possess and We acquired not the learning current amongst them, and yet whenever We desire to quote the sayings of the learned and of the wise, presently there will appear before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world and is revealed in the Holy Books and Scriptures*' (TB 149). That is one of the qualities of all the Manifestations of God, not only Bahá'u'lláh. A Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh says, can do anything. He has the power given by God to do anything. Remember the story of the messenger sent by the divines to meet Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád. The messenger asked Bahá'u'lláh to vindicate the high station that the people attributed to Him. He told the messenger, '*Go thou to the people, and tell them: "Ask whatsoever ye please. Powerful is He to do what He willeth. Nothing whatsoever, be it of the past or of the future, can frustrate His Will." Say: "O ye congregation of the divines! Choose any matter ye desire, and ask your Lord, the God of Mercy, to reveal it unto you. If He fulfil your wish, by virtue of His sovereignty, believe ye then in Him, and be not of those that reject His truth"*' (Gls LXVII). What a statement to make! They could have said that they wanted Him to speak in all the languages of the world!

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**Q. You said that the meaning of the Apostles speaking in tongues has been misunderstood by many Christians. Where is the reference for this interpretation?**

A. This explanation, as I recall, was taken from one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s table talks that were published in *Star of the West*. The article is a written version of an oral statement of the Master. Beyond this, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written that ‘*shining stars*’ will arise in the Bahá’í Faith who will ‘*speak in every tongue*’. It is clear what He intended to say (Sels 252, 251).

**Q. Before the first translations of the Guardian, except for *The Hidden Words* published in Cairo, were any of the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh available to the friends of the West?**

A. In addition to *The Hidden Words* as is mentioned here, there was the Kitáb-i-Iqán, which was translated by ‘Alí Qúlí Khán into English. In the days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá there were many prayers revealed by Bahá’u’lláh that were translated into English. They were not published as a prayer book as such, but were found in the early volumes of *Star of the West*. A number of Tablets, including the Tablet of Visitation and Tablet of Carmel, for example, were translated and published. But they were all sprinkled in various volumes of *Star of the West*.

**Q. The friends in the West had heard ‘Abdu’l-Bahá say wonderful things about the Hidden Words, and they had been translated previous to Shoghi Effendi’s edition. Were the friends in the East equally aware of this station of the Hidden Words?**

A. Many of them would have been aware, but not all, because not all the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Bahá’u’lláh were available to the friends everywhere. There were no publishing



trusts in those days. The first publication of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings was made in 1890 in India. The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were circulated written in longhand, but not printed until towards the end of the Master's life. They would be available in various kinds of photographic prints so that the friends would be able to read them.

In the West, similar things took place. If someone received a letter or a translation in the West, he would sit down and put four or five carbons in his typewriter and make copies so that he could distribute it to his friends and tell them to make even more copies. This was how the Tablets were available to the friends.

**Q. According to Shi'ih belief, there are other books in the possession of the Imáms, as well as the Hidden Book of Fáṭimih. Is there anything mentioned in the Bahá'í writings concerning these books?**

A. I have not seen any myself. I have not read every single Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, but in the ones that I have read, I have found no reference to books in the possession of the Imáms, such as the Hidden Words.

**Q. The Hidden Book of Fáṭimih is said *'to consist of words of consolation addressed by the angel Gabriel, at God's command, to Fáṭimih, and dictated to the 'Imam 'Alí, for the sole purpose of comforting her in her hour of bitter anguish after the death of her illustrious Father'* (GPB 140). Where is the association between the Book of Fáṭimih and the Hidden Words, since the latter consists of a code of ethical behaviour? How does this correlate with words of consolation? Is it our limited capacity that prevents us from understanding the connection?**

A. Actually, there are some very clear references to death in the Hidden Words. Take, for example, the well-known verse, 'O

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*SON OF THE SUPREME! I have made death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore dost thou grieve? I made the light to shed on thee its splendor. Why dost thou veil thyself therefrom?*’ (HW No. 32, Arabic) Could this not be seen as a consolation to someone in grief? There are also many passages that refer to death in an indirect way.

However, the really important aspect of this book is that it contains all the eternal and heavenly principles of life. This would have lifted Fāṭimih to a higher level of realization and faith. It would have raised her thinking to the station of maturity, by enhancing her values and enriching her spiritual insights. In this way, it is an indirect consolation to the heart of somebody who is grieving.

**Q. Several passages in *Gleanings* deal with the subject of the transmutation of metals and the Divine Elixir. I find these very difficult to understand, probably because I am unfamiliar with the ancient art of alchemy. What is the meaning of these statements?**

A. It is possible that the statements have a spiritual meaning as well as a physical one. The Divine Elixir is a reference to the Word of God, which can transmute the copper of our souls into gold. The Word of God can transmute the copper of the majority of humanity into gold too, bringing about the Golden Age of the Cause. God has this power, the Faith has this power. Thus, transmutation is sometimes clearly referred to in a spiritual sense. As Bahá’u’lláh states: ‘*These few have been endued with the Divine Elixir that can, alone, transmute into purest gold the dross of the world, and have been empowered to administer the infallible remedy for all the ills that afflict the children of men*’ (Gls XCII).

However, it is also true that metal can be transmuted. Copper can become gold, and, in fact, gold can become copper. This type of transmutation is done through the bombardment of the atom with subatomic particles, which is an extremely expensive

process. Therefore, it is still cheaper to produce gold by mining than by atomic bombardment. I don't think Bahá'u'lláh was referring to atomic bombardment. He was talking about alchemy. He meant that there is a real elixir which can be applied to baser metals to transform them into gold.

Bahá'u'lláh has given us three signs for the maturity of the world. These three signs are mentioned in the annotations of *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. One is the adoption of a universal language. The second is the time when the rulers will not be willing to assume leadership. The third is the discovery of a radical approach to the transmutation of elements. Bahá'u'lláh received many letters from Bahá'ís who wanted to know how to change copper into gold! He did not give direct answers and He used a veiled language. I can assure you that if you read them you'd not understand! If a compilation were made of all He wrote about alchemy it would be the size of the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*. I myself have read and reread them. Bahá'u'lláh says that He has used a veiled language so that robbers and thieves will not abuse this knowledge. When humanity is mature, Bahá'u'lláh will remove the veil.

It is just like what Shoghi Effendi said about the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'To attempt to estimate its full value, and grasp its exact significance after so short a time since its inception would be premature and presumptuous on our part. We must trust to time, and the guidance of God's Universal House of Justice, to obtain a clearer and fuller understanding of its provisions and implications'* (BA 62). For many years, nobody understood much about the Aghşán and the matter of succession. After the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice was able to clarify the matter for us. They wrote three long letters about it. The first is called 'The Guardianship', the second 'Election and Infallibility of the Universal House of Justice', and the third 'The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice'. These letters can be found in a thick book called *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*. They lifted the veil for all of us to see.

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**Q. Sometimes, for example in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Bahá'u'lláh Himself reveals a Tablet a second time. Why is it that He sometimes changed a word or two? Is it because He did not remember the original word and so He put in a new word instead, or He was not satisfied with the original?**

A. We have to understand this very clearly. When Bahá'u'lláh rerevealed His Tablets, some were repeated exactly as before, while in the case of those that were altered, the degree of change varied from case to case. One Tablet He rerevealed was a very outstanding Tablet, the Súriy-i-Haykal. He wrote it in the early years of His ministry, addressing the Bábí community at that time. Later, when He wanted it to be part of His major works, He rerevealed it and made some major changes to it. The essence of it, maybe 90 to 95 per cent, remained the same. However, He deliberately changed parts of it, so that instead of addressing the Bábí community, it now addressed all the peoples of the world.

In other cases, such as in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, there are minor changes, often just one word. Look at how careful Shoghi Effendi was in his translation. He did not just reuse the translation of the Tablet he had included previously, for example, in *Gleanings*. He checked word by word to make sure that what he translated was exactly what was rerevealed.

Why did Bahá'u'lláh change one word here or another word there? I do not know. Who knows the mind of Bahá'u'lláh? What I wanted to show you was the loyalty, the faithfulness, the carefulness of Shoghi Effendi in his translation work. We will never be able to understand fully the mind of Bahá'u'lláh. It is impossible. He said that whenever He wanted something of the past it would come before Him in the form of a Tablet and He would just read it, whether it was His own Writings or the writings of anybody who came before Him. If He decided to change a word, perhaps it was for the sake of the recipient of the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*.

**Q. Could you please elaborate on the significance of the word ‘chant’ used in the Tablet of Aḥmad? Does this mean that we should always try to chant the Tablet, even if we are reading it in a language other than Arabic or Persian?**

A. The word ‘chant’ that Shoghi Effendi has used here is, in my opinion, an expression of ecstasy, of rapture, of spiritual upliftment and exhilaration. This is my understanding. It does not necessarily mean that if you are reading it in a language other than Arabic you should burst into singing it. Far from it! I think there is an inner meaning. When we read this Tablet, it should be with a sense of spiritual excitement, ecstasy, rapture, happiness and joy. All the martyrs, when they went to their field of martyrdom, did so with great joy. They did it for the sake of Bahá’u’lláh, as an act of love. This is the point, not that you should suddenly burst into singing that particular paragraph or that you should chant the entire Tablet. Basically, when we read it we should be in that condition of spiritual attunement to the music of the Kingdom. This is when you surrender your will to the Will of God. When you read the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh about the meaning of martyrdom, He says that there are two types of martyrdom, physical martyrdom and spiritual martyrdom. Physical martyrdom is very clear. Spiritual martyrdom, He says, is when you submit, surrender, and you subordinate your will to the Will of God. This attitude of detachment – from your own wishes, from your own will, from your own preferences, in favour of the Will of God, whatever may be His good-pleasure, is what represents true spiritual martyrdom. If you are able to surrender your will to the Will of God, you have attained the condition of supreme martyrdom. You are then detached and you are happy about your detachment. You are freeing your soul from the attachments of this world and you are happy.

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On the subject of chanting, Shoghi Effendi has written that Persian, Arabic and Hebrew lend themselves to chanting. Other languages do not quite lend themselves. Some do, and I am of the opinion that Italian is one of them; but not all.

In English there is a tendency to put the accent of a word, if it is more than one syllable, at the beginning. If the word has only one syllable, obviously the accent is on it. Once it becomes two syllables, there is a tendency in English to put the accent on the first syllable, not on the second. There are other languages, such as Persian, Arabic and Hebrew, that put the accent on the second and not on the first. If there are three syllables, there is a tendency in English again to push the accent towards the beginning. It is either on the first or the second syllable. But in Persian, for example, the accent is often on the final syllable.

### **Q. Who translated most of the prayers in our prayer books?**

A. I think most, if not all, of the prayers of Bahá'u'lláh that you find in the prayer books were translated by Shoghi Effendi. However, when it comes to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, it is mixed. Some of them are translations by Shoghi Effendi, some are translations by others. These have been checked with the original texts from 'Abdu'l-Bahá that are at the World Centre and they were considered to be acceptable. Regarding the prayers of the Báb, except for the 'Remover of Difficulties' and perhaps one other short one, they were translated by the World Centre under the authority of the Universal House of Justice.

### **Q. Who is the author of *A Concise Encyclopaedia of the Bahá'í Faith*?**

A. Dr Peter Smith.

### **Q. You said that Professor Browne made some translations of Bahá'u'lláh's writings at a time when he was still well**

**disposed towards the Faith. What does this mean? Was there a time that he was not well disposed towards the Faith?**

A. There was a time when he was very well disposed. In the beginning, when he first travelled to Iran, he was truly unbiased, and he wrote *A Year among the Persians* at that time. He came to Iran in order to investigate. He didn't take any particular side, neither the side of Azal, nor that of Bahá'u'lláh, nor that of anyone else. Through his investigations he met with many Bahá'ís, and there was even some praise of them in his book. Gradually, as he learned more about the Faith, he decided to travel to the Holy Land to meet Bahá'u'lláh. He was graciously granted interviews with the Blessed Beauty, and he was the only Western scholar to ever meet Him personally. It was a great honour conferred upon Professor Browne. He had four interviews with Bahá'u'lláh, by which time he was deeply impressed by His personality, and the strength, power and authority he sensed in Him.

While he was there, he also met 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the first time, and he wrote about Him too, saying how impressed he was by this son of the Blessed Beauty! When leaving he took two manuscripts with him. One was the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh to Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh. This Tablet has an attachment, which is another Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh concerning the meaning of true victory. Browne translated both of them. The second manuscript was *A Traveller's Narrative*.

Some time after leaving 'Akká, he went to Cyprus and met Şubḥ-i-Azal and other Azalís. Gradually those people confused him, as they had changed the history books that had been written by early Bábís. They made him believe that what they had forged was a true history of the life of the Báb and the teachings of the Báb. Professor Browne seemed to be siding now with Şubḥ-i-Azal. We do not know whether he was truly convinced of the truth of what they told him, because maybe he had other motives. We will never know the mind of this man. 'Abdu'l-Bahá does

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write in one of His Tablets that he had political motives as well, which were added to whatever influence the Azalís had. Their manoeuvrings turned him away from the Faith. Yet he kept up a correspondence with the Bahá'ís, including 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself, who would reply and who met him during His visits to England. While Shoghi Effendi was in Oxford, he was hoping to meet Professor Browne, but this never happened.

**Q. Why did Bahá'u'lláh use a term such as '*choice wine*' as an analogy for His Writings and for His laws?**

A. Alcohol and wine are symbols for intoxication. In this context, however, spiritual intoxication is intended. Shoghi Effendi has described the early believers and martyrs as '*God-intoxicated heroes*'. There is another analogy in the writings about the fragrance of the rose. Now, in some countries they do not have roses. My wife, Violette, tells a story that she heard from Rúhíyyih Khánum about a pilgrim who had come from Alaska. This is a place where apparently roses do not exist and this pilgrim did not know what Bahá'u'lláh meant when He talked about the fragrance of the rose. Shoghi Effendi gave a little bottle of attar of rose to the pilgrim on the last day of pilgrimage. He said, 'Take this and show it to the local Bahá'í friends in Alaska so they know at least what a rose smells like.'

**Q. Could possible translations in the future be made of texts that Shoghi Effendi has already translated? Is that recommended?**

A. In a prefatory note to his translation of the Kitáb-i-Iqán, Shoghi Effendi made the following statement: '*This is one more attempt to introduce to the West, in language however inadequate, this book of unsurpassed preeminence among the writings of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation. The hope is that it may assist others in their efforts to approach what must always*



*be regarded as the unattainable goal – a befitting rendering of Bahá'u'lláh's matchless utterance'* (KI vii). I think that this means that it is impossible to convey the exact beauty and majesty of Bahá'u'lláh's original words. However, it is highly improbable that Shoghi Effendi's translations would ever be discarded. Shoghi Effendi was not only a translator. When he was translating, he was interpreting. There are many things that are not clear in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. You might read it in the original and you wouldn't know what it really means. Shoghi Effendi's translation is an exposition of the real meaning deposited in the words.

**Q. How exactly was the Kitáb-i-Aqdas translated?**

A. There is a clear reference in the writings of Shoghi Effendi that a translation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas would be made in the future. He himself translated numerous passages from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, totalling about one-third of the Book. However, he included them in *Gleanings* without specifying their source. When Bahá'u'lláh quotes Himself, as in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, He occasionally quotes from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, so the Guardian also translated those passages. When he wrote *The Promised Day Is Come* and needed to quote the Tablets and Writings of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to different kings, some of these passages were in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, so he translated them as well. When all of these translations are put together, as previously mentioned, about one-third of the Book is translated by the Guardian himself. In addition to that, he prepared copious notes for the book that was published in 1973 by the Universal House of Justice under the title of *A Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. These notes were handed over to the Universal House of Justice after his passing by Rúhíyyih Khánum. Few final touches were needed, so the House of Justice appointed a special committee for this purpose.

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Shoghi Effendi had said that when the time came for the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to be translated it would have to be accompanied by copious notes, to give the background explaining some of the references made by Bahá'u'lláh. Thus, the House of Justice appointed a special committee that consisted of most of its members at that time who had greater experience to help in this important project. It took many years of work. The committee had the assistance not only of individual Bahá'ís at the World Centre who were helpful to it, as well as the Research Department, but also some well-known scholars of the Faith in different parts of the world who were contacted for their opinions about various ways of translating specific passages. They had to gather all of this material and produce this translation, which was then discussed in full during the plenary sessions of the House of Justice itself, with full membership. The draft was presented to the House of Justice itself and in its meetings everything was reread and rediscussed. Thus, it took many years to produce.

**Q. Who put the questions to Bahá'u'lláh that we find answered in 'Questions and Answers' included in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas?**

A. Shoghi Effendi refers to 'Questions and Answers' as an annex to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. They were put together by one of the scholars of our Faith in the days of Bahá'u'lláh named Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín. He was transcribing the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, and lived in Mosul for a long time, until Bahá'u'lláh asked him to come to the World Centre, where he eventually passed away. He himself put numerous questions to Bahá'u'lláh. However, there were other believers asking questions as well. He gathered all of the questions and answers and added them to the compilation. Thus, it was not, as some may be misguided to believe, that somebody asked Bahá'u'lláh for an interview to put all these questions to Him at once. It was done gradually, by Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín gathering the Tablets, understanding what

the question was, putting them together and arranging them in some logical order. The order was also set by Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín. Shoghi Effendi said that it should be considered as an annex to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The published English text consists of the Book itself, some passages from other writings of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, which He said should be considered as part of the Book, followed by 'Questions and Answers', the synopsis and codification, and lastly the annotations. The notes took a long time too, information having to be gleaned from other Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and letters of Shoghi Effendi that explained specific issues.

**Q. Is the Kitáb-i-Aqdas somewhat incomplete because it does not cover many of the issues of society that would require legislation?**

A. There is an article by a non-Bahá'í scholar about the wisdom of the way in which the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is written. The wisdom is that although it is a book of laws, it doesn't provide reams of detail. Instead, Bahá'u'lláh provided for the creation of a legislative body, the Universal House of Justice, to fill in the gaps with secondary laws, which could themselves be changed by the House of Justice to suit the conditions of the times.

The basic, essential laws that are given in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas will never be changed by the House of Justice because they are binding. However, there are matters that need supplementary legislation. For example the law on engagement. This has not been universally applied yet, just as the law of Huqúq'u'lláh was only applicable to the East for many years. The law on engagement basically states that the period of engagement should not exceed 95 days. This law needs supplementary legislation. When does the period of 95 days begin? Is parental consent necessary? What about announcement of the engagement? What happens if a couple cannot, for certain reasons, get married until after 95

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days? In the East, such questions have been asked of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, of Shoghi Effendi and of the House of Justice. Certain answers have been given, but these must all be codified and any gaps must be filled in before it is made into a universally applicable law. The same thing applies to the treatment of thieves and arsonists. There are so many aspects of these laws that have to be determined, and this can only be done when there is a Bahá’í state, when the laws of the Aqdas pertaining to theft, arson, murder, and other such laws, could be implemented. I think the establishment of a Bahá’í state lies in the distant future. When the time comes, the Universal House of Justice will have to look at the condition of the Bahá’í community as a whole, review all the relevant laws of Bahá’u’lláh, study perhaps the laws of other religions on the subject, and even the laws in secular governments. Consider the sentence: ‘*Should anyone intentionally destroy a house by fire, him also shall ye burn*’ (KA ¶62). How should the word ‘house’ be defined? Is it a house with people living in it? Is it an empty house? Does it have furniture? Is it a warehouse? Is it a small house or an apartment? Are there extenuating circumstances? Likewise regarding the punishment for theft. How should the culprit be branded? In the case of a murder, under what circumstances will life imprisonment be used? Such issues are briefly dealt with in the notes at the end of *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*.

**Q. The translations of the beloved Guardian serve as a basis for further translations, particularly into other western languages. To what degree is or should the original Persian or Arabic text be consulted or taken into consideration for these second translations?**

A. This could be very useful. Shoghi Effendi is not telling us not to read the original Persian or Arabic, but that the final, translated text ought to be based on what he himself has translated, as that is much clearer. In fact, there are certain

languages, like Urdu, with many Persian and Arabic words, and the translators into such languages do not have to go to the English, but can translate directly from the Arabic or the Persian of Bahá'u'lláh.

**Q. George Townshend became a Bahá'í in 1921, but only left the Church years later. What was the Guardian's response to this and how can we learn from this example in dealing with friends who are still strongly attached to the Church?**

A. We should not remain or become registered as members of other religious groups, such as churches. However, there is a difference between the instructions of Shoghi Effendi regarding non-membership in religious communities and non-membership in political parties. When it was about religious communities, Shoghi Effendi used to give such advice as this: *'Such questions as the withdrawal from Church membership . . . should not be thrust upon the newcomer, but explained to him gradually, so that he himself may be convinced of the truth underlying these ordinances of the Cause'* (LG 68). With political parties, it was different. If you were a member of a political party you simply had to find your way to leave immediately.

Although we may not be allowed to have membership in other religious communities, we can still go to any church, be it Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or anything else. Rúhíyyih Khánum, whenever travelling, used to go to the houses of worship of other religions. She used to pray there, because they too are buildings raised to the glory of God. Again, with political parties, it is different. You should not only avoid membership of the party, but you should not go to their meetings, to offer your opinions in their discussions. With religions there is some flexibility. All such matters are for the National Spiritual Assembly to decide.

In the case of George Townshend there was no National Assembly, but he was such an important figure that it was after

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consultation with the Guardian that he finally submitted his resignation from the Church. He was over 70 years old when he renounced his orders. It cost him his house and his pension, because both had been provided by the church. Shoghi Effendi then took care of this dear man who was helping him in the translation work and he made special financial arrangements for Mr Townshend.

### **Q. Why has the Bayán not been fully translated yet?**

A. There are two Bayáns: the Persian Bayán and the Arabic Bayán. These have been already translated into French by A.L.M. Nicolas. Nicolas was the French consul in Tabriz at the time of the martyrdom of the Báb. He heard about the Báb and the Faith and became extremely interested. He did not become a Bábí, but he was enamoured by the life of the Báb and His teachings. He translated the entire Persian Bayán, which was published in Paris in three volumes, with his own footnotes. He also translated the Arabic Bayán. They were formerly available, but now they have gone out of print. If you went to some of the old libraries in Paris, you would probably find some copies of them. There may be copies available in cyberspace. In any case, it was published and Shoghi Effendi includes some quotations of Nicolas's translations in the footnotes to *The Dawn-Breakers*.

The laws of the Bayán are not applicable to us today. They were abrogated by Bahá'u'lláh. That is why there is no urgent or acute need for an authoritative translation. These two Books are available in French for anyone who wants to read them in the West.

## IV

### *The Dawn-Breakers*

#### *Background*

Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum describes *The Dawn-Breakers*, Nabíl's chronicle, as 'a classic among epic narratives in the English tongue' (PP 215). The author was Muḥammad Zarandí, who wrote his narrative in Persian. Bahá'u'lláh gave him the title of 'Nabíl-i-A'ẓam', which means 'the most great Nabíl'. Nabíl, in both Persian and Arabic, means 'noble', or 'excellent', and according to the Abjad reckoning, the two words Muḥammad and Nabíl have equivalent numerical values. Zarand is a town in one of the outlying districts of Tehran. Nabíl was on a visit in a nearby locality in Rubat-Karim when he heard for the first time that a merchant in Shiraz had declared Himself as the Promised One of Islam. He soon pursued his interest in the new Faith by contacting those who were among the most prominent believers of the Báb, and became a Bábí around the year 1847. During that period he met Bahá'u'lláh twice, once in Kirmánsháh, and once in Tehran.

After the Báb's martyrdom, Nabíl specially undertook a visit to Baghdád, and it was there that he caught a glimpse of the true station of Bahá'u'lláh. He decided to devote the rest of his life to serving and promoting the interests of the Bahá'í Faith. He was also a poet, and endowed with a powerful pen as well as a retentive memory. He composed many poems in praise of Bahá'u'lláh. Shoghi Effendi called him the '*Poet-Laureate*' of the Blessed Beauty (GPB 130). When Shoghi Effendi was

drawing up a list of outstanding believers to be named as 'Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh', he included Nabíl.

Nabíl travelled a great deal, and many of his journeys were undertaken at the behest of Bahá'u'lláh. During his extensive travels he met eminent Bábís and Bahá'ís and made copious notes of what he had heard from them regarding significant episodes in the history of the Faith. He later met the faithful brother of Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Músá, who provided him with important details related to Bábí and Bahá'í history. His close friends often encouraged him to write his memoirs, but he refused to do so. He finally agreed that he would proceed with such a project only if Bahá'u'lláh would give His permission. The matter was presented to Bahá'u'lláh through His amanuensis, and the suggestion was highly approved by the Blessed Beauty. In two Tablets addressed to Nabíl, Bahá'u'lláh gave him clear instructions about the narrative he was to set in writing. He was advised neither to overstate nor understate, neither to expand the description of events nor reduce their importance (Athar, Vol. 4, 184–5; 193–4). According to one of the Persian scholars, he was also told, possibly orally, that he should be strictly factual and his narrative should be free from doubtful reports and assumptions (NZ 54).

Nabíl started writing his history in the year 1887–8 and it took him a year and a half to complete (NZ 57). In the preface to *The Dawn-Breakers*, Nabíl states that what he has recorded is 'a description of the episodes I myself have witnessed, as well as those that have been reported to me by trustworthy and recognised informants, specifying in every case their names and standing' (DB lxiii). According to a statement made by the Research Department at the World Centre, the following process for submission of his work to Bahá'u'lláh is described: 'Nabíl composed the draft pages of his history without any extensive re-editing or corrections and submitted them in quires to Mírzá Áqá Ján. Upon their return to Nabíl, ten months after the submission of the final quire, with corrections to be made (how these



corrections were indicated is not explained), Nabíl made the requested corrections to the text of the draft manuscript as well as adding an appendix containing further material from the Baghdad period which had been omitted' (RD 9/11/05).

As stated by the Research Department, corrections had to be made to his original draft. What was available to the beloved Guardian was only the original uncorrected draft. In *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi points out that Muḥammad-‘Alí and his family ‘*carried off, by a ruse, the two satchels containing [Bahá’u’lláh’s] most precious documents*’ (GPB 249) immediately after the ascension of Bahá’u’lláh. Among the stolen documents, according to a Tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was the text of the corrected version of Nabíl’s narrative. If this revised version is ever found and acquired by the World Centre, then, obviously, experts will have to look at the document to see if anything has been changed or any word corrupted or interpolated, or anything of that nature. In such an event, the House of Justice may decide what needs to be done. We cannot be sure that the revised version will ever be recovered.

It must be remembered that, apart from *A Traveller’s Narrative*, the friends did not have in their possession a detailed account of the heroic exploits that characterized the lives of the early believers of the Báb’s Dispensation. In a cable dated 1 November 1931 to the National Assembly of the United States and Canada, Shoghi Effendi describes the contents of Nabíl’s work as a ‘*varied rich and authentic material [which] constitutes most effective weapon to meet challenge of a critical hour*’ (RD 9/11/05). In view of the need to make this material available to the friends, and as the final corrected text was not in his hands, he set himself the task of editing the original draft in the spirit of the instructions given by Bahá’u’lláh to Nabíl. This is why, in the final published work, the Guardian clearly states that the book was ‘*translated from the original Persian and edited by Shoghi Effendi*’.

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In explaining what he had to accomplish, Shoghi Effendi, in a letter dated 15 November 1932, wrote to the friends in Iran the following: *‘Before translating the Narrative, the text had to be edited and corrected, and this task was undertaken by me personally. Exaggerations and overstatements were eliminated. The text as it stands will serve as a standard when future histories of the Faith will be written.’* Furthermore, the original document was a continuous and uninterrupted narrative, and Shoghi Effendi, in order to make it more readable for Western audiences, found it necessary to break the text down into chapters and subheadings (RD 9/11/05). When sending his manuscript to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, his secretary wrote on his behalf: *‘the translation of Nabil’s Narrative and the reading of the books (quoted in the footnotes) and arrangement of the notes have taken a great deal of time and have entailed a considerable amount of labour and effort. The work he is sending you is the result of eight months of continuous labour and he hopes that the efforts exerted will prove of service to the Cause in this critical time’.* (RD 9/11/05)

#### *Contents of the book*

As stated earlier, Mr Townshend collaborated with the beloved Guardian in supplying the final touches to some of Shoghi Effendi’s writings. One of the manuscripts that Mr Townshend was asked to examine carefully was *The Dawn-Breakers*. In fact, as happened later in the case of *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi asked for input from Mr Townshend for the title of his book and adopted the suggestion his Irish correspondent gave him. However, Shoghi Effendi was not satisfied with just *The Dawn-Breakers* as a title. He felt he needed a subtitle, and added *‘Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá’í Revelation’*. It is interesting that although the book deals solely with the nine years of the Báb’s Ministry, the subtitle still refers to the *‘Bahá’í*

*Revelation*', indicating that the Báb's Ministry was not only under the shadow of Bahá'u'lláh, but was inextricable from the all-embracing Bahá'í Revelation.

It is not stated anywhere in *The Dawn-Breakers* that it is Volume I of II. However, in volumes of *The Bahá'í World*, Shoghi Effendi himself makes references to *The Dawn-Breakers* as Volume I of *Nabíl's Narrative*. It was the original intention of the Guardian to produce a second volume, which would cover the history of the Faith during the 39 years of Bahá'u'lláh's Ministry. However, he did not have the time to undertake this project, and as, some 12 years later, he published *God Passes By*, which included material from *Nabíl's Narrative*, he must have thought it unnecessary to produce the projected second volume of *The Dawn-Breakers*. Shoghi Effendi included almost everything that was in the rest of the manuscript of Nabíl in *God Passes By*. Those of us who have had the opportunity of looking at the original work of Nabíl know that the section which deals with the Ministry of Bahá'u'lláh is quite brief. This was perhaps because the life of Bahá'u'lláh was contemporaneous with Nabíl's own life and it is very natural for people to think that things that happen in their own lifetime are not historical and, as a result, they don't make a record of them.

The book is dedicated to the Greatest Holy Leaf in the following words: '*To the Greatest Holy Leaf, the Last Survivor of a Glorious and Heroic Age, I Dedicate This Work in Token of a Great Debt of Gratitude and Love*'.

Apart from the Table of Contents and the List of Illustrations, the book begins with facsimiles of the Báb's autographed Tablets addressed to each of the eighteen Letters of the Living. The nineteenth is addressed to Himself, and the twentieth to Bahá'u'lláh, the Promised One of the Bayán, 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. This is followed by an Introduction of 14 pages that Mr Townshend wrote at the behest of the Guardian and along guidelines specifically given by Shoghi Effendi. Mr Townshend requested that his name not appear as author of the Introduction

because of the sensitive relationship that he had at that time with his Church. Shoghi Effendi accepted this request, and refers to him in his Acknowledgements as ‘an English correspondent’ whom he thanks for his help in the preparation of the Introduction. Shoghi Effendi added passages from the Kitáb-i-Íqán into the Introduction, together with extracts from Lord Curzon’s *Persia and the Persian Question*, Volume 1. He also included a statement made by E.G. Browne about features of Shi’ah Islam, which appears in the Professor’s translation of *A Traveller’s Narrative*. This is followed by a chart made out in Shoghi Effendi’s handwriting of the ‘Genealogy of the Báb, showing connections with Bahá’u’lláh’s descendants’.

Shoghi Effendi divided the material into two parts. Part I he named ‘Pre-Revelation days’, and part II ‘The Revelation of the Báb’. The first section deals briefly with the missions of Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá’í, and of Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashtí. The second part consists of the rest of the book, and covers the entire scope of the life of the Báb, including His travels, Writings, the Declaration of His Mission, the appointment of the Letters of the Living, His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, His successive stays in Shiraz, in Iṣfahán, in Káshán, and ultimately in the two prison-fortresses of Máh-Kú and Chihríq, His examination by the ulamas of Tabriz, and finally the circumstances leading to His martyrdom. Interspersed in his account of the Báb’s activities, Nabíl relates Mullá Ḥusayn’s journey to Tehran to meet Bahá’u’lláh, his subsequent journey to Khurásán, and then to Mázindarán.

Regarding Bahá’u’lláh, we read of His early journey to Mázindarán, His participation in the conference of Badasht, His journey to Karbilá, and His imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál, followed by His release and banishment to Baghdád. In his chronicle Nabíl deals at length with the upheavals in Mázindarán, in Nayríz and in Zanján, together with an account of the execution of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran. In the course of his story he describes in great detail incidents related to the lives of

Quddús and of Ṭáhirih. He ends his book with an account of the attempt on the Shah's life and its consequences.

The section at the end of the book, which he titles as 'Epilogue', is a 17-page statement in which Shoghi Effendi gives an overview of the Báb's Ministry, praises the heroes it produced, and comments on the apathy of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh and his hopes of uprooting the Faith. The Guardian further makes the point that in the very act of banishing Bahá'u'lláh from His native land, the Sháh was but an instrument in the execution of God's design. He goes on to say that little did Nabíl himself imagine that, some 40 years after writing his narrative, the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and its fair name would have encircled the globe.

#### *Footnotes and Bibliography*

The book in its published form has some 700 pages and 200 illustrations. One third of the publication consists of footnotes, numbering in total 646. Of these, two-thirds are in English and one-third are in French. Approximately half are more elaborate footnotes, a number of which are over 100 lines in length.

He calls his bibliography 'Works consulted by the translator'. In this list we find 11 works by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and 39 works authored by others. The number of titles of works in English is 21, works in French are 10 in number, and there are 8 works written in Persian and/or Arabic, making a grand total of 50 titles.

#### *What others have said about Nabíl's Narrative, and what Shoghi Effendi himself stated regarding the book*

Rúḥíyyih Khánum writes: 'Although ostensibly a translation from the original Persian, Shoghi Effendi may be said to have recreated it in English, his translation being comparable to Fitzgerald's rendering of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* which gave the

world a poem in a foreign language that in many ways far exceeded the merits of the original' (PP 215).

She further cites a well-known scholar and humanitarian, who described it as 'a classic and a standard for all time to come' (PP 215), and quotes from a letter written by one of Shoghi Effendi's old professors: 'The quality of the English and the delightful ease of reading the translation are extraordinary . . . The force of the book is very great, because the translation is so scientific . . .' (PP 216).

A well-known orientalist wrote to Shoghi Effendi, saying: '*The Dawn-Breakers* is really one of the most beautiful books I have seen for many years . . . as for your English style, it really could not be bettered' (PP 216).

One of my own associates has written: 'The eternal drama of the Báb and His disciples, as he gives it to us through the winding labyrinthine stories within stories echoed by Nabíl, rises from the pre-dawn darkness of its beginnings, soars into the blazing azure of an incandescent zenith only to plummet in pain and splendour to its heart-breaking end. There never was a more thrilling nor a more tragic trajectory than this, nor a tale more eternal and immortal, either. He has not only translated and interpreted Nabíl, but re-invented the literature of East and West in the Dawn-Breakers" (BN 1).

As to his own evaluation of the contents of the book, we read the following in a cable dated 20 June 1932 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada:

FEEL IMPELLED APPEAL ENTIRE BODY AMERICAN  
BELIEVERS HENCEFORTH REGARD NABÍL'S SOUL-  
STIRRING NARRATIVE AS ESSENTIAL ADJUNCT TO  
RECONSTRUCTED TEACHING PROGRAM, AS UN-  
CHALLENGEABLE TEXTBOOK IN THEIR SUMMER  
SCHOOLS, AS SOURCE OF INSPIRATION IN  
ALL LITERARY ARTISTIC PURSUITS, AS AN  
INVALUABLE COMPANION IN TIMES OF LEISURE, AS

SHOGHI EFFENDI: THE RANGE AND POWER OF HIS PEN

*INDISPENSIBLE PRELIMINARY TO FUTURE PILGRIMAGE BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S NATIVE LAND AND AS UNFAILING INSTRUMENT TO ALLAY DISTRESS AND RESIST ATTACKS OF CRITICAL DISILLUSIONED HUMANITY. (TDH 3)*

Furthermore, in letters addressed to individual believers, written on his behalf by his secretaries, he repeatedly commended the study of *The Dawn-Breakers* to the friends. Extracts from four of these letters are as follows:

*The history of a people is always a source of inspiration to its future generations. Nabil's Narrative will operate in the same manner, and remain forever a stimulus to the Bahá'is. (16 December 1932)*

*Shoghi Effendi found great pleasure and spiritual upliftment while working on the translation of Nabil's Narrative. The life of those who figure in it is so stirring that everyone who reads those accounts is bound to be affected and impelled to follow their footsteps of sacrifice in the path of Faith. The Guardian believes, therefore, that it should be studied by the friends, especially the youth who need some inspiration to carry them through these troubled days. (11 March 1933)*

*The Guardian sincerely hopes and prays that the study of *The Dawn-Breakers* will inspire the friends to greater activity and more exerted energy in serving the Cause and spreading its message in that town. The life of those heroes of the Faith should teach us what true sacrifice is, and to what extent we should forego our personal and worldly interests while endeavouring to carry the divine message to the four corners of the earth. (16 April 1933, LDG Vol. II, 22)*

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*He was deeply gratified to learn that the reading of The Dawn-Breakers has deepened your knowledge of the Cause and has inflamed you with new courage and faith. The tale of these immortal heroes of God, so well narrated by the powerful pen of Nabil, is, indeed, stimulating and spiritually uplifting. It gives the reader a new vision of the Cause and unfolds before his eyes the glory of this new Manifestation in a manner hitherto unknown. Nabil's narrative is not merely a narrative; it is a book of meditation. It does not only teach. It actually inspires and incites to action. It quickens and stimulates our dormant energies and makes us soar on a higher plane. It is thus of an invaluable help to the historian as well as to every teacher and expounder of the Cause. (8 June 1933)*

*Extracts*

*'This Revelation, so suddenly and impetuously thrust upon me, came as a thunderbolt which, for a time, seemed to have benumbed my faculties. I was blinded by its dazzling splendour and overwhelmed by its crushing force. Excitement, joy, awe, and wonder stirred the depths of my soul. Predominant among these emotions was a sense of gladness and strength which seemed to have transfigured me. How feeble and impotent, how dejected and timid, I had felt previously! Then I could neither write nor walk, so tremulous were my hands and feet. Now, however, the knowledge of His Revelation had galvanised my being. I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world, all its peoples and its potentates, to rise against me, I would, alone and undaunted, withstand their onslaught. The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp. I seemed to be the Voice of Gabriel personified, calling unto all mankind: "Awake, for lo! the morning Light has broken. Arise, for His Cause is made manifest. The portal of His grace is open wide; enter*



*therein, O peoples of the world! For He who is your promised One is come!’’*. (DB 65)

*‘You have been called to this station; you will attain to it, only if you arise to trample beneath your feet every earthly desire, and endeavour to become those “honoured servants of His who speak not till He hath spoken, and who do His bidding.” You are the first Letters that have been generated from the Primal Point, the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this Revelation. Beseech the Lord your God to grant that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections, no ephemeral pursuits, may tarnish the purity, or embitter the sweetness, of that grace which flows through you. I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day. Exert your utmost endeavour that, in the world to come, I, who am now instructing you, may, before the mercy-seat of God, rejoice in your deeds and glory in your achievements. The secret of the Day that is to come is now concealed. It can neither be divulged nor estimated. The newly born babe of that Day excels the wisest and most venerable men of this time, and the lowliest and most unlearned of that period shall surpass in understanding the most erudite and accomplished divines of this age. Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming. Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty. Has He not, in past days, caused Abraham, in spite of His seeming helplessness, to triumph over the forces of Nimrod? Has He not enabled Moses, whose staff was His only companion, to vanquish Pharaoh and his hosts? Has He not established the ascendancy of Jesus, poor and lowly as He was in the eyes of men, over the combined forces of the Jewish people? Has He not subjected the barbarous and militant tribes of Arabia to the holy and transforming discipline of Muḥammad, His*

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*Prophet? Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory. ' (DB 93–4)*

*And yet who knows what achievements, greater than any that the past and the present have witnessed, may not still be in store for those into whose hands so precious a heritage has been entrusted? . . . Who knows but that triumphs, unsurpassed in splendour, are not in store for the mass of Bahá'u'lláh's toiling followers? Surely, we stand too near the colossal edifice His hand has reared to be able, at the present stage of the evolution of His Revelation, to claim to be able even to conceive the full measure of its promised glory. Its past history, stained by the blood of countless martyrs, may well inspire us with the thought that, whatever may yet befall this Cause, however formidable the forces that may still assail it, however numerous the reverses it will inevitably suffer, its onward march can never be stayed, and that it will continue to advance until the very last promise, enshrined within the words of Bahá'u'lláh, shall have been completely redeemed. (DB 667–8)*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. In *Nabíl's Narrative*, Mullá Ḥusayn says that he seemed to be the voice of the angel Gabriel personified. Does it mean that he felt Gabriel spoke through him?**

A. I will give you my personal opinion. Gabriel was a messenger, an angel of God that according to the Prophet Muḥammad gave Him the inspiration. He is also mentioned in the Old Testament as one of the angels. Mullá Ḥusayn, the first to believe in the Báb, felt that, now that he had received the Message of the Báb, he was to proclaim it to the world, just like the angel Gabriel proclaimed the Message to Muḥammad. Mullá Ḥusayn became a vehicle for the proclamation of the Cause of God.

**Q. Shoghi Effendi speaks about *The Dawn-Breakers* as a book of inspiration. Why is it that the history of the earliest believers was needed most, above all other works that could have been translated at that time?**

A. Shoghi Effendi felt that the West needed a history of the early believers of the Heroic Age. The first part of the Heroic Age, meaning the nine years of the Ministry of the Báb, is so full of stories about how the early believers arose and sacrificed themselves, gave their all and offered everything they had for the sake of the Báb. This spirit of dedication and of self-sacrifice, Shoghi Effendi felt, needed to be instilled in the hearts of the friends in the West. He wanted them to be the descendants of the Dawn-Breakers. He wanted them to carry the same spirit.

Remember that he was trying to raise the foundations of the Administrative Order. He chose the United States to be its Cradle. However, he did not want the community to become too involved, at the cost of ignoring the spirit of the Faith, with the gritty details of administration, although these are, of course, important. Yet, he wanted them to understand the meaning of

love and dedication to the Cause, the spirit of devotion and of detachment. In order to have this spirit, he felt that the friends in the West needed an authentic, reliable history of the early days of the Faith, so that they knew who their spiritual ancestors were. Mullá Husayn, Quddús and Táhirih are our spiritual ancestors. Let us learn from them, follow them, and try to be like them.

