XXVII. SPECIAL INSTITUTIONS

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English

XXVII. SPECIAL INSTITUTIONS

A. Institutions Defined

1. **Definition of Institution**

"While the friends may be concerned at the range of agencies of the Cause which are called institutions, attempts at classification are not useful, for of course an institution is anything which has been instituted. One group of Bahá'í institutions is of the administration of the Faith on international, national and local levels, another represents functions based upon laws given by the Manifestation. It is sufficient to accept what is officially named an institution, while observing the range of appropriate applications of that title."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 20, 1980)

1. **Clarification of the Institutions Attendant to the Guardianship**

"According to the 'Will and Testament' the institutions attendant to the Guardianship are the body of the Hands of the Cause, and the nine Hands of the Cause occupied in important services in the work of the Guardian. As you know, in his own lifetime, the Guardian also authorised the Hands to appoint Auxiliary Board members for protection and for propagation."

"However, this does not mean that the institution of the Counsellors, as presently organized, is, strictly speaking, an institution attendant to the Guardianship. To understand this subject in its several aspects you are advised to study carefully the letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated 24 April61. You will find the relevant passage from this letter on pages 11-13 of the compilation entitled 'The Institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors' published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 1, 1982)

B. The Guardianship

1. The Guardianship — Acceptance of — Day that Will Not Be Followed by Night

"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 [pg 311] 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 Bab 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 the 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 a divinely-guided individual in matters pertaining to His Faith."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 25, 1948: Bahá'í News, No. 232, p. 8, June 1950)

1. The Word "Guardianship" Used with Various Meanings

"Regarding your first question, it is important that when considering the references to the Guardianship in the writings of the Faith, and especially when striving to understand how these references apply at the present time, you should realize that the word 'guardianship' is used with various meanings in different contexts. In certain contexts it indicates the office and function of the Guardian himself, in others it refers to the line of Guardians, in still others it bears a more extended meaning embracing the Guardian and his attendant institutions. Nevertheless, it would be quite incorrect to state, at the present time when there is no Guardian, that the Hands of the Cause are members of the Institution of Guardianship. Nor would it be correct to so designate the International Teaching Centre, the Counsellors, the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 5, 1977)

1. Prerogatives and Duties Invested in the Guardian Are of Three Kinds

"In the specific sense of referring to the office and function of the Guardian himself, the House of Justice finds that the prerogatives and duties vested in him are of three kinds. First, as was explained in a letter to an individual believer, which was published in 'Wellspring of Guidance', there are a number of functions and objects which the Guardianship shares with the Universal House of Justice and which the House of Justice must continue to pursue. Secondly, there are other functions of the Guardianship which, in the absence of a Guardian, devolve upon the Universal House of Justice, for example, the Headship of the Faith, the responsibility for directing

the work of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God and of ensuring the continuing discharge of the functions of protection and propagation vested in that Institution, and the right to administer the Huququ'llah. Thirdly, there are those prerogatives and duties which lie exclusively within the sphere of the Guardian himself and, therefore, in the absence of a Guardian, are inoperative except insofar as the monumental work already performed by Shoghi Effendi continues to be of enduring benefit to the Faith. Such a function is that of authoritative interpretation of the Teachings."

(Ibid.) [pg 312]

1. **Infallibility of the Guardian is Not for Individual Believers to Limit or to Judge**

"Shoghi Effendi was asked several times during his ministry to define the sphere of his operation and his infallibility. The replies he gave and which were written on his behalf are most illuminating. He explains that he is not an infallible authority on subjects such as economics and science, nor does he go into technical matters since his infallibility is confined to 'matters which are related strictly to the Cause'. He further points out that 'he is not, like the Prophet, omniscient at will', that his 'infallibility covers interpretation of the revealed word and its application', and that he is also 'infallible in the protection of the Faith'. Furthermore, in one of the letters, the following guideline is set forth: '...It is not for individual believers to limit the sphere of the Guardian's authority, or to judge when they have to obey the Guardian and when they are free to reject his judgement. Such an attitude would evidently lead to confusion and to schism. The Guardian being the appointed interpreter of the Teachings, it is his responsibility to state what matters which, affecting the interests of the Faith, demand on the part of the believers complete and unqualified obedience to his instructions.'"

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 22, 1977)

1. **Authoritative Interpretation of the Teachings is the Exclusive Right of the Guardian After Abdu'l-Bahá**

"It must always be remembered that authoritative interpretation of the Teachings was, after Abdu'l-Bahá, the exclusive right of the Guardian, and fell within the 'sacred and prescribed domain' of the Guardianship, and therefore the Universal House of Justice cannot and will not infringe upon that domain. The exclusive sphere of the Universal House of Justice is to 'pronounce upon and deliver the final judgment on such laws and ordinances as Bahá'u'lláh has not expressly revealed'. Apart from this fundamental difference in the functions of the twin pillars of the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, insofar as the other duties of the Head of the Faith are concerned, the Universal House of Justice shares with the Guardian the responsibility for the application of the revealed Word, the protection of the Faith, as well as the duty 'to insure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its Teachings.' However, the Universal House of Justice is not omniscient; like the Guardian, it wants to be

provided with facts when called upon to render a decision, and like him it may well change its decision when new facts emerge."

(Ibid.)

1. **The Distinction Between Authoritative Interpretation and Individual Understanding**

"A clear distinction is made in our Faith between authoritative interpretation and the interpretation or understanding that each individual arrives at for himself from his study of its teachings. While the former is confined to the Guardian, the latter, according to the guidance given to us by the Guardian himself, should by no means be suppressed. In fact such individual interpretation is considered the fruit of man's [pg 313] rational power and conducive to a better understanding of the teachings, provided that no disputes or arguments arise among the friends and the individual himself understands and makes it clear that his views are merely his own. Individual interpretations continually change as one grows in comprehension of the teachings. In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi it is stated, 'To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form. There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for. They, therefore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their own. As the Cause is still in its early days we must be most careful lest we fall into this error and injure the Movement we so much adore. There is no limit to the study of the Cause. The more we read the Writings, the more truths we can find in Them, the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous.' So, although individual insights can be enlightening and helpful, they can also be misleading. The friends must therefore learn to listen to the views of others without being over-awed or allowing their faith to be shaken, and to express their own views without pressing them on their fellow Bahá'ís."

"The Cause of God is organic, growing and developing like a living being. Time and again it has faced crises which have perplexed the believers, but each time the Cause, impelled by the immutable purpose of God, overcame the crisis and went on to greater heights."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

1. **God Ordained, in This Day, that Guidance Has Been Vouchsafed to Man Through Institutions**

"...In view of the fact that guidance in this day, through the bounty of God, and because of the very nature of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, has been vouchsafed to man through institutions in this world; namely the Guardianship at present; and also in the future, the International House of Justice; individuals are not in a position to interpret the Teachings, and have no justification for claiming special stations."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, December 13, 1955)

1. **Future Guardians**

"Future Guardians are clearly envisaged and referred to in the Writings, but there is nowhere any promise or guarantee that the line of Guardians would endure forever; on the contrary there are clear indications that the line could be broken. Yet, in spite of this, there is repeated insistence in the Writings on the indestructability of the Covenant and the immutability of God's Purpose for this Day."

"One of the most striking passages which envisage the possibility of such a break in the line of the Guardians is in the Kitab-i-Aqdas itself:

'The endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. No one has the right to lay hold on them without leave from the Dawning-Place of Revelation. After Him the decision rests with the Aghsan (Branches), and after them with the House of Justice — should it be established in the world by then — so that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Sites exalted in this Cause, and for [pg 314] that which they have been commanded by God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful. Otherwise the endowments should be referred to the people of Baha, who speak not without His leave and who pass no judgement but in accordance with that which God has ordained in this Tablet, they who are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth, so that they may spend them on that which has been decreed in the Holy Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful.'"

