

# The Ministry of Shoghi Effendi



# Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Baha

- `Abdu'l-Bahá revealed a Will and Testament in three parts, 1902 to 1910, where He designated Shoghi Effendi as His successor and elaborated on the election of the Universal House of Justice
- We'll look at some passages later
- He delineated the authority of “twin successor” institutions
- He further defined responsibilities of the Hands of the Cause
- `Abdu'l-Bahá almost never mentioned to anyone that Shoghi Effendi would succeed Him; it was a well kept secret

# Shoghi Effendi Rabbani

- Born March 1, 1897; eldest of 13 grandchildren of `Abdu'l-Bahá
- Mother was `Abdu'l-Bahá's oldest daughter (of 4)
- `Abdu'l-Bahá insisted everyone address him with the term Effendi (Turkish for sir)
- Education in home school in Akka (in the House of Abbud) first by a Persian man, then by an Italian governess





# Education

- Then went to the College des Freres in Haifa, a Jesuit private school
- Then went to a Jesuit boarding school in Beirut
- Invited to go to America with `Abdu'l-Bahá, but he was turned back in Naples on the claim his eyes were diseased with trachoma
- He was devastated and lost weight
- He very strongly disliked the French high school, though he learned fluent French there
- Started his senior year at Syrian Protestant College Preparatory School, Oct. 1912, when 15 years old
- Graduated in early summer 1913 (age 16)

# Higher Education

- Summer 1913: In Egypt with `Abdu'l-Bahá
- Syrian Protestant college, 1913-17
- The college did relief work and provided free medical care to Turkish soldiers, so it was relatively safe during the war
- Bachelor of Arts degree when he was 20 (the graduating class had 10!)
- Graduate student at SPC, fall 1917-summer 1918
- Sept. 1918: General Allenby takes Haifa; `Abdu'l-Bahá is safe

# `Abdu'l-Baha's Secretary

- Flood of correspondence from the west; Shoghi Effendi becomes `Abdu'l-Bahá's English language secretary, fall 1918-spring 1920
- Met many pilgrims
- Worked so hard, caught malaria, spring 1919; health seriously impaired



# Paris and England

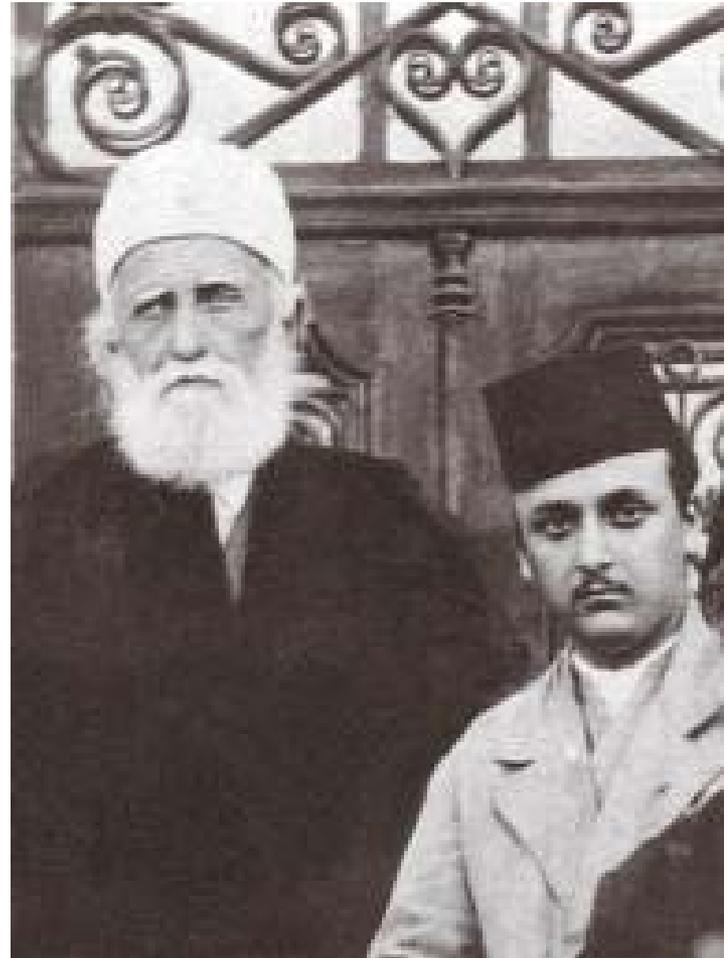
- Went to Paris to recuperate, April-June 1920
- Rested in the mornings, walked in the afternoons
- From Paris, in June applied to Oxford as a “non-collegiate student” for two years
- Arrived in mid-July 1920 and visited people in London to secure recommendations
- Then went to Balliol College and arranged interviews to be admitted
- He was accepted in August and immediately began to study, even though the semester didn't begin until October