**Q. Quddús was endowed with special and divine powers. Táhirih as well occupies a very high rank in the Faith. What was the nature of their tense dispute at Badasht?**

A. This whole episode in Badasht has been treated in *Nabíl's Narrative* and Shoghi Effendi had to translate what Nabíl had written about the subject. But when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was writing *A Traveller's Narrative*, which has been translated by Browne, He pointed out that this confrontation was pre-arranged by Bahá'u'lláh with Táhirih and with Quddús, in order to gradually educate the people and help them to understand the principles of the New Day. We should not consider this incident in Badasht as something that was a real dispute between Quddús and Táhirih.

**Q. Why were some of the footnotes to *The Dawn-Breakers* published in French?**

A. In the bibliography of works consulted by Shoghi Effendi for his translation of *The Dawn-Breakers* there are several books by French authors. If the books had been in any other language, I think he would have translated into English the quoted passages before including them. However, he did not feel that a translation from French was necessary because it is a language that is usually accepted and learned by scholars. Especially at that time, most English-speaking scholars would have studied French too. For those people who do not speak French, a supplementary booklet has been published that contains an English translation of all the French footnotes.

It is interesting to note that in all of his other writings, including his translations, Shoghi Effendi never used footnotes. Even *God Passes By* has no footnotes. The only other footnote he ever wrote was in *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*. He wrote a footnote to say that the word ‘oppression’ used in the text represented a translation from a Greek word.

**Q. Regarding what others have said about *Nabíl’s Narrative*, who stated that it reinvented the literature of East and West?**

That was Bahíyyih Nakhjavání. She explains what she meant as follows: ‘Those of you who have read this wonderful book, *One Thousand and One Nights*: do you remember how this work is constructed? You start with a story, you meet three characters, in the middle of this story of three characters, one of the characters says, “and by the way, something happened to me too . . .” and he starts telling you his story. You go from story one to story two. The character tells you his story, and in the middle of his story you meet a fourth, a fifth and a sixth character, somebody who is weeping inconsolably. “What is the matter with you?” “Ah” he says “you don’t know what was happened to me. I have to tell you my story . . .” So suddenly you are into story number three. It is like a Russian doll. You go from one story, to another story inside that story and so on. This is a classic oriental technique for story telling. It is a story that breeds another story, which breeds another story. It is a never-ending story. And if you think about the shape of that, it is very circular. There is one story, and another story, and another story, and another story. There is just no end. It does not actually have a linear form. Now in the west, in our tradition of literature and drama, we have a very linear concept of stories. All of these things go back to our religious heritage. This is a fascinating subject for anyone of you who wants to analyze how it is that religion has influenced literature, art, drama etc. In the west, which was so much dominated by the Judeo-Christian framework of religion, you see

that so much of our arts, in terms of drama and literature, have a linear form. They have a beginning, they reach a climax, and they arrive at a resolution. It is exactly the story of the “creation” of the world with Adam, in terms of Christians’ concept anyway, the “redemption” of the world when Christ came, and the final “resurrection” at the end of time. That is that ark shape. It is an ark which you find reflected over and over again, from the Greeks all the way up to the present day. It is constructed in time. We have the sense of the before, the now and the after. We have a sense of beginning, middle and end. What Shoghi Effendi has done in the “Dawn Breakers”, is that he has taken this rambling narrative of Nabil, where he is telling a story about someone, what he has eye witnessed, and in the middle of that story he introduces somebody else who says: “And he told me that when he was [in] such and such a town he had spoken to so and so who told him another story which has happened.” Russian doll within Russian doll. Going from one story to another story. Who was that person? Was that Muḥammad ‘Alí, or mulláh so and so? You just do not know who they all are. It does not really matter. Of course some scholars have clearly set up who all these people are, but what really matters is that you are seeing a story evolving from one person to another. Like a seamless and unending line and it seems too like a mushroom. It spawns. You will start one story and before you have really finished it, you go into another story. You have not even finished that one story before you have to read the new one because it is so interesting. As you read this new one, it goes to another one. But then you want to get back to number one. It is extraordinary. He has taken this heritage and he has done something new with it. He has turned it into a linear story. Just take a look at the passages, the major portions of the Dawn Breakers. He begins with the section of the pre-Bábí period with Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim. Then he goes to the declaration of the Báb. Then he goes to the pilgrimage of the Báb to Mecca. He goes on and he goes on, and then he reaches the climax, the tragic climax of the martyrdom of

the Báb, and then he reaches the end. There is even an epilogue. He has created a line. He has created a tragic drama that reaches its high point and comes to its low point. He has done something quite remarkable, because he has married the eastern style of narrative with the western style of literary heritage.'

**Q. Shoghi Effendi in a cable said that *Nabíl's Narrative* is an indispensable preliminary to future pilgrimage to Bahá'u'lláh's native land. What does this mean?**

A. Obviously what he means is that in the future there will certainly be pilgrimages to the holy and historic Bahá'í sites in Iran. For example, the House of the Báb in Shiraz, where He declared His mission: It has been demolished but it will certainly be rebuilt. Bahá'u'lláh made it a place of pilgrimage for the whole Bahá'í world. There is also the Siyáh-Chál, where Bahá'u'lláh received the intimation of His revelation, the house where Bahá'u'lláh resided and where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was born, the hamlet where the conference of Badasht took place, the burial site of Badí', the burial place of Táhiri, the house of Vahíd, the house of Hujjat. All these places are sacred and historical sites. In one of his statistical booklets Shoghi Effendi has given us a list of over a whole page of names of sacred and historic sites in Iran. Unfortunately the government confiscated all these properties under the new regime. But since it is God's will that there will be pilgrimages to Iran, we can be sure that the Bahá'í community will recover all of these sites. When the day comes for pilgrims to go to Iran, they will have *Nabíl's Narrative* to familiarize them with what happened in each place.

**Q. When the manuscript of *Nabíl's Narrative* was sent to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States how much time elapsed before it was first published?**

A. Shoghi Effendi spent a lot of time writing about how it should be published. He was extremely explicit about what the cover should be like, how the photographs should be displayed, in what order the letters to the Letters of the Living should be arranged, and so on. All these particulars were described in his letters to the Publishing Trust of the American National Assembly. It took some time for them to carry out his instructions. He finished translating it in 1931, but it was not published for about ten months, until 1932.

**Q. Ten thousand people witnessed the martyrdom of the Báb. Many reports have been written about this event, including some that are in discordance with the one recounted in *Nabíl's Narrative*. Do the majority of these reports indicate that Nabíl's statements were correct? Did Shoghi Effendi take into consideration other versions of the story when translating it?**

A. I think Shoghi Effendi read every account that was available to him in Persian, Arabic, English and French, and, I think, if any of these accounts were not biased and deliberately inimical, he included them in the footnotes of *Nabíl's Narrative*. What he did not and could not include were the reports of the Iranian government about the martyrdom, because he didn't have access to them. It will be left for future scholars to discover these things. I think that, as far as the major events of the martyrdom are concerned, we already know what happened. Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have referred innumerable times to the martyrdom of the Báb. Shoghi Effendi has said that it was a miracle that the Báb was not killed by the gunfire of the Armenian regiment.

It is very interesting that the Báb seemed to have foreknowledge of what was going to happen. He told the police official '*Not until I have said to him all those things that I wish to say can any earthly power silence Me*' (GPB 52). And before



the regiment fired the first volley of bullets, the Báb said nothing to the crowd. The second time, however, when He knew that they were to be His last words, He said to them, '*The day will come when you will have recognized Me; that day I shall have ceased to be with you*' (GPB 53).

**Q. *The Dawn-Breakers* was originally written by Nabíl, but was recreated by Shoghi Effendi. Does the book have the same validity as works written by Shoghi Effendi, such as *God Passes By*?**

A. With regard to specific times and dates and places, it may happen that in the future documents will be found that show that some of these details in Nabíl's narrative are not completely accurate. For example, a document may be found that a certain event, which Nabíl writes happened on a Wednesday, actually happened on a Thursday. That would be just a technical detail.

However, I do not think that the overall flow of events is going to change. Bahá'u'lláh warned Nabíl to adhere to the facts that he had heard, without embellishment or reduction. That is why Shoghi Effendi calls the book a narrative, not a history. Nabíl narrated the stories he had collected from the believers who lived through those years. I don't see how these first-hand accounts can be challenged. In the future, if authentic documents are found, perhaps they could be added to the narrative as footnotes. Such issues will certainly be decided by the Universal House of Justice.

**Q. What about the rest of *Nabíl's Narrative*? Will it ever be finished? Is it being worked on at this time? How can changes be made without having access to Bahá'u'lláh's correction? How did Shoghi Effendi know which corrections needed to be made if the original corrections by Bahá'u'lláh were not available?**

A. When Nabíl began to make his own notes about the history of the Faith, some of his friends, particularly the brother of Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Músá, and Mírzá Aqá Ján, who was the amanuensis of Bahá'u'lláh, asked him why he did not start writing a full account of the history of the Faith. As I stated earlier, he replied that he would not write anything unless Bahá'u'lláh wished him to. They reported this to Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh said that he should write, but gave him instructions in two Tablets. The two Tablets have been published. He told him not to overstate or understate the facts. He told him not to elaborate on the stories he had heard, nor to whittle down the parts of the story that he didn't like. Nabíl produced a manuscript and presented it to Bahá'u'lláh. Nabíl had not satisfactorily followed His instructions, so He returned the manuscript to him and instructed him to make some corrections. What we do not know at this time is how the instructions about the corrections were conveyed to Nabíl. However, Bahá'u'lláh had made it clear that His instructions had not been followed. Nabíl had to rewrite his narrative and present it to Bahá'u'lláh again. Bahá'u'lláh kept this version among His papers. We assume that He accepted this revised text.

I have already explained that after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, Covenant-breakers stole papers from the room of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They stole two cases of papers that Bahá'u'lláh had given to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They literally did this at a time when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not in His room and was washing the body of Bahá'u'lláh. Those documents are probably still in the possession of the descendants of the Covenant-breakers. We do not know if we will ever recover them. Even if we did, they may not be reliable. Muḥammad-'Alí is known to have corrupted texts. His brother, Badí'u'lláh, wrote a confession that mentioned that he had seen his brother corrupt texts. In my own personal opinion, even if they were found, I don't think we could trust them. However, the final decision, as I stated, rests with the House of Justice.

At the time when Shoghi Effendi produced *Nabíl's Narrative*, the Covenant-breakers spread a rumour among their Arab friends that Shoghi Effendi had fabricated the entire thing and that only they possessed Nabíl's narrative. Apart from that claim, as stated earlier, we also have a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in which He states that the revised edition of Nabíl's narrative was among the documents stolen by the Covenant-breakers.

When Shoghi Effendi set out to translate Nabíl, he had the instructions of Bahá'u'lláh before him, and we can be sure that he tried his best to remove anything that he felt was overstated or based on assumption. He gave us everything that he thought was authentic, and in conformity with the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's wishes.

**Q. The role of a traditional storyteller sees him or her taking the story and reworking it in his or her own interpretation and flavour. How do you see the storyteller's tool of artistic licence in the light of Bahá'u'lláh's clear instruction to Nabíl, to neither overstate nor understate, neither expand the description of events nor reduce their importance? What advice regarding artistic licence or individual artistic interpretation would you give to a contemporary storyteller who wished to retell stories from Bahá'í history?**

A. If this Bahá'í storyteller wants to recount the events of any part of Bahá'í history, he should not add fiction to fact. Adhering to the facts is very important. To add a feeling or an emotion, in the form of a question maybe, in order to bring to the attention of the reader a certain point, is entirely acceptable. But if the writer wants to add additional details, or to change them, then he should not write a history. He should write a novel. If the author makes it clear that he is writing a fictional story, then he can state whatever he wants and can add in little details to fill any gaps he may find.

## V

### *God Passes By*

#### *Background*

*God Passes By* is, in the words of its author, ‘a survey of the outstanding events of the century that has seen this Spirit [the Bahá’í Faith] burst forth upon the world . . .’ (GPB xii). It was the one book Shoghi Effendi wrote in his lifetime that was neither directly addressed to the Bahá’ís, expounding on subjects related to the Faith, nor a translation of an existing text in Arabic or Persian. With characteristic precision the Guardian refrained from referring to his ‘survey’ as a ‘detailed history’ of the first hundred years of the Bahá’í Era. He was content to call it ‘a review of the salient features of [the Faith’s] birth and rise, as well as of the initial stages in the establishment of its administrative institutions’ (GPB xiii).

In his Introduction to the work, George Townshend describes it as ‘a history of our times written on an unfamiliar theme – a history filled with love and happiness and vision and strength, telling of triumphs gained and wider triumphs yet to come . . .’. ‘The theme on its human side’, he writes, ‘is that of Love and Struggle and Death. It tells of men and women like ourselves, adventuring all they had and all they were for sheer love’s sake, of desolated homes, of breaking hearts, of bereavement and exile and suffering and indomitable purpose’ (GPB iii).

The book was published in 1944 to commemorate the first centenary of the Bahá’í Faith. To give an idea of the monumental nature of the task Shoghi Effendi undertook in preparing his

‘survey’, one has only to consider certain basic statistics. The work consists of 412 pages in all, including quotations from sacred scripture, scholarly treatises and other sources. Of these, 41 pages are quotations covering an entire page or more. Scattered throughout the rest of the book we find about 47 pages worth of further citations, bringing the total of pages where Shoghi Effendi is quoting other sources to over 85. Rúhíyyih Khánum, in *The Priceless Pearl*, gives us a glimpse of Shoghi Effendi’s meticulous research and overall vision for the book:

The method of Shoghi Effendi in writing *God Passes By* was to sit down for a year and read every book of the Bahá’í Writings in Persian and English, and every book written about the Faith by Bahá’ís, whether in manuscript form or published, and everything written by non-Bahá’ís that contained significant references to it. I think in all, this must have covered the equivalent of at least two hundred books. As he read he made notes and compiled and marshalled his facts. Anyone who has ever tackled a work of an historical nature knows how much research is involved, how often one has to decide, in the light of relevant material, between this date given in one place and that date given in another, how backbreaking the whole work is . . . When all the ingredients of his book had been assembled Shoghi Effendi commenced weaving them into the fabric of his picture of the significance of the first century of the Bahá’í Dispensation. It was not his purpose, he said, to write a detailed history of those hundred years, but rather to review the salient features of the birth and rise of the Faith, the establishment of its administrative institutions, and the series of crises which had propelled it forward in a mysterious manner, through the release of the Divine power within it, from victory to victory. He revealed to us the panorama of events which, he wrote, ‘*the revolution of a hundred years . . . has unrolled before our eyes*’ and lifted the curtain on the opening acts of what he asserted was

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one *'indivisible, stupendous and sublime drama, whose mystery no intellect can fathom, whose climax no eye can even dimly perceive, whose conclusion no mind can adequately foreshadow'*. (PP 223)

It was the Guardian's intention to present the Bahá'í world with a valuable gift at the anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb: the first comprehensive look at the events marking the emergence of the Faith from its humble beginnings in Persia to its status as a truly world-embracing religion. His purpose, he insisted, was not *'to ignore . . . the swift interweaving of seeming reverses with evident victories, out of which the hand of an inscrutable Providence has chosen to form the pattern of the Faith from its earliest days . . .'*' (GPB xiii), but to reveal the process of 'crisis and victory' that characterized the fortunes of the Bahá'í Faith throughout its history and which would continue to shape its progress in the future. *'[T]he history of the first hundred years of [the Faith's] evolution'*, he explains in his Foreword to the book, *'resolves itself into a series of internal and external crises . . . devastating in their immediate effects, but each mysteriously releasing a corresponding measure of divine power, lending thereby a fresh impulse to its unfoldment . . .'*' (GPB xiii).

The conditions under which he laboured to produce *God Passes By* reflect this very pattern of triumph and reversal. The book was written while he was under great strain from factors both within and without the Bahá'í world. This was a time when the Nazi regime was carrying out the mass extermination of Jews, Gypsies and other populations across Europe; when its armies were engaged on both the Western and Russian fronts, as well as in North Africa; when Japan and America had both joined in the hostilities, turning the Second World War into a planet-wide conflict. It was also a period of great personal loss for Shoghi Effendi due to the activities of Covenant-breakers within his own family.

Rúhíyyih Khánum paints a picture of these circumstances in *The Priceless Pearl*: ‘Shoghi Effendi, already crushed and overburdened from the weight of twenty years of Guardianship, when the tides of World War II threatened to sweep over the Holy Land and engulf him and the World Centre of the Faith in one catastrophic flow, during a period when his home was convulsed by the repercussions of Covenant-breaking now affecting his own family, set himself the task of appraising for all time the significance of the events of the first century of the Bahá’í Era’ (PP 224).

She further writes in her diary: ‘As Shoghi Effendi sat working on *God Passes By*, two army fighter planes in practice flight touched wings, lost control and crashed, one coming down over the roof of our house so low I thought it would sheer through the ceiling of Shoghi Effendi’s room. It landed and burst into flames not 100 yards away at the foot of the street’ (PP 162). And again, concerning the activities of Covenant-breakers in Haifa at that time, she noted, ‘They [the Master’s family] have gone a long way to crushing every ounce of spirit out of the Guardian’ (PP 161). ‘On rare occasions’, she recalls, ‘it was my misfortune . . . to see him weep as if his heart would break – so great was his agony, so overwhelming the pressures that bore down upon him!’ (PP 224).

The work of writing involved in such a major project was of course itself burdensome to Shoghi Effendi. ‘How many hundreds of hours’, Rúhíyyih Khánum tells us, ‘Shoghi Effendi spent on reading his sources and compiling his notes, how many days and months in painstakingly writing out in long hand – and often rewriting – the majestic procession of his chapters, how many more wearisome days he sat at his small portable typewriter, hammering away with a few fingers, sometimes ten hours on end, as he typed the final copy of his work! And how many more hours we spent late into the night, when the daily typing was over, seated side by side at his big table in his bedroom, each with three copies of the typescript before us, proof-reading,

making corrections, putting in by hand the thousands of accents on transliterated words which Shoghi Effendi would read aloud, until his eyes were bloodshot and blurred, his back and arms stiff with exhaustion, as we worked on to finish the entire chapter or part of a chapter he had typed that day. It had to be done. There was no possibility of working at a slower pace. He was racing against time to present the Bahá'ís of the West with this inimitable gift on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the inception of their Faith. In spite of the fact that he mailed off to America the corrected manuscript in instalments, conditions in the United States delayed publication and the book was not off the press until the middle of November 1944' (PP 223–4).

Due to the pressures in his life at the time of writing *God Passes By*, the Guardian was unable to fine-tune the text to the extent he would have desired. He made use once more of the services of George Townshend, sending the manuscript in instalments to his friend with the request that he make editorial corrections and suggestions. David Hofman describes the conditions of their collaboration: 'It [*God Passes By*] was undertaken during difficult times – the darkest days of the Second World War – when communications were far from regular, normal help was unobtainable and both men were under great strain' (GT 70).

In addition to making editorial suggestions, Mr Townshend was asked to write an Introduction to the book. Hofman observes: 'Having read every line of the Guardian's monumental work, having gloried in it, wept over it, lived with it from February 1943 to February 1944, offered his editorial "suggestions, criticisms or corrections" as he deemed necessary, he wrote with a full heart and flowing pen' (GT 69).

Shoghi Effendi also requested Mr Townshend's input on the choice of a title. It took Mr Townshend some time to come up with an appropriate idea. After letters and two cables from the Guardian, he finally cabled back three words: quite simply, 'God Passes By'. He received an immediate answer: 'DELIGHTED TITLE. EAGERLY AWAITING LETTER' (GT 69).



Townshend makes the following comments on the range and impact of Shoghi Effendi's centenary history: 'whatever it holds of darkest tragedy it leaves mankind at its close not facing a grim inhospitable future but marching out from the shadows on the high road of an inevitable destiny towards the opened gates of the Promised City of Eternal Peace' (GPB iii). In an undated letter to the Guardian he notes that 'Hitherto our information on the history of the Faith has been piece-meal, and uncertain on many points. Now an even light covers it all' (GT 72).

We are left with an enduring legacy, a vision of the first hundred years of Bahá'í history that is both far-reaching in its scope and concise in its execution. Rúhíyyih Khánum further describes it as 'the most brilliant and wondrous tale of a century that has ever been told', and 'a "Mother" of future histories' (PP 222). 'A book like *God Passes By*', she observes, 'is a veritable essence of essences; from this single hundred-year history, fifty books could easily be written and none of them would be superficial or lacking in material, so rich is the source provided by the Guardian, so condensed his treatment of it' (PP 196).

### *Summary*

Shoghi Effendi divided the book into four periods, focusing the first three respectively on the Ministries of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The fourth section deals with the start of the Formative Age. He then added a short epilogue, entitled 'Retrospect and Prospect', in which he gives an overview of the main highlights of the first century of Bahá'í history. Each section is summarized separately below.

#### *1. The Ministry of the Báb*

In his treatment of the Báb's Ministry, Shoghi Effendi describes the impact of that short and dramatic period on the lives of those professing the Bábí Faith and on the public consciousness and

political climate of Persia. He outlines the chief events between the Declaration of the Báb in 1844 and His martyrdom in 1850, and the resulting aftermath that led to Bahá'u'lláh's incarceration in the Síyáh-Chál. He summarizes the chief episodes related to the lives of outstanding Bábí disciples, extols their heroism and character, and places their achievements in the context of the relentless opposition and bloody persecution visited on them by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the nation.

He begins with an account of the Declaration of the Báb and the enrolment of the Letters of the Living, the Báb's arrest after His pilgrimage to Mecca, and His subsequent imprisonment. He describes the conference of Badasht and the intervention of Bahá'u'lláh in that famous gathering. He then addresses the all-important subject of the Báb's Writings during His captivity in Azerbaijan, including the composition of the Bayán, the revelation of the laws and ordinances of the Bábí Dispensation, and the references to 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. He explains the opposition of the clergy to the new ideas promoted by the Báb, their denunciation of His teachings and the resulting martyrdoms in Mázindarán, Nayríz and Tehran.

He goes on to depict the events surrounding the execution of the Báb, the parallels between His life and that of Jesus Christ, and the tributes paid to His memory by writers in the West. He portrays the circumstances attending the attack on Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh and the wave of imprisonment, torture and massacre that was visited on the Bábí community as a result of that misguided act. Lastly, he notes the role played by Bahá'u'lláh during the Báb's Ministry, and gives an account of the arrests and martyrdoms of the remaining prominent disciples of the Báb, as well as the eventual fate of the principal enemies of the Bábí Faith.

In order to capture some of Shoghi Effendi's insights on this vital period, some extracts follow:

*In sheer dramatic power, in the rapidity with which events of momentous importance succeeded each other, in the*

*holocaust which baptized its birth, in the miraculous circumstances attending the martyrdom of the One Who had ushered it in, in the potentialities with which it had been from the outset so thoroughly impregnated, in the forces to which it eventually gave birth, this nine-year period [the Ministry of the Báb] may well rank as unique in the whole range of man's religious experience. (GPB 3)*

*The heroes whose deeds shine upon the record of this fierce spiritual contest, involving at once people, clergy, monarch and government, were the Báb's chosen disciples, the Letters of the Living, and their companions, the trail-breakers of the New Day, who to so much intrigue, ignorance, depravity, cruelty, superstition and cowardice opposed a spirit exalted, unquenchable and awe-inspiring, a knowledge surprisingly profound, an eloquence sweeping in its force, a piety unexcelled in fervor, a courage leonine in its fierceness, a self-abnegation saintly in its purity, a resolve granite-like in its firmness, a vision stupendous in its range, a veneration for the Prophet [Muḥammad] and His Imáms disconcerting to their adversaries, a power of persuasion alarming to their antagonists, a standard of faith and a code of conduct that challenged and revolutionized the lives of their countrymen. (GPB 4–5)*

## *2. The Ministry of Bahá'u'lláh*

In his overview of Bahá'u'lláh's Ministry, Shoghi Effendi focuses on the principal events marking the years of exile and imprisonment that characterized the last half of Bahá'u'lláh's life, years that saw the open and far-reaching Declaration of His Mission and the establishment of His Faith outside Persia. He explores the influence and impact of Bahá'u'lláh's behaviour and Writings on the minds and hearts of those around Him, from the body of His followers to the government officials and eminent

intellectuals of His time. He addresses the nature and import of the different Tablets comprising the vast body of Revealed Text authored by the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith and draws particular attention to the prophecies and religious traditions of the past that found their final consummation in the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh.

He begins by depicting the events following the martyrdom of the Báb, and the confusion and despair that assailed the remaining adherents of the Bábí Faith. He recounts the first intimations of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission in the Síyáh-Chál, His exile to Baghdád, and the transformative influence of His presence on the people of that city, both within and without the Bábí community. He explains the machinations of Bahá'u'lláh's enemies within the ranks of the clergy and the resulting edict from the Sultan ordering His continued banishment, and gives an account of the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission on the eve of His departure from Baghdád.

He further describes Bahá'u'lláh's exile to Constantinople and Adrianople, enumerating the Tablets to the Kings and Rulers of the world which Bahá'u'lláh revealed during His stay in those cities. He relates the attempts on the life of Bahá'u'lláh at the instigation of His half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá, the consternation and division this open antagonism produced in the Bahá'í community, and the use that the enemies of the new-born Faith made of this internal division to convince the Sultan to issue a further edict banishing Bahá'u'lláh to 'Akká. He gives a description of Bahá'u'lláh's incarceration in *'the Most Great Prison'*, the gradual relaxation of the restrictions imposed upon Him in succeeding years, and His final sojourn in the Mansion of Bahjí. He summarizes the astounding volume of His Writings during those last years, including the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and the Tablets which *'supplemented'* the Most Holy Book, and explains the range and import of these Writings. He describes the events leading to His ascension, and finishes by chronicling instances of *'divine judgement'* visited on the enemies of the Faith during Bahá'u'lláh's Ministry.

The following are extracts from this section:

*[T]he Revelation identified with Bahá'u'lláh abrogates unconditionally all the Dispensations gone before it, upholds uncompromisingly the eternal verities they enshrine, recognizes firmly and absolutely the Divine origin of their Authors, preserves inviolate the sanctity of their authentic Scriptures, disclaims any intention of lowering the status of their Founders or of abating the spiritual ideals they inculcate, clarifies and correlates their functions, reaffirms their common, their unchangeable and fundamental purpose, reconciles their seemingly divergent claims and doctrines, readily and gratefully recognizes their respective contributions to the gradual unfoldment of one Divine Revelation, unhesitatingly acknowledges itself to be but one link in the chain of continually progressive Revelations, supplements their teachings with such laws and ordinances as conform to the imperative needs, and are dictated by the growing receptivity, of a fast evolving and constantly changing society, and proclaims its readiness and ability to fuse and incorporate the contending sects and factions into which they have fallen into a universal Fellowship, functioning within the framework, and in accordance with the precepts, of a divinely conceived, a world-unifying, a world-redeeming Order. (GPB 100)*

*The writings of Bahá'u'lláh during this [the 'Akká] period, as we survey the vast field which they embrace, seem to fall into three distinct categories. The first comprises those writings which constitute the sequel to the proclamation of His Mission in Adrianople. The second includes the laws and ordinances of His Dispensation, which, for the most part, have been recorded in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, His Most Holy Book. To the third must be assigned those Tablets which partly enunciate and partly reaffirm*

*the fundamental tenets and principles underlying that Dispensation. (GPB 205–6)*

*With the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh draws to a close a period which, in many ways, is unparalleled in the world's religious history. The first century of the Bahá'í Era had by now run half its course. An epoch, unsurpassed in its sublimity, its fecundity and duration by any previous Dispensation, and characterized, except for a short interval of three years, by half a century of continuous and progressive Revelation, had terminated. The Message proclaimed by the Báb had yielded its golden fruit . . . God's newborn Faith, the cynosure of all past Dispensations, had been fully and unreservedly proclaimed. The prophecies announcing its advent had been remarkably fulfilled. Its fundamental laws and cardinal principles, the warp and woof of the fabric of its future World Order, had been clearly enunciated . . . The Covenant designed to safeguard the unity and integrity of its world-embracing system had been irrevocably bequeathed to posterity. The promise of the unification of the whole human race, of the inauguration of the Most Great Peace, of the unfoldment of a world civilization, had been incontestably given . . . (GPB 223–4)*

### *3. The Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*

In his outline of the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi deals with His function as Centre of Covenant and Head of the Faith, the distinguishing features of His career, and the revitalizing effect of His unerring guidance on the fortunes of the Bahá'í community. He describes 'Abdu'l-Bahá's character and accomplishments, the arrival in the Holy Land of the first pilgrims from the West, and the establishment of rudimentary institutions of the Faith in various countries, under His tutelage. He singles out two of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's seminal works, His Will

and Testament and the Tablets of the Divine Plan, for specific mention. Finally, he relates numerous episodes recorded from the life of the Master that exemplify the astounding influence He had on those who met Him.

He first explains the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Book of the Covenant, lists its salient features, and recapitulates the role played by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the Ministry of His Father. He gives an account of the defection of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's half-brother, Muḥammad-'Alí, and describes the shameful conduct of the Covenant-breakers within His own family, machinations which culminated in the summoning of two Commissions of Inquiry into 'Abdu'l-Bahá's activities by the Ottoman government. He alludes to the impending judgement on 'Abdu'l-Bahá based on the report of the second Commission, His release from incarceration after the Young Turk revolution, and the final transference of the remains of the Báb to a mausoleum specifically erected, under His direction, on the slopes of Mount Carmel.

He further describes the early development of the Faith in the West, depicting 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels to Europe and America. He underlines the importance of these journeys, the impact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence and Person had on His audiences, and the ensuing advancement of the Faith in those countries. He notes the continued persecution of the Bahá'í community in Persia, describes the construction of the first Bahá'í House of Worship in 'Ishqábád and points out the effect of the First World War on the conduct of administrative affairs in the Holy Land. He mentions the recognition of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's services by the British government after the war. Lastly, he recounts the passing of the Master, reiterates the significance of His Ministry, and relates the fate of His few surviving opponents.

Some extracts are given below:

*To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, an instrument divinely*

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*ordained, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself, was clearly indispensable. That instrument Bahá'u'lláh had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant, an institution which He had firmly established prior to His ascension. (GPB 237–8)*

*During these travels [to Europe and America] 'Abdu'l-Bahá displayed a vitality, a courage, a single-mindedness, a consecration to the task He had set Himself to achieve that excited the wonder and admiration of those who had the privilege of observing at close hand His daily acts . . . [C]areless alike of His comfort and His health; expending every ounce of His energy day after day from dawn till late at night; consistently refusing any gifts or contributions towards the expenses of His travels; unfailing in His solicitude for the sick, the sorrowful and the down-trodden; uncompromising in His championship of the underprivileged races and classes; bountiful as the rain in His generosity to the poor; contemptuous of the attacks launched against Him by vigilant and fanatical exponents of orthodoxy and sectarianism; . . . unequivocal in His glorification of Bahá'u'lláh at all times and within the sanctuaries of divers sects and denominations; adamant in His refusal, on several occasions, to curry the favor of people of title and wealth both in England and in the United States; and last but not least incomparable in the spontaneity, the genuineness and warmth of His sympathy and loving-kindness shown to friend and stranger alike, believer and unbeliever, rich and poor, high and low, whom He met . . . He, the incarnation of every Bahá'í virtue and the embodiment of every Bahá'í ideal, continued . . . to trumpet to a world sunk in materialism and already in the shadow of war, the healing, the God-given truths enshrined in His Father's Revelation. (GPB 282–3)*



#### *4. The Inception of the Formative Age*

In his survey of the period immediately following the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi addresses the essential elements of the Bahá’í Administrative Order, details its uniqueness in the annals of religious history, and examines its lawful basis in the Will and Testament of Abdu’l-Bahá. He characterizes the Formative Age as a period of gradual development, when the Faith and its institutions, through a process of organic growth and alternate stages of crisis and victory, will lay the foundations for the appearance of Bahá’u’lláh’s Golden Age. He enumerates the achievements of individuals and communities in the fields of teaching and administration, applauds the formation of Assemblies on a sound constitutional and legal basis, and underlines the importance of the official recognition of the Faith.

He begins with an explanation of the nature of the Administrative Order based on the provisions of the Will and Testament of Abdu’l-Bahá. He then describes the attacks by Covenant-breakers on that newly established Order after the passing of Abdu’l-Bahá, and their inability to halt the steady march of development of the institutions of the Faith. He mentions the inauguration of the Mother Temple of the West, listing endowments, publishing houses, summer schools and other agencies associated with the nascent Bahá’í institutions. He recalls the persecutions suffered by Bahá’í communities in Russia, Germany and Persia, emphasizes the significance of an edict issued by ecclesiastical authorities in Egypt formally pronouncing the Faith an independent religion, and praises the official recognition of Bahá’í institutions in the United States.

He further catalogues the accomplishments of individuals and national communities in the field of teaching, making particular reference to the services of Martha Root, and notes the particular contribution of the American Bahá’ís to the spread of the Faith across the world, executing the mandate of Abdu’l-Bahá in His Tablets of the Divine Plan.

Some extracts from this section are as follows:

*The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh had been instituted solely through the direct operation of His Will and purpose. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on the other hand, may be regarded as the offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who had generated the forces of a God-given Faith and the One Who had been made its sole Interpreter and was recognized as its perfect Exemplar. The creative energies unleashed by the Originator of the Law of God in this age gave birth, through their impact upon the mind of Him Who had been chosen as its unerring Expounder, to that Instrument, the vast implications of which the present generation, even after the lapse of twenty-three years, is still incapable of fully apprehending. (GPB 325)*

*The Administrative Order which this historic Document has established, it should be noted, is, by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world's religious systems. No Prophet before Bahá'u'lláh, it can be confidently asserted, not even Muḥammad Whose Book clearly lays down the laws and ordinances of the Islamic Dispensation, has established, authoritatively and in writing, anything comparable to the Administrative Order which the authorized Interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings has instituted, an Order which, by virtue of the administrative principles which its Author has formulated, the institutions He has established, and the right of interpretation with which He has invested its Guardian, must and will, in a manner unparalleled in any previous religion, safeguard from schism the Faith from which it has sprung. Nor is the principle governing its operation similar to that which underlies any system . . . which the minds of men have devised for the government of human institutions. Neither in theory nor in practice can the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh be said to*

*conform to any type of democratic government, to any system of autocracy, to any purely aristocratic order, or to any of the various theocracies . . . which mankind has witnessed in the past. It incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, is devoid of the defects which each of them inherently possesses, and blends the salutary truths which each undoubtedly contains without vitiating in any way the integrity of the Divine verities on which it is essentially founded. (GPB 326)*

### 5. Retrospect and Prospect

In his epilogue Shoghi Effendi reviews the major episodes marking the history of the Faith in the hundred years since its inception, and looks forward to aspects of its future development. He characterizes the advancement of the Bahá'í Faith as '*A process, God-impelled, . . . mysterious in its workings, awful in the retribution meted out to every one seeking to resist its operation, infinitely rich in its promise for the regeneration and redemption of human kind . . .*' (GPB 402). He notes that '*Despite the blows levelled*' at it, whether by '*the wielders of temporal and spiritual authority from without, or by black-hearted foes from within*', the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has gone from strength to strength during the course of its first hundred years, and always emerged whole and victorious from any crisis that assailed it. '*Indeed its history*', he writes, '*. . . resolve[s] itself into a series of pulsations, of alternating crises and triumphs, leading it ever nearer to its divinely appointed destiny*' (GPB 409).

Shoghi Effendi's overarching understanding of the Faith's history and his far-reaching vision of its future may be glimpsed in the few quotes provided below:

*The tribulations attending the progressive unfoldment of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have indeed been such as to exceed in*

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*gravity those from which the religions of the past have suffered. Unlike those religions, however, these tribulations have failed utterly to impair its unity, or to create, even temporarily, a breach in the ranks of its adherents. It has not only survived these ordeals, but has emerged, purified and inviolate, endowed with greater capacity to face and surmount any crisis which its resistless march may engender in the future.*

*Mighty indeed have been the tasks accomplished and the victories achieved by this sorely-tried yet undefeatable Faith within the space of a century! Its unfinished tasks, its future victories, as it stands on the threshold of the second Bahá'í century, are greater still. (GPB 410)*

*Whatever may befall this infant Faith of God in future decades or in succeeding centuries, whatever the sorrows, dangers and tribulations which the next stage in its world-wide development may engender, from whatever quarter the assaults to be launched by its present or future adversaries may be unleashed against it, however great the reverses and setbacks it may suffer, we, who have been privileged to apprehend, to the degree our finite minds can fathom, the significance of these marvelous phenomena associated with its rise and establishment, can harbor no doubt that what it has already achieved in the first hundred years of its life provides sufficient guarantee that it will continue to forge ahead, capturing loftier heights, tearing down every obstacle, opening up new horizons and winning still mightier victories until its glorious mission, stretching into the dim ranges of time that lie ahead, is totally fulfilled. (GPB 412)*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. ‘Neither in theory nor in practice can the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh be said to conform to any type of democratic government, to any system of autocracy, to any purely aristocratic order, or to any of the various theocracies, whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic which mankind has witnessed in the past’ (GPB 326). What does he mean by ‘neither in theory nor in practice’?**

A. Autocracy means rule by one; aristocracy means rule by a group, a selected group; and democracy means rule by all the people. Aristotle divided systems of government into these three forms.

Shoghi Effendi says that the Administrative Order combines certain wholesome, healthy and useful elements from each of these three types of government. There is an *autocratic* element in the Faith, which is the power of the Manifestation of God and of the Interpreters of the Word of God. The *democratic* aspect is that the reins of authority are held by elected bodies. In a modern democracy, the government sometimes has to resort to a referendum to allow it to make certain decisions. The electorate has power over the government. The *aristocratic* element is that the elected bodies are not responsible to the electorate. They are responsible to their own consciences. They should feel they are responsible to God because they believe in life after death. Ultimately, they are the deputies of God, not of the people.

In his ‘Dispensation’ Shoghi Effendi has stated that the Bahá’í Administrative Order has an ‘*inclination to democratic methods in the administration of its affairs*’ (WOB 154). The democratic element is very clearly that the people are free to elect whomever they want. The elections for the Local and National Assemblies are held annually. Those who are electing can elect the same people each year or different people. They have that choice; the voice of the majority prevails.

The Administrative Order is not a pure democracy, nor a pure aristocracy, nor a pure autocracy. It is a combination of these three things together. Finally, there are additional Bahá'í spiritual principles: the methods of election, voting and consultation. These things make the Administrative Order an entirely new creation, unlike anything else in the past. These are not only theoretical principles, but the principles are practised. And the Universal House of Justice is the ultimate safeguard, our guarantee that it is *'the last refuge of a tottering civilization'* (WOB 89).

**Q. What were the commissions of inquiry into 'Abdu'l-Bahá's activity and what did they find out?**

A. There were two commissions of investigation or of inquiry. The first one came in about 1901, and the second about 1907. The first part of the Will was written at about the time when the first commission was in 'Akká, and the second part of the Will was written at about the time the second commission was there. These reports were all, unfortunately, against Abdu'l-Bahá. The members of the commission came from Constantinople, at the bidding of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamíd. The members of the commissions were antagonistic towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They were influenced by the Covenant-breakers, who invited them to their homes and gave them gifts, possibly bribed them, and tried to instil in them hatred for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself stayed away from the commission members. He did the exact opposite to the Covenant-breakers. The Covenant-breakers found some local people in 'Akká, and induced them to go before the commission and to give testimony against Abdu'l-Bahá. These negative reports went to Constantinople. The result of the first commission was that the incarceration of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was renewed. Once again He had to be confined within the prison walls of the city of 'Akká.

The second commission was even worse. There was the possibility that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be either sentenced to death or exiled to Libya. The Ottomans used to send prisoners to Fezzan, near Tripoli in North Africa. The second report was even more negative than the first, and it would have been very dangerous if that report had reached Constantinople, but it never did. The Young Turks arose against Sultan ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd, and he was deposed from the throne.

**Q. ‘Nor were the British authorities slow to express their appreciation of the rôle which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had played in allaying the burden of suffering that had oppressed the inhabitants of the Holy Land during the dark days of that distressing conflict’ (GPB 306). What did ‘Abdu’l-Bahá do for the British?**

A. There was not enough food for the British army during the war against the Turkish forces in the Holy Land. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had food in His storehouses, which He gave to the poor in ‘Akká. He also gave them some of this wheat to feed the British army after they gained control of the Holy Land. For these services the British government considered that He should be granted a knighthood.

**Q. Shoghi Effendi has described the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh during the ‘Akká period as follows: ‘The writings of Bahá’u’lláh during this period, as we survey the vast field which they embrace, seem to fall into three distinct categories. The first comprises those writings which constitute the sequel to the proclamation of His Mission in Adrianople’ (GPB 205). What are the Tablets which constitute this sequel?**

A. The delivery of the Message of Bahá’u’lláh came in three stages. The first stage began in the Siyáh-Chál of Tehran, when He received the first intimations of His message. Stage two was

the Declaration, and it occurred 10 years later, in the Najíbiyyih garden outside Baghdád. It was there that Bahá'u'lláh lifted the veils surrounding His station. His companions on that occasion were the Bábís of Baghdád, and He clearly announced to them that He was the Promised One of the Bayán. The third stage was the Proclamation of His Mission. This Proclamation was initiated in Constantinople. He had moved there from Baghdád at the bidding of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Azíz. After four months, the Sultan issued an edict banishing Bahá'u'lláh and His companions to Adrianople. Bahá'u'lláh responded to this by sending a condemnatory Tablet. The Proclamation process evolved in Adrianople. It emerged into the open with His Súriy-i-Mulúk (Tablet to the Kings). It continued with His Tablets to individual kings, rulers and religious leaders. The Proclamation to the individual rulers started in 1867 in Adrianople and continued until 1873, in 'Akká. Bahá'u'lláh was banished to 'Akká in 1868. The Proclamation could be said to have ended there with the revelation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.





## VI

### Outline of works published in English

#### **A. *Bahá'í Administration***

*Bahá'í Administration* is the first compilation of Shoghi Effendi's English letters. It was first published in 1928, and after two subsequent revisions, when additions were made to the text, it was published in its current form in 1941. The first letter in this volume is dated January 1922, and the last is dated July 1932, thus a period of a little over 10 years is covered by the book.

In the 1922 letter to the friends in the United States mentioned above, Shoghi Effendi expresses his sorrow and the grief of the Holy household at the passing of the Beloved Master, describing it as a '*shock . . . too terrible and sudden for us all to recover from in so short a time*' (BA 15). After quoting several passages from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá about the future glory of the Cause, and drawing the attention of the friends to the importance of the teaching work and unity in the community, he specifically underlines the fact that, in accordance with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's anticipation, '*tests intellectual rather than physical*' were ahead of them, and that these tests were designed to purify them and to make them shine brighter than ever before (BA 16).