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to Hands of the Cause of God, Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, December 7, 1969)

1. **The Guardian is Assured the Guidance of Both Bahá'u'lláh and the Bab**

"Instructions sent on behalf of the Guardian are binding, as are the words of the Guardian; although of course, they are not the Guardian's words."

"The Guardian's infallibility covers interpretation of the revealed word and its application. Likewise any instructions he may issue having to do with the protection of the Faith, or its well-being must be closely obeyed, as he is infallible in the protection of the Faith. He is assured the guidance of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Bab, as the Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Bahá clearly reveals."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 20, 1956)

1. **He is the Interpreter of the Word: Divine Truth is Relative**

"The Will and Testament of Bahá'u'lláh and the Will and Testament of the Master clearly and explicitly indicate that the Interpreter of the Word was the Centre of the Covenant and now is the Guardian. There are no other Interpreters whatsoever and no individual may interpret. This is strictly forbidden."

"Divine Truth is relative and that is why we are enjoined to constantly refer the seeker to the Word itself — and why any explanations we make to ease the journey of the soul of any individual must be based on the Word — and the Word alone."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, June 4, 1957)

1. **Guardianship Does Not Lose Significance nor Position Because There is No Living Guardian**

"During the whole thirty-six years of his Guardianship Shoghi Effendi functioned without the Universal House of Justice. Now the Universal House of Justice must function without the Guardian, but the principle of inseparability remains. The Guardianship does not lose its significance nor position in the Order of Bahá'u'lláh merely because there is no living Guardian. We must guard against two extremes: one is to argue that because there is no Guardian all that was written about the Guardianship and its position in the Bahá'í World Order is a dead letter and was unimportant; the other is to be so overwhelmed by the significance of the Guardianship as to underestimate the strength of the Covenant, or to be tempted to compromise with the clear texts in order to find somehow, in some way, a 'Guardian'."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 86-87)

1. **Station of Guardianship Cannot Be Claimed Ere the Expiration of 1000 Years**

"My purpose is this, that ere the expiration of a thousand years, no one has the right to utter a single word, even to claim the station of Guardianship." [pg 315]

"The Most Holy Book is the Book to which all peoples shall refer, and in it the Laws of God have been revealed. Laws not mentioned in the Book should be referred to the decision of the Universal House of Justice..."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Persian and Arabic Tablets, Vol. III, pp. 499-501: cited by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Netherlands, March 9, 1965: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 47)

C. The Universal House of Justice

1. **The Universal House of Justice Called into Being by the Author of the Faith**

"...In it (Kitab-i-Aqdas) He formally ordains the institution of the 'House of Justice,' ... and designates its members as the 'Men of Justice,' the 'Deputies of God,' the 'Trustees of the All-Merciful,'..."

(Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, 1987 ed., Wilmette, p. 214)

1. **Apex of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order**

"...There are statements from the Master and the Guardian indicating that the Universal House of Justice, in addition to being the Highest Legislative Body of the Faith, is also the body to which

all must turn, and is the 'apex' of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, as well as the 'supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth.'"

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

1. **Legislative Functions**

"The centre of the executive power is the government, and the legislative power lies in the hands of thoughtful and wise men. On the other hand, if these strong pillars and firm foundations are not complete and comprehensive, how can it be supposed that there will be safety and salvation for the nation? But as, in these latter days, such excellency is rare, the government and the whole body of the nation are in sore need of just and discerning directions. Thus it is of the utmost importance to establish an assembly of learned men, who, being proficient in the different sciences and capable of dealing with all the present and future requirements, will settle the questions in accordance with forbearance and firmness."

"All the civic affairs and the legislation of material laws for the increasing needs of the enlightened humanity belong to the House of Justice. This, the House of Justice, will be not only a body for the legislation of laws according to the spirit and requirement of the time, but a board of arbitration for the settlement of all disputes arising between peoples. When the Universal House of Justice is organized the members will do their utmost for the realization of greater cordiality and comity amongst the nations. The Laws of Bahá'u'lláh are the unchangeable, organic laws of the Universal House of Justice. They are the very foundation upon which the structure of additional legislation is built... Again, I repeat, the House of Justice, whether National or Universal, has only legislative power and not executive power...."

(From words of Abdu'l-Bahá in: Star of the West, Vol. VII, No. 15, pp. 138-139)

1. **Process of Legislating**

"It should be understood by the friends that before legislating upon any matter [pg 316] the Universal House of Justice studies carefully and exhaustively both the Sacred Texts and the writings of Shoghi Effendi on the subject. The interpretations written by the beloved Guardian cover a vast range of subjects and are equally as binding as the Text itself."

"...Unity of doctrine is maintained by the existence of the authentic texts of Scripture and the voluminous interpretations of Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, together with the absolute prohibition against anyone propounding 'authoritative' or 'inspired' interpretations or usurping the function of the Guardian. Unity of administration is assured by the authority of the Universal House of Justice."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Netherlands, March 9, 1965: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 52-53)

"...As already announced to the friends, a careful study of the Writings and interpretations on any subject on which the House of Justice proposes to legislate always preceded its act of legislation. Second, the Universal House of Justice, itself assured of divine guidance, is well aware of the

absence of the Guardian and will approach all matters of legislation only when certain of its sphere of jurisdiction, a sphere which the Guardian has confidently described as 'clearly defined'..."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966: Ibid., p. 84)

"It may help the friends to understand this relationship if they are aware of some of the processes that the Universal House of Justice follows when legislating. First, of course, it observes the greatest care in studying the Sacred Texts and the interpretations of the Guardian as well as considering the views of all the members. After long consultation the process of drafting a pronouncement is put into effect. During this process the whole matter may well be reconsidered. As a result of such reconsideration the final judgement may be significantly different from the conclusion earlier favoured, or possibly it may be decided not to legislate at all on that subject at that time...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 7, 1969: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 40)

1. **Has General Functions of Protecting and Administering the Cause**

"The Universal House of Justice, beyond its function as the enactor of legislation, has been invested with the more general functions of protecting and administering the Cause, solving obscure questions and deciding upon matters that have caused difference...."

(Ibid., pp. 38-39)

1. **Infallibility of the Universal House of Justice is Not Dependent on the Presence of the Guardian**

"The infallibility of the Universal House of Justice, operating within its ordained sphere, has not been made dependent upon the presence in its membership of the Guardian of the Cause. Although in the realm of interpretation the Guardian's pronouncements are always binding, in the area of the Guardian's participation in legislation it is always the decision of the House itself which must prevail. This is [pg 317] supported by the words of the Guardian: 'The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgement on such laws and ordinances as Bahá'u'lláh has not expressly revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested.'"

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

1. **The Universal House of Justice Has Conferred Infallibility**

"To epitomize: essential infallibility belongs especially to the supreme Manifestations, and acquired infallibility is granted to every holy soul. For instance, the Universal House of Justice, if it

be established under the necessary conditions — with members elected from all the people — that House of Justice will be under the protection and the unerring guidance of God. If that House of Justice shall decide unanimously, or by a majority, upon any question not mentioned in the Book, that decision and command will be guarded from mistake. Now the members of the House of Justice have not, individually, essential infallibility; but the body of the House of Justice is under the protection and the unerring guidance of God: this is called conferred infallibility."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, 1984 ed., Wilmette, pp. 172-173)

1. **The Process of Deducing Subsidiary Laws from the Original Text is the Right of the House of Justice**

"As regards the need to have deductions made from the Writings to help in the formulation of the enactments of the House of Justice, there is the following text from the pen of Abdu'l-Bahá:

'Those matters of major importance which constitute the foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice. The wisdom of this is that the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place. Therefore the House of Justice will take action accordingly.

'Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions. God forbid! The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.'"

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

1. **In the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh Certain Functions Are Reserved to Certain Institutions**

"In the Order of Bahá'u'lláh there are certain functions which are reserved to certain institutions, and others which are shared in common, even though they may be more in the special province of one or the other. For example, although the Hands of the Cause of God have the specific functions of protection and propagation, and are specialized for these functions, it is also the duty of the [pg 318] Universal House of Justice and the Spiritual Assemblies to protect and teach the Cause — indeed teaching is a sacred obligation placed upon every believer by Bahá'u'lláh. Similarly, although after the Master authoritative interpretation was exclusively vested in the Guardian, and although legislation is exclusively the function of the Universal House of Justice, these two Institutions are, in Shoghi Effendi's words, 'complementary in their aim and purpose.' 'Their common, their fundamental object is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings.' Whereas the Universal House of Justice

cannot undertake any function which exclusively appertained to the Guardian, it must continue to pursue the object which it shares in common with the Guardianship."

(Ibid.)

1. **The Decisions and Laws Made by the Universal House of Justice Are Inspired and Confirmed by the Holy Spirit — This Exclusive Authority Will Preclude Errors of Past Dispensations**

"Say, O people: Verily the Supreme House of Justice is under the wings of your Lord, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful, that is under His protection, His care, and His shelter; for He has commanded the firm believers to obey that blessed, sanctified and all-subduing body, whose sovereignty is divinely-ordained and of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whose laws are inspired and spiritual."

"Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice. In the religion of Islam, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text; although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified. These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence, and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances. All these were enforced. Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice. The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Bahá'í community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division and dispersion. The oneness of the world would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God would be shaken."

(From the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in a letter to an individual believer, May 27, 1966 by the Universal House of Justice)

1. **The Strong Cord to which All Must Cling is the Covenant**

"However great may be our inability to understand the mystery and the implications of the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the strong cord to which all must cling with assurance is the Covenant. The emphatic and vigorous language of Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament is at this time, as at the time of His own passing, the safeguard of the Cause: 'Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not [pg 319] expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant.' And again: 'All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.'"

(Ibid.)

1. **The Universal House of Justice is the "Last Refuge of a Tottering Civilization"**

"The Universal House of Justice, which the Guardian said would be regarded by posterity as 'the last refuge of a tottering civilization' is now, in the absence of the Guardian, the sole infallibly guided institution in the world to which all must turn, and on it rests the responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God in accordance with the revealed Word. There are statements from the Master and the Guardian indicating that the Universal House of Justice, in addition to being the Highest Legislative Body of the Faith, is also the body to which all must turn, and is the 'apex' of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, as well as the 'supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth'. The Guardian has in his writings specified for the House of Justice such fundamental functions as the formulation of future world-wide teaching plans, the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, and the guidance, organisation and unification of the affairs of the Cause throughout the world. Furthermore in 'God Passes By' the Guardian makes the following statement: 'The Kitab-i-Aqdas ... not only preserves for posterity the basic laws and ordinances on which the fabric of His future World Order must rest, but ordains, in addition to the function of interpretation which it confers upon His Successor, the necessary institutions through which the integrity and unity of His Faith can alone be safeguarded.' He has also, in 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh' written, that the members of the Universal House of Justice 'and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation.'"

(Ibid.)

1. **The Chosen Successors of Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá**

"...They have ... in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world."

(Shoghi Effendi: World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, 1982 ed., Wilmette, pp. 19-20)

1. **The Universal House of Justice Bears Responsibility for Executive and Judicial Functions as Well as Legislative**

"While ultimately the major function of the Universal House of Justice will be that [pg 320] of legislation, it has continuing responsibility for executive and judicial functions of the institution. Therefore it is not accurate to refer to members of the House of Justice as 'legislators,' understandable as is the wish to give simple titles rather than complex ones."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Grenada, May 19, 1985)

1. **Appointment of a Successor to Shoghi Effendi or More Hands of the Cause Not Possible**

"As the Universal House of Justice has already announced, it cannot legislate to make possible the appointment of a successor to Shoghi Effendi, nor can it legislate to make possible the appointment of any more Hands of the Cause, but it must do everything within its power to ensure the performance of all those functions which it shares with these two mighty Institutions. It must make provision for the proper discharge in future of the functions of protection and propagation, which the administrative bodies share with the Guardianship and the Hands of the Cause; it must, in the absence of the Guardian, receive and disburse the Huququ'llah, in accordance with the following statement of Abdu'l-Bahá: 'Disposition of the Huquq, wholly or partly, is permissible, but this should be done by permission of the authority in the Cause to whom all must turn'; it must make provision in its Constitution for the removal of any of its members who commits a sin 'injurious to the common weal'. Above all, it must, with perfect faith in Bahá'u'lláh, proclaim His Cause and enforce His Law so that the Most Great Peace shall be firmly established in this world and the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth shall be accomplished."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

D. Supreme Tribunal

1. Factor in Establishing the Lesser Peace

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Bahá'í News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

1. The Supreme Tribunal Will Fulfil Task of Establishing Universal Peace

"...the question of universal peace, about which Bahá'u'lláh says that the Supreme Tribunal must be established: ...the Supreme Tribunal which Bahá'u'lláh has described will fulfil this sacred task with the utmost might and power. And His plan is this: that the national assemblies of each country and nation — that is to say parliaments — should elect two or three persons who are the choicest men of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, [pg 321] the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government. From among these people the members of the Supreme Tribunal will be elected, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these

delegates is fully representative of his nation. When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority rule, there will no longer be any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant. In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal. Consider what a firm foundation this is!..."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 306-307)

1. **The Mission of the Supreme Tribunal is to Prevent War**

"A Supreme Tribunal shall be elected by the peoples and Governments of every nation, where members from each country and Government shall assemble in unity. All disputes shall be brought before this Court, its mission being to prevent war."

"A Supreme Tribunal shall be established by the peoples and Governments of every nation, composed of members elected from each country and Government. The members of this Great Council shall assemble in unity. All disputes of an international character shall be submitted to this Court, its work being to arrange by arbitration everything which otherwise would be a cause of war. The mission of this Tribunal would be to prevent war."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks, London, 1961 ed., pp. 132 and 155)

1. **International Executive — A Step Leading to Bahá'í World Government**

"As regards the International Executive referred to by the Guardian in his 'Goal of a New World Order', it should be noted that this statement refers by no means to the Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, but simply to that world government which will herald the advent and lead to the final establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The formation of this International Executive, which corresponds to the executive head or board in present-day national governments, is but a step leading to the Bahá'í world government of the future, and hence should not be identified with either the institution of the Guardianship or that of the International House of Justice."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 17, 1934)

E. Hands of the Cause of God

1. **The Institution of "The Learned"**

"...the beloved Guardian wrote on 4 November 1931: 'In this holy cycle the "learned" are, on the one hand, the Hands of the Cause of God, and, on the other, the teachers and diffusers of His teachings who do not rank as Hands, but who have attained an eminent position in the teaching work. As to the "rulers" they refer to the members of the Local, National and International Houses of Justice. The duties of each of these souls will be determined in the future.'" (Translated from the Persian). [pg 322]

"The Hands of the Cause of God, the Counsellors and the members of the Auxiliary Boards fall within the definition of the 'learned' given by the beloved Guardian. Thus they are all intimately interrelated and it is not incorrect to refer to the three ranks collectively as one institution."

