

# *The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith*



## **CHARLES MASON REMEY**

**(15th May 1874 – 4th February 1974)**

**Second Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith**

**Covering Seventy Five years of dedicated service to the Bahá'í Faith, culminating in his appointment by Shoghi Effendi as his successor and second Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith .**

**From Mason Remey's Proclamation**

**Believers have questioned me as to my status as President of the Bahá'í International Council, appointed by The Beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi,**

the First Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. I take the means of this proclamation, to the coming annual national convention to tell all Bahá'ís exactly what my position and status is in the Faith. The Bahá'í people the world around know that The Beloved Guardian singled me, Mason Remey, out from amongst all of the Believers upon earth to occupy the position of President of the Bahá'í International Council. This is the only position suggestive of authority that Shoghi Effendi ever bestowed upon anyone, the only special and specific appointment of authority to any man ever made by him. The Beloved Guardian declared the Bahá'í International Council to be the forerunner of and the first step toward the establishment of The Universal House of Justice, and furthermore, that the Bahá'í International Council was the embryo of The Universal House of Justice which embryo would eventually develop into The Universal House of Justice.

### **Early History -**

Charles Mason Remey was born in Burlington, Iowa, on May 15, 1874. Mason was the eldest son of Rear Admiral George Collier Remey and Mary Josephine Mason Remey, the daughter of Charles Mason, the first Chief Justice of Iowa. Mason Remey's parents raised him in the Episcopal Church. Mason Remey trained as an architect at Cornell University (1893–1896), and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France (1896–1903) where he first learned of the Bahá'í Faith. Mason Remey married Gertrude Heim Klemm in Paris on 17th July, 1931, and she died in Washington, D.C. 5th August, 1932.

### **Mason Remey the Architect –**

With a background in architecture, Mason Remey was asked to design the Australian and Ugandan Bahá'í House of Worship, which still stand today and are the Mother Temples for Australasia and Africa respectively. Upon the request of Shoghi Effendi, he also provided designs for a Bahá'í Houses of Worship to be built in Tehran, and on Mount Carmel in Haifa, and designed the magnificent International Archives building, the latter already constructed close to the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Carmel.

### **Mason Remey Writings -**

Mason Remey traveled extensively to promote the Bahá'í Faith during the Ministry of `Abdu'l-Bahá. Shoghi Effendi recorded that Mason Remey was the first Bahá'í to circle the globe teaching the Faith. A prolific writer, Mason Remey wrote numerous articles, many of which were published, promoting the Bahá'í Faith, including *Abdu'l-Bahá – The Center of the Covenant* and the five volume *A Comprehensive History of the Bahá'í Movement (1927)*, *The Bahá'í Revelation and Reconstruction (1919)*, *Constructive Principles of The Bahá'í Movement (1917)*, and *The Bahá'í Movement: A Series of Nineteen Papers (1912)*, comprising a few of the titles of the many works Mason Remey produced while `Abdu'l-Bahá was still alive. Mason Remey's life has been recorded in his diaries, and in 1940 he provided copies and selected writings to several public libraries. Included in most of the collections were the letters `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to him. Mason Remey's memoir of his final visit with 'Abdu'l Baha in 1921

records the following words 'Abdu'l Baha's addressed to him at that time:

*"I have adopted you as my son. You have to appreciate this favor very much indeed. One should see that you are living according to the requirements of this sonship. You should be aware of your responsibilities. My prayers will help you. I always pray for you."*

### **Under the Ministry of Shoghi Effendi -**

Mason Remey lived for some time in Washington, D.C., in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1950 he moved from Washington, D.C., to Haifa, Israel, at the request of Shoghi Effendi who stated that henceforth this would be his permanent home. In January 1951, Shoghi Effendi issued a Proclamation proclaiming the formation of the International Bahá'í Council (IBC), the first International Institution which initially in its embryonic form would then as outlined by him would evolve, as it matured through successive stages until attaining its ultimate efflorescence as the Universal House of Justice, the supreme legislative body of the Bahá'í Administrative Order over which only the Guardian of the Faith is authorized to preside as its "sacred head" for life according to the immutable provisions of the Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha in which are delineated the institutions of the Baha'l Administrative Order. Shoghi Effendi appointed Mason Remey as President of this International Council in March 1951, and Amelia Collins as Vice-President. At the end of the year, on December 24, 1951, Shoghi Effendi also appointed Mason Remey among the first contingent of twelve Hands of the Cause of God.