After the book was published in its last edition Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written to a National Assembly on his behalf, made the following comment about its importance:

*The Guardian would strongly urge each and every member of the National Spiritual Assembly to carefully peruse, and to*

*quietly ponder upon the outer meaning and upon the inner spirit as well, of all his communications on the subject of the origin, nature and present-day functioning of the administrative order of the Faith. A compilation of these letters has been lately published in the States under the title 'Bahá'í Administration', and a complete knowledge of that book seems to be quite essential to the right handling of the administrative problems facing your National Spiritual Assembly at present . . . (CC Vol. I, 220–1)*

In this book the duties of a National Assembly, the responsibilities of a National Convention, and of Local Spiritual Assemblies are outlined. The requirements of Bahá'í elections, and the nature of Bahá'í consultation are explained. Shoghi Effendi stresses over and over again the importance of engaging in the teaching work, which should be the dominating passion of every devoted believer, and underlines the implications of faith in the Manifestation of God. He gives full details of the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran and in Russia, and explains the legal problems surrounding the ownership of Bahá'u'lláh's House in Baghdád. Other issues, such as the importance of acquiring properties adjoining the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel, the need to adhere to a common system of transliteration, the importance of newsletters, of loyalty to government, of contributions to the Fund, of summer schools, of Queen Marie's public announcements, and of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its dependencies are also covered.

The last letter in this compilation is his tribute to the Greatest Holy Leaf, and expresses the extent to which her passing was a loss. He wrote:

*Which of the blessings am I to recount, which in her unfailing solicitude she showered upon me, in the most critical and agitated hours of my life? To me, standing in so dire a need of the vitalizing grace of God, she was the living symbol of*

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*many an attribute I had learned to admire in 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She was to me a continual reminder of His inspiring personality, of His calm resignation, of His munificence and magnanimity. To me she was an incarnation of His winsome graciousness, of His all-encompassing tenderness and love. (BA 194)*

Below are some further quotations from this valuable compilation:

*Humanity, through suffering and turmoil, is swiftly moving on towards its destiny; if we be loiterers, if we fail to play our part surely others will be called upon to take up our task as ministers to the crying needs of this afflicted world.*

*Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching – no matter how worldwide and elaborate in its character – not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age the supreme claim of the Abhá Revelation. One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendor of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. (BA 66)*

*But let us all remember, in this connection, that prior to every conceivable measure destined to raise the efficiency of our administrative activities, more vital than any scheme which the most resourceful amongst us can devise, far above the most elaborate structure which the concerted efforts of organized Assemblies can hope to raise, is the realization down in the innermost heart of every true believer of the regenerating power, the supreme necessity, the unfailing*

*efficacy of the Message he bears. I assure you, dear friends, that nothing short of such an immovable conviction could have in days past enabled our beloved Cause to weather the blackest storms in its history. Naught else can today vitalize the manifold activities in which unnumbered disciples of the Faith are engaged; naught else can provide that driving force and sustaining power that are both so essential to the success of vast and enduring achievements. It is this spirit that above all else we should sedulously guard, and strive with all our might to fortify and exemplify in all our undertakings. (BA 111–12)*

*Not by merely imitating the excesses and laxity of the extravagant age they live in; not by the idle neglect of the sacred responsibilities it is their privilege to shoulder; not by the silent compromise of the principles dearly cherished by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; not by their fear of unpopularity or their dread of censure can they hope to rouse society from its spiritual lethargy, and serve as a model to a civilization the foundations of which the corrosion of prejudice has well-nigh undermined. By the sublimity of their principles, the warmth of their love, the spotless purity of their character, and the depth of their devoutness and piety, let them demonstrate to their fellow-countrymen the ennobling reality of a power that shall weld a disrupted world. (BA 131–2)*

#### **B. and C. ‘The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh’**

During the year that saw the start of the Great Depression, two very important letters, dated 27 February 1929 and 21 March 1930, treating similar themes, streamed from the pen of the beloved Guardian. Shoghi Effendi felt it was time to explain to the Bahá’ís of the West the sources and broad outlines of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh. He drew the attention of the friends to the close relationship existing between the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and

the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. These two documents, authored respectively by the Founder of the Faith and the Centre of its Covenant, in Shoghi Effendi’s estimation, constitute ‘*the chief depository wherein are enshrined those priceless elements of that Divine Civilization, the establishment of which is the primary mission of the Bahá’í Faith*’ (WOB 3–4). He stated that these two seminal works have the same purpose and adopt identical methods in the provisions related to successorship. They are complementary, mutually confirm one another, and are ‘*inseparable parts of one complete unit*’ (WOB 4). Shoghi Effendi clearly states that the Will and Testament ‘*confirms, supplements, and correlates the provisions of the Aqdas*’ (WOB 19).

It is in the implications of the Bahá’í Covenant, its distinction in having been incorporated into a written document, the explicit character of its stipulations, and the binding effect of its terms, that the Bahá’í Faith differs radically from all past religions. This aspect of the Bahá’í Revelation ensures that there is always a central authority ‘*to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world*’ (WOB 20). Thus the system revealed by Bahá’u’lláh, Shoghi Effendi asserts, provides both ‘*immutability*’ and ‘*elasticity*’. ‘*The first preserves the identity of His Faith, and guards the integrity of His law. The second enables it, even as a living organism, to expand and adapt itself to the needs and requirements of an ever-changing society*’ (WOB 23).

Human society has embarked on a process of an ever-advancing civilization. Every Revelation brings about a new phase in the transformation ‘*in the ways, thoughts and manners*’ of humanity. In support of this theme, Shoghi Effendi quotes the following words from the Kitáb-i-Íqán:

*Is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a*

*transformation that shall manifest itself, both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestation would be apparent. (WOB 25)*

A few passages are quoted below to give us further glimpses of these two important letters of the Guardian:

*Bahá'u'lláh, we should readily recognize, has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these He, as well as 'Abdu'l-Bahá after Him, has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy. These are destined to be a pattern for future society, a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth. (WOB 19)*

*Leaders of religion, exponents of political theories, governors of human institutions, who at present are witnessing with perplexity and dismay the bankruptcy of their ideas, and the disintegration of their handiwork, would do well to turn their gaze to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and to meditate upon the World Order which, lying enshrined in His teachings, is slowly and imperceptibly rising amid the welter and chaos of present-day civilization. They need have no doubt or anxiety regarding the nature, the origin or validity of the institutions which the adherents of the Faith are building up throughout the world. For these lie embedded in the teachings themselves, unadulterated and unobscured by*

*unwarrantable inferences, or unauthorized interpretations of His Word.*

*How pressing and sacred the responsibility that now weighs upon those who are already acquainted with these teachings! How glorious the task of those who are called upon to vindicate their truth, and demonstrate their practicability to an unbelieving world! Nothing short of an immovable conviction in their divine origin, and their uniqueness in the annals of religion; nothing short of an unwavering purpose to execute and apply them to the administrative machinery of the Cause, can be sufficient to establish their reality, and insure their success. How vast is the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh! How great the magnitude of His blessings showered upon humanity in this day! And yet, how poor, how inadequate our conception of their significance and glory! This generation stands too close to so colossal a Revelation to appreciate, in their full measure, the infinite possibilities of His Faith, the unprecedented character of His Cause, and the mysterious dispensations of His Providence. (WOB 24)*

#### **D. 'The Goal of a New World Order'**

'The Goal of a New World Order' was written in late 1931, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, and addressed to the Bahá'í community as a whole. In this letter Shoghi Effendi explains that as the moral decline of humanity had been so acute, no amount of diplomacy or statesmanship, economic rejuvenation or mutual tolerance could form a sustainable basis for its renewal. '*Not even*', he states, '*would the very act of devising the machinery required for the political and economic unification of the world . . . provide in itself the antidote against the poison that is steadily undermining the vigor of organized peoples and nations*' (WOB 34). The Guardian reminds the Bahá'ís that it is only through worldwide and



unqualified acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh's message that humanity can hope to reverse this crippling, though inevitable, process of '*internal disintegration*' (WOB 34).

Shoghi Effendi emphasizes that the ailing economies, social degradation and political fallout of the post-war era were not, in and of themselves, the fundamental cause of humanity's depraved state, but were simply a consequence of '*the failure of those in whose hands the immediate destinies of peoples and nations have been committed, to adjust their system of economic and political institutions to the imperative needs of a rapidly evolving age*' (WOB 36). Economic and social upheaval, escalating political tension and an overriding sense of misery on a global scale were, rather, attributable to the inability, or indeed the unwillingness, of world leaders to '*reshape the machinery of their respective governments according to those standards that are implicit in Bahá'u'lláh's supreme declaration of the Oneness of Mankind*' (WOB 36).

The Guardian includes in his letter a series of extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá that demonstrate how imperative it is for humanity to curtail absolute state sovereignty and replace it with an international executive, legislature and judiciary. He explains how this form of '*world Super-State*', which would transmute '*the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism . . . into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship*' (WOB 40–1), should be a counterpart to the seemingly contradictory principle of '*unity in diversity*'. In conveying this concept, Shoghi Effendi stresses that the implementation of world governance should not in any way homogenise existing domestic traditions and institutions or suppress national history and ethnic heritage. The principle of unity in diversity, he states, '*repudiates excessive centralization on one hand and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other*' (WOB 42).

Shoghi Effendi also clarifies that the Oneness of Mankind, as the central tenet of the Bahá'í Faith, should not be confused with

a superficial or sanctimonious appeal for a ‘reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men’ (WOB 43). On the contrary, it necessitates a complete, and organic reworking of the very parameters around which contemporary human society is based. ‘*It calls for . . . a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units*’ (WOB 43).

As in some of his other letters, the Guardian draws a parallel between the violence and conflict which eventually ‘welded’ the fiercely independent, and hitherto irreconcilable, American states into one nation, and the process of ‘*mental*’ and ‘*physical agony*’ (WOB 45) which humanity as a whole would have to overcome on its path towards unification.

*That the forces of a world catastrophe can alone precipitate such a new phase of human thought is, alas, becoming increasingly apparent. That nothing short of the fire of a severe ordeal, unparalleled in its intensity, can fuse and weld the discordant entities that constitute the elements of present-day civilization, into the integral components of the world commonwealth of the future, is a truth which future events will increasingly demonstrate.* (WOB 46)

Shoghi Effendi concludes by reaffirming the responsibility of every individual believer to aid, ‘*with undimmed vision and unabated zeal*’, the further propagation of the message of Bahá’u’lláh (WOB 48). He also reminds the Bahá’is that the turmoil of the time, threatening as it may seem, is a requisite stage in mankind’s maturation, and will in due course culminate in lasting peace and worldwide harmony.

In a letter written on his behalf in January 1932, Shoghi Effendi made the following comments about ‘The Goal of a New World Order’:

SHOGHI EFFENDI: THE RANGE AND POWER OF HIS PEN

*Concerning the general letter he has sent lately to the Western friends, to which you refer . . . Shoghi Effendi thinks that the friends should spread the message it conveys to the public. It should undoubtedly be done in a very judicious way lest the people think that we have entered the arena of politics with rather drastic programmes of reform. But we should at the same time show the lead that the teachings take towards the realization of the international ideal. The primary importance of the Cause among the existing religions of the world is that, whereas the others have no coherent programme upon which they are united, the Movement is rich with the very spirit and teachings the world needs for solving its present international problems. It is a wonderful chance for the Cause to absorb the interest of the intelligent elements in the public. (SWSE 5)*

Extracts from this illuminating document follow below:

*Ten years of unceasing turmoil, so laden with anguish, so fraught with incalculable consequences to the future of civilization, have brought the world to the verge of a calamity too awful to contemplate. Sad indeed is the contrast between the manifestations of confident enthusiasm in which the Plenipotentiaries at Versailles so freely indulged and the cry of unconcealed distress which victors and vanquished alike are now raising in the hour of bitter delusion. (WOB 30)*

*Never indeed have there been such widespread and basic upheavals, whether in the social, economic or political spheres of human activity as those now going on in different parts of the world. Never have there been so many and varied sources of danger as those that now threaten the structure of society. (WOB 32)*

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*Are we, the privileged custodians of a priceless Faith, called upon to witness a cataclysmical change, politically as fundamental and spiritually as beneficent as that which precipitated the fall of the Roman Empire in the West? Might it not happen – every vigilant adherent of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh might well pause to reflect – that out of this world eruption there may stream forces of such spiritual energy as shall recall, nay eclipse, the splendor of those signs and wonders that accompanied the establishment of the Faith of Jesus Christ? Might there not emerge out of the agony of a shaken world a religious revival of such scope and power as to even transcend the potency of those world-directing forces with which the Religions of the Past have, at fixed intervals and according to an inscrutable Wisdom, revived the fortunes of declining ages and peoples? Might not the bankruptcy of this present, this highly-vaunted materialistic civilization, in itself clear away the choking weeds that now hinder the unfoldment and future efflorescence of God's struggling Faith? (WOB 33)*

*The call of Bahá'u'lláh is primarily directed against all forms of provincialism, all insularities and prejudices. If long-cherished ideals and time-honored institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the*

*preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine. (WOB 42)*

*Let there be no mistake. The principle of the Oneness of Mankind – the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve – is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds – creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world – a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units. (WOB 42–3)*

### **E. 'The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh'**

In this 17-page message addressed to the friends in the United States and Canada, Shoghi Effendi begins by lauding the propelling force of the Faith of God which has, 10 years after the passing of the beloved Master, *'in the face of tremendous obstacles, maintained its unity, resisted the malignant onslaught of its ill-wishers, silenced its calumniators [and] broadened the basis of its far-flung administration . . .'* (WOB 51). The letter goes on to pay warm tribute to the community of Bahá'ís in North America, to their efforts in aiding the progress of the Faith and in defence of its interests in the oppressed lands of the East.

In order to contrast Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation to other, man-created, movements, Shoghi Effendi poses this question for reflection: *'Where else, if not in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, can the unbiased student of comparative religion cite instances of a claim as stupendous as that which the Author of that Faith advanced, foes as relentless as those which He faced, a devotion more sublime than that which He kindled, a life as eventful and as enthralling as that which He led?'* (WOB 55). The Guardian draws a parallel between the early beginnings of past religions and the thrilling episodes which accompanied the birth and rise of the Bahá'í Faith, and gives a highly illuminating statement establishing the principle of the progressiveness and relativity of religious truth, and the unity and complementarity of all divinely revealed religions. He further, categorically, states the pre-eminent character of the Báb's Faith, and the fact that He was not only a Forerunner to Bahá'u'lláh, but an independent Manifestation of God in His own right.

The letter also deals with the importance and implications of the principle of non-interference in political affairs, pointing out that this in no way means that Bahá'ís are indifferent to the interests of their own country or the concept of sane patriotism. It is clear from this statement that the current circumstances in the world demand that such an attitude of non-involvement in

political and party pursuits should be uppermost in the minds of the friends. This of course does not entail avoidance of purely administrative positions in government, or association with movements that are humanitarian in their pursuits and in harmony with the Bahá'í principles. The concluding paragraphs of the letter address the need to carry out to a successful conclusion the great enterprise of completing the Wilmette temple.

Some passages from this document are set forth below:

*That the Cause associated with the name of Bahá'u'lláh feeds itself upon those hidden springs of celestial strength which no force of human personality, whatever its glamour, can replace; that its reliance is solely upon that mystic Source with which no worldly advantage, be it wealth, fame, or learning can compare; that it propagates itself by ways mysterious and utterly at variance with the standards accepted by the generality of mankind, will, if not already apparent, become increasingly manifest as it forges ahead towards fresh conquests in its struggle for the spiritual regeneration of mankind.*

*Indeed, how could it, unsupported as it has ever been by the counsels and the resources of the wise, the rich, and the learned in the land of its birth, have succeeded in breaking asunder the shackles that weighed upon it at the hour of its birth, in emerging unscathed from the storms that agitated its infancy, had not its animating breath been quickened by that spirit which is born of God, and on which all success, wherever and however it be sought, must ultimately depend?*  
(WOB 51–2)

*Not by the material resources which the members of this infant community can now summon to their aid; not by the numerical strength of its present-day supporters; nor by any direct tangible benefits its votaries can as yet confer upon the multitude of the needy and the disconsolate among their*

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*countrymen, should its potentialities be tested or its worth determined. Nowhere but in the purity of its precepts, the sublimity of its standards, the integrity of its laws, the reasonableness of its claims, the comprehensiveness of its scope, the universality of its program, the flexibility of its institutions, the lives of its founders, the heroism of its martyrs, and the transforming power of its influence, should the unprejudiced observer seek to obtain the true criterion that can enable him to fathom its mysteries or to estimate its virtue. (WOB 54)*

*Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that worldwide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster. Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen. Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them. Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world. It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representatives, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must*



*necessarily involve. Let them affirm their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Bahá'u'lláh, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to become worthy agencies of that Divine Polity which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men. (WOB 64-5)*

#### **F. This Decisive Hour**

This compilation of 135 pages, comprising 107 letters and cables of Shoghi Effendi, covers the period from 1932 to 1946. It is a revised edition of the earlier, 1947, volume entitled *Messages to America*. The cables are distinct from those published in the past by the American community, in that they are reproduced without the interpolations inserted in cables, as published in the earlier volume.

In this volume, Shoghi Effendi announces the publication of *Nabil's Narrative*, underlines its significance, and reminds the American friends that they are the spiritual descendants of the Dawn-Breakers. He refers to the American Bahá'í community as the '*champion-builders of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*', and stresses the importance of contributing to the National Fund and particularly to the Temple Fund. He also announces his marriage, in March of 1937, to Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum. In this message he refers to the institution of the Guardianship as '*the head-cornerstone*' of the Administrative Order, and characterizes it as being directly associated, through his marriage, to the community of North America.

In April of 1937 he launches the American Bahá'í community on their First Seven Year Plan, and encourages them to intensify their teaching work and their pioneering activities, on the home front as well as in virgin territories of Central and South America. Twice during this period, first in 1939 and then in 1942, he requests the National Assembly of the United States and Canada to deputize first nine, then five members of the

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community to settle in goal areas of the Seven Year Plan. Concurrent with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, during the second year of the Plan, he announces the transfer of the blessed remains of the Purest Branch and the mother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mount Carmel, thereby reinforcing the spiritual potencies of that '*consecrated Spot*'. As the Seven Year Plan draws to a close, he announces the preparations to be made for the Centenary of the Declaration of the Báb, the need to multiply the number of pioneers and to complete the exterior ornamentation of the Temple in Wilmette, and the importance of the participation of Latin American believers in the Centenary celebrations to be held under the shadow of the Mother Temple of the West.

In 1944 he announces the completion of his chief literary work, *God Passes By*. Also at this time, and with a heavy-laden heart, he makes known to the friends the faithlessness of members of his own family. Towards the end of the period covered by the compilation, in a message dated April 1946 to the National Convention, he inaugurates the start of the Second Seven Year Plan and explains how its goals are related to the spiritual conquest of the planet.

A few quotes from these messages are included below:

*The handling of this delicate and vital problem regarding non-participation by Bahá'ís of East and West in political affairs, calls for the utmost circumspection, tact, patience and vigilance, on the part of those whose function and privilege it is to guard, promote and administer the activities of a worldwide, ever-advancing Cause. The misgivings and apprehensions of individual Bahá'ís should be allayed and eventually completely dispelled. Any misconception of the sane and genuine patriotism that animates every Bahá'í heart, if it ever obscures or perplexes the minds of responsible government officials, should be instantly and courageously dissipated. Any deliberate misrepresentation,*

*by the enemies of the Cause of God of the aims, the tenets and methods of the administrators of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh should be vigorously faced and its fallacy pitilessly exposed. The Cause, to which we belong, stands on the threshold of an era of unprecedented expansion. Its problems are many, divers and challenging. Our methods and ways of approach must likewise be characterized by unusual sagacity, consummate skill and wisdom. He will surely never fail us in meeting the needs of a critical hour. (TDH 5)*

*As I lift up my gaze beyond the strain and stresses which a struggling Faith must necessarily experience, and view the wider scene which the indomitable will of the American Bahá'í community is steadily unfolding, I cannot but marvel at the range which the driving force of their ceaseless labors has acquired and the heights which the sublimity of their faith has attained. The outposts of a Faith, already persecuted in both Europe and Asia, are in the American continent steadily advancing, the visible symbols of its undoubted sovereignty are receiving fresh luster every day and its manifold institutions are driving their roots deeper and deeper into its soil. Blest and honored as none among its sister communities has been in recent years, preserved through the inscrutable dispensations of Divine Providence for a destiny which no mind can as yet imagine, such a community cannot for a moment afford to be content with or rest on the laurels it has so deservedly won. It must go on, continually go on, exploring fresh fields, scaling nobler heights, laying firmer foundations, shedding added splendor and achieving added renown in the service and for the glory of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The Seven Year Plan, which it has sponsored and with which its destiny is so closely interwoven, must at all costs be prosecuted with increasing force and added consecration. All should arise and participate.*

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*Upon the measure of such a participation will no doubt depend the welfare and progress of those distant communities which are now battling for their emancipation. To such a priceless privilege the inheritors of the shining grace of Bahá'u'lláh cannot surely be indifferent. The American believers must gird up the loins of endeavor and step into the arena of service with such heroism as shall astound the entire Bahá'í world. Let them be assured that my prayers will continue to be offered on their behalf. (TDH 18–19)*

*[I]t must be clearly understood, nor can it be sufficiently emphasized, that the conjunction of the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf with those of her brother and mother incalculably reinforces the spiritual potencies of that consecrated Spot which, under the wings of the Báb's overshadowing Sepulcher, and in the vicinity of the future Mashriqu'l-Adhkár which will be reared on its flank, is destined to evolve into the focal center of those world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and which are to function in consonance with the principles that govern the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice. Then, and then only, will this momentous prophecy which illuminates the concluding passages of the Tablet of Carmel be fulfilled: 'Erelong will God sail His Ark upon thee (Carmel), and will manifest the people of Bahá who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.'*

*To attempt to visualize, even in its barest outline, the glory that must envelop these institutions, to essay even a tentative and partial description of their character or the manner of their operation, or to trace however inadequately the course of events leading to their rise and eventual establishment is far beyond my own capacity and power. Suffice it to say that at this troubled stage in world history*

*the association of these three incomparably precious souls who, next to the three Central Figures of our Faith, tower in rank above the vast multitude of the heroes, Letters, martyrs, hands, teachers and administrators of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, in such a potentially powerful spiritual and administrative Center, is in itself an event which will release forces that are bound to hasten the emergence in a land which, geographically, spiritually and administratively, constitutes the heart of the entire planet, of some of the brightest gems of that World Order now shaping in the womb of this travailing age. (TDH 46)*

*Were anyone to imagine or expect that a Cause, comprising within its orbit so vast a portion of the globe, so turbulent in its history, so challenging in its claims, so diversified in the elements it has assimilated into its administrative structure, should at all times be immune to any divergence of opinion, or any defection on the part of its multitudinous followers, [it] would be sheer delusion, wholly unreasonable and unwarranted, even in the face of the unprecedented evidences of the miraculous power which its rise and progress have so powerfully exhibited. That such a secession, however, whether effected by those who apostatize their faith or preach heretical doctrines, should have failed, after the lapse of a century, to split in twain the entire body of the adherents of the Faith, or to create a grave, a permanent and irremediable breach in its organic structure, is a fact too eloquent for even a casual observer of the internal processes of its Administrative Order to either deny or ignore.*

*Therein every loyal and intelligent upholder of Bahá'u'lláh's incomparable Covenant – a Covenant designed by Him as the sole refuge against schism, disruption and anarchy – will readily recognize the hallmark of His Faith, and will acclaim it as the supreme gift conferred by Him Who is the Lord of Revelation upon the present and future*

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*generations who are destined, in this greatest of all Dispensations, to flock, from every creed and religion, to the banner, and espouse the Cause, of His Most Great Name. (TDH 66)*

*From the record of its tumultuous history, almost every page of which portrays a fresh crisis, is laden with the description of a new calamity, recounts the tale of a base betrayal, and is stained with the account of unspeakable atrocities, there emerges, clear and incontrovertible, the supreme truth that with every fresh outbreak of hostility to the Faith, whether from within or from without, a corresponding measure of outpouring grace, sustaining its defenders and confounding its adversaries, has been providentially released, communicating a fresh impulse to the onward march of the Faith, while this impetus, in its turn, would, through its manifestations, provoke fresh hostility in quarters heretofore unaware of its challenging implications – this increased hostility being accompanied by a still more arresting revelation of Divine Power and a more abundant effusion of celestial grace, which, by enabling the upholders of that Faith to register still more brilliant victories, would thereby generate issues of still more vital import and raise up still more formidable enemies against a Cause that cannot but in the end resolve those issues and crush the resistance of those enemies, through a still more glorious unfoldment of its inherent power. (TDH 66–7)*

#### **G. ‘America and the Most Great Peace’**

In this 23-page letter, dated 21 April 1933, addressed to the believers in the United States and Canada on the occasion of the passage of 40 years after the first public reference to Bahá’u’lláh and His Faith in the United States, Shoghi Effendi outlines the distinctions achieved by the American Bahá’í community in service to the Cause. He refers to them as a community which

has attained *'an undisputed leadership among its sister communities of East and West'* (WOB 72).

In this letter he recounts the attacks on the Faith, the *'vilest imputations'* hurled at its face, and the false assumption made by its enemies that it was *'an expiring creed'* (WOB 72). He recalls that the Báb had been labelled by these opponents as a *'perverted apostate'* (WOB 72) and Bahá'u'lláh was denounced as *'an unscrupulous plotter and usurper'*, while 'Abdu'l-Bahá was branded a *'stirrer of mischief and a notorious exponent of expediency and fraud'* (WOB 73). The principle of the oneness of the human race has been referred to by these same detractors as *'a shallow attempt at uniformity'*, the supernatural forces animating the Faith condemned as *'a vain belief in magic'* and its teachings on universal peace as *'a mere utopia'* (WOB 73). They have hailed the efforts of the Covenant-breakers as *'invading forces of schism'* which would lead the Faith to complete *'ruin'* (WOB 73).

It is God's design, Shoghi Effendi further points out, that the centre of Bahá'í activity should gravitate *'away from its cradle to the shores of the American continent'*, from East to West (WOB 74). He then draws a parallel to the rise of Christianity in the East and the manner in which, at its appointed time, the *'standard-bearers of the Cause of Jesus Christ'* succeeded in establishing *'His worldwide dominion on the ruins'* of the Roman Empire (WOB 74). The spread of the Faith from Iran to the West was one of the most outstanding aims adopted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for His Ministry. Shoghi Effendi describes the infinite love which 'Abdu'l-Bahá showered, incessantly but wisely, on the American friends, culminating in His choice to address the Tablets of the Divine Plan specifically to the North American Bahá'í community.

He then reviews the developments of the Faith during each of the four decades since its appearance in North America. He lauds the influence exerted by the early Western pilgrims to the Holy Land, and the manner in which the Faith struck its roots in

American soil. The passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he points out, released '*potent energies*' which crystallized in the system of Bahá'í Administration. After referring to Covenant-breakers and their vicious onslaughts on the Faith, he assures the friends that '*these notorious exponents of corruption and heresy*' succeed '*in protruding for a time their ugly features only to sink, as rapidly as they had risen, into the mire of an ignominious end*' (WOB 90).

Shoghi Effendi then lavishly extols the American Bahá'í community for its success in formulating the legal instruments to incorporate the National Assembly, in transferring national endowments into its name, in succouring its Egyptian brethren, in intervening on behalf of its fellow workers in the Soviet Republics, and in extending its support for its harassed brethren in Persia. He particularly praises the efforts of such members of the community as Mountfort Mills for his defence of the right of the Bahá'ís to the ownership of the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád, and Martha Root for her confirmed teaching work and particularly her success in obtaining from royalty repeated testimonies to the power of God's Holy Faith. He also mentions the courageous efforts of Keith Ransom-Kehler to obtain for the Persian Bahá'í community a greater measure of freedom and recognition, and finally the band of American women pioneers who scattered throughout the continents to raise the standard of the Faith in different countries.

He ends this stirring message with these questions, which he puts to the American Bahá'í community:

*Will it be America, will it be one of the countries of Europe, who will arise to assume the leadership essential to the shaping of the destinies of this troubled age? Will America allow any of her sister communities in East or West to achieve such ascendancy as shall deprive her of that spiritual primacy with which she has been invested and which she has thus far so nobly retained? Will she not rather contribute, by*



*a still further revelation of those inherent powers that motivate her life, to enhance the priceless heritage which the love and wisdom of a departed Master have conferred upon her?*

*Her past has been a testimony to the inexhaustible vitality of her faith. May not her future confirm it? (WOB 94)*

A few more quotes from the letter follow:

*Contrast the sad plight of the nations of the earth, and in particular this great Republic of the West, with the rising fortunes of that handful of its citizens [the Bahá'ís], whose mission, if they be faithful to their trust, is to heal its wounds, restore its confidence and revive its shattered hopes. Contrast the dreadful convulsions, the internecine conflicts, the petty disputes, the outworn controversies, the interminable revolutions that agitate the masses, with the calm new light of Peace and of Truth which envelops, guides and sustains those valiant inheritors of the law and love of Bahá'u'lláh. Compare the disintegrating institutions, the discredited statesmanship, the exploded theories, the appalling degradation, the follies and furies, the shifts, shams and compromises that characterize the present age, with the steady consolidation, the holy discipline, the unity and cohesiveness, the assured conviction, the uncompromising loyalty, the heroic self-sacrifice that constitute the hallmark of these faithful stewards and harbingers of the golden age of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. (WOB 79)*

*The passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, so sudden in the circumstances which caused it, so dramatic in its consequences, could neither impede the operation of such a dynamic force nor obscure its purpose. Those fervid appeals, embodied in the Will and Testament of a departed Master, could not but confirm its aim, define its character and reinforce the promise of its ultimate success.*

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*Out of the pangs of anguish which His bereaved followers have suffered, amid the heat and dust which the attacks launched by a sleepless enemy had precipitated, the Administration of Bahá'u'lláh's invincible Faith was born. The potent energies released through the ascension of the Center of His Covenant crystallized into this supreme, this infallible Organ for the accomplishment of a Divine Purpose. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá unveiled its character, reaffirmed its basis, supplemented its principles, asserted its indispensability, and enumerated its chief institutions. With that self-same spontaneity which had characterized her response to the Message proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh America had now arisen to espouse the cause of the Administration which the Will and Testament of His Son had unmistakably established. It was given to her, and to her alone, in the turbulent years following the revelation of so momentous a Document, to become the fearless champion of that Administration, the pivot of its new-born institutions and the leading promoter of its influence. To their Persian brethren, who in the heroic age of the Faith had won the crown of martyrdom, the American believers, forerunners of its golden age, were now worthily succeeding, bearing in their turn the palm of a hard-won victory. The unbroken record of their illustrious deeds had established beyond the shadow of a doubt their preponderating share in shaping the destinies of their Faith. In a world writhing with pain and declining into chaos this community – the vanguard of the liberating forces of Bahá'u'lláh – succeeded in the years following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing in raising high above the institutions established by its sister communities in East and West what may well constitute the chief pillar of that future House – a House which posterity will regard as the last refuge of a tottering civilization. (WOB 89)*

## H. 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh'

'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh' is one of the major works of Shoghi Effendi, written at a time when both Communism and Fascism were spreading their influence across Europe. In this work, 60 pages in length, Shoghi Effendi gives us the basic and doctrinal verities of the Faith, which lie at its very core. In a letter of 10 January 1935 to an individual believer, the Guardian points out that his 'Dispensation' constitutes an '*invaluable supplement*' to Bahá'u'lláh's Book of the Covenant, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament (LDG Vol. 1, 65). It is worthy of note that Shoghi Effendi states that the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá itself '*supplements*' (WOB 19) the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in matters related to the World Order.

Of such importance is 'The Dispensation' that Rúhíyyih Khánúm, in *The Priceless Pearl*, relates that Shoghi Effendi had remarked more than once that he 'considered he had said all he had to say, in many ways, in the *Dispensation*' (PP 213). To many pilgrims, including Hands of the Cause, he stated that his 'Dispensation' should be regarded as his will and testament.

At the very outset of the document, Shoghi Effendi states that he intends in this letter to '*lay special stress . . . upon certain truths which lie at the basis of our Faith and the integrity of which it is our first duty to safeguard. These verities, if valiantly upheld and properly assimilated, will, I am convinced, powerfully reinforce the vigor of our spiritual life, and greatly assist in counteracting the machinations of an implacable and vigilant enemy*' (WOB 99–100).

The purpose of this remarkable document is for the believers to attain to a clear understanding of the unique stations of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He describes these three Figures in the following paragraph:

*Dominating the entire range of this fascinating spectacle [the mysterious workings of God's Revelation] towers the*

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*incomparable figure of Bahá'u'lláh, transcendental in His majesty, serene, awe-inspiring, unapproachably glorious. Allied, though subordinate in rank, and invested with the authority of presiding with Him over the destinies of this supreme Dispensation, there shines upon this mental picture the youthful glory of the Báb, infinite in His tenderness, irresistible in His charm, unsurpassed in His heroism, matchless in the dramatic circumstances of His short yet eventful life. And finally there emerges, though on a plane of its own and in a category entirely apart from the one occupied by the twin Figures that preceded Him, the vibrant, the magnetic personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reflecting to a degree that no man, however exalted his station, can hope to rival, the glory and power with which They who are the Manifestations of God are alone endowed. (WOB 97–8)*

The first section of this letter is the citation of several excerpts from the Writings of the Central Figures of the Faith, to disclose to the reader *'the sublimity of this unique Cycle in the world's religious history'* (WOB 112). In explaining the station of Bahá'u'lláh, Shoghi Effendi makes it very clear that the Manifestation of God and the divinity attributed to Him should not be confused with the idea of divine incarnation in the person of the Manifestation. Shoghi Effendi categorically states:

*[T]hat invisible yet rational God Who, however much we extol the divinity of His Manifestations on earth, can in no wise incarnate His infinite, His unknowable, His incorruptible and all-embracing Reality in the concrete and limited frame of a mortal being. Indeed, the God Who could so incarnate His own reality would, in the light of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, cease immediately to be God. (WOB 112)*

This belief, he maintains, *'should never be obscured, and [its] integrity . . . no one of His followers should allow to be compromised'* (WOB 114).

The last part of the section dealing with Bahá'u'lláh quotes from the Writings to indicate the oneness that unites all Divine Revelations, their continuity and progressiveness, and the fact that Bahá'u'lláh, despite the vast range of His Dispensation, *'repudiates the claim to be regarded as the final revelation of God's will and purpose for mankind'* (WOB 115).

The next section considers the station of the Báb. Shoghi Effendi writes: *'Indeed the greatness of the Báb consists primarily, not in His being the divinely-appointed Forerunner of so transcendent a Revelation, but rather in His having been invested with the powers inherent in the inaugurator of a separate religious Dispensation, and in His wielding, to a degree unrivalled by the Messengers gone before Him, the scepter of independent Prophethood'* (WOB 123). This forthright statement is substantiated by him with several quotations from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb Himself, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The third section discusses the distinctive station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Shoghi Effendi writes,

*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 rôle and character of One Who, not only in the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh but in the entire field of religious history, fulfills a unique function . . . He towers, in conjunction with them [Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb], 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. (WOB 131–2)*

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A series of quotations follows from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh to support his statement. He ends the section by asserting that the belief of some early Western Bahá'ís to the effect that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the return of Christ, and that He and Bahá'u'lláh possessed the same station and reality, was completely erroneous. Such an identity applies indeed to the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh Themselves.

The final section of the letter deals with the Administrative Order and its twin institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice. In describing its significance, Shoghi Effendi writes:

*This Administrative Order, as it expands and consolidates itself, will no doubt manifest the potentialities and reveal the full implications of this momentous Document [the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá] – this most remarkable expression of the Will of One of the most remarkable Figures of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh. It will, as its component parts, its organic institutions, begin to function with efficiency and vigor, assert its claim and demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind. (WOB 144)*

He further stresses the point that in the scripture of none of the religions of the past *'do we find any provisions establishing a covenant, or providing for an administrative order, that can compare in scope and authority with those that lie at the very basis of the Bahá'í Dispensation'* (WOB 145).

This section goes on to explain the character and functions of the twin pillars that support this administrative structure, described by him as *'two fundamental organs of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá'* (WOB 147) and clarifies the relationship between the two. The final pages of this section deal with the similarities

and dissimilarities between this Administrative Order and the theory and practice of other systems of governance in the world.

Further quotations are included below:

*Significant as are the origins of this mighty administrative structure, and however unique its features, the happenings that may be said to have heralded its birth and signalized the initial stage of its evolution seem no less remarkable. How striking, how edifying the contrast between the process of slow and steady consolidation that characterizes the growth of its infant strength and the devastating onrush of the forces of disintegration that are assailing the outworn institutions, both religious and secular, of present-day society!*

*The vitality which the organic institutions of this great, this ever-expanding Order so strongly exhibit; the obstacles which the high courage, the undaunted resolution of its administrators have already surmounted; the fire of an unquenchable enthusiasm that glows with undiminished fervour in the hearts of its itinerant teachers; the heights of self-sacrifice which its champion-builders are now attaining; the breadth of vision, the confident hope, the creative joy, the inward peace, the uncompromising integrity, the exemplary discipline, the unyielding unity and solidarity which its stalwart defenders manifest; the degree to which its moving Spirit has shown itself capable of assimilating the diversified elements within its pale, of cleansing them of all forms of prejudice and of fusing them with its own structure – these are evidences of a power which a disillusioned and sadly shaken society can ill afford to ignore.*

*Compare these splendid manifestations of the spirit animating this vibrant body of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh with the cries and agony, the follies and vanities, the bitterness and prejudices, the wickedness and divisions of an ailing and chaotic world. Witness the fear that torments its leaders and paralyzes the action of its blind and bewildered statesmen.*

*How fierce the hatreds, how false the ambitions, how petty the pursuits, how deep-rooted the suspicions of its peoples! How disquieting the lawlessness, the corruption, the unbelief that are eating into the vitals of a tottering civilization!*

*Might not this process of steady deterioration which is insidiously invading so many departments of human activity and thought be regarded as a necessary accompaniment to the rise of this almighty Arm of Bahá'u'lláh? Might we not look upon the momentous happenings which, in the course of the past twenty years, have so deeply agitated every continent of the earth, as ominous signs simultaneously proclaiming the agonies of a disintegrating civilization and the birth-pangs of that World Order – that Ark of human salvation – that must needs arise upon its ruins? (WOB 154–5)*

## **I. 'The Unfoldment of World Civilization'**

In 1936, in the context of escalating political turmoil and dire socio-economic conditions in Europe and America, Shoghi Effendi addressed the Bahá'ís of the West. Although, he stated, the signs of progress in the development of the New World Order were evident to any '*fair-minded observer*', he warned that concurrent with that rise was the '*downfall of those powers and principalities that have either ignored or opposed*' the onward march of the Faith (WOB 161). This process of '*mystic, all-pervasive*' change which the Guardian describes is twofold (WOB 163–4). On one hand, it increasingly engenders oneness and cohesion. On the other, it disrupts an already ailing world, forcing mankind to abandon its '*hollow and outworn institutions*' and its '*obsolescent doctrines and beliefs*' (WOB 170). In further elaborating on this simultaneous and paradoxical process of integration and disintegration, Shoghi Effendi draws an interesting parallel between the incremental evolution of global government and society and the period of crisis preceding the eventual foundation of the United States of America. He explains



that the '*moral and social gloom*' which characterizes humanity's state of collective adolescence would lead to its maturation and prepare it for its inevitable unification (WOB 168). He also emphasizes that this '*coming of age*' would accord with the existing operational structure and animating spirit of the Administrative Order (WOB 163).

Shoghi Effendi attributed the fall of Shi'ah Islam and the Qájár dynasty, and the receding power of the Sunni caliphs of Constantinople, to the rampant rise of secularism in the East. He explained that the sovereign leaders of these Faiths and Empires were the authors of their own demise by attempting to obstruct the advancement of the Faith, and by failing to heed Bahá'u'lláh's warnings. In demonstrating this, the Guardian provides examples of Bahá'u'lláh's messages and describes the fate that befell those who disregarded His Call. He parallels the plight of Islam with that of Christianity, foretelling that '*the forces of irreligion, of a purely materialistic philosophy [and] of unconcealed paganism*' (WOB 180) would trigger its downfall. Unbridled industrialism had overcome the erstwhile 'Christian' world, and a concomitant rise in nationalism – inculcating in due course the deification of the state – would unavoidably result in '*a marked weakening of the Church and . . . a grave diminution of its spiritual influence*' (WOB 182). The Guardian also points to a widening gulf between liberal and fundamentalist denominations within the Christian and Muslim Faiths as being a contributory factor to the weakening of their influence.

The Guardian explains that the progressive decay of these religions would result in a phase of decadence, perversion and corruption in human conduct; and that political disarray and economic strangulation, as well as the inefficacy of multilateral governance structures on the global stage, were a direct consequence of humanity's morally retarded state. However, he applauds efforts made by the League of Nations Member States in attempting to develop a sufficiently forceful collective security system, and quotes passages from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings on the

subject. He also stresses that it is only through the regulation of the use of force and the development of a commonly acceptable international executive mechanism that *'the oneness of the whole body of nations will be made the ruling principle of international life'* (WOB 193). The time of nation-building, he underlines, is at an end, and the insistence on preserving absolute state sovereignty is counterproductive to *'the oneness and wholeness of human relationships'* (WOB 202).

Shoghi Effendi concludes by emphasizing the non-sectarian, *'rigidly non-partisan'* (WOB 198) and supranational nature of the Faith. He explains that Bahá'u'lláh foresaw the inauguration of a universal system of governance, and the establishment of a world language, currency, script and system of measurement.

