

Directives from the Guardian

Shoghi Effendi

Original English



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Stories about 'Abdu'l-Bahá

He[pg 1] would also urge you to attach no importance to the stories told about 'Abdu'l-Bahá or to those attributed to Him by the friends. These should be regarded in the same light as the notes and impressions of visiting pilgrims. They need not be suppressed, but they should not also be given prominent or official recognition.

For Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í News #96, November 1935

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Chief Objectives of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Ministry

As to the three aims which Shoghi Effendi has stated in his America and the Most Great Peace to have been the chief objectives of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry, it should be pointed out that the first was: The establishment of the Cause in America; the erection of the Bahá'í Temple in Iṣhqábád, and the building on Mt. Carmel of a mausoleum marking the resting-place of the Báb, were the two remaining ones.



ORIGINAL

Attitude Towards Administration (National Assembly's Statement Approved)

He also wishes me to express his approval of your statement in the November issue of the Bahá'í News to the effect of creating within the Assemblies and individual believers a more positive and active attitude towards the Administration. The need for positive action seems, indeed, to be one of the most urgent needs of the Cause at present.

Administration, Bahá'í — (Rules and Regulations)

The various rulings and regulations recorded in the 'Bahá'í Administration', and the supplementary statements already issued[pg 2] by the National Assembly, he feels, are for the present sufficiently detailed to guide the friends in their present-day activities... The American believers, as well as their National representatives, must henceforth direct their attention to the greater and vital issues which an already established Administration is called upon to face and handle, rather than allow their energies to be expended in the consideration of purely secondary administrative matters.

Administration (Study and Apply)

Without the study and application of the administration the teaching of the Cause becomes not only meaningless, but loses in effectiveness and scope.

Administrative Machinery (Related to America)

Now that they (the American believers) have erected the administrative machinery of the Cause they must put it to its real use — serving only as an instrument to facilitate the flow of the spirit of the Faith out into the world. Just as the muscles enable the body to carry out the will of the individual, all Assemblies and committees must enable the believers to carry forth the Message of God to the waiting public, the love of Bahá'u'lláh, and the healing laws and principles of the Faith to all men.

African Students and Visitors

He hopes that wherever it is possible the believers will make every effort to contact African students and visitors, and to show them kindness and hospitality. This may not only lead to the conversion of some while in America, but will also make friends for the Faith in Africa.

Ages and Epochs (Define)

The Faith is divided into three Ages: the Heroic, the Formative, the Golden Age, as has been outlined in His[pg 3] Writings. The Heroic Age closed with the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Formative Age is divided into epochs. The first epoch lasted 25 years. We are now actually in the second epoch of the Formative Age. How long the Formative Age will last is not known, and there will probably be a number of epochs in it.

The Divine Plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is divided into epochs. The first Seven-Year Plan constituted the first stage of the first epoch; the second Seven-Year Plan constitutes the second stage; while the Ten-Year Crusade will constitute the third stage of the first epoch of the Divine Plan. The first epoch of the Divine Plan will conclude with the conclusion of the Ten-Year Crusade.

Alláh-u-Abhá (Bahá'í Greeting)

The Bahá'ís are free to greet each other with Alláh-u-Abhá when they meet, if they want to, but they should avoid anything which to outsiders, in a western country, might seem like some strange Oriental password. We must be very firm on principles and laws, but very normal and natural in our ways, so as to attract strangers.

Annual Convention

I am deeply convinced that if the Annual Convention of the friends in America, as well as the National Spiritual Assembly, desire to become potent instruments for the speedy realization of the Beloved's fondest hopes for the future of that country, they should endeavor, first and foremost, to exemplify, in an increasing degree, to all Bahá'ís and to the world at large the high ideals of fellowship and service which Bahá'u'lláh and the beloved Master repeatedly set before them.

Aqdas (The) — Laws of

In view of the importance of such a statement, he feels it is his duty to explain that the Laws revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in the Aqdas are, whenever practical and not in direct conflict[pg 4] with the Civil laws of the land, absolutely binding on every believer or Bahá'í institution whether in the East or in the West. Certain laws, such as fasting, obligatory prayers, the consent of the parents before marriage, avoidance of alcoholic drinks, monogamy, should be regarded by all believers as universally and vitally applicable at the present time. Others have been formulated in anticipation of a state of society destined to emerge from the chaotic conditions that prevail today.

When the Aqdas is published, this matter will be further explained and elucidated. What has not been formulated in the Aqdas, in addition to matters of detail and of secondary importance arising out of the application of the laws already formulated by Bahá'u'lláh, will have to be enacted by the Universal House of Justice. This body can supplement but never invalidate or modify in the least degree what has already been formulated by Bahá'u'lláh. Nor has the Guardian any right whatsoever to lessen the binding effect much less to abrogate the provisions of so fundamental and sacred a Book...

Archives (The Importance of)

The importance of the institution of Bahá'í Archives is not due only to the many teaching facilities it procures, but is especially to be found in the vast amount of historical data and information it offers both to the present-day administrators of the Cause, and to the Bahá'í historians of the future. The institution of Bahá'í Archives is indeed a most valuable storehouse of information regarding all the aspects of the Faith, administrative as well as doctrinal. Future generations of believers will be surely in a better position than we are to truly and adequately appreciate the many advantages and facilities which the institution of the Archives offers to individual believers and also to the community at large. Now that the Cause is rapidly passing through so many different phases of its evolution, is the time for the friends to exert their utmost in order to preserve as much as they can of the sacred relics and various other precious objects that are associated with the lives of the Founders of the Faith, and particularly the[pg 5] Tablets They have revealed. Every believer should realize that he has a definite responsibility to shoulder in this matter, and to help, to whatever extent he can, in rendering successful and valuable work which National and local Bahá'í Archives committees are so devotedly accomplishing for the Faith in America.

Archives

The general principle should be that any object used by Him in person should be preserved for posterity, whether in the local or National Archives. It is the duty and responsibility of the Bahá'í Assemblies to ascertain carefully whether such objects are genuine or not, and to exercise the utmost caution in the matter.

Assemblies — Unity of (Bahá'u'lláh's Promise)

Bahá'u'lláh has given the promise that in every Assembly where unity and harmony prevail, there His glorious spirit will not only be present, but will animate, sustain and guide all the friends in all their deliberations.

It is to unity that the Guardian has been continually calling the friends: For where a united will exists, nothing can effectively oppose and hamper the forces of constructive development.

Assembly Meetings

The Spiritual Assembly must decide how often it should meet in order to properly handle the affairs of the Cause under its jurisdiction. Twice a week or twice a month is not the point, the point is that it should be alert and carry on the work adequately.

Assembly Vacancy

It is establishing a dangerous precedent to allow Assemblies to put a time limit on non-attendance of their members at[pg 6] meetings of the S.A., beyond which that person is automatically dropped from the Assembly and a vacancy declared ... there should be no time limit fixed by Assemblies beyond which a person is dropped. Every case of prolonged absence from the sessions of the Assembly should be considered separately by that Assembly, and if the person is seen to not want to attend meetings or to be held away from them indefinitely because of illness or travel, then a vacancy could legitimately be declared and a new member be elected.

Associate Committee Members (Appointing of)

The Guardian wishes your Assembly to abandon the practice of appointing associate members to some of the committees... Such a practice, he feels, tends to create confusion and misunderstanding.

Attacks from Church Missionaries

The Guardian has read very carefully the letters your Assembly has received from the Spiritual Assemblies of Urbana and Chicago, reporting the criticisms that have been advanced by Rev. John Elder, a missionary from Iran. While he is certain that such attacks from church missionaries are destined to increase in number and force in the future, he feels that for the present they do not constitute a challenge so grave and widespread as to justify any strong action by your Assembly. Later on, when the very progress of the Cause on the one hand, and the corresponding decline in ecclesiastical organizations on the other, will inevitably incite Christian ecclesiastical leaders to vehemently oppose and undermine the Faith, the believers will then have a real chance to defend and vindicate the Cause. Under present conditions it would be inadvisable for the American community to give such issues too much prominence. [pg 7]

Báb, Declaration of

In regard to the question submitted to your Assembly by the Bahá'í group at Maui, Hawaii, concerning the passage on page 88 of the book 'Bahá'í Administration,'

The Guardian wishes me to inform you that the festivals of the Declaration of the Báb and the birthday of 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to in that passage as having been celebrated on the twenty-second of November, 1925, by the Bahá'ís of the Orient, are based on the lunar calendar. For this reason the date of the celebration is not fixed, but shifts every year. Eventually as the Master has explicitly stated, a uniform system will have to be established by the International House of Justice.

Báb's Photograph

May I also draw your attention to the fact that the Báb's photograph which appeared in Nicolas' book, Siyyid 'Alí-Muḥammad dit le Báb, many years ago, is not authentic, although it presents great similarity to the original drawings of the Báb's portrait.

Bahá'í Dispensation (Duration of)

Concerning your question relative to the duration of the Bahá'í Dispensation. There is no contradiction between Bahá'u'lláh's statement in the Íqán about the renewal of the City of God once every thousand years, and that of the Guardian in the Dispensation to the effect that the Bahá'í cycle will extend over a period of at least 500,000 years. The apparent contradiction is due to the confusion of the terms cycle and dispensation. For while the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh will last for at least one thousand years, His Cycle will extend still farther, to at least 500,000 years.

The Bahá'í cycle is, indeed, incomparable in its greatness. It includes not only the Prophets that will appear after Bahá'u'lláh, but all those who have preceded Him ever since Adam. These should, indeed, be viewed as constituting but preliminary[pg 8] stages leading gradually to the appearance of this supreme Manifestation of God.

Bahá'ís (Destiny of)

I, for my part, am determined to reinforce the impulse that impels its members forward to meet their destiny. The Founders of their Faith survey from the Kingdom on high the range of their achievements, acclaim their progress, and are ever ready to speed their eventual triumph.

Bahá'ís — New (On Admittance of New Applicants)

He has noted with care what you had written him regarding the question of admittance of applicants into the Cause. This is certainly a matter which calls for the utmost tact, wisdom and consideration on the part of Bahá'í Assemblies. While, as he himself has repeatedly stressed, a uniform procedure should be adopted and followed whereby every applicant should be required to express his whole-hearted and unconditional acceptance of the essential verities of the Cause, great care should also be taken not to insist on matters of a secondary importance which the newcomer cannot, for obvious reasons, fully grasp and apprehend at the beginning. Once the applicant has been admitted in the Community with a clear understanding of the duties and responsibilities, and essential implications which such membership entails, there would be no difficulty for him in gradually adjusting his whole ideas according to the requirements set forth in the Teachings. The process of becoming a Bahá'í is necessarily slow and gradual. The essential is not that the beginner should have a full and detailed knowledge of the Cause, a thing which is obviously impossible in the vast majority of cases, but that he should, by an act of his own will, be willing to uphold and follow the truth and guidance set forth in the Teachings, and thus open his heart and mind to the reality of the Manifestation.[pg 9]

Bahá'ís — New (On Presenting the Master's Will to New Applicants)

Concerning the best method of presenting the Master's Will to the newcomers, Shoghi Effendi is of the opinion that the N.S.A. should first make some suitable extracts from the Testament and to send these to all the local Assemblies for their use, so that there may be full unity in circulating the provisions of the Will among the new believers. The problem of choosing such excerpts is left entirely to the discretion of the N.S.A. The main thing, as it appears to the Guardian, is that the full station of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá be clearly explained and that the origin, nature and working of the Administrative Order of the Faith be clearly stated. The full implications of such a recognition are evidently beyond the comprehension of any new believer. Such a knowledge can be acquired gradually and only when the essentials of the Faith have been clearly recognized and adequately understood.

Bahá'ís — New (Qualifications of a New Believer)

When a person becomes a Bahá'í, he gives up the past only in the sense that he is a part of this new and living Faith of God, and must seek to pattern himself, in act and thought, along the lines laid down by Bahá'u'lláh. The fact that he is by origin a Jew or a Christian, a black man or a white man, is not important any more, but, as you say, lends color and charm to the Bahá'í community in that it demonstrates unity in diversity.

Bahá'ís — New (The “Two Extremes” in Bringing in New Bahá'ís)

The believers must discriminate between the two extremes of bringing people into the Cause before they have fully grasped its fundamentals and making it too hard for them, expecting too much of them, before they accept them. This requires truly keen judgment, as it is unfair to people to allow them to[pg 10] embrace a movement the true meaning of which they have not fully grasped. It is equally unfair to expect them to be perfect Bahá'ís before they can enter the Faith. Many teaching problems arise out of these two extremes...

Bahá'ís (Two Kinds of)

There are two kinds of Bahá'ís, one might say: those whose religion is Bahá'í and those who live for the Faith. Needless to say if we can belong to the latter category, if we can be in the vanguard of heroes, martyrs and saints, it is more praiseworthy in the sight of God.

Bahá'í Way of Life (The Strength of the Cause)

It is good for the Bahá'ís to learn that being a Bahá'í is essentially an inner thing, or way of life, and not dependent on fixed patterns. Important as our organized Institutions are, they are not the Faith itself. The strength of the Cause grows no matter how much disrupted its activities may temporarily be. This we see over and over again, in lands where the Faith has been temporarily banned; at times when the believers are persecuted and even killed; where they are serving all alone or scattered and isolated. So it has been a stimulating experience for the American believers to be without their schools for a few years, rather than a depressing one.

Bahá'u'lláh (In accepting)

In accepting Bahá'u'lláh you have accepted Christ in His appearance as the Father, as He Himself so clearly foretold. The Catholic Church does not believe this; on the contrary, it still awaits the return of Christ. If you decide, in order to be buried next to your dear husband, to return to the Church, you either would have to, in good faith, deny Bahá'u'lláh or you would be just using the church as a means to satisfy a desire of your own, which would certainly not be an upright and conscientious thing to do.[pg 11]

When you think that your husband's soul is now free of the limitations of this world, and that he no doubt is beginning to see religious truth in its true light and to appreciate the station of Bahá'u'lláh, you should ask yourself whether he would wish you to leave the truth for this day and re-enter the church just for the sake of your dust being near his dust. Your spirit, when you pass away, will be near his spirit; of what importance, then, is the body? He will pray for your guidance in this matter.

Believers, New (Accept Cause Without Qualifications)

The believers, and particularly those who have not had sufficient experience in teaching, should be very careful in the way they present the teachings of the Cause. Sincerity, devotion and Faith are not the sole conditions of successful teaching. Tactfulness, extreme caution and wisdom are equally important. We should not be in a hurry when we announce the message to the public and we should be careful to present the teachings in their entirety and not to alter them for the sake of others. Allegiance to the Faith cannot be partial and half-hearted. Either we should accept the Cause without any qualification whatsoever or cease calling ourselves Bahá'ís. The new believers should be made to realize that it is not sufficient for them to accept some aspects of the teachings and reject those which cannot suit their mentality in order to become fully recognized and active followers of the Faith. In this way all sorts of misunderstandings will vanish and the organic unity of the Cause will be preserved.