# Oxford Days

- His was a provisional acceptance because the college was full until January, when he was fully matriculated
- He completed three “trimesters” and started on a fourth in the fall of 1921
- He was there to improve his English so that he could become a better translator
- He read Gibbon while walking around; he loved it
- “Rabbani was irrepressibly cheerful, always on the point of laughter, and bouncing around . . . Wherever he was, spirits were high. We all knew him destined for spiritual leadership: and believe me, in no sense of irreverence or discourtesy, he was affectionately known as ‘God.’”

# Last Days in England

- `Abdu'l-Bahá passed on November 28, 1921
- Sir Wellesley Tudor-Pole received a cable to that effect the next morning
- He telephoned Shoghi Effendi and asked him to come to London immediately, which he did
- Shoghi Effendi was so overcome with grief he had to be put to bed for several days



# Transition

- Shoghi Effendi loved `Abdu'l-Bahá more than his own life and his grief was profound and long lasting
- It took a month before passport issues could be resolved for him to return to Palestine
- He returned to Haifa the evening of 29 December 1921
- On Jan. 3, 1922 the Will and Testament was read aloud in public for the first time
- Shoghi Effendi discovered he was Guardian of the Cause of God

# Crises

- Many thought he was too young to lead and that he'd call for the election of the Universal House of Justice immediately
- Provisions of Will made this impossible, however (see next slide)
- He called prominent Bahá'ís to Haifa from the US, England, Germany, Persia, India, and Burma
- They arrived and left at different times and weren't all there at the same time
- He sent the visiting Bahá'ís home to stimulate formation of National Spiritual Assemblies
- Covenant breakers seize keys to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh
- Shoghi Effendi goes to Switzerland, March-Dec. 1922

# Ministry of Shoghi Effendi

- He built his ministry on three Charters of the Faith: the Tablet of Carmel, the Tablets of the Divine Plan, and the Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá
- Tablet of Carmel is the spiritual “blueprint” for the administrative and spiritual center of the Faith in Haifa
- The Tablets of the Divine Plan give the North American Bahá'ís responsibility to spread the Faith to the entire world
- But without a structure, Shoghi Effendi somewhat delayed their implementation, until 1937

# Mandates in the Will and Testament

- The Will and Testament gave Shoghi Effendi a blueprint for creating local and national Spiritual Assemblies
- They provided the structure necessary for systematic teaching and implementing the Tablets of the Divine Plan through a series of Plans
- They also provided the foundation for electing the Universal House of Justice and appointing Hands of the Cause
- The Will gave Shoghi Effendi infallible authority to translate the authoritative texts and interpret their meaning

# 1. Spread of organization

- Three LSAs elected in England, 1922 and 1923
- National Spiritual Assembly elected, 1923, by mail; all English Bahá'ís voted
- Germany and Austria; Indian and Burma form NSAs in 1923 as well
- Bahai Temple Unity renames itself “National Spiritual Assembly” right away, but voting procedures were irregular
- Shoghi Effendi recognized it as an National Spiritual Assembly in 1925

- US had maybe 8 LSAs in 1921
- By late 1920s it was 30 or 40
- Number of US Bahá'ís: 1899 (1,500), 1906 (1,280), 1920 (1,234), 1922 (1,368) and 1926 (1,247); 1936 (2,584), 1945 (5,174).
- Community was a revolving door without organization
- No national membership list in Iran because of persecution
- Central Spiritual Assembly was elected by Tehran Bahá'ís for the entire country
- Iran divided into 20 administrative districts, 1 LSA in each, plus LSAs in cities
- Shoghi Effendi recognized National Spiritual Assembly of Persia, 1934