Some further quotes from this remarkable document are given below:

*The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regarded as signaling through its advent the coming of age of the entire human race. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet. The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture – all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era – should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual,*

*will, nay must indeed as a result of such a consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and develop. (WOB 163)*

*Deep as is the gloom that already encircles the world, the afflictive ordeals which that world is to suffer are still in preparation, nor can their blackness be as yet imagined. We stand on the threshold of an age whose convulsions proclaim alike the death-pangs of the old order and the birth-pangs of the new. (WOB 169)*

*The recrudescence of religious intolerance, of racial animosity, and of patriotic arrogance; the increasing evidences of selfishness, of suspicion, of fear and of fraud; the spread of terrorism, of lawlessness, of drunkenness and of crime; the unquenchable thirst for, and the feverish pursuit after, earthly vanities, riches and pleasures; the weakening of family solidarity; the laxity in parental control; the lapse into luxurious indulgence; the irresponsible attitude towards marriage and the consequent rising tide of divorce; the degeneracy of art and music, the infection of literature, and the corruption of the press; the extension of the influence and activities of those 'prophets of decadence' who advocate companionate marriage, who preach the philosophy of nudism, who call modesty an intellectual fiction, who refuse to regard the procreation of children as the sacred and primary purpose of marriage, who denounce religion as an opiate of the people, who would, if given free rein, lead back the human race to barbarism, chaos, and ultimate extinction – these appear as the outstanding characteristics of a decadent society, a society that must either be reborn or perish. (WOB 187–8)*

*Ceasing to designate to itself a movement, a fellowship and the like – designations that did grave injustice to its ever-unfolding system – dissociating itself from such appellations*

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*as Bábí sect, Asiatic cult, and offshoot of Shi'ih Islám, with which the ignorant and the malicious were wont to describe it, refusing to be labeled as a mere philosophy of life, or as an eclectic code of ethical conduct, or even as a new religion, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is now visibly succeeding in demonstrating its claim and title to be regarded as a World Religion, destined to attain, in the fullness of time, the status of a world-embracing Commonwealth, which would be at once the instrument and the guardian of the Most Great Peace announced by its Author. (WOB 196)*

*How can a Faith, it should moreover be borne in mind, whose divinely-ordained institutions have been established within the jurisdiction of no less than forty different countries, the policies and interests of whose governments are continually clashing and growing more complex and confused every day – how can such a Faith, by allowing its adherents, whether individually or through its organized councils, to meddle in political activities, succeed in preserving the integrity of its teachings and in safeguarding the unity of its followers? How can it insure the vigorous, the uninterrupted and peaceful development of its expanding institutions? How can a Faith, whose ramifications have brought it into contact with mutually incompatible religious systems, sects and confessions, be in a position, if it permits its adherents to subscribe to obsolescent observances and doctrines, to claim the unconditional allegiance of those whom it is striving to incorporate into its divinely-appointed system? How can it avoid the constant friction, the misunderstandings and controversies which formal affiliation, as distinct from association, must inevitably engender? (WOB 199)*

*The long ages of infancy and childhood, through which the human race had to pass, have receded into the background.*

*Humanity is now experiencing the commotions invariably associated with the most turbulent stage of its evolution, the stage of adolescence, when the impetuosity of youth and its vehemence reach their climax, and must gradually be superseded by the calmness, the wisdom, and the maturity that characterize the stage of manhood. Then will the human race reach that stature of ripeness which will enable it to acquire all the powers and capacities upon which its ultimate development must depend. (WOB 202)*

*The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that comprise them are definitely and completely safeguarded. (WOB 203)*

*A world federal system, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation – such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving. (WOB 204)*

#### **J. *The Advent of Divine Justice***

*The Advent of Divine Justice* reads like a 77-page poem. Written in December 1938, at a time when Europe was showing signs of profound unrest, which led less than a year later to the outbreak

of the Second World War, this letter, addressed to the Bahá'í community of the United States and Canada, focuses on the nature and scope of America's divinely-ordained mission, and states that '*the impelling force of circumstances*' (ADJ 43) will inevitably oblige it to overcome its various challenges and execute the tasks which lie ahead. Shoghi Effendi meticulously lists such characteristics as are imperative if Bahá'ís in North America are to carry out its mission. Among them the Guardian specifically mentions '*a rectitude of conduct*' (ADJ 26), '*an abiding sense of undeviating justice*' (ADJ 23), adherence to '*the obligation of chastity and holiness*' (ADJ 29), and '*a fraternity freed from that cancerous growth of racial prejudice, which is eating into the vitals of an already debilitated society*' (ADJ 23).

American society, Shoghi Effendi points out, is '*immersed in a sea of materialism, a prey to one of the most virulent and long-standing forms of racial prejudice, and notorious for its political corruption, lawlessness and laxity in moral standards*' (ADJ 19). In fact, he emphasizes that it is not because of any '*racial superiority*', social capacity or spiritual distinction that America was chosen as '*champion-builders*' of the Administrative Order, but because it was a nation stained by '*political corruption and . . . moral license*' (ADJ 17, 20, 20).

The letter also sets out the requirements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan and the Seven Year Plan, mentioning in turn the teaching requirements that are incumbent upon all believers and the need for thorough intellectual familiarization with the history, social principles and spiritual teachings of both the Bahá'í Faith and its predecessor, Islam. The Guardian encourages the American Bahá'ís to consider pioneering within the Americas, and stresses the importance of '*rearing*' (ADJ 63) permanent local and national institutions within the US and across the two continents. The importance of the participation of Bahá'í youth in the execution of this mission is also underlined. Youth, he states, '*can contribute so decisively to the virility, the purity, and the driving force of the life of the Bahá'í community,*

*and upon [them] must depend the future orientation of its destiny, and the complete unfoldment of the potentialities with which God has endowed it'* (ADJ 22).

Shoghi Effendi explained that the pervasive and intensifying political turmoil of the late 1930s, in itself, presented an ideal opportunity both for the spiritual growth of the Bahá'í community and for the wider dissemination of the message of Bahá'u'lláh. '*These recurrent crises*', he writes, '*which, with ominous frequency and resistless force, are afflicting an ever-increasing portion of the human race must of necessity continue, however impermanently, to exercise, in a certain measure, their baleful influence upon a world community which has spread its ramifications to the uttermost ends of the earth*' (ADJ 2).

Later he writes that '*The opportunities which the turmoil of the present age presents, with all the sorrows which it evokes, the fears which it excites, the disillusionment which it produces, the perplexities which it creates, the indignation which it arouses, the revolt which it provokes, the grievances it engenders, the spirit of restless search which it awakens, must, in like manner, be exploited for the purpose of spreading far and wide the knowledge of the redemptive power of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and for enlisting fresh recruits in the ever-swelling army of His followers*' (ADJ 48). '[T]he synchronization of such world-shaking crises', he goes on to say, '*with the progressive unfoldment and fruition of their divinely appointed task is itself the work of Providence . . . Such simultaneous processes of rise and fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos, with their continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other, are but aspects of a greater Plan, one and indivisible, whose Source is God, whose author is Bahá'u'lláh, the theater of whose operations is the entire planet, and whose ultimate objectives are the unity of the human race and the peace of all mankind*' (ADJ 72-3).

Much of what the Guardian was telling the American Bahá'í Community in 1939 is distressingly applicable to the socio-

political context in which the world finds itself today. *'The light of religion is dimmed and moral authority is disintegrating,'* Shoghi Effendi writes. *'The nations of the world have, for the most part, fallen a prey to battling ideologies that threaten to disrupt the very foundations of their dearly won political unity. Agitated multitudes in these countries seethe with discontent, are armed to the teeth, are stampeded with fear, and groan beneath the yoke of tribulations engendered by political strife, racial fanaticism, national hatreds, and religious animosities'* (ADJ 88). This, therefore, represents an ideal time for Bahá'í youth to trigger change.

A few more excerpts from this precious and often-quoted document are included below.

*A world, torn with conflicting passions, and perilously disintegrating from within, finds itself confronted, at so crucial an epoch in its history, by the rising fortunes of an infant Faith, a Faith that, at times, seems to be drawn into its controversies, entangled by its conflicts, eclipsed by its gathering shadows, and overpowered by the mounting tide of its passions. In its very heart, within its cradle, at the seat of its first and venerable Temple, in one of its hitherto flourishing and potentially powerful centres, the as-yet unemancipated Faith of Bahá'u'lláh seems indeed to have retreated before the onrushing forces of violence and disorder to which humanity is steadily falling a victim. The strongholds of such a Faith, one by one and day after day, are to outward seeming being successively isolated, assaulted and captured. As the lights of liberty flicker and go out, as the din of discord grows louder and louder every day, as the fires of fanaticism flame with increasing fierceness in the breasts of men, as the chill of irreligion creeps relentlessly over the soul of mankind, the limbs and organs that constitute the body of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh appear, in varying measure, to have become afflicted with the crippling*



*influences that now hold in their grip the whole of the civilized world. (ADJ 5)*

*[Among the] opportunities which stand out preeminently, in any attempt to survey the possibilities of the future [are]: . . . the multitudinous issues that must be faced, the obstacles that must be overcome, and the responsibilities that must be assumed, to enable a sore-tried Faith to pass through the successive stages of unmitigated obscurity, of active repression, and of complete emancipation, leading in turn to its being acknowledged as an independent Faith, enjoying the status of full equality with its sister religions, to be followed by its establishment and recognition as a State religion, which in turn must give way to its assumption of the rights and prerogatives associated with the Bahá'í state, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, a stage which must ultimately culminate in the emergence of the worldwide Bahá'í Commonwealth, animated wholly by the spirit, and operating solely in direct conformity with the laws and principles of Bahá'u'lláh. (ADJ 14–15)*

*Let not, however, the invincible army of Bahá'u'lláh, who in the West, and at one of its potential storm-centers is to fight, in His name and for His sake, one of its fiercest and most glorious battles, be afraid of any criticism that might be directed against it. Let it not be deterred by any condemnation with which the tongue of the slanderer may seek to debase its motives. Let it not recoil before the threatening advance of the forces of fanaticism, of orthodoxy, of corruption, and of prejudice that may be leagued against it. The voice of criticism is a voice that indirectly reinforces the proclamation of its Cause. Unpopularity but serves to throw into greater relief the contrast between it and its adversaries; while ostracism is itself the magnetic power that must*

*eventually win over to its camp the most vociferous and inveterate amongst its foes. (ADJ 42)*

*The field is indeed so immense, the period so critical, the Cause so great, the workers so few, the time so short, the privilege so priceless, that no follower of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, worthy to bear His name, can afford a moment's hesitation. That God-born Force, irresistible in its sweeping power, incalculable in its potency, unpredictable in its course, mysterious in its workings, and awe-inspiring in its manifestations – a Force which, as the Báb has written, 'vibrates within the innermost being of all created things,' and which, according to Bahá'u'lláh, has through its 'vibrating influence,' 'upset the equilibrium of the world and revolutionized its ordered life' – such a Force, acting even as a two-edged sword, is, under our very eyes, sundering, on the one hand, the age-old ties which for centuries have held together the fabric of civilized society, and is unloosing, on the other, the bonds that still fetter the infant and as yet unemancipated Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. (ADJ 46–7)*

*The opportunities which the turmoil of the present age presents, with all the sorrows which it evokes, the fears which it excites, the disillusionment which it produces, the perplexities which it creates, the indignation which it arouses, the revolt which it provokes, the grievances it engenders, the spirit of restless search which it awakens, must, in like manner, be exploited for the purpose of spreading far and wide the knowledge of the redemptive power of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and for enlisting fresh recruits in the ever-swelling army of His followers. So precious an opportunity, so rare a conjunction of favorable circumstances, may never again recur. Now is the time, the appointed time, for the American believers, the vanguard of the hosts of the Most Great Name, to proclaim, through the*

*agencies and channels of a specially designed Administrative Order, their capacity and readiness to rescue a fallen and sore-tried generation, that has rebelled against its God and ignored His warnings, and to offer it that complete security which only the strongholds of their Faith can provide. (ADJ 48)*

### **K. *The Promised Day is Come***

Written in 1941, in the early years of the Second World War, and addressed to the Bahá'ís of the West, *The Promised Day is Come* reminded believers that the 'retributive calamity' (PDC 183) that had overcome humanity at that point in history was largely due to its ignorance of the modern message of God. In order to underline the importance of the Divine Call in this day, the Guardian quotes extensive passages from the Writings of the Central Figures of the Faith. The book comprises 130 pages. Shoghi Effendi includes some 50 pages of direct quotations from the Writings, of which more than half run to an entire page. The rest are scattered throughout the body of the text.

As ever-escalating conflict gripped the world, Shoghi Effendi reassured the Bahá'í community of the genesis, direction and necessity of the '*titanic upheaval*' mankind was experiencing (PDC 5). Underpinning his message was the notion that fears for the immediate future necessarily engendered hope for the distant future and that, though the severity of the calamity seemed overwhelming, it would inexorably result in worldwide acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh's message. He writes: '*It [the judgment of God] is at once a visitation from God and a cleansing process for all mankind. Its fires punish the perversity of the human race, and weld its component parts into one organic, indivisible, world-embracing community*' (PDC 5–6). Contrasting the '*distressing*' darkness of the past with the '*glorious*' radiance of the future, the Guardian explains that the path towards humanity's ultimate unification must, of necessity, comprise a stage of

adversity and discord (PDC 200–1). Although ‘*the folly and tumult of strife . . . blackened the annals of mankind*’, this would constitute a prerequisite for ‘*worldwide reconciliation*’ and a lasting, universal peace (PDC 192).

He writes: ‘*We are indeed living in an age which, if we would correctly appraise it, should be regarded as one which is witnessing a dual phenomenon. The first signalizes the death pangs of an order, effete and godless, that has stubbornly refused, despite the signs and portents of a century-old Revelation, to attune its processes to the precepts and ideals which that Heaven-sent Faith proffered it. The second proclaims the birth pangs of an Order, divine and redemptive, that will inevitably supplant the former, and within Whose administrative structure an embryonic civilization, incomparable and world-embracing, is imperceptibly maturing. The one is being rolled up, and is crashing in oppression, bloodshed, and ruin. The other opens up vistas of a justice, a unity, a peace, a culture, such as no age has ever seen. The former has spent its force, demonstrated its falsity and barrenness, lost irretrievably its opportunity, and is hurrying to its doom. The latter, virile and unconquerable, is plucking asunder its chains, and is vindicating its title to be the one refuge within which a sore-tried humanity, purged from its dross, can attain its destiny*’ (PDC 27).

The document charts the history and evolution of the Bahá’í Faith, and describes in detail the lives of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh. In surveying the nature of ‘*the international scene*’ (PDC 25) in the context of the early stages of Bahá’í history, Shoghi Effendi also provides a detailed description of the persecution and opposition that early believers faced in nineteenth-century Iran.

A series of messages of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh are also included in the text. They were originally addressed to those despotic monarchs who were largely responsible for the wrongs of society, and who were ‘*glorying in the pomp and pageantry of a kingship as yet scarcely restricted by constitutional limitations*,

*or entrenched within the strongholds of a seemingly inviolable ecclesiastical power* (PDC 30). The Guardian presents both a comprehensive account of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh's letters to the sovereigns of the world, and an assessment of the degree of success and consequences of those appeals in gaining support for the nascent Faith. Some rulers, for example, brushed aside the messages disdainfully. Others subjected individual adherents to unthinkable cruel treatment. Shoghi Effendi describes how these monarchs precipitated the crumbling of their respective dynasties by failing to answer Bahá'u'lláh's claim. One by one, he explains in impressive detail and in characteristically evocative terms, how, when and why these autocratic regimes in both the East and the West ultimately fell.

Shoghi Effendi was, however, wary that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh be misconstrued as being disparaging to the notion of kingship and monarchy. On the contrary, the Guardian reminds Bahá'ís that *'the principle of kingship is eulogized, the rank and conduct of just and fair-minded kings is extolled, the rise of monarchs, ruling with justice and even professing His Faith, is envisaged, and the solemn duty to arise and ensure the triumph of Bahá'í sovereigns is inculcated'* (PDC 117).

Shoghi Effendi draws a further parallel between the decay of monarchical institutions and the declining influence of the world's spiritual leaders, and offers an extensive overview of the various passages Bahá'u'lláh addressed collectively to those leaders. The heads of the ecclesiastical orders, particularly in the Muslim world, were the first who *'hoisted the standard of revolt'* and *'inflamed the ignorant and subservient masses against [the Faith]'* (PDC 122). As with the monarchy, the Guardian revealed that the *'calamities that afflicted'* these ecclesiastical hierarchies – Christian and Muslim alike – were foretold by Bahá'u'lláh's message (PDC 164).

*This great retributive calamity, for which the world's supreme leaders, both secular and religious, are to be regarded*

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*as primarily answerable, as testified by Bahá'u'lláh, should not, if we would correctly appraise it, be regarded solely as a punishment meted out by God to a world that has, for a hundred years, persisted in its refusal to embrace the truth of the redemptive Message proffered to it by the supreme Messenger of God in this day. It should be viewed also, though to a lesser degree, in the light of a divine retribution for the perversity of the human race in general, in casting itself adrift from those elementary principles which must, at all times, govern, and can alone safeguard, the life and progress of mankind. Humanity has, alas, with increasing insistence, preferred, instead of acknowledging and adoring the Spirit of God as embodied in His religion in this day, to worship those false idols, untruths and half-truths, which are obscuring its religions, corrupting its spiritual life, convulsing its political institutions, corroding its social fabric, and shattering its economic structure. (PDC 183–4)*

In concluding, Shoghi Effendi emphasizes that it was not Bahá'u'lláh's intention to dismiss or belittle the teachings of other Dispensations, but simply to impress upon His followers the principle of the progressiveness and continuity of Divine Revelation, and to convey the idea that these seemingly disparate Revelations were, in fact, united by a shared purpose and by the commonality of the fundamental values that they enshrine.

*'The world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny', Shoghi Effendi explains. 'The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth, whatever the leaders of the divisive forces of the world may say or do, is already an accomplished fact. Its unity in the economic sphere is now understood and recognized. The welfare of the part means the welfare of the whole, and the distress of the part brings distress to the whole . . . The fires lit by this great ordeal are the consequences of men's failure to recognize [the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh]' (PDC 200–1).*

A few further quotations from the book follow below:

*A tempest, unprecedented in its violence, unpredictable in its course, catastrophic in its immediate effects, unimaginably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is at present sweeping the face of the earth. Its driving power is remorselessly gaining in range and momentum. Its cleansing force, however much undetected, is increasing with every passing day. Humanity, gripped in the clutches of its devastating power, is smitten by the evidences of its resistless fury. It can neither perceive its origin, nor probe its significance, nor discern its outcome. Bewildered, agonized and helpless, it watches this great and mighty wind of God invading the remotest and fairest regions of the earth, rocking its foundations, deranging its equilibrium, sundering its nations, disrupting the homes of its peoples, wasting its cities, driving into exile its kings, pulling down its bulwarks, uprooting its institutions, dimming its light, and harrowing up the souls of its inhabitants. (PDC 1)*

*Who is the ruler, may it not be confidently asked, whether of the East or of the West, who, at any time since the dawn of so transcendent a Revelation, has been prompted to raise his voice either in its praise or against those who persecuted it? Which people has, in the course of so long a captivity, felt urged to arise and stem the tide of such tribulations? Who is the sovereign, excepting a single woman, shining in solitary glory, who has, in however small a measure, felt impelled to respond to the poignant call of Bahá'u'lláh? Who amongst*

*the great ones of the earth was inclined to extend this infant Faith of God the benefit of his recognition or support? Which one of the multitudes of creeds, sects, races, parties and classes and of the highly diversified schools of human thought, considered it necessary to direct its gaze towards*

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*the rising light of the Faith, to contemplate its unfolding system, to ponder its hidden processes, to appraise its weighty message, to acknowledge its regenerative power, to embrace its salutary truth, or to proclaim its eternal verities? Who among the worldly wise and the so-called men of insight and wisdom can justly claim, after the lapse of nearly a century, to have disinterestedly approached its theme, to have considered impartially its claims, to have taken sufficient pains to delve into its literature, to have assiduously striven to separate facts from fiction, or to have accorded its cause the treatment it merits? Where are the preeminent exponents, whether of the arts or sciences, with the exception of a few isolated cases, who have lifted a finger, or whispered a word of commendation, in either the defense or the praise of a Faith that has conferred upon the world so priceless a benefit, that has suffered so long and so grievously, and which enshrines within its shell so enthralling a promise for a world so woefully battered, so manifestly bankrupt? (PDC 20–1)*

*God . . . does not only punish the wrongdoings of His children. He chastises because He is just, and He chastens because He loves. Having chastened them, He cannot, in His great mercy, leave them to their fate. Indeed, by the very act of chastening them He prepares them for the mission for which He has created them . . .*

*God's purpose is none other than to usher in, in ways He alone can bring about, and the full significance of which He alone can fathom, the Great, the Golden Age of a long-divided, a long-afflicted humanity. Its present state, indeed even its immediate future, is dark, distressingly dark. Its distant future, however, is radiant, gloriously radiant – so radiant that no eye can visualize it. (PDC 189–90)*

*Then [with the emergence of Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order] will the coming of age of the entire human race be*



*proclaimed and celebrated by all the peoples and nations of the earth. Then will the banner of the Most Great Peace be hoisted. Then will the worldwide sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh – the Establisher of the Kingdom of the Father foretold by the Son, and anticipated by the Prophets of God before Him and after Him – be recognized, acclaimed, and firmly established. Then will a world civilization be born, flourish, and perpetuate itself, a civilization with a fullness of life such as the world has never seen nor can as yet conceive. Then will the Everlasting Covenant be fulfilled in its completeness. Then will the promise enshrined in all the Books of God be redeemed, and all the prophecies uttered by the Prophets of old come to pass, and the vision of seers and poets be realized. Then will the planet, galvanized through the universal belief of its dwellers in one God, and their allegiance to one common Revelation, mirror, within the limitations imposed upon it, the effulgent glories of the sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh, shining in the plenitude of its splendor in the Abhá Paradise, and be made the footstool of His Throne on high, and acclaimed as the earthly heaven, capable of fulfilling that ineffable destiny fixed for it, from time immemorial, by the love and wisdom of its Creator.*

*Not ours, puny mortals that we are, to attempt, at so critical a stage in the long and checkered history of mankind, to arrive at a precise and satisfactory understanding of the steps which must successively lead a bleeding humanity, wretchedly oblivious of its God, and careless of Bahá'u'lláh, from its calvary to its ultimate resurrection. Not ours, the living witnesses of the all-subduing potency of His Faith, to question, for a moment, and however dark the misery that enshrouds the world, the ability of Bahá'u'lláh to forge, with the hammer of His Will, and through the fire of tribulation, upon the anvil of this travailing age, and in the particular shape His mind has envisioned, these scattered and mutually destructive fragments into which a perverse world has fallen,*

*into one single unit, solid and indivisible, able to execute His design for the children of men.*

*Ours rather the duty, however confused the scene, however dismal the present outlook, however circumscribed the resources we dispose of, to labor serenely, confidently, and unremittingly to lend our share of assistance, in whichever way circumstances may enable us, to the operation of the forces which, as marshalled and directed by Bahá'u'lláh, are leading humanity out of the valley of misery and shame to the loftiest summits of power and glory. (PDC 202–4)*

#### **L. Citadel of Faith**

This 158-page compilation of messages addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States was first published after the Guardian's death, in 1965. It includes 121 messages, some as letters, and others in cable form, sent over a period of 10 years between 1947 and 1957. Thirty-nine are cables sent on the occasion of the passing of outstanding believers. Apart from these specific communications, the bulk of Shoghi Effendi's messages deal with the duties and responsibilities facing the community of the Great Republic of the West. The preface summarizes the content of the volume as a description, in 'challenging terms', of the world mission of the American Bahá'ís, 'reminding them of their spiritual primacy as the trustees and executors of the Divine Plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and reinforcing that primacy with the mysterious power of accomplishment inherent in his words of encouragement and exhortation' (CF v).

The longest letter is 34 pages in length, and was separately published under the title of *The Challenging Requirements of the Present Hour*. Six others are from 8 to 12 pages long. In these messages Shoghi Effendi explains in great detail the needs and challenges of the second Seven Year Plan, sees a parallel between the processes propelling the American Bahá'í com-

munity and the American Republic itself, draws the attention of the friends to the inevitability of tribulations, crises and trials, impresses upon the friends the importance of supporting the international and national funds, reminds them of the promises of divine blessings as stated in the utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, appeals to them to scale nobler heights of heroism, and finally advises them to have a period of austerity, curtailing some of their activities in order to divert contributions to the Temple Fund. In this volume we read about the significance of the Shrine of the Báb and the construction of its superstructure, and learn of the disaffection of members of Shoghi Effendi’s family and their passing out from under the shadow of the Cause. Emphasis is laid on the continuous extension of the teaching work, the need of Europe for a flow of devoted pioneers, and on the urgency of supporting the teaching undertakings in Africa, while the friends are reminded that priority should be given to the announced goals and objectives of the Ten Year Crusade.

The Guardian underlines the fact that the American Bahá’í community will face perils, trials and crises stemming from such internal issues as racial prejudice, as well as conflicts on the world scene. He relates the premeditated campaign of persecution against the Persian Bahá’ís, and portrays it as a blessing in disguise, aiding the proclamation of the Faith worldwide. In these pages we also read about the irreplaceable contribution of the individual believer, and the need for personal consecration and dedication to the pressing tasks facing the community. Shoghi Effendi assures the friends that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *‘watchful care and unfailing grace [will] continue to sustain them, individually and collectively’* (CF 158).

Some more quotations from this important compilation are included below:

*A continent [Europe], twice blessed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s successive visits to its shores, and the scene of His first public appearance in the West; which has been the cradle of a*

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*civilization to some of whose beneficent features the pen of Bahá'u'lláh has paid significant tribute; on whose soil both the Greek and Roman civilizations were born and flourished; which has contributed so richly to the unfoldment of American civilization; the fountainhead of American culture; the mother of Christendom, and the scene of the greatest exploits of the followers of Jesus Christ; in some of whose outlying territories have been won some of the most resplendent victories which ushered in the Golden Age of Islám; which sustained, in its very heart, the violent impact of the onrushing hosts of that Faith, intent on the subjugation of its cities, but which refused to bend the knee to its invaders, and succeeded in the end in repulsing their assault – such a continent is now experiencing, at the hands of the little as yet unnoticed band of pioneers sent forth by the enviable, the privileged, the dynamic American Bahá'í Community, the first stirrings of that spiritual revolution which must culminate, in the Golden Age that is as yet unborn, in the permanent establishment of Bahá'u'lláh's Order throughout that continent. (CF 26–7)*

*Indeed if we would read aright the signs of the times, and appraise correctly the significances of contemporaneous events that are impelling forward both the American Bahá'í Community and the nation of which it forms a part on the road leading them to their ultimate destiny, we cannot fail to perceive the workings of two simultaneous processes, generated as far back as the concluding years of the Heroic Age of our Faith, each clearly defined, each distinctly separate, yet closely related and destined to culminate, in the fullness of time, in a single glorious consummation.*

*One of these processes is associated with the mission of the American Bahá'í Community, the other with the destiny of the American nation. The one serves directly the interests of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the*

*other promotes indirectly the institutions that are to be associated with the establishment of His World Order. The first process dates back to the revelation of those stupendous Tablets constituting the Charter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan. It was held in abeyance for well-nigh twenty years while the fabric of an indispensable Administrative Order, designed as a divinely appointed agency for the operation of that Plan, was being constructed. It registered its initial success with the triumphant conclusion of the first stage of its operation in the republics of the Western Hemisphere. It signaled the opening of the second phase of its development through the inauguration of the present teaching campaign in the European continent. It must pass into the third stage of its evolution with the initiation of the third Seven Year Plan, designed to culminate in the establishment of the structure of the Administrative Order in all the remaining sovereign states and chief dependencies of the globe. It must reach the end of the first epoch in its evolution with the fulfilment of the prophecy mentioned by Daniel in the last chapter of His Book, related to the year 1335, and associated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the world triumph of the Faith of His Father. It will be consummated through the emergence of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth in the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation.*

*The other process dates back to the outbreak of the First World War that threw the great republic of the West into the vortex of the first stage of a world upheaval. It received its initial impetus through the formulation of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, closely associating for the first time that republic with the fortunes of the Old World. It suffered its first setback through the dissociation of that republic from the newly born League of Nations which that president had labored to create. It acquired added momentum through the outbreak of the second World War, inflicting unprecedented suffering on that republic, and involving it still further in the*

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*affairs of all the continents of the globe. It was further reinforced through the declaration embodied in the Atlantic Charter, as voiced by one of its chief progenitors, Franklin D. Roosevelt. It assumed a definite outline through the birth of the United Nations at the San Francisco Conference. It acquired added significance through the choice of the City of the Covenant itself as the seat of the newly born organization, through the declaration recently made by the American president related to his country's commitments in Greece and Turkey, as well as through the submission to the General Assembly of the United Nations of the thorny and challenging problem of the Holy Land, the spiritual as well as the administrative center of the World Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. It must, however long and tortuous the way, lead, through a series of victories and reverses, to the political unification of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, to the emergence of a world government and the establishment of the Lesser Peace, as foretold by Bahá'u'lláh and foreshadowed by the Prophet Isaiah. It must, in the end, culminate in the unfurling of the banner of the Most Great Peace, in the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh. (CF 31-3)*

*The champion builders of Bahá'u'lláh's rising World Order must scale nobler heights of heroism as humanity plunges into greater depths of despair, degradation, dissension and distress. Let them forge ahead into the future serenely confident that the hour of their mightiest exertions and the supreme opportunity for their greatest exploits must coincide with the apocalyptic upheaval marking the lowest ebb in mankind's fast-declining fortunes. (CF 58)*

*As the threat of still more violent convulsions assailing a travailing age increases, and the wings of yet another conflict, destined to contribute a distinct, and perhaps a*

*decisive, share to the birth of the new Order which must signalize the advent of the Lesser Peace, darken the international horizon, the eyes of the divers communities, comprising the body of the organized followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the Eastern Hemisphere, are being increasingly fixed upon the progressive unfoldment of the tasks which the executors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Mandate have been summoned to undertake in the course of the second stage of their world-girdling mission. (CF 58)*

*[N]othing short of the vitalizing influx of new blood [winning fresh recruits to the Faith] . . . can safeguard the prizes [already won] . . .*

*This flow, moreover, will presage and hasten the advent of the day which, as prophesied by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, will witness the entry by troops of peoples of divers nations and races into the Bahá'í world – a day which, viewed in its proper perspective, will be the prelude to that long-awaited hour when a mass conversion on the part of these same nations and races, and as a direct result of a chain of events, momentous and possibly catastrophic in nature, and which cannot as yet be even dimly visualized, will suddenly revolutionize the fortunes of the Faith, derange the equilibrium of the world, and reinforce a thousandfold the numerical strength as well as the material power and the spiritual authority of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. (CF 117)*

*The steady and alarming deterioration in the standard of morality as exemplified by the appalling increase of crime, by political corruption in ever widening and ever higher circles, by the loosening of the sacred ties of marriage, by the inordinate craving for pleasure and diversion, and by the marked and progressive slackening of parental control, is no doubt the most arresting and distressing aspect of the decline*

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*that has set in, and can be clearly perceived, in the fortunes of the entire nation. (CF 124)*

*Parallel with this, and pervading all departments of life – an evil which the nation, and indeed all those within the capitalist system, though to a lesser degree, share with that state and its satellites regarded as the sworn enemies of that system – is the crass materialism, which lays excessive and ever-increasing emphasis on material well-being, forgetful of those things of the spirit on which alone a sure and stable foundation can be laid for human society. It is this same cancerous materialism, born originally in Europe, carried to excess in the North American continent, contaminating the Asiatic peoples and nations, spreading its ominous tentacles to the borders of Africa, and now invading its very heart, which Bahá'u'lláh in unequivocal and emphatic language denounced in His Writings, comparing it to a devouring flame and regarding it as the chief factor in precipitating the dire ordeals and world-shaking crises that must necessarily involve the burning of cities and the spread of terror and consternation in the hearts of men. Indeed a foretaste of the devastation which this consuming fire will wreak upon the world, and with which it will lay waste the cities of the nations participating in this tragic world-engulfing contest, has been afforded by the last World War, marking the second stage in the global havoc which humanity, forgetful of its God and heedless of the clear warnings uttered by His appointed Messenger for this day, must, alas, inevitably experience. It is this same all-pervasive, pernicious materialism against which the voice of the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant was raised, with pathetic persistence, from platform and pulpit, in His addresses to the heedless multitudes, which, on the morrow of His fateful visit to both Europe and America, found themselves suddenly swept into the vortex of*



*a tempest which in its range and severity was unsurpassed in the world's history. (CF 124–5)*

*No less serious is the stress and strain imposed on the fabric of American society through the fundamental and persistent neglect, by the governed and governors alike, of the supreme, the inescapable and urgent duty – so repeatedly and graphically represented and stressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His arraignment of the basic weaknesses in the social fabric of the nation – of remedying, while there is yet time, through a revolutionary change in the concept and attitude of the average white American toward his Negro fellow citizen, a situation which, if allowed to drift, will, in the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cause the streets of American cities to run with blood, aggravating thereby the havoc which the fearful weapons of destruction, raining from the air, and amassed by a ruthless, a vigilant, a powerful and inveterate enemy, will wreak upon those same cities. (CF 126)*

*This challenge [the requirements of the Ten Year Plan], so severe and insistent, and yet so glorious, faces no doubt primarily the individual believer on whom, in the last resort, depends the fate of the entire community. He it is who constitutes the warp and woof on which the quality and pattern of the whole fabric must depend. He it is who acts as one of the countless links in the mighty chain that now girdles the globe. He it is who serves as one of the multitude of bricks which support the structure and insure the stability of the administrative edifice now being raised in every part of the world. Without his support, at once whole-hearted, continuous and generous, every measure adopted, and every plan formulated, by the body which acts as the national representative of the community to which he belongs, is foredoomed to failure. The World Center of the Faith itself is paralyzed if such a support on the part of the rank and file of*

*the community is denied it. The Author of the Divine Plan Himself is impeded in His purpose if the proper instruments for the execution of His design are lacking. The sustaining strength of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, the Founder of the Faith, will be withheld from every and each individual who fails in the long run to arise and play his part. (CF 130–1)*

**M. Messages to the Bahá'í World (1950–1957)**

This 175-page compilation contains 82 messages of the beloved Guardian from 25 April 1950 till October 1957. The volume is divided into two parts. From page 131 onwards, additional messages have been included under the title 'Supplementary Collection'. Shoghi Effendi started his practice of sending one major message to all the Bahá'í Conventions in April 1950. The longer messages were sent after the inauguration of the Ten Year Crusade in 1953, and progressed incrementally in length, from 7 pages in April 1954 to 19 pages in April 1957. At times he would send a further brief message to some National Assemblies for their Conventions, if he felt the need to bring certain specific points to their attention in the areas under their jurisdiction.

A list of major subjects covered in these messages to the Bahá'í world follows:

- Formation of the first International Bahá'í Council
- Inception of the institution of the Hands of the Cause, in accordance with the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, through the appointment of several contingents
- Acquisition of property on Mount Carmel and in Bahjí
- Review of the world progress of the Faith
- Preparing the international Bahá'í community for a world-encircling plan, and the subsequent launching of the Ten Year Plan
- The inauguration of the Holy Year, October 1952–October 1953

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- Announcement of the convocation of four inter-continental conferences
- Establishment of a Roll of Honour for the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh
- Progress reports on the construction and completion of the Shrine of the Báb
- The opposition of Covenant-breakers and the eventual frustration of their efforts
- The initiation of the construction of the International Archives Building
- Data regarding the plans for the construction of the Temples in Frankfurt, Kampala and Sydney
- Persecution of the Bahá'ís in Persia
- Victories won in Africa and the Pacific
- Announcement of another series of five intercontinental conferences at the midway point of the Ten Year Crusade
- Reopening the doors of pilgrimage in May 1951
- Messages to the five intercontinental conferences
- The ten parts or stages of the social and spiritual evolution of mankind leading to the diffusion, penetration and suffusion of the light and warmth of God's Revelation in human society
- Future opposition to the Faith.

The messages in this volume, particularly those dated during the last years and months of Shoghi Effendi's life, represent his last wishes to the friends, and voice his incessant and earnest call on them to vigilantly protect the Cause, vigorously promote its interests, and steadfastly, unitedly and selflessly maintain the tempo and indeed increase the momentum of their endeavours in the path of their love for the Blessed Beauty.

A few excerpts from these soul-stirring messages are included below:

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*No matter how long the period that separates them from ultimate victory; however arduous the task; however formidable the exertions demanded of them; however dark the days which mankind, perplexed and sorely-tried, must, in its hour of travail, traverse; however severe the tests with which they who are to redeem its fortunes will be confronted; however afflictive the darts which their present enemies, as well as those whom Providence, will, through His mysterious dispensations raise up from within or from without, may rain upon them, however grievous the ordeal of temporary separation from the heart and nerve-center of their Faith which future unforeseeable disturbances may impose upon them, I adjure them, by the precious blood that flowed in such great profusion, by the lives of the unnumbered saints and heroes who were immolated, by the supreme, the glorious sacrifice of the Prophet-Herald of our Faith, by the tribulations which its Founder, Himself, willingly underwent, so that His Cause might live, His Order might redeem a shattered world and its glory might suffuse the entire planet – I adjure them, as this solemn hour draws nigh, to resolve never to flinch, never to hesitate, never to relax, until each and every objective in the Plans to be proclaimed, at a later date, has been fully consummated. (MBW 38–9)*

*It is indeed my fervent and constant prayer that the members of this firmly-knit, intensely alive, world-embracing Community, spurred on by the triple impulse generated through the revelation of the Tablet of Carmel by Bahá'u'lláh and the Will and Testament as well as the Tablets of the Divine Plan bequeathed by the Center of His Covenant – the three Charters which have set in motion three distinct processes, the first operating in the Holy Land for the development of the institutions of the Faith at its World Center and the other two, throughout the rest of the Bahá'í world, for its propagation and the establishment of its Administrative*

*Order – may advance from strength to strength and victory to victory. May they hasten, by their present exertions, the advent of that blissful consummation when the shackles hampering the growth of their beloved Faith will have been finally burst asunder, when its independent status will have been officially and universally recognized, when it will have ascended the throne and wielded the scepter of spiritual and temporal authority, when the brightness of its glory will have illuminated the whole earth, and its dominion will have been established over the entire planet. (MBW 84–5)*

*Against the background of these afflictive disturbances – the turmoil and tribulations of a travailing age – we may well ponder the portentous prophecies uttered well-nigh fourscore years ago, by the Author of our Faith, as well as the dire predictions made by Him Who is the unerring Interpreter of His teachings, all foreshadowing a universal commotion, of a scope and intensity unparalleled in the annals of mankind. (MBW 103)*

*The violent derangement of the world's equilibrium; the trembling that will seize the limbs of mankind; the radical transformation of human society; the rolling up of the present-day Order; the fundamental changes affecting the structure of government; the weakening of the pillars of religion; the rise of dictatorships; the spread of tyranny; the fall of monarchies; the decline of ecclesiastical institutions; the increase of anarchy and chaos; the extension and consolidation of the Movement of the Left; the fanning into flame of the smouldering fire of racial strife; the development of infernal engines of war; the burning of cities; the contamination of the atmosphere of the earth – these stand out as the signs and portents that must either herald or accompany the retributive calamity which, as decreed by Him Who is the Judge and Redeemer of mankind, must,*

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*sooner or later, afflict a society which, for the most part, and for over a century, has turned a deaf ear to the Voice of God's Messenger in this day – a calamity which must purge the human race of the dross of its age-long corruptions, and weld its component parts into a firmly-knit world-embracing Fellowship – a Fellowship destined, in the fullness of time, to be incorporated in the framework, and to be galvanized by the spiritualizing influences, of a mysteriously expanding, divinely appointed Order, and to flower, in the course of future Dispensations, into a Civilization, the like of which mankind has, at no stage in its evolution, witnessed. (MBW 103)*

*This present Crusade, on the threshold of which we now stand, will, moreover, by virtue of the dynamic forces it will release and its wide repercussions over the entire surface of the globe, contribute effectually to the acceleration of yet another process of tremendous significance which will carry the steadily evolving Faith of Bahá'u'lláh through its present stages of obscurity, of repression, of emancipation and of recognition – stages one or another of which Bahá'í national communities in various parts of the world now find themselves in – to the stage of establishment, the stage at which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh will be recognized by the civil authorities as the state religion, similar to that which Christianity entered in the years following the death of the Emperor Constantine, a stage which must later be followed by the emergence of the Bahá'í state itself, functioning, in all religious and civil matters, in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy, the Mother-Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, a stage which, in the fullness of time, will culminate in the establishment of the World Bahá'í Commonwealth, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, and which will signalize the long-awaited advent of the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth – the*

*Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh – mirroring however faintly upon this humble handful of dust the glories of the Abhá Kingdom.*

*This final and crowning stage in the evolution of the plan wrought by God Himself for humanity will, in turn, prove to be the signal for the birth of a world civilization, incomparable in its range, its character and potency, in the history of mankind – a civilization which posterity will, with one voice, acclaim as the fairest fruit of the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, and whose rich harvest will be garnered during future dispensations destined to succeed one another in the course of the five thousand century Bahá'í Cycle. (MBW 155)*

## **N. Sundry compilations of letters to divers national communities**

### *1. United Kingdom*

This impressive volume of messages, letters and cables of the Guardian to the Bahá'ís of the British Isles was first published in 1981 under the title of *Unfolding Destiny*. The title page, however, gives a fuller designation: *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community*. This compilation runs to over 430 pages of communications dating from 1922 to 1957. The letters have been arranged in six categories in the following order:

- From 1922 to 1944 (the early years)
- From 1944 to 1950 (covering the Six Year Plan)
- From 1950 to 1953 (the Africa Plan)
- From 1953 to 1957 (the Ten Year Crusade)
- Letters to Local Assemblies
- Excerpts from letters to individuals

These messages show the deep love that Shoghi Effendi cherished in his heart for the British Bahá'í community. It was to

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the United Kingdom that the Master sent his beloved grandson for study at Oxford; it was there, during his time as a student at Oxford, that Shoghi Effendi associated with the friends as a member of their community – the only community of which he was a member outside the World Centre; and it was in that selfsame country that he heard about the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and learned of his appointment as Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith. The messages abound with praises of the sterling qualities of the British Bahá’ís and unfold the glorious destiny lying ahead of them.

The first collective teaching undertaking in the United Kingdom was the Six Year Plan, which was executed and completed with singular success. It was a Plan which was characterized by Shoghi Effendi as a ‘*signal victory*’, which ‘*shed lustre on the opening years of the second Bahá’í century*’. The second crown won by the British Bahá’í community during Shoghi Effendi’s lifetime was the formulation and execution of the Two Year Africa Plan. The Guardian singled out the British National Assembly to be the coordinating body of four other National Assemblies, to open countries and establish the machinery of the administration of the Faith in lands south of the Sahara. This plan likewise ended with resounding success.