Believers, Removal of

Concerning the removal of believers I feel that such a vitally important matter should be given the most serious consideration and preferably be referred to the National Assembly for further consideration and final decision. We should be slow to accept and reluctant to remove. I fully approve and whole-heartedly and unreservedly uphold the principle to which you[pg 12] refer that personalities should not be made centers around which the community may revolve but they should be subordinated under all conditions and however great their merits to the properly constituted Assemblies. You and your co-workers can never over-estimate or over-emphasize this cardinal principle of Bahá'í Administration.

Bible (Authenticity of the)

As to the question raised by the Racine Assembly in connection with Bahá'u'lláh's statement in the Gleanings concerning the sacrifice of Ishmael; although His statement does not agree with that made in the Bible, Genesis 12:9, the friends should unhesitatingly, and for reasons that are only too obvious, give precedence to the sayings of Bahá'u'lláh which, it would be pointed out, is fully corroborated by the Qur'án, which book is more authentic than the Bible, including both the New and Old Testaments. The Bible is not wholly authentic, and in this respect not to be compared with the Qur'án, and should be wholly subordinated to the authentic Sayings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Calendar (Bahá'í)

It is advisable to use both the Bahá'í dates, according to the Bahá'í Calendar, and the usual Gregorian dates as well. The friends at present are free to do as they please.

Caliphate and Imámate

Both Caliphate and Imámate mean successorship. Either term could be used.

Catastrophe (The Apocalyptic Upheaval)

We have no indication of exactly what nature the apocalyptic upheaval will be; it might be another war ... but as students of our Bahá'í Writings, it is clear that the longer the 'Divine

Physician' (i.e. Bahá'u'lláh) is withheld from healing the ills of [pg 13] the world, the more severe will be the crisis, and the more terrible the sufferings of the patient.

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Civil Courts (Disputes)

The Guardian wishes to emphasize the importance of avoiding (reference to civil courts) of cases of dispute between believers, even in non-Bahá'í issues. It is the Assembly's function to endeavor to settle amicably such disputes, both in order to safeguard the fair name and prestige of the Cause, and to acquire the necessary experience for the extension of its functions in the future.

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Civil Elections (Voting in)

No Bahá'í vote for an officer, no Bahá'í participation in the affairs of the Republic, shall involve acceptance of a program or policy that contravenes any vital principle, spiritual or social, of the Faith.

No vote cast, or office undertaken, by a Bahá'í should necessarily constitute acceptance, by the voter or office holder, of the entire program of any political party. No Bahá'í can be regarded as either a Republican or Democrat, as such. He is above all else, the supporter of the principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, with which, I am firmly convinced, the program of no political party is completely harmonious.

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Committee Appointments (Assembly Members)

Regarding the non-appointment of Assembly members to membership on National Committees, the Guardian firmly believes that no such principle should be recognised. Those who are best fitted for the specific work assigned to the Committees should be elected irrespective of their membership on either National or local Assemblies. The greater the pressure on those who shoulder both Committee and Assembly responsibilities, the greater the reward and the richer the blessings vouchsafed to those who willingly and gratefully sustain this double burden.[pg 14]

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Committees' Responsibilities

He feels that Committees must assume more responsibility and exercise freedom of choice and judgment in electing their officers, and function as a corporate body with a corporate spirit. More especially so as now that the Cause is growing in numbers, and its responsibilities are

being multiplied, National committees are acquiring added importance and must seek, ever increasingly, to follow the pattern of Bahá'u'lláh and assume responsibility for the election of their officers. These committees must develop, become mature, and forge ahead courageously relying more on united effort and less on personal leadership, as is now the case with Local and National Assemblies.

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Contribution

As to the idea of 'giving what one can afford', this does by no means put a limit or even exclude the possibility of self-sacrifice. There can be no limit to one's contributions to the national fund. The more one can give the better it is, especially when such offerings necessitate the sacrifice of other wants and desires on the part of the donor. The harder the sacrifice the more meritorious will it be of course in the eye of God. For after all it is not so much the quantity of one's offerings that matters, but rather the measure of deprivation that such offerings entail.

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Contributions (Lifting the Burden of Misery from Mankind)

In the first place every believer is free to follow the dictates of his own conscience as regards the manner in which to spend his own money. Secondly, we must always bear in mind that there are so few Bahá'ís in the world, relative to the world's population, and so many people in need, that even if all of us gave all we had, it would not alleviate more than an infinitesimal amount of suffering. This does not mean we must not help[pg 15] the needy, we should; but our contributions to the Faith are the surest way of lifting once and for all time the burden of hunger and misery from mankind, for it is only through the System of Bahá'u'lláh — Divine in origin — that the world can be gotten on its feet, and want, fear, hunger, war, etc., be eliminated. Non-Bahá'ís cannot contribute to our work or do it for us; so really our first obligation is to support our own teaching work, as this will lead to the healing of the nations.

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Contributions Are Voluntary

In connection with the Institution of the National Fund and the budgetary system set forth in the minutes of the National Spiritual Assembly, I feel urged to remind you of the necessity of ever bearing in mind the cardinal principle that all contributions to the Fund are to be purely and strictly voluntary in character. It should be made clear and evident to every one that any form of compulsion, however slight and indirect, strikes at the very root principle underlying the formation of the Fund ever since its inception. While appeals of a general character, carefully worded and moving and dignified in tone are welcome under all circumstances, it should be left entirely to the discretion of every conscientious believer to decide upon the nature, the amount, and purpose of his or her contribution for the propagation of the Cause.

Covenant (Meaning of Bahá'í)

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. First is the Covenant that every Prophet makes with humanity or, more definitely, with His people that they will accept and follow the coming Manifestation who will be the reappearance of His reality. 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[pg 16] 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.

The Most Great Covenant is different from the Everlasting Covenant.

Covenant Breakers (Expulsion and Reinstatement of)

The Guardian, like the Master before him, has not considered it advisable to as yet permit any person or Assembly to put another person out of the Cause of God. There is a sharp distinction between depriving a believer of his voting rights, which is a severe disciplinary measure and not a spiritual sanction, and pronouncing a former believer to be a truly spiritually diseased soul, a soul in the condition the Master referred to when, in His last cable to America before His ascension, He said: 'He who sitteth with a leper catcheth leprosy.' The Guardian has, within the last few years, considered the National Assemblies strong enough to wield the instrument of sanction in the sense of depriving a Bahá'í of his voting rights. But no one but himself can pronounce a person to be in that diseased condition we call 'Covenant Breaking' and no one but he can reinstate a Covenant Breaker. No National Assembly has been given this right and cannot therefore review the question or reinstate anyone...

Covenant Breakers (Shun)

Bahá'u'lláh and the Master in many places and very emphatically have told us to shun entirely all Covenant breakers as they are afflicted with what we might try and define as a contagious spiritual disease; they have also told us, however, to pray for them. These souls are not lost forever. In the Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh says that God will forgive Mírzá Yahyá if he repents. It follows, therefore, that God will forgive any soul[pg 17] if he repents. Most of them don't want to repent, unfortunately. If the leaders can be forgiven it goes without saying that their followers can also be forgiven...

Also, it has nothing to do with unity in the Cause; if a man cuts a cancer out of his body to preserve his health and very life, no one would suggest that for the sake of unity it should be

reintroduced into the otherwise healthy organism. On the contrary, what was once a part of him has so radically changed as to have become a poison.

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Crimson Book (The)

Unfortunately it would seem that the knowledge 'which could largely eliminate fear' has not been disclosed or identified by Bahá'u'lláh, so we do not know what it is.

However, what Bahá'u'lláh did not elaborate but what He meant by the 'world' recorded in the Crimson Book was the power of the Covenant.

The 'Crimson Book' refers to the Book of His Covenant, and the reference above means the power for unity which the Covenant possesses and radiates. On page 238 of 'God Passes By' you will find the cross-reference to the 'Crimson Book' and the 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.'

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Criticism

When criticism and harsh words arise within a Bahá'í community, there is no remedy except to put the past behind one, and persuade all concerned to turn over a new leaf, and for the sake of God and His Faith refrain from mentioning the subjects which have led to misunderstanding and inharmony. The more the friends argue back and forth and maintain, each side, that their point of view is the right one, the worse the whole situation becomes.

When we see the condition the world is in today, we must surely forget these utterly insignificant internal disturbances,[pg 18] and rush, unitedly, to the rescue of humanity. You should urge your fellow Bahá'ís to support you in a strong effort to suppress every critical thought and every harsh word, in order to let the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh flow into the entire community, and unite it in His love and in His service.

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Criticism (On)

Vicious criticism is indeed a calamity. But its root is lack of faith in the system of Bahá'u'lláh, i.e., the Administrative Order — and lack of obedience to Him — for He has forbidden it! If the Bahá'ís would follow the Bahá'í laws in voting, in electing, in serving and in abiding by Assembly decisions, all this waste of strength through criticizing others could be diverted into cooperation and achieving the Plan...

Daniel, The Prophecy of

Regarding the Prophecy of Daniel: The passage in Esselmont should be changed to state that this prophecy refers to the one-hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh, in the Garden of Ridván, Baghdád — reference to this can be found in 'The Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in quotation from two of His Tablets.

Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh

With reference to ... the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, he wishes me to explain that although 'Abdu'l-Bahá's station is not that of a Manifestation of God, nevertheless supplications may be addressed to Him. It is essential, however, that every believer should realize that while doing so he is directing his thoughts toward the Master as an intermediary between him and the Manifestation, and not as the Source of Divine Revelation and Spiritual Guidance. Provided this distinction is clearly established, there can be no harm or objection in addressing prayers to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.[pg 19]

Disputes, Individual — (Consultation with Assembly)

Regarding consultation: Any person can refer a matter to the Assembly for consultation whether the other person wishes to or not. In matters which affect the Cause the Assembly should, if it deems it necessary, intervene even if both sides don't want it to, because the whole purpose of the Assemblies is to protect the Faith, the Communities and the individual Bahá'ís as well.

Drama — Manifestations (Dramatic Works)

With reference to your question whether the Figures of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh should be made to appear as characters in dramatic works written by the believers, Shoghi Effendi's opinion is that such an attempt to dramatize the Manifestations would be highly disrespectful, and hence should be avoided by the friends, even in the case of the Master. Besides it would be practically impossible to carry out such a plan faithfully, and in a dignified and befitting manner.

Drama of the Faith

The Faith can certainly be dramatized, but two things must be remembered: No personal presentation of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh or the Master, only their Words can be used, but no figure must represent Them; great dignity must be the keynote.

Economic Teachings

With regard to your wish for reorganizing your business along Bahá'í lines, Shoghi Effendi deeply appreciates the spirit that has permitted you to make such a suggestion. But he feels nevertheless that the time has not yet come for any believer to bring about such a fundamental change in the economic structure of our society, however restricted may be the field for [pg 20] such an experiment. The economic teachings of the Cause, though well known in their main outline, have not as yet been sufficiently elaborated and systematized to allow anyone to make an exact and thorough application of them even on a restricted scale.

Economics — Bahá'í

As you say, the Writings are not so rich on this subject and many issues at present baffling the minds of the world are not even mentioned. The primary consideration is the spirit that has to permeate our economic life, and this will gradually crystallize itself into definite institutions and principles that will help to bring about the ideal condition foretold by Bahá'u'lláh.

No, Bahá'u'lláh did not bring a complete system of economics to the world. Profit sharing is recommended as a solution to one form of economic problems. There is nothing in the teachings against some kind of capitalism; its present form, though, would require adjustments to be made.

There are practically no technical teachings on economics in the Cause, such as banking, the price system, and others. The Cause is not an economic system, nor its Founders be considered as having been technical economists. The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as it consists of the application of spiritual principles to our present-day economic system. Bahá'u'lláh has given us a few basic principles which should guide future Bahá'í economists in establishing such institutions which will adjust the economic relationships of the world...

Social inequality is the inevitable outcome of the natural inequality of man. Human beings are different in ability and should, therefore, be different in their social and economic standing. Extremes of wealth and poverty should, however, be abolished...

The Master has definitely stated that wages should be unequal, simply because that men are unequal in their ability and hence should receive wages that would correspond to their varying capacities and resources.[pg 21]

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Economic Teachings

As regards the activities of the economic committee of the National Assembly; Shoghi Effendi fully sympathizes with the desire of some of the members to see the Committee find ways and means to put into practice the economic teachings of the Cause, as explained in some of the recorded Writings and Sayings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master. But he believes that the time is not yet ripe for such activities. First we have to study the economic teachings in the light of modern problems more thoroughly so that we may advocate what the Founders of the Faith say and not what we conjecture from Their Writings. There is great difference between sounding a great general principle and finding its application to actual prevailing conditions. Secondly, the Cause is not financially in a position to launch itself in such undertakings at present. Such plans need great financial backing to be worked out in a permanent form. In time, Shoghi Effendi hopes all these things will come to pass. For the present we have to consolidate our basic institutions and spread the teachings and spirit of the Faith among the public.

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Education (On Inability of Modern Education to Produce a Mature Mind)

People today indeed do tend to be very superficial in their thinking, and it would seem as if the educational systems in use are sorely lacking in ability to produce a mature mind in a person who has reached supposedly adult life! All the outside influences that surround the individual seem to have an intensely distracting effect, and it is a hard job to get the average person to do any deep thinking or even a little meditation on the problems facing him and the world at large.

Over and over again Bahá'u'lláh cried out against the heedlessness of humanity, and warns of the fate such an attitude must lead to. Did we not know what God plans to, and will do, with the world in the future, we should certainly be as hopeless as many of the best thinkers of our generation have become.[pg 22]

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Elders (Four and Twenty)

Regarding the four and twenty elders: The Master, in a Tablet, stated that they were the Báb, the eighteen Letters of the Living, and five others who would be known in the future. So far we do not know who these five others are.

Election (Acceptance of)

Concerning the question of refusal by certain believers to accept election to an administrative post: The Guardian strongly feels that criticism, opposition, or confusion do not provide sufficient grounds for either refusal or resignation. Only cases of physical or mental incapacity, which, by their very nature, are extremely rare, constitute valid reasons for such an act. The difficulties and tests involved in the acceptance of Administrative posts, far from inducing the believers to dissociate themselves from the work of the Cause, should spur them on to greater exertions and to a more active participation in the privileged task of resolving the problems that confront the Bahá'í community.

Only in cases where individual believers, without any valid reason, deliberately refuse the repeated exhortations, pleas, and warnings addressed to them by their Assemblies, should action be taken in removing them from the voting list. This is a measure designed to sustain the institutions of the Faith at the present time, and to insure that the abilities and talents of its, as yet, limited number of supporters are properly consecrated to its service.