"However, each is also a separate institution in itself...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, April 24, 1972: Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 92)

1. **The Hands of the Cause Not Heirs of Any Name or Title**

"...The Hands of the Cause in this dispensation are not heirs of any name or title. Nay, they are holy personages, the rays of whose holiness and spirituality throw light on the minds of people. Hearts are attracted by the beauty of their morals, the sincerity of their intentions and the sense of equity and justice. Souls are involuntarily enamoured of their praiseworthy morals and laudable qualities; faces turn spontaneously to their manifest signs and traces. It is not a title that may be awarded to whomsoever it pleases, nor is it a chair of honour in which whosoever pleases sits. The Hands of the Cause are the Hands of God. Hence whosoever is the servant and the promoter of the Word of God, he is the Hand of God. The object is the spirit and not the letters or words. The more self-effacing one is, the more he is assisted in the Cause of God; and the more meek and humble, the nearer is he to God."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Mahmoud's Diary, pp. 29-30)

1. **Tablet Revealed for the Hands of the Cause**

"May My praise, salutations, and greetings rest upon the stars of the heaven of Thy knowledge — the Hands of Thy Cause — they who circled round Thy Will, spoke not save after Thy leave, and clung not save unto Thy hem. They are servants whose mention and praise are recorded in the Holy Writ, Thy Books and Tablets wherein are extolled their services, victories, and high resolve. Through them the standards of Thy oneness were raised in Thy cities and realms, and the banners of Thy sanctity were uplifted in Thy Kingdom. They utter not a word on any subject ere Thou hast spoken, for their ears are attuned to hear Thy Command, and their eyes are expectant to witness the effulgence of Thy Countenance. They are servants who have been well-favoured, have attained Thy good-pleasure, and have arisen in Thy Cause. The people of the world, the denizens of the Kingdom, and the dwellers of Paradise and the Realm on High, and beyond them, the Tongue of Grandeur send salutation upon them. Praise be to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast aided me to make mention of them and to praise them and their stations in Thy Cause and in Thy days."

"No God is there save Thee, the Reckoner, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

(Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, translated in the Holy Land: Bahá'í News, No. 420, p. 2, March 1966)

1. **Auxiliary Institution of Guardianship**

"...The institution of the Hands of the Cause of God was brought into existence in the time of Bahá'u'lláh and when the Administrative Order was proclaimed and formally established by Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will, it became an auxiliary institution of the Guardianship. The Auxiliary Boards, in their turn, were brought [pg 323] into being by Shoghi Effendi as an auxiliary institution of the Hands of the Cause."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, April 24, 1972: Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 92)

1. **Functions of the Hands of the Cause**

"...The institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, charged in the Sacred Texts with the specific duties of protecting and propagating the Faith, has a particularly vital responsibility to discharge. In their capacity as protectors of the Faith, the Hands will continue to take action to expel Covenant-breakers and to reinstate those who sincerely repent, subject in each instance to the approval of the Universal House of Justice."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the World, October 1963: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 13-14)

1. **The Authority of Expulsion and Reinstatement Exercised by the Hands of the Cause**

"The authority of expulsion and reinstatement will be exercised by the Hands of the Cause of God, subject in each instance to the approval of the Universal House of Justice. When a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors learns of any incipient Covenant-breaking, the matter should be reported without delay to a Hand of the Cause available in the area, who will deal with the matter. A copy of the report should be sent to the Hands in the Holy Land and to the other members of the Board. Should no Hand of the Cause be available in the area, the report should be sent to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, with copy to the other members of the Board, in which case the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land will deal with the matter. Such reports should contain full details of actions already taken."

"Reinstatement of Covenant-breakers will follow similar procedures."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors, June 24, 1968)

1. **Prerogative and Obligation of the Hands of the Cause to Consult with Boards of Counsellors and National Assemblies**

"The Hands of the Cause of God have the prerogative and obligation to consult with the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies on any subject which, in their view, affects the interests of the Cause...."

"...The House of Justice will call upon them to undertake special missions on its behalf, to represent it on both Bahá'í and other occasions and to keep it informed of the welfare of the

Cause ... they will operate increasingly on an intercontinental level, a factor which will lend tremendous impetus to the diffusion throughout the Bahá'í world of the spiritual inspiration channelled through them — the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, June 24, 1968: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 7-8)

1. **Inappropriate for Them to Serve on Administrative Institutions**

"The exalted rank and specific functions of the Hands of the Cause of God make [pg 324] it inappropriate for them to be elected or appointed to administrative institutions, or to be elected as delegates to national conventions. Furthermore, it is their desire and the desire of the House of Justice that they be free to devote their entire energies to the vitally important duties conferred upon them in the Holy Writings...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, November 1964: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 42)

1. **The Rank and Position of the Hands of the Cause of God**

"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[1] should be mentioned the Hands, and then the National bodies. Because the Guardian has restrained the Hands at this time, and given as one of their functions, aiding the National bodies in winning the goals of the Ten Year Crusade, the National bodies should not misunderstand the true position of the Hands. They should report to the Hands, where teaching assistance is needed, etc., so the Hands, and their Auxiliary Boards, may be of the greatest assistance."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 30, 1957)

F. International Teaching Centre

1. **The International Teaching Centre Establishment and Duties**

"...The time is indeed propitious for the establishment of the International Teaching Centre, a development which, at one and the same time, brings to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land and provides for its extension into the future, links the institution of the Boards of Counsellors even more intimately with that of the Hands of the Cause of God, and powerfully reinforces the discharge of the rapidly growing responsibilities of the Universal House of Justice."

1. (and the Universal House of Justice)

"The duties now assigned to this nascent institution are:

— To coordinate, stimulate and direct the activities of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and to act as liaison between them and the Universal House of Justice.

— To be fully informed of the situation of the Cause in all parts of the world and to be able, from the background of this knowledge, to make reports and recommendations to the Universal House of Justice and give advice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors.

— To be alert to possibilities, both within and without the Bahá'í community, for the extension of the teaching work into receptive or needy areas, and to draw the attention of the Universal House of Justice and the Continental Boards of Counsellors to such possibilities, making recommendations for action.

— To determine and anticipate needs for literature, pioneers and travelling teachers and to work out teaching plans, both regional and global, for the approval of the Universal House of Justice."

"All the Hands of the Cause of God will be members of the International [pg 325] Teaching Centre. Each Hand will be kept regularly informed of the activities of the Centre through reports or copies of its minutes, and will be able, wherever he may be residing or travelling, to convey suggestions, recommendations and information to the Centre and, whenever he is in the Holy Land, to take part in the consultations and other activities of the Centre."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, June 8, 1973)

G. Continental Boards of Counsellors

1. Duties of Continental Boards of Counsellors

"...Their duties will include directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, consulting and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Cause in their areas."

"The Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation will henceforth report to the Continental Boards of Counsellors who will appoint or replace members of the Auxiliary Boards as circumstances may require...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, June 24, 1968: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 141-142)

"...The Counsellors are responsible for stimulating, counselling and assisting National Spiritual Assemblies, and also work with individuals, groups and Local Assemblies."

"...if the Counsellors find that a National Spiritual Assembly is not functioning properly, they should not hesitate to consult with the National Spiritual Assembly about this in a frank and loving way."

