

Guardianship; He accomplished this through 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Shoghi Effendi wrote that the Institution of Guardianship was clearly anticipated in the implications of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.⁷ Bahá'u'lláh chose to anticipate that sacred institution in the implications of His Most Holy Book, and He brought it into being through the instrumentality of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The mighty institution of the Guardianship, described in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the "Centre of the Cause"⁸ and described by Shoghi Effendi as the "head cornerstone of the Administrative Order"⁹ is not explicit in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. This interplay among the Writings of the Central Figures, in which momentous teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are left implicit for 'Abdu'l-Bahá or the passage of time to make manifest, deserves our examination, and illuminates the authority in the Sacred Text for the Universal House of Justice to function without the presence of a Guardian.

Shoghi Effendi has designated the Kitab-i-Aqdas the "brightest emanation of the mind of Bahá'u'lláh."¹⁰ He applies this same term to the Master's Will and Testament, describing it as the "brightest emanation" of the mind of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.¹¹ In his masterpiece The Dispensation of Bahá'u'llah, Shoghi Effendi shows the inseparability of these two sacred Books:

The creative energies released by the Law of Bahá'u'lláh, permeating and evolving within the mind of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have, by their very impact and close interaction, given birth to an Instrument which may be viewed as the Charter of the New World Order which is at once the glory and the promise of this most great Dispensation. The Will may thus be acclaimed as the inevitable offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who communicated the generating influence of His divine Purpose and the One Who was its vehicle and chosen recipient. Being the Child of the Covenant ? the Heir of both the Originator and the Interpreter of the Law of God ? the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá can no more be divorced from Him Who supplied the original and motivating impulse than from the One Who ultimately conceived it. Bahá'u'lláh's inscrutable purpose, we must ever bear in mind, has been so thoroughly infused into the conduct of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and their motives have been so closely wedded together, that the mere attempt to dissociate the teachings of the former from any system which the ideal Exemplar of those same teachings has established would amount to a repudiation of one of the most sacred and basic truths of the Faith."¹² [Throughout this paper, this quotation will be referred to as "Quotation A."]

Please observe how Shoghi Effendi states that the Master's Will cannot be "divorced" or "dissociated" from the design of Bahá'u'lláh: To "divorce" the Master's Will from the Kitab-i-Aqdas, to "dissociate" the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh from the system of the Master, would amount to a repudiation of one

of the verities of the Faith. In this paragraph of the Dispensation, the Guardian shows that the Institutions created in the Master's Will are inseparable from the purpose of Bahá'u'lláh. As we shall see, the way in which

Shoghi Effendi uses the term "divorced" in connection with the institutions of the Faith is extremely important to the purpose of this paper.

Since the institution of the Guardianship, described in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the "Centre of the Cause"¹³ and described by Shoghi Effendi as the "head cornerstone of the Administrative Order"¹⁴ is implicit ? not explicit ? in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, it is not surprising that the possibility that the line of Guardians might end, is also implicit and not explicit in the Text. Let us examine one of these instances of how the Kitab-i-Aqdas implicitly anticipates the ending of the line of Guardians, and provides for the authority of the Universal House of Justice to lead the Faith in that event; and how the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes that authority explicit.

In its letter, Comments on the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice,¹⁵ the Universal House of Justice clarifies how Bahá'u'lláh Himself, in the Most Holy Book, foresaw the possibility that the House of Justice might well not be formed until after the line of Guardians ended ? and thus, would have to function without the presence of a Guardian. Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

"Endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. None hath the right to dispose of them without leave from Him Who is the Dawning-place of Revelation. After Him, this authority shall pass to the Aghsan,¹⁶ and after them to the House of Justice ? should it be established in the world by then ? that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Places which have been exalted in this Cause, and for whatsoever hath been enjoined upon them by Him Who is the God of might and power. Otherwise, the endowments shall revert to the people of Bahá who speak not except by His leave and judge not save in accordance with what God hath decreed in this Tablet ? lo, they are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth ? that they may use them in the manner that hath been laid down in the Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful."¹⁷ [Quotation B]