The believers, for the sake of the Cause, now in the period of its infancy, should accept their duties in a spirit of self-sacrifice, and should be animated by the desire to uphold the verdict of the electorate, and to lend their share of assistance however difficult the circumstances, to the effective administration of the affairs of the Faith.

The same sanction should apply to those who persistently refuse to dissociate themselves from political and ecclesiastical activities. This is a general principle which is being maintained throughout the Bahá'í world...[pg 23]

Elections (Bahá'í)

I feel that reference to personalities before the election would give rise to misunderstanding and differences. What the friends should do is get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals. We should refrain from influencing the opinion of others, of canvassing for any particular individual, but should stress the necessity of getting fully acquainted with the qualifications of membership referred to in our Beloved's Tablets of learning more about one another through direct, personal experience rather than through the reports and opinions of our friends.

Elections (Bahá'í) (To Administrative Posts)

There is no objection in principle to an Assembly being re-elected whether in toto or in part, provided the members are considered to be well qualified for that post. It is individual merit that counts. Novelty, or the mere act of renewal of elections, are purely secondary considerations. Changes in Assembly membership would be welcome so far as they do not prejudice the quality of such membership. Once Assembly elections are over, the results should be conscientiously and unquestionably accepted by the entire body of the believers, not necessarily because they represent the Voice of Truth, or the Will of Bahá'u'lláh, but for the supreme purpose of maintaining unity and harmony in the community.

Elections (Assembly Voting)

With these Assemblies, Local as well as National, harmoniously, vigorously and efficiently functioning throughout the Bahá'í world, the only means for the establishment of the Supreme House of Justice will have been assured. And when this Supreme Body will have been properly established, it will[pg 24] have to consider afresh the whole situation, and lay down the principle which shall direct, as long as it deems advisable, the affairs of the Cause.

Pending the establishment, and to insure uniformity throughout the East and throughout the West, all Local Assemblies will have to be re-elected once a year, during the first day of Ridván, and the result of polling, if possible, be declared on that day.

Elections (The Character of Bahá'í)

Let us recall His explicit and often-repeated assurance that every Assembly elected in that rarified atmosphere of selflessness and detachment is in truth, appointed of God, that its verdict is truly inspired, that one and all should submit to its decision unreservedly and with cheerfulness ... the elector ... is called upon to vote for none but those whom prayer and reflection have inspired him to uphold... Hence it is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience... Nothing short of the all-encompassing, all-pervading power of His Guidance and Love can enable this newly enfolded order to gather strength and flourish amid the storm and stress of a turbulent age, and in the fullness of time vindicate its high claim to be universally recognized as the one Haven of abiding felicity and peace.

Election of National Assemblies (Radical Changes Not Advised)

Regarding your questions concerning the advisability of changing the basis of the National Assembly's election and confining it to the body of delegates or of limiting the term of office: He feels that as any such changes are of a radical nature and should therefore apply to the National Spiritual Assemblies[pg 25] of other countries, they are inadvisable and premature, both for this reason and because of their very nature.

What is needed is to get the administration in its present form to run more efficiently and at the same time to build up a higher sense of the responsibility among the body of the believers. They should be encouraged to think more, not only about the qualifications of their elected bodies, but also about such things as you mention, the law of averages, the age and indisposition of some of the members, etc.

When we look back and see what the administration has accomplished in twenty-odd years, indeed what it has done in the last seven years, we see what strides forward have been made. Far greater tasks lie ahead, but the Guardian does not feel that the way to meet them is to change the present system but rather to perfect it by educating the believers and training them, holding more conferences, publishing more news for Bahá'ís, getting more people active.

Elections, Regarding (In the United States)

The Guardian has written the National Assembly in detail and given them the principle upon which he would like to see them act. He has asked them to advise the friends accordingly and also to expound the principles so as to apply to the local conditions in America.

To facilitate matters and avoid misunderstandings he prefers to refer you and the individual friends to them (The National Assembly). He is sure that you will obtain full satisfaction by putting the question to them. The purpose of the Guardian in this is not to avoid the issue but only to facilitate matters and eliminate misunderstandings. In all such matters the friends should first approach the Local, then the National Assembly and only in case they can obtain no satisfaction should they approach the Guardian on these matters. This way many difficulties will be avoided.[pg 26]

Emmanuel, His Highness

In connection with your question regarding the reference made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to 'His Highness Emmanuel' in Vol. III of His Tablets; this obviously refers to the Báb, as the text shows it clearly, and is in no way a reference to Swedenborg.

Esperanto (The Subject of)

Regarding the subject of Esperanto; it should be made clear to the believers that while the teaching of that language has been repeatedly encouraged by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, there is no reference either from Him or from Bahá’u’lláh that can make us believe that it will necessarily develop into the international auxiliary language of the future. Bahá’u’lláh has specified in His Writings that such a language will either have to be chosen from one of the existing languages, or an entirely new one should be created to serve as a medium of exchange between the nations and peoples of the world. Pending this final choice, the Bahá’ís are advised to study Esperanto only in consideration of the fact that the learning of this language can considerably facilitate intercommunication between individuals, groups and Assemblies throughout the Bahá’í world in the present stage of the evolution of the Faith.

Evolution, Man’s

You have asked as to what point in man’s evolution he becomes conscious of self. This consciousness of self in man is a gradual process, and does not start at a definite point. It grows in him in this world and continues to do so in the future spiritual world.

Man can certainly recall past experiences in his evolution, and even when his soul leaves this world it will still remember the past.

Family Ties, Spiritual Ties (Vs.)

Deep as are family ties, we must always remember that the spiritual ties are far deeper; they are everlasting and survive[pg 27] death, whereas physical ties, unless supported by spiritual bonds, are confined to this life. You should do all in your power, through prayer and example, to open the eyes of your family to the Bahá’í Faith, but do not grieve too much over their actions. Turn to your Bahá’í brothers and sisters who are living with you in the Light of the Kingdom.

Indeed, the believers have not yet fully learned to draw on each other’s strength and consolation in time of need. The Cause of God is endowed with tremendous powers, and the reason the believers do not gain more from it is because they have not learned to draw fully on these mighty forces of love and strength and harmony generated by the Faith.

Fast (Necessary Permission For)

With reference to your son's request for advice regarding the observance of the Bahá'í Fast; much as the Guardian realizes the difficulty which a believer of his position, attending a military school, will have to encounter if he wishes to strictly conform to the regulations of the Fast, he nevertheless would advise him to make every effort to obtain from the school authorities the necessary permission. In case his request is refused the only alternative for him would be to obey his superior.

Fasting (The Ordinance of)

As regards fasting, it constitutes, together with the obligatory prayers, the two pillars that sustain the revealed Law of God. They act as stimulants to the soul, strengthen, revive and purify it, and thus insure its steady development.

The ordinance of fasting is, as is the case with these three prayers (obligatory) a spiritual and vital obligation enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh upon every believer who has attained the age of fifteen. In the Aqdas He thus writes: 'We have commanded you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity; this is ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. He has exempted from this those who are weak[pg 28] from illness or age, as a bounty from His Presence, and He is the Forgiving, the Generous.'

And in another passage He says: 'We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period, and at its close have designated for you Naw-Rúz as a Feast... The traveller, the ailing, those who are with child or giving suck, are not bound by the Fast... Abstain from food and drink, from sunrise to sundown, and beware lest desire deprive you of this grace that is appointed in the Book.'

Also in the 'Questions and Answers' that form an appendix to the Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh reveals the following: 'Verily, I say that God has appointed a Great station for fasting and prayer. But during good health its benefit is evident, and when one is ill, it is not permissible to fulfill them.' Concerning the age of maturity, He reveals in the appendix of that same Book: 'The age of maturity is in the fifteenth year; women and men are alike in this respect.' Regarding the vital character and importance of the Divine ordinances and laws, and the necessity of complete obedience to them by the believers, we thus read in the Gleanings, p. 175:

'Know verily that the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinance prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation. Were His law to be such as to strike terror in the hearts of all that are in heaven and on earth, that law is naught but manifest justice. The fears and agitation which the revelation of this law provoke in men's hearts should indeed be likened to the cries of the suckling babe weaned from his mother's milk, if ye be of them that perceive...'

The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of the same month, involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary [pg 29] readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires.

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Fast (The)

Regarding your question concerning the Fast: Travellers are exempt from fasting, but if they want to fast while they are travelling, they are free to do so. You are exempt the whole period of your travel, not just the hours you are in a train or car, etc. If one eats unconsciously during the fasting hours, this is not breaking the Fast as it is an accident. The age limit is 70 years, but if one desires to fast after the age limit is passed, and is strong enough to, one is free to do so. If during the Fast period a person falls ill and is unable to fast, but recovers before the Fast period is over, he can start to fast again and continue until the end. Of course the Fast, as you know, can only be kept during the month set aside for that purpose.

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Feast Day (Changing Observance of)

This is really a matter of secondary importance, and should be decided by the Assembly. Meetings which have been publicly advertised for a certain date cannot obviously be cancelled.

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Feast (Nature of)

Concerning the nature of the Nineteen-Day Feast, in the Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh clearly revealed the spiritual and social character of this Institution. Its administrative significance, however, has been stressed by the Guardian in direct response to the growing needs of the Bahá'í Community in this formative period of the Bahá'í era for better training in the principles and practice of Bahá'í administration. [pg 30]

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Naw-Rúz Feast (Observance of Feast Day Calendar)

The Naw-Rúz Feast should be held on March 21 before sunset and has nothing to do with the 19-day Feast. The 19-day Feast is administrative in function whereas the Naw-Rúz is our New Year, a Feast of hospitality and rejoicing.

Naw-Rúz, Time of Celebration of

Regarding Naw-Rúz: If the vernal equinox falls on the 21st of March before sunset, it is celebrated on that day. If at any time after sunset, Naw-Rúz will then, as stated by Bahá'u'lláh, fall on the 22nd. As to which spot should be regarded as the standard, this is a matter which the Universal House of Justice will have to decide. The American NSA need not therefore take any action in this matter at present.

Feast (Time for Holding)

Regarding the time for the holding of the Nineteen-Day Feasts and elections; the Guardian would advise your Assembly to urge the friends to hold such gatherings on the prescribed day before sunset. If impossible, then it is permissible to hold them on the preceding day. In connection with the nine holy days, however, the friends should consider it obligatory to celebrate them on the prescribed day before sunset.

Feasts (Attendance at)

Attendance at 19-Day Feasts is not obligatory but very important, and every believer should consider it a duty and a privilege to be present on such occasions.

He wishes the Bahá'ís to press for recognition of their right to observe their own Holy Days, and to observe them whenever possible in strict accordance with our teachings.[pg 31]

Feasts and Anniversaries — Bahá'í

The Bahá'í Day starts and ends at sunset, and consequently the date of the celebration of Bahá'í Feasts should be adjusted to conform to the Bahá'í Calendar Time...

Fund (How Every Believer Can Test the Measure of His Faith)

He wishes you particularly to impress the believers with the necessity of maintaining the flow of their contributions to the Temple, and also to stress the importance of the Institution of the National Bahá'í Fund which, in these early days of the administrative development of the Faith, is the indispensable medium for the growth and expansion of the Movement. Contributions to

this fund constitute, in addition, a practical and effective way whereby every believer can test the measure and character of his Faith, and to prove in deeds the intensity of his devotion and attachment to the Cause.

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Fund (The Life-blood of these Nascent Institutions)

As the activities of the American Bahá'í Community expand, and its world-wide prestige correspondingly increases, the Institution of the National Fund, the bedrock on which all other Institutions must necessarily rest and be established, acquires added importance, and should be increasingly supported by the entire body of believers, both in their individual capacities and through their collective efforts, whether organized as groups or as Local Assemblies. The supply of funds, in support of the National Treasury, constitutes, at the present time, the life-blood of these nascent institutions you are laboring to erect. Its importance cannot, surely, be overestimated. Untold blessings shall no doubt crown every effort directed to that end.[pg 32]

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Fund (National Fund, Chief Obligation of)

Regarding his special contributions to the Teaching Fund; he feels that this is a matter to be left entirely to the discretion of the N.S.A. He feels that the continuous expenditure of a considerable sum to provide for traveling expenses of teachers who are in need, constitutes in these days the chief obligation of the National Fund. An effort should be made to facilitate as much as possible, the extension of the teaching work by helping those who are financially unable to reach their destination, and once there to encourage them to settle and earn the means of their livelihood.

— 83 —

Fund (We must be like the Fountain)

We must be like the fountain or spring that is continually emptying itself of all that it has and is continually being refilled from an invisible source. To be continually giving out for the good of our fellows undeterred by fear of poverty and reliant on the unfailing bounty of the Source of all wealth and all good — this is the secret of right living.

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Fund (The Sacred Obligation)

And as the progress and extension of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of Local as well as National Spiritual Assemblies, a Bahá'í Fund be established, to be placed under the exclusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. All donations and contributions should be offered to

the Treasurer of the Assembly, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Cause, throughout the locality or country. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund...

— 85 —

Funeral (Bahá'í Funeral Service)

Regarding the Bahá'í funeral service: It is extremely simple, as it consists only of a congregational prayer to be read[pg 33] before burial. This prayer will be made available to the friends when the Aqdas is translated and published. In the meantime your N.S.A. should take great care lest any uniform procedure or ritual in this matter be adopted or imposed upon the friends. The danger in this, as in some other cases regarding Bahá'í worship, is that a definite system of rigid rituals and practices be developed among the believers. The utmost simplicity and flexibility should be observed, and a selection from the Bahá'í Sacred Writing should serve the purpose at the present time, provided this selection is not rigidly and uniformly adopted on all such occasions.

There is no objection whatsoever to non-Bahá'ís being present when the long prayer for the dead is read, as long as they respect our manner of reading it by rising and standing as the Bahá'ís do on this occasion. Nor, indeed, is there any objection to non-Bahá'ís being present during the reading of any Bahá'í prayer for the departed.

An official Bahá'í funeral service should only be given for a believer, but there is no objection to the reading of Bahá'í prayers, or indeed, to a Bahá'í conducting the funeral service of a non-Bahá'í if this has been requested.

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Greatest Name (Translation of Symbol of)

He also wishes me to inform you that the symbol of the Greatest Name represents an invocation which can be translated either as 'O Glory of Glories' or 'O Glory of the All-Glorious'. The word Glory used in this connection is a translation of the Arabic term 'Bahá, the name of Bahá'u'lláh.

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Group, Bahá'í

...next to an isolated believer, any number of confirmed Bahá'ís less than nine persons should be considered as automatically constituting a Bahá'í Group...