(From a message of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 30, 32)

1. **Terms of Office of the Continental Counsellors**

"In June 1979 we were moved to announce that the duration of the terms of office of Continental Counsellors would be five years, to start on the Day of the Covenant of this year...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, November 3, 1980)

1. **Relationship of Counsellors to National Spiritual Assemblies**

"The relationship of Continental Boards of Counsellors to National Spiritual Assemblies will follow the pattern of the relationship between the Hands of the Cause and National Spiritual Assemblies, outlined by the beloved Guardian in various communications. Within the framework of these, and of general instructions given to them by the Universal House of Justice, the Boards of Counsellors will decide the manner in which they will collaborate and consult with National Spiritual Assemblies in their areas...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, June 24, 1968) [pg 26]

1. **Relationship Between Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies**

"The statement that the Boards of Counsellors outrank the National Institutions of the Faith has a number of implications. A Board of Counsellors has the particular responsibility of caring for the protection and propagation of the Faith throughout a continental zone which contains a number of national Bahá'í communities. In performing these tasks it neither directs nor instructs the Spiritual Assemblies or individual believers, but it has the necessary rank to enable it to ensure that it is kept properly informed and that the Spiritual Assemblies give due consideration to its advice and recommendations. However, the essence of the relationships between Bahá'í institutions is loving consultation and a common desire to serve the Cause of God rather than a matter of rank or station."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, March 27, 1978)

1. **The Counsellors and Auxiliary Board Members Are Free from Administrative Responsibilities**

"The National Spiritual Assembly has the responsibility to formulate its plans and prosecute them. The Boards of Counsellors outrank the National Institutions of the Faith and are not engaged in the conduct and administering of these plans. This aloofness in itself provides them

with the opportunity to concentrate on the general and vital issues of the Cause, and enables them to provide guidance to the National Spiritual Assemblies, which are usually weighed down with the numberless current tasks and issues of the day-to-day work of the community. Furthermore, such freedom from administrative responsibilities makes it possible for the Counsellors and their Auxiliary Board members to be removed from the entanglements and involvements that engagement in administrative duties sometimes entails, and heightens their capacity to be a source of inspiration and stimulation to the friends."

(From a summary of points prepared by the Universal House of Justice, based on a letter from that Body to a National Spiritual Assembly, May 20, 1970)

1. **The Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assemblies Have One Common Objective**

"The Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assemblies have one common objective which is service to the Cause and the promotion and protection of its interests. The closer the collaboration between these two institutions the richer will be the blessings showered upon them and the community."

(Ibid.)

1. **The Counsellors Follow in the Footsteps of the Hands of the Cause**

"The Hands of the Cause have the essential duties of propagation and protection of the Faith. Although the Counsellors occupy a rank lower than that of the Hands of the Cause, they are nevertheless charged with the same two responsibilities and follow in the footsteps of the Hands of the Cause."

(Ibid.) [pg 327]

1. **The Functions of the Counsellors and the Spiritual Assemblies Are Complementary**

"Since the functions of the propagation and the protection of the Faith are among the duties of Spiritual Assemblies, wholehearted collaboration and regular, continuous and full consultation between these Assemblies and the institution of the Counsellors are necessary. It should not be assumed that these two arms act independently of each other and are not in need of the essential support which each must give to the other. The functions are indeed complementary."

(Ibid.)

1. **The Proper Functioning of Society Requires Preservation of Ranks and Classes**

"It is clear from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as from those of Abdu'l-Bahá and the interpretations of the Guardian, that the proper functioning of human society requires the preservation of ranks and classes within its membership. The friends should recognize this without envy or jealousy, and those who occupy ranks should never exploit their position or regard themselves as being superior to others...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, March 27, 1978)

1. **Pride and Self-Aggrandisement Are Among the Most Deadly of Sins**

"Courtesy, reverence, dignity, respect for the rank and achievements of others are virtues which contribute to the harmony and well-being of every community, but pride and self-aggrandisement are among the most deadly of sins."

"The House of Justice hopes that all the friends will remember that the ultimate aim in life of every soul should be to attain spiritual excellence — to win the good pleasure of God. The true spiritual station of any soul is known only to God. It is quite a different thing from the ranks and stations that men and women occupy in the various sectors of society. Whoever has his eyes fixed on the goal of attaining the good pleasure of God will accept with joy and radiant acquiescence whatever work or station is assigned to him in the Cause of God, and will rejoice to serve Him under all conditions."

"There are many passages on this theme in the Holy Writings, and the Universal House of Justice hopes that these remarks will help the friends to turn to them and understand their purport."

(Ibid.)

1. **Differentials of Rank Meant to Canalize, Not Obstruct the Work of the Cause**

"...the transcendent spirit of loving cooperation which must motivate and infuse the conduct of any institution or any believer, whether he labours in the capacity of a member of an institution or as an individual who desires to advance the interests of the Faith. The differentials of rank, functions or procedures between agencies of the Bahá'í administration are meant to canalize, not obstruct, the work of the Cause; and it is the fervent hope of the House of Justice that these aspects of the administration will properly be viewed in the context of humble service to the Blessed Perfection, which is the loftiest objective of all who gather under the banner of the Most Great Name."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 10, 1983) [pg 328]

1. **Counsellors Should Give Wide Latitude to Auxiliary Board Members in Carrying Out Their Work**

"The Counsellors in each continental zone have wide latitude in the carrying out of their work. Likewise they should give to each Auxiliary Board member considerable freedom of action within his own allocated area. Although the Counsellors should regularly direct the work of the Auxiliary Board members, the latter should realise that they need not wait for direction; the nature of their work is such that they should be continually engaged in it according to their own best judgement, even if they are given no specific tasks to perform. Above all the Auxiliary Board members should build up a warm and loving relationship between themselves and the believers in their area so that the Local Spiritual Assemblies will spontaneously turn to them for

advice and assistance."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969)

1. **Assemblies Plan and Direct the Work — The Plans Should Be Well Known to Counsellors and Auxiliary Board Members**

"It is the Spiritual Assemblies who plan and direct the work, but these plans should be well known to the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members, because one of the ways in which they can assist the Assemblies is by urging the believers continually to support the plans of the Assemblies. If a National Spiritual Assembly has adopted one goal as preeminent in a year, the Auxiliary Board members should bear this in mind in all their contacts with the believers and should direct their attention to the plans of the National Assembly, and stimulate them to enthusiastically support them."

(Ibid.)

1. **The Counsellors May Report Misconduct of Individuals to the National Spiritual Assembly Through Board Member**

"Information about the conduct of individuals which adversely affects the interests of the Faith may be conveyed by the Counsellors to the National Spiritual Assembly either directly or, if the Counsellors so choose, through one or more of their Auxiliary Board members. The method of conveyance of such information is left to the discretion of the Counsellors."

"Any matter which is related to the protection of the Faith is obviously a primary concern of the National Assembly, as it is of the Counsellors."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands, June 16, 1982)

1. **Every Institution of This Divinely Created Order is One More Refuge for a Tottering Society**

"Every institution of this divinely created Order is one more refuge for a distraught populace; every soul illumined by the light of the sacred Message is one more link in the oneness of mankind, one more servant ministering to the needs of an ailing world. Even should the Bahá'í communities, in the years immediately ahead, be cut off from the World Centre or from one another — as some have already been — the Bahá'ís will neither halt nor hesitate; they will continue to pursue their objectives, [pg 329] guided by their Spiritual Assemblies, and led by the Counsellors, the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants..."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 25, 1975)

H. Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation

1. Two Auxiliary Boards with Distinct But Complementary Functions Established by the Guardian

"The beloved Guardian's message of October 1957 clearly indicates that the two Auxiliary Boards must have distinct but complementary functions. In that message he charges the Protection Board with 'the specific duty of watching over the security of the Faith' and says that the duty of the Propagation Board would 'henceforth be exclusively concerned with assisting the prosecution of the Ten-Year Plan.'"