In the explanatory notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas prepared under the supervision of the Universal House of Justice it is pointed out that this passage "has particular implications...for the succession of authority following the passing of Bahá'u'lláh...and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá."¹⁸ The House of Justice has also written that "The passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 precipitated the very situation provided for in this passage [Quotation A], in that the line of Aghsan ended before the House of Justice had been elected."¹⁹

The crucial phrase for our purposes in Quotation B is "after them," i.e., after the Aghsan. The House of Justice has written that this "striking passage"

envisages the possibility of "a break in the line of Guardians."²⁰ How can we be assured that by use of the term "after" the Aghsan, Bahá'u'lláh means after the line of Chosen Aghsan, implying an end of the line of Guardians? Could not this verse mean, "After the passing of all of My sons?" If this phrase means His "sons" and not the line of hereditary successors, it would merely foreshadow the possibility that the House of Justice might not be elected until after the passing of the first generation of the Aghsan ? Bahá'u'lláh's sons.²¹ In that case, this phrase would not anticipate the House of Justice functioning without the presence of a Guardian.

Quotation B refers to the "authority" to administer certain assets of the Faith ? its international endowments. However, Bahá'u'lláh never dispersed authority among several individuals; He and 'Abdu'l-Bahá after Him, always concentrated all authority in the Cause in one Center.²² The history of the Faith shows no instance where the Aghsan (neither the sons as a group, nor the entire male lineage of Bahá'u'lláh²³ as a group at one time) acted as a corporate body or had any authority whatever in the Faith. In fact, the Master directed all of the other Aghsan to "show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him."²⁴

The fact that the "endowments" paragraph (Quotation B) refers to administrative responsibility in the Cause implies that in this instance Bahá'u'lláh's use of the term "Aghsan" is limited to the line of "chosen" Aghsan: The Master, and the line of Guardians after Him. Since Bahá'u'lláh states that "after" the Aghsan the Universal House of Justice will exercise this authority, Quotation A foreshadows the possibility of the ending of the line of chosen Aghsan, and thus, the ending of the line of Guardians.

In this same paragraph, Quotation B, Bahá'u'lláh even provides for the exercise of authority in the Faith during the interregnum between the passing of Shoghi Effendi and the first election of the Universal House of Justice:

"...[T]he endowments shall revert to the people of Bahá who speak not except by His leave and judge not save in accordance with what God hath decreed in this Tablet ? lo, they are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth...."²⁵

Who are the "people of Bahá" in this paragraph of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas? They are described as those "who speak not except by His leave," and as "the champions of victory." The notes to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas confirm that in this instance, "the people of Bahá" are the Hands of the Cause of God.²⁶ We shall compare this Quotation B to other Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh in which He has used this same terminology of speaking not before God speaks, and of accomplishing the victory of the Cause, to refer to the Hands of the Cause of God:

"May My praise, salutations, and greetings rest upon the stars of the heaven

of Thy knowledge ? the Hands of Thy Cause-they who circled round Thy Will, spoke not save after Thy leave, and clung not save unto Thy hem. They are servants whose mention and praise are recorded in the Holy Writ, Thy Books and Tablets, wherein are extolled their services, victories, and high resolve. Through them the standards of Thy oneness were raised in Thy cities and realms, and the banners of Thy sanctity were uplifted in Thy Kingdom...Praise be to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast aided me to make mention of them and to praise them in their stations in Thy Cause and in Thy days."²⁷

Thus, we see that in the implications of the Most Holy Book (Quotation B), Bahá'u'lláh provided for the transfer of authority from the Chosen Branches, to the Hands of the Cause, to the Universal House of Justice functioning without a Chosen Branch ? without a Guardian.

My purpose is not to minimize the loss of the Guardian's presence in the deliberations of the House. As the House of Justice has cautioned:

"Although, as is seen, the ending of the line of Aghsan at some stage was provided for, we must never underestimate the grievous loss that the Faith has suffered."²⁸

And again, the Universal House of Justice has written:

"We must guard against two extremes: one is to argue that because there is no Guardian all that was written about the Guardianship and its position in the Bahá'í World Order is a dead letter and was unimportant; the other is to be so overwhelmed by the significance of the Guardianship as to underestimate the strength of the Covenant..."²⁹

My purpose is to follow the guidance of the Universal House of Justice to not be overwhelmed by that loss. It is also to help us to counter those who attempt to use the absence of a living Guardian today, as a pretext in their claim to leadership of the Bahá'í community.³⁰

Crisis During the Boyhood of Shoghi Effendi

As stated above, important implications in the laws of Bahá'u'lláh are sometimes made explicit in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We have seen that in the implications of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh provided the authority for the Universal House of Justice to function with only its elected membership. Now we will see that in His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressly provided this authority.