A few quotations from this wonderful compilation follow:

*I wish to congratulate in person the English believers, and particularly the members of the youth group, on their splendid achievements. The activities they have initiated, the perseverance, zeal and fidelity they have increasingly manifested, the plans they have conceived and the obstacles they have already overcome, rejoice my heart and arouse fresh hopes and expectations within me. I will continue to pray for their success. Rest assured and persevere. (17 October 1936, UD 110–1)*



*The marvellous zeal, unity, understanding and devotion exemplified by the English believers in recent months, individually as well as through their concentrated efforts, constitute a landmark in the progressive development of the Faith in that land. They who have risen to the height of their present opportunities stand at the threshold of unprecedented achievements. They must labour continually, exercise the utmost vigilance, proclaim courageously, and cling tenaciously to the principles of their Faith, spiritual as well as administrative, and resolve to endure every sacrifice and hardship, however severe, for the vindication, the consolidation and recognition of the Faith they profess and are now so admirably serving. (27 November 1938, UD 123 )*

*The various and compelling evidences of the unquenchable enthusiasm, the unbreakable resolution and the inflexible purpose of the English believers, in these days of stress, of turmoil and danger, have cheered my heart and fortified me in the discharge of my arduous and multitudinous duties and responsibilities. I feel truly proud of them all, and will, with increasing gratitude and redoubled fervour, supplicate the Beloved whose Cause they are so valiantly serving, to bless, sustain, guide and protect them under all circumstances, and aid them to establish firmly the institutions of His Faith throughout the length and breadth of their country. (7 December 1939, UD 134–5)*

*The Bahá'í world, in its entirety, is struck with amazement at the quality of the work performed, at the extent and number of the victories achieved by this community. Its sister-community in the great Republic of the West, already laden with many and splendid trophies gathered in distant fields and over a long period of time cannot regard this resurgence of the Bahá'í spirit, this manifestation of Bahá'í solidarity, these ennobling evidences of Bahá'í achievement, amidst so*

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*conservative a people, within so short a time, under such trying circumstances, and by so small a band of workers, except with feelings compounded of envy, of admiration and respect. Its sister-communities throughout the East, venerable by reason of their age, and the sacrifices they have made, and fully aware of the long period of incubation this community has undergone, recall, with feelings of delight, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prediction, forecasting the germination, at their appointed time, of the potent seeds His loving hands have sown in the course of His twice-repeated visit to that Island, and marvel at the rapidity with which its soil is now manifesting the potentialities with which it has been endowed. He Who blessed it with His footsteps, Who called into being, and fostered the growth of, the community labouring in that Island, hails, from His station on high, the exploits which immortalise the small band of His present-day consecrated and resolute followers, who are carrying on the torch which He Himself had entrusted to their immediate predecessors. Bahá'u'lláh Himself lauds the conspicuous victories being won in His Name, in the dawning years of the Second Bahá'í Century, at the very heart and centre of the greatest Empire the world has ever seen, whose Sovereign Monarch He Himself had addressed and whose deeds He, with His Own pen, had commended. (9 April 1949, UD 226–7)*

*On the success of this enterprise [the Africa Plan 1951–3], unprecedented in its scope, unique in its character and immense in its spiritual potentialities, must depend the initiation, at a later period in the Formative Age of the Faith, of undertakings embracing within their range all National Assemblies functioning throughout the Bahá'í World, undertakings constituting in themselves a prelude to the launching of world-wide enterprises destined to be embarked upon, in future epochs of that same Age, by the Universal*

*House of Justice, that will symbolise the unity and coordinate and unify the activities of these National Assemblies.*

*Indeed the birth of this African enterprise, in the opening decade of the second Bahá'í century, coinciding as it does with the formation of the International Bahá'í Council, should be acclaimed as an event of peculiar significance in the evolution of our beloved Faith. Both events will, no doubt, be hailed by posterity as simultaneous and compelling evidences of the irresistible unfoldment of a divinely appointed Administrative Order and of the development, on an international scale, of its subsidiary agencies, heralding the establishment of the Supreme Legislative Body designed to crown the Administrative Edifice now being laboriously erected by the privileged builders of a Divine Order, whose features have been delineated by the Centre of the Covenant in His Will and Testament, whose fundamental laws have been revealed by the Founder of our Faith in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and Whose advent has been foreshadowed by the Herald of the Bahá'í Dispensation in the Bayán, His most weighty Book. (25 February 1951, UD 261)*

*That they may ascend from height to height, go forward from victory to victory, is the fervent prayer of one who has invariably followed the course of their exploits with undiminished confidence and admiration, who has cherished the brightest hopes for the ultimate attainment of their Mission, and whose love and esteem for them has correspondingly increased with every revelation of the capacities and energies with which they have discharged, and are constantly discharging, their Mission. (17 June 1954, UD 340)*

*Now, of a certainty, is not the time for the members of this gallant band [the British Bahá'í community], so thinly spread over the length and breadth of its island home, and reaching out, so laboriously yet so determinedly to the*

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*inhospitable islands fringing its northern and western coasts, to dwell, however tentatively, on the nature of the tantalising task awaiting them in the not distant future, or to seek to probe into its mysterious, divinely guided operation. Theirs is the duty to plod on, however tedious the nature of the work demanding their immediate attention, however formidable the obstacles involved in its proper execution, however prolonged the effort which its success necessitates, until the signs of its ultimate consummation, heralding the launching of what is sure to be the most spectacular phase of their Mission, are clearly discerned. (30 August 1957, UD 385 )*

#### 2. Indian subcontinent

A compilation of the letters of Shoghi Effendi to the Indian subcontinent was published in 1970 under the title of *Dawn of a New Day*. It was revised and enlarged in 1995. The new edition carries the title of *Messages of Shoghi Effendi to the Indian Subcontinent* and consists of 580 letters and cables of the Guardian to the Indian, Pakistani and Burmese Bahá'í communities. These messages cover some 430 pages.

The Indian subcontinent was opened to the Faith during the lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh, when He sent a well-known Persian Bahá'í scholar, Jamál Effendi, to teach the Cause in India and Burma. It is of interest that one of the Báb's Letters of the Living was also Indian in origin. During the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Master showered the Bahá'ís in these lands with His all-embracing love, and must have sent the friends over 700 Tablets. Compared with other communities in the world, apart from Persia, it may be said that by the time Shoghi Effendi assumed the Headship of the Faith in 1921, one of its strongholds was the Indian subcontinent.

The extracts which follow from Shoghi Effendi's letters clearly show the degree of joy and pride that he took in the

Indian Bahá'í community, and detail the responsibilities he laid upon them for the future expansion of the Faith.

*You should concentrate your efforts at the present time on whatever will, in your opinion reinforce the basis, and extend the influence, of the administrative institutions and the teaching activities of the Faith. The Cause will, no doubt, surmount the obstacles that now hinder its growth, and will establish its ascendancy in the fulness of time and at the appointed hour. We should persevere and never feel disheartened. (2 January 1934, MSI 109)*

*The friends in India and Burma have made a splendid start. They have laid a firm foundation within the framework of the administrative order of our Faith. They have weathered manifold and distressing difficulties and successfully surmounted formidable obstacles. A new era is opening before them. I have no doubt that they will rise to the height of the occasion, and will prove themselves worthy of their high destiny. (22 November 1935, MSI 136)*

*The progress of the teaching activities initiated by your Assembly is highly gratifying. Inflexible determination is required to carry it to a successful conclusion. The methods adopted by the American Bahá'í community, the zeal, the initiative, the efficiency, the fidelity with which they are prosecuting their enterprise should be exemplified by individuals and Assemblies in India and Burma. The administrative machinery which the American believers have erected and perfected has already had its counterpart in the institutions you have so nobly reared in recent years. Your teaching campaign, the supreme purpose for which this machinery has been fashioned, should likewise be modelled according to the plan which your sister community has*

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*devised and is now developing so strenuously and successfully.* (7 November 1936, MSI 150)

*I am delighted to learn of the work which is being steadily and efficiently accomplished in so many spheres of Bahá'í activity throughout India and Burma. My heart is filled with gratitude as I witness the progress you have achieved, the enterprises you have initiated, the method and measures you have adopted, the plans you have conceived, and above all, the spirit of exemplary loyalty and magnificent devotion that impels you forward in the great mission you are destined to fulfil.* (28 February 1937, MSI 156)

*Let them remember that a firm resolution on their part, an absolute re-dedication of their resources, and an actual attempt to translate into action their meritorious intentions, coupled with perseverance in the discharge of their duties, would suffice to ensure the success of the mission to which they are now committed. The time is indeed ripe, and the minds and hearts of the suffering multitudes are being mysteriously prepared for the Great Message that can alone redeem, exalt and regenerate a sore tried and bewildered humanity. I will specially and fervently pray for the success of any and every effort the dearly beloved friends in India and Burma may arise to exert.* (28 November 1940, MSI 191–2)

*The vastness of the field, the smallness of your numbers, the indifference of the masses, must neither discourage nor appal you. You should at all times fix your gaze on the promise of Bahá'u'lláh, put your whole trust in His creative Word, recall the past and manifold evidences of His all-encompassing and resistless power, and arise to become worthy and exemplary recipients of His all-sustaining grace and blessings. I appeal to every Indian and Burmese believer,*

*however modest his position, however limited his knowledge, however restricted his means, to rise to the height of this great opportunity which if missed will not recur again. To disperse, to settle, to teach by word and deed, to persevere and sacrifice are the requirements of the present hour (29 June 1941, MSI 203).*

*The manner in which the friends have arisen to promote the teaching work throughout their country merits the highest praise. By their enthusiasm, their self-abnegation, the determination and vigour they display, they have lent a fresh impetus to the onward march of the Faith and the expansion of its institutions and the multiplication of its administrative centres. The perils of the present hour, the repercussions of this tremendous world ordeal on their native land, must, in no wise, alarm or discourage them. Their purpose must never be deflected, their enthusiasm never dimmed, their vision never obscured, their exertions never discontinued. Adversity prepares the hearts of men, and paves the way for a wholehearted and general acceptance of the tenets and claims of our beloved Faith. Challenged by the obstacles in their path, encouraged by work already initiated, assured of the Divine Promise of Bahá'u'lláh, let them forge ahead until their goal is attained. (27 December 1941, MSI 211)*

*Perseverance is the magnet that will, in these days, attract the promised blessings of the almighty Author of our beloved Faith. Unity and harmony constitute the basis on which the structure of these activities can securely rest. Self-sacrifice, audacity, undeviating adherence to the essentials of that Faith, will reinforce that structure and accelerate its rise. That the dear friends in India are increasingly demonstrating the quality and depth of their faith and the character and range of their accomplishments is a source of intense*

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*satisfaction to me, and I will continue to supplicate our Beloved to guide their steps, cheer their hearts, illumine their understanding, and fulfil their highest and noblest aspirations. He indeed is well-pleased with the record of their past services, and will, if they redouble their efforts, enable them to achieve a signal victory. (27 June 1942, MSI 220)*

*The call is urgent, the opportunities priceless, the need of the waiting masses desperate, the machinery for the execution of the Divine Purpose already erected and vigorously functioning, the promise of signal victory clear and definite. A higher degree of administrative efficiency; a closer collaboration between the various elements constituting the organic Bahá'í community; a greater measure of self-sacrifice; a still more intensified exertion aiming at the consolidation and preservation of the newly constituted Assemblies and the rapid conversion of the existing groups into full-fledged Assemblies; a systematic, sustained and nation-wide endeavour for the purpose of disseminating the literature of the Faith, increasing its volume and adding to its diversity, and lastly a more audacious and convincing presentation of its tenets to the masses of the people, these constitute the primary tasks facing now the Indian believers. (20 December 1944, MSI 254)*

*The hour is indeed propitious. The ordeals and tribulations which the hungry, the dispossessed, the sick, as well as the disillusioned and restless multitudes, are now experiencing, offer the bearers of the Message of the Most Great Name, an opportunity which may never again recur. There is no time to lose. Every warrior in the ever-advancing army of Bahá-'u'lláh must arise and participate in this holy crusade. The rewards and prizes to be won are inestimable. However circumscribed its resources, however small its numbers,*



*however formidable the obstacles with which it is confronted, the entire community of the believers in India, Burma, and Pakistan, must arise as one man, and, pledging anew its fidelity to its Faith, prove itself fully worthy of the Cause it has espoused and the high mission it has undertaken. (24 October 1947, MSI 289)*

*The Asiatic continent, the cradle of the principal religions of mankind; the home of so many of the oldest and mightiest civilizations which have flourished on this planet; the crossways of so many kindreds and races; the battleground of so many peoples and nations; above whose horizon, in modern times, the suns of two independent Revelations – the promise and consummation of a six thousand-year-old religious Cycle – have successively arisen; where the Authors of both of these Revelations suffered banishment and died; within whose confines the Centre of a divinely-appointed Covenant was born, endured a forty-year incarceration and passed away; on whose Western extremity the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world has been definitely established; in whose heart the City proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh as the 'Mother of the World' (Tehran) is enshrined; within whose borders another City regarded as the 'Cynosure of an adoring world' (Baghdád) and the scene of the greatest and most glorious Revelation the world has witnessed is embosomed; on whose soil so many saints, heroes and martyrs, associated with both of these Revelations, have lived, struggled and died – such a continent, so privileged among its sister continents and yet so long and so sadly tormented, now stands, at the hour of the launching of a world-encompassing Crusade, on the threshold of an era that may well recall, in its glory and ultimate repercussions, the great periods of spiritual revival which, from the dawn of recorded history have, at various stages in the revelation of God's purpose for mankind, illuminated the path of the human race. (October 1953, MSI 356)*

### 3. *Germany and Austria*

The National Spiritual Assembly of Germany published two compilations, in 1982 and 1985 respectively, of letters of the beloved Guardian to Bahá'í communities and to individual believers in Germany and Austria. The first volume is in two parts, from 1922 to 1939, when the Second World War broke out, and from November 1945 to the end of Shoghi Effendi's ministry. A similar pattern is found in volume two of the compilations. The reason for the gap from 1939 to 1945 is, of course, due to the fact that the Nazi regime had officially banned the Bahá'í Faith in both Germany and Austria, and all communications with the World Centre were cut off.

During the last 12 years of his ministry, Shoghi Effendi not only inspired the scattered Bahá'ís in Germany to resume their Bahá'í activities, but enabled them to re-form their National Spiritual Assembly, embark on a teaching plan, and finally become one of the twelve '*generals*' of the Ten Year Crusade. Two of the messages he sent were each nine pages long, addressed to the National Assembly, and were written during the Ten Year Plan. Letters to individual believers were shorter and mostly consisted of encouragement to them in their teaching and administrative endeavours.

Extracts from these compilations follow below:

*The time is sure to come and the signs are already apparent, when the various and distant members of this great world community will find their activities co-ordinated, their purpose unified, their efforts re-inforced and the effect of their combined efforts manifest throughout the world. May the Power of Bahá'u'lláh breathe the dynamic spirit of Life into the combined and systematized efforts of the friends the world over and revive through them the body of stricken*

*humanity and give it the peace which it yearns for and which the world cannot give. (19 January 1923, LDG Vol. 1, 11–2)*

*Why fear and sorrow? Have we not the express promise of the Master, uttered after the termination of the Great War, that Germany, now humbled and weakened, will no doubt be freed from its fetters and will develop, materially and spiritually, and shall one day emerge from this sad turmoil strong, united and prosperous, ready to take her place in the great Family of the advanced nations of the world? (16 February 1923, LDG Vol. 1, 12–13)*

*Let us then take heart, and endeavour to deepen in spirit, to reinforce our numbers, so that, however depressing and distracting the conditions around us may be, we may persevere, with clear vision, steadfast hope, and united effort to achieve the triumph of the Bahá'í Revelation throughout the world.*

*I am eagerly awaiting the news you may wish to send me, for I thirst after the glad tidings of the progress of the Cause in your mighty and promising land. (31 December 1923, LDG Vol. 1, 18)*

*I wish to add a few words in person and assure you of my keen and heartfelt appreciation of your high and painstaking endeavours for the spread and consolidation of the Faith in that land. The German believers have undergone tests of unprecedented severity. They have weathered the storm in a marvellous spirit and with fine and praiseworthy determination. These tests were God-sent, and will serve to deepen the roots of the Faith in that promising country. (24 February 1932, LDG Vol. 1, 40–1)*

*My heart rejoiced and my soul was refreshed at the receipt of your most welcome message, signed by so great a number*

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*of ardent and youthful co-workers in a land so rich in promise, so blessed by our Beloved, and so severely tried by the vicissitudes of war. You are, I assure you, often in my thoughts and prayers, and I cherish the brightest hopes for your future work. You are, I feel confident, destined to achieve memorable victories, both in your native land and on the continent of Europe, and you should diligently and unitedly prepare yourselves for this glorious task. Persevere, redouble your efforts, and rest assured that the Beloved will bless and sustain you always. (4 May 1946, LDG Vol. 1, 106)*

*The immediate past, with all its confused issues and unpleasant memories must be entirely forgotten, if the task that lies ahead is to be efficiently prosecuted. Personal animosities, suspicions, accusations, wounded pride, controversial issues must all be laid aside. Members of assemblies, national and local, must be the first to set a worthy example to their fellow-believers. All thought and discussion must henceforth centre around the measures required to stimulate the growth of the Faith, to deepen and enrich the spiritual life of its members, to familiarize them more intimately with the character and workings of the Administrative Order, and enable them to participate more actively in the prosecution of the Plan to which they are committed. (30 June 1949, LDG Vol. 1, 155–6)*

*I appeal to them, with all my heart, to close their ranks, purge their hearts, broaden their vision, renew their determination, rededicate themselves to their glorious task, march resolutely forward along the road traced for them by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, beat down every barrier obstructing their path, and press on, confidently, unitedly and uncompromisingly, until their goal is attained, and the first stage in the*

*evolution of their collective task is brought to a victorious conclusion. (30 June 1949, LDG Vol. 1, 156)*

*Time is running out. The work they [the German and Austrian Bahá'í communities] have to accomplish is immense, exacting, thrilling and inescapable. The hosts of the Concourse on high will surely lead them onward and assure them a resounding victory, if they but keep their vision undimmed, if they refuse to faint or falter, if they persevere and remain faithful to both the spiritual and the administrative principles inculcated by their Faith. (30 May 1952, LDG Vol. 1, 186)*

*Theirs is a responsibility which, at this historic and crucial stage in the evolution of their precious and beloved Faith, they can neither minimize nor neglect. theirs is a God-sent opportunity to demonstrate, at this grave hour through which the overwhelming majority of their brethren are passing, the incorruptible character of their faith, the indomitable spirit which animates them, the sublimity of the principles which motivate their action, providing thereby an abiding and sorely needed consolation to the victims of the brutal, the wide spread and repeated persecutions engulfing so many of their co-religionists in the cradle of their Faith. (2 August 1955, LDG Vol. 1, 240)*

#### *4. Australasia*

During the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in response to the Tablets of the Divine Plan, John Henry and Clara Hyde Dunn, Bahá'ís residing in the United States, arrived in Australia, on 18 April 1920. Three years later the first Bahá'í Local Assembly was formed in Melbourne, Victoria under the tutelage of the beloved Guardian. The National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand was formed in 1934, and in 1956 New Zealand

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was able to establish its own independent National Assembly. The collection of letters of Shoghi Effendi published in 1970 consists of 82 messages, all of which carried guidance, encouragement, wise counsel, and assurance of prayers for the growth of the community in these two significant outposts in the Antipodes.

Extracts from these messages are included below:

*The detailed report of the activities of the national assembly – the furthestmost pillar of the Universal House of Justice which the high endeavours of the believers of Australia and New-Zealand have reared – has filled my heart and soul with immense joy and gratitude. The Beloved is surely watching over and continually blessing your splendid accomplishments, the plans you have conceived, the methods you have devised, the efforts you are exerting, the services which you have rendered. I will continue to pray for the consolidation and uninterrupted expansion of your laudable activities in the service of so glorious and mighty a Cause. Never relax nor despair. The tender plant which your hands have raised and nurtured shall grow and will ultimately gather beneath its shadow the whole of that far-off and promising continent. (26 September 1935, LAN 11)*

*Effective measures, unprecedented in scope, should be carefully and immediately devised, proclaimed to the believers, and, through sustained and organised effort, carried into effect. There is no time to lose. The masses, greatly tried by the calamities of the age, restless, disappointed, and eager to obtain real and complete relief in their hour of trial, hunger for the Message of the New Day, and will, if properly approached and appealed to, embrace the great verities it enshrines. (25 May 1946, LAN 62)*

*The limited resources at the disposal of the prosecutors of the Plan, the vastness of the territory in which it must operate, the fewness of the numbers of those participating in its execution, offer a mighty challenge which no loyal follower of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh can either ignore or minimize. Indeed the greater the challenge, the more bountiful the blessings which will be vouchsafed from on high, and the richer the reward to be won by its triumphant executors. (11 May 1948, LAN 71)*

*It is not for them, however, at the present stage of their evolution, to probe into the future, and seek to evaluate the range of their future achievements. They must concentrate every ounce of their energy, and focus their entire attention, on the tasks immediately ahead, resolved to work unremittingly and unflinchingly until the goals of the present Plan are achieved.*

*Whatever the situation that may develop in the years to come, however great the obstacles by which a nascent community may yet be faced, no matter how arduous the task now confronting its members, it must persevere until the historic work is accomplished.*

*I will, from the depths of my heart, supplicate the Beloved to reinforce the noble exertions of this community, guide its steps, clarify its vision, deepen its understanding of the requirements of the present hour, and aid it to extend continually the scope of its meritorious achievements. (11 May 1948, LAN 72)*

*Every outward thrust into new fields, every multiplication of Bahá'í institutions, must be paralleled by a deeper thrust of the roots which sustain the spiritual life of the community and ensure its sound development. From this vital, this ever-present need, attention must at no time be diverted; nor must it be, under any circumstances, neglected, or subordinated to*

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*the no less vital and urgent task of ensuring the outer expansion of Bahá'í administrative institutions. That this community, so alive, so devoted, so strikingly and rapidly developing, may maintain a proper balance between these two essential aspects of its development, and march forward with rapid strides and along sound lines toward the goal of the Plan it has adopted, is the ardent hope of my heart and my constant prayer. (30 December 1948, LAN 76)*

#### 5. Canada

Canada was opened to the Faith in 1902 by Mrs May Maxwell, and blessed by the footsteps of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 10 years later. With its sister national community the United States, it was joint recipient of the Tablets of the Divine Plan. Shoghi Effendi's first letter to the newly-formed Local Spiritual Assembly in Montreal, dated 2 January 1923, reads: *'Though its people be firmly entrenched in their religious sectarianism and strongly attached to their religious doctrines and traditions, yet who can doubt that with courage and persistence, kindness and wisdom, the all-conquering words of Bahá'u'lláh can fail to break down all these barriers of prejudice and religious exclusiveness and conquer this long-standing stronghold of sectarian belief!'* (MC 5).

The first edition of messages to Canada was published in 1965, and had only 30 communications from the Guardian. An enlarged edition appeared in 1999 and consists of 278 letters and cables, running to 170 pages. The revised version is divided into four sections as follows:

- From 1923 to 1937 (the early years)
- From 1937 to 1948 (first teaching plans)
- From 1948 to 1953 (emergence as an independent national community)
- From 1953 to 1957 (Ten Year Crusade)



SHOGHI EFFENDI: THE RANGE AND POWER OF HIS PEN

The Canadian National Spiritual Assembly was formed in 1948 and by 1953, when the Ten Year Crusade was launched, had become one of the national pillars of the Administrative Order. It was thus one of the ‘*twelve generals*’ of the Ten Year Plan. The major messages of Shoghi Effendi to Canada were sent between 1948 and 1957.

Passages from these important letters follow below:

*It behoves us, now that the signs of that glorious and promised Day are fast appearing, to arise, with utter selflessness, unity and determination, to promote and consolidate the Work which He has Himself established in the heart of that vast Dominion [Canada], and prove ourselves, by our wisdom, moderation, and constancy, worthy of the many bestowals He has showered upon us in the past. If we but follow in His Way, regard at all times the dignity of the Cause, guard sedulously its unity and vital principles, and exercise the utmost endeavour to keep its Spirit pure, effective and unobscured, then, and only then, can we hope to achieve the immediate spread and triumph of the Cause. (20 April 1923, MC 9)*

*Obstacles, however formidable, will have to be determinedly surmounted. Any reverses that sooner or later may be suffered should be met with stoic fortitude, and speedily offset by victories in other fields. The glorious vision now unveiled to your eyes must never be dimmed. The illuminating promises enshrined in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablets should not be forgotten for a moment. The quality of the success already achieved by so small a number, over so extensive a field, in so brief a period, at so precarious an hour in the destinies of mankind, should spur on the elected representatives of this now fully fledged community to achieve in as short a period, over still more extensive an area, and despite a severer crisis than any as yet*

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*encountered, victories more abiding in their merit and more conspicuous in their brilliance than any as yet won in the service and for the glory of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. (4 November 1948, MC 109–10)*

*As the operation of the Plan gathers momentum the members of this community must evince a still greater measure of solidarity, rise to higher levels of heroism, demonstrate a greater capacity for collective achievement, and attract still more abundant blessings on the varied enterprises on which they have embarked. (19 June 1949, MC 114–15)*

*That this community will never relax in its high endeavours, that the vision of its glorious mission will not be suffered to be dimmed, that obstacles, however formidable, will neither dampen its zeal or deflect it from its purpose, is my confident hope and earnest prayer. He Who watches over its destinies, from Whose pen testimonies so significant and soul thrilling have flowed, will no doubt continue to direct its steps, to shower upon it His loving bounties, to surround it with His constant care, and to enable it to scale loftier heights on its ascent towards the summit of its destiny.*

*With a heart brimful with gratitude for all that this community has so far achieved, and throbbing with hope for the future exploits that will distinguish its record of stewardship to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, I pray that by its acts, this community will prove itself worthy of the trust confided to its care, and the station to which it has been called. (23 June 1950, MC 131)*

*It was a Canadian [Louis Bourgeois], of French extraction, who through his vision and skill was instrumental in conceiving the design, and delineating the features, of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West, marking the first attempt, however rudimentary, to express the beauty which*

*Bahá'í art will, in its plenitude, unfold to the eyes of the world. It was a Canadian woman [Marion Jack], one of the noblest in the ranks of Bahá'í pioneers, who alone and single-handed, forsook her home, settled among an alien people, braved with a leonine spirit the risks and dangers of the world conflict that raged around her, and who now, at an advanced age and suffering from infirmities, is still holding the Fort and is setting an example, worthy of emulation by all her fellow pioneers of both the East and the West. It was a member [Rúhíyyih Khánum] of that same community who won the immortal distinction of being called upon to be my helpmate, my shield in warding off the darts of Covenant-breakers and my tireless collaborator in the arduous tasks I shoulder. It was a Canadian subject [May Maxwell], the spiritual mother of that same community, who, though fully aware of the risks of the voyage she was undertaking, journeyed as far as the capital of Argentina to serve a Cause that had honoured her so uniquely, and there laid down her life and won the everlasting crown of martyrdom. It was, moreover, a Canadian [William Sutherland Maxwell] who more recently achieved the immortal renown of designing the exquisite shell destined to envelop, preserve and embellish the holy and priceless structure enshrining the dust of the Beloved Founder of our Faith. (1 March 1951, MC 141–2)*

*The opportunity given to this Community is precious, unutterably precious. The fate of this first historic Plan now hangs in the balance. The present chance, if lost, cannot be retrieved. The issues on which hinge the successful prosecution of the Plan are so weighty that none can assess them at present. The needs of a sorely-stricken society, groping in its distress for God's redemptive Message, are growing more acute with every passing hour. The Canadian Bahá'í Community, newly emerged as an independent member of the Bahá'í World Community, so richly blessed through its*

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*elevation to the rank of a chosen prosecutor of a Divine Plan, unique, in many respects, among its sister communities in both Hemispheres in the manifold blessings bestowed upon it, can neither afford to flinch for a moment or hesitate in the discharge of its sacred duty. Every effort exerted by this community, during these fate-laden months, every sacrifice willingly endured by its members, will, if they but persevere, be richly blessed by Him Who brought it into being, Who nursed it through His love, Who conferred upon it so distinguished a Mission, Who made such magnificent promises regarding its future, and Who will continue to sustain it through His unfailing, His abounding grace and favour. (30 October 1951, MC 149)*

*Inspired by the example and the accomplishments of those of its members who have distinguished themselves in the Holy Land, on the European continent and in both the northern and southern continents of the Western Hemisphere, this community must forge on, with added determination, with increasing dedication, with thanksgiving and redoubled zeal, on the road leading it to a still more glorious destiny in the years immediately ahead. That it may press forward, conquer still greater heights, plumb greater depths of consecration, spread wider and wider the fame of the Cause of God is the cherished desire of my heart and the object of my constant supplication. (8 June 1952, MC 160)*

*May this community march forward on its destined path with renewed vigour, with undimmed vision, with complete unity, with utter consecration, and be enabled to play an important part in the execution of the great tasks ahead, and worthily contribute to the prodigious efforts now being collectively exerted by the followers of the Most Great Name, in every continent of the globe, for the world-wide establishment and*

*ultimate triumph of a long-persecuted, divinely impelled, world-redeeming Faith. (15 June 1954, MC 208)*

*The duties incumbent upon this community, and particularly its elected national representatives, multiply with every passing day. Heavy is the burden they carry. Rich and immense are the possibilities stretching before them. Priceless are the rewards which a befitting discharge of their multiple responsibilities must bring in its wake. Boundless are the favours and bestowals which a loving and watchful Providence is ready to confer upon those who will arise to meet the challenge of the present hour. (26 June 1956, MC 244)*

*'Abdu'l-Bahá's prophetic words regarding the future of its [Canada's] homeland, spiritually as well as materially – the initial evidences of which are becoming more apparent every day, must not be lost sight of for a moment, however exacting and all-absorbing the strenuous task ahead, however complex the problems its prosecution involves, however burdensome the preoccupations which it must needs engender. (18 July 1957, MC 267)*

#### 6. New Zealand

This compilation was published in 1982 under the title of *Arohanui*. The literal meaning of this Maori word is 'big love' (or 'much and great love'). In the introduction the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand explains that the title also implies 'enfolding love' or 'that love which builds and carries forward culture or civilization'.

The compilation consists of 79 letters and cables addressed to individuals and institutions in New Zealand. These letters are set out under the following categories:

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- Letters to individuals, June 1923 to April 1926
- Letters to individuals, August 1926 to September 1933
- Letters to individuals, June 1934 to January 1955
- Letters to Bahá'í institutions, March 1926 to September 1957
- Cables to New Zealand, January 1949 to December 1953
- Extracts on various subjects

Passages from these messages are included below:

*Your letters are always a source of inspiring joy and stimulating encouragement to me. You are destined to achieve great things for our beloved Cause and my constant prayer is that your vision may be clear, your purpose unshaken, your zeal undiminished, your hopes undimmed. Let not obstacles and disappointments, which are inevitable, dishearten you and whenever you are faced with trials recall our Beloved's innumerable sufferings. You certainly occupy a warm and abiding place in my heart. (12 August 1926, AR 21)*

*When 'Abdu'l-Bahá says man breaks the laws of nature, He means we shape nature to meet our own needs, as no animal does. Animals adapt themselves to better fit in with and benefit from their environment. But men both surmount and change environment. Likewise when He says nature is devoid of memory He means memory as we have it, not the strange memory of inherited habits which animals so strikingly possess. (Written on his behalf, 7 June 1946, AR 85)*

*May the outpourings of the Holy Spirit continue to energise this small yet resolute forward marching, dedicated community, and may the outcome of the collective efforts of its members contribute decisively to the triumphant consummation of the World Crusade on which the entire body of the*

*followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have so confidently embarked.* (4 April 1957, AR 72)

*All must participate, whether young or old, veterans as well as newly enrolled believers, all must contribute their share to the ultimate success of this mighty collective enterprise, however limited their means, however modest their abilities, however restricted the range of their previous experiences.* (27 June 1957, AR 74–5)

### 7. Alaska

The National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, which was formed at Ridván of the very year that Shoghi Effendi passed away, published in 1976 a compilation of his letters to the friends in Alaska. In the foreword to the book we read the following: ‘[T]his book represents more than a collection of letters from the Guardian of the Cause of God. It shows his tender, loving hand as his vision becomes translated into reality, from virgin territory to teaching area, to pioneer post, to local institutions, to national institutions. It is a view of the master craftsman, shaping a sustained pillar of the Universal House of Justice’ (HE viii–ix).

The letters to individual believers are divided into two sections, one dated 1939 to 1943, and the second 1946 to 1957. The book also reproduces telegrams to pioneers and letters to Bahá'í institutions. There are 80 communications from the Guardian, and an additional 24 messages written on his behalf, but not included under the section of letters to individuals.

Extracts from this compilation are given below:

*I am thrilled by the news you give me. How proud I feel of the spirit that so powerfully animates you. My prayers will, I assure you, accompany you on your great and historic adventure. Persevere no matter how great the obstacles in your way. Future generations will glorify your deed and*

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*emulate your example. The Concourse on high acclaims your resolve and will richly bless your endeavours. Be happy and confident. (HE 4)*

*Your letter cheered and heartened me in the conduct of my arduous duties and responsibilities. I rejoice to learn of your high endeavours in that distant field, and I will specially pray with increasing fervour for your protection and success. How great your privilege, how laborious your task, how noble your mission! Do not feel disheartened. Persevere and be confident always. (HE 5)*

*The endeavours which the highminded, youthful hearted, deeply consecrated members of this community will exert must be such as to excite the unqualified admiration of their fellow believers in Bahá'í communities in both Hemispheres. The sacrifices which must be made will, no doubt, if they rise to this occasion, merit the applause of the Concourse on high and draw forth a still fuller measure of the promised blessings of the Author of the Divine Plan Himself.*

*That the members of this community may neither falter nor fail, that they may set an example worthy of emulation of their fellow-workers in all continents of the globe, that they may achieve such feats, in the course of the attainment of their high objectives, as shall eclipse the past achievements of their spiritual brethren in the North American continent and throughout Latin America, is the object of my constant prayer for them in the Holy Shrines as well as my heart's most cherished desire. (HE 38)*

#### 8. Japan

The first compilation of Shoghi Effendi's messages to Japan was published in 1974 under the title of *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*. It was revised and enlarged in 1992. The revised version begins



with copies of Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Miss Agnes Alexander as well as to Japanese Bahá’ís. This is followed by the major portion of the book, which includes 103 letters and cables of the Guardian, arranged in the following order:

- 46 letters and cables to Miss Agnes Alexander
- 11 letters and cables to the Bahá’ís of Japan
- 2 letters and cables to institutions
- 5 letters and cables to the National Assembly of North-East Asia, with its seat in Japan

These communications from the Guardian quite often remind the friends of the promises given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá of the glorious services that are in store for Japanese believers and the high standards of sustained, vigorous and dedicated effort expected of them in promoting the interests of God’s Holy Faith.

Some extracts follow:

*Now if ever is the time for you and for us to show, by our unity, service, steadfastness and courage, the spirit that the Master has throughout His lifetime so laboriously, so persistently kindled in our hearts. Now is the time for us to prove ourselves worthy of His love for us, His trust in us and His hopes for us. Japan, He said, will turn ablaze. Let us not, in any way, whatsoever, retard the realization of His promise. Nay, let us hasten, through our service, cooperation and efforts the advent of this glorious day. (26 January 1922, JTA 73)*

*Your letters have gladdened my heart and fortified me in my task. I will continue to supplicate for you at His Shrine, that He may graciously assist you to make of those who are merely interested, active supporters of the Faith, recognizing fully the significance and station of Bahá’u’lláh, and who will form a nucleus of believers who will carry on the work,*

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*loyally and effectively after you and in your absence. This is my fervent prayer for you. (21 December 1928, JTA 59)*

*Your past and present services are engraved upon my heart. The Beloved is well-pleased with your constancy, your zeal and exemplary devotion. I am proud of the spirit that so powerfully animates you in His service. I will continue to pray for your success from the bottom of my heart. Rest assured and persevere. (23 September 1935, JTA 64)*

*Bahá'u'lláh wrote, many, many years ago: 'The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it?'*

*This is the ebb of the tide. The Bahá'ís know that the tide will turn and come in, after mankind has suffered, with mighty waves of faith and devotion. The people will enter the Cause of God in troops, and the whole condition will change. The Bahá'ís see this new condition which will take place, as one on the mountain-top sees the first glimpse of the dawn, before others are aware of it; and it is toward this that the Bahá'ís must work. (Written on his behalf, 5 October 1953, JTA 102)*

*. . . The emergence of a new Regional Spiritual Assembly in the North Pacific Area [National Spiritual Assembly of North East Asia, with its seat in Tokyo, Japan] . . . may be said to have, at long last, established a spiritual axis, extending from the Antipodes to the northern islands of the Pacific Ocean – an axis whose northern and southern poles will act as powerful magnets, endowed with exceptional spiritual potency, and towards which younger and less experienced communities will tend for some time to gravitate. (19 July 1957, JTA 89)*

*A responsibility, at once weighty and inescapable, must rest on the communities which occupy so privileged a position in so vast and turbulent an area of the globe. However great the distance that separates them; however much they differ in race, language, custom, and religion; however active the political forces which tend to keep them apart and foster racial and political antagonisms, the close and continued association of these communities . . . is a matter of vital and urgent importance, which should receive on the part of the elected representatives of their communities, a most earnest and prayerful consideration . . . (19 July 1957, JTA 89)*

**O. Letters written on behalf of the Guardian by his secretaries**

When mail was received by Shoghi Effendi, it was his practice to open the letters himself, just in case the material submitted to him was confidential. He would then decide whether to send the answer over his own signature, or use one of his secretaries to convey his thoughts on his behalf. This method was followed in respect to both the East and the West.

The secretaries who served him in this capacity for the correspondence from the West were as follows: Ethel Rosenberg, Dr J.E. Esslemont, Rouhanguiz Rabbani (his sister), Ruhi Afnan, ‘Azizu’lláh Bahádúr, Soheil Afnan, Hussein Rabbani (his brother), Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, the International Bahá’í Council, and Leroy Ioas. The secretaries for the East, writing most of the time in Persian, and at times in Arabic, were as follows: Maḥmúd Zarqání, ‘Azizu’lláh Bahádúr, Núri’d-Dín Zayn, ‘Alí-Asghar Qazvíní (only for correspondence with local believers and neighbouring localities in Jordan) and Dr Lotfu’llah Hakim.

These secretaries were not all serving him at the same time; their names have been given on a chronological basis as they

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succeeded one another. The secretaries who served him for his English correspondence were normally accessible to him in person, but for the secretaries for the East, particularly in the case of Mr Zayn, who lived at a distance from the Master's house, he would instead convey his instructions in writing.

When the instructions were given, the secretaries would for the most part take notes, especially if the answer was not to be a brief one. Drafts would then be made by the secretary concerned, and the letter submitted to the Guardian for verification. If, in any given case, the Guardian did not approve the drafted letter, it would be sent back to the secretary with renewed instructions. If he felt that the draft was acceptable, he would, in rare cases, send it without any further additions, but in the majority of cases would append a postscript followed by his signature.

He would normally also add a closing phrase to the letter. For the East it was invariably '*The servant of His Threshold*'. When he first used this expression, soon after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, it was clear from the context that the possessive pronoun, 'His', referred to the Master. After the phrase he would sign his name, '*Shoghi*'. As to his correspondence with the West, various forms were used in the early years, such as:

*Your sincere co-worker in His Cause*  
*Your brother and co-worker in His Cause*  
*Your brother and co-worker*  
*I am, as ever, you brother in His Service*  
*I am your devoted brother*  
*I am your brother and fellow-worker*  
*Your brother in His Service*  
*I am your brother and co-worker*  
*Your brother*

Towards the end of 1923, he finally settled on '*Your true brother*', followed by his signature. In certain cases, when he felt that the recipient, whether an institution or an individual, had

accomplished services that called for his special appreciation, the final greeting would be, '*Your true and grateful brother*'.

In one of his letters, he assures the questioner of his close examination of the letters written on his behalf prior to sending them to their recipients: '*Concerning letters from Haifa. Whatever letters are sent in my behalf from Haifa are all read and approved by me before mailing. There is no exception whatever to this rule*' (PBA 87).

In the light of the above extract, it has become the policy of the Archives Office to receive and preserve not only letters and other communications composed by Shoghi Effendi himself, but also all letters written on his behalf to the East and to the West.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **Q. Will all people become Bahá'ís in the future?**

A. There is no reference in the writings stating that every single person will become Bahá'í, but at least half of them will. Rúhíyyih Khánum used to say that Shoghi Effendi was asked this question quite often by pilgrims. He would answer by saying that, in this Dispensation, the totality of the peoples of the world will not become Bahá'ís, but the majority will.

### **Q. How can we explain sensitively to a seeker that the future World Order will have international institutions, which will govern the whole world in a just and fair way, but whose members will be only Bahá'ís? How can we then explain that the Faith accepts and embraces all religions?**

A. In the writings of Shoghi Effendi about the future, there are two different sets of global institutions that are described. One set can be found in 'The Goal of a New World Order', the other in 'The Unfoldment of World Civilization'. In the former, he describes the institutions as a world superstate. In the latter, he describes the institutions of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth.

The world superstate will be a separate political system. Parallel with this system, the Bahá'í Administrative Order will also function. The two systems will not yet have merged. This will be a perfected, a consolidated, and a spiritually oriented system of the Lesser Peace. Subsequently, these two structures will progress until they will both join together, forming the Bahá'í World Commonwealth, which will usher in the Most Great Peace.

In 'The Goal of a New World Order', Shoghi Effendi lists the institutions that will exist at the time of the world superstate. He writes '*Such a state will have to include within its orbit an*

*International Executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a World Parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a Supreme Tribunal whose judgment will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration*' (WOB 40–1). When you compare this to the list of institutions that will exist during the Bahá'í World Commonwealth, we notice that, although the executive, the legislative and judicial branches are mentioned, their order has changed. He writes, *'This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system'* (WOB 203). In this case, the legislative body is before the executive body.

We must be aware that the world superstate will not be a Bahá'í system. There may be Bahá'ís involved in it, but its operation, as far as we can visualize, will be inspired by the Bahá'í system.

There is nothing in the writings to say that those who occupy positions in all branches of the Commonwealth should be Bahá'ís. The world legislature in the Bahá'í World Commonwealth, however, will be the Universal House of Justice, which Shoghi Effendi has called the *'supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth'*, and its members must be Bahá'ís. This does

not necessarily apply to the other two branches. The members of the executive and judicial branches may well be non-Bahá'ís. The only strict requirement is that the members of the Universal House of Justice must be Bahá'ís.