"It must also be borne in mind that these twin agencies derive their complementary functions from one and the same source, are interrelated, and their members act as 'deputies', 'assistants' and 'advisers' of the Hands of the Cause of God, and, now, the Continental Boards of Counsellors. It is further clear that Shoghi Effendi was reluctant to specify in too great detail matters related to the functioning of the Auxiliary Boards, preferring to leave such things to be worked out in the light of experience."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, October 10, 1976)

1. Areas for the Protection Board and Propagation Board Are Not Necessarily the Same

"Provision for the work of the Auxiliary Boards is set forth in the By-Laws of the Universal House of Justice. See page 16, Article X of the printed copy of 'The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice'. However, the areas for the Protection Boards and the Propagation Boards need not be the same. They can overlap."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, August 3, 1973)

1. In Exceptional Circumstances One Board Member Might Cover an Area

"It is desirable that every part of each zone have both a Protection Board member and a Propagation Board member responsible for it, nevertheless it is within the discretion of each Board of Counsellors to assign a member of only one of the Boards to an area if, in the light of the conditions in that area, it believes this would be preferable."

(From a memorandum of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, October 7, 1973)

1. Advisable that Auxiliary Board Member Reside in Area which He Serves

"As you know, the beloved Guardian repeatedly emphasized the importance of Auxiliary Board members' visiting Assemblies and groups in the respective areas served by them. While details concerning the appointment and functioning of the members of Auxiliary Boards are left to the

Counsellors, in light of the Guardian's instructions cited above, they should take into consideration, in making a new appointment, the [pg 330] advisability of that appointee residing in the area which he serves."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, February 4, 1976)

1. **Many of the Functions of Members of the Two Boards and Assemblies Are Held in Common**

"In implementing their functions the members of the two Auxiliary Boards will often be promoting the same thing; moreover, many of their functions are held in common especially in the areas of consolidation and deepening, and it is left to each Board of Counsellors to determine the range of responsibility assigned to each Auxiliary Board member so that in the circumstances of each area maximum collaboration is achieved. Experience has shown that good results can usually be obtained when the Counsellors consult upon these matters with their Auxiliary Board members."

"It should, furthermore, be remembered that these self-same functions are being carried out by the Assemblies, National and Local, and their committees, which have at this time the great responsibility for actually executing the teaching plans and for administering, consolidating and protecting the Bahá'í communities. The Auxiliary Board members should thus watch carefully that their work reinforces and complements that of the administrative institutions."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, October 10, 1976)

1. **The Members of the Boards Should Encourage the Friends and Assemblies to be Unified**

"The members of the Boards in turn should encourage the friends — individuals and Assemblies alike — through correspondence and through visits, and impress upon them that the foundation of all of our activities is unity; they should encourage the friends to be unified under all circumstances, so that the work may go ahead with the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. The members of the Boards should likewise encourage the friends to contribute freely to the various Funds which have been established, as the Funds are the life-blood of the Community, and the work cannot be carried forward unless the life-blood is constantly circulating."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Hands of the Cause of God, June 7, 1954)

1. **Auxiliary Boards Will Stimulate and Help Teaching Work**

"The Guardian feels sure that the Auxiliary Boards ... will stimulate and help the teaching work, which of course includes pioneer work, and be a prop and mainstay to the often over-worked and over-burdened National Spiritual Assemblies...."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the American National Spiritual Assembly, June 20, 1954: Auxiliary Board Members, A Compilation dated March 25, 1969)

1. **Auxiliary Board Members Free to Have Direct Contact with Individuals and Local Assemblies**

"...Auxiliary Board Members are not only free, but are urged, in accordance with the writings of the beloved Guardian, to have direct contact with the individual friends, [pg 331] as well as the Local Spiritual Assemblies. It is at this very foundation of the administrative structure of the Faith where so often we find, alas, weakness and inefficiency."

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda and Central Africa, December 15, 1965: Ibid.)

1. **The Friends Should Feel Free to Refer to Either Auxiliary Board Member**

"The question has been raised as to how Local Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers are to know which matters they should refer to which Auxiliary Board member. We feel that this will be worked out at the local level in the light of experience, and that meanwhile the Assemblies and believers should not concern themselves unduly about it. They should feel free to refer to either Board, and if the Auxiliary Board member feels that the matter would better have been referred to his colleague, he can either himself pass the question on, or suggest the different approach to the Assembly or believer. This is similar to the situation, already familiar to Board members, when they have referred to them a matter which should properly be dealt with by a National Spiritual Assembly or one of its committees."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, October 10, 1976)

1. **Protection Board Members' Responsibilities**

"The need to protect the Faith from the attacks of its enemies is not generally appreciated by the friends because such attacks, particularly in the West, have so far been intermittent. However, we know that these attacks will increase and will become concerted and universal. The writings of our Faith clearly foreshadow not only an intensification of the machinations of internal enemies, whether religious or secular, as our beloved Faith pursues its onward march towards ultimate victory. Therefore, in the light of the warnings of Shoghi Effendi, the Auxiliary Boards for Protection should keep 'constantly' a 'watchful eye' on those 'who are known to be enemies or to have been put out of the Faith', discreetly 'investigate' their activities, warn intelligently the friends of the opposition inevitably to come, explain how each crisis in God's Faith has always proved to be a blessing in disguise, prepare them for the 'dire contests' which are 'destined to range the Army of Light against the forces of darkness', and, when the influence of the enemies spreads and reaches their fold, the members of these Auxiliary Boards should be alert to their schemes to 'dampen the zeal and sap the loyalty' of the believers and, by adopting 'wise and effective measures', counteract these schemes and arrest the spread of their influence. Above all, the members of the Protection Boards should concentrate on deepening the friends' knowledge of the Covenant and increasing their love and loyalty to it, on clearly and frankly

answering, in conformity with the teachings, whatever questions may trouble any of the believers, on fostering the spiritual profundity and strength of their Faith and certitude, and on promoting whatever will increase the spirit of loving unity in Bahá'í communities."

(Ibid.)

1. **Moral Problems Should Be Dealt with Only When They Arise**

"...We feel that instead of having Board Members investigate the private lives of [pg 332] believers, the Board Members should be called upon to educate the believers regarding the principles of the Faith and that problems involving alleged immorality or irregularities in marital status should be dealt with only when they arise. These problems should not be sought out."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, August 14, 1974)

1. **Propagation Board Members' Responsibilities**

"The primary tasks of the Propagation Boards, however, are to direct the believers' attention to the goals of whatever plans have been placed before them, to stimulate and assist them to promote the teaching work in the fields of proclamation, expansion, consolidation and pioneering, to encourage contributions to the funds, and to act as standard-bearers of the teachers of the Faith, leading them to new achievements in the diffusion of God's Message to their fellow human beings."

(Ibid.)

1. **Members of Auxiliary Boards Should Be Freed from Administrative Responsibilities**

"Members of the Auxiliary Boards should be freed from administrative responsibilities including serving on Committees and as delegates to conventions. In the event of any member of a National Assembly accepting appointment to a Board, the National Assembly should accept this as valid reason for that member's resignation from the Assembly; should a Board Member be elected to a National Assembly, he must choose on which body he will serve."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í World, November 1964)

1. **Auxiliary Board Member Must Decide What to Report to the Local Spiritual Assembly — Generally, the More Freely Information is Shared Between Institutions, the Better**

"In answer to your fourth question, the House of Justice instructs us to say that an element of judgement is required in deciding what are and what are not 'administrative' matters. Immoral actions of believers, for example, generally become subjects for administrative action only when they are blatant or flagrant, and reflect on the good name of the Faith. If a believer turns to an assistant or Auxiliary Board member for advice on a personal matter it is for the assistant or Auxiliary Board member to decide whether he should advise the believer to turn to his Spiritual

Assembly, whether he should himself give advice and, in either case, whether he should report the matter to the Counsellors, or to the Local Assembly, which, of course, would depend upon the degree of confidentiality he had undertaken to observe. Likewise, it is for the Counsellor to decide whether it is a matter of which the National Assembly should be informed. All this is, of course, within the general context that, apart from matters which ought to remain confidential, the more freely information is shared between the institutions of the Faith the better."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands, August 2, 1982) [pg 333]

1. **Board Member Should Feel Responsible Before God in the Discharge of His Responsibilities**

"Each Auxiliary Board Member who is allotted a specific area in which to serve, should establish contact with the Local Spiritual Assemblies and other localities of his area, encourage and guide all such centres in the implementation of the goals of the Plan, become informed of the relative strength and weakness of each locality, and feel responsible before God in the discharge of his responsibilities. Should he lose contact with a particular Local Spiritual Assembly or locality, he should use his initiative in finding a satisfactory solution to the problem. He should also send his reports and recommendations to the Counsellors on a regular basis."