'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed Part One of His Will and Testament, in which He appointed

Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Cause of God, when Shoghi Effendi was a little boy. Shoghi Effendi may have been as young as seven, and was surely no older than ten. 31 Other Tablets He revealed at that time, show that

His life was in peril at that time.³²

The Master likewise revealed the Second Part of His Will during a time Shoghi Effendi described as "an hour of grave suspense."³³ In Part Two of His Will, the Master described the crisis that compelled Him to write it: "I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour's life is lost to me."³⁴ This was likely when the Second Commission of Inquiry threatened the life of 'Abdu'l Bahá. Had these threats materialized during either of the Commissions of Inquiry ? in 1904 or in 1907 ? Shoghi Effendi, still

in his boyhood, would have been too young to perform the duties of the Guardianship, including appointing a representative to act in his place in the deliberations of the Universal House of Justice. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was, of course, well aware of this. The Universal House of Justice has directed us to study the second part of the Master's Will, especially in connection with the establishment of that sacred body through the convening of only its elected membership.⁴⁰

Let us examine what the Master provided in His Will for the leadership of the Faith, in the event that He was martyred while Shoghi Effendi was still a child. In the second part of His Will the Master makes no mention of Shoghi Effendi or of the Institution of the Guardianship.³⁵ As both Shoghi Effendi³⁶ and the Universal House of Justice³⁷ have pointed out, during that same crisis the Master wrote a Tablet to the Bab's cousin, Haji Mirza Taqi Afnan. In that same Tablet, the Master directed the Afnan to arrange immediately for the election of the Universal House of Justice if He was put to death. This House of Justice would have been composed of only its elected members for several years, until Shoghi Effendi reached the age when he could assume his responsibilities as Guardian. The language 'Abdu'l-Bahá uses in the second part of His Will refers only to the elected members of that Body. Therefore, in the following words the Master provided that the Universal House of Justice would act without the presence of the Guardian of the Cause of God, or the Guardian's representative, during the minority of Shoghi Effendi:

"Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant. By this House is meant that Universal House of Justice which is to be elected from all countries, that is from those parts in the East and West where the loved ones are to be found, after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England.... It is incumbent upon these members (of the Universal House of Justice) to gather in a certain place and deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book. Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as

the Text itself."³⁸ (Identified as "Quotation C" throughout this paper.)

The Master here provided that it was incumbent upon "these members" to deliberate, and He identifies "these members" as those who were to be "elected from all countries, that is from those parts in the East and West where the loved ones are to be found, after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries...." Again, He makes no reference to the Universal House of Justice functioning with Shoghi Effendi, nor does He refer to the Institution of the Guardianship, or to the representative of the Guardian acting as chairman of the House of Justice. As we see from Quotation C, nowhere does He indicate that in such circumstances, without the presence of the Guardian to chair that Body, to define the sphere of its legislative action, or to interpret the Word of God, that the House of Justice would not be infallible. Rather, He wrote of the House functioning without its hereditary Head, and with only its elected members, "That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself," and that its decisions will have "the same effect as the Text itself."

Since the Master provided that the House of Justice would function infallibly before the beloved Guardian wrote a single authoritative word, surely we may conclude that it does so now, when it has the benefit of the multitude of Shoghi Effendi's writings.³⁹ Nowhere in the Master's Will does He imply that the authority or the guarantee of divine guidance to the House of Justice operating without the presence of the Guardian would be more limited than they would be with the Guardian as its sacred Head.

The Inspiration of the Holy Spirit

Another passage from the Pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which explicitly provides that the infallibility of the Universal House of Justice is not dependent upon the participation of the Guardian in its deliberations is quoted by the Universal House of Justice in one of its letters addressing this very subject. The Master writes:

"Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions. God forbid! The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.

