

## Chapter 2

Rúhíyyih Rabbani

Original English



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### The Passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Its Immediate Consequences

The address of Major Tudor Pole, in London, was often used as the distributing point for cables and letters to the Bahá'ís. Shoghi Effendi himself, whenever he went up to London, usually called there. On 29 November 1921 at 4.30 in the morning the following cable reached that office:

Cyclometry London

His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá ascended Abhá Kingdom. Inform friends.

Greatest Holy Leaf

In notes he made of this terrible event and its immediate repercussions Tudor Pole records that he immediately notified the friends by wire, telephone and letter. I believe he must have telephoned Shoghi Effendi, asking him to come at once to his office, but not conveying to him at that distance a piece of news which he well knew might prove too much of a shock. However this may be, at about noon Shoghi Effendi reached London, went to 61 St James' Street (off Piccadilly and not far from Buckingham Palace) and was shown into the private office. Tudor Pole was not in the room at the moment but as Shoghi Effendi stood there his eye was caught by the name of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the open cablegram lying on the desk and he read it. When Tudor Pole entered the room a moment later he found Shoghi Effendi in a state of collapse, dazed and bewildered by this catastrophic news. He was taken to the home of Miss Grand, one of the London believers, and put to bed there for a few days. Shoghi Effendi's sister Rouhangeze was studying in London and she, Lady Blomfield and others did all they could to comfort the heart-stricken youth.

Dr Esslemont immediately responded to his need; his first thought, on hearing the news, was evidently of Shoghi Effendi. In a letter written on 29 November he says:

The  
Bournemouth

Home

Sanatorium

Dearest Shoghi,



ORIGINAL

It was indeed a “bolt from the blue” when I got Tudor Pole’s wire this morning: “Master passed on peacefully Haifa yesterday morning”... It must be very hard for you, away from your family and even away from all Bahá’í friends. What will you do now? I suppose you will go back to Haifa as soon as possible. Meantime you are most welcome to come here for a few days...Just send me a wire...and I shall have a room ready for you...if I can be of any help to you in any way I shall be so glad. I can well imagine how heart-broken you must feel and how you must long to be at home and what a terrible blank you must feel in your life...Christ was closer to His loved ones after His ascension than before, and so I pray it may be with the beloved and ourselves. We must do our part to shoulder the responsibility of the Cause and His Spirit and Power will be with us and in us.

After a few days in Miss Grand’s home Shoghi Effendi roused himself to wind up his affairs and return immediately to the Holy Land. Tudor Pole, in a letter to the American Bahá’ís dated 2 December, wrote: “Shoghi Rabbani and his sister will be returning to Haifa towards the end of the present month and they will be accompanied by Lady Blomfield...” We presume that Shoghi Effendi was in Oxford on 3 December, as Professor Margoliouth expressed his condolences to him on that date and invited him to “look in”. We also know, from a letter he wrote to a Bahá’í student in London, alas, undated, that he accepted Dr Esslemont’s invitation for he writes:

The terrible news has for some days so overwhelmed my body, my mind and my soul that I was laid for a couple of days in bed almost senseless, absent-minded and greatly agitated. Gradually His power revived me and breathed in me a confidence that I hope will henceforth guide me and inspire me in my humble work of service. The day had to come, but how sudden and unexpected. The fact however that His Cause has created so many and such beautiful souls all over the world is a sure guarantee that it will live and prosper and ere long will compass the world! I am immediately starting for Haifa to receive the instructions He has left and have now made a supreme determination to dedicate my life to His service and by His aid to carry out His instructions all the days of my life.

The friends have insisted on my spending a day or two of rest in this place with Dr. Esslemont after the shock I have sustained and tomorrow I shall start back to London and thence to the Holy Land.

The stir which is now aroused in the Bahá’í world is an impetus to this Cause and will awaken every faithful soul to shoulder the responsibilities which the Master has now placed upon every one of us.

The Holy Land will remain the focal centre of the Bahá’í world; a new era will now come upon it. The Master in His great vision has consolidated His work and His spirit assures me that its results will soon be made manifest.

I am starting with Lady Blomfield for Haifa, and if we are delayed in London for our passage I shall then come and see you and tell you how marvellously the Master has designed His work after Him and what remarkable utterances He has pronounced with regard to the future of the Cause....

With prayer and faith in His Cause, I am your well-wisher in His service,

## Shoghi

This is little short of an astonishing letter to have been written before the provisions of the Master's Will were known or circulated, although it seems clear Shoghi Effendi had been informed there was awaiting his arrival in Haifa an envelope addressed to him by the Master. Truly it seems as if the spirit of the Master as it winged its way on its eternal flight had passed by England and dropped His mantle on the scion of His house in passing! One of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's daughters wrote, on 22 December 1921: "He has written His last instructions enclosed in an envelope addressed to Shoghi Effendi — therefore we cannot open it until he arrives, which will be, we hope, about the end of this month, as he is now on his way here."

The high office so soon to be made known to him, the long years of training by his beloved grandfather, all seem to have poured spiritual strength into Shoghi Effendi at the most tragic hour of his life. He found time, in the midst of his agony, to comfort others as witnessed by this moving letter written to him on 5 December by E. T. Hall, one of the old believers of Manchester:

Your loving, tender and noble letter, full of encouragement and fortitude came when we were very sad but resolute, very shocked but thoroughly understanding; and it turned the tide of our feelings into a flood-tide of peace and patience in the Will of God....Your noble letter uplifted us all and renewed our strength and determination; for if you could gather yourself together and rise above such grievous sorrow and shock, and comfort us, we, too, must do no less; but arise and serve the Cause which is our Mother...I know you have a thousand things to see to ere you start for the Holy Land. But we all love you dearly and we are all united and stronger than ever. Go with our love and sympathy and all our hearts to that Hallowed Spot, for we are one with you always.

Owing to passport difficulties Shoghi Effendi cabled Haifa he could not arrive until the end of the month. He sailed from England on 16 December, accompanied by Lady Blomfield and Rouhangeze, and arrived in Haifa by train at 39. 20 P.M. on 29 December from Egypt where his boat from England had docked. Many friends went to the station to bring him home; it is reported he was so overcome on his arrival that he had to be assisted up the steps. Awaiting him in the house was the only person who could in any measure assuage his suffering — his beloved great-aunt, the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She had already — so frail, so quiet, so modest at all times — shown herself in these past weeks to be a strong rock to which the believers clung in the midst of the tempest that had so suddenly burst upon them. The calibre of her soul, her breeding, her station, fitted her for the role she played in the Cause and in Shoghi Effendi's life during this extremely difficult and dangerous period.

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá so unexpectedly and quietly passed away, after no serious illness, the distracted members of His family searched His papers to see if by chance he had left any instructions as to where He should be buried. Finding none, they entombed Him in the centre of the three rooms adjacent to the inner Shrine of the Báb. They discovered his Will — which consists of three Wills written at different times and forming one document — addressed to Shoghi Effendi. It now became the painful duty of Shoghi Effendi to hear what was in it; a few days after his arrival they read it to him. In order to understand even a little of the effect this had

on him we must remember that he himself stated on more than one occasion, not only to me, but to others who were present at the table of the Western Pilgrim House, that he had had no foreknowledge of the existence of the Institution of Guardianship, least of all that he was appointed as Guardian; that the most he had expected was that perhaps, because he was the eldest grandson, 'Abdu'l-Bahá might have left instructions as to how the Universal House of Justice was to be elected and he might have been designated the one to see these were carried out and act as Convenor of the gathering which would elect it.

In that house, so empty now, so terribly empty, where every step reminded him of the Master's presence now gone forever, he did indeed sink under the waters of darkest grief and despair. "Moments of gloom," he writes to Mrs Whyte, "of intense sadness, of agitation I often experience for wherever I go I remember my beloved grandfather and whatever I do I feel the terrible responsibility He has so suddenly placed upon my feeble shoulders." In this letter, written on 6 February 1922, a little over one month after his return, he pours out his heart to his friend: "How intensely I feel the urgent need of a thorough regeneration to be effected within me, of a powerful effusion of strength, of confidence, of the Divine Spirit in my yearning soul, before I rise to take my destined place in the forefront of a Movement that advocates such glorious principles. I know that He will not leave me to myself, I trust in His guidance and believe in His wisdom, but what I crave is the abiding conviction and assurance that He will not fail me. The task is so overwhelmingly great, the realization of the inadequacy of my efforts and myself so deep that I cannot but give way and droop whenever I face my work..." This noble woman had evidently written to Shoghi Effendi such inspiring letters that he informs her that as he read them he was "moved to tears" and goes on to cry out "Oh how much in my youth and frailty, I need every now and then a vigorous appeal, a powerful reminder, a word of cheer and comfort!" He ends his letter with a very significant phrase, telling her that many times he has told the ladies of the household of her wise counsel "make not of the Movement a sect", and signs himself "I am yours very affectionately".

