

## The Divinely Guided Universal House of Justice

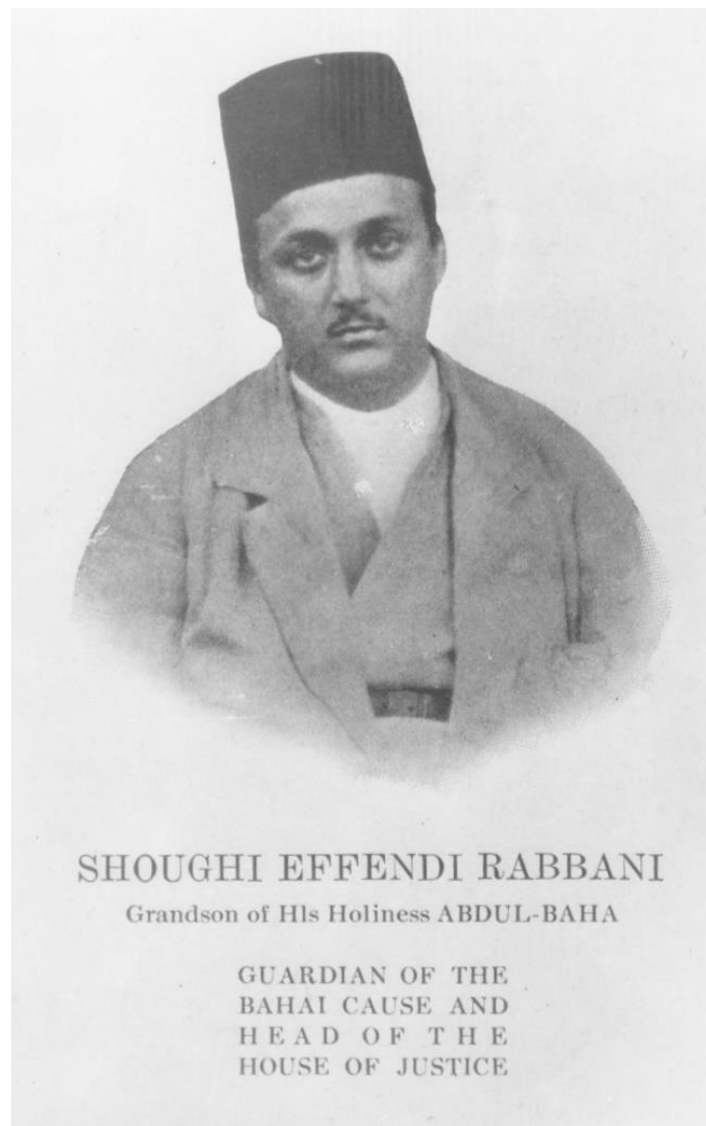
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### The Guardian of the Cause – the Sacred Head of the Universal House of Justice

In His Will, Abdu'l-Baha directed the Baha'is to “*turn to*” Shoghi Effendi ([pp. 11, 26](#)) and the Universal House of Justice ([pp. 19, 26](#)). He also provides that the Guardian of the Cause was to

serve as “the sacred head and the distinguished member for life” of that Body ([p. 14](#)).

From the time immediately following the passing of `Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi was presented as the Head of the Universal House of Justice. His photograph was published in *Star of the West* in January 1922, captioned “Guardian of the Baha'i Cause and Head of the House of Justice.”



Likewise, in March of 1922 Shoghi Effendi wrote a letter in which he stated:

“Abdu'l-Bahá in his testament has appointed me to be the head of the universal council which is to be duly elected by national councils representative of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in different countries...” (Quoted in [The Priceless Pearl, p. 49](#))

From the beginning, Shoghi Effendi anticipated that the two institutions would function together, as Abdu'l-Baha provided in the First Part of His Will. However, it became apparent to Shoghi Effendi that conditions in the Baha'i community would not permit this, and he was divinely guided to postpone its election. As he wrote in 1923:

*“With these Assemblies, local as well as national, harmoniously, vigorously, and efficiently functioning throughout the Bahá'í world, the only means for the establishment of the Supreme House of Justice will have been secured. And when this Supreme Body will have been properly established, it will have to consider afresh the whole situation, and lay down the principle which shall direct, so long as it deems advisable, the affairs of the Cause.”* (Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p. 40)

