

## MIRZA MIHDI

### The Children of Bahá'u'lláh

When Bahá'u'lláh was about nineteen years old He married a lady of noble birth, Asíyih Khánum. She bore Him seven children of whom only three survived - 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Greatest Holy Leaf, and Mírzá Mihdí, the Purest Branch.  
(Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, Page 18)

### The Deadly Accident

To the galling weight of these tribulations was now added the bitter grief of a sudden tragedy - the premature loss of the noble, the pious Mírzá Mihdí, the Purest Branch, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's twenty-two year old brother, an amanuensis of Bahá'u'lláh and a companion of His exile from the days when, as a child, he was brought from Tihrán to Baghdád to join his Father after His return from Sulaymáníyyih. He was pacing the roof of the barracks in the twilight, one evening, wrapped in his customary devotions, when he fell through the unguarded skylight onto a wooden crate, standing on the floor beneath, which pierced his ribs, and caused, twenty-two hours later, his death, on the 23rd of Rabí'u'l-Avval 1287 A.H. (June 23, 1870). His dying supplication to a grieving Father was that his life might be accepted as a ransom for those who were prevented from attaining the presence of their Beloved.

In a highly significant prayer, revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in memory of His son - a prayer that exalts his death to the rank of those great acts of atonement associated with Abraham's intended sacrifice of His son, with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the martyrdom of the Imám Husayn - we read the following: "I have, O my Lord, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servant may be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united." And, likewise, these prophetic words, addressed to His martyred son: "Thou art the Trust of God and His Treasure in this Land. Erelong will God reveal through thee that which He hath desired."

After he had been washed in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, he "that was created of the light of Bahá," to whose "meekness" the Supreme Pen had testified, and of the "mysteries" of whose ascension that same Pen had made mention, was borne forth, escorted by the fortress guards, and laid to rest, beyond the city walls, in a spot adjacent to the shrine of Nabí Sáliḥ, from whence, seventy years later, his remains, simultaneously with those of his illustrious mother, were to be translated to the slopes of Mt. Carmel, in the precincts of the grave of his sister, and under the shadow of the Báb's holy sepulcher.

(God Passes By, Page 188)

### Prayer

Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! Thou seest me in this day shut up in my prison, and fallen into the hands of Thine adversaries, and beholdest my son (The Purest Branch) lying on the dust before Thy face. He is Thy servant, O my Lord, whom Thou

hast caused to be related to Him Who is the Manifestation of Thyself and the Day-Spring of Thy Cause.

At his birth he was afflicted through his separation from Thee, according to what had been ordained for him through Thine irrevocable decree. And when he had quaffed the cup of reunion with Thee, he was cast into prison for having believed in Thee and in Thy signs. He continued to serve Thy Beauty until he entered into this Most Great Prison. Thereupon I offered him up, O my God, as a sacrifice in Thy path. Thou well knowest what they who love Thee have endured through this trial that hath caused the kindreds of the earth to wail, and beyond them the Concourse on high to lament. I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by him and by his exile and his imprisonment, to send down upon such as loved him what will quiet their hearts and bless their works. Potent art Thou to do as Thou willest. No God is there but Thee, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

(Prayers and Meditations, Page 34)

And lastly, there should be mentioned, as a further evidence of the blessings flowing from the Divine Plan, the transfer, a few years later, to that same hallowed spot, after a separation in death of above half a century, and notwithstanding the protests voiced by the brother and lieutenant of the arch-breaker of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, of the remains of the Purest Branch, the martyred son of Bahá'u'lláh, "created of the light of Bahá," the "Trust of God" and His "Treasurer" in the Holy Land, and offered up by his Father as a "ransom" for the regeneration of the world and the unification of its peoples.

(God Passes By, Page 347)

The Purest Branch, the martyred son, the companion, and amanuensis of Bahá'u'lláh, that pious and holy youth, who in the darkest days of Bahá'u'lláh's incarceration in the barracks of 'Akká entreated, on his death-bed his Father to accept him as a ransom for those of His loved ones who yearned for, but were unable to attain, His presence, and the saintly mother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, surnamed Navváb by Bahá'u'lláh, and the first recipient of the honored and familiar title of "the Most Exalted Leaf," separated in death above half a century, and forced to suffer the humiliation of an alien burial-ground, are now at long last reunited with the Greatest Holy Leaf with whom they had so abundantly shared the tribulations of one of the most distressing episodes of the Heroic Age of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Avenged, eternally safeguarded, befittingly glorified, they repose embosomed in the heart of Carmel, hidden beneath its sacred soil, interred in one single spot, lying beneath the shadow of the twin holy Tombs, and facing across the bay, on an eminence of unequalled loveliness and beauty, the silver-city of 'Akká, the Point of adoration of the entire Bahá'í world, and the Door of Hope for all mankind. "Haste thee, O Carmel!" thus proclaims the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh, "for lo, the light of the countenance of God, the Ruler of the Kingdom of Names and Fashioner of the heavens, hath been lifted upon thee." "Rejoice, for God hath in this day established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the day-spring of the evidences of His Revelation."