That same month, in another letter, he writes: "...the pain, nay the anguish of His bereavement is overwhelming..." Yet in the midst of this torture the young man of twenty-four found that he was not only designated "*the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees*", whose shade "*shadoweth all mankind*", but that he was "*the Sign of God, the chosen branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the Aghṣán<sup>1</sup>, the Afán<sup>2</sup>, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn*". We can only hope that the revelation of the fact that he had been designated for this role when he was still a small child was of some comfort to him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will consists of three parts; years later Shoghi Effendi was to write that "its first section" had been "composed during one of the darkest periods of His incarceration in the prison-fortress of Akka". It was in that first section that the Guardian's stupendous station had been conferred upon him, but then kept a closely guarded secret by his grandfather, who had written on the Will in His own hand that "this written paper hath for a long time been preserved under ground...the Holy Land being sorely agitated it was left untouched."

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1. Male descendants of Bahá'u'lláh.

2. Relatives of the Báb.

Shoghi Effendi likewise discovered that he was “*the expounder of the words of God*”, and that anyone who opposed, contended or disputed with, or disbelieved in him had done this to God; that anyone who deviated, separated himself or turned aside from him had done this to God, and that the Master had evoked the wrath, the fierce indignation and the vengeance of God upon such a one! He also learned that he was the irremovable head for life of the Universal House of Justice and that he and that Body would unerringly be guided by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and that what they decided would be from God; anyone disobeying him or them, anyone rebelling against him or them, would be disobeying and rebelling against God. He found he was to choose during his lifetime his eldest son, or failing the manifestation of the necessary qualities in him, demonstrating that “*The child is the secret essence of its sire*”, another branch to succeed him. He found the Master had remembered him tenderly: “*O ye faithful loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi...that no dust of despondency 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.*” It is relatively easy to accept that someone is going to lift the world on his shoulders — but it is very difficult to accept the fact that you are the one who is going to do it. The believers accepted Shoghi Effendi, but his crucifixion was to try to accept himself.

There is no doubt that the Greatest Holy Leaf, and probably a selected few of the Master's family, knew, before Shoghi Effendi reached Haifa, the gist at least of what was in the will because it had been examined to see if He had made any provisions for His own burial. That this is so is borne out by cables sent to the Persian and to the American believers, by the Greatest Holy Leaf, on 21 December 79. The one to America read as follows: “Memorial meeting world over January seven. Procure prayers for unity and steadfastness. Master left full instructions in His Will and Testament. Translation will be sent. Inform friends.” But the provisions of the Will were not made known until it was first read to Shoghi Effendi and, indeed, until it was officially read on 3 January 1922.

That Shoghi Effendi and all the Master's family passed through a period of unbearable suffering during these days, and indeed during the immediate years that followed, I have no doubt. Many times, when he was intensely distressed I saw him, in later years, go to bed, refusing to eat or drink, refusing to talk, rolled under his covers, unable to do anything but agonize, like someone beaten to the ground by heavy rain; this condition sometimes lasted for days, until forces within himself would adjust the balance and set him on his feet again. He would be lost in a world of his own where no one could follow. Once he said to me: “I know it is a road of suffering; I have to tread this road till the end; everything has to be done with suffering.”

The sense of abandonment, of unworthiness, of passionate longing for his grandfather that assailed Shoghi Effendi so strongly during the early years of his Guardianship is made even more heartbreaking when we remember a fact that was recounted to me and some Persian ladies by his mother, and is referred to by one of the American Bahá'ís who was present at the time the Master passed away, in a letter written a few days later. It seems that a few weeks before 'Abdu'l-Bahá died, suddenly He came into the room where Shoghi Effendi's father was and said “Cable Shoghi Effendi to return at once.” His mother told us that on hearing this she consulted with her mother and it was decided that to cable risked shocking Shoghi Effendi unnecessarily and so

they would write to him the Master's instruction; the letter arrived after He had ascended. She said as the Master had been perfectly well they had never dreamed He was going to pass away. No doubt the motive was a good one, but so typical of the interference of a family in what they considered a family matter, too short-sighted to realize that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was always right and should always be obeyed. There is no doubt that this tragically human element caused untold harm in the days of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. In any case, it effectively prevented Shoghi Effendi from seeing his grandfather again and many times he said that he felt if he had done so the Master might have given him some special words of advice or instruction, not to mention the infinite comfort it would have afforded him just to see His face once again in this world.

After his arrival in Haifa Shoghi Effendi occupied his old room, next to that of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; however, a few days later he moved to a room in the home of one of his aunts, next door, and while he was in Haifa continued to stay there until the Greatest Holy Leaf, in the summer of 1923, had two rooms and a small bath built for him on the roof of the Master's home. There were no doubt many reasons for his decision to stay for the time being in another home: the terrible agony of memory the old room brought to him, the crowds of people constantly coming and going in the Master's house and another factor, typical of Shoghi Effendi, which was his deep feeling of justice, that as his own family had received so much honour through having one of its sons raised to so high a position he must now shower honour and kindness on his aunts, uncles and cousins to redress, in some measure, the balance.

In the midst of such a home-coming Shoghi Effendi had no opportunity to recover from the blows he had received ever since he stood in Tudor Pole's office and read the fateful cable informing him of the Master's passing. In spite of his condition, the rank now conferred on him by the Master's *Will and Testament* had saddled him with a responsibility which, until the last moment of his life, could no more be shared with any individual or body than could have been the responsibility placed on the Master when, at the time of Bahá'u'lláh's ascension, His Will made it quite clear that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was His successor. Decisions had to be made. The first of these was the manner in which the Will should be made public knowledge.

From different sources we gather that on the morning of 3 January 1922 Shoghi Effendi visited the Shrine of the Báb and the Tomb of his grandfather; later that same day, in the home of his aunt, but not in his presence, the Master's *Will and Testament* was read aloud to nine men, most of them members of the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and its seals, signatures and His writing throughout, in His own hand, shown to them. The Guardian gave instructions that a true copy should then be made by one of those present — a believer from Persia. In a letter written by Shoghi Effendi himself to an old Bahá'í a few weeks later, he states: "'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will was read on the 7th of January, 1922, at his house in the presence of Bahá'ís from Persia, India, Egypt, England, Italy, Germany, America and Japan..." This gathering was not attended by the Guardian either, no doubt for reasons of ill health as much as delicacy on his part. In conformity with the local custom to hold a memorial gathering on the fortieth day after the death of a person, some Bahá'ís and many notables, including the Governor of Haifa, gathered in the hall of the Master's home, were first served lunch and then held a large meeting in that same hall, at which speeches were made in honour of the departed Master and the provisions of His Will were announced. The guests were most anxious to have Shoghi Effendi address them a few words



and one of the friends carried this message to him; Shoghi Effendi, who was with the Greatest Holy Leaf in her room, said he was too distressed and overcome to comply with their request and instead hastily wrote a few words to be read on his behalf in which he expressed the heartfelt gratitude of himself and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family for the presence of the Governor and the speakers who by their sincere words "have revived his sacred memory in our hearts...I venture to hope that we his kindred and his family may by our deeds and words, prove worthy of the glorious example he has set before us and thereby earn your esteem and your affection. May His everlasting spirit be with us all and knit us together for evermore!" He begins this message: "The shock has been too sudden and grievous for my youthful age to enable me to be present at this gathering of the loved ones of beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

It was befitting that the Greatest Holy Leaf, and not Shoghi Effendi himself, should announce to the Bahá'í world the provisions of the Master's Will. On 7 January she sent two cables to Persia as follows: "Memorial meetings all over the world have been held. The Lord of all the worlds in His Will and Testament has revealed His instructions. Copy will be sent. Inform believers." and "Will and Testament forwarded Shoghi Effendi Centre Cause." It is significant to recall that 'Abdu'l-Bahá — no doubt in anticipation of events He clearly foresaw — had, in answer to a query from the Tehran Assembly written to them: "You have asked in whose name the real estate and buildings donated should be registered with the Government and the legal deeds issued: they should be registered in the name of Mirza Shoghi Rabbani, who is the son of Mirza Hadi Shirazi and is in London." However great the grief and shock the Master's ascension produced in Persia it is unlikely that the news of Shoghi Effendi's appointment came as much of a surprise to the more informed amongst the friends there, especially after having so recently received such an illuminating instruction from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. To the United States the Greatest Holy Leaf cabled on 16 January: "In Will Shoghi Effendi appointed Guardian of Cause and Head of House of Justice. Inform American friends." In spite of the fact that from the very beginning Shoghi Effendi exhibited both a tactful and masterful hand in dealing with the problems that continually faced him, he leaned very heavily on the Greatest Holy Leaf, whose character, station and love for him made her at once his support and his refuge.

Immediately after these events Shoghi Effendi selected eight passages from the Will and circulated them among the Bahá'ís; only one of these referred to himself, was very brief and was quoted as follows: "O ye the faithful loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi... For he is, after 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the guardian of the Cause of God, the Afnan, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him." Of all the thundering and tremendous passages in the will referring to himself, Shoghi Effendi chose the least astounding and provocative to first circulate among the Bahá'ís. Guided and guiding he was from the very beginning.