**Q. Could you please clarify what was going to be the function of the Bahá'í Court in the Holy Land that was to be established as one of the objectives of the Ten Year Crusade? Do you think that such a Court will be created in the future, if conditions permit?**

A. A short introduction is necessary to understand the question. Shoghi Effendi, towards the end of 1950, appointed a body of men and women to support him in his work. He named this institution the International Bahá'í Council. He assigned the members of the International Bahá'í Council such duties as forging ties with the government of the newly emerged state of Israel, helping him in the construction of the Báb's Shrine, and conducting negotiations with the civil authorities about the possibility of Bahá'í laws of personal status being officially recognized in the Holy Land. Shoghi Effendi explained that the appointed International Bahá'í Council would pass through several stages in its evolution. The appointed Council was to become an appointed International Bahá'í Court. The appointed Court would cease to exist, and then the Universal House of Justice would be elected. That was his outline of its development.

In 1953, as soon as he included the formation of a Bahá'í Court in the goals of the Ten Year Crusade, Shoghi Effendi immediately started working on it. He sent the members of the appointed Council to Jerusalem, back and forth, to investigate whether this was possible or not. The report was negative. The Hands of the Cause of God have referred to this in a book called *The Ministry of the Custodians 1957–1963*, compiled by Rúhíyyih Khánúm. In their letter, the Hands of the Cause of God



wrote that Shoghi Effendi had indicated that this goal might not be achieved, because the country was becoming secular and the government was not in favour of giving further powers to religious courts. The government intended to gradually phase out the religious courts and replace them with secular civil courts.

The Hands of the Cause decided that they would have to make arrangements for the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, since Shoghi Effendi had clearly indicated this in his writings. They came to the conclusion that the best way to handle this was to have the appointed Council become an elected Council and then to ask the elected Council to continue its negotiations about the Court. Despite the fact that Shoghi Effendi indicated that it was most unlikely for that goal of the Ten Year Crusade to be fulfilled, they did not stop pursuing it.

To set up the election of the Council, the Hands of the Cause of God issued a letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies stating that it was not necessary to come to the Holy Land for the election. Instead, the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies that were elected in 1960 were asked to send their ballots by mail to the World Centre, for nine people, men or women, to become members of the elected International Bahá'í Council. They further stated that the Hands of the Cause should not be considered for election as they were wholly occupied with the Ten Year Crusade. The election took place and a new body was created – the elected International Bahá'í Council. One of the duties that the Hands of the Cause gave to this International Bahá'í Council was to continue the work of investigating the possibility of establishing a Bahá'í Court in the Holy Land. The members had to bear in mind that Shoghi Effendi had repeatedly said that we would have a religious court on one condition only: it should have the same rights as the other religious courts, as the Bahá'ís should have equal status with the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims in the country. If we weren't given equal status, we wouldn't accept. The members of the elected International Council started going to Jerusalem. They must have gone about

20 times to meet with different ministers, the Prime Minister, and the President. However, it was not possible to establish a Bahá'í Court that would have equal rights with the others. Shoghi Effendi had been correct in his anticipation of this outcome, and so this goal remained unfulfilled. However, this does not mean that we have given up. If at any time it would be possible to do so, no doubt the Universal House of Justice will take action.

It is important to know that Shoghi Effendi made it clear to the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land that the anticipated Court, if it was established, would not have jurisdiction over National Spiritual Assemblies. It would be a local institution just for Israel, concerned with the recognition of the Bahá'í laws of personal status. It was called the International Court because it was to be located at the World Centre of the Faith.

During the time when Israel was a British mandated territory, Shoghi Effendi had won recognition from the authorities for the Bahá'í marriage ceremony, and the government of Israel still honours this recognition. There are other laws of personal status which have not yet been recognized, such as the laws related to divorce and inheritance. There is an excellent statement published in *The Bahá'í World*, Volume XIII, which gives a full and authoritative treatment of the question.

**Q. What is the role of the nine Israel Branches of National Spiritual Assemblies?**

A. Shoghi Effendi wanted the Bahá'í properties and Shrines to be held in the names of Bahá'í institutions rather than individuals. He himself embodied an institution, the Guardianship, but he didn't want the properties to be held in his name. Therefore, he would establish in Israel a society, with a secretary and a chairman, which would be named as the Israel Branch of a National Spiritual Assembly. He started this practice during the British mandate, and at that time they were called Palestine Branches. The very first body that was established as a branch in

Palestine was the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada – Palestine Branch. It had some very simple by-laws, about five or six items, that the lawyer was able to draw up for Shoghi Effendi. It had a chairman and a secretary. The signed chairman was Shoghi Rabbani. The signed secretary was his own secretary. It was accepted, and the property was transferred to this particular society. When Israel came into existence, it became the Israel Branch. Later, more National Spiritual Assemblies were added and more properties were registered in the names of these Branches.

The Universal House of Justice has continued the same process and it is hoped that, in the future, more properties belonging to the Bahá'í Community in Israel will be transferred in the names of Branches of other National Spiritual Assemblies. Indeed, Shoghi Effendi has written that, not only will the Bahá'í properties of the World Centre be transferred to branches of different National Spiritual Assemblies, but important Bahá'í holy places throughout the world, particularly in Iran, will eventually be transferred to these Branches. Take for example the site of the martyrdom of the Báb. Instead of being registered only in the name of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran it will become an international endowment and registered in the name of maybe one or more Iranian Branches of different National Spiritual Assemblies.

**Q. Today the Universal House of Justice is the Head of the Faith, and fulfils legislative, executive and judicial functions. When the stage of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth is attained, what will be the function of the Universal House of Justice? What is it that will protect this unique Order from degenerating into any form of despotism, oligarchy or demagoguery?**

A. Today, not only the Universal House of Justice, but the National Spiritual Assemblies and Spiritual Assemblies also

fulfil legislative, executive and judicial functions. However, this will change in the future. Eventually, I think, at all levels, the executive and judicial functions will be given to other institutions. The Universal House of Justice will have to decide how this should be done.

One day, when I was on pilgrimage, Shoghi Effendi was talking about some similar subject. He drew my attention to a statement made by Bahá'u'lláh that *'All matters of State should be referred to the House of Justice'* (TB 129).

The second part of the question deals with the promise that Shoghi Effendi has given us in 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh': *'[T]his unique Order, however long it may endure and however extensive its ramifications, cannot ever degenerate into any form of despotism, of oligarchy, or of demagoguery which must sooner or later corrupt the machinery of all man-made and essentially defective political institutions'* (WOB 154). The guarantee is the Covenant. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the Centre of the Covenant. Shoghi Effendi was the Centre of the Cause, and today the Focal Point of the Cause is the Universal House of Justice. You will never find this term, the Centre of the Covenant, applied by the Universal House of Justice to itself or even to the Guardian. Other terms are used, such as Head of the Faith, Central Institution of the Faith, Pivot of the Faith, Central Pivot of the Faith, or Focal Point of the Covenant, but the term Centre of the Covenant is reserved for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Covenant of God is the instrument that Bahá'u'lláh has Himself created, not only for the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but for posterity. Shoghi Effendi has written: *'The Covenant designed to safeguard the unity and integrity of its world-embracing system had been irrevocably bequeathed to posterity'* (GPB 223). We are now living under the shadow of the Covenant. 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to the period of His own ministry as the morning of the Covenant. We are still situated in the early hours of the morning of the Covenant. The Covenant is going to continue throughout the Day, *'the Day which shall not be followed by night'* (GPB 245).

This is the guarantee! The finger of God is on the Central Institution of the Faith, which today is the Universal House of Justice. The guarantee is our love for Bahá'u'lláh, our love for the Covenant, and our conviction of its validity. It is the power of the Covenant which protects the Bahá'í Administrative Order from the degeneration suffered by all other institutions.

**Q. *'Will America allow any of her sister communities in East or West to achieve such ascendancy as shall deprive her of that spiritual primacy with which she has been invested and which she has thus far so nobly retained?'* (WOB 94). Is this just rhetoric? Do you think that Shoghi Effendi really considered the possibility that one of the European communities would surpass the United States? What about the other countries in the world, such as India, Colombia, Iran, etc.?**

A. My own personal feeling about this is that Shoghi Effendi was endeavouring to stimulate the Bahá'is of the United States to fully assume the primacy that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had conferred upon the American community. Just before this, he refers to the destiny of America in these words: *'Great indeed have been your past and present achievements! Immeasurably greater are the wonders which the future has in store for you!'* (WOB 94).

He is talking about the standard which, if 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wishes are to be fulfilled, must be raised in America. It has not yet been unfurled. I think he was pricking and nudging the American Bahá'í community to wake up and assume its God-given responsibilities. However, no one really knows what the future has in store. It would be a great tragedy to the American Bahá'í community if it fails in future years to assume the grave responsibility laid upon it by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Let us hope that the American Bahá'is will continue to succeed in their efforts.

**Q. ‘To attempt to visualize, even in its barest outline, the glory that must envelop these institutions, to essay even a tentative and partial description of their character or the manner of their operation, or to trace however inadequately the course of events leading to their rise and eventual establishment is far beyond my own capacity and power’ (TDH 46). Is this just rhetoric? Are we to honestly believe that Shoghi Effendi, the sign of God, didn’t have the power to tell us about these things?**

A. To fully understand this sentence one has to read the previous paragraph. He says ‘*these institutions*’. Which institutions? Certainly they are not the institutions of the current Administrative Order, nor are they institutions which we are to see emerging over the next 100 or 200 years. Shoghi Effendi wrote that the Guardianship enabled the Faith ‘*to take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations*’ (WOB 148). Therefore, I do not think that these institutions lie within that period of time that he could foresee. He was talking about the institutions mentioned in the previous paragraph: ‘*those world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions, ordained by Bahá’u’lláh and anticipated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and which are to function in consonance with the principles that govern the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice*’ (TDH 46). In my opinion, he was referring to the institutions of the Bahá’í World Commonwealth. He was not speaking about the time of the Lesser Peace, or of the Great Peace, but of the Most Great Peace.

During the Great Peace there will be, basically, a non-sacred superstate. The institutions of the Faith will not yet have the opportunity to exercise direct influence on the condition of the world, but they will do it indirectly, through the inspiration they will give to the superstate. During the Most Great Peace the institutions of the Faith will effectively be world-shaking, world-embracing and world-directing. This is when the words, ‘*The*

*world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order'* (KA ¶181) will have become a reality. We are assured that a world civilization is going to emerge, by virtue of the impact of *'this wondrous System – the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed'* (KA ¶181). Shoghi Effendi is telling us that even he could not fully visualize the wonder and glory of that civilization.

**Q. Bahá'ís are allowed to vote in certain elections, for example, those which do not require them to identify themselves with a political party. How should we view an election where you cannot, technically, give your vote to an individual, only to a political party? Would it make any difference if each party had only one candidate (e.g. for President), so that by voting for a particular party one is, in effect, voting for a particular individual?**

A. You are living in a world submerged in politics and propaganda. It is vital for you to know the Bahá'í position on politics. There is a text from Shoghi Effendi, which we must call to mind: *'Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions . . . I am firmly convinced, their first and sacred obligation [is] to abstain from any word or deed that might be construed as a violation of this vital principle'* (WOB 64).

Whenever there is uncertainty about what you are permitted to do in your particular country, it should be referred to your National Spiritual Assembly. The National Spiritual Assembly will deliberate on it. If it thinks that casting such a vote is obviously not an act of political involvement, then it will give you the green light. However, if there is some chance that such an act would give the impression that the Bahá'ís had become

involved in politics, it would advise you accordingly. The final word on the matter is that Bahá'ís should not only avoid interfering in matters that are obviously political, but they should also avoid activities that could be construed as political.

**Q. Could you elaborate a little on the fall of Shi'ah Islam, of the Qájár dynasty and of the Sunni Caliphs in Constantinople, and on the rampant rise of secularism in the East?**

A. Obviously the situation in many countries in the world will fluctuate. At the time when Shoghi Effendi was writing his World Order letters and *The Promised Day is Come*, the Shah of Iran was trying to suppress the clergy there. He wanted to follow the example of Atatürk, who had declared that Turkey had become a secular state, as it still is today. The Shah of Iran also hoped to separate the church from the state. We see today, however, that, far from being suppressed, the Shi'ih clergy have now become the government in Iran. We must take into consideration the fact that there will be fluctuations in the situation of the country.

At the end of chapter 2 of *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi describes this process, which began when Táhírih lifted her veil at Badasht. '[T]his process of disintegration, associated with the declining fortunes of a superannuated, though divinely revealed Law, . . . is destined to culminate in the secularization of the Muslim states, and in the universal recognition of the Law of Bahá'u'lláh by all the nations, and its enthronement in the hearts of all the peoples, of the Muslim world' (GPB 34).

As I understand it, this means that whatever the current situation might be in Iran and in the Muslim East, the long-term development will be that secular states are destined eventually to replace Islamic states.



**Q. As I understand it, Muḥammad established in Medina the precedent of the modern state, with a triple separation of powers: executive, legislative and judicial. Yet, we read in many history books that the modern state has its origins in the traditional monarchies of fifteenth-century Europe. What is the relationship between the state, as conceived by Muḥammad, and the modern state?**

A. Patriotism, as well as the concept of nationhood, has its origin in the Islamic Dispensation. However, this is a vast subject, so I will just give my own very limited understanding of it.

First of all, the state that was established by Muḥammad did not have three branches, legislative, executive and judicial. The first part of the period of the ministry of Muḥammad was in Mecca. The situation was quite similar to the three years of the ministry of Jesus Christ. From 610, when He declared His Mission, to 622, Muḥammad and His followers were persecuted and opposed. In 622, after 12 years of suffering, Muḥammad's enemies conceived a plot to assassinate Him. Therefore, He and His followers took flight from Mecca and went to Medina, where there were some people who were well disposed towards Islam.

During the first two years in Medina, Muḥammad, for the first time, had some peace of mind. After the first two years, there was an attack from the people of Mecca, from His own tribe, the Quraysh. Muḥammad saw that if He did not now stand before them and defend Himself as well as His own community, they would all be assassinated. So, at such a time, he raised the call of jihad, which is holy war. This war was purely defensive, because they were being attacked. The first battle marked the beginning of a six-year period of war between Mecca and Medina. Eventually, the Islamic army won and entered into Mecca. This was two years before the passing of Muḥammad. During these two years, He tried to establish order in the land. When the other tribes in Arabia saw that the powerful Quraysh tribe had been defeated, they too accepted Islam. This is how

Arabia as a nation came into existence. ‘*Love of one’s country is an element of the Faith of God*’ is a statement attributed to Muḥammad in one of the well-recognized traditions. In other words, patriotism is an element of religion. This was because, under His rule, the whole of Arabia was united. He tried to establish some form of government, but it certainly didn’t involve the triple separation of powers. He appointed people to act as governors in different parts of the country. They were His representatives, and if there was any problem in one of the localities, they could resolve it or appoint another person to do so on their behalf.

It was because of this well-recognized tradition, ‘Love of one’s country is an element of the Faith of God’, that Shoghi Effendi was moved to write ‘*The conception of nationality, the attainment to the state of nationhood, may, therefore, be said to be the distinguishing characteristics of the Muḥammadan Dispensation, in the course of which the nations and races of the world, and particularly in Europe and America, were unified and achieved political independence*’ (PDC 196). Before Islam there were, however, empires. Empire-building was and had been the order of the day, and it flourished under the Persians, the Greeks and Romans, then the Christian, Islamic and European empires, and so on throughout past centuries. But empire-building has, in this Age, come to a complete end. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá referred to unity in freedom. The Universal House of Justice has shed some illumination on this subject in *Century of Light*, ‘Among the chief developments giving substance to it, the Master may well have had in mind the dramatic extinction of colonialism and the consequent rise of self-determination as a dominant feature of national identity at century’s end’ (CL 129).

**Q. Do you think that there will be crisis and victory in the Golden Age?**

A. I am not a prophet, so I don't really know. However, I don't think there will be a chain of crises, as we know them today. It will be victory after victory. The crises today involve persecution and opposition to the Faith, such as banning the administration, demolition of Holy Places, confiscating properties and assets, martyrdom, imprisonment, ostracism etc. This sort of crisis will not exist because the Faith will be the established religion of the planet. There may, however, be other kinds of tests and trials that we cannot possibly imagine now.

**Q. Could you please tell us a little bit more about the secretaries of the Guardian? How many of them remained loyal?**

A. I will start with the secretaries for the West. Ethel Rosenberg remained firm to the very end. She was a British Bahá'í, who had been taught the Faith by Mrs Maxwell. She was very devoted to Shoghi Effendi and helped him in the work of revising his translations in the early years of his Guardianship. She remained firm to the very end. Dr Esslemont, likewise, remained firm in the Covenant. He was posthumously appointed Hand of the Cause of God. He wrote the book *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* and he served for a time as Shoghi Effendi's secretary. Rouhangiz Rabbani, the sister of Shoghi Effendi, became a Covenant-breaker with the rest of the family. Ruhi Afnan was a cousin of Shoghi Effendi. The mother of Shoghi Effendi, Díyá'íyyih Khánum, had a sister, and that sister was the mother of Ruhi Afnan. Ruhi Afnan and his mother both broke the Covenant. 'Azízu'lláh Bahádúr was a Persian Bahá'í from Shiraz and he was well versed in Persian literature. He had beautiful handwriting. He also had studied at the American University of Beirut and knew very good English, enabling him to serve as a secretary for the West as well as a secretary of the East. He broke the Covenant as well. Soheil Afnan was the brother of Ruhi Afnan. He too broke the Covenant. Hussein Rabbani was Shoghi

Effendi's brother. He broke the Covenant as well. Thank God, this ended the line of the Covenant-breaker secretaries.

Then we had a new set of secretaries. Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, whom you all know. The Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land: there were four of them: Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, Amelia Collins, Leroy Ioas and Charles Mason Remey. Mason Remey later broke the Covenant, but the body of the Hands did not break the Covenant. Shoghi Effendi used this group of four Hands to convey his thoughts and his instructions to the Hands of the Cause throughout the world, and all four of them would sign the letters. The International Bahá'í Council was also used by Shoghi Effendi as a vehicle to convey his instructions to National Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers, especially pioneers. That was an appointed institution and Leroy Ioas was its Secretary-General. These letters would be written on paper bearing the International Bahá'í Council letterhead. Leroy Ioas also wrote letters on his own, not in his capacity as Secretary-General of the International Bahá'í Council, but as an assistant secretary to the Guardian. These were written on paper bearing Shoghi Effendi's letterhead. Rúhíyyih Khánum was the main English secretary of Shoghi Effendi. She herself had an assistant typist, called Ethel Revell.

Now we come to the secretaries of the East. Maḥmúd Zarghání was a wonderful Bahá'í, who remained firm and constant till the very end. 'Azízu'lláh Bahádúr has already been mentioned. Núri'd-Dín Zayn died in Beirut, and, thank God, he was under the shadow of the Covenant. 'Alí-Asghar Qazvíní was a beautiful soul and Shoghi Effendi loved him very much. He was living in the basement of the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa. He was only used for correspondence with local believers and neighbouring localities in Jordan. There was a community in Jordan known as 'Adasíyyih. They were Bahá'ís from Yazd who had gone there in order to be farmers. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had bought some land in that village and this land needed to be cultivated, so He encouraged Bahá'ís from Yazd, who knew about farming, to

settle on this property in ‘Adasiyyih and to develop it. The correspondence with ‘Adasiyyih was mostly through this dear Bahá’í, ‘Alí-Asghar Qazvíní. Finally, Dr Lotfu’llah Hakim was the secretary for the East on the International Bahá’í Council. He remained firm in the Covenant and was elected to the first Universal House of Justice.

**Q. What did the Nazis do to the Bahá’ís in Germany and Austria? What was their motivation for this?**

A. The Nazi regime’s policy was to exterminate the Jews, and there were quite a few Bahá’ís in Germany and Austria who were of Jewish background. Furthermore, the principles of the Faith, such as unity in diversity, were directly in opposition to the fascist ideology of the Nazis. They couldn’t tolerate the existence of an organization which so readily accepted people of all races into its ranks. Hitler especially didn’t want Jews to escape persecution by changing their religion, so he outlawed the Bahá’í Faith. There had been a National Assembly for Germany and Austria and it was forced to disband in 1939.

The Bahá’ís were prevented from having any form of activity or meeting until the end of the war. It took a whole year, from 1945 to 1946, for the German Bahá’í community to be resuscitated. Particular credit must go to the American Bahá’í community for the work it did in Germany after the war. As soon as the community was back on its feet, Shoghi Effendi gave it a teaching plan. The Bahá’ís really leaped back into action, moved on, and won their goals.

**Q. What is meant by the City of the Covenant?**

A. The ‘City of the Covenant’ refers to New York, because, as far as the West was concerned, it was in New York that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá first declared His own station as the Centre of the

Covenant. The circumstances are described in *Century of Light*, page 26.

**Q. I can see the integrative process in the world today, for example, the way in which the principles of Bahá'u'lláh are gaining greater acceptance among all kinds of people. This is speeding up day by day. However, the disintegrative process doesn't seem to be progressing. Did it not reach its peak during the lifetime of the Guardian? Aren't things a lot better now than before, generally speaking?**

A. The process of disintegration did not reach its nadir in the years of the Guardianship. There has been a definite and obvious recrudescence of religious prejudice. Fundamentalism is on the rise. There are now more mullas than ever who preach a kind of radical Islam. Fundamentalism can also be seen in the ranks of Christianity, especially in North America.

This disintegration is not going to have a serious negative effect on the integrative process. It will have mainly a positive effect: the people of the world will become exasperated with fundamentalism. When people become worn out and tired as they see the disintegration of society, then they will lend an even mightier effort to the integrative process.

This recrudescence of fundamentalism has been designed by an All-Wise Providence in order to shake the world's conscience, to awaken the spirit of brotherhood, and to strengthen the spirit of tolerance. Fundamentalism is a kind of religious irreligion which, combined with the forces of materialism, secularism and abandonment of the true spirit of religion, will create chaos and confusion in the world, and will eventually turn people towards the spiritual values, and eventually towards the Cause.

**Q. *'Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the***

*oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life'* (WOB 202). The number of nations in the world has rapidly increased since the time Shoghi Effendi wrote this, especially in Eastern Europe and Africa. Many other countries are on the verge of splitting up. How should we view this process in the light of the above quotation?

A. We must make a distinction between two totally different processes. The first process is the creation of new independent states due to the collapse of vast empires (e.g. British and French empires) and the dismemberment of collective political unions (e.g. the splitting up of the USSR). The second process is one whereby independent nations try to strengthen their national sovereignty and to become ever more independent of other countries.

In my opinion, what Shoghi Effendi meant by nation-building coming to an end was that it is no longer possible for one nation to go it alone. It is no longer in harmony with the spirit of the Age for one group of people to think that it can exist within its own boundaries, ignoring the rest of the world. We are now at the stage where it is imperative for the nations to become united. Shoghi Effendi calls nationalism a fetish. We must distinguish the spirit of nationalism from the spirit of patriotism. Patriotism is love for one's country. This will continue. The future world civilization will be based on unity in diversity. Everyone can still love their own culture and their own country. That is natural. Shoghi Effendi has written, '*Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá'u'lláh . . . Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy . . .*' (WOB 41). Nationalism, as distinct from patriotism, is different, because it implies neglecting the rest of the world, when national interests are at

stake, and even wishing one's own country to prevail over others. Shoghi Effendi says that this tendency towards nationalism has come to an end. Universal solidarity is destined to take the place of extreme national sovereignty.

**Q. In *The Promised Day is Come* the Guardian explains the high station of just kings and monarchs. Was he only speaking about the hereditary kind of monarchs as there were at that time, or could he also have meant presidents, as we have today, or elected monarchs, for example?**

A. There is nothing that I have read that gives a clear definition of what Bahá'u'lláh had in mind when He wrote about kings. However, He often used the phrase 'kings and rulers', so I think that one could reasonably conclude that He was writing about heads of state. Some heads of state are hereditary monarchs, but nowadays many heads of state are elected presidents. This matter certainly falls under the category of matters of state. '*All matters of State should be referred to the House of Justice*' (TB 129).

**Q. '*This judgment of God . . . is both a retributory calamity and an act of holy and supreme discipline. It is at once a visitation from God and a cleansing process for all mankind. Its fires punish the perversity of the human race, and weld its component parts into one organic, indivisible, world-embracing community*' (PDC 5–6). Is the line of disintegration a part of the Major Plan of God? Are the calamities the result of mankind's own behaviour? What is meant by the 'judgment of God'?**

A. The line of disintegration is certainly a part of the Major Plan of God, but we should not conclude that God likes to see all this suffering. He looks at humanity and He sees the illnesses and diseases afflicting it. As a Physician, He tells us that the con-



dition of this sick patient is going to deteriorate. His knowledge of humanity's waywardness doesn't cause its waywardness.

As for the meaning of the judgment of God: God certainly has not created the world and gone to sleep. He is watching over the destiny of humanity and the fortunes of His own Faith. He sees that the people of the world are not generally responding to the Faith. He has sent to them His own Manifestation, and just look at how they have treated Him and are treating His Faith! Therefore, God designs a punishment for humanity because of the behaviour of the human race. As Shoghi Effendi pointed out, '*God . . . does not only punish the wrongdoings of His children. He chastises because He is just, and He chastens because He loves. Having chastened them, He cannot, in His great mercy, leave them to their fate. Indeed, by the very act of chastening them He prepares them for the mission for which He has created them*' (PDC 189). In that sense, the punishment has a positive effect. When a father or a mother punishes a child it is not because of vengeance. Basically, it is because of love. It is to help that child to realize its own mistake and not repeat it again.

**Q. 'Who is the sovereign, excepting a single woman, shining in solitary glory, who has, in however small a measure, felt impelled to respond to the poignant call of Bahá'u'lláh?' (PDC 20-1). Who is the single woman mentioned in this quotation?**

A. My understanding of this sentence is that it is a reference to Queen Victoria.

**Q. How can we understand the statement made by Bahá'u'lláh, '*In truth the station of this Revelation transcendeth the station of whatever hath been manifested in the past or will be made manifest in the future*' (TB 74-5). Does this mean there will never again be a Revelation equal to or higher than Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation?**

#### OUTLINE OF WORKS PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH

A. This is a very good question. If someone were to ask you how it is possible that Bahá'u'lláh has made such a statement you should not be surprised. I will give you simply my own personal understanding of it. He speaks about the past and about the future. Let me deal firstly with the past. All the past revelations throughout the Adamic Cycle appeared during the time when humanity was passing through the different stages of infancy, childhood and adolescence. It had not yet reached the stage of maturity. However, Bahá'u'lláh has come at a time when humanity has organically come to a point of social, spiritual, and intellectual maturity. It is during the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh that the world will be organically united for the very first time, and a global civilization will start to emerge. In the course of future Dispensations, this maturity will be refined and perfected.

In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, it says '*Future Prophets will bring us new laws suitable to our state of development and continue to educate us on this planet, but they will be under the shadow of Bahá'u'lláh for five thousand centuries*' (HE 71). All the Manifestations, in the Bahá'í Cycle, will come under the shadow of Bahá'u'lláh. They will not go beyond planetary unity, which represents its social maturity. It is the unique glory of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation that it marks the beginning of mankind's unity and solidarity.

**Q. You stated that only the Head of the Faith can identify Covenant-breakers, but with the passing of the Guardian there was on the one hand the International Bahá'í Council and on the other the Hands of the Cause. Who was then the official Head of the Cause and therefore who had the authority to identify Mason Remey's secession?**

A. Shortly before his passing on 4 November 1957, Shoghi Effendi wrote a letter to the entire Bahá'í World. In this letter, dated October 1957, the beloved Guardian speaks of the Hands of the Faith as '*one of the cardinal and pivotal institutions*',

designates them as *'the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth'*, and describes their *'dual function of guarding over the security, and of insuring the propagation'* of the Faith (MBW 127). This letter gave the Hands of the Cause the authority to take temporary leadership after his passing.

There is another reference that gives the Hands a special responsibility in matters relating to the protection of the Faith. In the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written: *'My object is to show that the Hands of the Cause of God must be ever watchful and so soon as they find anyone beginning to oppose and protest against the guardian of the Cause of God, cast him out from the congregation of the people of Bahá and in no wise accept any excuse from him . . . Should any, within or without the company of the Hands of the Cause of God disobey and seek division, the wrath of God and His vengeance will be upon him'* (WTA 12–13). You can be sure that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His superhuman wisdom, could foresee the future and wished to ensure the protection of the Cause by granting the body of the Hands this authority.

We must also take into consideration this passage from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas: *'Endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. None hath the right to dispose of them without leave from Him Who is the Dawning-place of Revelation. After Him, this authority shall pass to the Aghsán, and after them to the House of Justice – should it be established in the world by then – that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Places which have been exalted in this Cause, and for whatsoever hath been enjoined upon them by Him Who is the God of might and power. Otherwise, the endowments shall revert to the people of Bahá who speak not except by His leave and judge not save in accordance with what God hath decreed in this Tablet'* (KA ¶42). This passage clearly makes reference to a situation where the line of Aghsán has ended and the Universal House of Justice has not yet been formed. In such a case,

Bahá'u'lláh orders that authority will then be vested in the *'people of Bahá who speak not except by His leave'*. This description is particularly applicable to the Hands of the Cause.

We come now to the International Bahá'í Council. This was the precursor of the Universal House of Justice. It had a very specific function given to it by the Guardian. The International Bahá'í Council was charged with the duty to improve the legal standing of the Faith in the Holy Land, to forge ties with the government, and to assist in the construction of the Shrine of the Báb. The International Bahá'í Council was never called the Chief Steward of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth, nor was it told to be watchful of Covenant-breakers as stated in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was clear and obvious to the friends that the Hands of the Cause would be the Head of the Faith during the interregnum period.

**Q. Regarding: *'those world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and which are to function in consonance with the principles that govern the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice'* (TDH 46). What are the principles that govern the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice?**

A. First, let us consider the principles that govern the Guardianship. Shoghi Effendi once said that the primary work of the Guardian was to promote the teaching work. And, of course, the protection of the Cause was another of his primary functions. These functions have not come to an end with the end of the Guardianship. These functions have been carried on by the Auxiliary Board members for protection and for propagation and by the Continental Counsellors. The Universal House of Justice has ensured that these functions will continue into the future.

Now, let us look at the principles that govern the Universal House of Justice. The first aspect is the election process. Shoghi

Effendi says that in the future there will be no changes in the election process of the Universal House of Justice, because the process is laid down by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This calls for the process to pass through three stages: (1) the election of delegates, (2) the election of the National Spiritual Assembly by the delegates, and (3) the election of the Universal House of Justice by the National Assemblies. It is envisioned that, in the future, this election process will not be changed. In addition, the law of Bahá'í consultation will remain as 'Abdu'l-Bahá envisaged it.

The National Assemblies will become legislative institutions, while they will have within their orbit an executive body and a judicial branch. The same will apply to Local Assemblies. Apart from the spiritual principles which are at the core of the Administrative Order, the main organizational difference between the modern, secular system of government and that of the Bahá'í system of administration is that in secular governments the head of the executive branch is the president or prime minister of the country. Shoghi Effendi has described the institutions of the world superstate in this order: first comes the international executive, second is the world parliament and third is the supreme tribunal (WOB 40). The world superstate will not be a Bahá'í system. Compare this list of institutions to one Shoghi Effendi used to describe the future Bahá'í World Commonwealth: First comes the world legislature; second is the world executive, whose function is to carry out the decisions arrived and apply the laws enacted by the World Legislature; third is the world tribunal (WOB 202). In the Golden Age, when this Bahá'í World Commonwealth comes into being, the legislature will be the head of state, and by this I mean that the legislature will be the highest centre of authority. This is one of the main distinctions of the Bahá'í system of government.

Another distinction is that the world legislature (the Universal House of Justice) will be small enough to make the decision-making process quick and easy. Whereas the members of modern parliaments can number many hundreds of people, Bahá'u'lláh

has written, *‘The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counselors to the number of Bahá, and should it exceed this number it doth not matter’* (KA ¶30) In His interpretation of this verse, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said that the number of members of the Universal House of Justice could be 19. This is a decision that only the Universal House of Justice can take.

This will enable all of the members to consult quickly. I have attended meetings with 18 people: for example meetings between the House of Justice and the International Teaching Centre, and the consultation is quite manageable.

**Q. What is a pantheistic mindset? Does the present worship of industrial objects, such as cars, have anything to do with it? What is an anthropomorphic conception of God?**

A. This question is referring to the statement in ‘The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh’: *‘So crude and fantastic a theory of Divine incarnation is as removed from, and incompatible with, the essentials of Bahá’í belief as are the no less inadmissible pantheistic and anthropomorphic conceptions of God’* (WOB 112). According to a pantheistic theory, the sum total of everything is God, and God is the sum total of everything. It is also associated with the worship of many gods and false idols. An pantheistic concept of God is that God is in everything. For example, He is in a flower. Therefore, if you smother a flower, you are killing God. If you cook a vegetable, you are cooking God. Anthropomorphism is associated with attributing human characteristics to God. If we were to believe that God has a human body, then we would be holding an anthropomorphic conception of God. Both anthropomorphism and pantheism are unacceptable to Bahá’ís.

According to the Bahá’í teachings, God cannot be incarnated into a human body. We do not agree with those Christians who insist that Jesus was an incarnation of God, or that He is God ‘in

the flesh'. Shoghi Effendi says that the God who incarnates His unknowable Essence into a human body would immediately cease to be God.

What then is the relationship between God and His creation? In *Some Answered Questions*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has explained that the Manifestations of God were divine Appearances, like the image of God reflected in a perfect mirror. The rest of the creation is an emanation from God. He gives an example of emanation: a book emanates from a writer. The book is not an incarnation or a manifestation of the writer, but it is created through his power and bears the marks of his influence. This answer is very brief, so you will have to carefully study the writings to develop your understanding.

## VII

### Shoghi Effendi's writings in Persian/Arabic

As stated in Chapter II, the first Persian letter of the beloved Guardian to the friends in Iran was dated 19 January 1922. As was indicated in the Introduction, the number of his letters in Persian and Arabic came to 12,308 communications. The total number of pages as published by the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, several years ago, comes to 3,336. Some of the letters are up to three pages long, while the longest, an abridgement of *God Passes By*, is 197 pages. The rest of the letters are somewhere in between these two extremes in length. Of these, 830 are letters addressed to the communities in the East in general.

In order to describe the general subjects that the Guardian addressed in these letters (apart from the letters to individual believers in which their personal questions were discussed), a list has been prepared under the following headings: the Universal House of Justice; Local and National Spiritual Assemblies; teaching and the advancement of the Cause; opposition to the Faith; the importance of historical sites and relics; historic developments; obligations of individual Bahá'ís; clarification of certain laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and issues related to the Most Holy Book; as well as other miscellaneous matters.

#### *1. The Universal House of Justice*

- The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has mysteries, which will be revealed gradually after the election of the Universal House of Justice.



- The Universal House of Justice is described as the Central Pivot of the Bahá'í World Community.
- The Universal House of Justice will inaugurate a new stage in the development of the Faith, and will establish new institutions.
- Salient features of the functions of the Universal House of Justice are outlined.
- The Shrine of the Báb is the head cornerstone of the institution of the Universal House of Justice.
- During the remaining nine years of the Ten Year Plan (this letter was written at the end of the first year of the Ten Year Crusade) isolated centres, which are like points, should change into groups, which are like letters. These letters should then develop during the remaining years of the plan into words, sentences, and the 'Luminous Book'. These correspond to Local and National Assemblies, and the last unit, namely the Crown of the administrative order, is the Universal House of Justice.

## *2. Local and National Spiritual Assemblies*

- The firm foundations on which Spiritual Assemblies should be elected, in anticipation of the formation of the Universal House of Justice.
- Outline of the steps to be taken for the election of a National Assembly in a number of eastern lands.
- The spirit and conscientious character of Bahá'í elections.
- Special committees should be appointed for the transcription of original Tablets of the Central Figures of the Faith.
- Spiritual Assemblies should exercise restraint in laying down too many detailed and secondary procedures.
- Maintaining correct and up-to-date statistics is a basic requirement for proper Bahá'í elections.
- The decisions of Spiritual Assemblies must be obeyed.

- Government regulations must be observed.
- The nature and functions of the National Convention are fully explained.
- The Constitution and By-laws of the National Assembly and Local Assemblies should be drawn up in accordance with the models adopted by the friends in North America.
- National interests should be subordinated to universal interests and needs.
- The formation of committees for the advancement of Bahá'í women is vital.
- The institution of the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds is an essential element of the Administrative Order.
- The issuing of Bahá'í news bulletins should be regularly maintained.
- Bahá'í summer schools should be established, following the model adopted by the friends in North America.
- The establishment of Bahá'í funds and the offering of contributions are bedrock requirements of the community.
- The establishment of Local and National Bahá'í Archives.
- Committees are like the hands and wings of Spiritual Assemblies.
- The necessity to incorporate Spiritual Assemblies, when feasible, is of vital importance.
- Mount Carmel is ordained to be the spot for the emergence of three central institutions of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh: the Báb's Shrine, the Dayspring of Lights; the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the Dawning Place of His praise; and the World Administrative Seat of the Bahá'í world community, the Pivotal Centre to which all must turn.
- The process of establishing branches of National Assemblies in Israel and the transfer of properties in the Holy Land into their names are important steps for the protection of the international Bahá'í endowments.

- The formation of the appointed International Bahá'í Council; its members are named and its functions set forth.
- Bahá'í endowments are properties owned by Local Assemblies and the National Assembly in each country.
- Administrative expulsion is explained.
- Effort should be made to seek recognition of Bahá'í marriage certificates and Bahá'í holy days and anniversaries.
- The statement on the laws of personal status, prepared by the Egyptian National Assembly, should be translated into Persian for the deepening of the believers.
- The acquisition of properties to serve as Bahá'í cemeteries should not be ignored
- The need to prepare for the centenaries of 1944 and 1953 is underlined.

### *3. Teaching and the advancement of the Cause*

- The teaching work should at all times be the primary concern of individuals and institutions.
- The formulation of national teaching plans by National Assemblies is called for.
- Living the Bahá'í life is an essential element of the advancement of the Cause.
- Pioneering is of utmost importance to goals within the country and adjoining territories.
- Impressive developments in the growth of the Faith in western countries are joyously described and applauded.
- Participation in progressive societies having principles in harmony with the Faith is highly recommended.
- The qualifications of Bahá'í teachers are of great moment and should not be ignored.
- Calls on the friends to pray for the protection of His Cause and the fulfilment of His promises.
- The friends should tread the path of wisdom, caution and

- moderation.
- Unity and harmony in the community should be promoted.
- Victories are assured when the friends exemplify the spirit of sacrifice.
- The future glory of the Faith is explicitly promised in the Sacred Writings.
- The Cause is the collective centre for the oneness of mankind.
- The seven stages of the development of the Faith.
- The Tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá beginning with the words *‘Oh phoenix of that Immortal Flame’* (published in *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, 251–2) is prayerfully recited by Shoghi Effendi and members of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s household.
- The importance of opening virgin territories in neighbouring lands.
- The blood of the martyrs in Persia enabled the Tree of the Cause to produce victories on the world scene. This will eventually lead to the triumph of the Cause in the land of its birth.

#### 4. *Opposition to the Faith*

- The steadfastness of the families of martyrs is appreciated and assistance to them should be extended, as required.
- The persecution of the Bahá’í communities in Turkmenistan, in Russia and in Germany is described.
- The future opposition to the Faith will be fierce and universal.
- In the face of active oppression the friends should continue to stand firm and steadfast.
- The total failure of the Covenant-breakers to create a rift within the Bahá’í community is explained.
- The tragic and pathetic end of the Covenant-breakers,

who opposed the dynamic force of the Covenant, is pinpointed.

- The forced seizure of the keys of the Most Holy Shrine in Bahjí by the Covenant-breakers is described.
- Protecting the Faith from the onslaught of enemies is of vital importance.
- There is a mystic force within the Cause that will withstand onslaughts and overcome them.
- The persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran has resulted in a worldwide proclamation of the Faith and has equally deepened the devotion of the believers, steeling their resolve to sacrifice in the path of service.
- As the Faith expands and its fair name is more widely proclaimed the tests and trials besetting it and the opposition against its onward march will intensify. This will be followed by fresh victories which will, in turn, lead to graver crises.
- The transfer of the remains of the Purest Branch and the Mother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from 'Akká to Mount Carmel is successful, despite the machinations of the Covenant-breakers.

##### *5. Importance of historical sites and relics*

- The graves of martyrs and outstanding believers should be preserved.
- Holy relics and historical documents should be preserved in local and national Archives.
- Portraits of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb should not be displayed and should preferably be sent to the Holy Land.
- The problems related to the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád are fully explained.
- Historical data related to past epochs of the Heroic Age should be obtained and assembled.
- The expropriation of the Ḥazírat'ul-Quds in Tehran is

deeply lamented.

- Bahá'í holy and historic sites should be identified, acquired where possible and fully documented.
- Land for the Bahá'í Temple in Tehran should be acquired.
- The acquisition of properties on Mount Carmel is vitally needed, and the friends are encouraged to contribute.
- Historic events throughout the Heroic and Formative Ages are thoroughly described in several messages.
- The significance of Daniel's prophecy regarding the 1335 days is underlined.
- Support for the Nawnahálán Company and its development are encouraged.
- The furnishing of both the House of Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká and the Mansion in Mazra'ih is proclaimed, in anticipation of visits by pilgrims.
- Exemptions have been obtained locally and nationally from taxes on Bahá'í Holy places in both Haifa and 'Akká.
- The significance of the Shrine of the Báb and progress reports on building its superstructure are outlined.
- The announcement of the acquisition of a large property adjacent to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and of the development of the Ḥaram-i-Aqdas, which has five portals and nine avenues.
- The purchase of vital properties on Mount Carmel to protect the Shrine of the Báb is announced.
- The Shrine of the Báb is described as the 'Queen of Carmel'.
- Pilgrims are now visiting the Cell of Bahá'u'lláh in the Prison Citadel.

#### *6. Historic developments*

- The Holy Year should be celebrated from October 1952

to October 1953, marking the centenary of the Birth of the Bahá'í Revelation.

- A religious court in Egypt issues, with the full approval of the Azhar University and the Ministry of Justice, a decree declaring the Bahá'í Faith to be an independent religion possessing its own laws, principles and practices, and not a sect of Islam.
- Public statements made by Queen Marie of Romania are unique and a source of jubilation.
- Appreciation of the services of Martha Root, the pride of Bahá'í teachers.
- The Ten Year Crusade, its goals and its significance.
- The Intercontinental Conferences, during the Holy Year, launching the Ten Year Plan.
- The Africa Campaign, its objectives and its significance are explained.