Guardian (Infallibility of the)

The infallibility of the Guardian is confined to matters which are related strictly to the Cause and interpretation of the [pg 34] teachings; he is not an infallible authority on other subjects, such as economics, science, etc. When he feels that a certain thing is essential for the protection of the Cause, even if it is something that affects a person personally, he must be obeyed, but when he gives advice, such as that he gave you in a previous letter about your future, it is not binding; you are free to follow it or not as you please.

Guidance, Divine (Of Guardian)

He feels that if ... ponders more deeply about the fundamentals of Divine Revelation, she will also come to understand the Guardianship. Once the mind and heart have grasped the fact that God guides men through a Mouthpiece, a human being, a Prophet, infallible and unerring, it is only a logical projection of this acceptance to also accept the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardians. The Guardians are the evidence of the maturity of mankind in the sense that at long last men have progressed to the point of having one world, and of needing one world management for human affairs. In the spiritual realm they have also reached the point where God could leave, in human hands (i.e. the Guardians) guided directly by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, as the Master states in His Will, the affairs of His Faith for this Dispensation. This is what is meant by 'this is the day which will not be followed by night.' In this Dispensation, divine guidance flows on to us in this world after the Prophet's ascension, through first the Master, and then the Guardians. If a person can accept Bahá'u'lláh's function, it should not present any difficulty to them to also accept what He has ordained in a Divinely guided individual in matters pertaining to the Faith.

Guidance (Individual)

The questions you ask in your letter about individual guidance have two aspects, one might say. It is good that people should turn to God and beseech His aid in solving their problems and guiding their acts, indeed every day of their lives, if they feel the desire to do so. But they cannot possibly impose [pg 35] what they feel to be their guidance on anyone else, let alone on Assemblies or Committees, as Bahá'u'lláh has expressly laid down the law of consultation and never indicated that anything else superseded it.

As to meditation: This also is a field in which the individual is free. There are no set forms of meditation prescribed in the teachings, no plan as such, for inner development. The friends are urged — nay enjoined — to pray, and they also should meditate, but the manner of doing the latter is left entirely to the individual.

Guidance (Question of)

The question of Guidance is a very subtle one. We cannot be positive that an impulse or a dream is guidance. We can seek, through earnest prayer and longing, sincerely to do God's will, His guidance. We can try, as you say, to emulate the Master and at all times live up to the teachings, but we cannot be sure that doing these things we are still making no mistakes and are perfectly guided. These things help us not to make so many mistakes and to receive more directly the guidance God seeks to give us.

Hands of the Cause — Institutions (Station and Function — When Mentioned in Writing)

The rank and position of the Hands of the Cause are superior to the position of the National Assemblies. In writing concerning the Hands, therefore, when there is reference to the Institutions of the Faith, after the Guardian should be mentioned the Hands, and then the National Bodies...

Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds (Functions of)

While the National Office in Wilmette, designated by the Guardian as Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, is primarily an administrative[pg 36] center, its use should by no means be confined to purely administrative work, but should include such activities of a social and intellectual character, both local and national, as can best establish its character as the foremost teaching and administrative center of the Faith throughout the States.

As a teaching center, where Bahá'í lectures, conferences, meetings, whether local, regional or national, could be held, the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds can also prove of invaluable help, and the N.S.A. should indeed see to it that the necessary facilities are provided in the building for that purpose. But thus combining these three features, namely teaching, administrative, and social the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds can best fulfill its mission, as the visible symbol of the steadily-growing National Bahá'í Community in Northern America, and as the chief rallying center for all its activities and plans throughout that Continent.

Healing

The Guardian knows nothing about your kind of healing... But he can lay down for your guidance certain broad principles: There is no such thing as Bahá'í healers or a Bahá'í type of

healing. In His Most Holy Book (the Aqdas) Bahá'u'lláh says to consult the best physicians, in other words, doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine; He never gave us to believe, He Himself would heal us through 'Healers' but rather through prayer and the assistance of medicine and approved treatments. Now, as long as your healing is in no opposition to these principles, as long as you do not try and take the place of a regular doctor in trying to heal others, but only give them your kind of help through constructive suggestion — or whatever it may be — and do not associate this help with being a channel of the direct grace of Bahá'u'lláh, the Guardian sees no harm in your continuing your assistance to others. But you must conscientiously decide whether, in view of the above, you are really justified in continuing. He will pray for your guidance and happiness.

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Heroism Is Needed

These, indeed, are the days when heroism is needed on the [pg 37] part of the believers. Self-sacrifice, courage, indomitable hope and confidence are characteristics they should show forth, because these very attributes cannot but fix the attention of the public and lead them to enquire what, in a world so hopelessly chaotic and bewildered, leads these people to be so assured, so confident, so full of devotion? Increasingly, as time goes by, the characteristics of the Bahá'ís will be that which captures the attention of their fellow-citizens. They must show their aloofness from the hatreds and recriminations which are tearing at the hearts of humanity, and demonstrate by deed and word their profound belief in the future peaceful unification of the entire human race.

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Hidden Words (Arabic)

As to the passage No. 13 of the Arabic Hidden Words: That which Bahá'u'lláh declares we can find abiding within us is the power of the Divine Spirit, the reflection of the light of His Revelation. This reflection of the Divine Spirit, however, can in no way be compared to the Revelation which God discloses to His Prophets and Messengers. The similarity in the terminology should not confuse this distinction which is most fundamental.

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Holy Days — Bahá'í

He wishes the Bahá'ís to press for recognition of their right to observe their own Holy Days, and to observe them whenever possible in strict accordance with our teachings.

He wishes also to stress the fact that, according to the Bahá'í laws, work is forbidden on our nine Holy Days. Believers who have independent businesses or shops should refrain from working on these days. Those who are in government employ should, on religious grounds, make an effort

to be excused from work; all believers, whoever their employers, should do likewise. If the government or other employers refuse to grant them these days off, they are not required to forfeit their employment, but they should make every effort to have the independent[pg 38] status of the Faith recognized and their right to hold their own religious Holy Days acknowledged.

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Holy Days of Other Religions

As regards the celebration of the Christian Holiday by the believers; it is surely preferable and even highly advisable that the friends should in their relation to each other discontinue observing such holidays as Christmas and New Years, and to have their festival gatherings of this nature instead during the Intercalary Days and Naw-Rúz....

— 99 —

Holy Shrine (Believers turn to the)

He feels the drawing of the hearts together, as the believers turn towards the Holy Shrine, will produce a greater love and unity amongst the friends, and attract the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh.

— 100 —

Hosts of His Testament (The)

'The Hosts of His Testament' refers to those who are firm in the Will and Testament of Bahá'u'lláh and who defend and uphold it.

— 101 —

Cord (Meaning of)

The word 'cord' so often mentioned in the Teachings means both the Faith itself and also the power of the Faith which sustains those who cling to it.

— 102 —

Illness

Such hindrances (i.e., illness and other difficulties) no matter how severe and insuperable they may at first seem, can and should be effectively overcome through the combined and sustained power of prayer and of determined and continued effort.[pg 39]

Illness (Cancer)

Cancer is such a terrible scourge in the world today! But when the believers are called upon to go through such bitter ordeals they have the Faith to sustain them, the love of their Bahá'í friends to comfort them, and the glorious words of Bahá'u'lláh regarding immortality to give them confidence and courage. Blessed are we, indeed, even in the midst of our greatest trials.

Inheritance (Division of)

To divide the inheritance as it is prescribed by Bahá'u'lláh we have to divide it into 2,520 shares. But we can also divide it into 42 shares. Then every one of the beneficiaries will take so many of these shares. These numbers form like a highest denominator for the different fractions which represent the shares of the different individuals that will benefit in case of intestacy. In case of the non-existence of one class of inheritors the Aqdas mentions how it should be divided. As a general rule a part goes to the House of Justice, a part to the children.

International Language (Whole question of)

Regarding the whole question of an International Language and its relation to the Faith: We, as Bahá'ís, are very anxious to see a universal auxiliary tongue adopted as soon as possible; we are not the protagonists of any one language to fill this post. If the governments of the world agree on an existing language, or a constructed, new tongue, to be used internationally, we would heartily support it because we desire to see this step in the unification of the human race take place as soon as possible.

Esperanto has been in wide use, more so than any similar language, all over the world, and the Bahá'ís have been encouraged by both the Master and the Guardian to learn it and to translate [pg 40] Bahá'í literature into it. We cannot be sure it will be the chosen language of the future; but as it is the one which has spread most, both East and West, we should certainly continue to cooperate with its members learn to speak it, and translate Bahá'í literature into it.

Islám

Islám attained a very high spiritual state, but Western scholars are prone to judging it by Christian standards. One cannot call one World Faith superior to another, as they all come from God; they are progressive, each suited to certain needs of the time.

Jesus (Virgin Birth of)

With regard to your question concerning the Virgin Birth of Jesus; on this point, as on several others, the Bahá'í teachings are in full agreement with the doctrines of the Catholic Church. In the Kitáb-i-Íqán (Book of Certitude) page 56, and in a few other Tablets still unpublished, Bahá'u'lláh confirms, however indirectly, the Catholic conception of the Virgin Birth. Also 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Some Answered Questions', Chap. 12, page 73, explicitly states that Christ found existence through the spirit of God which statement necessarily implies, when reviewed in the light of the text, that Jesus was not the son of Joseph.

We believe that Christ only was conceived immaculately. His brothers and sisters would have been born in the natural way and conceived naturally.

Life After Death

Those who have never had any opportunity of hearing of the Faith but who lived good lives will no doubt be treated with the greatest love and mercy in the next world and reap their full reward.[pg 41]

Love (Turn to Bahá'í Brothers and Sisters)

Turn to your Bahá'í brothers and sisters, who are living with you in the kingdom. Indeed, the believers have not yet fully learned to draw on each other's love for strength and consolation in time of need. The Cause of God is endowed with tremendous powers, and the reason the believers do not gain more from it is because they have not learned to duly draw these mighty forces of love and strength and harmony generated by the Faith.

Love, Custodians of (World Exceedingly Dark)

The friends must, at all times, bear in mind that they are, in a way, like soldiers under attack. The world is at present in an exceedingly dark condition spiritually; hatred and prejudice of every sort are literally tearing it to pieces. We, on the other hand, are the custodians of the opposite forces, the forces of love, of unity, of peace and integration, and we must continually be on our guard, whether as individuals or as an Assembly or Community, lest through us these destructive, negative forces enter into our midst. In other words, we must beware lest the darkness of society become reflected in our acts and attitudes, perhaps all unconsciously. Love for each other, the deep sense that we are a new organism, the dawn-breakers of a new World Order, must

constantly animate our Bahá'í lives, and we must pray to be protected from the contamination of society which is so diseased with prejudice.

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Love — Unity (The Greatest Need)

The greatest need it seems everywhere inside the Cause is to impress upon the friends the need for love among them. There is a tendency to mix up the functions of the Administration and try to apply it in individual relationships, which is abortive, because the Assembly is a nascent House of Justice and is supposed to administer, according to the Teachings, the affairs of the Community. But individuals towards each other[pg 42] are governed by love, unity, forgiveness and a sin-covering eye. Once the friends grasp this they will get along much better, but they keep playing Spiritual Assembly to each other and expect the Assembly to behave like an individual.

— 112 —

Manifestation — In 1000 Years (Organic Unity)

As to the meaning of the quotation, 'My fears are for Him Who will be sent down unto you after Me,' this refers to the Manifestation who is to come after a thousand or more years, who like all previous Messengers of God will be subjected to persecutions, but will eventually triumph over them. For men of ill-will have been and will always continue to be in this world, unless mankind reaches a state of complete and absolute perfection — a condition which is not only improbable but actually impossible to attain. The fundamental difference, however, between this Dispensation and all previous ones is this, that in this Revelation the possibility of permanent schism between the followers of the Prophet has been prevented through the direct and explicit instructions providing for the necessary instruments designed to maintain the organic unity of the body of the Faithful.

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Manifestations (The Phrase — “His Holiness”)

In Persian it is impolite not to use the word Haḍrat before the name of the Prophet, so that strictly speaking, a proper translation should always have 'His Holiness Moses' etc.; however, as this seems peculiar in English, and not in the best usage of our language, he feels it can be dispensed with. Pronouns referring to the Manifestation, or the Master, should, however, invariably be capitalized.

Manifestations (Return of the Qualities)

The reflection of the qualities of holy souls can take place at any time; it is not confined to the period when the Manifestation is on earth.[pg 43]

Manifestations (Significance of the Remains of the Prophets)

There is no special physical significance in the remains of the Prophets or relics of Their Persons. But there is a profound spiritual significance in the sense that Their dust was the physical mirror of the greatness of God. In other words we know God through His Prophets, Who have bodies; these bodies — Their very dust — are precious through association. It is natural for people to be touched by a lock of hair or some token of one they loved; how much more should we treasure and feel moved by a relic of the Beloved of God?

The Báb has told us to bury the dead in silk (if possible) in coffins of crystal. Why? Because the body, though now dust, was once exalted by the immortal soul of man! The portrait of the Báb should be regarded as an inestimable privilege and blessing to behold, as past generations were denied a glimpse of the Face of the Manifestation, once He had passed on.

The atoms of the Prophets are just atoms, like all others, but the association of this great spiritual power with them leaves in the place they are laid to rest a spiritual atmosphere, if one can use this expression. They are, no doubt, endowed with a tremendous spiritual influence and far-reaching power. But the physical character of their atoms are not different from other people's, any more than their bodies and physical functions are different.

Manifestations (Station of)

The Manifestations no doubt had some consciousness of their station, but what the nature of that consciousness was we do not know.

Marriage, Bahá'í

In regard to your question concerning the nature and character of Bahá'í marriage. As you have rightly stated, such a Marriage is conditioned upon the full approval of all[pg 44] four parents. Also your statement to the effect that the principle of the oneness of mankind prevents any true Bahá'í from regarding race itself as a bar to union is in complete accord with the Teachings of the Faith on this point. For both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá never disapproved of the idea of

interracial marriage, nor discouraged it. The Bahá'í Teachings, indeed, by their very nature transcend all limitations imposed by race, and as such can and should never be identified with any particular school of racial philosophy.

— 118 —

Marriage, Bahá'í (Consent of Parents — duty of Assembly to ascertain validity)

With reference to the matter of the consent of the parents to a Bahá'í marriage: As this is a vital binding obligation, it is the duty of the Assemblies to ascertain, before giving their sanction, that the consent obtained has been given freely by the parents themselves.

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Marriage — (Consent of Parents — Non-Bahá'í Participants)

Regarding the question whether it is necessary to obtain the consent of the parents of a non-Bahá'í participant in a marriage with a Bahá'í; as Bahá'u'lláh has stated that the consent of the parents of both parties is required in order to promote unity and avoid friction, and as the Aqdas does not specify any exceptions to this rule, the Guardian feels that under all circumstances the consent of the parents of both parties is required.