These early years of his Guardianship must be seen as a continual process of being floored and rising to his feet again, often staggering from the terrible blows he had received, but game to the core. It was his love for 'Abdu'l-Bahá that always carried him through: "yet I believe", he cries out, "and firmly believe in His power, His guidance, His ever-living presence..." In a letter written in February 1922, to Nayir Afnan, a nephew of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the agony of his soul is clearly reflected: "Your...letter reached me in the very midst of my sorrows, my cares and afflictions... the pain, nay the anguish of His bereavement is so overwhelming, the burden of responsibility He

has placed on my feeble and my youthful shoulders is so overwhelming..." He goes on to say: "I am enclosing for you personally the copy of the dear Master's Testament, you will read it and see what He has undergone at the hands of His kindred...you will also see what a great responsibility He has placed on me which nothing short of the creative power of His word can help me to face..." This letter is not only indicative of his feelings but in view of the fact that the one he wrote it to belonged to those who had been the enemies of the Master in the days after Bahá'u'lláh's ascension and were of that breed of kindred He had so strongly denounced in His Will, shows how courageously Shoghi Effendi holds up the mirror of the past and at the same time appeals for his support and loyalty in the new situation which exists.

His earliest letters reveal Shoghi Effendi's characteristic strength, wisdom and dignity. To one of the professors of the American University in Beirut he wrote, on 19 March 1922, clearly and unequivocally stating his own position: "Replying to your question as to whether I have been officially designated to represent the Bahá'í Community: '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..."

It must not be thought, however, that the act of promulgating the Master's Will solved all problems and ushered in a new era in the Cause with the greatest ease. Far from it. Before Shoghi Effendi reached Haifa the Greatest Holy Leaf had been obliged to cable America on 14 December: "Now is period of great tests. The friends should be firm and united in defending the Cause. Nakeseens [Covenant-breakers] starting activities through press other channels all over world. Select committee of wise cool heads to handle press propaganda in America." Grave as the events indicated in this cable were, they cannot be considered apart from the serious situation which existed in America when 'Abdu'l-Bahá died. He had been deeply concerned over Covenant-breaking in that country for some time, even having predicted in a letter written some years before that a storm would arise after His passing and praying for the protection of the believers. On 8 November 1921 He cabled Roy Wilhelm, His trusted correspondent, "How is situation and health friends?" to which Mr Wilhelm, the next day, was obliged to reply: "Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia agitating violation centering Fernald, Dyer, Watson. New York, Boston refused join, standing solidly constructive policy." An immediate reply was cabled back by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on 12 November, in the strongest language, and clearly indicating His distress: "*He who sits with leper catches leprosy. He who is with Christ shuns Pharisees and abhors Judas Iscariot. Certainly shun violators. Inform Goodall, True and Parsons telegraphically.*" That same day the Master in a second cable to Roy Wilhelm said: "*I implore health from divine bounty*". These were the last messages America ever received from Him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's sudden passing did nothing to remedy this situation. It was the awareness of its gravity that undoubtedly inspired the cable sent by the Greatest Holy Leaf informing the American friends the Master had left full instructions in His Will. The perpetual agitation of Muḥammad 'Alí, ever since the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, had not abated and his henchmen in the United States were vigilant and active. At that time the magazine *Reality* was a Bahá'í organ and in its columns was published news of the Covenant-breakers and their activities; this greatly distressed the wiser and more experienced believers, particularly those who had had the privilege of knowing 'Abdu'l-Bahá personally, but left the young, inexperienced and "liberal" minded unperturbed and unaware of their danger. It was because of this sickly and equivocal



attitude that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had written less than two months before His passing a Tablet, published in the *Star of the West*, in which He sought to make clear to the friends that they ran grave risks in such matters as these by taking them lightly, that Bahá'u'lláh had warned His followers that a foul odour was none other than the violators. This situation Shoghi Effendi now inherited.

One of the oldest and most staunch of the American believers wrote to Shoghi Effendi on 18 January 1922, less than two weeks after the public announcement of the provisions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will: "As you know we are having great troubles and sorrows with violators in the Cause in America. This poison has penetrated deeply among the friends..." In many reports, in great detail, accusations and facts poured in upon the newly-made Guardian. There was, of course, another aspect. With touching pureheartedness and trust the Bahá'ís of East and West rallied round their young leader and poured out avowals of their love and loyalty: "We long to assist the Guardian in every way and our hearts are responsive to the burdens upon his young shoulders..." "Word has reached us here in Washington that our beloved Master has placed the guidance and protection of the Holy Cause in your hands and that He named you as the head of the House of Justice. I write you these few lines responding with all my heart to the sacred instructions of our Beloved Lord and assuring all the support and fidelity of which I am capable..." "Beloved of our beloved," he was addressed by two pillars of the Faith in America, "How our hearts sang with joy at the news that the Master had not left us comfortless but had made you, His beloved, the centre of the unity of His Cause, so that the hearts of all the friends may find peace and certainty." "Our lives have been in utter darkness until the blessed cablegram of the Greatest Holy Leaf arrived with the first ray of light, and that is your appointment by the Merciful Lord as our Guardian and our Head as well as the Guardian of the Cause of God and the Head of the House of Justice." "Whatever the Guardian of the Cause wishes or advises these servants to do, that is likewise our desire and intention." In a letter to the Greatest Holy Leaf one of the old believers, recently returned from Haifa, writes in August 1922: "The friends are greatly attached to Shoghi Effendi, and they desire naught but to follow our Lord's injunctions that we should all support the Guardian of this Holy Cause..." Another old believer wrote about the same time to Shoghi Effendi and assured him that although "we still have many difficulties and some sore spots but I sense the healing power and believe that in general the Cause never was more healthy or deep in America than at present..." Such messages were no doubt a great consolation, but in comparison to the number of believers in the West and to the heart-break of the Guardian they seem to have been pitifully few in number. It is a sad fact that many of those who rallied most firmly to his support, themselves later left the Cause and even turned against it. The tornado uproots the big trees but leaves the humble grass unaffected.

There is no doubt that the Bahá'ís everywhere were swept by a great wave of love and loyalty on hearing of the provisions of the Master's Will. Its effect on the Covenant-breakers, however, was to stir them to violent action. Like a hydra-headed monster, each head hissing more

venomously than the other, they reared up and struck at the young successor of the Master. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s half-brother Muḥammad ‘Alí, his brother, his sons and his henchmen; the perennial enemies of the Faith in Persia; the disaffected, the lukewarm, the ambitious — wherever they were and whoever they were — began to stir up trouble. On 16 January two veteran American Bahá’ís serving in Tehran wrote to the Master’s family giving a picture of what was going on there; not the least significant fact which emerges from their letters is that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had sent to Persia a letter in which He enclosed, for the edification of the friends, a letter of Shoghi Effendi to Him, giving news of the Cause in England. This letter arrived after His passing, but it shows the Master’s pride in His grandson and taken in conjunction with the news of His ascension and the appointment of the Guardian, so soon to follow, seems to be more than mere coincidence. These letters go on to say: “...a hue and cry is raised against the Cause...but the sheep were not scattered and forgotten and are firm and constant, and rallying to the support of the brave young leader with whom the Beloved has blessed us. Shoghi Effendi has always been a household word with us and the whole Bahá’í nation extends welcome and greeting to him today. ‘Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord’...” “...I wish you might hear the grateful expressions of the believers: ‘Now we are comforted. Now we are content. The Cause has become young.’”

On 16 January the Guardian wrote his first letter to the Persian Bahá’ís encouraging them to remain steadfast and protect the Faith and sharing with them in moving terms his grief at the passing of the beloved Master. On 22 January Shoghi Effendi cabled the American Bahá’ís: “Holy Leaves comforted by Americans’ unswerving loyalty and noble resolve. Day of steadfastness. Accept my loving cooperation.” The day before he had written his first letter to them, beginning: “At this early hour when the morning light is just breaking upon the Holy Land, whilst the gloom of the dear Master’s bereavement is still hanging thick upon the hearts, I feel as if my soul turns in yearning love and full of hope to that great company of His loved ones across the seas...” Already he has placed his hand on the tiller and sees the channels he must navigate clearly before him: “the broad and straight path of teaching”, as he phrased it, unity, selflessness, detachment, prudence, caution, earnest endeavour to carry out the Master’s wishes, awareness of His presence, shunning of the enemies of the Cause — these must be the goal and animation of the believers. Four days later he is writing his first letter to the Japanese Bahá’ís: “Despondent and sorrowful though I be in these darksome days, yet whenever I call to mind the hopes our departed Master so confidently reposed in the friends in that Far-Eastern land, hope revives within me and drives away the gloom of His bereavement. As His attendant and secretary for well nigh two years after the termination of the Great War, I recall so vividly the radiant joy that transfigured His face whenever I opened before Him your supplications...”

During these days Shoghi Effendi was also busy translating his grandfather’s Will into English. Emogene Hoagg, who had been living in Haifa for some time prior to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s passing, wrote on 24 January: “Before long the Will of the dear Master will be ready for America and elsewhere. Shoghi Effendi is translating it now.”

While Shoghi Effendi was thus occupied and was gathering his powers and beginning to write letters such as these to the Bahá'ís in different countries, he received the following letter from the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, dated 24 January 1922:

Dear Mr. Rabbani,

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of Jan. 11. , and to thank you for the kind expression it contains.

It would be unfortunate if the ever to be lamented death of Sir 'Abdu'l-Bahá were to interfere with the completion of your Oxford career, and I hope that may not be the case.

I am much interested to learn of the measures that have been taken to provide for the stable organization of the Bahá'í Movement.

Should you be at any time in Jerusalem it would be a pleasure to me to see you here.