"Say, O People: Verily the Supreme House of Justice is under the wings of your Lord, the Compassionate, the All Merciful, that is under His protection, His care, and His shelter; for He has commanded the firm believers to obey that blessed, sanctified, and all-subduing body, whose sovereignty is divinely ordained and of the Kingdom of Heaven and whose laws are inspired and spiritual.

"Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice. In the religion of Islam, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text; although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified. These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence, and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances. All these were enforced. Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice. The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Bahá'í community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division, and dispersion. The oneness of the Word would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God would be shaken."⁴¹

The Master's use of the phrase "whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Bahá'í community" is an explicit reference to the elected membership of the Universal House of Justice. This passage shows that when He states that the decisions and laws of that "blessed, sanctified and all-subduing body" are inspired by the Holy Spirit, He refers to the infallibility bestowed upon that Body through its elected membership. This Tablet confirms and illuminates a brief reference in one of the Laws of Bahá'u'lláh contained in His "Leaves of Paradise."

The Ultimate Safeguard of the Bahá'í Revelation

One of Bahá'u'lláh's express promises of infallible divine guidance to the Universal House of Justice is found in the Eighth Leaf of the *Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih*.

"It is incumbent upon the Trustees of the House of Justice to take counsel together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them. God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth, and He, verily, is the Provider, the Omniscient."⁴²

How do we know that this promise that "God will inspire them" is a promise of infallible divine guidance to the elected membership of the Universal House of Justice acting as a body, and does not promise this guidance only if the "sacred head" of that Body, the Guardian of the Cause, is present in its deliberations? Shoghi Effendi provides the answer in his exposition of this law of Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*:

"In the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, in the enactment of the legislation necessary to supplement the laws of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should be

borne in mind, are not, as Bahá'u'lláh's utterances clearly imply, responsible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them. They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience. They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision. "God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth," is Bahá'u'lláh's incontrovertible assurance. They, and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation."⁴³

The words selected by the Guardian ? the members of the Universal House of Justice and not those who elect them ? show that Bahá'u'lláh's promise that "God will, verily, inspire them" means that infallible divine guidance flows through the elected membership of the Universal House of Justice acting as a body.⁴⁴ This, again, is Scriptural authority for the Universal House of Justice to function infallibly without the presence of a Guardian.

"Divorced from the Institution of the Guardianship"

Any discussion of the authority for the Universal House of Justice to function infallibly without the presence of the Guardian must address the following passage from Shoghi Effendi's *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*:

"Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written, has been invariably upheld by the Law of God. "In all the Divine Dispensations," He states, in a Tablet addressed to a follower of the Faith in Persia, "the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright." Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered. Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long, uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn." ["Quotation D"]

"Severed from the no less essential institution of the Universal House of Justice this same System of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá would be paralyzed in its action and would be powerless to fill in those gaps which the Author of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* has deliberately left in the body of His legislative and administrative ordinances."⁴⁵ ["Quotation E"]

Some of the friends have experienced particular difficulty in accepting the ability of the Universal House of Justice to function infallibly without the presence of the Guardian, because they believe that those words from the Guardian in Quotation D were a direct warning about that very circumstance. A reader of this passage might naturally ask whether Shoghi Effendi when he wrote those words in 1934, confident that there would be future Guardians,⁴⁶ was elaborating the horrible consequences to the Cause of God if the line of Guardians were to end. From the Guardian's phrase "Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship," should we understand his intention to have been a description of the mutilation of the Cause that would occur if the Universal House of Justice were to function without a living Guardian?

