

## Preface

Shoghi Effendi

Original English



## Messages to Canada



## Foreword

Bahá'ís everywhere will feel a deep sense of gratitude to Canada's National Spiritual Assembly for its decision to republish *Messages to Canada*, letters written by or on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, which has been out of print for all too many years. The new edition will be welcomed even more enthusiastically because of the fact that the compilation as now made available has grown from the thirty communications constituting the original publication to a total of over two hundred letters and cables addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly itself, to Local Spiritual Assemblies and groups, to committees, and to a great many individual Canadian believers.

Clearly, the task of identifying and assembling this large body of new material and of integrating it into the original volume has been a long and painstaking labour of love on the part of the editors. No more appropriate occasion could be imagined for the launching of the resulting work than the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Canada's National Spiritual Assembly as an independent Institution of the Bahá'í Faith and "ninth pillar" of the Universal House of Justice. To remember that historic occasion is to ponder deeply the significance of the body thus created. This meaning is powerfully expressed in words which Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum addressed to the first national convention assembled in the drawing room of her girlhood home in Montreal:

"Whenever one thinks of Canada one thinks of cultivation. Out of her virgin forests, her wildernesses, her barren North lands and lakes, has already been wrung a great and promising nation. The darkness of nature, as the Master said, has given way to cultivation and out of imperfection has arisen the splendour of government, industry, trade, settlement, and the arts and sciences of human life. But spiritually the land is still dark, promising, but dark. Primarily the measure of spirituality radiated by your national body will be the measure of Bahá'u'lláh's light directly available for Canada. For He created the concept of your institution. You exist because of the functions He desired you to perform, and your fundamental function is to be the spiritual heart of Canada."

On April 30, 1949, barely twelve months after the new National Spiritual Assembly had come into existence, it was formally incorporated by special Act of Parliament, an event twice hailed by



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Shoghi Effendi in the documents published here as “a magnificent victory unique in the annals of East and West”. In retrospect, the achievement provided a dramatic illustration of the immense potentialities with which, as the Guardian repeatedly reminded Canadian believers, Providence has endowed their community and their country. Today, as Canadian Bahá’ís contemplate the results of fifty years of struggle and sacrifice they begin to catch a glimmer of the dazzling panorama that lay open to the eyes of Shoghi Effendi as he penned the words of appeal, advice, and encouragement that constitute the heart of this book: Local Spiritual Assemblies established in the most remote corners of a vast land — the second largest on the face of the planet; an enviable record of work carried out quietly but with great effect by succeeding generations of Canadian pioneers and travel teachers in every part of the world; an outpouring of funds that has nourished the activities of the Cause at its World Centre and throughout the globe and that truly merits the term sacrificial; the impetus given to the international community’s proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh’s message by Canadian Bahá’í creativity in the arts and the media; and the growing involvement in the work of the Faith on the part of believers from Canada’s many ethnic and cultural backgrounds, a hope which is the unflagging theme of so many of Shoghi Effendi’s letters.

Canadian readers who note the Guardian’s poignant references to the suffering of their fellow Bahá’ís in the land of their Faith’s birth will derive a feeling of profound satisfaction from the leadership which both their community and their nation have since demonstrated in mobilizing international condemnation of such persecution, in providing homes for several thousand of the victims, and in winning the agreement of many other nations to similarly open their own doors.

Above all, given the letters’ urgent emphasis on the qualities of “loyalty”, “vigilance”, and “unswerving fidelity”, Canadian Bahá’ís will reserve their deepest expressions of gratitude to Bahá’u’lláh for the Divine protection which, since the moment of the Faith’s arrival in their country a hundred years ago, has so remarkably shielded their community from all efforts to undermine its record of unyielding commitment to the Covenant.