Yours sincerely,

Herbert Samuel

However friendly its tone, it demanded on the part of His Majesty's Government to be informed of what was going on. And this is not in the least surprising in view of the activities of Muḥammad 'Alí. Shortly after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension, this disgruntled and perfidious half-brother had filed a claim, based on Islamic law (he who pretended he had still a right to be the successor of Bahá'u'lláh!), for a portion of the estate of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which he now claimed a right to as His brother. He had sent for his son, who had been living in America and agitating his father's claims there, to join him in this new and direct attack on the Master and His family. Not content with this exhibition of his true nature he applied to the civil authorities to turn over the custodianship of Bahá'u'lláh's Shrine to him on the grounds that he was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's lawful successor. The British authorities refused on the grounds that it appeared to be a religious issue; he then appealed to the Muslim religious head and asked the Mufti of Akka to take formal charge of Bahá'u'lláh's Shrine; this dignitary, however, said he did not see how he could do this as the Bahá'í teachings were not in conformity with Shariah law. All other avenues having failed he sent his younger brother, Badiullah, with some of their supporters, to visit the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh where, on Tuesday, 30 January, they forcibly seized the keys of the Holy Tomb from the Bahá'í caretaker, thus asserting Muḥammad 'Alí's right to be the lawful custodian of his Father's resting-place. This unprincipled act created such a commotion in the Bahá'í Community that the Governor of Akka ordered the keys to be handed over to the authorities, posted guards at the Shrine, but went no further, refusing to return the keys to either party.

It does not require much imagination to conceive this was another terrible shock to Shoghi Effendi, the news arriving after dark, by a panting and excited messenger, all the believers aroused and distressed beyond words at the thought that for the first time in decades the Most Sacred Remains had fallen into the hands of the inveterate enemy of the Centre of His Covenant. One of the American believers, who visited the Shrine with Shoghi Effendi himself

during March 1922, describes this situation in his diary: "Upon each of my three very recent visits to Behje we were able to penetrate only as far as the court of the tomb — inner sanctuary being sealed...And as yet no one can foresee how the affair will come out. Shoghi Effendi is much troubled over the matter." In spite of his personal feelings Shoghi Effendi followed faithfully the example of the Master in other days of attack and storm, giving instructions calmly as to where the lights should be placed inside and outside the Shrine, as it was in process of being illuminated.

This same informant went on to record that while he was in Haifa telegrams were sent out by the Guardian to King Feisal of Iraq appealing against the action of his government in seizing the blessed House of Bahá'u'lláh (the prescribed site of pilgrimage for the Bahá'ís of all lands), and arrangements were made by him for similar messages to be sent from other Bahá'í communities. This was another terrible blow to Shoghi Effendi; in the space of a few months he had received four, any one of which was calculated to place an unbearable strain on his entire being.

The situation in which Shoghi Effendi now found himself was truly crushing. Although the body of the believers was loyal, the Cause was being attacked from all sides by enemies emboldened by and rejoicing over the death of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We are informed by one of the old Bahá'ís, who was himself a secretary to the Governor of Haifa at that time, that the guardian was commonly referred to by the local authorities as "the Boy". Aside from his extreme youth, the beardless Oxford student, however dignified in his manner, refused to even pretend he was like the bearded patriarch everyone knew so well as one of the features of Haifa — much loved or much hated as the case might be — but always respected as its most outstanding notable. Shoghi Effendi refused to wear a turban and the long oriental robes the Master had always worn; he refused to go to the mosque on Friday, a usual practice of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; he refused to spend hours with visiting Muslim priests, who were wont to pass the time of day with the Master, and who no doubt now were eager to assess the stripling He had placed in His seat as Head of the Faith. The Guardian, when members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family remonstrated with him for not following in the ways of the Master, would reply he must devote himself undividedly to the work of the Cause. All this must have added to his suffering and caused much alarm within the family and local community. Some of them secretly suspected that Shoghi Effendi did not really know what he should do, that he needed older and wiser heads about him, and that the sooner the Universal House of Justice was formed the better for the Cause and all concerned.

There is no doubt that in his deep distress, alternately worshipped, adored, advised, questioned, admonished and challenged, he felt the need for support and consultation. During March 1922 he gathered in Haifa a group of representative and well-known Bahá'ís: Lady Blomfield had returned with him from England, Emogene Hoagg had been living in Haifa; to these were added Miss Rosenberg from England, Roy Wilhelm, Mountfort Mills and Mason Remey from America, Laura and Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney of France, Consul and Alice Schwarz from Germany, and Major Tudor Pole. Two well-known Bahá'í teachers from Persia, Avarih and Fazel, had likewise been summoned to Haifa, but owing to complications their arrival was long delayed; at a later date the Guardian sent them on long teaching missions to Europe and North America, respectively. Siyyid Mustafa Roumie of Burma, and Corinne True and her daughter, Katherine, from the United States arrived later on. Other pilgrims came and went during those

early months. But the significant fact is that not only many of the older Bahá'ís believed that the next step to be taken was the formation of the Universal House of Justice, but that the Governor of Haifa, in a conversation with one of the Bahá'ís Shoghi Effendi had sent for, broached this subject himself, saying that he felt that when the House of Justice was established, and the Bahá'í Holy Places registered in its name, the whole issue would be removed from the status of a family quarrel and placed on the firm legal basis of a permanent religious organization. This opinion held by not only a British official but some believers and members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family as well, reflects very clearly the attitude of some of them towards the guardian. His youth, his own condition at the beginning of his ministry, inclined them to the belief that he needed the other members of the Body of which he was permanent Head to help and advise him, as well as to secure a firmer legal foundation on which to fight the claims being made by the enemies in Palestine and in Iraq according to Muslim Shariah law, to the Bahá'í Holy Places in these countries.

The reaction of Shoghi Effendi to the trend of these opinions and the consultations he was holding with the Bahá'ís he had summoned to Haifa, show how, at the outset of his Guardianship, his mind, however crushed he may have often felt personally, was always that of a brilliant general, seeing all battles in the round, never becoming blinded by details or emergencies. The above-mentioned diary records: "During the early days of my visit Shoghi Effendi was occupied much of the time in consultation with Mountfort Mills, Roy Wilhelm, the Dreyfus-Barneys, Lady Blomfield, and Major Tudor Pole, and then later when they came the Schwarzes, about the foundation of the Universal House of Justice. I heard in a general way of the matters they discussed. It seems that before the Universal House can be established the Local and National Houses must be functioning in those countries where there are Bahá'ís. I understand that Shoghi Effendi has called certain friends from Persia and from India for this conference, but they did not arrive in time to meet with these friends from the West whom I have mentioned."

The upshot of these discussions seems to have been that the Guardian instructed the Schwarzes to return to Germany and work towards the formation of local bodies and a national body; Roy Wilhelm and Mountfort Mills were to convey to America, at its forthcoming Convention, that the Executive Board — the national body of the North American Bahá'ís — was to become a legislative one in function, guiding all national affairs rather than merely implementing decisions and recommendations arrived at in the Annual Convention by delegates in consultation. No doubt the British Bahá'ís present were to convey the same over-all concept to their own Community. What this really amounts to is that Shoghi Effendi, a little over two months after he became Guardian, began to lay his foundations for the erection of the Administrative Order of the Faith as set forth in the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

But the strain of this was more than he could bear. He appointed a body of nine people to act tentatively as an Assembly and we find that on 7 April 1922 this body enters in its records that a letter has been received from the Greatest Holy Leaf in which she states that "the Guardian of the Cause of God, the chosen Branch, the Leader of the people of Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, under the weight of sorrows and boundless grief, has been forced to leave here for a while in order to rest and recuperate, and then return to the Holy Land to render his services and discharge his responsibilities." She goes on to say that in accordance with his letter, which she encloses, he has

appointed her to administer, in consultation with the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and a chosen Assembly, all Bahá'í affairs during his absence. Shoghi Effendi had already left Haifa for Europe, on 5 April, accompanied by his eldest cousin. This decision, and the Guardian's letter, were communicated by the Greatest Holy Leaf to the editors of the *Star of the West* and published by them in translation and with facsimiles of her own and Shoghi Effendi's original Persian letters. No doubt a similar communication was sent to other key Bahá'í centres. In her letter to the *Star of the West* the Greatest Holy Leaf explains that she has organized an Assembly of those whom Shoghi Effendi has appointed. The Guardian's letter reads as follows:

He is God!

This servant, after that grievous event and great calamity — the ascension of His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Abhá Kingdom — has been so stricken with grief and pain and so entangled in the troubles (created) by the enemies of the Cause of God, that I consider my presence here, at such a time and in such an atmosphere, is not in accordance with the fulfillment of my important and sacred duties.

For this reason, unable to do otherwise, I have left for a time the affairs of the Cause, both at home and abroad, under the supervision of the Holy Family and the headship of the Greatest Holy Leaf — may my soul be a sacrifice to her — until, by the Grace of God, having gained health, strength, self-confidence and spiritual energy, and having taken into my hands, in accordance with my aim and desire, entirely and regularly the work of service, I shall attain to my utmost spiritual hope and aspiration.

