

THE INSTITUTION OF THE GUARDIANSHIP
Notes prepared by Brent Poirier November 2016

We are now going to briefly read about the twin divine institutions that are the successors to Baha'u'llah and the Master [\(The World Order of Baha'u'llah\)](#). First we will study the beauty and perfection of the institution of Guardianship, and in a few weeks, the Universal House of Justice. An examination of the broad scope of the life work of Shoghi Effendi is found in the latter sections of Unit Two of Ruhi Book 8, "The Covenant of Baha'u'llah - the Guardian of the Faith"

One of the fascinating features of the Bahai Administrative Order, is the institution of Guardianship. Shoghi Effendi refers to this institution as the "head cornerstone" of Baha'u'llah's Administrative Order [\(This Decisive Hour\)](#). The institution of Guardianship is explicitly mentioned for the first time in the Master's Will, and Shoghi Effendi refers to this institution as "the pivot of Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament" [\(Messages to the Bahai World, p 148\)](#)

Shoghi Effendi asserted the power and station of the Guardianship in a letter he wrote to one of the National Spiritual Assemblies:

"Just as the National Assembly has full jurisdiction over all its local Assemblies, the Guardian has full jurisdiction over all National Assemblies; he is not required to consult them, if he believes a certain decision is advisable in the interests of the Cause. He is the judge of the wisdom and advisability of the decisions made by these bodies, and not they of the wisdom and advisability of his decisions. A perusal of the Will and Testament makes this principle quite clear. He is the Guardian of the Cause in the very fullness of that term, and the appointed interpreter of its teachings, and is guided in his decisions to do that which protects it and fosters its growth and highest interests."

[\(Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, p. 55\)](#)

The Guardian - and the Universal House of Justice, as we will see - are always guided to do that which is in the best interests of the Faith. They are incapable of making a decision that harms the Cause. It is an aspect of their conferred infallibility. [\(Some Answered Questions, No 45\)](#)

During the lifetimes of Baha'u'llah and the Master, They did not build anticipation among the believers that the institution of Guardianship would come into being after Their passing. Had They done so - had They even mentioned the existence of such an institution after Them - Shoghi Effendi's life would have been imperiled.

Ruhiyyih Khanum writes,

"But let us return to 'Akká and the earlier years of Shoghi Effendi. Although there is no doubt that 'Abdu'l-Bahá did everything to ensure Shoghi Effendi had as happy and carefree a childhood as possible, it must have been out of the question to hide from so sensitive and intelligent a child the fact that great dangers threatened his beloved grandfather . . . It was a time of violent Covenant-breaking; the community of believers who had come into exile with Bahá'u'lláh, with the exception of a handful of faithful souls, were, for the most part, infected with the germ of this deadly disease, some openly joining 'Abdu'l-Bahá's rebellious half-brother, Muhammad 'Ali, some overtly sympathizing with him. It was during these years that 'Abdu'l-Bahá told Shoghi Effendi never to drink coffee in the homes of any of the Bahá'ís. He was afraid this precious grandchild might be poisoned! Shoghi Effendi told me this himself, and when one remembers that he was only a young boy at the time one realizes how great were the dangers surrounding them all in those days." (Ruhiyyih Khanum, *The Priceless Pearl*, p. 15)

Instead, as Dr. Youness Afroukteh writes, the Master built the expectation among the friends that the Universal House of Justice would lead the Faith after His ascension.

Abdu'l-Baha's half-brother, Mirza Badi'ullah, the "brother and chief lieutenant" of the Archbreaker of the Covenant Mirza Muhammad-Ali, for a time outwardly renounced his opposition to the Master and sought the shelter of the Covenant. His motives were transparent. In my personal understanding, he tried to win favor with the Master in hopes of being designated as the Master's successor.

One of the devoted believers witnessed this brief period:

"For some time a whispering of a possible return of Mirza Badi'u'llah to the fold of the faithful had been heard. . .

