

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

11 March 1994

[To an individual]

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your letter of 31 December 1993 was received and referred to us for a response.

You quote the reference in paragraph 42 of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and ask how this can be understood as an anticipation of the institution of the Guardianship.

As you correctly state, this passage relates entirely to the disposition of endowments dedicated to charity. In it Bahá'u'lláh provides that the authority in this matter passes, after Him, to the Aghṣán. The Aghṣán comprise not only the sons of Bahá'u'lláh, but all His male descendants. Thus in His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to Shoghi Effendi as "the chosen branch," and provides that if the eldest son of the Guardian did not possess the qualities which would befit him to be appointed as his successor, the Guardian should "choose another branch [Ghuṣn] to succeed him." There is also a letter in which Shoghi Effendi refers to his brother, Ḥusayn, as a "Ghuṣn."

It should be noted that, although only two of the Aghṣán are explicitly mentioned in the Kitáb-i-'Ahd (the Ghuṣn-i-A'zam and the Ghuṣn-i-Akbar, namely 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí), paragraph 42 of the Aqdas refers to more than two. Arabic nouns have three forms for number:

Singular	Branch	Ghuṣn
Dual	two Branches	Ghuṣnán
Plural	more than two Branches	Aghṣán

The Aqdas foresees a hereditary function for the Aghṣán in relation to the disposition of endowments dedicated to charity. Paragraph 42 of the Aqdas continues by stating that "after them" [i.e. the Aghṣán] this authority passes "to the House of Justice—should it be established in the world by then." This envisages the possibility that the line of Aghṣán would come to an end before the Universal House of Justice came into existence, which is, in fact, what happened on the death of Shoghi Effendi.

In this way, therefore, this passage can be seen as anticipating the institution of the Guardianship....

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat