

XXXIX. POLITICS AND GOVERNMENTS

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

Original English



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A. Politics

1. Political Figures

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

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 12, 1933: Bahá'í News, No. 72, April 1933, p. 3)

1. Politicians: Non-Political Government Jobs

"Actual politicians, he feels, will for the most part never be willing to forget their ambitions, work and prestige in order to embrace the Faith, but association with all people, in government occupation or otherwise, who are progressive minded, is advisable, as we publicize the Faith this way and may meet receptive souls. There is no objection to Bahá'ís serving in government jobs that are purely non-political."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 30, 1947)

1. No Bahá'í Can Be Regarded as Republican or Democrat

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

(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 26, 1933: Bahá'í News, No. 85, July, 1934, p. 2)

1. Voting in Civil Elections

"As regards the non-political character of the Faith,... The friends may vote, if they can do it, without identifying themselves with one party or another. To enter the arena of party politics is



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surely detrimental to the best interests of the Faith and will harm the Cause. It remains for the individuals to so use their right to vote as to keep aloof from party politics, and always bear in mind that they are voting on the merits of the individual, rather than because he belongs to one party or another. The matter must be made perfectly clear to the individuals, who will be left free to exercise their discretion and judgement. But if a certain person does enter into party politics and labours for the ascendancy of one party over another, and continues to [pg 443] do it against expressed appeals and warnings of the Assembly, then the Assembly has the right to refuse him the right to vote in Bahá'í elections."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 16, 1933)

1. Avoid Identification with Political Parties

"We have received your letter of 12 December 1973 concerning the problem of ... who says that it is very difficult for him to keep his job as a teacher in a public school without being registered as a member of one of the political parties now in the government."

"A similar question has arisen in some other countries, particularly in Africa where the one-party system is in use. Although we understand that there is more than one political party in your country, we think it would be helpful to you to have a summary of the instructions we have given to African Assemblies, and this is enclosed."

"We suggest that ...'s case might offer your Assembly an opportunity to seek an appointment with the proper government official or officials to explain the Bahá'í position on non-interference in political affairs, as well as on obedience and loyalty to government. Your approach should be to seek advice on what can be done in ...'s situation and in similar cases to avoid identification with party politics while at the same time showing the utmost loyalty to the government. Certainly this would afford your Assembly yet another opportunity to proclaim the Faith and its principles and to seek the respect and understanding of the officials."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, December 28, 1973)

1. For Bahá'ís Living in Countries Where the Political Structure is Based on a One-Party System

"1. The beloved Guardian repeatedly emphasized the principle of refusing to join any political party. In 'The Advent of Divine Justice', in speaking of the rectitude of conduct which must manifest itself in the Bahá'í community, he said: 'It must characterize the attitude of every loyal believer towards non-acceptance of political posts, non-identification with political parties, non-participation in political controversies, and non-membership in political organizations...'"

"2. a. If the National Spiritual Assembly is satisfied that membership in the party is not compulsory according to the law of the land, but is promoted merely by persuasion,

encouragement, and inducement through the granting of privileges and even threats, then the Bahá'ís should refrain from joining the party, whatever the personal sacrifices may be."

"b. If, however, it is ascertained by the National Spiritual Assembly, that the law requires every citizen to belong to the party, Bahá'ís may pay money equivalent to the dues involved, without accepting membership of the party. There is no objection to their carrying receipts indicating that the contribution has been made." [pg 444]

"c. If alternative 2b. is not possible, Bahá'ís have no choice but to accept membership, without becoming active in the party, such as holding offices."

(From a Summary of Instructions of the Universal House of Justice attached to the above cited letter to Bolivia, December 28, 1973)

1. No Loyal Believer Should Commit Himself to a Political Program

"...no loyal believer should under any circumstances commit himself in any way to a political program or policy formulated and upheld by a political party. For affiliation with such a party necessarily entails repudiation of some principles and teachings of the Cause, or partial recognition of some of its fundamental verities. The friends should, therefore, keep aloof from party politics. What they should mainly keep away from under all circumstances and in all its forms is partisanship."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 17, 1935)

1. Bahá'ís Should Refrain from Voting, if They Must Identify with a Political Party or Doctrine

"The main principle, as you know, is that the friends should refrain from participating in any political election, unless they ascertain that in casting their vote for this or that candidate they are not affiliating themselves with any political party or organization, and are not identifying themselves with any political program. The whole question hinges on the matter of identification, and not on voting in itself."