All of these developments were possible because of the hours of patient care which Shoghi Effendi devoted to the community’s development at the very dawn of its collective history as a distinct national community. It was the blazing ardour of these messages that inspired Canadian Bahá’í pioneers to endure years of isolation in Arctic posts, remote island settlements, and regions of the earth which seemed initially to display as little in the way of spiritual receptivity as they offered with respect to the comforts of life. It was letters in this book — cherished treasures in homes across the country, treasures grown fragile through constant re-reading — which awoke in individual believers the courage to look within themselves for capacities quite outside their daily experience. Through the guidance the messages contained, Local Spiritual Assemblies learned gradually to be patient not only with the failings of the communities entrusted to their care, but also with the slow processes of their own institutional growth.

At all times, Shoghi Effendi held up before the eyes of Canadian believers — conditioned by everything in their culture to the virtues of modesty and prudence, and confirmed in this mindset by sobering historical experience — the breathtaking mandate which has been conferred on them by the Centre of the Covenant. They must strive to appreciate, he insisted, that they are a “co-heir” of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, “chosen prosecutors” of that Plan, “sole

partner” and “chief ally” of their sister community in the United States in its worldwide implementation, and endowed with that “primacy with which the twin Bahá’í national communities labouring in the North American continent have been invested by the unerring Pen of the Centre of Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant”.

Whenever response was unduly slow or energies flagged, Shoghi Effendi was in no way reluctant to press those matters which deeply concerned him. Perhaps the most vexed single issue was the difficulty which the National Spiritual Assembly appeared to have in acquiring a suitable site for its first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár and even an appropriate property for its national Hazíratu’l-Quds. As delay followed delay and one after another of the Assembly’s optimistic expectations proved illusory, letters from the Guardian’s secretaries expressed growing concern. Eventually, Shoghi Effendi himself addressed the subject in the course of a major message in 1955:

[From the Guardian:]

“[The] purchase of the site of the Mother Temple of the Dominion of Canada and the establishment of the national Hazíratu’l-Quds constitute a double task that can brook no further delay, as the entire Bahá’í world, having hailed the erection of such an indispensable institution in no less than eighteen countries scattered throughout the continents and oceans of the Globe, is now intently fixing its eye on this community, so richly blessed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá....”

Principally, however, one is struck by the gentleness and restraint that the messages display over failures which, however serious in themselves, were clearly seen by Shoghi Effendi as the result not of obduracy or folly, but of ineptitude on the part of a very young community desperately concerned to learn and to fulfil the expectations of the incomparable figure on whom all its love and hope were fixed.

A startling feature of Shoghi Effendi’s letters to Canada — and indeed of the Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that inspired them — is their linking of the spiritual destiny of the country with its brilliant material future. Repeatedly, the Guardian returns to the theme of the Master’s emphasis on this dual process. In an especially provocative passage, he points to the vital role which, in the fullness of time, the Bahá’í community itself is destined to play not only in the nation’s spiritual development, but in its social and economic advance:

[From the Guardian]

May this community, the leaven placed by the hands of Providence in the midst of a people belonging to a nation, likewise young, dynamic, richly endowed with material resources, and assured of a great material prosperity by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, play its part not only in lending a notable impetus to the world-wide propagation of the Faith it has espoused, but contribute, as its resources multiply and as it gains in stature, to the spiritualization and material progress of the nation of which it forms so vital a part.

Here, we touch with that mystery that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá termed “the secret of Divine civilization”. Increasingly, Bahá’ís will feel impelled to consider the impact on Canadian consciousness of Shoghi Effendi’s messages and the long term effects on the nation’s life. Prior to World War II it

might well have been impossible to identify a society more provincial, more resolutely self-absorbed than that of Canada. Today, in its place, stands a nation for whom a global perspective is the norm, that has established a perhaps unparalleled record of service to the cause of international peacekeeping, and that is justly renowned for its willingness to provide economic assistance without attaching to it political or other conditions.

Readers will note that the major messages in the book were all written during the nine year period — 1948 to 1957 — which coincided with this great turning point in the orientation of Canada's people. The letters' immediate effects can be traced in the lives of only the several hundred persons to whom they were directly addressed. Their broader influence, an influence deriving its force from the direct intervention in Canadian history of the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, was prefigured in words with which 'Abdu'l-Bahá described the significance of the brief but incalculably precious days He spent in the country:

The time of sojourn was limited to a number of days, but the results in the future are inexhaustible.... Again I repeat, that the future of Canada, whether from a material or spiritual standpoint, is very great. Day by day civilization and freedom shall increase. The clouds of the Kingdom will water the seeds of guidance which have been sown there.