(From a summary of points prepared by the Universal House of Justice, based on a letter from that Body to a National Spiritual Assembly, dated May 20, 1970)

I. Auxiliary Board Member Assistants

1. **Appointment of Auxiliary Board Members' Assistants**

"...we have decided to take a further step in the development of the institution by giving to each Continental Board of Counsellors the discretion to authorize individual Auxiliary Board members to appoint assistants..."

"The exact nature of the duties and the duration of the appointment of the assistants is also left to each Continental Board to decide for itself. Their aims should be to activate and encourage Local Spiritual Assemblies, to call the attention of Local Spiritual Assembly members to the importance of holding regular meetings, to encourage local communities to meet for the Nineteen Day Feasts and Holy Days, to help deepen their fellow-believers' understanding of the Teachings, and generally to assist the Auxiliary Board members in the discharge of their duties...."

"...Believers can serve at the same time both as assistants to Auxiliary Board members and on administrative institutions."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, October 7, 1973)

1. **Primary Aim of Assistants is to Stimulate and Assist the Believers**

"The establishment and strong growth of Local Spiritual Assemblies is one of the most fundamental requirements for the spread of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, the development of Bahá'í community life and the emergence of a transformed society..."

"Already a number of specific steps have been taken by the Universal House of Justice to assist National Spiritual Assemblies towards the attainment of these objectives. The most far-reaching of these steps is the authority given to members of the Auxiliary Boards to appoint assistants whose primary aim is to stimulate and assist the believers to bring into being and to consolidate Local Spiritual Assemblies in all localities where nine or more Bahá'ís reside, and to advise and assist these Assemblies in the performance of their God-given duties. The effects of the appointment of assistants by Auxiliary Board members are beginning to appear and will undoubtedly bear more and more fruit as the months pass."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies, March 6, 1977)

1. **An Assistant May Serve Two Board Members**

"As to the Assistants, it is evident that the Propagation Board members are in greater need of assistants. However, this should not inhibit the appointment and use of [pg 334] assistants by Protection Board members. It may be found that in many areas the appointment of only one Assistant to attend to both functions will prove sufficient for the time being, but we foresee a time when this situation may well change. Here again, the way in which relationships are worked out and coordinated must remain flexible and dependent on local conditions."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, October 10, 1967)

1. **The House of Justice Prefers that Assistants Not Retire from Administrative Work**

"As you know, when informing the Bahá'ís of the world in October 1973 of its decision to authorize the appointment of believers to assist Auxiliary Board members in the discharge of their duties, the House of Justice said that such appointees can serve at the same time both as assistants to Auxiliary Board members and on administrative institutions. As is often the case, a believer whose knowledge of the Teachings and devotion to the Faith make him or her a logical choice to serve on an Assembly becomes a suitable candidate for appointment as an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member. The House of Justice leans towards assistants not retiring from administrative work, although in consultation with their Spiritual Assembly it may be quite in order; it would be preferable, however, for the suggestion to come from the appointee and not from the Spiritual Assembly."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 31, 1982)

1. **Assistant Functions Individually, Does Not Function in Relation to National Assembly, Should Foster Warm Relationship Between Local Assembly and Board Member**

"In the relationship between assistants and the National Spiritual Assembly no problems should arise, because the functions are entirely separate. An assistant is appointed by an Auxiliary Board

member to help him in a specified area of the territory and he functions as an assistant only in relation to that area. Assistants, like Auxiliary Board members, function individually, not as a consultative body. Assistants who are members of a National Assembly or a national committee do not function as assistants in relation to that body, and they have the same duty to observe the confidentiality of its consultations, and of matters considered by the Assembly to be confidential, as does any other member. An assistant can, of course, be a member of a Local Spiritual Assembly, but his task here as an Assistant is to help the Spiritual Assembly to function harmoniously and efficiently in the discharge of its duties and this will hardly succeed if he gives the Assembly the feeling that he is reporting privately everything it does to the Auxiliary Board member. He should, on the contrary, do all he can to foster an atmosphere of warm and loving collaboration between the Local Assembly and the Board member."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands, August 2, 1982) [pg 335]

1. **Principle of Confidentiality Applies to Assistant Who is Assembly Member — Most Subjects Dealt with Are Not Confidential**

"Every institution in the Faith has certain matters which it considers should be kept confidential, and any member who is privy to such confidential information is obliged to preserve the confidentiality within the institution where he learned it. Such matters, however, are but a small portion of the business of any Bahá'í institution. Most subjects dealt with are of common interest and can be discussed openly with anyone. Where no confidentiality is involved the institutions must strive to avoid the stifling atmosphere of secrecy; on the other hand, every believer must know that he can confide a personal problem to an institution of the Faith with the assurance that knowledge of the matter will remain confidential."

"Members of Assemblies, whether they are assistants or not, are obviously in a position to receive confidential information as individuals from several sources. It is an important principle of the Faith that one must not promise what one is not going to fulfil. Therefore, if a Bahá'í accepts confidential information either by virtue of his profession (e.g., as a doctor, a lawyer, etc.), or by permitting another person to confide in him, he is duty bound to preserve that confidentiality."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 2, 1982)

J. Relationships Between Counsellors, Auxiliary Board Members and Assistants, and National and Local Assemblies and Committees

1. **Authority and Direction Flow from the Assemblies — Counsellors, Auxiliary Board Members and Assistants Advise, Stimulate and Assist**

"Authority and direction flow from the Assemblies, whereas the power to accomplish the tasks resides primarily in the entire body of the believers. It is the principal task of the Auxiliary Boards to assist in arousing and releasing this power. This is a vital activity, and if they are to be able to

perform it adequately they must avoid becoming involved in the work of administration. For example, when Auxiliary Board members arouse believers to pioneer, any believer who expresses his desire to do so should be referred to the appropriate committee which will then organise the project. Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members should not, themselves, organise pioneering or travel teaching projects. Thus it is seen that the Auxiliary Boards should work closely with the grass roots of the community: the individual believers, groups and Local Spiritual Assemblies, advising, stimulating and assisting them. The Counsellors are responsible for stimulating, counselling and assisting National Spiritual Assemblies, and also work with individuals, groups and Local Assemblies."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969: The Continental Boards of Counsellors, Wilmette, 1981, pp. 37-38)

1. **Auxiliary Board Member May Meet with Local Spiritual Assembly Occasionally**

"The National Spiritual Assembly should by all means encourage close co-operation and collaboration between the Auxiliary Board members and the Local Spiritual [pg 336] Assemblies, but it is not required that an Auxiliary Board member be present at all Local Assembly meetings. At occasional meetings, when the Local Spiritual Assembly wishes to discuss matters regarding the progress of the Cause in certain areas, for instance, attendance by a member of the Auxiliary Board would be of assistance, but such matters should be left to the discretion of the Local Spiritual Assemblies concerned. Of course whenever an Auxiliary Board member feels it necessary to consult with the Local Spiritual Assembly, he or she may request the Assembly to hold a meeting in his presence for the particular subject."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Burma, July 13, 1986)

1. **Relationship Between Auxiliary Board Members and Local Assemblies Should Not Be Hampered by Regulations**

"...we feel it important to stress that the relationship between Auxiliary Board members and Local Spiritual Assemblies should not be hampered by regulations; the methods of submitting information — either by minutes or otherwise — are optional... The relationship between Auxiliary Board members and Local Spiritual Assemblies should not be a matter of rights and prerogatives; it should be one of loving and wholehearted collaboration, in the spirit of the beloved Guardian's statement that 'the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation'."