## Proclamation of Shoghi Effendi

Proclaim National Assemblies (of) East (and) West weighty epoch-making decision (of) formation (of) first International Bahá'í Council, forerunner (of) supreme administrative institution destined (to) emerge (in) fullness (of) time within precincts beneath shadow (of) World Spiritual Center (of) Faith already established (in) twin cities (of) 'Akká (and) Haifa. Fulfillment (of) prophecies uttered (by) Founder (of) Faith (and) Center (of) His Covenant culminating (in) establishment (of) Jewish State, signaling birth after lapse (of) two thousand years (of an) independent nation (in the) Holy Land, (the) swift unfoldment (of) historic undertaking associated (with) construction (of) superstructure (of the) Báb's Sepulchre (on) Mount Carmel, (the) present adequate maturity (of) nine vigorously functioning national administrative institutions throughout Bahá'í World, combine (to) induce me (to) arrive (at) this historic decision marking most significant milestone (in) evolution (of) Administrative Order (of the) Faith (of) Bahá'u'lláh (in) course (of) last thirty years. Nascent Institution now created (is) invested (with) threefold function: first, (to) forge link (with) authorities (of) newly emerged State; second, (to) assist me (to) discharge responsibilities involved (in) erection (of) mighty superstructure (of the) Báb's Holy Shrine; third, (to) conduct negotiations related (to) matters (of) personal status (with) civil authorities. To these will be added further functions (in) course (of) evolution (of) this first embryonic International Institution, marking its development into officially recognized Bahá'í Court, its transformation into duly elected body, its efflorescence into Universal House (of) Justice, (and) its final fruition through erection (of) manifold auxiliary institutions constituting (the) World Administrative Center destined (to) arise (and) function (and) remain permanently established (in) close neighborhood (of) Twin Holy Shrines. Hail (with) thankful, joyous heart (at) long last (the) constitution (of) International Council which history will acclaim (as the) greatest event shedding lustre (upon) second epoch (of) Formative Age (of) Bahá'í Dispensation potentially unsurpassed (by) any enterprise undertaken since inception (of) Administrative Order (of) Faith (on) morrow (of) 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Ascension, ranking second only (to) glorious immortal events associated (with) Ministries (of the) Three Central Figures (of) Faith (in) course (of) First Age (of) most glorious Dispensation (of the) five thousand century Bahá'í Cycle. Advise publicize announcement through Public Relations Committee.

—SHOGHI

[Cablegram, January 9, 1951]

During the years that immediately followed the formation of the International Bahá'í Council and Shoghi Effendi's appointment of its President Charles Mason Remey (who had been previously summoned by him to take up permanent residence in Haifa), he explains in his writings, that he awaited instructions from Shoghi Effendi to convene the Council into a functioning administrative body but no such instructions were forthcoming during the remaining years of his ministry. This fact was the cause of puzzlement at the time and the reason therefore only became clear some two and a half years after the passing of Shoghi Effendi when the President of the Council issued his own [Proclamation at Ridván 1960](#). As the Council was not activated as an administrative body during this embryonic state prior to Shoghi Effendi's passing (with only individual members of the Council performing assignments under the direction of the Guardian) the import of the establishment of the Council as the embryonic Universal House of Justice – the supreme Bahá'í administrative body in the world – was soon lost sight of by the believers.