# Organization elsewhere

- Egypt and Sudan, 1924
- Iraq, 1931
- Australia and New Zealand, 1934
- Turkmenistan, by 1925
- Caucasus: by 1925
- 10 NSAs by 1934
- Persecution limits growth in Soviet Union
- Ishqabad temple confiscated, 1928, then leased back
- Some Bahá'ís exiled to Siberia; others forced to return to Iran
- 1938: Systematic persecution in USSR, communities are destroyed
- House of Worship confiscated, damaged by earthquake in 1948, demolished in 1963

# Troubles

- German Bahá'í community is banned by Nazis, 1937
- Jewish Bahá'ís like Lidia Zamenhof go to concentration camps; others are drafted and die
- Iraqi, Egyptian communities have some persecution, too
- India and Burmese communities and small, relatively poor
- North America and Persia had the most resources and people, though Iranians were persecuted, too

## 2. New Interpretations

- Shoghi Effendi was a prolific writer; 34,000 documents, over 5 million words attributed to him exist in the archives
- *Bahá'í Administration*, letters, 1922-32
- “The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh” (February 1929)
- “The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Further Considerations” (March 1930)
- “The Goal of a New World Order” (November 1931)
- “The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh” (March 1932)
- “America and the Most Great Peace” (April 1933)

- “The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh” (February 1934)
- “The Unfoldment of World Civilization” (March 1936)
- Compiled as *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, in 1938
- *The Advent of Divine Justice* (December 1938)
- *The Promised Day is Come* (March 1941)
- *God Passes By* (1944)
- Numerous compilations of his letters to specific countries
- After World War II, the Bahá'í community got so large and kept him so busy, he had less time to write and translate

# 3. Translations

- He had been translating as `Abdu'l-Bahá's secretary and made it a central priority as Guardian
- He clarified the meaning of the original through translation into English
- Will and Testament, 1922
- *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (1931)
- *Hidden Words* (1932)
- *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (1935)
- *Prayers and Meditations* (1938)
- *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (1941)
- *The Dawn-breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation* (1932)
- Encouraged publication and translation of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* into scores of languages (by 1969, over 100)
- Some chapters read and approved by `Abdu'l-Bahá; it served as a manual of Bahá'í teachings

# Marriage



- Mary Maxwell was born of May Maxwell and William Sutherland Maxwell in 1910 after `Abdu'l-Bahá prayed they'd have a child
- She first met `Abdu'l-Bahá in 1912 when He visited their house in Montreal
- She arrived on pilgrimage with her mother, January 12, 1937
- Shoghi Effendi proposed to her by February 26, when May cabled her husband to come immediately to Haifa and Mary cabled asking for permission
- They were married March 24, 1937

# Wars

- The Bahá'í World Centre was imperiled by the Nazis in 1941-42
- Rommel almost reached Alexandria; the Nazis conquered Crete
- The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem was an enemy of the Faith; there were others, too
- British and free French forces captured Vichy-controlled Lebanon
- The British mandate ended in terrorism and war, 1947-48
- Shoghi Effendi was strictly neutral and his neutrality was recognized and respected by all parties
- Akka was supposed to be in Arab Palestine, Haifa in Jewish Palestine!
- The Israeli War of independence raged around the shrines, but miraculously, nothing was damaged

# Pictures of Shoghi Effendi



# 4. Developing the World Centre

- 1923: Got back the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh from Covenant-breakers
- 1929: Obtained from the Covenant breakers the Mansion of Bahjí and repaired it
- 1932: Interred Bahiyyih Khanum on Mount Carmel
- 1939: Built the monument gardens by moving Navvab and Mirza Mihdi to Mt. Carmel from Akka
- They become the focus of the Arc



# Monument Gardens; Shrine of the Bab



# International Archives; Shrine of Bab



# Bahji

- Only possessed 1,000 square meters in 1921
- Expanded property to 260,000 square meters
- Rebuilt the mansion of Bahji, which was dilapidated
- Tore down houses of Covenant-breakers and used the roofing tiles for the pathways
- Established gardens around the mansion