The House of Justice has provided the key to understanding this subject when it elucidates "the principle of inseparability," and gives several examples of the application of that principle to the institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice.⁴⁷

In order to understand the meaning of "divorced from the institution of the Guardianship" in Quotation D, we have the benefit of other passages in Shoghi Effendi's writings where he uses similar, sometimes identical language to illustrate this principle. We have seen in Quotation A, how Shoghi Effendi warned that to "divorce" or "dissociate" the institutions established by 'Abdu'l-Bahá from the underlying laws of Bahá'u'lláh would "amount to a repudiation of one of the most sacred and basic truths of the Faith."⁴⁸ In yet another passage, he used strikingly similar language to elaborate the scriptural authority for the functioning of the Bahá'í institutions:

"It should be remembered by every follower of the Cause that the system of Bahá'í administration is not an innovation imposed arbitrarily upon the Bahá'ís of the world since the Master's passing, but derives its authority from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is specifically prescribed in unnumbered Tablets, and rests in some of its essential features upon the explicit provisions of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. It thus unifies and correlates the principles separately laid down by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and is indissolubly bound with the essential verities of the Faith. To dissociate the administrative principles of the Cause from the purely spiritual and humanitarian teachings would be tantamount to a mutilation of the body of the Cause, a separation that can only result in the disintegration of its component parts, and the extinction of the Faith itself."⁴⁹

[Quotation F]

Please note that the Guardian described such a "dissociation" as a "mutilation of the Cause." This is another illustration of what the Universal House of Justice terms "the principle of inseparability." A careful reading of Quotation F will show that the Guardian's purpose is to elaborate the unity of the components of the Bahá'í Faith, not to issue a warning about possible future events. The "mutilation" would be to knowingly misunderstand this important verity of the Faith.

The Guardian again illustrates the principle of inseparability when he explains that the distinct periods of Bahá'í history must be understood as one whole; to

see them in isolation from one another and thereby dissociate them from one another, would be to "mutilate" the Cause and pervert the truth:

"The century under our review [1844-1944] may therefore be considered as falling into four distinct periods, of unequal duration, each of specific import and of tremendous and indeed unappraisable significance. These four periods are closely interrelated, and constitute successive acts of one, indivisible, stupendous and sublime drama, whose mystery no intellect can fathom, whose climax no eye can even dimly perceive, whose conclusion no mind

can adequately foreshadow. Each of these acts revolves around its own theme, boasts of its own heroes, registers its own tragedies, records its own triumphs, and contributes its own share to the execution of one common, immutable Purpose. To isolate any one of them from the others, to dissociate the later manifestations of one universal, all-embracing Revelation from the pristine purpose that animated it in its earliest days, would be tantamount to a mutilation of the structure on which it rests, and to a lamentable perversion of its truth and of its history

These four periods are to be regarded not only as the component, the inseparable parts of one stupendous whole, but as progressive stages in a single evolutionary process, vast, steady and irresistible.

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In yet another instance, the Guardian uses the same terminology to apply the principle of inseparability to the Bahá'í institutions of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar and its Dependencies.⁵¹ I suggest that it is clear from all of these instances that it is the design of Bahá'u'lláh that the Guardian is speaking of.

In all of these cases, whether he uses the term "divorced," "dissociated," or "isolated," the purpose of Shoghi Effendi is to communicate to his reader the inseparability of the components of the Faith. This is his way of imparting a spiritual truth to us ? the "principle of inseparability" in its various applications. In all of these instances, the Guardian is using this language to communicate to us something our minds have never previously grasped: The wonder of this "vast and unique" Order, of this "colossal," this "mighty Administrative structure."⁵² He is not warning us of the consequences of the loss of any Bahá'í institution, nor speaking of such a loss as a "mutilation" of the Cause of God. Rather, through use of this powerful language he infuses our understanding with his vision of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Vibrant Body of the Cause

The purpose of the Guardian in the "Dispensation" [Quotation D] was not to foreshadow unthinkable consequences if the Universal House of Justice must function without the presence of a Guardian. The most convincing demonstration of this is in the paragraph that immediately follows the "divorced from the institution of the Guardianship" paragraph [Quotation E]:

"Severed from the no less essential institution of the Universal House of Justice this same System of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá would be paralyzed in its action and would be powerless to fill in those gaps which the Author of the Kitab-i-Aqdas has deliberately left in the body of His legislative and administrative ordinances."⁵³

Like the other instances where he used the terms "divorced," "dissociated," or "isolated," here, by his use of the synonym "severed" he explains yet again, the principle of the inseparability of the component aspects of the World Order. Quotation E is clearly a parallel to Quotation D, and enables us to better understand the intent of Quotation D.