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Marriage to Non-Bahá'í

The general principle in regard to the marriage of a Bahá'í to a non-Bahá'í is as follows:

If a Bahá'í marries a non-Bahá'í who wishes to have the religious ceremony of his own sect carried out, it must be quite clear that, first, the Bahá'í partner is understood to be a Bahá'í by religion, and not to accept the religion of the other party to [pg 45] the marriage through having his or her religious ceremony; and second, the ceremony must be of a nature which does not commit the Bahá'í to any declaration of faith in a religion other than his own. Under these circumstances the Bahá'í can partake of the religious ceremony of his non-Bahá'í partner.

The Bahá'í should insist on having the Bahá'í ceremony carried out before or after the non-Bahá'í one, on the same day.

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Marriages, Bahá'í — (Reporting to the NSA)

In reporting Bahá'í marriages it is much better to mention that the ceremony was performed by the Assembly, as this is the proper thing to do, and an individual only acts for the Assembly on

this occasion. As a funeral is not a legal ceremony more latitude can be allowed, especially as the family of the deceased may want some particular Bahá'í friend to officiate.

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Marriage, Bahá'í (re: Consent of Natural Parents)

Our beloved Guardian made it clear that it was the responsibility of the Bahá'í body performing the marriage ceremony to confirm without question the fact that the living natural parents of the two individuals who are being married have given their consent to the marriage. It is preferable that this consent be given in writing, but if this is not possible, or inadvisable for some reason, verbal consent in the present of witnesses is sufficient.”... “Regarding your question of applying the sanction of suspension of voting rights to people who marry without the consent of parents, this should be done from now on. The laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas are explicit and not open to any ambiguity at all. As long as the parents are alive, the consent must be obtained; it is not conditioned on their relationship to their children. If the whereabouts of the parents is not known legally, in other words, if they are legally dead, then it is[pg 46] not necessary for the children to obtain their consent, obviously. It is not a question of the child not knowing the present whereabouts of the parents, it is a question of a legal thing — if the parents are alive, they must be asked.

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Marriage of Bahá'u'lláh

It would, however, be very helpful for the friends to know that the question which the above-mentioned missionary has raised in connection with the marriage of Bahá'u'lláh and the provisions in the Aqdas regarding the institution of marriage have been explained by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a Tablet which the Guardian hopes to have translated and published in conjunction with the Aqdas. Moreover, as regards Bahá'u'lláh's marriage, it should be noted that His three marriages were all contracted before He revealed His Book of Laws, and even before His declaration in Baghdád, at a time when Bahá'í marriage laws had not yet been made known, and the Revelation not yet disclosed.

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Masonry, Free (Membership in)

Disapprove membership (in) Freemasonry.” “Any Bahá'í determined retain membership (in) Freemasonry loses voting rights.

The directive regarding membership in Freemasonry should be carried out by your Assembly in all areas under your Assembly's jurisdiction.

Medical Science (Leaving bodies to)

There is nothing in the Teachings against leaving our bodies to Medical Science. The only thing we should stipulate is that we do not wish to be cremated, as it is against Bahá'í Law.

As many people make arrangements to leave their bodies to Medical Science for investigation, he suggests that you[pg 47] inquire, either through some lawyer friend or through some hospital, how you could do this and then make the necessary provision in your will, stipulating that you wish your body to be of service to mankind in death, and that, being a Bahá'í, you request that your remains not be cremated and not be taken more than an hour's journey from the place you die.

The spirit has no more connection with the body after it departs, but as the body was once the temple of the spirit, we Bahá'ís are taught that it must be treated with respect.

Meditation

Through meditation doors of deeper knowledge and inspiration may be opened. Naturally, if one meditates as a Bahá'í he is connected with the Source;... Meditation is very important, and the Guardian sees no reason why the friends should not be taught to meditate, but they should guard against superstitions or foolish ideas creeping into it.

Meetings, Bahá'í

Regarding your question as to the advisability of holding Bahá'í meetings at a time coinciding with church meetings; the Guardian would advise the friends to avoid such a coincidence, as otherwise many church people may feel offended, and this may lead to unnecessary and even harmful misunderstandings and developments which may injure the Cause and affect its prestige in the eyes of the public. The friends should, under all circumstances, be careful not to arouse unnecessarily any feelings of religious antagonism.

Membership Responsibilities, LSA (Residential Qualifications)

...it is only too obvious that unless a member can attend regularly the meetings of his local Assembly, it would be impossible for him to discharge the duties incumbent upon him, and to fulfill his responsibilities, as a representative of the[pg 48] community. Membership in a Local

Spiritual Assembly carries with it, indeed, an obligation and capacity to remain in close touch with local Bahá'í activities, and ability to attend regularly the sessions of the Assembly.

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Memorial Offerings

He feels sure this offering, expended in memory of your dear ones, will rejoice their spirits, and aid them to progress in the world beyond.

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Mental Illness

Regarding persons whose condition has not been defined by the civil authorities after medical diagnosis, the Assembly on the spot must investigate every case that arises and, after consultation with experts, deliver its verdict. Such a verdict, however, should, in important cases, be preceded by consultation with the NSA. No doubt, the power of prayer is very great, yet consultation with experts is enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh. Should these experts believe that an abnormal case exists, the withholding of voting rights is justified.

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Military Duty (Status of Bahá'ís in relation to)

No change whatsoever (in) status (of) Bahá'ís (in) relation (to) active military duty. No compromise (of) spiritual principles (of) Faith possible however tense (the) situation, however aroused public opinion.

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Military Service

As there is neither an International Police Force nor any immediate prospect of one coming into being, the Bahá'ís should continue to apply, under all circumstances, for exemption from any military duties that necessitate the taking of life. There is no justification for any change of attitude on our part at the present time.[pg 49]

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Mormons (Religious sects — Associate with all — Show tolerance and friendliness)

The Bahá'ís should deal with the members of all religious sects, however, with the greatest tolerance and friendliness, and try to point out to them the significance of the Revelation of

Bahá'u'lláh to the world in this Great Day. The Guardian would advise you to teach the Mormons, like everyone else, the Faith, when you find them receptive. They have many great principles and their teachings regarding charity, not drinking or smoking, etc., are quite similar to ours and should form a point of common interest.

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Munírih Khánum

With regard to Munírih Khánum's account of her life, concerning which certain questions have been raised by one of the believers; what has been written by Munírih Khánum herself in that account, and also the references to the subject made by Nabíl in his Narrative should be taken as the accurate standard and not what has been reported in Dr. Esslemont's book.

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Music

Music, as one of the arts, is a natural cultural development, and the Guardian does not feel that there should be any cultivation of 'Bahá'í Music' any more than we are trying to develop a Bahá'í school of painting or writing. The believers are free to paint, write or compose as their talents guide them. If music is written incorporating the Sacred Writings, the friends are free to make use of it, but it should never be considered a requirement at Bahá'í meetings to have such music. The farther away the friends keep from any set forms, the better, for they must realize that the Cause is absolutely universal, and what might seem a beautiful addition to their mode of celebrating a Feast, etc., would perhaps fall on the ears of people of another country as unpleasant sounds — and vice versa. As long as they have music for its own sake it is all right, but they should not consider it 'Bahá'í Music'. [pg 50]

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National Assemblies (Authority of)

I wish to reaffirm in clear and categorical language, the principle already enunciated upholding the supreme authority of the National Assembly in all matters that affect the interests of the Faith in that land. There can be no conflict of authority, no duality under any form or circumstances in any sphere of Bahá'í jurisdiction whether local, national or international. The National Assembly, however, although the sole interpreter of its Declaration of Trust and By-Laws, is directly and morally responsible if it allows any body or institution within its jurisdiction to abuse its privileges or to decline in the exercise of its rights and privileges. It is the trusted guardian and the mainspring of the manifold activities and interests of every national community in the Bahá'í world. It constitutes the sole link that binds these communities to the International House of Justice, the supreme administrative body in the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.

N.S.A. Involvement (Appeals Prohibited)

Anything whatsoever affecting the interests of the Cause and in which the National Assembly as a body is involved should, if regarded as unsatisfactory by Local Assemblies and individual believers, be immediately referred to the National Assembly itself. Neither the general body of the believers, nor any Local Assembly, nor even the delegates to the annual Convention, should be regarded as having any authority to entertain appeals against the decision of the National Assembly. Should the matter be referred to the Guardian it will be his duty to consider it with the utmost care and to decide whether the issues involved justify him to consider it in person, or to leave it entirely to the discretion of the National Assembly.

This administrative principle which the Guardian is now restating and emphasizing is so clear, so comprehensive and simple that no misunderstanding as to its application, he feels, can possibly arise. There are no exceptions whatever to this rule, and the Guardian would deprecate any attempt to [pg 51] elaborate or dwell any further upon this fundamental and clearly enunciated principle.

N.S.A.'s Jurisdiction Over Committees (Authority of)

The N.S.A.'s final jurisdiction over both the National Teaching Committee and the Regional Teaching Committees is certainly indisputable, and is of the same nature and character as the authority to which it is entitled over all other national committees.

New Assemblies (Formation of)

Regarding the formation of Local Assemblies, the Guardian does not advise any departure from the principle that every civil community should have its own independent Assembly.

New Assemblies (Residence Qualifications)

In connection with the formation of new Assemblies and the maintenance of their Assembly status, the Guardian wishes to reaffirm the general principle that only those who reside within the city limits of any given locality have the right to either vote or be elected as member of the Assembly, even though this may involve frequent dissolution of the Assembly owing to insufficient number of members. It will, on the other hand, serve as a stimulus to those outside these limits to establish a group and eventually an Assembly of their own. This principle should be closely adhered to, otherwise it will lead to confusion and overlapping.

Nine (Number)

The number nine, which in itself is the number of perfection, is considered by the Bahá'ís as sacred, because it is symbolic of the perfection of the Bahá'í Revelation which constitutes the ninth in the line of existing religions, the latest[pg 52] and fullest Revelation which mankind has ever known. The eighth is the religion of the Báb and the remaining seven are: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islám, and the religion of the Sabaeans. These religions are not the only true religions that have appeared in the world but are the only ones still existing. There have always been Divine Prophets and Messengers, to many of whom the Qur'án refers. But the only ones existing are those mentioned above.

The Guardian feels that with intellectuals and students of religion the question of exactly which are the nine existing religions is controversial, and it would be better to avoid it. He does not want the friends to be rigid in these matters, but use their judgment and tact, sometimes one statement is exactly the right thing for one type of mind and the wrong thing for another.

Strictly speaking the 5-pointed star is the symbol of our Faith, as used by the Báb and explained by Him. But the Guardian does not feel it is wise or necessary to complicate our explanations of the Temple by adding this.

Nine is the highest digit, hence symbolizes comprehensiveness, culminations; also, the reason it is used in the Temple's form is because 9 has exact numerical value of 'Bahá (in the numerology connected with the Arabic alphabet) and 'Bahá is the name of the Revealer of our Faith, Bahá'u'lláh. The 9-pointed star is not a part of the teachings of our Faith, but only used as an emblem representing '9'. In telling people of the religions of the world, that is 'existing religions, we should not give this as the reason the Temple has nine sides. This may have been an idea of the architect, and a very pleasing idea, which can be mentioned in passing, but the Temple has 9 sides because of the association of 9 with perfection, unity and 'Bahá.

Oriental

As regards those Persian or Oriental non-believers who become genuinely interested in the Cause in America, they can[pg 53] be admitted to study classes, but every care should be taken by the Assemblies to fully test their sincerity and the genuineness of their desire to join the Community before they are given the necessary facilities that will enable them eventually to be regarded as voting members of the Faith.

Orientalism (Association with)

In this connection, the Guardian wishes to draw once more your attention to the all-importance of his instructions to the Western believers regarding association with Orientals. The friends in the West must be wide awake, and be extremely cautious when dealing with Easterners, particularly with those who in the name of the Cause desire to satisfy their own desires and ambitions. The first step which they should take in protecting themselves against such mischief-makers is to insist that they should obtain proper credentials from the Assembly of the locality in which they live. This measure, he feels, is absolutely essential and there can be no exception whatever to it.

Pacifism (Bahá'í View of)

With reference to the absolute pacifists, or conscientious objectors to war; their attitude, judged from the Bahá'í standpoint is quite anti-social and due to its exaltation of the individual conscience leads inevitably to disorder and chaos in society. Extreme pacifists are thus very close to the anarchists, in the sense that both of these groups lay an undue emphasis on the rights and merits of the individual. The Bahá'í conception of social life is essentially based on the subordination of the individual will to that of society. It neither suppresses the individual nor does it exalt him to the point of making him an anti-social creature, a menace to society. As in everything, it follows the 'golden mean'. The only way that society can function is for the minority to follow the will of the majority.

The other main objection to the conscientious objectors is that their method of establishing peace is too negative. Non-cooperation is too passive a philosophy to become an effective way for social reconstruction. Their refusal to bear arms can never establish peace. There should first be a spiritual revitalization which nothing, except the Cause of God, can effectively bring to every man's heart.

Peace

I might add that he does not believe any radiations of thought or healing, from any group, is going to bring peace. Prayer, no doubt, will help the world, but what it needs is to accept Bahá'u'lláh's system so as to build up the World Order on a new foundation, a divine foundation!

Photographs

It is quite important that the Greatest Name or a picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá be placed in a dignified position. They should not be placed on the floor nor, on the other hand, should they be held above the heads of the people in the photograph. It would seem that the proper position would be for them to be held about chest height.

Pilgrim's Notes

Regarding the notes taken by pilgrims at Haifa. The Guardian has stated that he is unwilling to sign the notes of any pilgrim, in order that the literature consulted by the believers shall not be unduly extended... This means that the notes of pilgrims do not carry the authority resident in the Guardian's letters written over his own signature. On the other hand, each pilgrim brings back information and suggestions of a most precious character, and it is the privilege of all the friends to share in the spiritual results of these visits.

Pioneering

Sometimes people strive all their lives to render outstanding service. Here is the time and opportunity to render[pg 55] historic services; in fact the most unique in history, aiding in the fulfillment of Daniel's Prophecies of the Last Day, and the 1335 days, when men are to be blessed by the Glory of the Lord, covering the entire globe — which is the real goal of the Ten Year Crusade.

In other words, when we fulfill the Ten Year Crusade we will have brought into fulfillment Daniel's great prophecy of 'Blessed is he who waits and comes to the 1335 days.' What could be more wonderful than taking part in the fulfillment of religious prophecy of over 3,000 years!

The pioneers themselves must realize that not only are they fulfilling the wishes of Bahá'u'lláh, and doing that which the Master Himself said He longed to do; namely, to go, if necessary on foot, and carry His Father's Message to all the regions of the earth; but they are enhancing the prestige of the Faith to a remarkable degree in the eyes of the public, and specially in the eyes of the officials. There is no doubt that the rapid forward march of the Faith recently has attracted a far greater measure of attention on the part of the thoughtful people, and people of position in society and in educational fields, than has been the case for almost one hundred years.