The servant of His Threshold,

Shoghi

On 8 April the Greatest Holy Leaf wrote a general letter to the friends. She first acknowledges the letters of allegiance they have sent and says Shoghi Effendi is counting upon their co-operation in spreading the Message; the Bahá'í world must from now on be linked through the Spiritual Assemblies and local questions must be referred to them. She then goes on to say: "Since the ascension of our Beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá Shoghi Effendi has been moved so deeply... that he has sought the necessary quiet in which to meditate upon the vast task ahead of him, and it is to accomplish this that he has temporarily left these regions. During his absence he has appointed me as his representative, and while he is occupied in this great endeavor, the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is assured that you will all strive to advance triumphantly the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh..." The typewritten letter in English is signed in Persian "Bahá'íyyih" and sealed with her seal.

It all looked very calm on paper but behind it was a raging storm in the heart and mind of Shoghi Effendi. "He has gone", the Greatest Holy Leaf wrote, "on a trip to various countries". He left with his cousin and went to Germany to consult doctors. I remember he told me they found he had almost no reflexes, which they considered very serious. In the wilderness, however, he found for himself a partial healing, as so many others had found before him. Some years later, in 1926, to Hippolyte Dreyfus, who had known him from childhood and whom he evidently felt he could be open with as an intimate friend, he wrote that his letter had reached him "on my way



to the Bernese Oberland which has become my second home. In the fastnesses and recesses of its alluring mountains I shall try to forget the atrocious vexations which have afflicted me for so long...It is a matter which I greatly deplore, that in my present state of health, I feel the least inclined to, and even incapable of, any serious discussion on these vital problems with which I am confronted and with which you are already familiar. The atmosphere in Haifa is intolerable and a radical change is impracticable. The transference of my work to any other centre is unthinkable, undesirable and in the opinion of many justly scandalous...I cannot express myself more adequately than I have for my memory has greatly suffered."

In the early years after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, although Shoghi Effendi often travelled about Europe with the restless interest of not only a young man but a man haunted by the ever-present, towering giants of his work and his responsibility, he returned again and again to those wild, high mountains and their lofty solitude.

Copies of correspondence in French with a German Swiss in whose home Shoghi Effendi lodged for many summers are most revealing of his nature, his love of what he called "good, simple people", and the tender feelings that so often characterized his friendships:

Dec. 22, 1923

Dear Mr. Hauser,

I have received your kind card and the mere view of the Jungfrau, with the admirably depicted town of Interlaken awoke in me the unforgettable memory of your friendliness, kindness and hospitality during my delightful sojourn with you. All this I shall never forget and I shall treasure always this memory with a feeling of tenderness and gratitude.

I am sending you a few postage stamps which I hope will interest you.

I wish you from all my heart, dear Mr. Hauser, a happy New Year and a long, prosperous and happy life.

Hoping to see you again, and never forgetting you,

Your very devoted,  
Shoghi

The next year, on 26 September, he again writes to him:

My dear Mr. Hauser,

I am back and on my return to my home the first letter I want to write is to my unforgettable and dear Hauser under whose roof I tasted the pleasures of picturesque Switzerland and the charms of a hospitality which will never be effaced from my memory.

Recalling my experiences and my exhausting adventures followed by the repose offered me by the comfortable and modest Chalet Hoheweg, the charm of which I shall never forget, I often feel in myself the strong desire to see you one day in the bosom of my family, in our home,

showing you the evidences of my gratitude and friendship! And if that is impossible I hope you will always remember my gratitude and affection.

I have just received by mail some new Persian stamps with the portrait of the new Shah, which I hope will interest you.

I wish you with all my heart a long, joyous and prosperous life, and hope to see you one day again in Interlaken, in the heart of that beloved country.

I remain your faithful friend

On 18 December he is thanking this friend for his postcards, sending him "a modest souvenir of the city of Haifa, so different and inferior to the beautiful sites in your picturesque Switzerland", and wishes his "dear and unforgettable friend" a prosperous New Year.

This man was an old Swiss guide in whose house on the main street Shoghi Effendi had rented a tiny room, the attic under the eaves, for which he paid about one franc a night. The ceiling was so low that when his uncle-in-law, a big man, came to see him, he could not stand upright. There was a small bed, a basin and a pitcher of cold water to wash with. Interlaken is in the heart of the Bernese Oberland and the starting point for innumerable excursions into the surrounding mountains and valleys. Often long before sunrise Shoghi Effendi would start out, dressed in knee breeches, a Norfolk jacket and black wool puttees on his legs, sturdy mountain boots, and a small cheap canvas rucksack on his back and carrying a cane. He would take a train to the foot of some mountain or pass and begin his excursion, walking often ten to sixteen hours, usually alone, but sometimes accompanied by whichever young relative was with him; they could seldom stand the pace and after a few days would start making their excuses. From here he also climbed some of the higher mountains, roped to a guide. These expeditions lasted practically up to the time of his marriage. I remember when we first went to Interlaken, in the summer of 1937, Shoghi Effendi took me to Hauser's house, wanting to introduce his wife to the old man to whom he had been so attached and who had listened with so much interest to the enthusiastic account of his day's walk or climb, marvelling at the indefatigable energy and determination of the young man, but we found he had died. The Guardian went to the peaceful little mountain cemetery to visit his grave, taking me with him. Shoghi Effendi often told me these stories of his early years in the mountains and showed this or that peak he had climbed, this or that pass he had been over on foot. His longest walk, he said, was forty-two kilometres over two passes. Often he would be caught by the rain and walk on until his clothes dried on him. He had a deep love of scenery and I believe these restless, exhausting hour after hour marches healed to some extent the wounds left so deep in his heart by the passing of the Master.

Shoghi Effendi would tell me of how he practically never ate anything until he got back at night, how he would go to a small hotel (he sometimes took me there to the same simple restaurant) and order *pommes sautées*, fried eggs and salad as these were cheap and filling, go home to his little room under the eaves and fall into bed exhausted and sleep, waking to drink a carafe of the cold mountain water, and sleep again, until, driven by this terrible soul-restlessness, he arose and set out again before daybreak. There was something strange and deeply touching about the way that last summer of his life he went back to all the places he loved most to see them once again, as if one of the long mountain shadows was reaching out towards him. Those early

years were the years when he was not only most distressed but hardest on himself. He had a rigid discipline he applied to himself and those who were with him. A sum, less than modest in amount, was set aside for the summer and whether he was alone with one of his relatives acting as companion and secretary, or, as sometimes happened, joined by other members of his family, this sum had to suffice and was not added to. The economy would be greater if there were more people. He never travelled other than third class, even when he was a middle-aged man. I can remember very few occasions when we went anywhere in a train first or second class and that only when the train was too filthy or too full to make third class possible. If he travelled by night he would sleep on the hard wooden benches, his head on his rucksack, more than those who travelled with him could stand. He had two standards, one for himself as Head of the Faith identified before the public gaze with the honour of the Cause which was synonymous with his honour; one as an individual person, incognito, and thus not demanding a personal appearance in any other form than that of a naturally modest, conscientious man, who was reluctant to spend on luxury the funds his high office placed at his disposal. He was not accountable to anyone in the world, no Bahá'í on earth would question anything he chose to do, but he questioned himself and he was a difficult taskmaster.

As his age increased and the burden he carried wore him down more and more I brought as much pressure to bear as I dared to get him to be a little less harsh to himself, a little less exacting, to at least accept the modest comforts of a decent hotel, to sometimes take a cure for his health, to have a room with a bath, to eat food, as he only ate once a day, more nourishing and of better quality. This slight change he only accepted because Milly Collins, in her great love for him, formed the habit of offering him a sum of money before his "rest" began and begging him to use it for himself, for whatever he wanted. It was only through vehement appeals on my part, that he should accept what Milly gave with such tender love and concern for him personally, that he would use a small portion of it for his own use — the rest was spent on purchases for the gardens, Holy Places and Archives; but this gave him real pleasure, so Milly's intention was fulfilled in one way or another.

During one or two of those summers early in Shoghi Effendi's ministry he told me he had bought a bicycle and cycled over many passes. I have often wondered how, with his verve, audacity and lack of mechanical sense, he arrived home safely, which he invariably did! He had very little feeling for machines, being a typical intellectual, though he could do with this hands, when he desired to, very dainty things.

In spite of his withdrawal — for that is really what this first absence from the Holy Land amounted to — the forces Shoghi Effendi had set in motion were bearing fruit. One of the returning pilgrims informed the American Bahá'í Convention, held in April 1922, that: "our visit was at the summons of Shoghi Effendi. At Haifa we met Bahá'ís from Persia, India, Burma, Egypt, Italy, England and France...On arrival the impression that came strongly over me was that God is in His Heaven and all is well with the world...We met Shoghi Effendi, dressed entirely in black, a touching figure. Think of what he stand for today! All the complex problems of the great statesmen of the world are as child's play in comparison with the great problems of this youth, before whom are the problems of the entire world...No one can form any conception of his difficulties, which are overwhelming...the Master is not gone. His Spirit is present with greater intensity and power...In the center of this radiation stands this youth, Shoghi Effendi. The Spirit

streams forth from this young man. He is indeed young in face, form and manner, yet his heart is the center of the world today. The character and spirit divine scintillate from him today. He alone can...save the world and make true civilization. So humble, meek, selfless is he that it is touching to see him. His letters are a marvel. It is the great wisdom of God in granting us the countenance of this great central point of guidance to meet difficult problems. These problems, much like ours, come to him from all parts of the world. They are met and solved by him in the most informal way...The great principles laid down by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá now have their foundation in the external world of God's Kingdom on earth. This foundation is being laid, sure and certain, by Shoghi Effendi in Haifa today." Another of those who had been called to Haifa for consultation said: "When one reaches Haifa and meets Shoghi Effendi and sees the workings of his mind and heart, his wonderful spirit and grasp of things, it is truly marvelous." They reported how in Haifa they heard Shoghi Effendi had retired at 3 a.m. and arisen at 6 a.m. and once worked forty-eight hours without food or drink. To the friends gathered at the Convention Shoghi Effendi had sent a bunch of violets by one of the returning pilgrims and his love to all the believers. The Convention report stated: "It became apparent to all that the time of the organization of the Divine Kingdom on earth has come..." It was as a result of the instructions given to the American Bahá'ís who had visited Haifa in the early months of 1922 that this Convention elected a National Spiritual Assembly, replacing the older Executive Board of Bahá'í Temple Unity and setting the work of the Faith in North America on an entirely new basis.