. Through the intercession of some of the friends his declaration was accepted at the sanctified threshold of the Centre of the Covenant. . . . in the presence of all of the friends gathered in the biruni reception hall of the house, Mirza Badi'u'llah entered, and according to the prevailing custom demonstrated his sentiments of humble devotion and servitude to the Master. He read the letter of repentance and then fell at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's feet and begged forgiveness. 'Abdu'l-Bahá accepted him and showered him with loving-kindness. . . . Now, regarding the future of the Faith, 'Abdu'l-Bahá suddenly began to continually emphasize the need for the Universal House of Justice and the significance of its establishment. In clearly defined statements, He made us understand that the friends should not assume that after the setting of the Sun of the Covenant, the Cause of God would fall into the hands of the wicked and the corrupt. He emphasized this point repeatedly. . . . "

(Youness Afroukteh, "Memories of Nine Years in Akka", pp. 169-170)

In other words, as soon as Mirza Badi'u'llah re-entered the fold, the Master began to shatter his hopes of leadership, exposing his insincerity. The following photograph was taken during this brief period of "repentance".



The man standing on the far left is Dr. Youness Afroukhteh. The man with the white beard standing next to him is Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin (See [The Most Holy Book, p. 9](#)). Standing center is Mirza Badi'u'llah, holding the photograph of the Master. In the back, between Badi'u'llah and Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin is Munir Zayn, the second son of Zaynu'l Muqarrabin. Seated on the far left is Mirza Hadi Afnan, the father of Shoghi Effendi. The man with his right hand on the table and his left hand in the shoulder of a little boy is Mirza Muhsin, another son-in-law of the Master; and that little boy is Shoghi Effendi. It was, perhaps, not long after this that the Master wrote the first part of His Will, designating Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause and sacred head of the Universal House of Justice. This photograph was taken prior to the Master's writing of the First Part of His Will, because in it He recounts Mirza Badiu'llah's brief repentance and return to Covenant-breaking.

Once Badi'u'llah realized that his hopes of being named to succeed the Master were dashed by the Master's statements that the Universal House of Justice would succeed him, he renounced his devotion to the Covenant and rejoined the Covenant-breakers. ([See p. 21, The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha](#)) He spent the next 50 years opposing the Master, and after Him, that little boy who became the Guardian of the Cause. ([Badi'u'llah Has Miserably Perished](#))

Abdu'l-Baha assured the friends that "The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the Guardian of the Cause of God." ([The Will and Testament, p. 11](#)) And so it was. Despite all of their efforts, the following of the Covenant-breakers who arose during Shoghi Effendi's ministry have all vanished from the earth - as the Master promised (p. 261, Youness Afroukteh, Nine Years in Akka) This subject of the defeat of the Covenant-breakers under the guidance of the beloved Guardian is examined in more depth in Book 8, Unit Two of the Ruhi Institute materials, particularly Sections 20-22.

Here is a story of how Shoghi Effendi defeated the forces of the Covenant-breakers. [Leroy loas, Champion of the Charters of the Baha'i Faith](#)

Here is a picture of Shoghi Effendi (on the left) with his eldest sister Ruhangiz and his cousin Ruhi Afnan, during the days when he was growing up in the prison-city of Akka. Sadly, both of these relatives of the beloved Guardian violated the Master's Covenant years later, which broke his tender heart. ([The Priceless Pearl, Chapter 5](#))



COMPARING HOW BAHÁ'U'LLÁH WROTE OF THE MASTER, AND HOW THE
MASTER WROTE OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

When Baha'u'llah wrote about the Master He never referred to Him as "Abdu'l-Baha." That title did not exist during the lifetime of the Manifestation. He generally referred to the Master as Ghusn-i-A'zam, translated as either The Most Mighty Branch or The Most Great Branch. Only after the Ascension of Baha'u'llah, when the Covenant-breakers falsely accused the Master of claiming to be a Manifestation of God equal to Baha'u'llah, did the Master Himself choose the title "The Servant of Baha'u'llah" - Abdu'l-Baha - to show that His own station was beneath that of Baha'u'llah. He directed all of the friends to thereafter use this title instead of the other exalted titles given to Him. (Taherzadeh, "Child of the Covenant," p. 147)

In His Will and Testament, p. 11, the Master bestowed on Shoghi Effendi the title "Ghusn-i-Mumtaz" - the Chosen Branch. This

word, mumtaz, has implications of being distinct, excellent and exquisite. In schools in the Arabic-speaking world the valedictorian of a class is the "mumtaz" student.

THE "BRANCH OF HOLINESS", AND "THE SACRED AND YOUTHFUL BRANCH"

It is instructive to compare the beautiful language Baha'u'llah employed when speaking of the Master, and how it is reflected in the language the Master used to speak of Shoghi Effendi.