(From a memorandum of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land, October 7, 1970)

1. **Problems with Board Members to be Reported to Counsellors**

"In general the House of Justice feels that where a National Spiritual Assembly has reason to believe that the actions of an Auxiliary Board member are giving rise to problems in a community, it is preferable for it to report the matter to the Counsellors rather than approach

the Board member directly. But where the matter is purely personal it may be preferable for the Assembly to take it up with the Board member himself initially in the hope that the problem can be solved confidentially although, of course, any serious problem with a Board member should be reported to the Counsellors in any case. Likewise, if the issue is a small and unimportant one it may be simply solved by direct action and not justify invoking the action of the Counsellors."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the South West Pacific, October 25, 1977)

1. **Counsellors Need Not Consult with National Spiritual Assembly About Appointments**

"We have your letter of 28th November 1968, informing us of the appointment of ... as a member of the Auxiliary Board, and raising the question as to whether the Continental Board of Counsellors should consult with National Spiritual Assemblies before appointing Auxiliary Board members from the membership of a National Spiritual Assembly."

"Inasmuch as the appointee himself must decide whether or not he can accept the appointment we see no necessity for a Continental Board of Counsellors to consult [pg 337] with National Spiritual Assemblies, except in very exceptional circumstances, and in such instances it is within the discretion of the Continental Board of Counsellors as to whether they will do so."

"However, the appointee is free to consult with his National Spiritual Assembly as to whether or not he should accept the appointment to the Auxiliary Board."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, December 17, 1968: The Continental Board of Counsellors, op. cit., p. 36)

1. **Gatherings of Counsellors, Board Members, National Assembly Members and Committee Members Encouraged**

"...in the implementation of that plan, there should be the closest collaboration between the National Spiritual Assembly and its committees and the Local Spiritual Assemblies on the one hand, and the Counsellors, Auxiliary Board members and their assistants on the other. An aspect of this collaboration could well be the gathering, if circumstances permit, of Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members with the National Assembly and its committees in a meeting where, because of their inevitable involvement in the operations of the plan, all together can become acquainted with the details of it and, at the same time, engender the esprit de corps necessary to its successful execution."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 10, 1983)

1. **Auxiliary Board Members and Committees Should Exchange Information**

"...it is permissible and highly desirable to have a direct and regular exchange of information between the committees and the Auxiliary Board members."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 1977)

1. **Board Member Reports and Recommendations Are Sent to Counsellors, Not to National Assembly or Committees**

"Reports and recommendations for action, however, are quite different. Auxiliary Board members should send theirs to the Counsellors and not to the National Assemblies or national committees directly. It is possible that the Counsellors may reject or modify the recommendation; or, if they accept it and pass it on to the National Spiritual Assembly, the National Assembly may decide to refuse it. For an Auxiliary Board Member to make recommendations directly to a national committee would lose the benefit of the knowledge and experience in a wider field than that of which the Auxiliary Board member is aware, and would short-circuit and undermine the authority of both the Counsellors and the National Assembly."

"Similarly, although an Auxiliary Board member can and should receive information from the National Assemblies and national committees, his primary source of information about the community should be his own direct contacts with Local Spiritual Assemblies, groups and individual believers. In this way the Counsellors as well as the National Spiritual Assemblies have the benefit of two independent sources of information about the community: through the Auxiliary Board members on the one hand, and through the national committees on the other."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969) [pg 338]

1. **National Spiritual Assemblies Should Refer to Protection Board Member for Protection Matters**

"It is the duty of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies to refer to the Auxiliary Board members for protection matters which may involve not only possible Covenant-breaking, but also problems of disunity within the community, the removal of voting rights or any other matters in which you feel the guidance and advice of the Protection Boards may be helpful to the institutions of the Faith. The Auxiliary Board members of course keep the Continental Board of Counsellors informed and the Counsellors then take whatever steps they feel are called for."

"You are free at any time to refer to the Continental Board of Counsellors and the Auxiliary Board members for protection any matters about which you are not clear involving the security of the Faith in your area and you will always find them willing to assist you in dealing with such problems."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Venezuela, October 1, 1979)

1. **Administrative Institutions May Request Auxiliary Board Member to Perform Certain Tasks**

"A National Spiritual Assembly, National Committee or Local Spiritual Assembly may directly request an Auxiliary Board member to perform such tasks as speaking at summer schools, appearing on television, etc. It should, of course, be left to the discretion of the Auxiliary Board member to determine whether such a request would clash with his other commitments."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 10, 1983)

1. **Auxiliary Board Members Teach, Advise on, Observe and Report on Administration**

"Assemblies sometimes misunderstand what is meant by the statement that Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members are concerned with the teaching work and not with administration. It is taken to mean that they may not give advice on administrative matters. This is quite wrong. One of the things that Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members should watch and report on is the proper working of administrative institutions. The statement that they do not have anything to do with administration means, simply, that they do not administer. They do not direct or organise the teaching work nor do they adjudicate in matters of personal conflict or personal problems. All these activities fall within the sphere of responsibility of the Spiritual Assemblies. But if an Auxiliary Board member finds a Local Spiritual Assembly functioning incorrectly he should call its attention to the appropriate Texts; likewise if, in his work with the community, an Auxiliary Board member finds that the teaching work is being held up by inefficiency of national committees, he should report this in detail to the Counsellors who will then decide whether to refer it to the National Spiritual Assembly concerned. Similarly, if the Counsellors find that a National Spiritual Assembly is not functioning properly, they should not hesitate to consult with the National Spiritual Assembly about this in a frank and loving way."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969: The Continental Boards of Counsellors, op. cit., pp. 39-40) [pg 339]

1. **It is Not Necessary to Inform National Assembly When Board Members Are Working with a Local Spiritual Assembly**

"It is not necessary for the Continental Board of Counsellors to inform the National Spiritual Assembly whenever an Auxiliary Board member is working with a Local Spiritual Assembly in their area. However, it is anticipated that a cordial relationship will be maintained between the Continental Board of Counsellors and the National Assembly and that the Continental Board of Counsellors will share with the National Spiritual Assembly such information as they feel will assist the National Assembly in their work."

"...it is not necessary that a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors or an Auxiliary Board member obtain the consent of the National Spiritual Assembly before contacting a Local Spiritual Assembly. However, an attitude of courtesy, respect and understanding on the part of both the administrative institutions and the Counsellors and their Auxiliary Board members should characterize their relationships to each other. Thus when a member of the Auxiliary Board wishes to meet with the Local Spiritual Assembly, both the Board member and the Local Spiritual Assembly should try to arrange a mutually satisfactory time as far in advance as possible."

(From a communication of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, May 10, 1970)

1. **National Assemblies Should Avail Themselves of Services of Auxiliary Board Members and Their Assistants**

"The National Spiritual Assemblies in consultation with the Counsellors should avail themselves of the services of the Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, who, together 'with the travelling teachers selected by the Assembly or its Teaching Committees, should be continuously encouraged to conduct deepening courses ... and to make regular visits to Local Spiritual Assemblies'."

"The visitors, whether Auxiliary Board members, their assistants or travelling teachers 'should meet on such occasions not only with the Local Assembly but, of course, with the local community members, collectively at general meetings and even, if necessary, individually in their homes.'"

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies, Naw-Ruz 1979, citing a letter dated February 2, 1966 to all National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in mass teaching work) [pg 340]