Douglas Martin<sup>1</sup>

Haifa, 28 February 1998



## Preface

It is with immense joy that we release this new edition of Messages to Canada. The publication of this commemorative edition of communications from Shoghi Effendi is particularly momentous in this auspicious year when the Canadian Bahá'í Community celebrates the hundredth anniversary of the introduction of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh to Canada and the fiftieth anniversary of the election of Canada's independent National Spiritual Assembly.

The edition published in 1965 contained thirty letters and cablegrams, which, other than the Guardian's first letter to Canada, were concentrated in the period after Canada's National Spiritual Assembly came into being. Since then, a substantial number of additional letters from the Guardian to individuals, Groups and Local Spiritual Assemblies, as well as to the National Spiritual Assembly, have been collected and catalogued. As a result we are pleased to include 278 letters and cablegrams in this edition.<sup>2</sup>

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2. A "message" is a letter or cablegram which has been addressed to an individual, group or Assembly, and which was written by the Guardian, by a secretary on behalf of the Guardian, or which includes portions written both by the Guardian and his secretary.

The letters contained in this volume are written by the Guardian or on his behalf by his various secretaries. Those written by the Guardian himself have a unique character and a greater authority than messages written on his behalf, but the latter constitute authoritative Bahá'í text, as noted in a letter dated 25 February 1951, written on behalf of the Guardian to a National Spiritual Assembly: "Although the secretaries of the Guardian convey his thoughts and instructions and these messages are authoritative, their words are in no sense the same as his, their style certainly not the same, and their authority less, for they use their own terms and not his exact words in conveying his messages."

The messages are presented in chronological order. In accordance with guidance of the Universal House of Justice, addressees and other individuals have not been identified, except in circumstances where "it would seem strange or inappropriate to omit a particular believer's name." All cablegrams received from Shoghi Effendi have been presented in the original form and without interpolation.

The variety of spelling, capitalization and punctuation used by the Guardian's secretaries has been standardized to the form most often used by the Guardian himself. The texts remain as written, and have been checked against the originals or authenticated copies of originals. The names used in the text to designate various groups have been retained, notwithstanding that these designations are no longer in common use.

We would like to thank Judith Oppenheimer in the Archives office of the Bahá'í World Centre, and Roger Dahl in the National Bahá'í Archives of the United States, for providing additional texts beyond those in our own archives. We would like to extend our deep appreciation to the diligent and enthusiastic project manager, Ailsa Hedley, who operated under the supervision of an advisory committee of the National Spiritual Assembly. We are also grateful for the proofreading and research assistance of Pixie MacCallum, Jayne Long, Michael Rochester, Jean McKeever, Anne Banani and Sarah Banani.

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada

April 1998



## Foreword to the 1965 Edition

Few tasks have given such pleasure to the National Spiritual Assembly as the publication of this book. The thirty messages which it contains are collated from letters and cablegrams sent to the Canadian Bahá'í community by Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Cause. They span virtually the entire thirty-six years of his ministry, but the reader will not fail to note that apart from the first letter (written in January 1923, shortly after Shoghi Effendi assumed his responsibilities at the World Centre) the messages are concentrated in the nine years from 1948 to 1956. The explanation lies, of course, in the fact that prior to April 1948, Canadian and American Bahá'ís were members of a single community embracing the two countries. The great body of messages addressed to

that community have found permanence in several other volumes,<sup>3</sup> and are now a part of the heritage of the entire Bahá'í world. The Canadian National Spiritual Assembly has long desired to contribute to that inheritance this final share of the trust left to it by the Guardian. No more fitting occasion could be found than the inauguration of the first of the global plans designed by the Universal House of Justice and inspired by just such undertakings as form the subject of much of this book.