TURN TO THE BRANCH

BAHA'U'LLAH WROTE: "It is incumbent upon the Aghsán, the Afnán and My Kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch." (1)

ABDUL-BAHA WROTE "After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghsán (Branches), the Afnán (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abhá Beauty to turn unto Shoghi Effendi..." (2)

"It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice, upon all the Aghsán, the Afnán, the Hands of the Cause of God to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the Guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him." (3)

And just as Baha'u'llah directed the believers to turn their faces towards the Master, the Master in His turn directed the friends to turn to, and seek the guidance of, the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice:

"All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause and the House of Justice." (4)

As Baha'u'llah referred to the Master as "this Branch of holiness," the Master referred to Shoghi Effendi as "the sacred and youthful branch" and as "the blest and sacred bough" :

THE SACRED BRANCH

BAHA'U'LLAH WROTE

"There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness..." (5)

ABDU'L-BAHA WROTE: "The sacred and youthful branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God..." (6)

"...he is the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees." (7)

In the following verses we see the same spirit expressed, and the continuity of the sacred branch from Baha'u'llah's Covenant to that of the Master.

SEEK THE SHELTER OF THE BRANCH

BAHA'U'LLAH WROTE ABOUT ABDU'L-BAHA: "...well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow." (8)

"We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind, a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth, a stronghold for whosoever hath believed in God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing." (9)

Likewise, the Master wrote of the blessings upon those who sought the shelter and shade of Shoghi Effendi:

ABDU'L-BAHA WROTE ABOUT SHOGHI EFFENDI: "Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind." (10)

An essential part of every divine Covenant is the Promise of divine guidance, and the threat to those who would oppose it.

TURNING AWAY FROM HIM IS TURNING AWAY FROM GOD

BAHA'U'LLAH WROTE: "Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me." (11)

ABDU'L-BAHA WROTE: "He that obeyeth him not, hath not obeyed God; he that turneth away from him, hath turned away from God and he that denieth him, hath denied the True One." (12)

WOE TO him WHO OPPOSES HIM

BAHA'U'LLAH WROTE: "Woe, great woe, betide him that opposeth and injureth Thee. Well is it with him that sweareth fealty to Thee; the fire of hell torment him who is Thine enemy." (13)

ABDU'L-BAHA WROTE [about whoso opposes the Guardian] "May the wrath, the fierce indignation, the vengeance of God rest upon him!" (14)

ORDAIN HAPPINESS FOR HIM

BAHA'U'LLAH WROTE TO ABDU'L-BAHA: "We pray God to illumine the world through Thy knowledge and wisdom, to ordain for Thee that which will gladden Thine heart and impart consolation to Thine eyes." (15)

ABDUL-BAHA WROTE "It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi, the twig that hath branched from and the fruit given forth by the two hallowed and Divine Lote-Trees, 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. (16)

The growth of the Faith under the guidance of Shoghi Effendi, its protection, the development of its worldwide institutions and its World Center, the beauty of his translations of Baha'i scripture, and the importance of his writings are all examined in Unit Two of Ruhi Book 8. In Section 46 of that same book the believers "are encouraged to draw up a personal plan for carrying out a systematic study" of Shoghi Effendi's writings.

This document can be downloaded as a PDF here:

[→Institution of the Guardianship.pdf](#)

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NOTES

- (1) [Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 221](#)
- (2) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 11](#)
- (3) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 11.](#)
- (4) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 26](#)
- (5) [The Tablet of the Branch, quoted on p. 135, The World Order of Baha'u'llah](#)
- (6) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 11](#)
- (7) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 3](#)
- (8) [The Tablet of the Branch, quoted on p. 135, The World Order of Baha'u'llah](#)
- (9) [Quoted on p. 135, The World Order of Baha'u'llah](#)
- (10) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 3](#)
- (11) [The Tablet of the Branch, quoted on p. 135, The World Order of Baha'u'llah](#)
- (12) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 25](#)
- (13) [Quoted on p. 135, The World Order of Baha'u'llah](#)
- (14) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 11](#)
- (15) [Quoted on p. 135, The World Order of Baha'u'llah](#)
- (16) [The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 25](#)