### **After Shoghi Effendi's Passing**

Mason Remey was a resident Hand at Haifa when Shoghi Effendi died in November 1957 while in England. With the sudden and completely unexpected passing of the first Guardian of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi, the believers suffered a tremendous shock, followed almost immediately by the second shock of finding that Shoghi Effendi had apparently failed to appoint a successor in the manner they had anticipated based on their interpretation of the provisions of the Will and Testament. Failing to find a

successor so appointed, the great majority of the believers, led by the then Hands of the Cause, forthwith concluded that the Institution of Guardianship had ended with the passing of Shoghi Effendi and that he had failed to appoint a successor in spite of all that he had said about the immortal provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. As the Hands of the Cause led by Rúhíyyih Khánum, Shoghi Effendi's wife, had taken charge of affairs in the Faith upon Shoghi Effendi's passing and convened a conclave in 'Accá for the purpose of determining the Guardian's successor (although no such conclave is called for under the terms of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, nor is it necessary as there is no interregnum in the Guardianship) the believers quite understandably turned to these Hands for guidance and direction when they were informed that there was no successor. The Hands of the Cause (with a single notable exception) mistakenly believing that the Faith had been left without a Guardian quickly seized upon the appellation that Shoghi Effendi had given them as "**Chief Stewards**" and construed this to mean that they should assume authority for the direction of the affairs of the Faith. They then promulgated their insidious doctrine that God had changed His Plan (i.e. had ended the Guardianship) which meant, although not admitted by them, that the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh would be deprived not only of the Guardian but its supreme administrative institution as well and therefore could never become a reality. Only the President of the International Bahá'í Council (whose supreme station in The Faith no one recognized) refused to accept this doctrine (known as "**BADA**") and endeavored over some two and a half years until the issuance of his own Proclamation to get them to

reconsider their stand against the continuity of the Guardianship, to no avail). During the years of 1957-1960, Mason Remey wrote more diaries, which he subsequently self-published as *Daily Observations of Things and Conditions in The Holy Land*. In three volumes he recorded his memoirs of the years in Haifa after Shoghi Effendi's passing. Mason Remey urged the Hands repeatedly to "seek their Guardian." Mason Remey's conviction that the Faith required a living Guardian resounded throughout his diaries. Late in 1959, Mason Remey left Haifa and returned to the United States after the announcement by the Hands of the plan to elect the body of the International Baha'i Council in 1961. The Hands, at this stage, relegated the International Bahá'í Council to an insignificant role subordinate to themselves but, curiously enough, in their announced plans for the future administration of the Faith they called for the election of a successor body to the Council to be held in 1963 which, although headless, as they would depose Mason Remey, Shoghi Effendi's appointed President, they had the audacity to label "**The Universal House of Justice**." This spurious body, clearly created outside of the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá then reigned over the Faith for a period of some six years until its demise and its functions assumed by an equally illegitimate and sans-Guardian so-called Universal House of Justice, elected in 1963 In April 1960 Mason Remey issued a public Proclamation, that he was the "Second Guardian of the Baha'i Faith." In it, Mason Remey explained:

**"The Beloved Guardian chose me to be the President of the Bahá'í International Council that is according to his explanation the President of the Embryonic Universal House of Justice. Therefore I am the President of**

**the Embryonic Universal House of Justice. When this August body becomes the Universal House of Justice, if such being during my lifetime, I will then be the President of the First Universal House of Justice of the Bahá'í Dispensation."**

Both in the administrative provisions of the Bahá'í Dispensation, and in the matter of succession, as embodied in the twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh can summon to their aid such irrefutable evidences of Divine Guidance that none can resist, that none can belittle or ignore. Therein lies the distinguishing feature of the Bahá'í Revelation. This is the reason why Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have both revealed and insisted upon certain details in connection with the Divine Economy which they have bequeathed to us, their followers. This is why such an emphasis has been placed in **THEIR** Will and Testament upon the powers and prerogatives of the ministers of their Faith [House of Justice and Guardianship]