Therefore, each pioneer must feel his responsibility very heavily, and understand that his calling is far above the average service; and his duty to remain at his post a very pressing one indeed.

Political Figures (Non-Political Character of the Bahá'í Faith)

The Guardian wishes me to draw the attention of the friends through you that they should be very careful in their public utterance not to mention any political figures ... either side with them or denounce them. This is the first thing to bear in mind. Otherwise they will involve the friends in political matters, which is definitely dangerous for the Cause.[pg 56]

Politics (Loyalty to World Order of Bahá'u'lláh)

Loyalty (to the) World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, security of its basic institutions, both imperatively demand all its avowed supporters ... in these days when sinister uncontrollable forces are deepening (the) cleavage sundering peoples, nations, creeds (and) classes, (to) resolve, despite (the) pressure (of) fast crystallizing public opinion, (to) abstain individually and collectively, in word (and) action, informally as well as in all official utterances and publications, from assigning blame, taking sides, however indirectly, in recurring political crises now agitating (and) ultimately engulfing human society. Grave apprehension lest cumulative effect (of) such compromises (should) disintegrate (the) fabric, clog (the) channel of grace that sustains (the) system of God's essentially supranational, supernatural order so laboriously evolved, so recently established.

Politics (Non-Interference in)

The attitude of the Bahá'ís must be two-fold, complete obedience to the government of the country they reside in, and no interference whatsoever in political matters or questions. What the Master's statement really means is obedience to a duly constituted government, whatever that government may be in form. We are not the ones, as individual Bahá'ís, to judge our government as just or unjust — for each believer would be sure to hold a different viewpoint, and within our own Bahá'í fold a hotbed of dissension would spring up and destroy our unity. We must build up our own Bahá'í system, and leave the faulty systems of the world to go their way. We cannot change them through becoming involved in them; on the contrary, they will destroy us.

Politics (Remain Aloof from Political Affairs)

We should — every one of us — remain aloof, in heart and in mind, in words and in deeds, from the political affairs and[pg 57] disputes of the Nations and of Governments. We should keep

ourselves away from such thoughts. We should have no political connection with any of the parties and should join no faction of these different and warring sects.

Absolute impartiality in the matter of political parties should be shown by words and by deeds, and the love of the whole humanity, whether a Government or a nation, which is the basic teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, should also be shown by words and by deeds...

According to the exhortations of the Supreme Pen and the confirmatory explanations of the Covenant of God Bahá'ís are in no way allowed to enter into political affairs under any pretense of excuse; since such an action brings about disastrous results and ends in hurting the Cause of God and its intimate friends.

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Politics (Shun Politics Like the Plague)

The cardinal principle which we must follow ... is obedience to the government prevailing in any land in which we reside....

We see therefore that we must do two things — Shun politics like the plague, and be obedient to the Government in power in the place where we reside... We must obey in all cases except where a spiritual principle is involved, such as denying our Faith. For these spiritual principles we must be willing to die. What we Bahá'ís must face is the fact that society is disintegrating so rapidly that moral issues which were clear a half century ago are now hopelessly confused and what is more, thoroughly mixed up with battling political interests. That is why the Bahá'ís must turn all their forces into the channel of building up the Bahá'í Cause and its Administration. They can neither change nor help the world in any other way at present. If they become involved in the issues the Governments of the world are struggling over, they will be lost. But if they build up the Bahá'í pattern they can offer it as a remedy when all else has failed.[pg 58]

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Prayer (Five Steps of)

Regarding the five steps of prayer outlined by the Guardian, and recorded by Mrs. Moffett in her booklet, the 'Call to Prayer', these, he wishes me to explain, are merely personal suggestions and need not, therefore, be adopted strictly and universally by the believers.

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Prayer Beads

In the matter of the use and distribution of prayer beads, in this and other matters of secondary importance he does not wish that any hard and fast rules be set up. The believers should not be required to use prayer beads, nor should they be prevented from doing so, as the Teachings do not contain any specific instruction on the subject.

Prayer (Bahá'u'lláh's in Dispensation)

The names of those cited in Bahá'u'lláh's Prayer in the Dispensation are quite correct as you gave them, (Abraham, Moses, Joseph, John the Baptist, Christ, Muḥammad, Imám Ḥusayn, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.)

The Prophets 'regarded as one and the same person' include the lesser Prophets as well, and not merely those who bring a 'Book'. The station is different, but They are Prophets and Their nature thus different from that of ours.

In the prayer mentioned above Bahá'u'lláh identifies Himself with Imám Ḥusayn. This does not make him a Prophet, but his position was very unique, and we know Bahá'u'lláh claims to be the 'return' of the Imám Ḥusayn. He, in other words, identifies His Spirit with these Holy Souls gone before, that does not, of course, make Him in any way their re-incarnation. Nor does it mean all of them were Prophets.

Prayers

You have asked whether our prayers go beyond Bahá'u'lláh; It all depends whether we pray to Him directly or through Him[pg 59] to God. We may do both, and also can pray directly to God, but our prayers would certainly be more effective and illuminating if they are addressed to Him through His Manifestation Bahá'u'lláh.

Under no circumstances, however, can we, while repeating the prayers, insert the name Bahá'u'lláh where the word 'God' is used. This would be tantamount to blasphemy.

In quoting prayers any part may be used, but should be quoted as it is, however short.

Prayers and Meditations (Book of)

He is indeed pleased to know that the Book of Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh has been out in time to enable the friends to read it during the Fast, and he has every hope that the perusal of such a precious volume will help to deepen more than any other publication, the spirit of devotion and faith in the friends, and thus charge them with all the spiritual power they require for the accomplishment of their tremendous duties towards the Cause...

Prayers (Daily)

The daily prayers are to be said each one for himself, aloud or silent makes no difference. There is no congregational prayer except that for the dead. We read healing and other prayers in our meetings, but the daily prayer is a personal obligation, so someone else reading it is not quite the same thing as saying it for yourself.

If you find you need to visualize someone when you pray, think of the Master. Through Him you can address Bahá'u'lláh. Gradually try to think of the qualities of the Manifestation, and in that way a mental form will fade out, for after all the body is not the thing, His Spirit is there and is the essential, everlasting element.[pg 60]

Prayers (Daily Obligatory)

The daily obligatory prayers are three in number. The shortest one consists of a single verse which has to be recited once in every twenty-four hours and at midday. The medium (prayer) which begins with the words: 'The Lord is witness that there is none other God but He,' has to be recited three times a day, in the morning, at noon and in the evening. The long prayer which is the most elaborate of the three has to be recited once in every twenty-four hours, and at any time one feels inclined to do so.

The believer is entirely free to choose any one of those three prayers but is under the obligation of reciting one of them, and in accordance with any specific directions with which they may be accompanied.

These daily obligatory prayers, together with a few other specific ones, such as the Healing Prayer, the Tablet of Aḥmad, have been invested by Bahá'u'lláh with a special potency and significance, and should therefore be accepted as such and be recited by the believers with unquestioned faith and confidence, that through them they may enter into a much closer communion with God, and identify themselves more fully with His Laws and precepts.

Prayers (Healing)

The healing prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh can be effective even though used by non-believers. But their effectiveness is of course greater in the case of those who fully accept the Revelation.

Prayers (To be Read as Revealed)

Regarding your question as to the changing of pronouns in Bahá'í prayers: The Guardian does not approve of such changes, either in the specific prayers or in any others. They should be read as printed without changing a single word.[pg 61]

Prejudices (Racial)

Regarding the solution of the racial problem; the believers should of course realize that the principle of the oneness of mankind which is the cornerstone of the message of Bahá'u'lláh is wholly incompatible with all forms of racial prejudice. Loyalty to this foundation principle of the Faith is the paramount duty of every believer and should be therefore wholehearted and unqualified. For a Bahá'í, racial prejudice, in all its forms, is simply a negation of Faith, an attitude wholly incompatible with the very spirit and actual teachings of the Cause.

But while the friends should faithfully and courageously uphold this Bahá'í principle of the essential unity of all human races, yet in the methods they adopt for its application and further realization on the social plane they should act with tact, wisdom and moderation. These two attitudes are by no means exclusive. Bahá'ís do not believe that the spread of the Cause and its principles and teachings can be effected by means of radical and violent methods. While they are loyal to all those teachings, yet they believe in the necessity of resorting to peaceful and friendly means for the realization of their aims.

As regards the meaning of the passage on page 188 of the Gleanings it is an emphasis by Bahá'u'lláh on the importance of maintaining differences of station and classes in society and does not refer to the question of race.

Prophets (Many will appear)

After Bahá'u'lláh many Prophets will, no doubt, appear but they will be under His Shadow. Although they may abrogate the laws of this Dispensation in accordance with the needs and requirements of the age in which they appear, they nevertheless draw their spiritual force from this mighty Revelation. The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh constitutes, indeed, the stage of maturity in the development of mankind. His appearance has released such spiritual forces which will continue to animate, for many long years to come, the world in its development. Whatever progress may be achieved, in later ages, after the unification of the [pg 62] whole human race is achieved, will be but improvement in the machinery of the world. For the machinery itself has been already created by Bahá'u'lláh. The task of continually improving and perfecting this machinery is one which later Prophets will be called upon to achieve. They will thus move and work within the orbit of the Bahá'í Cycle.

Psychiatry

There is nothing in our teachings about Freud and his method. Psychiatry treatment in general is no doubt an important contribution to medicine, but we must believe it is still a growing rather than a perfected science. As Bahá'u'lláh has urged us to avail ourselves of the help of good physicians Bahá'ís are certainly not only free to turn to psychiatry for assistance but should, when available, do so. This does not mean psychiatrists are always wise or always right; it means we are free to avail ourselves of the best medicine has to offer us.

Psychic Phenomena

With reference to psychic phenomena referred to in your letter; these, in most cases, are an indication of a deep psychological disturbance. The friends should avoid as much as possible giving undue consideration to such matters.

Pure Souls

Those who have never had any opportunity of hearing of the Faith but who lived good lives will no doubt be treated with the greatest love and mercy in the next world, and reap their full rewards.

Pyramid Prophecies

We have nothing in our Bahá'í Writings about the so-called Prophecies of the Pyramids; so he (the Guardian) does not think you need attach any importance to them.[pg 63]

Prominent Figures (Letters to Government Heads)

The Guardian feels that any communications addressed to international figures of this nature, particularly in connection with political proposals of any one group, should not be written unless approved by him. He feels matters of this type so important that he does not wish such communications sent without his prior consideration and approval. It may lead to quite difficult and embarrassing situations, especially when the letters are made public...

Qur'án ('Sales' Translation Recommended)

As to the question raised by the Spiritual Assembly of Los Angeles concerning the best English translation of the Qur'án, the Guardian would recommend 'Sales' translation which is the most accurate rendering available, and is the most widespread.

Qur'án — Study of (Concerning School Program)

With regard to the school's program (Louhelen) for the next summer; the Guardian would certainly advise, and even urge the friends to make a thorough study of the Qur'án, as the knowledge of this sacred Scripture is absolutely indispensable for every believer who wishes to adequately understand and intelligently read, the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Although there are very few persons among Western Bahá'ís who are capable of handling such a course in a scholarly way, the mere lack of such competent teachers should encourage and stimulate the believers to get better acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures of Islám. In this way, there will gradually appear some distinguished Bahá'ís who will be so well versed in the teachings of Islám as to be able to guide the believers in their study of that religion.[pg 64]

Qur'án, Surihs of The

It is certainly most difficult to thoroughly grasp all the Súrahs of the Qur'án, as it requires a detailed knowledge of the social, religious and historical background of Arabia at the time of the appearance of the Prophet. The believers can not possibly hope, therefore, to understand the Súrahs after the first or even second or third reading. They have to study them again and again, ponder over their meaning, with the help of certain commentaries and explanatory notes as found, for instance, in the admirable translation made by Sale, endeavor to acquire as clear and correct understanding of their meaning and import as possible. This is naturally a slow process, but future generations of believers will certainly come to grasp it. For the present, the Guardian agrees, that it would be easier and more helpful to study the Book according to subjects, and note verse by verse and also in the light of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interpretation which throw such floods of light on the whole of the Qur'án.

Religious Associations, Non-Bahá'í

Concerning membership in non-Bahá'í religious associations, the Guardian wishes to re-emphasize the general principle already laid down in his communications to your Assembly and also to the individual believers that no Bahá'í who wishes to be a whole hearted and sincere

upholder of the distinguishing principles of the Cause can accept full membership in any non-Bahá'í ecclesiastical organization. For such an act would necessarily imply only a partial acceptance of the Teachings and Laws of the Faith, and an incomplete recognition of its independent status, and would thus be tantamount to an act of disloyalty to the verities it enshrines. For it is only too obvious that in most of its fundamental assumptions the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is completely at variance with outworn creeds, ceremonies, and institutions. To be a Bahá'í and at the same time accept membership in another religious body is simply an act of contradiction that no sincere and logically-minded person can possibly[pg 65] accept. To follow Bahá'u'lláh does not mean accepting some of His teachings and rejecting the rest. Allegiance to His Cause must be uncompromising and whole-hearted. During the days of the Master the Cause was still in a stage that made such an open and sharp disassociation between it and other religious organizations, and particularly the Muslim Faith not only inadvisable but practically impossible to establish. But since His passing, events throughout the Bahá'í World and particularly in Egypt where the Muslim religious courts have formally testified to the independent character of the Faith, have developed to a point that have made such an assertion of the independence of the Cause not only highly desirable but absolutely essential.

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Resurrection (Explains the Passage on page 231 of the Gleanings)

'From it (the earth) have We created you', etc., this is a verse from the Qur'án and the quotation mark has been wrongly omitted from the text and should be added after 'time'. Bahá'u'lláh in quoting this passage seeks to refute the argument of the Muslims, who attach a purely literal interpretation to this verse of the Qur'án, and therefore consider it as implying bodily resurrection. To these Muslims, He says, that you who literally believe that the human body will return to dust and will be raised from it again, and therefore attach so much importance to this mortal world, how then can you wax so proud, and boast over things which are but perishable and consequently void of any true and lasting value.

