

# **The Infallibility of the Twin Successors: The Guardian and the Universal House of Justice: The two parts of Abdu'l-Baha's Covenant - God's part and our part Prepared By Brent Poirier**

Let's revisit this extract from a letter from Shoghi Effendi's secretary written on his behalf - and please recall that such letters were not only written at the direction of Shoghi Effendi; the vast majority of them also bear Shoghi Effendi's signature:

*“As regards the meaning of the Bahá'í Covenant: The Guardian considers the existence of two forms of Covenant both of which are explicitly mentioned in the literature of the Cause . . . . The second form of Covenant is such as the one Bahá'u'lláh made with His people that they should accept the Master. This is merely to establish and strengthen the succession of the series of Lights that appear after every Manifestation. Under the same category falls the Covenant the Master made with the Bahá'ís that they should accept His administration after Him.”* (From a letter on behalf of the Guardian dated October 21, 1932; Directives from the Guardian, p. 15, #43)

Please pay special attention to that last sentence:

*“the Covenant the Master made with the Bahá'ís that they should accept His administration after Him.”*

This is an extremely important point. It is common to hear Bahá'ís say that the Master was the Successor to Bahá'u'lláh, as was written by Baha'u'llah's own pen in His Will; and that Shoghi Effendi was the successor to the Master, as was written by the Master's own pen in His Will; and then the statements from the friends sometimes get sort of fuzzy. Generally there is no mention that the House of Justice is also named as the Master's successor in His own handwriting in His Will - but that is the case. The House of Justice is not the Head of the Faith because there's no one else to do it; it is the Head of the Faith because the Master, in the same passage where He names the Guardian as His successor, names the House of Justice as His successor. The House of Justice is not only the supreme Body and infallible; it is in the line of successorship. The House of Justice is one of the twin Successors of the Manifestation and `Abdu'l-Bahá. This is perhaps the most important point in these materials.

**The Universal House of Justice is, in conjunction with the Guardianship, the Successor to `Abdu'l-Bahá**

In this statement, Shoghi Effendi states who the Successors of the Master and Bahá'u'lláh are:

*“They [Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá] have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as **their chosen Successors**, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world.”* (Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 19.)

So in these quotations above, we have one statement from Shoghi Effendi stating that the twin institutions of the House of Justice and the Guardianship are the Successors; and in another statement on his behalf, he states this another way—that the successor to the Master is *“His administration”*.

Emeric Sala, a devoted believer, went on pilgrimage during 1937 and left this account of a conversation with the beloved Guardian:

*One night Shoghi Effendi asked me a question, which I could not answer, nor did I understand its significance at that time. Shoghi Effendi asked me:*

*“Since after the martyrdom of the Báb the authority of the Faith was passed on to Bahá'u'lláh, and after his passing to `Abdu'l-Bahá, to whom was it transferred after the ascension of `Abdu'l-Bahá?”*

*I answered, of course, to Shoghi Effendi. He said no. I then said the Guardian. He again shook his head. I then ventured the Universal House of Justice. He again said no, and I could see from his expression that he was disappointed with my inability to answer his question. Then he asked, are the friends not reading my letters? The answer, he said, is clearly stated in *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*. It is divided into four parts: Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, `Abdu'l-Bahá, and the fourth part entitled the “World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,” which is the answer to his question.*

[Shoghi Effendi's Question](#) (Actually, the fourth section is entitled the “Administrative Order.”)

As the House of Justice wrote in its Constitution, the Covenant of Baha'u'llah

*“...continues to fulfil its life-giving purpose through the agency of the Universal House of Justice whose fundamental object, as one of the twin successors of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá, is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of the Faith...”* (The Constitution of The Universal House of Justice, p. 3)

**The Heart of the Covenant of `Abdu'l-Bahá**

As we read previously, the Master's Will and Testament is, according to Shoghi Effendi's guidance, the Master's Covenant. [Letter of 3 July 1949 \(First Pioneer School\)](#)

A Covenant has two parties, each of whom makes a solemn promise to the other. God promises something to us - and we promise something to God. We became parties to the twin Covenants of Baha'u'llah and the Master when we became Baha'is.

- God's part of the Covenant: *Baha'u'llah and the Master promise to guide the Universal House of Justice.*
- Our part of the Covenant: *We promise to turn to it, and to seek its guidance.*

The heart of the Master's Covenant is contained in these words:

*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 Abhá 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!"* (The Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Baha, p. 11)

The Master here covenants, or promises, that both the Guardian of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice are guided by Bahá'u'lláh ("The Abhá Beauty") and the Báb ("His Holiness, the Exalted One"). In one of his World Order letters, Shoghi Effendi states that the Bab and Baha'u'llah are both "*presiding ... over the destinies of this supreme Dispensation*" (Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 97), echoing the Master's solemn Covenant that both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh guide the Universal House of Justice and the Guardian. This is God's part of the Master's Covenant; it is a re-phrasing of what He writes on page 11 of His Will.

Man's part of the Covenant—to turn to these twin institutions and seek their guidance—is stated in the rest of that paragraph on page 11 of the Will, and again in the closing words of the Master's Will:

*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.*

(The Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Baha, p. 11)

*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 Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 25-26)

Imagine the significance of this passage. These are the very last words of Abdu'l-Baha to the human race - turn to the Guardian and to the Universal House of Justice. These words are worthy of memorizing, and of teaching to our children.

### **The Close Functioning of the Twin Institutions**

In His Will (p. 14), the Master provided that the Universal House of Justice was to be elected by the National Spiritual Assemblies (referred to in the Will as the "Secondary Houses of Justice"), and that the Guardian of the Cause would serve as its permanent Chairman:

*“. . . the Guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body.”*

As a side-note, the title given to Shoghi Effendi by the Master, is *Ghusn-i-Mumtaz* or the Chosen Branch. *Mumtaz* is an Arabic word that is used, for example, to designate the best student in a class. It appears again in the Master's Will, p. 14, translated as "distinguished" - the Guardian is the "distinguished" member of the House of Justice.

As the House of Justice has written, the Master "*obviously envisaged their functioning together,*" i.e. the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice. (Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986, p. 87)

Shoghi Effendi also referred to this relationship between these twin institutions in a letter he wrote to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine:

*The passing of `Abdu'l-Bahá marked the termination of the first and Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Faith and signaled the opening of the Formative Age destined to witness the gradual emergence of its Administrative Order, whose establishment had been foretold by the Báb, whose laws were revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, whose outlines were delineated by `Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament, and whose foundations are now being laid by the national and local councils which are elected by the professed adherents of the Faith, and which are paving the way for the constitution of the World Council, to be designated as the Universal House of Justice, which in*

*conjunction with me, as its appointed Head and authorized interpreter of the Bahá'í teachings, must coordinate and direct the affairs of the Bahá'í community, and whose seat will be permanently established in the Holy Land, in close proximity to its world spiritual center, the resting-places of its Founders.* [Summary Statement - 1947, Special UN Committee on Palestine](#)

(Under the sub-heading “The Administrative Order”)

As we will see in the next two Units of this course, these two divine institutions have each had to function separately from the other. Each was independently promised infallible divine guidance - in the case of the Universal House of Justice, this promise was made by Baha'u'llah, as well as by the Master.