In the autumn of 1922 the Greatest Holy Leaf, deeply distressed by Shoghi Effendi's long absence, sent members of his family to find him and plead with him to come back to the Holy Land. In the street of a small village in the mountains, as he returned in the evening from one of his all-day walks, Shoghi Effendi, to his great surprise, found his mother looking for him; she had come all the way from Palestine for this purpose, accompanied by another member of the Master's family; with tears she informed him of the distress of Bahíyyih Khánum, the family and friends and persuaded him to return and assume his rightful place.

A notice in the Bahá'í News of America, the *Star of the West*, stated: "Shoghi Effendi...returned to Haifa on Friday afternoon, December 15, in radiant health and happiness and resumed 'the reins of the office' of Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause, committed to him in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá." The Guardian's own letters and cables reflect the change in his condition. Two days after his return he wrote to the believers in Germany: "To have been unable, owing to sad circumstances over which I had no control, to keep in close and constant touch with you...is to me a cause of sad surprise and deep and bitter regret..." but, he goes on to say, he has now "returned to the Holy Land with a renewed vigour and refreshed spirit". The same day he wrote to the French Bahá'ís: "Now that refreshed and reassured I resume my arduous duties" and also to the Japanese Bahá'ís: "Having brought to an end my long hours of retirement and meditation"; he says he never doubted "that my sudden withdrawal from the field of active service...would never damp your tender hopes". He also made it quite clear that for him this "sudden disappearance" had been necessary: "Prolonged though this period has been," he wrote to America on 16 December 1922, "yet I have strongly felt ever since this New Day has dawned upon me that such a needed retirement, despite the temporary dislocations it might entail, would far outweigh in its results any immediate service I could have humbly tendered at the Threshold of Bahá'u'lláh". In his seclusion Shoghi Effendi had commemorated the first

anniversary of the passing of the Master; to face such an occasion in Haifa, in the tomb of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was probably more than he could have borne in the first year of his Guardianship.

“With feelings of joyful confidence”, as he expressed it, Shoghi Effendi now threw himself into his work. Something of his original nature, which had led one of the Bahá’ís to write to him, as a student in Beirut, “Your smiling face is ever before me” had returned to him. This is clearly reflected in the sheaf of cables he dispatched on 16 December 1922, the day after his arrival, to practically the entire Bahá’í world, the exact copy of which I quote from his own files:

#### PERSIA

“That the Lord of Hosts may, upon my re-entry to the field of Service, bestow a fresh blessing upon His valiant warriors of that favoured Land is indeed my earnest prayer.”

#### AMERICA

“The onward march of the Cause hath not been nor can it ever be stayed. I pray the Almighty that my efforts, now refreshed and renewed, may with your undiminished support lead it to glorious victory.”

#### GREAT BRITAIN

“Solaced and strengthened, I now join my humble strivings to your untiring exertions for the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh.”

#### GERMANY

“United thus far with you in my thoughts and meditations I now gladly and hopefully add the further bond of active participation in a life-long service at the Threshold of Bahá’u’lláh.”

#### INDIA

“May our reunion in the glorious arena of service prove in the spiritual field of that land the herald of triumphal victories.”

#### JAPAN

“Refreshed and reassured I now stretch to you across the distant seas my hand of brotherly cooperation in the Cause of Bahá.”

#### MESOPOTAMIA

“With zeal unabated and with strength renewed I now await your joyful tidings in the Holy Land.”

#### TURKEY

“Back to these hallowed surroundings I extend towards you my hand of fellowship and service in the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh.”

## FRANCE

"Awaiting your joyful tidings in the Holy Land."

On 18 December he cabled:

## SWITZERLAND

"Pray convey my Swiss friends assurance of my unfailing cooperation on my happy return to the Holy Land."

And on 19 December he sent the two following cables:

## ITALY

"Convey Italian friends my best wishes on my return Holy Land."

to DUNN

"Awaiting lovingly glad-tidings of Australian friends in Holy Land."

Shoghi Effendi also sent telegrams to some of his relatives, which clearly reflect his determination, his eagerness and a touch of youthful exuberance that pierces one's heart with sympathy for him. On 18 December he wired one of his aunts, who was visiting Egypt, "Holding fast and definitely reins of office. Missing you terribly. Assure me your health". To his cousin he wired, the same day, "Have reentered field of service. Trusting your unfailing cooperation", and to another distant cousin, the next day "...confidently trusting your brotherly cooperation."

Being by nature very methodical Shoghi Effendi in these early years kept fairly complete records and copies of letters sent; later, pressure of work and problems prevented him from doing this, with the exception of his cables which, until the end of his life, he kept copies of, by number and year. He lists 67 centres that he wrote to, East and West, during the months he was in the Holy Land in 74. From 16 December 1922 to 23 February 1923 he records 132 places he wrote to, some more than once. In a letter dated 16 December 1922 he wrote: "...I shall now eagerly await the joyful tidings of the progress of the Cause and the extension of your activities and will spare no effort in sharing with the faithful, here and in other lands, the welcome news of the progressive march of the Cause." The correspondence of this period covers 21 countries and 67 cities, but he does not seem to have written to more than a score of individuals, many of whom were not Bahá'ís. the countries he corresponded with at the very outset of his ministry included Persia, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, United States, Canada, Australia, Pacific Islands, Japan, India, Burma, Caucasus, Turkistan, Turkey, Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt.

With the enthusiasm and conscientiousness so typical of his nature, Shoghi Effendi sat down the day after his arrival in that December of 1922 and wrote to his friends in Britain:

My dearest brethren and sisters in the Faith of God!



May I at the very outset of this, my very first letter to you, convey to your hearts in words, however inadequate but assuredly deeply felt and sincere, a measure of my burning impatience during my days of retirement to return speedily and join hands with you in the great work of consolidation that awaits every earnest believer in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. Now that happily I feel myself restored to a position where I can take up with continuity and vigour the threads of my manifold duties, the bitterness of every disappointment felt time and again in the course of the past weary months at my feeling of unpreparedness, have been merged in the sweetness of the present hour when I realize that spiritually and bodily I am better equipped to shoulder the responsibilities of the Cause... I need hardly tell you how grateful and gratified I felt when I heard of the news of the formation of a National Council whose main object is to guide, coordinate and harmonize the various activities of the friends...

He ends this letter by assuring them that with "abiding affection and renewed vigour" he eagerly awaits their news, signing himself very simply "Your brother Shoghi". In a further letter, dated the 23rd of that same month, he tells them: "I have during the last few days been waiting eagerly for the first written messages of my Western friends, sent to me since they have learned of my return to the Holy Land." He states that the first letter to come from the West was from an English believer and goes on to say: "I very sincerely hope that now I have fully reentered upon my task I may be enabled to offer my humble share of assistance and advice in the all-important work which is now before you." In a personal letter to a relative, written on 20 December, he voices his inmost feelings: "True, my task is immense, my responsibilities grave and manifold, but the assurance which the words of the all-wise Master give me in my work is my shield and support in the career which is now unfolding itself to my eyes."

In his first letter to the newly elected National Assembly of America he writes, on 23 December, that: "To have been unable, owing to unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances, to correspond with you ever since you entered upon your manifold and arduous duties is to me a cause of deep regret and sad surprise." These are the words of a man coming up from the depths of nightmare and reflect how deep had been the abyss of affliction into which he had fallen during the past year of his life. "I am however", he goes on to say, "assured and sustained by the conviction, never dimmed in my mind, that whatever comes to pass in the Cause of god, however disquieting in its immediate effects, is fraught with infinite Wisdom and tends ultimately to promote its interests in the world."

In these early letters he invites the Assemblies to write to him, and he asks them to inform him of their "needs, wants and desires, their plans and their activities", so that he may "through my prayers and brotherly assistance contribute, however meagerly to the success of their glorious mission in this world." He is deeply grateful for the manner in which "my humble suggestions" have been carried out, and assures the friends of his "never-failing brotherly assistance."