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Ringstones and Burial Stones

In regard to the use of ringstones and burial stones, the Guardian leaves this matter at present entirely to the discretion of the believers, and has no objection if your Assembly provides facilities for their purchase by the friends. When the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is published the necessary instructions will be given regarding this matter.[pg 66]

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Summer Schools, Bahá'í (Importance of)

He fervently hopes that through the earnest and sustained efforts of your committee these annual gatherings will acquire increasing importance in the eyes of the public, and will

constitute an effective medium for the dissemination of the Teachings. He feels that in your next summer meetings continued emphasis should be laid upon the teaching of the Administration, especially in its relation to the outside world, so as to impress the non-Bahá'í attendants at the school with the nature, character, and world-significance of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

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Summer Schools, Bahá'í (Purpose of)

The basic purpose of all Bahá'í Summer Schools, whether in East or West, is to give the believers the opportunity to acquaint themselves, not only by mere study but through whole-hearted and active collaboration in various Bahá'í activities with the essentials of the administration and in this way enable them to become efficient and able promoters of the Cause. The teaching of the Administration is therefore, an indispensable feature of every Bahá'í Summer School and its special significance can be better understood if we realize the great need of every believer today for a more adequate understanding of the social principles and laws of the Faith.

How wonderful it would be if all the friends could arrange to spend at least a few days in one of these summer schools and take an active part in their development. These centers could attract many souls if properly arranged and made interesting; those non-Bahá'ís who visit them will then have some time to get into the spirit of the place and make a study of the Cause... We constantly receive letters from people who became Bahá'í by visiting one of these centers and obtaining the Message there.[pg 67]

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Service to Humanity

He feels that, although your desire to partake actively of the dangers and miseries afflicting so many millions of people today, is natural, and a noble impulse, there can be no comparison between the value of Bahá'í work and any other form of service to humanity.

If the Bahá'ís could evaluate their work properly they would see that whereas other forms of relief work are superficial in character, alleviating the sufferings and ills of men for a short time at best, the work they are doing is to lay the foundation of a new Spiritual Order in the world founded on the Word of God, operating according to the Laws He has laid down for this age. No one else can do this work except those who have fully realized the meaning of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, where as almost any courageous, sincere person can engage in relief work, etc.

The believers are building a refuge for mankind. This is their supreme, sacred task and they should devote every moment they can to this task.

Seven Lights of Unity

The seven lights of Unity will not necessarily come in the order given. A product of the second may well be universal culture.

Social Aspects of the Faith (A Single Divine and World-Embracing System)

Concerning the idea of the Bahá'í World Order and the proper emphasis which should be laid on the social aspect of the Faith; the Guardian feels the necessity for all teachers to stress the fact that the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh can, under no circumstances, be divorced from the spiritual principles and [pg 68] teachings of the Cause; that the social laws and institutions of the Faith are inseparably bound up and closely interwoven with the moral and spiritual principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, Who, Himself, indeed, has time and again emphasized the underlying oneness and the identity of purpose of all His spiritual, doctrinal, and social teachings. The Friends, while emphasizing both of these aspects, should, in particular, point out that they constitute parts of one and the same plan, and elements of a single, divine and world-embracing system.

Spirituality (The Troubles of This World Pass)

As we suffer these misfortunes we must remember that the Prophets of God Themselves were not immune from these things which men suffer. They knew sorrow, illness and pain too. They rose above these things through Their spirits, and that is what we must try and do too, when afflicted. The troubles of this world pass, and what we have left is what we have made of our souls; so it is to this we must look — to becoming more spiritual, drawing nearer to God, no matter what our human minds and bodies go through.

Summer Schools (The Bahá'í)

Definite courses should be given along the different phases of the Bahá'í Faith and in a manner that will stimulate the students to proceed in their studies privately once they return home, for the period of a few days is not sufficient to learn everything. They have to be taught the habit of studying the Cause constantly, for the more we read the Words the more will the truth they contain be revealed to us.

Summer Schools (Bahá'í Atmosphere in)

He (the Guardian) thinks the less time spent on such topics as 'Current Events in the light of the Bahá'í Faith', and 'The [pg 69] Bahá'í Faith and Modern Science' the better. There is no harm in having an evening lecture by a qualified speaker once on each of these subjects, but he certainly does not feel that much time should be spent on them, for the very simple reason that there is so little that can be said on the subject.

The Bahá'ís must realize that they belong to a world-wide Order, and not an American civilization. They must try and introduce the Bahá'í atmosphere of life and thought into their Summer Schools, rather than making the Summer School an episode and a pleasant vacation period, during which they learn a little more about the Faith.

Supreme Tribunal

The Supreme Tribunal is an aspect of a world Superstate; the exact nature of its relationship to that state we cannot at present foresee. Supreme Tribunal is the correct translation; it will be a contributing factor in establishing the Lesser Peace. There is no statement in the teachings indicating that the Lesser Peace will definitely be established by 1957 or

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The work of collecting and publishing the Tablets is one of the most important tasks that this generation has to undertake for upon it depends our true understanding of the Cause and its principles. Only Tablets with the Master's signature and in the original tongue should be recognised. Any translation or copies of them fail having real authority. This shows the importance of collecting the original Tablets that bear the Master's signature.

Teachers (Unqualified Loyalty)

In connection with the problems facing the friends in their teaching work; these, the Guardian is well aware, are by no means easy to overcome, specially in view of the limited number and resources of the believers. But in the field of Bahá'í [pg 70] service, as the history of the Cause abundantly demonstrates, there is no obstacle that can be said to be unsurmountable. Every difficulty will, in due time, be solved. But continued and collective effort is also needed. The

Bahá'í teacher should not get discouraged at the consciousness of the limitations within or without him. He should rather persevere, and be confident, that no matter how numerous and perplexing the difficulties that confront him may appear, he is continually assisted and guided through Divine Confirmations. He should consider himself as a mere instrument in the Hands of God, and should, therefore, cease looking at his own merits.

The first and most important qualification of a Bahá'í Teacher is, indeed, unqualified loyalty and attachment to the Cause. Knowledge is, of course essential; but compared to devotion it is secondary in importance.

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Teachers and Administrators (Can Serve as Both)

Regarding the statement made by the Guardian ... concerning the fact that believers can serve both as teachers and administrators. Shoghi Effendi would approve your Assembly making this fact known to all the friends. For although it is essential for the believers to maintain always a clear distinction between teaching and administrative duties and functions, yet they should be careful not to be led to think that these two types of Bahá'í activity are mutually exclusive in their nature and as such cannot be exercised by one and the same person. As a matter of fact, the friends should be encouraged to serve in both the teaching and the administrative fields of Bahá'í service. But as there are always some who are more specially gifted along one of these two lines of activity it would seem more desirable that they should concentrate their efforts in acquiring the full training for that type of work for which they are best suited by nature. Such a specialization has the advantage of saving time and of leading to greater efficiency, particularly at this early stage of our development. The great danger, however, lies in that by so doing the friends may tend to develop a sort of class[pg 71] consciousness which is fundamentally contrary to both the spirit and actual teachings of the Faith.

It is precisely in order to overcome such a danger that the Guardian thinks it advisable that the friends should be encouraged to serve from time to time in both the teaching and the administrative spheres of Bahá'í work, but only whenever they feel fit to do so.

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Teachers, Bahá'í (A Principle)

Regarding the principle that the Cause must not be allowed to center around any Bahá'í personality, the Guardian wishes to make it clear that it was never intended that well qualified individual teachers should not receive from local Assemblies every encouragement and facilities to address the public. What the Guardian meant was that the personality and popularity of such a speaker should never be allowed to eclipse the authority or detract from the influence of the body of the elected representatives in every local community. Such an individual should not only seek the approval, advice and assistance of the body that represents the Cause in his locality, but should strive to attribute any credit he may obtain, to the collective wisdom and capacity of the Assembly under whose jurisdiction he performs his services. Assemblies and not individuals

constitute the bedrock on which the Administration is built. Everything else must be subordinated to, and be made to serve and advance the best interests of these elected custodians and promoters of the laws of Bahá'u'lláh.

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Teaching

The Cause of God is developing rapidly in the virgin areas of the Crusade; but on the home front we seem to be not so successful. No doubt this is due to the fact that the friends at home are not as diligently taking advantage of every teaching opportunity as the pioneers do in foreign lands. Success will crown the efforts of the friends on the home front when they meditate on the teaching, pray fervently for divine confirmations for their work, study the teachings so they may carry the [pg 72] spirit to the seeker, and then act, — and above all persevere in action. When these steps are followed, and the teaching work carried on sacrificially and with devoted enthusiasm, the Faith will spread rapidly.

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Teaching, Love for Bahá'u'lláh

Without the spirit of real love for Bahá'u'lláh, for His Faith and its Institutions, and the believers for each other, the Cause can never really bring in large numbers of people. For it is not preaching any rules the world wants, but love and action...

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Teaching

Shoghi Effendi would urge every Bahá'í who feels the urge to exercise his right of teaching unofficially the Cause, to keep in close touch with the Local Spiritual Assembly of the locality in which he is working. The Local Spiritual Assembly, while reserving for itself the right to control such activities on the part of individual Bahá'ís, should do its utmost to encourage such teachers and to put at their disposal whatever facilities they would need in such circumstances. Should any differences arise, the National Spiritual Assembly would naturally have to intervene and adjust matters.

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Teaching, Advent of Divine Justice

In the matter of teaching, as repeatedly and emphatically stated, particularly in his 'Advent of Divine Justice', the Guardian does not wish the believers to make the slightest discrimination, even though this may result in provoking opposition or criticism from any individual, class or institution. The Call of Bahá'u'lláh, being universal, should be addressed with equal force to all

the peoples, classes and nations of the world, irrespective of any religious, racial, political or class distinction or difference...[pg 73]

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Teaching, Concentrate On (Source of Joy and Consolation)

We all have our petty material obstacles in this life. We cannot totally get rid of them. The best thing to do, after all our efforts have failed to deliver us, is to concentrate on that which can alone bring real happiness and peace to our heart. And you should be thankful to God for having enabled you to recognize and accept His Faith. For this is, assuredly, the only source of joy and consolation you can have in your moments of suffering. Is there anything more worthwhile to work for than the Teachings of the Message?

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Teaching (The Concourse on High)

The invisible battalions of the Concourse on High, are mustered, in serried ranks, ready to rush their reinforcements to the aid of the vanguard of Bahá'u'lláh's crusaders in the hour of their greatest need, and in anticipation of that Most Great, that Wondrous Jubilee in the joyfulness of which both heaven and earth will partake.

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Teaching (Direct)

He approves of your desire to teach the principles of the Faith through radio. But he urges you to do all you can to always, however small the reference you are able to make to it may be, clearly identify or associate what you are giving out with Bahá'u'lláh. The time is too short now for us Bahá'ís to be able to first educate humanity and then tell it that the source is this new World Faith. For their own spiritual protection people must hear of the name Bahá'í — then, if they turn blindly away they cannot excuse themselves by saying they never even knew it existed! For dark days seem still ahead of the world, and outside this Divine Refuge the people will not, we firmly believe, find inner conviction, peace and security. So they have a right to at least hear of the Cause as such.[pg 74]

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Teaching — Divine World Order — The Sole Panacea

In connection with your teaching work: What the Guardian wishes you to particularly emphasize in all your talks is the supreme necessity for all individuals and nations in this day to adopt in its entirety the social program given by Bahá'u'lláh for the reconstruction of the religious, economic and political life of mankind. He wishes you to explain and analyze the elements that help in

raising this Divine World Order in the light of the present-day events and conditions in the world. Special stress, he feels, should be laid on the impending necessity of establishing a super-national, and sovereign world state, as the one described by Bahá'u'lláh. With the world becoming increasingly subject to tumults and convulsions never experienced before, the realization of such a necessity is entering into the consciousness of not only the wise and learned, but of the common people as well. The believers should, therefore, seize this opportunity to make a supreme effort to present, in convincing and eloquent language, those social and humanitarian teachings of the Faith which we believe to constitute the sole panacea for the innumerable ills afflicting our present-day world.

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Teaching (Duty of Every Believer)

Indeed to bring this message to mankind in its darkest hour of need is the paramount duty of every believer. All the agony, the suffering, privation and spiritual blindness afflicting people today everywhere in the world, to a greater or lesser degree, is because they are unaware of, or indifferent to, the Remedy God has sent them. Only those who are aware of it can carry its healing knowledge to others, so that each Bahá'í has an inescapable and sacred duty to perform.

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Teaching (Give the Message)

The believers ought to give the message even to those who do not seem ready for it, because they can never judge the real extent to which the Word of God can influence the hearts and [pg 75] minds of the people, even those who appear to lack any power of receptivity to the teachings.

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Teaching (Greater Unity Among the Friends)

Regarding your question about the need for greater unity among the friends, there is no doubt that this is so, and the Guardian feels that one of the chief instruments for promoting it is to teach the Bahá'ís themselves, in classes and through precepts, that love of God, and consequently of men, is the essential foundation of every religion, our own included. A greater degree of love will produce a greater unity, because it enables people to bear with each other, to be patient and forgiving.

Teaching (Love and Unity)

The most important thing for the believers is, of course, to be united and to really love each other for the sake of God, (Otherwise it is not possible to love everyone). However, if communities wait until love and complete harmony are established before teaching, the teaching work will come to a standstill. Both sides must be cultivated; whilst actively teaching the friends must themselves be taught and deepened in the spirit of the Faith, which brings love and unity.

Teaching — Bahá'í Faith (What the Cause Now Requires)

What the Cause now requires is not so much a group of highly cultured and intellectual people who can adequately present its Teachings, but a number of devoted, sincere and loyal supporters, who, in utter disregard of their own weaknesses and limitations, and with hearts afire with the love of God, forsake their all for the sake of spreading and establishing His Faith. In other words, what is mostly needed nowadays is a Bahá'í pioneer and not so much a Bahá'í philosopher or scholar.[pg 76] For the Cause is not a system of philosophy; it is essentially a way of life, a religious faith that seeks to unite all people on a common basis of mutual understanding and love, and in a common devotion to God.

Bahá'í scholars and writers will, no doubt, gradually appear, and will as promised by Bahá'u'lláh lend a unique support to the Faith. But in the meantime, we should not tarry, or slacken in our efforts.

Teaching (Study Early History and Principles of the Faith)

I wish to urge the necessity of concentrating at your next summer session, on the systematic study of the early history and principles of the Faith, on public speaking, and on a thorough discussion, both formally and informally, of various aspects of the Cause. These I regard as essential preliminaries to a future intensive campaign of teaching in which the rising generation must engage, if the spread of the Cause is to be assured in that land.

Teaching (The Utmost Effort)

I cannot refrain from adding a few words to renew and reaffirm my fervent plea to you, and through you to every individual member of the American Bahá'í Community, to exert the utmost effort in order to further the Cause of Teaching throughout the American Continent.