Please note: He states that the Universal House of Justice must be “properly” established. Though the Will had provided that he would serve as a member of, and the Head of, the Universal House of Justice, he could not, and would not, allow it to be established other than as required by the spirit and meaning of the Will. He made this point again in a letter he wrote in 1929:

*“For upon the National Houses of Justice of the East and the West devolves the task, in conformity with the explicit provisions of the Will, of electing directly the members of the International House of Justice. Not until they are themselves fully representative of the rank and file of the believers in their respective countries, not until they have acquired the weight and the experience that will enable them to function vigorously in the organic life of the Cause, can they approach their sacred task, and provide the spiritual basis for the constitution of so august a body in the Bahá'í world.”* ([The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 7](#))

Does anyone question that this decision of his was divinely guided? And yet, it meant that he functioned alone, not as Head of the House of Justice, as provided in the Will. It is significant that Shoghi Effendi states that while he is postponing the election of the House of Justice this is not renunciation of the terms of the Will, but rather is faithfulness to its provisions—this is the only way of remaining “*in conformity with the explicit provisions of the Will.*”

Although the Will anticipates these institutions functioning together, and does not expressly state that the Guardian could function alone and without the elected membership of the Universal House of Justice, no faithful Baha'i would claim that Shoghi Effendi was anything but scrupulously faithful to the Will, or that in the absence of the Universal House of Justice he lacked the divine guidance to carry out his function as Head of the Faith. In like manner, circumstances within the Cause have now made it impossible for the Universal House of Justice to function with the Guardian of the Cause present in its deliberations. When Shoghi Effendi functioned without the Universal House of Justice, he had no input at all from that divine

institution, which had not yet been brought into being. Now, although the Guardian of the Cause is not present in its deliberations, the Universal House of Justice has a vast body of Shoghi Effendi's written guidance. Even a cursory glance at any of the instruments of divine guidance flowing from the Universal House of Justice shows how utterly and faithfully it relies on the writings of the beloved Guardian provided throughout his 36 year ministry.

### **The vital importance of both of the “twin successors”**

Shoghi Effendi emphasized the centrality of both of these divinely-ordained institutions, describing the Institution of Guardianship as the "head cornerstone" of the Administrative Order, and the Universal House of Justice as the "apex" of the Administrative Order, as its "*dome, the final unit crowning the entire edifice.*" He emphasized the greatness of the Institution of the Guardianship, referring to it as "*the pivot of Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament,*" and the Universal House of Justice as "that central pivot of the people of Baha." (Letter dated 30 October 1924 to the Spiritual Assembly of Tihiran, translated from Persian; Baha'i World Vol. XIV, p. 436; Compilation on Establishment of the Universal House of Justice)

These Spiritual Assemblies have been primarily constituted to carry out these affairs, and secondly to lay a perfect and strong foundation for the establishment of the divine and Universal House of Justice. When that central pivot of the people of Baha shall be effectively, majestically and firmly established, a new era will dawn, heavenly bounties and graces will pour out from that Source, and the all-encompassing promises will be fulfilled. (Shoghi Effendi, *Ibid.*)

Just as Shoghi Effendi had to serve his entire 36-year ministry without the benefit of the "dome" of the Administrative Order, without benefit of the presence of the "no less essential institution" of the Universal House of Justice; the Universal House of Justice must now function without the presence of the Guardian of the Cause as its "sacred head" -- and there is explicit provision in the Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha for it to do so. Both of these institutions are independently promised divine guidance; and both of them have demonstrated, by their spirit and by their deeds, that they receive it.