The Bahá'ís having learned from his cables that the Guardian had returned to Haifa, a flood of correspondence poured in upon him from all parts of the world. Reassuring as this was it placed Shoghi Effendi in a serious quandary which he set forth clearly in a letter to a distant cousin, written during the first years of his ministry: "One of my most pressing problems is that of individual correspondence. To copy the Master, is presumptuous on my part, and in view of the rapid extension of the Movement, impracticable. To correspond in person with some and not write to others, I am sure you realize will lead gradually to friction, discouragement and even

animosity, as you know fully well the considerable number of friends who expect much and do little. To do away utterly with individual correspondence, and rely on indirect written messages, penned by my helpers and associates, whilst I would devote my time to direct correspondence with the Assemblies throughout the world, is also a difficult problem. I would indeed value your views on this thorny problem. The latter course has the obvious objection of severing all personal relationships with the individual friends." In January 1923 the Guardian wrote to the German believers that in view of the "marvellously rapid expansion of the Movement all over the world" he could not correspond individually with all the believers in the East and the West as it would "entail so much time and energy on my part as to prevent me from paying adequate attention to my other duties that are so urgent and vital in these days. I shall therefore very reluctantly have to content myself with direct correspondence with every Bahá'í group in each locality, be it a city or hamlet...and coordinating their...activities through the National Assembly..." In November 1923 the problem is still worrying him. He writes to the British National Assembly that he is giving it "his careful and undivided attention" and assures them that "No written message, however unimportant, will first be opened and read by anyone save myself"; in 1926 he writes: "I am so perplexed and preoccupied that I find hardly any time for direct correspondence".

For many years, indeed for thirty-six, this question of how to find time to cope with his mail worried the Guardian; finally he decided not to give up answering individual letters, particularly in the West, and in countries where there were new believers, as he discovered through painful experience that the Assemblies were not wise enough to always deal with human beings in a way that healed their wounds and kept them active in the Faith. This correspondence with individuals was not invariably well received on the part of a national body who, when it found an individual was the recipient of an important fact, felt it should be the official filter of such information. In a letter written on the Guardian's behalf by his secretary in 1941 to a National Assembly we find his own explanation of his policy in such matters: "Shoghi Effendi has repeatedly stated, to believers in every part of the world, that the Bahá'ís are entirely free to write to him on any matter they please; naturally he is equally free to answer in any manner he pleases. At the present time, when the Institutions of the Cause are just beginning to function, he considers it essential to keep up this large correspondence, much as it adds to his many other burdens. It is sometimes the case that the very first intimation he receives of some important step influencing the interest of the Faith, one way or another, comes from an individual's letter instead of from an Assembly; it would naturally be preferable for the information to come from an Administrative body, but whatever the source, the Guardian is solely concerned with the welfare of the Faith, and when he deems a certain step detrimental he states his views in his reply. This he is at entire liberty to do."

"I am now", Shoghi Effendi wrote to Tudor Pole in 1923, "fully restored to health and am intensely occupied with my work at present." Correspondence, however, was far from being his only activity; he was also "engaged in the service of the various pilgrims that visit in these days this sacred Spot." It was customary for him, in these early days of his ministry, to hold regular meetings in the home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In December 1922, five days after his return, he writes: "I have shared fully your news with those loving pilgrims and resident friends in the Holy Land whom I meet regularly in what was the audience chamber of the Master." In addition to attending to the welfare of his guests, having a meal with the western pilgrims in their Pilgrim House opposite 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home, and visiting the Shrines of the Bab and the Master with

the oriental friends and often having a cup of tea with them in the adjacent Oriental Pilgrim House, Shoghi Effendi was already devoting considerable time and attention to improving and enlarging the World Centre of the Faith. On 9 April 1922 work was commenced on the new Western Pilgrim House, plans for which had been made in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's lifetime but which Shoghi Effendi now vigorously implemented. On the first of Ridván, although Shoghi Effendi himself had left Haifa, the Shrines of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb were electrically illuminated for the first time, pursuant to arrangements made before the Master's ascension, but, again, supervised by Shoghi Effendi himself. Already, during the visit in March 1922 of Mr Remey, Shoghi Effendi had discussed with him at length various possibilities for the ultimate construction of a tomb for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the site of the future Bahá'í Temple on Mt Carmel and a general landscaping plan for the Bahá'í properties there.

These might be described as the more pleasant phases of his work in the discharge of his high office, though they exacted from him a great deal of time and energy. But what really burdened him beyond all endurance were the activities of the Covenant-breakers. The day after his return to Haifa he had written: "Already...the awful promises of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding the Covenant-breakers have been strikingly fulfilled!" The situation was becoming more grave all the time; in February 1923 he felt it necessary to cable America: "Register all mail. Inform friends", showing a definite concern about his post reaching him safely. In January he wrote to Hussein Afnan: "I presume you have gathered from past experience that I stand for absolute sincerity, scrupulous justice in all matters pertaining to the Cause, and an uncompromising attitude with regard to the enemies of the Movement, the Nakezeens, whose vile and unceasing efforts God alone shall frustrate." The man to whom this was written, a grandson of Bahá'u'lláh and a nephew of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, became himself a notorious Covenant-breaker not long afterwards; it was his three brothers who married three grand-daughters of the Master — two of them the two sisters of the Guardian himself — and thus wove such an inextricable web of family feeling, disloyalty and hatred that in the end the entire family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was involved and Shoghi Effendi lost all his relatives. We see here, shining through the innocent-minded young Guardian, the steel of the statesman, the great overshadowing Protector of the Faith and Defender of the Faithful whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá had left to His followers as His greatest gift, His most cherished possession. Towards the end of that same letter Shoghi Effendi assures him: "With a pure heart, I eagerly look forward to those signs that will unmistakably reveal your desire and resolve to stand by the Will of the Master and avoid in every way the breakers of the Covenant." It was, in Shoghi Effendi's own words, "amidst the heat and dust which the attacks launched by a sleepless enemy precipitated" that he had to carry on his work.

The position of the Faith necessitated the cultivation of careful relations with the Mandatory authorities. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been well known and highly esteemed, though it is unlikely that anyone in Palestine had the faintest inkling of the vast implications of the "Movement", as it was so often referred to in the early days, of which they accepted Him as Head. On 19 December 1922 Shoghi Effendi had wired to the High Commissioner for Palestine in Jerusalem: "Pray accept my best wishes and kind regards on my return to Holy Land and resumption of my official duties." As there must have been a considerable buzz of gossip, ardently fed no doubt by the Covenant-breakers, about his eight months' withdrawal, this was a carefully calculated move on Shoghi Effendi's part as well as an act of courtesy.

The matter which concerned Shoghi Effendi most, however, was the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí. The keys of the inner Tomb were still held by the authorities; the right of access to other parts of the Shrine was accorded Bahá'ís and Covenant-breakers alike; the Bahá'í custodian looked after it as before, and any decision seemed in a state of abeyance. Shoghi Effendi never rested until, through representations he made to the authorities, backed by insistent pressure from Bahá'ís all over the world, he succeeded in getting the custody of the Holy Tomb back into his own hands. On 7 February 1923 he wrote to Tudor Pole: "I have had a long talk with Col. Symes and have fully explained to him the exact state of affairs, the unmistakable and overwhelming voice of all the Bahá'í Community and their unshakable determination to stand by the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Recently he sent a message to Muḥammad 'Alí requiring from him the sum of £108. for the expenses of the policeman, contending that he being the aggressor is liable to this expense. So far he has not complied with this request and I await future developments with deep anxiety."

The following day Shoghi Effendi received this telegram from his cousin, who was in Jerusalem:

His Eminence Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Haifa.

Letter received immediate steps taken the final decision by the High Commissioner is in our favour the key is yours.

The letter referred to was one the Akka governor, Sir Gilbert Clayton, had written to the High Commissioner. Shoghi Effendi, in another letter to Tudor Pole, informed him that he was on very warm terms with the Governor of Haifa, Colonel G. Stewart Symes, and had met Sir Gilbert; it was no doubt due to these contacts that the authorities decided in favour of the Guardian and the key was officially returned to the legitimate Bahá'í keeper of the Shrine, from whom it had been wrested by force over a year before.

Though the safety of the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world was now assured once and for all time, the house Bahá'u'lláh had occupied in Baghdad was still in the hands of the Shí'ah enemies of the Faith, and continues to be so until the present day; the battle to get it back into Bahá'í custody was to worry and to exercise Shoghi Effendi for many years.

Every time one goes into the details of any particular period in the Guardian's life one is tempted to say "this was the worst period", so fraught with strain, problems, unbearable pressures was his entire ministry. But there is a pattern, there are themes, higher and lower points were reached. The pattern of 1922, 1923 and 1924 reveals itself, insofar as his personal life is concerned, as an heroic attempt to come to grips with this leviathan — the Cause of God — he had been commanded to bestride. Again and again he was thrown. Torn by agonies of doubt as to his own worthiness to be the successor of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, struggling with himself as had so many Prophets and Chosen Ones before him, he argued in the depths of his soul with his destiny, remonstrated with his fate, appealed to his God for relief — but it availed him naught. He was firmly caught in the meshes of the Master's mighty *Will and Testament*. He hints at this many times in his letters: "the storm and stress that have agitated my life since 'Abdu'l-Bahá's

passing..." "I, for my part, as I look back...to the unfortunate circumstances of ill-health and physical exhaustion that have attended the opening years of my career of service to the Cause, feel hardly gratified, and would be truly despondent but for the sustaining memory and inspiring example of the diligent and ceaseless efforts which my fellow-workers the world over have displayed during these two trying years in the service of the Cause." In another letter he wrote: "...looking back upon those sullen days of my retirement, bitter with feelings of anxiety and gloom...I can well imagine the degree of uneasiness, nay of affliction, that must have agitated the mind and soul of every loving and loyal servant of the Beloved during these long months of suspense and distressing silence..."