#### *7. Obligations of individual Bahá'ís*

- Non-interference in political affairs and non-involvement in partisan activities are essential Bahá'í obligations.
- The translation of Bahá'í texts into various languages is highly commended.
- The services of outstanding believers are specifically mentioned and praised, upon their passing.
- Specific literary works of Bahá'í authors and scholars are appreciated.
- Customary practices, such as the veil, should be respected as a temporary measure.
- It is essential that the friends should free themselves of inadmissible prejudices, racial, religious or otherwise.
- The education of children should be the object of constant stress and emphasis.
- Assistance to areas afflicted by natural disasters should be extended.

- The Tarbíyat schools should observe the sanctity of Bahá'í Holy Days.
- Observance of the anniversary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension is an obligation.
- The importance of prayer and meditation is stressed.
- The appropriate behaviour on the part of the rich and the poor is explained.
- The avoidance of dissimulating one's faith, especially on official documents, is a step towards the emancipation of the Faith.
- The basic principles of the Cause should not be compromised.
- The importance of cordial ties with people in authority is emphasized.

*8. Clarification of certain laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and issues related to the Most Holy Book*

- Laws of inheritance
- Marriage and divorce
- Bahá'í calendar
- Ḥuqúq'u'lláh
- Bahá'í Holy Days
- Burial of the dead
- Zikát
- Consumption of alcohol
- Smoking
- Obligatory prayers
- Obligation to write a will and testament
- Commentary on the predictions of Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í

*9. Miscellaneous matters*

- The seed of the Adamic Cycle produced a fruit, which symbolizes the appearance of the Báb. This fruit was



crushed, and its oil was ignited by Bahá'u'lláh in the Síyáh-Chál, enabling the Faith to diffuse its radiance throughout the world.

- Excessive veneration of the Guardian and his rank should be avoided.
- The civil rights of Covenant-breakers should be upheld and safeguarded in legal issues and commercial transactions.
- Description of the chaotic condition of the world.
- When the light of religion is obstructed, chaos and confusion inevitably ensue.
- Prophecies and promises recorded in the Writings, as yet unfulfilled.
- *The Bahá'í World* volumes, their importation into the country, and their use by the friends.
- The nine concentric circles, beginning with the planet and ending with the casket holding the sacred remains of the Báb.
- The definition of the Bahá'í Cycle of 500,000 years, its division into a series of dispensations, the first of which – the Bahá'í Dispensation – is divided into three ages, and each Age is subdivided into epochs.
- The station of the Blessed Beauty is inconceivably and unapproachably great.
- The appointment of Hands of the Cause of God in accordance with the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is announced.
- The acquisition of the Mansion in Mazra'ih is announced.
- The death of Muḥammad-'Alí is announced.
- The Invisible Hand of God is at work in the world and the Eye of the Supreme Reckoner is wide awake.

Set forth below are English versions of certain selected passages from Shoghi Effendi's letters in Persian/Arabic. These renditions fall into three categories: authorized translations,

authorized provisional translations, and free renditions. The free renditions should not be regarded in the same light as the other two categories. They have been put together for the benefit of this course, in order to give us, in however narrow a compass, an idea of the quality of Shoghi Effendi's style when addressing the friends in the East. In all cases, a note has been added to indicate the nature of the translation in question.

*1. ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] eyes are now directed towards His grieved and afflicted ones. From His exalted station, He is addressing the people of Bahá in this world of dust, and conveying to them these exhortations:*

*'O my loved ones. Be not grieved and disturbed. Be not listless, nor lose hope and feel distressed. I am with you. I am guarding you in the stronghold of My protection, and at every moment I send you a fresh measure of assistance and confirmation. Be ye faithful to His Cause, and like unto this Servant, be constant till your very last breath, in service to this Faith and in thralldom at His Threshold. Exert your utmost and vie ye with each other.*

*'Be not saddened by My passing, nor afraid and unsettled by reason of the changes and chances of this world and its ever-checkered conditions. Do not waver in the Cause of God. Ye are His hosts. Ye are the people of Bahá who are to face the storm of this ordeal, to evince meekness and tenacity, and be adorned with goodly deeds and the ornaments of purity and rectitude of conduct before the eyes of all men.*

*'Arise to champion the Faith of God and lead this sombre, this afflicted and agitated world to the climax of eternal glory, under the shadow of the Cause of God, and the canopy of divine Salvation.*

*'O my beloved friends. O staunch ones who have arisen to follow Me! Be not lax or negligent after Me, and do not*

*forfeit your precious chance, otherwise you will find yourselves in utter loss and disappointment, deprived of the supreme blessing of everlasting felicity. Do not think that stillness and silence on the part of any of the believers will lead to any harm. Nay, by God! God will raise up heroes for His Cause, who will win the day in His holy Name.*

*'Strive ye, therefore, and exert your high endeavours. I am with you, and in the sublime presence of the Exalted One and the Blessed Beauty, I will aid your efforts and guide your steps with a mighty confirmation. You should all arise in utmost unity and attain this exalted station. Otherwise you will not see Me, nor enter His sacred presence in the heavenly Realms. O beloved ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This is what will impart joy and happiness to My heart in the Abhá Kingdom.'* (19 December 1923, free rendition)

*2. O spiritual brothers and sisters! I call on you to reflect and immerse yourselves in the Sacred Texts. Some fifty years ago, there poured down as copious rain from the tongue of the Mighty Founder of our Faith, our Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed, admonitory Tablets, stern warnings, joyful tidings, and wrathful apostrophes addressed to the Kings and Rulers of the East and the West . . .*

*Ere long, when the appointed time has come, the Rulers and Presidents of the Republics of the world will step forward and follow the example of the active supporters and helpers of God's Holy Cause. They will cast away their crowns upon the dust, will adorn their heads with the bejewelled diadem of total, absolute and unconditional servitude, will join the front ranks of the leaders and proclaimers of His Cause and with their substance, their very souls, and with whatsoever their Lord has bestowed upon them, will engage in spreading the tidings of God's Faith and ensuring its triumph.*

*And after completing their mission, they will hasten to reach the shores of the Holy Land, will be privileged to circumambulate the Holy Shrines in a spirit of humility, submissiveness and lowliness, will raise their voices to the heavens in praise, in glorification and celebration of their blessings, and will convincingly demonstrate to the entire world the validity and majesty of this Mighty Cause.*

*This is a standing promise, unfailing, unchanging and immutable, as decreed by God, as it is irrevocably recorded in His preserved Tablet. (February 1927, free rendition)*

*3. Be well assured that, as the enemies of the Cause of God will strive to oppose the Faith, its flame will be intensified and its warmth and brightness will increase. The erudite and intellectuals, who are carefully watching the progress of this Cause and are investigating its aims, will never be influenced or waver in their resolve, as a result of false reports and futile, unfounded and conflicting accounts originating from that land. They will never give up their search after truth, nay, indeed they will only be led to deepen their study and examination of the purposes of our Faith, its teachings and principles so that they become fully aware of the essence of the Cause of God. They will, as circumstances may indicate and as guided by our All-Knowing and All-Powerful Lord, arise to defend the Faith of God and ensure its triumph. They will overcome the hosts of vain fancies and imaginings, will destroy and uproot the edifice of falsehood and untruth and will demonstrate, with sound evidence before the eyes of the world, the purity, loftiness, power and reality of God's invincible Cause. (August 1927, free rendition)*

*4. He is God! O mighty Lord! Thou seest what hath befallen Thy helpless lovers in this darkest of long nights; Thou knowest how, in all these years of separation from Thy*

*Beauty, the confidants of Thy mysteries have ever been acquainted with burning grief.*

*O Powerful Master! Suffer not Thy wayfarers to be abased and brought low; succour this handful of feeble creatures with the potency of Thy might. Exalt Thy loved ones before the assemblage of man, and grant them strength. Allow those broken-winged beings to raise their heads and glory in the fulfilment of their hopes, that we in these brief days of life may gaze with our physical eyes on the elevation and exaltation of Thy Faith, and soar up to Thee with gladdened souls and blissful hearts.*

*Thou knowest that, since Thy ascension, we seek no name or fame, that in this swiftly passing world we wish henceforth no joy, no delight and no good fortune.*

*Then keep Thy word, and exhilarate once more the lives of these, Thy sick at heart. Bring light to our expectant eyes, balm to our stricken breasts. Lead Thou the caravans of the city of Thy love swiftly to their intended goal. Draw those who sorrow after Thee into the high court of reunion with Thee. For in this world below we ask for nothing but the triumph of Thy Cause. And within the precincts of Thy boundless mercy we hope for nothing but Thy presence.*

*Thou art the Witness, the Haven, the Refuge; Thou art He Who rendereth victorious this band of the innocent.*  
(November 1927, authorized provisional translation, RD 9/11/05)

*5. O people of Bahá! Raise your call addressing the people of wisdom, cry out betwixt heaven and earth and say: O people of the world! O perpetrators of tyranny and oppression! Know ye of a certainty that we, the people of Bahá, bought our Faith with our own blood, and have tasted the sweetness of sacrifice in the path of His love. We are living in the hope of attaining His Presence. We are detached from all else but Him. We will help and support His Cause to our very last*

*breath, and are contented and grateful in the face of trials and tribulations.*

*O people of the earth! Be well-assured, and give ye assurance to every hesitant doubter that whatsoever has been revealed by the Pen of the Most High will come to pass and shall eventually be made manifest, as clear as the sun in its midday glory. In this snow-white spot, as well as in other lands, through the direct and celestial operation of the Will of the One Who spread the earth and upraised the Heavens, the fondest desires of His lovers will be realized and will emerge from behind seventy thousand veils.*

*Then will the longing of the people of Bahá be consummated fully, impeccably and to perfection. This is what our Lord has promised us, both implicitly and openly, and this is a pledge which will not prove untrue. Arise, therefore, and tell the unbelieving world: 'Die ye in your wrath! Ere long shall the ensigns of God's Holy Cause be raised in every city, and shed its radiance upon all regions.'*  
(November 1927, free rendition)

*6. The Lord of Hosts, the King of The throne of divine Majesty, is calling from His Exalted Realm during this spiritual spring time, this Ridván period, the supporters of His Most Great Name, and addresses them with these words:*

*'O ye My ardent lovers! O ye who have arisen to help My Cause! O ye bearers of My trust among My creatures. Harken unto My call. I am Ever-living in My Realm of Glory! O My friends, be ye aware of My presence.*

*'You were quickened for the triumph of My Cause. I chose you for Mine Own Self. I singled you out that ye may attain true understanding. I reared you for the exaltation of My Word. I raised you up for the proclamation of My Sovereignty. I made you spiritual leaders among My servants, and heirs of My heritage.*

*'Be patient, O My lovers, I will unveil to your eyes My Signs, will strengthen you with My confirmations, and will fulfil all that I have promised in My Tablets. I will aid you to subdue My enemies and will realize your aspirations through the potency of My Might and My Dominion over all the worlds.*

*'Help Me on My earth, that I may render you victorious in My Kingdom – a Kingdom lofty, exalted, luminous, wondrous and sublime.*

*'O ye who are the treasures of the hidden and heavenly secrets enfolded in My Cause, the repositories of the matchless tokens of My wisdom, and the mysteries of My Law – a Law which has manifestly emerged from behind the veils, and whose light will shed its radiance upon all regions with a brilliance that past centuries have not witnessed. Then will the sanctified and angelic dwellers in the Concourse on High sing songs of glory and praise, and beyond them shall rejoice God's Messengers and Prophets in the highest Heaven. Then shall ye clearly witness the gems and tokens that the hands of Our grace, wisdom and might had concealed from the eyes of men, in this bewildering, this challenging and irresistible Cause.'* (Riḍvān 1933, free rendition)

*7. Praise be to God, the One, the Single, the Eternal, the Ever-Abiding, the Supreme life-imparting Reality, the Being whose bounties embrace all things, He Who is the Invisible, Inaccessible, the Hidden Treasure, the Source of all grace, the Causer of Causes, He who has sent the Messengers, and set down the laws and commandments, Who has no peer or partner in His realm, no equal in the entire creation. All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding, move according to His Purpose and are in need of His tender mercies. All have their origin in Him, and all return unto Him. Exalted, immensely exalted is He above any description of His Prophets or any praise uttered by those endowed with wisdom.*

*Salutation and praise be upon the Most Resplendent Light that shone from the Dayspring of Glory, the Ancient Beauty, the Most Great Name, the Adorned Symbol, He, the Glory of God, unapproachably eminent and singularly splendid, the Inmost Reality of all truth, the Essence of Essences, the Source of all Light, the Concealed Name, the Impenetrable Mystery, the Ancient Root, the Most Great Announcement, God's Universal Manifestation, He round Whom all Messengers circle, the Promised One mentioned in the Scriptures of the Messengers and Prophets of the past, the Lord of Hosts, the Speaker of Sinai, Who built the Temple, Who is the Healer of the ill, and is seated upon the throne of David, Who is the Heavenly Father, the Alpha and the Omega, the King of Kings, the Lord of the Kingdom, the Lord of the Day of Reckoning, the Author of the Covenant, the Lord of the Covenant, the Day-star of the world, He Who is the All-compelling, Whom God shall make manifest, the Remnant of God, the Most Sublime Vision for His creatures mentioned in God's glorious Book, He Whom the world has wronged, the Quickener of mouldering bones, the Establisher of the Most Great Peace amongst all nations, Who unsealed the choice, the mystic and sealed wine, through Whom God proved the hearts of the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets, through Whose advent the day of Resurrection did open, the second woe occurred, and the second blast on God's trump was heard, the earth shone forth with the light of its Lord, whereupon the earth told out its tidings, and cast forth its burden. How great, how very great is His might, His glory, His grandeur, His loftiness, His sovereignty, His power, and His transcendent authority.*

*Blessing and glory be upon His peerless Herald, the Solace of the eyes of the Prophets of the past, the Gate of God, His Most Great Gate, His Most Lofty and Supreme Remembrance, His Mighty Testimony unto all people, His choice Pearl of great price, the Exalted, the Most Exalted*



*One, the Primal Point, He Who manifested the signs and tokens of all the Prophets of former Dispensations, He Who was God's Countenance that cannot wane, and His Light that cannot fade, He who arose as prophesied, the Morn of truth, the Lord of the Age, the King of Messengers, through Whose appearance the time of the end came to pass, the Hour did strike, the earth was rent in twain, the heavens were cleft asunder, the mountains were set in motion, the contingent world swooned away, the Straight Path was laid, the Balance was appointed, the Fire was made to blaze, every expectant mother cast her burden, the Dawn of Guidance did break, the Great Glad-tiding was announced, and the Hour drew nigh for the sun of Bahá to shed His radiance upon the entire creation.*

*Greeting and glorification be upon the Messengers and the Prophets of God, the Emblems of divine unity, the Embodiments of detachment, the Manifestations of God, the Pure Mirrors reflecting His light, the Perfect Words emanating from Him, They Who are the Sacred Souls chosen by Him, Who represent Him amongst men, Who are the Exponents of His Revelation, the Symbols of His radiant Beauty, the Daysprings of His Cause, the Repositories of His mysteries, the Revealers of His attributes, the Sources of His wisdom, the Fountainheads of His inspiration, the Treasuries of His knowledge, the Mouthpieces of His Utterance, the Standards of His might, the Lamps of His guidance, the Tokens of His love, the Bearers of His truth, and the Dawning-places of His behest. Through Them God announced His Cause, revealed His Law, advanced His Proofs, transmitted His Message, foretold the Day when His divine Presence would be attained – the Day of Reckoning, the Promised Day, the Day of Gathering, the dreadful Day of the Lord, and the Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds.*

*Salutations and peace be upon the Centre of God's Covenant, His Most Great Branch, His immutable and glorious Mystery, the Gulf that branched out of His Ancient Ocean, the Exemplar of His teachings, the Being round Whom all names revolve, He Whom God has purposed, the Apple of the eye of Bahá, His trust amongst His people, the Interpreter of His Revelation, the Stronghold and Shield of His Cause, the Promoter of His Law, the Repository of His hidden secrets, the Expounder of the principles of His Order, the Standard of His victory, and He Who attired His head with the crown of thralldom in servitude to God's Holy Cause.*

*Joy and light be upon God's Holy ones, His Chosen ones, Successors and the Arch-Promoters of His Cause, His Testimonies, His Witnesses, the Chief guides of His community – they who were appointed by the Messengers and the Prophets to execute Their laws, to interpret Their utterances, to consolidate the foundations of God's Faith, to render it victorious, to exalt His Name, to spread His message, to demonstrate His might, to demand and establish the rights of His Cause and to neutralize the evil designs of His enemies and opponents.*

*Remembrances and praise be upon the people of Bahá, they that hold aloft the banner of His Faith, and dwell in His Crimson Ark, upon His kindred, the Leaves and Off-shoots of the Tree of Holiness, the Letters of His Book, the Hands of His Cause, the summoners of the people to His Call, they who are firm in His Covenant, hold fast unto the Cord of His love, long to shed their blood in His path, spread the divine fragrances and are the builders of the foundations of His New World Order – an Order which is the child of His Law and the fruit of a Divine Covenant which is eminently glorious, exalted, holy, unassailable and unique. (Naw-Rúz 1945, free rendition)*

8. *He is God! O our Lord, the Most Exalted! We entreat Thee, by the righteousness of Thy blood which was shed upon the dust, to heed our petition, to shield us within the stronghold of Thy care and protection, to rain down upon us out of the clouds of Thy bounty and loving kindness, to enable us to walk in Thy Path, through Thy gracious help and confirmation, to lay fast hold on the cord of Thy grace, to demonstrate the truth of Thy Testimony, to spread abroad Thy Holy Writings, to dispel the wickedness of Thine enemies, to become imbued with Thy saintly character and to proclaim the Cause of Thy Best-Beloved, the Lord of Glory – He for whose sake Thou didst sacrifice Thine Own Being, and yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of His love. Help us, we beseech Thee, O our Best-Beloved, the Most Exalted One. Strengthen our loins, make firm our steps, wash away our sins, cancel our evil doings, unloose our tongues to yield praise and thanksgiving unto Thee, adorn our deeds and efforts with the garlands of Thy acceptance and good-pleasure, and grant that our last days may prove as the ones Thou hast destined for the sincere among Thy servants. Shelter us within the court of Thy gracious favour, and cause us to be admitted into the effulgent realm of Thy nearness. Make us come together with such of Thy chosen ones as are nigh unto Thee, and destine for us to attain Thy holy Presence. Suffer us to be intoxicated with the immortal draught of reunion with Thee, and let us gain admission into the meads of Thy holiness, and provide us with the best of what Thou hast fore-ordained for Thy heavenly kingdom, O Thou Who art invoked by all mankind.* (Naw-Rúz 1945, authorized provisional translation, RD 9/11/05)

9. *This beautiful and majestic path, which extends from the Shrine of the Báb to the City of Haifa in line with the greatest avenue of that blessed city, which is adorned with trees and*

*verdant plants and illumined with bright lights, which is the object of the admiration of the people of this region and a source of joy and pride to the authorities in this land, will subsequently be converted, as foreshadowed by the Centre of the Covenant, into the Pathway of the Kings and Rulers of the World.*

*These mighty embodiments of kingly power, humble pilgrims to the Sanctuary of the Lord, will, upon their arrival in the Holy Land, first proceed to the Plain of 'Akká, there to visit and circumambulate the Qiblih of the People of Bahá, the Point around which circle in adoration the Concourse on High. They will then make their way to this august and venerated city, and climb the slopes of Mount Carmel. With the utmost rapture, ardour and devotion, they will hasten towards this Sacred Spot and, with reverence and submissiveness, humility and lowliness, ascend these terraces to approach the luminous precincts of the sanctified and holy Shrine. Reaching the threshold of the Sanctuary of Grandeur, they will cast their crowns upon the ground, prostrate themselves to kiss its fragrant earth and, circling around its hallowed arcade, call out 'Here am I, here am I, O Thou Who art the Exalted, the Most Exalted One!' and recite in tones of fervent supplication the perspicuous Verses of the Tablet of Carmel.*

*Thereafter they will walk over the spacious lawns and through the wondrous gardens of this sublime and holy spot, this garden of the Exalted Paradise, will inhale its fragrant scents and taste of its choice and luscious fruits. They will, with tearful eyes and burning hearts, call to mind the pain and suffering, each affliction and calamity, the duress, imprisonment and martyrdom which befell that Wronged One of the world, will behold, with their own eyes, on every hand in this exalted Spot, the glory of Carmel and the evidences of the compelling might and greatness, the invincibility, the all-encompassing dominion of the Conqueror of the worlds, and*

*will praise and glorify the Lord of Carmel.* (Naw-Rúz 1952, authorized translation, courtesy copy received from the World Centre)

*10. Unto thee, O Queen of Carmel, be the purest and most tender salutations, and upon thee rest the fairest and most gracious blessings! Glorified be He Who has ordained the place of thy Seat and honoured it with His footsteps, and has made mention of thee in His Holy Writ. How great is the potency of thy might, a might which has bewildered the souls of the favoured ones of God and His Messengers!*

*I behold thee as in a dream, established upon thy glorious throne, robed in white, crowned in gold, resplendent with the lights shining within thee and around thee, calling aloud in ringing tones and lifting up thy voice between earth and heaven.*

*I see the souls of the holy ones and of the dwellers of the realms above hastening towards thee with utmost devotion, love and attraction, pointing to thee, circling around thee, inhaling the fragrance of thy blossoms and flowers, seeking blessing from the earth of thy precincts, and bowing their foreheads to the ground in recognition of the majesty and glory which surround the Trust of God reposing in thy heart, and the Pearl that lies enshrined within thy bosom.*

*Blessed, immeasurably blessed is the one who visits thee and circles around thee, who serves at thy threshold, waters thy flowers, inhales the fragrance of holiness from thy roses, celebrates thy praise and magnifies thy station for the love of God, He Who has created thee in this most hallowed and luminous, this most exalted, august and wondrous age.* (Naw-Rúz 1952, authorized translation, courtesy copy received from the World Centre)

*11. This magnificent edifice (the Shrine of the Báb) stands facing Bahá'u'lláh's Most Great Prison, extolled by the Pen*

*of Glory as the 'Heaven of heavens', and looks toward the Qiblih of the people of Bahá, that Spot within the vale of security and peace, the plain of 'Akká, round which circle in adoration the Concourse on high. To her right are the hills of Galilee in which nestles the childhood home of the beautiful Christ, and the locality by the banks of the Jordan River where He Who is the Spirit (Jesus Christ) was called to prophethood; and on her left, on the crest of Carmel, are to be found the Cave of Elijah and the exalted Spot which was blessed by the footsteps of the Most Holy Abhá Beauty and was ennobled through the revelation of the Tablet of Carmel from the treasury of the Pen of Glory. Behind her stand the twin Mounts of Zion and Olives and the holy and ancient city of Jerusalem, within whose walls lie the site of the martyrdom and the burial place of Jesus Christ, the seat of the Throne of David, the glorious Temple of Solomon and the Aqsa Mosque which ranks third among the shrines of the Islamic world. Beyond these there rises Mount Sinai, the cradle of the Jewish Faith, that Sacred Mount, the Paran of light, that holy land where He Who conversed with God (Moses) heard the Voice from the Blessed Tree. And further beyond lies the Arabian Peninsula, the land of Hijaz, the cradle of the Muḥammadan Dispensation, with the two cities of Batha and Yathrib, the noble Mecca and the bright Medina, one enshrining the Qiblih of Islam and the other the Resting-place of Him Who is the Lord of mankind (Muḥammad) – upon Him be countless salutations and praise.*

*High, immeasurably high, is this Shrine, the lofty, the most great, the most wondrous. Exalted, immeasurably exalted, is this Resting-place, the fragrant, the pure, the luminous, the transcendent. Glorified, immeasurably glorified, is this Spot, the most august, the most holy, the most blessed, the most sublime. (Naw-Rúz 1952, authorized translation, courtesy copy received from the World Centre)*

*12. How often the beloved Master was heard to say: Should each one of the friends take upon himself to carry out, in all its integrity and implications, only one of the teachings of the Faith, with devotion, detachment, constancy and perseverance and exemplify it in all his deeds and pursuits of life, the world would become another world and the face of the earth would mirror forth the splendours of the Abhá Paradise. Consider what marvellous changes would be effected if the beloved of the Merciful conducted themselves, both in their individual and collective capacities, in accordance with the counsels and exhortations which have streamed from the Pen of Glory. (Authorized translation, CC Vol. II, 1)*

*13. One can hardly imagine what a great influence genuine love, truthfulness and purity of motives exert on the souls of men. But these traits cannot be acquired by any believer unless he makes a daily effort to gain them . . . (Authorized translation, CC Vol. II, 2)*

*14. The chosen ones of God . . . should not look at the depraved condition of the society in which they live, nor at the evidences of moral degradation and frivolous conduct which the people around them display. They should not content themselves merely with relative distinction and excellence. Rather they should fix their gaze upon nobler heights by setting the counsels and exhortations of the Pen of Glory as their supreme goal. Then it will be readily realized how numerous are the stages that still remain to be traversed and how far off the desired goal lies – a goal which is none other than exemplifying heavenly morals and virtues. (Authorized translation, CC, Vol. II, 136–7)*

*15. [P]raise be to God that the Pen of Glory has done away with the unyielding and dictatorial views of the learned*

*and the wise, dismissed the assertions of individuals as an authoritative criterion, even though they were recognized as the most accomplished and learned among men and ordained that all matters be referred to authorized centers and specified Assemblies. Even so, no Assembly has been invested with the absolute authority to deal with such general matters as affect the interests of nations. Nay rather, He has brought all the assemblies together under the shadow of one House of Justice, one divinely-appointed Center, so that there would be only one Center and all the rest integrated into a single body, revolving around one expressly-designated Pivot, thus making them all proof against schism and division. (Authorized translation, MUHJ, 216–17)*

Six of the paragraphs reproduced above (1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7) are labelled as ‘free renditions’. These renditions are neither ‘authorized’ nor ‘provisional’ translations. They have been prepared purely for the benefit of the participants of the course, and therefore should be regarded as paraphrases, and not as regular, quotable texts.

On five occasions during his ministry, Shoghi Effendi addressed simultaneous and parallel messages to East and West. These occasions were the passing of the Greatest Holy Leaf; the Centenary of the Declaration of the Báb and the birth of the Bahá’í Revelation; as well as the launching of the Ten Year Plan, with an outline of its goals; and finally, the completion of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb. The details of these messages have not been reproduced in this summary.

Interspersed in his letters there are 20 prayers written by him, some in English and others in Arabic. Two of these have been given in the extracts above (no. 4 is in Persian, and no. 8 is in Arabic). The latter comes at the end of his abridgement of *God Passes By*. The abridgement itself begins with a preamble (no. 7) in which he offers praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God, to the Blessed Beauty, the Báb, all God’s Messengers, ‘Abdu’l-



Bahá, the appointed successors of God's Manifestations, and finally the rank and file of the believers.

After the conquest of Persia by the armies of Arabia, soon after the passing of the Prophet Muḥammad, Arabic words were gradually assimilated into the Persian language. Just as in the case of the English language, with the introduction of French and Latin words after the Norman conquest, the Persian vocabulary was infinitely broadened and enriched by the addition of Arabic. Shoghi Effendi's style in his Persian letters clearly illustrates the importance of the introduction of Arabic words into the Persian vocabulary. In fact, in the course of explaining the intricacies of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and so as to better express his deepest, inner sentiments, we find him introducing rarely used but easily understood Arabic words and terms into his phrases. His style is thus given an elegant and elevated tone, while still being perfectly comprehensible to the average Eastern reader. By this method, he was able to convey his inspired insights and wisdom through a language that is at once clear, powerful and exquisitely beautiful.

Several unbiased Persian scholars who, in the past, were shown examples of Shoghi Effendi's writing style by the Bahá'is, spontaneously averred that his Persian composition was equal if not superior to that of immortal Persian authors such as Sa'di. As to his original and graceful penmanship in Persian and Arabic, the style of calligraphy he chose was both legible and pleasing to the eye. Rúhiyyih Khánum makes the following comment in *The Priceless Pearl*:

There are a number of styles of calligraphy in Persian and Arabic but his is a variation of 'Shikastih Nasta'liq'. It has a charm and originality, a grace and strength all its own. One should remember that calligraphy was the highest of the graphic arts in Islamic countries and beautiful writing was the distinction *par excellence* for the cultivated man to possess. The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá all had wonder-

ful handwriting and Shoghi Effendi in this too proved himself worthy of his heritage (PP 202).

It must be made absolutely clear that the Guardian made no effort to copy the unique styles of each of the Central Figures of the Faith. Not only in his style of calligraphy, but in so many other ways, such as his dress, demeanour, in choosing never to occupy seats that Bahá'u'lláh or 'Abdu'l-Bahá used during their lifetimes, and even in avoiding the particular greetings his Predecessors employed when welcoming the pilgrims, Shoghi Effendi wanted emphatically to show that his station was in no way comparable to those before him, and that indeed he was under their shadow.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **Q. What were the predictions of Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í?**

A. This question is about the references made by Shoghi Effendi to the allusions made by Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í in his writings (CF 101). Bahá'u'lláh was born in Tehran on 12 November 1817. That very night, according to *Nabíl's Narrative*, Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í was staying in Tehran as a guest of the Shah. He was requested by one of the princes to proceed to Kirmánsháh. But the Shaykh was aware of the significance of what had happened in Tehran. He didn't want to leave but he resigned himself to God's will and left. Before he left, it is written, he uttered a prayer that the Hidden Treasure Who had been born would be cherished by the people of Tehran. This story shows the intuition which the Shaykh had about the coming of the Promised One. However, the prediction which is mentioned in *Citadel of Faith* and in *God Passes By* is more important. In one of his epistles to Siyyid Kázim, Shaykh Aḥmad has written '*The mystery of this Cause must needs be made manifest, and the secret of this Message must needs be divulged. I can say no more. I can appoint no time. His Cause will be made known after Hín (68)*' (GPB 92–3). In the original language, the final sentence has the meaning 'His Cause will be made know after a while'. However, according to Abjad numerology, the word 'hin' has a numerical value of 68. Therefore, 'after Hin' refers to the year 69. According to the Hijrah calendar, the next year 69 would be 1269 (1852–3). It was quite clear that Shaykh Aḥmad was making the prediction that the Promised One would appear in the year 1852–3. It was in this year that Bahá'u'lláh received the first intimations of His Revelation, while lying in chains in the Siyáh-Chál.

Another of the predictions of Shaykh Aḥmad is alluded to in the verse of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas: '*Behold, the "mystery of the Great Reversal in the Sign of the Sovereign" hath now been*

*made manifest* (KA ¶157). In his writings, Shaykh Aḥmad had said that at the time of the Promised One all things would be reversed. It is just like what Christ has said '*But many that are first shall be last; and the last first*' (Mark 10: 31). It means that those who are downtrodden will be raised to glory and vice versa. In fact, the latter part of the verse in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas corroborates this interpretation: '*How many the outwardly pious who have turned away, and how many the wayward who have drawn nigh . . .*' (KA ¶157) It is exactly what happened in every Dispensation. But in the Bahá'í Dispensation, it is even more dramatic than it was before, because now it is on a universal level.

**Q. What is the meaning of the '*nine concentric circles*'? Is this a fulfilment of a prophecy or is it a symbol?**

A. It is a symbol. The '*nine concentric circles*' is a concept that Shoghi Effendi developed himself, in his English and Persian writings. In my opinion, Shoghi Effendi wanted to emphasize the importance of the Shrine of the Báb. In another of his letters he says something that seems extremely strange, that the Shrine of the Báb is the cornerstone of the Universal House of Justice. It is very clear that the most sacred spot on earth is not the Shrine of the Báb; it is the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. Quite often Shoghi Effendi explained that the Shrine of the Báb was under the shadow of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. By this he implied that the Universal House of Justice, the head cornerstone of which is the Shrine of the Báb, and indeed all of the administrative institutions, consisting of the entire series of buildings around the Arc, all are under the shadow of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.

**Q. What does the Crimson Ark refer to in the Writings?**

A. The Crimson Ark in the quotation refers to the Cause of God; crimson, because we have had martyrs.

**Q. *‘These mighty embodiments of kingly power, humble pilgrims to the Sanctuary of the Lord, will, upon their arrival in the Holy Land, first proceed to the Plain of ‘Akká, there to visit and circumambulate the Qiblih of the People of Bahá . . .’*** (Naw-Rúz 1952). **When is this going to happen?**

A. Nobody knows. However, I don’t think they are all going to come together, at once. When the Bahá’í Faith becomes the established religion in a country, the head of state, whether he is a king, a president, or whatever, will also probably be a Bahá’í. This process won’t happen all at once, but gradually, one at a time. I don’t think the time will ever come when the House of Justice will make it a goal of one of its plans to have a head of state become a Bahá’í and come on pilgrimage. It is a prediction based on the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

**Q. Mount Carmel is ordained to be the spot for the emergence of three central institutions of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh: the Báb’s Shrine, the Dayspring of Lights; the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, the Dawning Place of His praise; and the World Administrative Seat of the Bahá’í world community, the Pivotal Centre to which all much turn. Why is so much weight given to Mount Carmel? Why isn’t the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh the spot for the emergence of these institutions? Why is not the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh the centre of the nine concentric circles?**

A. First of all, Mount Carmel is specifically mentioned in the Old Testament. Also, Isaiah refers to a mountain towards which all the nations of the world will move, to which all the kings and rulers of the earth will turn. Apart from Isaiah’s prophecy, Bahá’u’lláh Himself came to this mountain and revealed the Tablet of Carmel. That was on the head of the mountain, near the Catholic monastery, where the Temple land is. The Tablet of Carmel has been called the Charter for the development of the

Faith at the World Centre. In it, Bahá'u'lláh foresees that the remains of the Báb would be interred in that Mountain. In the same Tablet, He ordained that the Administrative Centre of the Faith should be on Mount Carmel.

Nevertheless, the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh is the Most Holy, the Most Sacred Shrine on the planet. And, as I stated before, the Shrine of the Báb and the World Administrative Centre are under the shadow of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. Blessed are those who are able to visit that Shrine. In this day we are permitted to enter the Shrine – what a blessing this is! Do you think, when millions and billions will become Bahá'ís, that it will be possible to enter that Shrine or the Shrine of the Báb? They will have to satisfy themselves with circumambulation, while visiting the Shrines from outside. Such will be the majesty of the Faith in the future.

**Q. Why did the International Bahá'í Council have women on it, if the Guardian envisioned it as the precursor to the House of Justice? Will future Manifestations of God change the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and allow women to sit on the Universal House of Justice?**

A. The International Bahá'í Council was a very important institution. Its members represented Shoghi Effendi on their visits to Jerusalem. This institution had a representative of the Guardian, a president, a vice-president, a member at large, a secretary-general, a treasurer and two assistant secretaries, one for the East and one for the West. It had its own letterhead. Shoghi Effendi assigned the building at 10 Haparsim Street, Haifa, to be the seat of the International Bahá'í Council and he put an appropriate sign outside the door of the building.

However, the Council was not the Universal House of Justice. As you know, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written, *'The House of Justice, however, according to the explicit text of the Law of God, is confined to men; this for a wisdom of the Lord God's, which will ere long be made manifest as clearly as the sun at*

*high noon*' (Sels 79). According to the principle of the equality of the sexes, Shoghi Effendi saw no reason why the membership of the precursor to the House of Justice should be confined to men.

It would be possible for future Manifestations of God to allow the membership of the Universal House of Justice to include women. Shoghi Effendi has written, in a letter to the Bahá'ís of the East, that the next Manifestation of God will be empowered to change the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and to change the structure of the Administrative Order of the Faith. We are not told what changes He will make, but He certainly will have that authority.

**Q. What is or was the Nawnahálán Company?**

A. Nawnahálán is a Persian word which means 'children'. Shoghi Effendi refers to this company in *God Passes By*, but he uses the name '*the children's Savings Bank*' (GPB 342). In Iran it was referred to as the Nawnahálán Company. It was initiated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He made the initial contribution that became the basis on which to build this Savings Bank. Violette and I had shares in this company. When we went to our children's classes we would have the opportunity to buy some little shares, and gradually we would build them up. At the end of the year they would give us dividends based on how much profit the Bank had made. Often we would just use the dividends to buy more shares! And if anyone wanted to get their money back, they could sell the shares. It was no problem at all. When the children grew up they would often withdraw the whole lot so that they could pay for their education or for other purposes.

Unfortunately, after the revolution in Iran the entire company was confiscated, along with all its shares. Those of us who still had shares lost them all. Many other things were confiscated as well, such as sacred and historic sites, local centres, even cemeteries and a lot of personal assets. It is hoped that in the

future all these things will be recovered. When the Bahá'ís have their rights restored, they should be able to receive compensation for what has been confiscated, including the assets of the Nawnahálán Company.

**Q. You have said that, in his Persian writings, Shoghi Effendi described the Shrine of the Báb as the head cornerstone of the Universal House of Justice. Why is not the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh the head cornerstone?**

A. We have to refer in this case to the Tablet of Carmel. For a long time, none of the Bahá'ís fully understood the meaning of many of the references in this Tablet. We knew that it was very important, because it was one of the few Tablets that 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi often encouraged the friends to memorize. It was not until towards the end of his life that Shoghi Effendi began to explain its meaning. He said that the Tablet of Carmel provides the Faith with two Centres; one spiritual and one administrative. The spiritual centre is the Shrine of the Báb, referred to as the '*celestial Kaaba*'. The administrative centre is the Universal House of Justice and its administrative institutions. The House of Justice is referred to as the '*Ark*' that God will sail upon Mount Carmel. '*The people of Bahá*' (TB 4–5) mentioned in the Tablet are the members of the Universal House of Justice. Shoghi Effendi personally explained these things to the members of the International Bahá'í Council. The Council then wrote a letter to the Bahá'í world to spread the news of this interpretation. The letter was fully approved by Shoghi Effendi and it was published in *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. XII.

As for the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh; its station is even higher than that of the Shrine of the Báb. As already stated, the Shrine of the Báb and the administrative institutions on Mount Carmel are all under the shadow of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. The Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh is the most sacred spot on earth.





## VIII

### Shoghi Effendi's style

#### A. Writing style in English

Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, in *The Priceless Pearl*, draws our attention to the fact that: 'Unlike so many people Shoghi Effendi wrote what he meant and meant exactly what he wrote' (PP 196). She further writes: 'In an age when people play football with words, kicking them right and left indiscriminately with no respect for either their meaning or correct usage, the style of Shoghi Effendi stands out in dazzling beauty . . . It is impossible to eliminate any word from one of his sentences without sacrificing part of the meaning, so concise, so pithy is his style' (PP 196). It is difficult to find such an appropriate description of Shoghi Effendi's style as has been so charmingly identified by one who was not only his consort but his secretary as well, and bore heroically the load of onerous duties that the beloved Guardian placed on her shoulders.

It would be illuminating to read her other comments on this subject:

It is really during the 1930's that one sees a change manifest in Shoghi Effendi's writings. With the rapier of his pen in hand he now stands forth revealed as a giant. Where before one could trace a certain diffidence, an echo of the affliction of soul he had passed through after the ascension of the Master and his assumption of his high office, the crying out of his heart in its longing for the departed beloved of his life,

now the tone changes and a man speaks forth his assurance with great confidence and strength. The warrior now knows what war is. He has been surprised, beset, wounded by vicious and spiritually perverse enemies. Something of the tender and trusting youth has gone forever. This change is manifest not only in the nature and power of his directives to the Bahá'í world, the fashion in which he is shaping the administration East and West and welding into a whole the disparate and diversified communities of which it is composed, but in a beauty and assurance in his style that steadily gathers glory as the years go by. (PP 214)

He was a great reader of King James version of the Bible, and of the historians Carlyle and Gibbon, whose styles he greatly admired, particularly that of Gibbon whose *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* Shoghi Effendi was so fond of that I never remember his not having a volume of it near him in his room and usually with him when he travelled. There was a small Everyman's copy of part of it next to his bed when he died. It was his own pet bible of the English language and often he would read to me excerpts from it, interrupting himself with exclamations such as 'Oh what style; what a command of English; what rolling sentences; listen to this.' With his beautiful voice and pronunciation – in the direction of what we call an 'Oxford accent', but not exaggeratedly so – the words fairly glowed with colour and their value and meaning came out like shining jewels. I particularly remember one peaceful hour (so rare, alas) when we sat on a bench facing the lake on a summer afternoon in St James' Park in London and he read me Gibbon out loud. He revelled in him and throughout Shoghi Effendi's writings the influence of his style may clearly be seen, just as the biblical English is reflected in his translations of Bahá'u'lláh's Prayers, *The Hidden Words* and Tablets. (PP 37–8)

From the beginning of my life with the Guardian until the end, I was almost always present when he translated or wrote his books, long letters and cables in English. There was nothing unusual in this; he liked to have someone in the room on these occasions to listen to what he was writing. His method of composition was new and fascinating to me. He wrote out loud, speaking the words as he put them down. I think this habit in English was carried over from Persian . . . I believe it is because of this that even his long and involved sentences sound even more flowing and intelligible when read aloud. The length of some of these sentences was at times a cause of comment on my part; Shoghi Effendi would raise his head and look at me, with those wonderful eyes whose colour and expression changed so frequently, with a hint of defiance and rebelliousness in them – but did not shorten his sentence! I can recall only one occasion when he admitted, ruefully, that it was a long sentence; but he still did not change it. It said what he wanted it to as he wanted it to; it was too bad it was so long. On the other hand he liked to use a structure sometimes of very short sentences that followed each other one after the other like the cracks of a whip. He would call my attention to this variation in style, pointing out how each method was effective, how the combination of the two enriched the whole and achieved different ends. (PP 197)

He was very fond of the device of alliteration, much used in oriental languages but now no longer so common in English. An excellent example of his use of this is provided by this sentence reiterating words beginning with 'p' from one of his cables: '*Time pressing opportunity priceless potent aid providentially promised unfailing.*' (PP 197–8)

Shoghi Effendi's method of composition was like that of a mosaic artist at work, who creates his picture with clearly

defined and separate pieces; each word had its own place and if he struck a difficult sentence he would not change it around so as to accommodate a thought that grammatically could not fit into the sentence structure but would stick to it, sometimes literally for hours, until I at least was worn out by his verbal repetition of the phrase as he battled to subjugate it and fit it in the way he wished to, trying one piece of his mosaic after another, until he had solved his problem. I seldom remember his ever abandoning a sentence and starting over in a new form. (PP 198)

The Guardian's method of writing was interesting: he did not like large pieces of paper and usually wrote all his books and long communications on small lined pads. He did all his composition by hand; if the first draft was too written-over he sat down patiently and copied it all over. He typed, on a very small portable machine, by the two-finger method, all his own manuscripts, making any further changes as he went along. It is not surprising therefore that by this method he should have produced such highly polished works as we have from his pen. (PP 201–2)

One of my associates, for whose prowess in expressing himself in elegant English I have high regard, wrote the following about Shoghi Effendi's style: 'In most general terms it may be said that the hallmark of the Guardian's English is the perfect blend it effects between a comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter on the one hand, and a consummate mastery of the language in which this is to be expressed on the other. Had either of these been lacking, then it might truly be said that he could not have achieved the level of excellence that he did . . . [T]he writings of Shoghi Effendi . . . although they might appear to some expansive, are in fact, considering the sheer vastness and variety of the subjects dealt with, models of concision and compression . . . [W]hat one surveys in looking at the writings of

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Shoghi Effendi is not so much a particular style of English on a par with many others; but rather the English language used to the very height of its capacity, and with a level of mastery so consummate as to constitute a testimony to the truth of this Revelation.'