# 5. Implementing the Divine Plan

- The National Spiritual Assembly of the US and Canada created a “Plan for Unified Action” for Jan. 1926-Dec. 1928 and another one for 1931-34
- Both focused on spreading the Cause and building the Temple
- They were precursors to plans started by Shoghi Effendi
- 1936: Shoghi Effendi wrote US National Convention urging settlement of at least 1 Bahá’í in every state of US, every republic of Latin America, by 1944
- 1937: He launched the Seven Year Plan
- 3 big goals: LSA in every state and province; open every Republic in Latin America; complete exterior of House of Worship
- Traveling teachers weren’t enough
- Firesides were implemented so local Bahá’ís would teach
- “Pioneering” introduced as a term
- 1944: 10 LSAs in Latin America; 27 by 1946

# Second Seven Year Plan, 1946-53

- Two year break, 1944-46
- National Spiritual Assembly elected in Canada, 1948
- Canadians given their own 5 Year Plan, 1948
- National Spiritual Assemblies for South America, Central America, 1951
- Interior of House of Worship to be completed
- National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria re-elected, 1946
- Pioneers take the Faith to postwar Europe, which is very receptive
- LSA on Omaha Indian Reservation, 1948
- Lofts pioneer to Tyendinaga Mohawk reserve

# Other National Plans

- 1944-50: British 4 Year plan
- 1947: Iraqi 3 Year Plan
- 1947: Egyptian goals by 1953
- 1947-53: Australian and New Zealand plan
- 1947-52: German/Austrian plan
- 1945: Indian National Spiritual Assembly opens school in Panchgani (New Era)
- 1946-50: Four year plan for India
- 1946-50: Forty-five month plan for Iran

# Bahá'í Institutions

- Shoghi Effendi builds up a World Centre secretarial staff after World War II
- By the 1950s, he had to read 2 or 3 hours a day to keep up with the minutes, newsletters, and correspondence
- Jan. 1951: Shoghi Effendi appoints International Bahá'í Council to work with state of Israel and with real estate and construction
- Says it will be elected later
- Dec. 1951: Appointment of 12 Hands of the Cause of God; first public appointment of living persons in over half a century
- Feb. 1952: He appointed seven more, raising total to 19
- Oct. 1957: Raised total to 27

# Ten Year Crusade

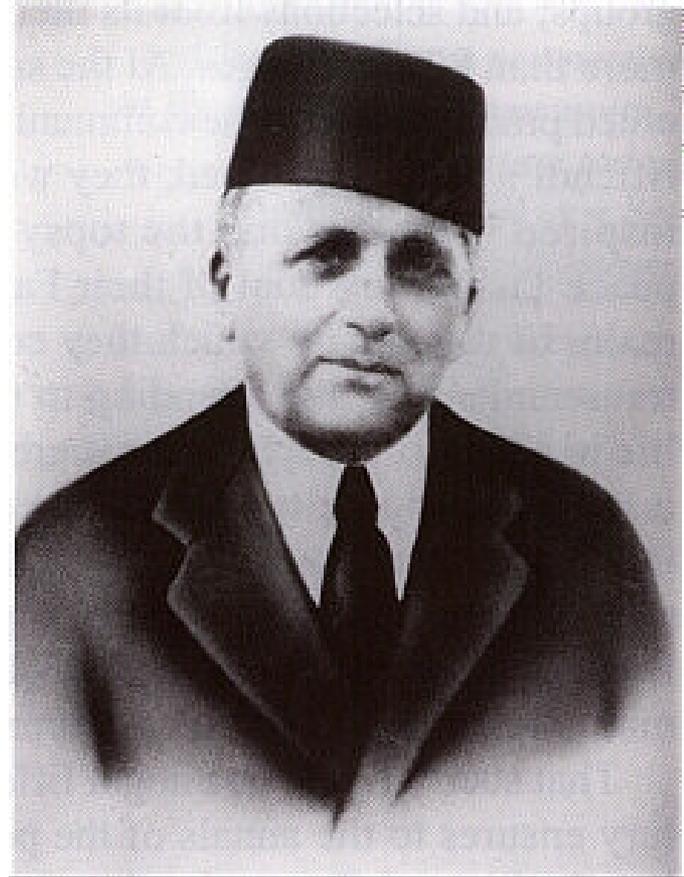
- Plans for all 12 NSAs, 1953-63
- Countries with Bahá'ís to increase from 128 to 259
- NSAs to increase from 12 to 57
- Required reaching rural populations
- Big expansion of Haifa staff was necessary
- Mass teaching develops in Kiribati, Mentawai Islands, Bolivia, Malwa (India), Uganda, Chile, Ecuador, Kenya
- 1,300 pioneers went out
- LSAs worldwide, 611 to 3,551; localities, 2,425 to 11,210; Bahá'í population doubled to 408,000
- US Bahá'í population goes from 7,000 to 10,000