Every possible assistance, whether moral, financial, or administrative, should be continuously, generously, and systematically extended to this most urgent, this sacred and meritorious Cause. My heart yearns to learn of any speedy and effective action which the valiant members of that community may determine, whether collectively or severally, to undertake. The invisible hosts of the Abhá Kingdom are arrayed and ready to rush forth and ensure the triumph of every stout-hearted and persevering herald of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.[pg 77]

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Teaching (In South)

Regarding the whole manner of teaching the Faith in the South; the Guardian feels that, although the greatest consideration should be shown the feelings of white people in the South whom we are teaching, under no circumstances should we discriminate in their favour, consider them more valuable to the Cause than their Negro fellow-southerners, or single them out to be taught the Message first. To pursue such a policy, however necessary and even desirable it may superficially seem, would be to compromise the true spirit of our Faith, which permits us to make no such distinctions in offering its tenets to the world. The Negro and white races should be offered, simultaneously, on a basis of equality, the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. Rich or poor, known or unknown, should be permitted to hear of this Holy Faith in this, humanity's greatest hour of need.

This does not mean that we should go against the laws of the State, pursue a radical course which will stir up trouble, and cause misunderstanding... Even in places where the two races can meet together in the South, he feels it would be, in certain cases, preferable to teach them separately until they are fully confirmed and then bring them together...

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Teaching Methods

The same thing is true of teaching methods; no system, for teachers to practice, exists. But obviously the more people know about the teachings and the Cause, the better they will be to present the subject. If some people find that prayer and placing all their trust in God, releases in them a flood of inspiration, they should be left free to pursue this method if it is productive of results.

The inspiration received through meditation is of a nature that one cannot measure or determine. God can inspire into our minds things that we had no previous knowledge of, if He desires to do so.

We cannot clearly distinguish between personal desire and[pg 78] guidance, but if the way opens, when we have sought guidance, then we may presume God is helping us.

Temple, Chanting In The

As regard the chanting of Tablets in the Temple, Shoghi Effendi wishes in this connection to urge the friends to avoid all forms of rigidity and uniformity in matters of worship. There is no objection to the recital or chanting of prayers in the Oriental language, but there is also no obligation whatsoever of adopting such a form of prayer at any devotional service in the auditorium of the Temple. It should neither be required nor prohibited. The important thing that should always be borne in mind is that with the exception of certain specific obligatory prayers, Bahá'u'lláh has given us no strict or special rulings in matters of worship, whether in the Temple or elsewhere. Prayer is essentially a communion between man and God, and as such transcends all ritualistic forms and formulae.

Tests and Problems

Ultimately all the battle of life is within the individual. No amount of organization can solve the inner problems or produce or prevent, as the case may be, victory or failure at a crucial moment. In such times as these particularly, individuals are torn by great forces at large in the world and, we see some weak ones strong, and strong ones fail — we can only try, through loving advice, as your Committee has done, to bring about the act on the part of the believer which will be for the highest good of the Cause. Because obviously something bad for the Cause cannot be the highest good of the individual Bahá'í.

Theocracy

What the Guardian was referring to was the Theocratic systems, such as the Catholic Church and the Caliphate, which are not divinely given as systems, but man-made and yet, having[pg 79] partly derived from the teachings of Christ and Muḥammad are, in a sense, theocracies. The Bahá'í theocracy, on the contrary, is both divinely ordained as a system and, of course, based on the teachings of the Prophet Himself... Theophany is used in the sense of Dispensation...

Tombstone, Bahá'í Symbol on

In regard to your question regarding the use of the Greatest Name on tombstones of Bahá'ís, the Guardian considers this too sacred to be placed in such a position in general use, and the friends should not use it on their tombstones. They can use quotations from the Teachings, if they wish to, but not the Greatest Name. Naturally, if anyone has already used it, it does not matter.

NINE-POINTED STAR FOR HEADSTONE

“Approve star for graves.” Cable of October 22,

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Transliteration of Bahá'í Terms

...the faithful spelling of which by all the Western friends will avoid confusion in future, and insure in this matter a uniformity which is greatly needed at present in all Bahá'í literature... I feel confident that all the friends will from now on follow this system and adhere scrupulously and at all times to this code in all their writings.

The preparation of Bahá'í articles, committee reports, etc., should therefore employ the system of transliteration which the Guardian has supplied.

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Universal House of Justice, Membership

As regards your question concerning the membership of the Universal House of Justice, there is a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in which He definitely states that the membership of the [pg 80] Universal House is confined to men and that the wisdom of it will be fully revealed in the future. In the local, as well as the National Houses of Justice, however, women have the full right of membership. It is therefore, only to the International House that they cannot be elected. The Bahá'ís should accept this statement of the Master in a spirit of deep faith, confident that there is a divine guidance and wisdom behind it, which will be gradually unfolded to the eyes of the world.

Regarding your question, the Master said the wisdom of having no women on the International House of Justice, would become manifest in the future. We have no other indication than this.

At present there are women on the International Council, and this will continue as long as it exists, but when the International House of Justice is elected, there will only be men on it, as this is the law of the Aqdas.

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Vaccination

Regarding your question about vaccination:

These are technical matters which have not been specifically mentioned in the Teachings, and consequently, the Guardian cannot make any statement about them. No doubt medical science

will progress tremendously as time goes by and the treatment of disease becomes more perfect.

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Visions

There is a fundamental difference between Divine Revelation as vouchsafed by God to His Prophets, and the spiritual experiences and visions which individuals may have. The latter should, under no circumstances, be construed as constituting an infallible source of guidance, even for the person experiencing them.[pg 81]

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Voting — (Civil)

The friends may vote, if they can do it, without identifying themselves with one party or another. To enter the arena of party politics is surely detrimental to the best interests of the Faith and will harm the Cause. It remains for the individuals to so use their right to vote as to keep aloof from party politics, and always bear in mind that they are voting on the merits of the individual, rather than because he belongs to one party or another. The matter must be made perfectly clear to the individuals, who will be left free to exercise their discretion and judgment. But if a certain person does enter into party politics and labors for the ascendancy of one party over another, and continues to do it against the expressed appeals and warnings of the Assembly, then the Assembly has the right to refuse him the right to vote in Bahá'í elections.

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Voting Right, The

I feel I must reaffirm the vital importance and necessity of the right of voting — a sacred responsibility of which no adult recognized believer should be deprived, unless he is associated with a community that has not as yet been in a position to establish a Local Assembly. This distinguishing right which the believer possesses, however, does not carry with it nor does it imply an obligation to cast his vote, if he feels that the circumstances under which he lives do not justify or allow him to exercise that right intelligently and with understanding. This is a matter which should be left to the individual to decide himself according to his own conscience and discretion.

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Voting Rights (Status of Individuals Deprived of)

Concerning your question as to the status of those individuals whom the Local Assembly or the N.S.A. have considered it necessary to deprive of the voting right and to suspend from local

meetings and gatherings; such action which Local and National Assemblies have been empowered to take against such[pg 82] recalcitrant members, however justified and no matter how severe, should under no circumstances be considered as implying the complete expulsion of the individuals affected from the Cause. The suspension of voting and other administrative rights of an individual, always conditional and therefore temporary, can never have such far reaching implications, since it constitutes merely an administrative sanction; whereas his expulsion or ex-communication from the Faith, which can be effected by the Guardian alone in his capacity as the supreme spiritual head of the community, has far-reaching spiritual implications affecting the very soul of that believer. The former, as already stated, is an administrative sanction, whereas the latter is essentially spiritual, involving not only the particular relationship of a believer to his local or National Assembly, but his very spiritual existence in the Cause. It follows, therefore, that a believer can continue calling himself a Bahá'í even though he may cease to be a voting member of the community. But in case he is excluded from the body of the Cause by an act of the Guardian he ceases to be a believer and cannot possibly identify himself even nominally with the Faith.

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Work, Bahá'í

If the believers could properly evaluate the work they are doing they would be astonished at its importance, but they are in the position of not being able to see the forest for the trees; they are too close to it to realize its true import.

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Work, Daily — (Bahá'u'lláh's Command Concerning Daily Work)

With reference to Bahá'u'lláh's command concerning the engagement of the believers in some sort of profession; the teachings are most emphatic on this matter, particularly the statement in the Aqdas to this effect which makes it quite clear that idle people who lack the desire to work can have no place in the new World Order. As a corollary of this principle,[pg 83] Bahá'u'lláh further states that mendicity should not only be discouraged but entirely wiped out from the face of society. It is the duty of those who are in charge of the organization of society to give every individual the opportunity of acquiring the necessary talent in some kind of profession, and also the means of utilizing such a talent, both for its own sake and for the sake of earning the means of his livelihood. Every individual, no matter how handicapped and limited he may be, is under the obligation of engaging in some work or profession, for work, especially when performed in the spirit of service, is according to Bahá'u'lláh, a form of worship. It has not only a utilitarian purpose, but has a value in itself, because it draws us nearer to God, and enables to better grasp His purpose for us in this world. It is obvious, therefore, that the inheritance of wealth cannot make anyone immune from daily work. As to the question of retirement from work for individuals who have reached a certain age, this is a matter on which the International House of Justice will have to legislate as there are no provisions in the Aqdas concerning it.

World Federation — (On Bahá'í Participation in International Conferences)

He feels that the statement which your assembly made in your letter to him ... regarding Bahá'ís cooperating with peace and world unity conferences, covers the subject adequately. There is no reason to draw a line of demarcation as to whether the type of world federation being promoted by a certain society involves governments or peoples. The point is that if it is not allied to any particular political faction, and is not either Eastern or Western in its projects, the Bahá'ís may appear as speakers on its platform and give it moral support.

Year Nine, The

The 'Year Nine' is an abbreviation of 1269 A.H. The beginning of the Year Nine occurred about two months after His (Bahá'u'lláh's) imprisonment in that dungeon. We do not know the exact time He received this first intimation... We[pg 84] therefore regard the entire Year Nine as a Holy Year, and the emphasis should be placed ... on the entire year, which started in October, 66. This means our Centenary Year of Celebration will be from October, 1952 to October, 1953.

Youth

He quite agrees that the dangers facing the modern youth are becoming increasingly grave, and call for immediate solution. But, as experience clearly shows, the remedy to this truly sad and perplexing situation is not to be found in traditional and ecclesiastical religion. The dogmatism of the Church has been discarded once for all. What can control youth and save it from the pitfalls of the crass materialism of the age is the power of a genuine, constructive and living Faith such as the one revealed to the world by Bahá'u'lláh. Religion as in the past, is still the world's sole hope, but not that form of religion which our ecclesiastical leaders strive vainly to preach. Divorced from true religion, morals lose their effectiveness and cease to guide and control man's individual and social life. But when true religion is combined with true ethics, then moral progress becomes a possibility and not a mere ideal.

The need of our modern youth is for such a type of ethics founded on pure religious faith. Not until these two are rightly combined and brought into full action can there be any hope for the future of the race.

The world that lies ahead of us after this war is going to be in a terrible condition, and if the believers are going to accomplish their duty and present the Divine Solution to mankind, they must prepare themselves for the great tasks that lie ahead. This particularly applies to Bahá'í youth. Young men and women in the Faith must be deep and thoughtful scholars of its

teachings, so that they can teach in a way that will convince people that all the problems facing them have a remedy. They must grasp the Administration, so that they can wisely and efficiently administer the ever-growing affairs of the Cause; and they must exemplify the Bahá'í way of living. All this is[pg 85] not easy — but the Guardian is always greatly encouraged to see the spirit animating such young believers as yourself. He has high hopes of what your generation will accomplish.

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Youth (Regarding the Age of Fifteen)

Regarding the age of fifteen fixed by Bahá'u'lláh: This relates only to purely spiritual functions and obligations and is not related to the degree of administrative capacity and fitness which is a totally different thing, and is, for the present, fixed at twenty-one.

Bahá'í youth under twenty-one may serve on Committees.

The question of young Bahá'ís being permitted to serve on committees other than the Youth Committee has been raised in a number of letters recently, and in considering the matter he felt that Bahá'í young people under twenty-one should not be denied the privilege of committee work. Though they cannot be voting members of Bahá'í communities (or exercise the electoral vote at all until they reach that age), and though they cannot, likewise, be elected to Assemblies, there is no reason why they should not serve the Cause on various committees as all committees, national or local, are subordinate to Assemblies and their members not elected but appointed, and appointed by Assemblies. We have many devoted and talented young believers who can be of great assistance to the Cause even though not yet legally of age.

This Cause, although it embraces with equal esteem people of all ages, has a special message and mission for the youth of your generation. It is their charter for their future, their hope, their guarantee of better days to come. Therefore the Guardian is especially happy that the young Bahá'ís are active in the pioneer work.

The importance of young Bahá'ís to become thoroughly steeped in every branch of the teachings can not be over-emphasized, as they have great teaching tasks ahead of them to accomplish.[pg 86]

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Bahá'í Youth In School

The problem with which you are faced is one which concerns and seriously puzzles many of our present-day youth. How to attain spirituality is indeed a question to which every young man and woman must sooner or later try to find a satisfactory answer. It is precisely because no such satisfactory answer has been given or found, that the modern youth finds itself bewildered, and is being consequently carried away by the materialistic forces that are so powerfully undermining the foundations of man's moral and spiritual life.

Indeed the chief reason for the evils now rampant in society is the lack of spirituality. The materialistic civilization of our age has so much absorbed the energy and interest of mankind that people in general do no longer feel the necessity of raising themselves above the forces and conditions of their daily material existence. There is not sufficient demand for things that we call spiritual to differentiate them from the needs and requirements of our physical existence.

The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual in its causes. The spirit of the age, taken on the whole, is irreligious. Man's outlook on life is too crude and materialistic to enable him to elevate himself into the higher realms of the spirit.

It is this condition, so sadly morbid, into which society has fallen, that religion seeks to improve and transform. For the core of religious faith is that mystic feeling which unites Man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer. And this is the reason why Bahá'u'lláh has so much stressed the importance of worship. It is not sufficient for a believer merely to accept and observe the teachings. He should, in addition, cultivate the sense of spirituality which he can acquire chiefly by means of prayer. The Bahá'í Faith, like all other Divine Religions, is thus fundamentally mystic in character. Its chief goal is the development of the individual and society, through the acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers.[pg 87] It is the soul of man which has first to be fed. And this spiritual nourishment prayer can best provide.

Laws and institutions, as viewed by Bahá'u'lláh, can become really effective only when our inner spiritual life has been perfected and transformed. Otherwise religion will degenerate into a mere organization, and becomes a dead thing. The believers, particularly the young ones, should therefore fully realize the necessity of praying. For prayer is absolutely indispensable to their inner spiritual development, and this, as already stated, is the very foundation and purpose of the religion of God.

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Youth, Junior (Do Great Deeds)

He urges you to make up your minds to do great, great deeds for the Faith; the condition of the world is steadily growing worse, and your generation must provide the saints, heroes, martyrs and administrators of future years. With dedication and will power you can rise to great heights!

He appreciates very much the devoted and determined spirit with which you are facing the future and all the Bahá'í responsibility it will bring you increasingly. The part of youth is very great; you have the opportunity to really determine to exemplify in word and deed the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and to show your generation that the New World Order He has brought is a tangible reality in the lives of His followers.