As the body Shoghi Effendi spoke of as "the divinely ordained, the Supreme House of Justice" has written:

*“Whereas he obviously envisaged their functioning together, it cannot logically be deduced from this that one is unable to function in the absence of the other. During the whole thirty-six years of his Guardianship Shoghi Effendi functioned without the Universal House of Justice. Now the Universal House of Justice must function without the Guardian, but the principle of inseparability remains. The Guardianship does not lose its significance nor position in the Order of Bahá'u'lláh merely because there is no living Guardian. We must guard against two extremes: one is to argue that because there is no Guardian all that was written about the Guardianship and its position in the Bahá'í World Order is a dead letter and was unimportant; the other is to be so overwhelmed by the significance of the Guardianship as to underestimate the strength of the Covenant, or to be tempted to compromise with the clear texts in order to find somehow, in some way,*

a Guardian." ([From a letter dated 27 May 1966 to an individual, Paragraph 13](#); also, "The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice," Messages from The Universal House of Justice 1963-1986, Paragraph 35.9, p. 87)

*"The fact that Shoghi Effendi did not leave a will cannot be adduced as evidence of his failure to obey Bahá'u'lláh -- rather should we acknowledge that in his very silence there is a wisdom and a sign of his infallible guidance. We should ponder deeply the writings that we have, and seek to understand the multitudinous significances that they contain. Do not forget that Shoghi Effendi said two things were necessary for a growing understanding of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: the passage of time and the guidance of the Universal House of Justice." ([From a letter dated 27 May 1966, to an individual Paragraph 3](#); also, Messages from The Universal House of Justice 1963-1986, Paragraph 35.3, p. 84)*

### **Provision in the Master's Will**

In His [Will and Testament](#), Abdu'l-Baha provides for the Universal House of Justice to function in two ways: With the presence of the Guardian or his representative or with only its elected membership, as explained below. Provision for this second means of functioning is not only in the Will and Testament; it is explicit in another Tablet written by Abdu'l-Baha. In both instances, Abdu'l-Baha was in mortal danger, and He arranged for the Universal House of Justice to be elected following His passing. At the time, Shoghi Effendi was a young boy, unable to assume his functions as Guardian of the Cause. Abdu'l-Baha provided for the House of Justice to be established and to function with only its elected members, and provided that it would be divinely guided when it did so.

As the Universal House of Justice has explained:

*“At a time described by the Guardian as 'the darkest moments of His [the Master's] life, under 'Abdu'l-Hamid's regime, when He stood ready to be deported to the most inhospitable regions of Northern Africa,' and when even His life was threatened, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Haji Mirza Taqi Afnan, the cousin of the Báb and chief builder of the 'Ishqabad Temple, commanding him to arrange for the election of the Universal House of Justice should the threats against the Master materialize. [The Will and Testament p. 20; The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 17] The second part of the Master's Will is also relevant to such a situation and should be studied by the friends.” (Messages From the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986, paragraph 23.15, p. 53; the full letter is [here.](#))*

In this Tablet, written during the boyhood of Shoghi Effendi, Abdu'l-Baha directs the relatives of the Bab [the Afnan] together with the Hands of the Cause of God to carry out the provisions of His Will and Testament and arrange for the election of the Universal House of Justice.

In like manner in the Second Part of His Will and Testament, written when His life was in imminent peril, He directed that the Universal House of Justice should be established:

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

*of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Word and the safety of His Teachings.”* ([The Will and Testament, p. 19](#))

In that same paragraph of His Will He explains that the Universal House of Justice is to be elected; and He promises that the decisions of its members – its elected members – are “the truth and purpose of God Himself.” He writes:

*“Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. 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. By this House is meant that Universal House of Justice which is to be elected from all countries, that is from those parts in the East and West where the loved ones are to be found, after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England.*

*“It is incumbent upon these members (of the Universal House of Justice) to gather in a certain place and deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book. Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text itself.”* ([The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 19-20](#))

Please note that after stating that “By this House is meant that Universal House of Justice which is to be elected,” He directs that “**these members**”, i.e. the elected members, are to convene and deliberate. He does not, in this Second Part of His Will, written when His death was imminent, mention the Institution of the Guardianship, or Shoghi Effendi, who was then a boy of about 10 or 11.

In this way, Abdu'l-Baha provides for the Universal House of Justice to function as the Head of the Faith, infallibly, without the presence of the Guardian.

Further examination of the guidance of the Universal House on this subject is found here:

[Flow of Divine Authority by Brent Poirier](#)