For those believers who were members of the Faith before November 1957, this book will have a special dimension. For them, the messages will always be letters, inseparable in memory from climactic moments at conventions, conferences, and assembly meetings; for some among them, they will be even more closely interwoven with memories of the personal decisions which helped to translate the plans of the messages into the reality of a world-wide community; for a fortunate few, these letters will speak with an unforgettable voice and face and hands remembered from all too brief evenings at the dinner table in Haifa. The messages have significance, however, far beyond the circumstances in which they were issued. Perhaps the most obvious, to a Canadian, is the unique contribution which they make to the history of the Cause in this country. As a nation, Canada has not had a strong sense of mission or identity, and its history has frequently appeared to be a sequence of reactions to events occurring in other countries. For Canadian Bahá'ís, however, the messages of Shoghi Effendi and the statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on which they are based provide glimpses of the foundations of their community and of its mission in the world which are the very essence of history. Shoghi Effendi speaks in moving language of the promises of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; of the role of the Canadian community as "co-heir" with the American believers to the Tablets of the Divine Plan; of the "imperishable record of international service" associated with such names as May Maxwell and Sutherland Maxwell, Marion Jack, Fred Schopflocher, Louis Bourgeois, and Rúhíyyih Khánum, "my helpmate, my shield ... my tireless collaborator"; of the "initiation of [Canada's] glorious mission, far beyond the borders of the Dominion"; of the significance of the 1949 Act of Parliament incorporating the National Spiritual Assembly, a "magnificent victory unique annals East West"; and of the special role which the community must play in the establishment of the Faith among aboriginal peoples and particularly among the Eskimos.

Ultimately, however, the messages are the property of the Bahá'í world community. On the one hand, they provide authoritative guidance for both individuals and assemblies on issues which in several instances may have been dealt with nowhere else. On the other, they speak in a spirit of understanding which will infinitely reward any effort to appreciate and express it. Local assemblies, like national assemblies, will benefit from a study of the Guardian's repeated urging that we "avoid ... rules and regulations" as stifling to "the spirit of the Cause", and deal instead with each case on its individual merits in the light of the principles of the Faith. The individual believer will be interested in the reflection in several of the letters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's appeal that we refrain from moral judgements on other people. Assemblies and individuals alike will not fail to remark the extreme caution which the Guardian counsels us to use in the disciplinary functions of an administrative body. Finally, the letters provide a remarkable glimpse into the

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3. Bahá'í Administration, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, The Advent of Divine Justice, The Promised Day is Come, Messages to America

world of the spirit in such passages as those in which the Guardian stresses the long term significance of the goals established in the remote and inhospitable regions of Canada's northland.

In one of the most challenging passages of this book, Shoghi Effendi writes: "Above all, the utmost endeavour should be exerted by your Assembly to familiarize the newly enrolled believers with the fundamental and spiritual verities of the Faith, and with the origins, the aims and purposes, as well as the processes of a divinely appointed Administrative Order.... For as the body of the avowed supporters of the Faith is enlarged ... a parallel progress must be achieved, if the fruits already garnered are to endure, in the spiritual quickening of its members and the deepening of their inner life."

There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who has read them that these messages themselves provide a priceless opportunity for the spiritual quickening to which their author refers. They constitute a part of that imperishable legacy which, without a written Will, the Guardian of the Cause has left to the entire world, a legacy which will continue to enrich future generations of Bahá'ís throughout the centuries of this Dispensation.

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada

Ridván, 1964



### Introduction to the 1965 Edition by Hand of the Cause, John A. Robarts

The communications in this book were written by Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of Canada, mostly through the National Spiritual Assembly. The first message dated January 2nd, 1923, the Guardian wrote when he was twenty-five years old, and in the beginning of his ministry. The others, dating from April 1948, when Canada became an independent Bahá'í Community, continued until almost that tragic day of his death, November 4th,

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His Will and Testament, wrote of Shoghi Effendi, His eldest and dearly loved grandson: "Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest upon that primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree, ... the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas; ... Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind ... as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God...."

Until 1948, the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada had been one Community. In April of that year, acting upon the instructions of the Guardian, we passed the stage of infancy, attained the status, and assumed the functions, of an independent existence within the Bahá'í World Community. We held our own National Convention in the Maxwell Home, in Montreal, elected our National Spiritual Assembly, the ninth in the Bahá'í world, and were given a Five Year Plan by



the Guardian. We proudly became the ninth pillar of the Institution of the Universal House of Justice.