That his own condition, and what he considered his failure to rise to the situation the Master's passing had placed him in, distressed him more than anything else for a number of years is reflected in excerpts from his letters. As late as September 1924 he wrote: "I deplore the disturbing effect of my forced and repeated withdrawals from the field of service...my prolonged absence, my utter inaction, should not, however, be solely attributed to certain external manifestations of inharmony, of discontent and disloyalty — however paralyzing their effect has been upon the continuance of my work — but also to my own unworthiness and to my imperfections and frailties." His hardest task, from the very beginning, was to accept himself.

In the early summer of 1923 Shoghi Effendi again left Haifa and sought some restoration of health and solace in the solitude of the high mountains of Switzerland. But, unlike later years, when he continued to keep in constant touch with the work of the Cause by cable and letter, this was once more a complete break, a fleeing into the wilderness, a soul-searching, a communion with himself and his destiny in order to find the strength to go back and assume the duties of his high office. He returned in November 1923, and the letter he wrote to the American believers on the 14th of that month, in which he says he has returned from a "forced" absence, contains a sentence that gives a clue to what must have been passing in his mind during that period. He says the "remarkable revelations of the Beloved's Will and Testament, so amazing in all its aspects, so emphatic in its injunctions, have challenged and perplexed the keenest minds..." Can one doubt that they perplexed his mind too? With the great humbleness of nature on one hand and the great faith and confidence in the Master on the other that so strongly characterized Shoghi Effendi he must indeed have devoted much thought to the implications of that Will and to what his own course must be now that he was returning "after a long and unbroken silence" to take up once again "my work of service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh".

This time he made it a point to arrive before the commemoration of the second anniversary of the Master's ascension. That it moved him very deeply is reflected in the cables he sent to different countries at that time, referring to the "poignant memories", the "grief and agony" that this anniversary evoked. To Persia he cabled: "May tonight's darkest hour of anguish usher in the dawn of a new day for well beloved Persia." For many years, in many messages, he stresses this anniversary and its associations; it always evoked deep and tragic memories for him. I remember after the thirty-fifth anniversary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, many times Shoghi Effendi said "Do you realize I have been carrying this load thirty-six years? I am tired, tired!"

With the passing of 1923 one could almost say that the winged Guardian emerged from the chrysalis of youth, a new being; the wings may not yet be fully stretched, but their beat gains

steadily in sweep and assurance as the years go by until, in the end, they truly cast a shadow over all mankind. In his early writings one sees this mastery unfolding, in style, in thought, in power. Let us pick certain facts and quotations at random and see how clearly they substantiate this evolution that was taking place. From the very beginning he turned to the believers, with that inimitable trusting and confiding touch that won all hearts, and asked them to pray for him, that he might, in collaboration with them, achieve the "speedy triumph of the Cause of God" in every land. His questions are challenging, his thoughts incisive: "Are we to be carried away by the flood of hollow and conflicting ideas, or are we to stand, unsubdued and unblemished, upon the everlasting rock of God's Divine Instructions?" "...are we to believe that whatever befalls us is divinely ordained, and in no wise the result of our faint-heartedness and negligence?" Already in 1923 he sees the world and the Cause as two distinct things, not to be mixed up in our minds into one sentimental and haphazard lump. The Will of God he asserts is "at variance with the shadowy views, the impotent doctrines, the crude theories, the idle imaginings, the fashionable conceptions of a transient and troublous age."

Over and over in the letters of these early years Shoghi Effendi mentions the need to "arise to offer your share of service to this heedless and suffering world." In a letter to one of the friends he makes a highly revealing distinction: "The time has come for the friends...to think not as to how they should serve the Cause, but how the Cause should be served." We might well continue to this day to ponder these words. What are its needs, what its direction, what its goals?

Shoghi Effendi's interest in the Pacific and his awareness of the future development of the Cause in that area is manifested in the first years of his Guardianship. He wrote to the Pacific Islands, in delightfully romantic terms, in January 1923, that "their very names evoke within us so high a sense of hope and admiration that the passing of time and the vicissitudes of life can never weaken or remove", and addressed a letter in January 1924 "To the dearly-beloved ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá throughout Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, and the adjoining islands of the Pacific. Friends and heralds of the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh! A fresh breeze laden with the perfume of your love and devotion to our beloved Cause was wafted again from your distant Southern shores to the Holy Land and has served to remind us one and all of that unquenchable spirit of service and self-sacrifice which the passing of our Beloved has in these days kindled in almost every corner of the world."

The words he wrote to one of the American Assemblies in December 1923 sound almost like a soliloquy: "The inscrutable wisdom of God has so decreed that we, who are the chosen bearers of the world's greatest Message to suffering humanity, should toil and promote our work under the most trying conditions of life, amidst unhelpful surroundings, and in the face of unprecedented trials, and without means, influence or support, achieve, steadily and surely, the conquest and regeneration of human hearts." Many of these early letters to various Spiritual Assemblies have this quality, not of disquisition, but of voicing his own innermost considerations. That same month he wrote: "...True, the progress of our work, when compared to the sensational rise and development of an earthly cause, has been painful and slow, yet we firmly believe and shall never doubt that the great spiritual Revolution which the Almighty is causing to be accomplished, through us, in the hearts of men is destined to achieve, steadily and surely, the complete regeneration of all mankind." "However great our tribulation may be, however unexpected the miseries of life, let us bear in mind the life He [the Master] has led before us, and,



inspired and grateful, let us bear our burden with steadfastness and fortitude, that in the world to come, in the divine Presence of our loving Comforter, we may receive His true consolation and reward of our labours." "Whatever may befall us, and however dark the prospect of the future may appear, if we but play our part we may rest confident that the Hand of the Unseen is at work, shaping and moulding the events and circumstances of the world and paving the way for the ultimate realization of our aims and hopes for mankind." "Our primary duty is to create by our words and deeds, our conduct and example, the atmosphere in which the seeds of the words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, cast so profusely during well-nigh eighty years, may germinate and give forth those fruits that alone can assure peace and prosperity to this distracted world." "... let us arise to teach His Cause with righteousness, conviction, understanding and vigour...let us make it the dominating passion of our life. Let us scatter to the uttermost corners of the earth, sacrifice our personal interests, comforts, tastes and pleasures, mingle with the divers kindreds and peoples of the world; familiarize ourselves with their manners, traditions, thoughts and customs." The tone of some of these sounds like his great messages during the prosecution of the Divine Plan, but they were written in the winter of 1923-4. He had set himself the task of seeing that the Faith emerged into "the broad daylight of universal recognition", a term he used that same year.

Steeped in the Teachings from his infancy, privileged to hear, read and write so many of the Master's words during his youth, Shoghi Effendi firmly guided the friends in East and West along their destined course. Already in March 1922, in one of his first letters to the American believers, he had stated: "the friends of God the world over are strictly forbidden to meddle with political affairs". He is using the term "pioneer" in his earliest letters, and in 1925 is keeping a list of Bahá'í centres throughout the world!

In spite of what he described as the "thorny path of my arduous duties", in spite of the "oppressive burden of responsibility and care which it is my lot and privilege to shoulder", he was clear in expressing and brilliant in understanding the needs of the Cause and the tasks facing the believers. He was equally clear in defining what relationship he wished the Bahá'ís to have with him and in what manner they should regard him. On 6 February 1922 he wrote to one of the Persian Bahá'ís: "I wish to be known, to realize myself however far I may proceed in future, as one and only one of the many workers in His Vineyards...whatever may betide I trust in His ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] wondrous love for me. May I in no wise by my deeds, thoughts or words, impede the stream of His sustaining Spirit which I sorely need in facing the responsibilities He has placed on my youthful shoulders..." and on 5 March he added the following postscript to a letter to the American friends: "May I also express my heartfelt desire that the friends of God in every land regard me in no other light but that of a true brother, united with them in our common servitude to the Master's Sacred Threshold, and refer to me in their letters and verbal addresses always as Shoghi Effendi, for I desire to be known by no other name save the one our Beloved Master was wont to utter, a name which of all other designations is the most conducive to my spiritual growth and advancement." In 1924 he cabled India clearly and succinctly: "My birthday should not be commemorated". In 1930 his secretary wrote on his behalf: "Concerning Shoghi Effendi's station: he surely has none except what the Master confers upon him in His Will and that Will also states what Shoghi Effendi's station is. If anyone misinterprets one part of the Will

he misinterprets all the Will." When Shoghi Effendi wrote the general letter known as *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh* he made clear, once for all, his own position, disassociating himself categorically from the prerogatives and station Bahá'u'lláh had conferred upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "In the light of this truth to pray to the Guardian of the Faith, to address him as lord and master, to designate him as his holiness, to seek his benediction, to celebrate his birthday, or to commemorate any event associated with his life would be tantamount to a departure from those established truths that are enshrined within our beloved Faith." In 1945 his secretary wrote on his behalf: "...he has never gone so far as to forbid the friends to have pictures of himself in their possession; he merely would rather they placed the emphasis on the beloved Master."