# Persecution

- 1955-56: Severe outbreak in Iran after the CIA coup in 1953
- Haziratu'l-Quds confiscated and dome destroyed
- House of the Bab severely damaged
- “An orgy of senseless murder, rape, pillage and destruction”
- Iranian Bahá'ís responded with discipline and protested
- Shoghi Effendi organized a massive international response
- International outcry stopped it
- 1960: All Bahá'í institutions in Egypt are banned
- 1962-63: 14 Moroccan Bahá'ís arrested; 3 sentenced to death

# Shoghi Effendi's Passing

- Oct. 1957: The Hands are “Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth, who have been invested by the unerring Pen of the Center of His Covenant [ʻAbdu'l-Bahá] with the dual function of guarding over the security, and of insuring the propagation, of His Father's Faith.”
- Nov. 4, 1957: Shoghi Effendi dies suddenly in London



# Shoghi Effendi's Resting Place



# The “Dilemma”

- For 36 years, the Bahá'í community came to understand that the Guardianship was a permanent, fixed, and essential element of the Administrative Order
- Do we abandon the Guardianship, or abandon a literal reading of the Will and Testament?
- If the latter, who has the authority to do so? No one? The House of Justice? How would we do it?
- The Hands as a body were unwilling to go down that road; but Charles Mason Remey (1874-1974) was

# Interregnum

- The Hands met after the funeral, searched for a Will and found none
- No Guardian was possible, based on the literal provisions of the Will
- Hands debated the situation in conclave in Persian and English with slow translation between the two
- Decided to appoint body of 9 Hands to coordinate completion of the Crusade from Haifa, hold annual conclaves of all Hands
- Decided to elect International Bahá'í Council, 1961, by mail, and the Universal House of Justice, 1963, when the Crusade ended

# Covenant breaking

- Remey argued that Shoghi Effendi had appointed him President of the International Bahá'í Council; the IBC is the forerunner of the Universal House of Justice; the Guardian is head of the Universal House of Justice; therefore Remey is appointed second Guardian
- But by this logic, Shoghi Effendi would have to appoint himself as President of the IBC, or the Faith had 2 Guardians at once
- Will specifies that the Guardian must be descendant of Bahá'u'lláh (an Aghsan) and the choice must be ratified by a 9-member Committee of the Hands
- One must reinterpret these requirements very “liberally” to accommodate them, and by whose authority do you do this?
- Even the Universal House of Justice doesn't have the authority to reinterpret the Will (as it explained later)

# Remeyites

- Remey seems not to have “realized” he was Guardian until fall 1959, when the Hands decided to elect the IBC, thereby terminating his appointed position as its President
- Remey was followed by 5 members of the French NSA but by few others (perhaps 100-200 worldwide)
- He appointed an IBC and a third guardian, then disbanded the IBC and appointed another third guardian
- The two “third guardians” asked Remey for clarification and he didn’t offer it
- Remey died in 1974 and his movement split in two

# Transition

- The Hands disqualified themselves from being elected
- The election was held in the House of `Abdu'l-Bahá in April 1963
- The House members then flew to London for the Bahá'í World Congress
- The Ten Year Crusade was a smashing success; 56 of 57 National Spiritual Assemblies were elected (Afghanistan proved impossible)
- Growth of the Faith equaled or exceeded that of the previous century!