The Five Year Plan called for the incorporation of our National Spiritual Assembly; the establishment of National Bahá'í endowments; doubling the number of our fifteen Local Spiritual Assemblies and raising to one hundred the total number of localities where Bahá'ís reside; the constitution of a group in Newfoundland and the formation of a nucleus of the Faith in Greenland, and the participation of Eskimos and Red Indians in membership to share administrative privileges in local Institutions of the Faith in Canada.

For the mere handful of Bahá'ís scattered across Canada, this Plan seemed a colossal task. But, as a reading of these messages will reveal, the Guardian knew the goals were attainable. He gave us a glimpse of his great vision of the Cause. He reminded us of the promises of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The future of the Dominion of Canada ... is very great and the events connected with it infinitely glorious..." He showed us that dedication and service to the Cause of God must come first in our lives. His stirring appeals, his unwavering faith in us, his love and his prayers for us, his keen interest in the execution of all phases of the Plan, his constant encouragement, his sympathy and understanding in our difficulties, his deep appreciation, gratitude and pride in every victory, his reminding us of the promises of Divine assistance, brought us to April 1953, with our Five Year Plan completed.

To our sixth National Convention he cabled: "Overjoyed grateful triumphant conclusion Five Year Plan most momentous enterprise launched Canadian Bahá'í history initiated morrow emergence independent existence Canadian Bahá'í Community..."

In that same cable he announced details of our part of the Ten Year World Crusade, "constituting prelude mightier undertaking designed consolidate magnificent victories achieved homefront inaugurate Community's historic mission beyond confines Dominion. Ten Year Plan its valiant members now embarking upon enabling them push outposts Faith northernmost territories Western Hemisphere associating them members seven other sister Communities raising aloft banner Faith Pacific Islands..."

These messages contain both instruction and inspiration. The Guardian gave us a deeper understanding of the Faith. We are very proud that he paid such loving tributes to a number of Canadian Bahá'ís: Sutherland and May Maxwell, their daughter now Rúhíyyih Khánum, Siegfried (Freddie) Schopflocher, Marion Jack, and others.

While we suffered the devastating loss of our cherished Guardian at almost the halfway point of the Crusade we are happy that the goals have been achieved. We know that he will be overjoyed and grateful for the triumphant conclusion of his Ten Year World Crusade, "the greatest spiritual drama the world has ever witnessed". We will now go forward with our fifty-five sister Communities of the Bahá'í world to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

A fuller perspective of the work of Shoghi Effendi is obtained by reading these messages in conjunction with those he wrote before 1948, to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, and from 1950, to the Bahá'ís of the world. For thirty-six years he was the Divine Tree that



shadowed all mankind. He was the most wondrous, unique and priceless being. He was indeed the Guardian of the Cause of God.



### “O My Loving Friends!...”

O my loving friends! 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 — the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Trees and the fruit grown from the union of the two offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, — as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the Aghsán, the Afnán, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn.

— Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 11



### The Guardian’s First Letter to Canada

January 2, 1923



[From the Guardian:]

The beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful throughout Canada  
c/o the members of the Spiritual Assembly in Montreal

Dear friends!

It is a great pleasure and privilege to me to enter into direct and I trust permanent correspondence with those faithful friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who, though few in number and scattered over that vast and flourishing country, will I trust act as a powerful leaven to the mass of that spiritually-minded people.

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!

Surely the efficacy of the universal Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, as applied to the cherished and time-honoured religious traditions of the East, has been sufficiently demonstrated to justify at present our confident hopes for the future and speedy reawakening of that land.

May the small company of the steadfast followers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Canada be filled with the outpourings of the Divine Grace that are being showered so mightily in these days upon the friends of God the world over, and may they arise with undiminished fervour to carry out to their fullest measure the last wishes and instructions of our departed Master for that great and flourishing Dominion!

With all good wishes, Your brother and co-worker,

Shoghi