### **Actions of the Hands**

Regardless of these provisions, the Hands barred independent investigation and discussion of Mason Remey's claim, and they enforced this censorship by excommunication, an act for which they had no authority to impose. Consequently, Shoghi Effendi's writings were shamefully disregarded in these actions taken by the Hands and they inexcusably placed no importance on and ignored, as well, the **"historic"** and **"epoch-making"** decisions he had made pertaining to the establishment of the highest Institutions of the Faith at the World Center and had announced in glowing terms in messages to the Bahá'í World during the concluding years

of his 36-year ministry. The National Spiritual Assembly of France was the only national Baha'i institution to officially recognize him in 1960.

Is it not a blatant paradox that, since the passing of Shoghi Effendi, that the sans-Guardian, and therefore headless, illegitimate and so-called Universal House of Justice has now so perverted the meaning of fidelity to the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh that they now ludicrously label as Covenant-breakers those believers who have continued to faithfully and steadfastly adhere to every clause of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's divinely-conceived, sacred and immortal Will and Testament—a part of the explicit Holy Text—whereas, in marked contrast, it is they, who in their abandonment of the Guardianship, have thereby faithlessly declared major clauses of this Will and Testament null and void and have, in consequence, undeniably become themselves the arch-breakers of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh?

After a short period of residence in Washington, D.C., after returning from Haifa, in the early 1960s, Mason Remey moved to Fiesole, Italy.. A small number of the believers had refused to accept this view and clung to their faith in the continuity of the Guardianship in spite of the signs at the time to the contrary. Some three years were to pass before the faith of those who had remained firm was vindicated and rewarded upon receipt of a [Proclamation issued by the second Guardian of the Faith at Ridván, 1960.](#)

This Proclamation struck as a thunderbolt in the Bahá'í World and brought on the spiritual catastrophe aforementioned. To the faithful few, it brought the joy of the realization that the line of Guardianship of the Faith had remained unbroken as promised in the Will and Testament and discovery of

the unique manner in which Shoghi Effendi had provided for the continuity of the Guardianship in complete conformity to the provisions of the Will and Testament but not in accordance with the preconceived opinions of the believers. These faithful friends hastened to embrace the second Guardian and arose with renewed dedication to work for the victory of the Covenant. Armed with the irrefutable arguments contained in the [Proclamation](#) and Mason Remey's subsequent [Encyclical Letters](#), as well as the enlightening expositions in his ["Daily Observations"](#) penned during the painful and fateful years of his residence at Haifa following the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the faithful friends composed numerous treatises and apologia of their own supporting the claim of Mason Remey to the Guardianship.

In spite of the fierce opposition which the Proclamation engendered and the machinations of this new generation of violators of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, the true Faith under the hereditary Guardianship slowly began to grow and win adherence to its ranks in the four corners of the earth. It was not long before strong groups were formed on several continents followed by the establishment of Local Spiritual Assemblies and the formation of National Spiritual Assemblies in the United States and in Pakistan. The high water mark in this progress was reached with the historic announcement made by the second Guardian on 21 September 1964 of the creation of the second International Bahá'í Council (announced in the October 1964 issue of the Glad Tidings). Through the means of this historic announcement, the second Guardian, similarly to the first Guardian, publicly announced to the believers the one whom he had

chosen, Joel Bray Marangella as his potential successor to Guardianship (i.e., by naming the President of the Council). But he had gone a step further than Shoghi Effendi to reinforce this appointment and to avoid any future doubt by placing in the hands of his successor-to-be well in advance of this public announcement a document written in his own hand naming him as his successor. It is difficult to point to a specific date when the fortunes of the Faith under the hereditary Guardianship of Mason Remey began to falter and then later to decline rapidly, but it was soon after the formation and activation of the second International Bahá'í Council and the passing of the 'mantle of authority' to the new Guardian.

Mason Remey remained in Fiesoli until his passing in February 1974.