If one reads "divorced from the institution of the Guardianship" as a foreshadowing of the consequences of the ending of the line of Guardians, then one must also read "Severed from the no less essential institution of the Universal House of Justice" as a portent of the consequences of the World Order functioning without the Universal House of Justice.

We must ask ourselves, where was the Universal House of Justice at the time Shoghi Effendi wrote Quotations D and E? The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh was written in 1934, and the House of Justice would not be brought into existence for another twenty-nine years. At the time the Guardian wrote the words, "severed from...the Universal House of Justice," the World Order was functioning without the benefit of a single word from that "no less essential institution." Furthermore, if "essential" meant that the World Order could not function without the presence of the House of Justice, then the Guardian would not have delayed its election.⁵⁴ In Quotation E the Guardian could not be stating that these Institutions cannot function independently, because he was himself functioning independently of the "no less essential" House of Justice when he wrote those very words.

The Guardian wrote in Quotation E that the sign of the World Order being "severed" from the Universal House of Justice, would be that the World Order would be "paralyzed in its action."⁵⁵ How can we be certain that he did not intend to convey that because the House of Justice was not yet functioning, the World Order was, in some measure, "paralyzed in its action" at that time? We may determine as a certainty that Shoghi Effendi did not intend to convey that the World Order was "paralyzed" in 1934 due to the absence of a functioning Universal House of Justice. The proof is a few pages later in the same letter, where the Guardian contrasts the "vitality" of the institutions of the Faith with the paralysis amicting the old world order at that time:

"The vitality which the organic institutions of this great, this ever-expanding Order so strongly exhibit; the obstacles which the

high courage, the undaunted resolution of its administrators have already surmounted; the fire of an unquenchable enthusiasm that glows with undiminished fervor in the hearts of its itinerant teachers; the heights of self-sacrifice which its champion-builders are now attaining; the breadth of vision, the confident hope, the creative joy, the inward peace, the uncompromising integrity, the exemplary discipline, the unyielding unity and solidarity which its stalwart defenders manifest; the degree to which its moving Spirit has shown itself capable of assimilating the diversified elements within its pale, of cleansing the m of all forms of prejudice and of fusing them with its own structure-these are evidences of a power which a disillusioned and sadly shaken society can ill afford to ignore.

"Compare these splendid manifestations of the spirit animating this vibrant body of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh with the cries and agony, the follies and vanities, the bitterness and prejudices, the wickedness and divisions of an ailing and chaotic world. Witness the fear that torments its leaders and paralyzes the action of its blind and bewildered statesmen."56

Particularly in the last sentence, the Guardian explicitly contrasts the "vibrant body of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh" with the leaders and statesmen of the world whom he describes as "paralyzed in their action." The Guardian's own language shows that he did not intend to convey that the World Order was "paralyzed in its action" due to the absence of the Universal House of Justice. Rather, it was "vibrant," in contrast to the paralysis amicting the old order. We may therefore deduce that the Cause was not then "severed" from the Universal House of Justice, even though the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh was functioning entirely without its influence.

Having ascertained that the Guardian did not intend to convey that without a functioning House of Justice the dire consequences in Quotation E would ensue, we may conclude that in the Quotation D - "Divorced from the Institution of the Guardianship" ? he was not foreshadowing appalling consequences if there were no

living Guardian. Rather, he was disclosing the perfection and completion of Bahá'u'lláh's design, and that if Bahá'u'lláh had not provided for all of its inseparable parts it would have been flawed in design.

So the explanations in Quotation D regarding the hereditary function of the Guardian in relation to the House, that he protects the integrity and stability of the Faith, enhances its prestige, provides for its continuity, and defines the legislative sphere of the Universal House of Justice, are presented as demonstrations of the "principle of inseparability" in the preceding paragraph of the Dispensation. These twin institutions "supplement each other's authority and functions, and are permanently and fundamentally united in their aims."57 That is what that paragraph is about. Without question, it emphatically states the importance of the Guardianship. What it does not do is state that the World Order would be "mutilated," "imperiled" and "endangered" without a living Guardian. What it does not do is to state that we

are today "divorced" from the institution of the Guardianship.

