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 know 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 in 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: Nabil’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, Mentawei 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 [`Abdu'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!