(Messages to America, Page 31)

## The Transfer of the Remains of his Body

The long years of preparation - outside in the body of the Bahá'í world through the erection of the machinery of the Administrative Order, inside its heart through the erection of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb and the general consolidation of the World Centre - had involved the creation of a Spot suitable to form the "focal centre", as Shoghi Effendi termed it, of the mightiest institutions of the Faith. This Spot was no less than the resting-places of the mother, sister and brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, those "three incomparably precious souls", as he called them, "who, next to the three Central Figures of our Faith, tower in rank above the vast multitude of the heroes, Letters, martyrs, hands, teachers and administrators of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh." It had long been the desire of the Greatest Holy Leaf to lie near her mother, who was buried in 'Akká, as was her brother, Mihdá. But when Bahíyyih Khánum passed away in 1932 she had been befittingly interred on Mt. Carmel near the Shrine of the Báb. Shoghi Effendi conceived the idea of transferring the remains of her mother and brother, so unsuitably buried in 'Akká, to the vicinity of her resting-place and in 1939 he ordered in Italy twin marble monuments, similar in style to the one he had erected over her own grave. Fortunately these reached Haifa safely in spite of the war. Far from being a simple procedure "the consummation of this long, this profoundly cherished hope" proved to be extremely difficult. I will quote from my own published account of these events as I was, of course, present in Haifa at the time: "Whilst their tombs were still in process of excavation from the solid rock of the mountain, the Guardian had learned that the Covenant-breakers were protesting against the right of the Bahá'ís to remove the mother and brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to new graves, actually having the temerity to represent to the government their so-called claim as relatives of the deceased. As soon, however, as the civil authorities had the true state of facts made clear to them - that these same relatives had been the arch-enemies of the Master and His family, had left the true Cause of Bahá'u'lláh to follow their own devices, and had been denounced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament - they approved the plan of the Guardian and immediately issued the necessary papers for the exhumation of the bodies. Without risking further delay Shoghi Effendi, two days later, himself removed the Purest Branch and his mother to Mount Carmel".

After daybreak, accompanied by a few Bahá'ís, Shoghi Effendi went to 'Akká, opened one grave after the other, and brought the remains to Haifa. He later told me about it; it had been a nerve-racking experience for him in every way. In the first place there was a very real risk that the Covenant-breakers might decide to come with a party of supporters to the cemeteries and try to prevent by force the exhumations; in this they would have had the sympathy of the Muslims who believe that to open a grave is the greatest desecration, and indeed open graves just for the purpose of inflicting this greatest of all insults. Aside from this danger, to stand while a grave is being opened, no matter how noble the purpose for doing it may be, is a very harrowing experience; how much more so for a sensitive person like Shoghi Effendi! When the earth was removed from the coffin of the Master's mother he discovered the wood was still intact, except for the bottom which had rotted away, and so he instructed them to gently remove the top.

He told me the figure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's mother, would in her shroud, lay there so clearly outlined that one could almost discern her features, but it collapsed in dust and bones at the first touch. He descended into the grave and with his own hands helped to place the skeleton in the new coffin prepared for it; this was then closed, loaded on a waiting vehicle, and they all proceeded to the second Arab cemetery where the Purest Branch was buried and there opened his grave. As he had been buried two decades longer than his mother, and the interment had been hastily carried out in the days when Bahá'u'lláh was so strictly confined in the prison barracks of 'Akká, the coffin had entirely disintegrated and Shoghi Effendi again gathered up himself the few bones and dust that remained and again placed them himself in the second coffin that lay beside the grave to receive them. Although all this was carried out successfully it took many harrowing hours of strain and anxiety to accomplish before Shoghi Effendi, with his precious trust, could return to Haifa. I will again quote from what I wrote at the time as it is so much more vivid than anything I could rewrite at this distance from the event: "Twilight has fallen on Mount Carmel and the veils of dusk have deepened over the bay of 'Akká. A group of men stand waiting by the gate, beneath the steps. Suddenly there is a stir, the gardener runs to illumine the entrance and amidst the white shafts of light a procession appears. A man clothed in black rests the weight of a coffin on his shoulder. It is the Guardian of the Cause and he bears the mortal remains of the Purest Branch, Bahá'u'lláh's beloved son. Slowly he and his fellow bearers mount the narrow path and in silence approach the house adjacent to the reating-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf. A devoted servant speeds ahead with a rug and candelabra from the Holy Shrines and swiftly prepares the room. The gentle, strong face of the Guardian appears as he enters the door, that precious weight always on his shoulder, and the coffin is laid temporarily to rest in a humble room, facing Bahjí, the Qiblih of the Faith. Again those devoted servants, led by their Guardian, return to the gate and again remount the path with another sacred burden, this time the body of the wife of Bahá'u'lláh, the mother of the Master."