Comparing such writers as Gibbon, whose English style Shoghi Effendi greatly admired, with that of the Guardian, my correspondent further writes:

. . . [W]hereas the carefully wrought prose of the latter (Gibbon), for all its lapidary precision, is of a dry, sophisticated and slightly world-weary nature, that of the Guardian by contrast is brimful of vitality, enthusiasm, and redemptive affirmation . . . Intimately connected with the impalpably life-affirming, spiritual, and poetic qualities of the Guardian's writings, is their immensely energizing, vitalizing and stimulating effect upon the reader, who, provided he approach them in the correct deferential and receptive spirit, cannot help but little by little feel his heart uplifted, his imagination fired, and even his pulse slightly quickened, as the sheer magnitude of the vision they unfold, imparted to some degree by every sentence, becomes apparent . . . (MH 4/12/05)

The longest letter Shoghi Effendi wrote during the first 11 years of his ministry was his tribute to his Great Aunt, the Greatest Holy Leaf. It ran over nine pages of the compilation of his letters published in 1933. The passing of the Greatest Holy Leaf, as well as the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, were two events that caused devastating grief to the heart of the beloved Guardian. It is indeed more than coincidental, and perhaps providential, that Shoghi Effendi was absent at the times of the funerals of these two members of his family, who towered over all the rest in rank and spirituality. Indeed, it could be said that

although the natural parents of Shoghi Effendi were present throughout his childhood and beyond, his true spiritual parents were ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Bahíyyih Khánum.

In 1921, when the Master passed away, Shoghi Effendi was just embarking, at the youthful age of 24, on his mission as Head of the Faith, and may have been understandably diffident in expressing the full scope of his poignant sorrow. However, in 1932, when the Greatest Holy Leaf passed on, he allowed himself full rein in the expression of his emotions, and freely used the potency of his literary gift:

*How can my lonely pen, so utterly inadequate to glorify so exalted a station, so impotent to portray the experiences of so sublime a life, so disqualified to recount the blessings she showered upon me since my earliest childhood – how can such a pen repay the great debt of gratitude and love that I owe her whom I regarded as my chief sustainer, my most affectionate comforter, the joy and inspiration of my life? My grief is too immense, my remorse too profound, to be able to give full vent at this moment to the feelings that surge within me. (BA 187)*

At the end of his letter he addresses a plea to the departed soul of the Greatest Holy Leaf in these moving words:

*Dearly-beloved Greatest Holy Leaf! Through the mist of tears that fill my eyes I can clearly see, as I pen these lines, thy noble figure before me, and can recognize the serenity of thy kindly face. I can still gaze, though the shadow of the grave separate us, into thy blue, love-deep eyes, and can feel, in its calm intensity, the immense love thou didst bear for the Cause of thine Almighty Father, the attachment that bound thee to the most lowly and insignificant among its followers, the warm affection thou didst cherish for me in thine heart. The memory of the ineffable beauty of thy smile shall ever*

*continue to cheer and hearten me in the thorny path I am destined to pursue. The remembrance of the touch of thine hand shall spur me on to follow steadfastly in thy way. The sweet magic of thy voice shall remind me, when the hour of adversity is at its darkest, to hold fast to the rope thou didst seize so firmly all the days of thy life.*

*Bear thou this my message to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, thine exalted and divinely-appointed Brother: If the Cause for which Bahá'u'lláh toiled and labored, for which Thou didst suffer years of agonizing sorrow, for the sake of which streams of sacred blood have flowed, should, in the days to come, encounter storms more severe than those it has already weathered, do Thou continue to overshadow, with Thine all-encompassing care and wisdom, Thy frail, Thy unworthy appointed child.*

*Intercede, O noble and well-favoured scion of a heavenly Father, for me no less than for the toiling masses of Thy ardent lovers, who have sworn undying allegiance to Thy memory, whose souls have been nourished by the energies of Thy love, whose conduct has been moulded by the inspiring example of Thy life, and whose imaginations are fired by the imperishable evidences of Thy lively faith, Thy unshakable constancy, Thy invincible heroism, Thy great renunciation.*

*Whatever betide us, however distressing the vicissitudes which the nascent Faith of God may yet experience, we pledge ourselves, before the mercy-seat of thy glorious Father, to hand on, unimpaired and undivided, to generations yet unborn, the glory of that tradition of which thou hast been its most brilliant exemplar.*

*In the innermost recesses of our hearts, O thou exalted Leaf of the Abhá Paradise, we have reared for thee a shining mansion that the hand of time can never undermine, a shrine which shall frame eternally the matchless beauty of thy*



*countenance, an altar whereon the fire of thy consuming love shall burn forever. (BA 194)*

How can one remain insensible after reading such a soul-stirring call! The American National Spiritual Assembly, having received this letter, chose to produce a photocopied version of the original in the handwriting of the beloved Guardian, so that the friends everywhere would have access not only to a full account of the life and work of one who was the heroine of the Bahá'í Dispensation, but also to appreciate the degree of heartbreak that afflicted Shoghi Effendi.

Before we end this section, a few minor points regarding Shoghi Effendi's writing style need to be addressed. It is often forgotten that the titles used in the publication of the Guardian's letters were not always chosen by Shoghi Effendi himself. Most of these titles were added by Horace Holley, who served as Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi. Holley also inserted subtitles in the texts. Rúhíyyih Khánum writes: 'Horace was a writer himself, and the titles he gave to the Guardian's communications not only served to identify them but dramatized their message and captured the imagination' (PP 205). She further writes that Horace Holley, when inserting these titles, picked up 'phrases in the writing of the Guardian which were most descriptive of the general subject' (PP 205).

Another feature of the Guardian's works (with the exception of *Nabíl's Narrative*) is the total absence of footnotes. He was quite often quoting from Tablets revealed by the Central Figures of the Faith, which had not yet been translated and published. It is left to future scholars of the Faith to research these references and, with the approval of the Universal House of Justice, add them to the text. I have already commented on one footnote in the Book of Certitude.

As to the cabled messages he sent to the Bahá'í world, Rúhíyyih Khánum has given us the following insight:

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Since the inception of his ministry Shoghi Effendi had increasingly used the medium of telegrams and cablegrams, not only because they saved time but because, as he explained to me, of their psychological effect; a cable conveys a sense of urgency and drama and is often a better way of driving home one's point. Shoghi Effendi developed what one might call the language of cables to such a high degree that they became a literary accomplishment. Not infrequently he sent cables the length of letters. He thought in the abbreviated form when he wrote them. It was not a question of expressing a thought in the normal style of composition and then eliminating all the words that could be left out and still convey the meaning; from the beginning he did not think those words into his text at all and thus the style is very graphic, powerful and dramatic. (PP 225–6)

These cables were published in the American *Bahá'í News*, and the National Office would insert words to make the text more understandable to the readers. Quite often, when Shoghi Effendi would read these inserted words, he would find that they misrepresented his intention. He had to then write to the National Assembly requesting them to make the necessary corrections, which were subsequently published in the same bulletin. This clearly shows his meticulous care in ensuring that his meaning was conveyed correctly to the friends.

Another point regarding cables sent by him is that he invariably omitted the closing greeting, and simply signed his name. Sometimes he used his full name, Shoghi Rabbani, possibly for security requirements during the war years.

#### **B. Comparison of his English and Persian writings**

In previous sections we dealt separately with Shoghi Effendi's writing styles in Persian/Arabic and in English. They are certainly similar in their distinctiveness, their clarity, the elevated

character of their tone, their precision, systematic orderliness, intellectual reasoning, exquisite beauty and fervency of appeal. Shoghi Effendi has handed down to generations yet unborn a matchless heritage of dissertations on the fundamental teachings of the Faith, salient features of Bahá'í history, soul-entrancing disclosures of the vision of Bahá'u'lláh about the destiny of His Faith, and glimpses of the glory of the future Bahá'í World Commonwealth.

There are unique concepts in the Guardian's writings which cannot readily be found in the Writings of the Founders of the Faith, although the roots of his exposition can always be traced back to the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. A few of the startling subjects disclosed by the pen of Shoghi Effendi are the following:

1. The seven stages that national communities will experience as the Faith passes from obscurity to formal recognition, establishment and supremacy in their lands.
2. The distinction between the Bahá'í Cycle and the Bahá'í Dispensation, the three Ages of that Dispensation, and the division of each Age into epochs, and epochs into phases.
3. The need for every National Assembly to have a teaching and consolidation plan, and to adopt goals and objectives under the overall umbrella of the international plans formulated by the Head of the Faith.
4. The concept of the nine concentric circles which surround the sacred dust of the Holy of Holies, namely the sanctified remains of the Blessed Báb. The first circle is the planet itself. The subsequent inner circles are the Holy Land, Mount Carmel, the properties owned by the Faith on that mountain, the gardens immediately adjacent to the Shrine, the domed superstructure, the six rooms built by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during

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His Ministry, the vault wherein the casket has been deposited, and finally the casket itself.

5. Despite the exalted station of the Shrine of the Báb, it is still under the shadow of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, the Most Holy Shrine.
6. The characterization of the Báb as the fruit of the Adamic Cycle – a fruit which yielded its oil, and was subsequently ignited by Bahá'u'lláh in the lamp of His Revelation. This light is, under our very eyes, being diffused first to the major countries and islands of the world, then gradually to every spot on earth, enabling the warmth of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to penetrate, through the establishment of the administrative machinery of the Faith, into every land, and finally to suffuse the hearts of the population throughout the entire planet.

Regarding the tenor of the Guardian's communications with the East, several important points need to be remembered:

1. The friends in the East were generally reared on the importance of the fulfilment of prophecies, the need to abide by the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and the requirements of the teaching work. They were groomed to pursue these avenues and live the Bahá'í life in the hope that the Promised Dawn will break. They had very little experience in the conduct of their administrative affairs, because the institutions of the Faith in their countries were at a lamentably rudimentary stage. One of the main concerns of Shoghi Effendi therefore was to educate them in the administrative principles of the Faith, and in the creation and operation of both local and national institutions and their attendant agencies. In his letters he gave them the broad outline of the Bahá'í system of administration, but repeatedly called on them to follow the model which was being carefully implemented in the West,

more particularly in North America. He insisted that the Spiritual Assemblies have properly formulated constitutions and by-laws, and that these should follow the pattern that had been already established in America.

2. In view of the persecution suffered by the friends in the East by reason of the constant incitements of the Muslim clergy and the abject indifference of the civil authorities, who refused to openly defend and protect the legitimate rights of the Bahá'ís, Shoghi Effendi had to counsel them to be firm and steadfast, even in the face of imprisonment, confiscation of properties, and martyrdom. He advised them to avoid becoming involved directly or indirectly, individually or institutionally, with any political activity, to obey in administrative matters the regulations and restrictions imposed on them, to make efforts to obtain from the authorities gradual relaxation of these restrictions, and finally to place their trust in the promises of Bahá'u'lláh, Who anticipated not only the emancipation of the Faith but also its attainment to supreme glory in the land of its birth.
3. While in the West, in view of the relative freedom enjoyed by individual citizens and minority groups, Shoghi Effendi had no reservation in writing to the friends about the vision of Bahá'u'lláh for the future World Order, he was deliberately cautious in unveiling this vision in great detail to the communities in the East. The first time he engaged in such expositions in Persian/Arabic was when he wrote his abridgement of *God Passes By* in 1944. It was then that he briefly expounded on the features of the Divine Order enshrined in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.
4. In his letters to the West, Shoghi Effendi usually addressed the recipients in such phrases as, '*To the beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful, throughout . . .*'. In his

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Persian letters however, he was more elaborate and descriptive of the condition of the Bahá'í communities in eastern lands. Included below are some free renditions of the way he addressed the friends in the East:

*O ye the oppressed ones in the path of the Lord, who have remained steadfast in His Covenant and who are builders of the pillars of His luminous and excellent Order.*

*O burning torches of love and affection! I send you my salutations from this sacred, luminous and radiant Spot. Your loving memory is always on my mind, filled as I am with joy as I receive your glad tidings. I rejoice at the vastness of your services, remember you in my prayers, and seek for every one of you perpetual confirmations from the Kingdom of Lights.*

5. Another distinction is that in some of his letters, after such opening phrases as quoted above, he would begin with a preamble in which he would extol the Blessed Beauty, or the Master, or in general the Concourse on High. A typical example is the preamble to his abridgement of *God Passes By* in Persian. This appears in its free rendition form as extract no. 7 in our section dealing with Persian letters.
6. In a few of his letters to the East, Shoghi Effendi felt free to directly invoke the Voice of Bahá'u'lláh or 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as if they were addressing the friends at the very moment of his writing. Two free renditions of such passages appear under nos. 6 and 1 of the examples given in the Persian letters section.
7. Yet another point is worthy of consideration. At times at the beginning of a letter to the East, and quite often at the end, he would include an entreaty which was clearly not intended to

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become part of the regular repertory of Bahá'í prayers. He considered these more as supplications of his own, turning his heart to the Realms Above, referring to the state of the oppressed community of the Orient, and seeking divine assistance in the execution of the tasks ahead. Two such examples have been included in the list of provisional translations in the section on Persian letters.

Undoubtedly, in future years, the day will come when the Universal House of Justice will make available to the friends in the West authorized translations of Shoghi Effendi's immortal writings in the Persian and Arabic tongues.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. Why is it that, for over 80 years now, the writings of Shoghi Effendi and of the Universal House of Justice have conveyed a constant feeling of urgency? Is every day really a critical moment in the life of the Faith?**

A. That is a very good question! It signifies growth. The Faith is a living organism. Every day, every moment counts. Every turn of events is critical. It's like when we have an infant, every day in the life of this infant is critical. Just like Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice looks at the Faith as a living organism. They tell us that the time is critical. They ask us to support matters that are very important at every stage in the evolution of our Faith. The Faith is always growing. It is not a dead or stagnant thing. It is a developing, living organism. Every stage in its development is critical.

**Q. Shoghi Effendi, when writing to the Bahá'ís of the East, sometimes expresses thoughts in a form of prayer, or by saying that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is now addressing the people of Bahá. How should we consider these? Are these prayers? Can we say that the Guardian wrote prayers?**

A. Shoghi Effendi did not want the friends to consider what he wrote, in the form of prayer, as prayers to be read on different occasions or to be included in prayer books. He always described what he had written in the form of prayer as a supplication: a supplication rising from his own heart about the condition of the community at that time, and asking Bahá'u'lláh for the removal of difficulties, to help the Bahá'ís to arise and carry out the wishes as expressed by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. So, out of respect for him, the House of Justice has decided that we should not include these supplications in our prayer books at this time.



Regarding the second part of the question, I have given you two examples in the material. In one, Shoghi Effendi transmits a message from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the Bahá’ís, and in the second he transmits a message from Bahá’u’lláh. This is something peculiar to the writings of Shoghi Effendi addressed to the friends in the East. He has not repeated this method of addressing the friends in his letters to the West, with one exception. In ‘The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh’, he communicates a message from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the friends. The way he expresses it is, ‘*We can dimly picture to ourselves the wishes that must have welled from His eager heart as He bade His last farewell to that promising country. An inscrutable Wisdom, we can well imagine Him remark to His disciples on the eve of His departure, has, in His infinite bounty . . .*’ (WOB 86).

**Q. ‘In the innermost recesses of our hearts, O thou exalted Leaf of the Abhá Paradise, we have reared for thee a shining mansion that the hand of time can never undermine, a shrine which shall frame eternally the matchless beauty of thy countenance, an altar whereon the fire of thy consuming love shall burn forever’ (BA 194). Is this mansion purely symbolic, or is it also a reference to the monument Shoghi Effendi built over the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf?**

A. I think there is no question that it is a symbolic mansion which we must have in our hearts for the Greatest Holy Leaf.

**Q. The Guardian insisted that Spiritual Assemblies have a constitution and by-laws. What does this mean for Local and National Assemblies in this day?**

A. When Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice refer to the constitution of a National or Local Assembly, they refer to a special document that exists. There is a model document entitled ‘Declaration of Trust and By-laws of a

National Spiritual Assembly'. This document has been published in *The Bahá'í World*, in volumes up to Vol. XX. After Vol. XX the Universal House of Justice decided to bring out an annual edition of *The Bahá'í World*, and these later volumes do not contain that document. I think it first appeared in Vol. VI or VII. It was the wish of Shoghi Effendi, and it is the current wish of the Universal House of Justice, that every National Assembly should adopt this document as its constitution. When a National Assembly is seeking to become incorporated, the government, by virtue of legal requirements of the country, may suggest some changes to the constitution, but these changes are to be kept to an absolute minimum.

There is another, much shorter, document called 'By-laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly', which can also be found in those same volumes of *The Bahá'í World*. Again, it is the hope of the House of Justice that Local Assemblies, when incorporated, will adhere to this model as closely as possible.

**Q. You said that Shoghi Effendi invariably omitted the closing greetings in his cables. Was this for financial reasons, since every word had to be paid for?**

A. I really don't know why Shoghi Effendi did not include '*Your true brother*' or some other greeting at the end of his cables. Cables are very expensive, so usually the sender would try to be as brief as possible. That may well have been the reason, but we can't be sure.

In 1951 Shoghi Effendi reopened the doors to pilgrimage to the World Centre, after the disturbances in Israel had lessened. As soon as this message from the Guardian was announced, one of the American Bahá'ís wrote him a letter in which he expressed his longing to go on pilgrimage. Then he waited for a reply. He left instructions at the post office of his town that if anything was received by cable from Haifa, they should phone him immediately and not wait to deliver the cable to his house.

About a week later he received a phone call informing him that a cable had arrived from Haifa. While on the phone he said that he had to go and get a pen and paper. So the official on the other side waited. He went and got some paper, and when he returned to the phone he said: 'Yes, go ahead!' and the clerk replied: 'Welcome. Shoghi.' That was all! He had expected a long message, but in cablese, briefness was Shoghi Effendi's practice.

**Q. Why was Shoghi Effendi so reserved about writing to the Persian believers about his vision of the future World Order of Bahá'u'lláh?**

A. Between 1921 and 1944, in his letters to the West, Shoghi Effendi opened the eyes of the friends to the glory of Bahá'u'lláh's future World Order. However, he did not write about this subject in his Persian and Arabic writings. It must be said, a few of the friends in the East were quite aware of what he was writing to the West. Shoghi Effendi encouraged the Iranian Bahá'ís to learn English and to read his writings and to have classes on them.

In my own personal opinion, I think he was waiting for the conditions in the East to change. He wanted to wait until there was greater enlightenment and liberality in the country. Between 1921 and 1944 there were many changes in Iran, and many more people started to receive second level education, and even third level, too. This brought the country out of its dark ages, if you will. If he had started writing to them about the World Order in 1921, it would have probably been totally misinterpreted by the Persian government. They would have accused the Bahá'ís of trying to take over not only the government of Iran but the government of the whole world! These misrepresentations would have become ammunition for the enemies of the Faith.

In 1944 the Guardian decided that the time had come for him to write something in Persian about the World Order. Then the

Bahá'ís in the East realized that they had totally misunderstood that verse in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

On this point, I should say that when Shoghi Effendi wrote about the New World Order, he was not writing about politics. He was talking about the spiritual and social evolution of humanity. The Bahá'í Faith will not be spread through force, and the New World Order will not be established through armed rebellion. It will come about naturally, as a result of the maturity of the human race, when the majority of the people in the world would embrace the Faith. The way to hasten its arrival is to teach the Faith. The Báb has written *'The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past, and shall continue to be in the future!'* (SWB 77). As 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains this in *Some Answered Questions*, Muḥammad never sanctioned offensive jihad. He only allowed his followers to defend themselves against their would-be attackers and murderers. After His death, the Muslims themselves transformed defensive jihad into an offensive one. Religion is not to be promoted with the sword. In the Qur'an it says, *'To you be your Way, and to me mine'* (109: 6) and *'Let there be no compulsion in Religion'* (2: 256).



## IX

### Miscellaneous

#### **A. Brief statements introducing the Faith, its history, basic principles and administrative structures**

Shoghi Effendi wrote two statements during his ministry in which he outlined the history and teachings of the Faith. The first would have been produced in the early 1930s, and was written possibly for the benefit of the British mandate authorities in Palestine. It appears as a section immediately after the Introduction to the 1955 edition of the compilation of Shoghi Effendi's writings entitled *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, on page xi, and was called 'The Bahá'í Faith – A Summary'. The second statement was written in July 1947 in response to a request made by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. It was published by the Bahá'í Publishing Committee in Wilmette, in October 1947, under the title, *The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh – A World Religion*. There are many similarities between the two statements, in such aspects as the treatment of the principles of the Faith and a summary of its history. There are, however, some distinctive features particular to each one .

The earlier statement begins with the following sentence: '*The Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, His followers believe, is divine in origin, all embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men*' (WOB xi).

In no previous writings do we find the statement that the Faith is '*scientific in its method*'. It can well be assumed that future scholars will research the point and develop this theme.

There are two other elements in the first paragraph that are worthy of note. Emphasis is laid on the fact that '*religious truth is not absolute, but relative*'. Furthermore, when referring to the process of human evolution, we read the following sentence in explanation of the consummation of that process:

*This final stage in this stupendous evolution, they [the Bahá'ís] assert, is not only necessary but inevitable, that it is gradually approaching, and that nothing short of the celestial potency with which a divinely ordained Message can claim to be endowed can succeed in establishing it.*  
(WOB xi)

A word of explanation might be useful regarding this quotation. Some non-Bahá'í scholars have argued that if the organic unity of mankind is inevitable, then we do not need a divinely ordained Message to establish it. Two examples have been given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Tablets and talks which bear on this point. Plants grow both in an abandoned field and in a well-tended garden, but a gardener is needed to transform the field into a garden! Likewise, a child develops its mental powers organically, but an educator is needed to train and discipline that development.

The second statement provides us with some highly revealing features of the Faith. These are listed below:

1. The social and material teachings of a religion are described as the '*non-essential aspects*' of the doctrine promulgated by that Faith (FOB 2).

MISCELLANEOUS

2. The station of Bahá'u'lláh is uncompromisingly described as '*the Promised One in the end of time*', and the advent of the '*Day of Judgment*' (FOB 2).
3. The aim of Bahá'u'lláh is stated as being '*not to destroy, but to fulfill the Revelations of the past*', and '*to reconcile rather than accentuate the divergences*' of the creeds in present-day society (FOB 2).
4. The duty of investigating truth is not only the responsibility of humanity as a whole, but the '*unfettered search after truth*' is a '*primary duty*' of every member of the Bahá'í community (FOB 3).
5. A description of the Administrative Order of the Faith is given, a feature which was not discussed in the previous statement.
6. The Bahá'í Faith is referred to as '*essentially supernatural, supranational, entirely non-political, non-partisan, and diametrically opposed to any policy or school of thought that seeks to exalt any particular race, class or nation*' (FOB 6).
7. Yet another interesting point is the emphasis Shoghi Effendi places on the principle that Bahá'ís '*subordinate every particular interest, be it personal, regional or national, to the over-riding interests of the generality of mankind*', by reason of the truth that '*the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole*' (FOB 7).

The statement ends with Shoghi Effendi quoting tributes made by prominent world figures such as Queen Marie of Romania, Leo Tolstoy, Revd T.K. Cheney, and the Master of Balliol, Professor Benjamin Jowett, among others.



## B. Statistical surveys

During his ministry Shoghi Effendi issued three statistical surveys of the Bahá'í world community. The first was published in 1944, consisted of 24 pages and was entitled *A World Survey: The Bahá'í Faith, 1844–1944*. This was released on the occasion of the Centenary of the Declaration of the Báb. The second survey was dated 1950, consisted of 36 pages, and was published under the title of *The Bahá'í Faith, 1844–1950 – Information Statistical and Comparative*. The last survey was published simultaneously in the United States and the United Kingdom in 1953, on the occasion of the Centenary of the birth of the Bahá'í Revelation, and was entitled *The Bahá'í Faith, 1844–1952 – Information Statistical and Comparative, including supplement: Ten Year International Bahá'í Teaching and Consolidation Plan 1953–1963*.

This third survey consisted of a booklet of 74 pages, divided into two parts. Part one covered some 50 pages, and dealt with such subjects as: dates of historical significance; enumerations of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb's best-known writings; names given to the doors of the Shrine of the Báb; the fate of those who persecuted Him and opposed the construction of His Shrine; the Bahá'í Calendar; a list of significant events related to Bahá'u'lláh's Proclamation of His Message; stages in Bahá'u'lláh's successive exiles; and cities visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the course of His travels. Its contents also include data about countries opened to the Faith; the languages in which Bahá'í literature is translated and published; tribes and minority groups represented in the community; names of the Hands of the Cause; lists of National Assemblies and those which were incorporated; principal Bahá'í historic sites in Iran; and names of prominent personages who have paid tribute to the Faith.

Part two covers the objectives and goals of the Ten Year Crusade. Under 23 headings, Shoghi Effendi tabulates these goals by continent, and according to the responsibilities assigned

to each National Assembly. He gives alphabetical lists of territories to be opened and languages into which Bahá'í literature is to be translated, names the countries that need to be consolidated and those National Assemblies responsible, and further divides the goals in terms of National Assemblies to be incorporated, temple sites to be purchased, national endowments to be acquired and publishing trusts to be founded.

This precious volume also included a map that showed the various goals, outlined in different colours for each category, and indicating which National Assembly was responsible for which task.

### **C. *The Bahá'í World* volumes**

The idea of the publication of a Bahá'í Yearbook was a suggestion made by Horace Holley in 1924. Shoghi Effendi approved the proposal and considered it '*extremely valuable and timely*' (BA 74). He gave the responsibility of producing the first yearbook to the National Assembly of America. From volumes II to XII, Shoghi Effendi assumed the responsibility of producing the publication himself, and also changed the title to *The Bahá'í World*.

Rúhíyyih Khánum, in *The Priceless Pearl*, gives us further insights on the subject:

Shoghi Effendi seized on this idea and from then on Horace became Shoghi Effendi's primary instrument, as a gifted writer, and in his capacity as Secretary of the American National Spiritual Assembly, in making of *The Bahá'í World* the remarkable and unique book it became. (PP 209)

What Shoghi Effendi himself thought of *The Bahá'í World* he put down in writing. As early as 1927, when only one volume had been published, he wrote to a non-Bahá'í: '*I would strongly advise you to procure a copy of the Bahá'í*

*Year Book . . . which will give you a clear and authoritative statement of the purpose, the claim and the influence of the Faith.*' In a general letter addressed, in 1928, 'To the beloved of the Lord and the hand-maids of the Merciful throughout the East and West', and entirely devoted to the subject of *The Bahá'í World*, Shoghi Effendi informs them: 'I have ever since its inception taken a keen and sustained interest in its development, have personally participated in the collection of its material, the arrangement of its contents, and the close scrutiny of whatever data it contains. I confidently and emphatically recommend it to every thoughtful and eager follower of the Faith, whether in the East or in the West . . .'. He wrote that its material is readable, attractive, comprehensive and authoritative; its treatment of the fundamentals of the Cause concise and persuasive, and its illustrations thoroughly representative; it is unexcelled and unapproached by any other Bahá'í publication of its kind. This book Shoghi Effendi always visualized as being – indeed he designed it to be – eminently suitable for the public, for scholars, to place in libraries and as a means, as he put it, of '*removing the malicious misrepresentations and unfortunate misunderstandings that have so long and so grievously clouded the luminous Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.*'

It was a book that he himself often gave as a gift to royalty, to statesmen, to professors, universities, newspaper editors and non-Bahá'ís in general, mailing it to them with his simple personal card 'Shoghi Rabbani' enclosed. The reaction of one of these – an American professor – conveys very clearly the impression the gift Shoghi Effendi had sent him produced: 'Two copies of Bahá'í World have reached us . . . I cannot tell you how much I appreciate being able to study the book, which is exceedingly interesting and inspiring in every way . . . I congratulate you especially for developing the literature, and keeping alive such a wholesome spirit amongst the persons of many different groups

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who look to you for leadership.’ But perhaps the greatest tribute to the calibre of this publication, into which Shoghi Effendi poured throughout the years so much time and care, was that a proud Queen should write for it special tributes to the Faith and consent that these and her own photograph should appear as frontispieces in its various volumes. ‘*No words*’, Shoghi Effendi wrote to Martha Root in 1931, upon receiving from her one of Queen Marie’s specially written tributes, ‘*can adequately express my pleasure at the receipt of your letter enclosing the precious appreciation which will constitute a valuable and outstanding contribution to the forthcoming issue of the Bahá’í World.*’ (PP 211–12)

He always deplored the fact that the material was not of a higher standard. It is due solely to his determination and perseverance that the *Bahá’í World* volumes are as brilliant and impressive as they are. (PP 210)

Partly because of the difficulty in obtaining adequate material, and also because of his other preoccupations, Shoghi Effendi found that he would have to cover two or more years in each of the publications. He produced eleven volumes during his ministry. Volume XIII of *The Bahá’í World*, which covered the period of the Interregnum from the passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 to the end of the Ten Year Crusade, was produced by the Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land. Thereafter, the Universal House of Justice followed the same practice, and issued seven more volumes covering the years from 1963 to 1992. Subsequently, the House of Justice has found it possible to publish the volumes on a yearly basis.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. What happened to the descendants of Queen Marie of Romania? Was not her daughter also a Bahá'í? What is the relationship of the family to the Faith now?**

A. My wife, Violette, can deal with this question better than I. Here is Violette: 'The youngest daughter of Queen Marie, Princess Ileana, was with her mother during the visits of Martha Root and she was very attracted to the Faith. She never actually said that she was a believer, unlike her mother. After the passing of Queen Marie and all the political upheavals in Romania, when the whole royal family left the country, Princess Ileana went to the United States. While there, she actually converted to the Catholic Faith and towards the end of her life she was a nun. She lived in a convent and she was very much involved in that kind of life, and then something very unusual happened. Shoghi Effendi had told the Bahá'ís that whenever there were royalty or heads of government, or important political people in the area, the individual Bahá'ís should not contact them. Whatever contact is made, he said, should be made through the administrative bodies. Princess Ileana gave a talk at a conference in the US about her mother. This is a story of many years ago, in the lifetime of Shoghi Effendi. One of the Bahá'ís, a lady, was very enthusiastic and she thought Princess Ileana should have said in her talk that her mother was a Bahá'í. She got up in that conference and raised her hand, and then said to the Princess that there was evidence that her mother, Queen Marie, was a Bahá'í. Princess Ileana was very upset in public, and she publicly denounced this fact. When she wrote her biography of her mother, her family and herself, she very specifically said that her mother belonged to the Orthodox Church, or whatever was the church of Romania. It was a very sad thing and there was no reason why this would have come out in her book, had she not been provoked by this Bahá'í in public.

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‘The grandson of Queen Marie is now King Michael. He is not officially the King of Romania, but if they wanted a king, he would be the one. He is a very nice man. I remember, in 1996, when Rúhiyyih Khánum was in London, arrangements were made for her to meet with King Michael and his wife, Queen Ann, a very wonderful couple. They are not interested in becoming Bahá’ís, but they are very fine individuals. They know about the Faith, as does their daughter, Crown Princess Margarita. She was in India one or two years ago. She was there officially with a group and they went to visit the Temple. There is a reception room next to the Temple in Delhi. When they took her to see this place, Mr Fariborz Sahba himself was present, and he took her around. There is a whole wall in that building of the photographs of Queen Marie and her statements about the Faith. This Princess Margarita was extremely impressed. She read and she turned to Mr Sahba and said, “Yes, I recognize the handwriting of my great-grandmother”. They are quite aware of the Faith but none of them is a Bahá’í.’

**Q. What does the beloved Guardian mean when he states that religious truth is relative, not absolute? What impact should the statement have on our teaching work?**

A. The fact that religious truth is relative means that it cannot be absolute. It has to be suited to the conditions and the capacity of the recipient of that truth. If that recipient is limited in his understanding, the measure of truth given to him must also be limited. It must be suited to the recipient’s requirements.

For example, children at elementary school learn about arithmetic. It is simplified for the capacity of the children. There is so much that the children are not and cannot be told, because they would not understand. For example, they cannot learn about the complicated algorithms that are used in modern technology. A lot of that is arithmetic as well, but it is so complicated that we cannot even do it easily on paper. We need computers to work

out these calculations. Therefore, we can say that arithmetic is a relative truth. The level of understanding of the subject is not absolute. We will always be able to learn more than what we currently know. This is about scientific truth. Religious truth is the same. It is adapted to our understanding.

The statements of Abraham about God are still true. He compared God to the Sun. Even in Islam, the conception of God is not as elaborate as it is in our Faith. Christ referred to God as His Father and said that the Father was in Him. The choice of this simple terminology was in conformity with the understanding of the people of the time. In addition, religious truth involves the conception of the soul and the next world. Muḥammad compared the next world to a garden. His words are true, but they were adapted to the minds of the people of the time. Bahá'u'lláh has explained the meaning of all these terms, such as heaven, hell, the garden, the Sun etc. However, this is not the end. Religious truth is still relative and the future Manifestations of God will further develop these themes for humanity.

**Q. What are the social and material teachings of a religion?**

A. Shoghi Effendi has described the social and material teachings of religion as non-essential. He employed the terminology of essentials and non-essentials. 'Abdu'l-Bahá used a different terminology. He spoke about spiritual teachings and social teachings. The meaning is very clear: the teachings of every religion are comprised of two parts. The essential part has to do with morality, with ethics, and with the eternal, immutable principles of religion. The non-essential part includes instructions about material things and matters related to our daily lives, e.g. inheritance, marriage, divorce, burial, as well as prayers, fasting etc. The essentials are really the same in all religions but the non-essential parts can change.

However, Shoghi Effendi mentions that there is a third part of the teachings of every religion. The third part consists of the

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man-made additions to the essential and non-essential parts of religion. The essential part of the religion is not static, as each Manifestation elaborates on that essential part. Each Manifestation of God also makes amendments to the non-essential parts of religion, as is required. The man-made additions to religion are always set aside and disregarded.

We should use the concepts of essential, non-essential and man-made rituals in order to teach the principle of religious unity and progressive revelation. It is through this kind of explanation that we can demonstrate that it is possible for all religions to be in complete agreement. Tolerance of other religions is good, but it is not enough. People must see the unity of religion.



## Conclusion

When one reviews the panorama of Shoghi Effendi's writings, in English and in Persian/Arabic, one is bound to be overwhelmed by the power, beauty and precision of the language he uses. As we have seen in the above sections, his style changed over the years and became more forceful, more impressive and more majestic. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá had envisaged in His Will and Testament, the tender plant had become a mighty tree, and the tree had yielded its fruit.

Shoghi Effendi himself never stated the broad lines of his ministry in so many words. We might, however, identify some compelling overall objectives in the literary work he produced so profusely, so lovingly and so wisely over the years. Five of these overriding themes appear to have occupied a central position in his writings.

1. The Kitáb-i-Aqdas foreshadows the formation of the Universal House of Justice at the end of the line of the Aghsáns. From the very outset of his ministry the Guardian drew the attention of the friends to the shining goal of establishing, on a firm foundation, the Supreme Body of the Administrative Order. For this firm foundation to be achieved it was imperative that Local Assemblies be established in the true spirit and with the sound procedures of Bahá'í elections. These assemblies had to function harmoniously and efficiently, in accordance with a set of clearly defined by-laws, and their consultation had to follow the lofty principles enumerated by the Master in His Tablets.

In addition, National Assemblies had to be established in conformity with the stipulations laid down in the Will and

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Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, to be formed through well-ordered National Conventions, and function, like Local Assemblies, in accordance with national by-laws. They had, moreover, to organize and promote the teaching work, to provide means for the spiritual enrichment and development of the community, to establish national headquarters, acquire endowments, issue regular bulletins, and represent the Faith to those in authority in the country. These Assemblies were also meant to become effective instruments to execute the provisions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablets of the Divine Plan. Such preliminary steps Shoghi Effendi considered as essential for the eventual election of the Universal House of Justice, the future Pivot of the Covenant and Central Authority to which all must turn.

2. Unfounded theories and even unwarranted assumptions were being made by the believers about each of the Central Figures of the Faith, as well as about himself as Guardian of the Cause. Administrative unity was not enough – it had to be combined with the greater concept of doctrinal unity. Thus, he had to define in clear terms the distinction between God, the Almighty Creator and Essence of Essences, and His Manifestations, who were the Perfect Mirrors of Divine Light. The unapproachable station of Bahá’u’lláh, the singular position of the Báb in the Bahá’í Dispensation, and the unique rank occupied by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Mystery of God, had to be delineated. Likewise, the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the House of Justice, the distinctive features of the Administrative Order, and the relationship of that Order to the Author of the Faith and the Centre of its Covenant, had to be explicitly explained. Such must have been the motives that led Shoghi Effendi to write ‘The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh’, which, as stated earlier, he regarded as a supplement to the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

3. He saw the need to provide the community with an authentic record of the historical events of the Ministries of the Báb and of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as the major developments of the first Bahá'í Century. This prompted him to produce first *The Dawn Breakers* and then *God Passes By*.
4. Looking into the future, he had to outline the stages that the Bahá'í Administrative Order would traverse as it matured into the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and eventually into the Bahá'í Commonwealth. These steps had to be described in the context of world developments, on the one hand, and on the other in line with the driving, mysterious force which propelled the Cause of God on its divinely ordained course.

In conjunction with the overshadowing responsibility of individual teaching, Shoghi Effendi urged National Assemblies to formulate collective teaching plans, and trained them to create agencies and instruments to implement the two necessary counterparts of community development, namely, expansion and consolidation. These national undertakings would prepare the Bahá'í world to engage in universal enterprises such as the Ten Year Crusade, aiming at the diffusion of the light of the Bahá'í Revelation throughout the planet, and the spread of its beneficial influence over all races, creeds and classes of humanity.

5. Apart from these overriding considerations, he certainly had other concerns that he had to address. For example, he could not ignore the need to emphasize the moral aspect of Bahá'í life, and the obligation of adhering to norms of personal behaviour such as freedom from prejudice, rectitude of conduct, and attainment of excellence in all things. He also had to warn the Bahá'ís against affiliating themselves with political parties and interfering in political activities. Furthermore, as the independence of the Faith was becoming

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increasingly apparent, the followers of the Most Great Name had to disassociate themselves from the ecclesiastical orders of other religions. The Guardian encouraged the Bahá'ís to actively serve their countries by participating in administrative (non-political) fields of government, as well as in community activities and benevolent pursuits. On the international level, he called on the friends to support humanitarian projects and other endeavours in harmony with the spirit of the Faith, and to aid efforts that would promote the general interests of the human race as it is impelled along the path to world solidarity and universal peace.

How perceptive was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who, when asked about the '*little child*' Isaiah had prophesised would '*lead*' the faithful to triumph (Isa. 11: 6), answered in a Tablet that that child was indeed alive. The Tablet has been quoted by Amatu'l-Bahá in *The Priceless Pearl*:

*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.*  
(PP 2)

We have seen the '*supreme capacity*' of Shoghi Effendi's inspired pen, and the '*consummate power and unsurpassed might*' that he evinced through his immortal writings. Indeed, he has shed his illumination on '*all the horizons of the world*', and future generations will witness how '*ages and centuries*' have borne '*traces of him*'.

## Abbreviations

ACC	<i>‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Centre of the Covenant</i>
Acts	New Testament: Acts of the Apostles
ADJ	<i>The Advent of Divine Justice</i>
AR	<i>Arohanui: Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand</i>
Athar	<i>Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A ‘lá</i>
BA	<i>Bahá’í Administration</i>
BBM	<i>Blessings Beyond Measure</i>
BN	Bahíyyih Nakhjavání, personal note to the author
CC	<i>Compilation of Compilations</i>
CEBF	<i>A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá’í Faith</i>
CF	<i>Citadel of Faith</i>
CUHJ	<i>The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice</i>
DB	<i>The Dawn-Breakers</i>
FOB	<i>The Faith of Bahá’u’lláh</i>
Gls	<i>Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh</i>
GPB	<i>God Passes By</i>
GT	<i>George Townshend</i>
HE	<i>High Endeavours: Messages to Alaska</i>
HW	<i>The Hidden Words</i>
JTA	<i>Japan Will Turn Ablaze</i>
KA	<i>The Kitáb-i-Aqdas</i>
KI	<i>The Kitáb-i-Íqán</i>
LAN	<i>Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand</i>
LDG	<i>The Light of Divine Guidance</i>
MBW	<i>Messages to the Bahá’í World 1950–1957</i>
MC	<i>Messages to Canada</i>

# ABBREVIATIONS

MoC	<i>The Ministry of the Custodians</i>
MH	Mark Hellaby, personal note to the author
MSI	<i>Messages of Shoghi Effendi to the Indian Subcontinent</i>
MUHJ	<i>Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986</i>
NZ	Navváb-Zádih
PA	<i>The Passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá</i>
PBA	<i>Principles of Bahá’í Administration</i>
PDC	<i>The Promised Day is Come</i>
PM	<i>Prayers and Meditations by Bahá’u’lláh</i>
PP	<i>The Priceless Pearl</i>
RD	Research Department memorandum
SAQ	<i>Some Answered Questions</i>
SBWC	Secretariat of the Bahá’í World Centre
Sels	<i>Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá</i>
SEO	<i>Shoghi Effendi in Oxford.</i>
SLH	<i>The Summons of the Lord of Hosts</i>
SW	<i>Star of the West</i>
SWB	<i>Selections from the Writings of the Báb</i>
SWSE	<i>Studying the Writings of Shoghi Effendi</i>
TAW	<i>Tawqí‘át-i-Mubárákih</i>
TB	<i>Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas</i>
TN	<i>A Traveler’s Narrative</i>
TDH	<i>This Decisive Hour</i>
UD	<i>Unfolding Destiny</i>
VSE	<i>The Vision of Shoghi Effendi</i>
WOB	<i>The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh.</i>
WTA	<i>The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá</i>

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