Conclusion

Shoghi Effendi referred to the Bahá'ís as the "stewards" of the Faith,⁵⁸ and designated the Hands of the Cause of God as its "Chief Stewards."⁵⁹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the Hands the specific protective function of expelling Covenant breakers.⁶⁰ They were not endowed with infallibility; their capacity to lead the Bahá'í Faith was explicit in only one word: "Chief." The generality of the Bahá'í community was, as yet, unaware of the provisions in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* for the transmission of authority to the Hands of the Cause and would not learn of this verse for over a decade.⁶¹

Despite these limitations on their office, despite the fact that they possessed, in the mind of the generality of the friends, only one word of authority, it is worth reflecting on the power of that one word to keep the Cause of God united until the Universal House of Justice was brought into being. One of the first acts of the Universal House of Justice was to express its heartfelt love and gratitude to the Hands.⁶²

In contrast, the authority of the Universal House of Justice to function infallibly with only its elected members is explicitly provided in a number of passages in the Writings of both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. One can only wonder at the power of such emphatic language, the power of the Covenants of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to keep the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh united behind "[T]he divine and Universal House of Justice...that central pivot of the people of Bahá...."⁶³

Shoghi Effendi wrote, "Only those who come after us will be in a position to realize the value of the surprisingly strong emphasis that has been placed on the institution of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship."⁶⁴ Among the "surprisingly emphatic language"⁶⁵ to which he refers, are surely these words from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"The sacred and youthful branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice, to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled against God; whoso opposeth him hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them hath contended with God; whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God. May the wrath, the fierce indignation, the vengeance of God rest upon him!"⁶⁶

We may derive conviction from these words with which 'Abdu'l-Bahá closes His Last Will and Testament, words which will ring down through the centuries:

"All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error. The Glory of Glories rest upon you!"⁶⁷

Notes

- 1) The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 14.
- 2) Wellspring of Guidance, p. 86.
- 3) "Proclamation by the Hands of the Cause to the Bahá'ís of East and West," November 25, 1957, The Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 342; The Ministry of the Custodians 1957-1963, pp. 36, 211; "The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice," The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p. 82.
- 4) Shoghi Effendi, Compilation on the Universal House of Justice, p. 17.
- 5) The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 24, 34; The Light of Divine Guidance, p. 84; Unfolding Destiny, p. 57.
- 6) Will and Testament to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 3.
- 7) God Passes By, p. 214; The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 147.
- 8) Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 26.
- 9) Messages to America, p. 8.
- 10) God Passes By, p. 213.
- 11) Ibid., p. 325.
- 12) The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 144; compare God Passes By, p. 325, where Shoghi Effendi makes clear that he is referring to the Kitab-i-Aqdas.
- 13) Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 26.
- 14) Messages to America, p. 8.
- 15) Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 37-44.
- 16) Literally, "Branches."
- 17) Kitab-i-Aqdas, pp.34-35, |br42.
- 18) Ibid.,pp.196-197, Note 66.
- 19) "Comments on the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice," Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 41.
- 20) Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973, p. 41.
- 21) For example, Shoghi Effendi has sometimes translated Aghsan as "Sons." (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 93 and 94; Gleanings from the Writings of

Bahá'u'lláh, p. 244) In each of these instances Bahá'u'lláh speaks of "My" Aghs an; perhaps this is why the Guardian translated "Aghsan" as "sons" in those instances.

22) See *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* pp.385-386, and the *Compilation "The Continental Boards of Counselors,"* pp.44-45.

23) Shoghi Effendi has explained the general meaning of the term: "As to 'Aghsan it also means branch. But it is a bigger branch than 'Afnan'. It refers to Bahá'u'lláh's descendants." From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, Sept.25,1934; *Lights of Guidance*, 2nd. Edition, pp.470-471, #1548.

24) *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 11 (three times).

25) *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, pp.34-35, |br42.

26) *Ibid.*, pp.196-197, Note 67.

27) Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in the frontispiece to Dr. Muhajir, *Hand of the Cause of God, Knight of Bahá'u'lláh*. Bahá'u'lláh employs very similar terminology In speaking of the Hands of the Cause in the *Surat-al Haykal*; see Paul Haney, "The Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God," *Bahá'í World*, Vol. XIII, p. 333.