The moment this task had been safely accomplished the American Assembly, on 5 December, received the following cable from Shoghi Effendi: "Blessed remains Purest Branch and Master's mother safely transferred hallowed precincts Shrines Mount Carmel. Long inflicted humiliation wiped away. Machinations Covenant-breakers frustrate plan defeated. Cherished wish Greatest Holy Leaf fulfilled. Sister brother mother wife 'Abdu'l-Bahá reunited one spot designed constitute focal centre Bahá'í Administrative Institutions at Faith's World Centre. Share joyful news entire body American believers. Shoghi Rabbani." The signing of the Guardian's full name was required as we were at war and all correspondence was censored.

The exquisite taste and sense of proportion, so characteristic of everything the Guardian created, is nowhere better reflected than in the marble monuments he erected over the four graves of these close relatives of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Designed in Italy according to Shoghi Effendi's own instructions and executed there in white Carrara marble, they were shipped to Haifa and placed, in the decade between 1932 and 1942, in their predestined positions, around which he constructed the beautiful gardens which we commonly referred to as the "Monument Gardens" and which he evolved into the

fulcrum of that arc on Mt. Carmel about which are to cluster in future the International Institutions of the Faith.

For three weeks these precious remains were kept in that room until, as Shoghi Effendi cabled in 26 December: "Christmas eve beloved remains Purest Branch and Master's mother laid in state Báb's Holy Tomb. Christmas day entrusted Carmel's sacred soil. Ceremony presence representatives Near Eastern believers profoundly moving. Impelled associate America's momentous Seven Year enterprise imperishable memory these two holy souls who next twin founders Faith and perfect Exemplar tower together with Greatest Holy Leaf above entire concourse faithful. Rejoice privilege pledge thousand pounds my contribution Bahíyyih Khánum Fund designed inauguration final drive insure placing contract next April last remaining stage construction Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Time pressing opportunity priceless potent aid providentially promised unfailing."

The genius of the Guardian for doing things befittingly, ever following so faithfully in the footsteps of his beloved grandfather, is nowhere better demonstrated than in the extreme honour and reverence with which he accomplished the final interment of those two holy souls who had been so much loved by both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. So unique is this entire event in religious history that I feel it must receive its full due here. Again I refer to the above-mentioned article: "The last stone is laid in the two vaults, the floors are paved in marble, the name plates fixed to mark their heads, the earth smoothed out, the path that leads to their last resting-place built...And now, again on the shoulder of the Guardian, they are borne forth to lie in state in the Holy Tomb of the Báb. Side by side, far greater than the great of this world, they lie by that sacred threshold, facing Bahjí, with candles burning at their heads and flowers before their feet...The following sunset we gather once again in that Holy Shrine...Slowly, held aloft on the hands of the faithful, led by Shoghi Effendi, who never relinquishes his precious burden...Once they circumambulate the Shrines, the coffin of beloved Mihdí, supported by the Guardian, followed by that of the Master's mother, passes us slowly by. Around the Shrine, onward through the lighted garden, down the white path, out onto the moonlit road, that solemn procession passes. High, seeming to move of themselves, above the heads of those following, the coffins wend their way...They pass before us, outlined against the night sky...They approach, the face of the Guardian close to that priceless burden he bears. They pass on toward the waiting vaults. Now they lay the Purest Branch to rest. Shoghi Effendi himself enters the carpeted vault and gently eases the coffin to its preordained place. He himself strews it with flowers, his hands the last to caress it. The mother of the Master is then placed in the same manner by the Guardian in the neighbouring vault...Masons are called to seal the tombs...Flowers are heaped upon the vaults and the Guardian sprinkles a vial of attar of rose upon them...And now the voice of Shoghi Effendi is raised as he chants those Tablets revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and destined by Him to be read at their graves."  
(The Priceless Pearl, Page 259)

### The Telegram

5 December 1939

REMAINS PUREST BRANCH AND 'ABDU'L-BAHA'S MOTHER PERMANENTLY LAID  
REST CLOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD SHRINE GREATEST HOLY LEAF HEARTS  
REJOICING.

Shoghi Rabbaní

(The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community, Page 133)

### To all Youth

[Letter to Bahá'í Youth in Every Land]

In country after country the achievements of Bahá'í youth are increasingly advancing the work of the Nine Year Plan and arousing the admiration of their fellow believers. From the very beginning of the Bahá'í Era, youth have played a vital part in the promulgation of God's Revelation. The Báb Himself was but twenty-five years old when he declared His Mission, while many of the Letters of the Living were even younger. The Master, as a very young man, was called upon to shoulder heavy responsibilities in the service of His Father in 'Iráq and Turkey; and His brother, the Purest Branch, yielded up his life to God in the Most Great Prison at the age of twenty-two that the servants of God might "be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united." Shoghi Effendi was a student at Oxford when called to the throne of his Guardianship, and many of the knights of Bahá'u'lláh, who won imperishable fame during the Ten Year Crusade, were young people. Let it, therefore, never be imagined that youth must await their years of maturity before they can render invaluable services to the Cause of God. (Wellspring of Guidance, Page 92)

### Youth

"Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord of the beginning and of the end, and adorn his heart with His love. The manifestation of such a grace is greater than the creation of the heavens and of the earth. Blessed are the steadfast and well is it with those who are firm."  
(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by the Universal House of Justice in the Ridván Message 1982)