Also compare Bahá'u'lláh's reference to the Hands of the Cause in a passage translated by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 85.

28) *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973*, p. 41.

29) *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 87.

30) See, for example, the case of Charles Mason Remey, discussed in *The Ministry of the Custodians 1957-1963*, pp.206-226.

31) The Master wrote in His Will that the "Committee of Investigation" had come to the Holy Land from Constantinople "a few months ago." (*The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 7) The first Committee of Investigation arrived in the Holy Land in 1904 (Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 111), when Shoghi Effendi was seven years old. It appears from the above-quoted language that the first part of His Will was written at that time. In that first part of His Will, 'Abdu'l-Ba ha appointed Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian, and provided that the Guardian would serve as the chairman of the Universal House of Justice. The second Commission came to the Holy Land in 1907 (Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 118 *God Passes By*, p. 269). At that time, Shoghi Effendi was still a boy of ten years.

32) Selection #188 in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* appears to have been written at that time. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also refers to that time in *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 56.

33) *God Passes By*, p. 268.

- 34) The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 19.
- 35) Ibid., pp.17-22.
- 36) God Passes By, p. 268, The World Order of Bahá'u'llah, p. 17.
- 37)"Unassailable Foundation of the Cause Of God," Wellspring of Guidance, p. 49; also quoted in the Compilation on the Establishment of the Universal House of Justice, p. 37.
- 38) The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Part Two), pp. 19-20.
- 39) The Universal House of Justice has explained the importance of the innumerable definitions provided by Shoghi Effendi in its letter "The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice Wellspring of Guidance", pp. 83-84. As early as 1929, Shoghi Effendi had described the sphere of authority of the Universal House of Justice as "clearly defined" (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 8, 148).
- 40) "The second part of the Master's Will is also relevant to such a situation and should be studied by the friends." "Unassailable Foundation of the Cause of God" Wellspring of Guidance, p. 49; also quoted in the Compilation on the Establishment of the Universal House of Justice at p. 37, and in The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. 1 p. 347.
- 41) 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in "The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice," Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 84-86.
- 42) Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 68. Please compare this Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh with the Eighth Ishraq of the Tablet of Ishraqat, accounted by Bahá'u'lláh as part of the Most Holy Book; see the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 91.
- 43) The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 153.
- 44) The Universal House of Justice has deemed this passage so . significant, that it has included it in its Constitution. The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, p. 6. Also see the Compilation on the Establishment of the Universal House of Justice, pp. 25 and 53.
- 45) The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 148.
- 46) Ibid., p. 151.
- 47) "The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice," Wellspring of Guidance, p. 87.
- 48) The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 144, quoted and discussed above.
- 49) Ibid., p. 5.
- 50) God Passes By, pp. xiv - xv.
- 51) Bahá'í Administration, pp. 185-186.
- 52) The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 146 and 147.

53) Ibid., p. 148.

54) The Guardian states his reasons for delaying the election of the Universal House of Justice in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 7, and *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 41, and they are further commented upon by Ruhíyyih Rabbani in *The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 106-107.

55) *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 148.

56) Ibid., p. 1 55.

57) Ibid., p. 148.

58) Ibid., pp. 54, 79, 98; *God Passes By* pp. 26, 340.

59) Shoghi Effendi announced "...yet another step in the progressive unfoldment of one of the cardinal and pivotal institutions ordained by Bahá'u'lláh, and confirmed in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, involving the designation of yet another contingent of the Hands of the Cause of God, raising thereby to thrice nine the total number of the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth, who have been invested by the unerring Center of His Covenant with the dual function of guarding over the security, and of insuring the propagation, of His Father's Faith." *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 127.

60) *The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 12.

61) The Bahá'í world became aware of this verse in 1969, when the Universal House of Justice issued its letter "Comments on the Guardianship and the Universal House to Justice," published in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973*, p. 41.

62) *Wellspring of Guidance*, pp. 2-3.

63) *Bahá'í World*, Vol. XIV, p. 436.

64) *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 8.

65) Ibid., p. 22.

66) *The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 11.

67) Ibid., p. 26.

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