"The application of this principle the Guardian has left to the individuals who are conscientiously required to submit their own special cases in which they are doubtful to their assemblies for consideration and guidance."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 28, 1936)

1. Enrollment When Political Affiliation or Activities Are Involved

"No additional requirements should be laid upon new members at the time of their declaration of belief. Rather, your Assembly should undertake to make the issues clear with such friends so that prospective new adherents may know beforehand of the position of the Faith in regard to political connections. When it is found that, in spite of this, a new Bahá'í still has political associations or activities, he should be lovingly and patiently educated so that he will withdraw

from them. Some will be able to achieve this immediately, but others will need time to sever their connections discreetly. This can be a delicate matter and requires an awareness of each individual's particular situation and obligations. Of course, if such a believer does not respond to the Assembly's efforts to disengage him from politics, he must be warned and, if this still produces no effect, the Assembly would ultimately have to consider depriving him of his voting rights."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Dominican Republic, July 12, 1984)

1. Membership in Any Political Party Entails Repudiation of Principles of Peace and Unity

"The Bahá'í Community is a world-wide organization seeking to establish true [pg 445] and universal peace on earth. If a Bahá'í works for one political party to overcome another it is a negation of the very spirit of the Faith. Membership in any political party, therefore, necessarily entails repudiation of some or all of the principles of peace and unity proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. As Abdu'l-Bahá stated: 'Our party is God's party; we do not belong to any party.'"

"If a Bahá'í were to insist on his right to support a certain political party, he could not deny the same degree of freedom to other believers. This would mean that within the ranks of the Faith, whose primary mission is to unite all men as one great family under God, there would be Bahá'ís opposed to each other. Where, then, would be the example of unity and harmony which the world is seeking?"

"If the institutions of the Faith, God forbid, became involved in politics, the Bahá'ís would find themselves arousing antagonism instead of love. If they took one stand in one country, they would be bound to change the views of the people in another country about the aims and purposes of the Faith. By becoming involved in political disputes, the Bahá'ís instead of changing the world or helping it, would themselves be lost and destroyed. The world situation is so confused and moral issues which were once clear have become so mixed up with selfish and battling factions, that the best way Bahá'ís can serve the highest interests of their country and the cause of true salvation for the world is to sacrifice their political pursuits and affiliations and whole-heartedly and fully support the system of Bahá'u'lláh."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies in Africa, February 8, 1970)

1. Regarding a Bahá'í Producing Television Advertising for a Political Campaign

"In reply to your query of 24 September concerning the involvement of a Bahá'í in producing television advertising for a political campaign, the Universal House of Justice has directed us to convey its advice that the person in question should refrain from activities promoting the campaign of a politician, although this should not be construed as a restriction on non-Bahá'í associates."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, October 29, 1979)

1. Bahá'ís Can Neither Campaign for Office nor Undertake Partisan Political Activities — They May Hold Appointive Posts which Are Not Political

"In the case of Mr. ..., it is important that you ascertain precisely what his membership on a village council entails, and how he achieved such membership, i.e., by election or appointment. Your Assembly should understand that Bahá'ís do not engage in political activities nor belong to political parties, but may freely undertake non-political administrative work with governments, may hold appointive posts which are not political in character, or may serve on local councils if they do not campaign for office and are not required to undertake partisan political activities."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Leeward Islands, February 15, 1982) [pg 446]

1. No Objection to a Bahá'í Being Elected as a Neighbourhood Captain or Serving on a Neighbourhood Council, Provided...

"There is no objection to a Bahá'í being elected a Barrio Captain or serving on a Barrio Council provided:

1. He is not required to become a member of a political party.
1. Service as a Barrio Captain or as a member of the Barrio Council does not involve him in partisan politics.
1. That he does not campaign for election to office. There is no objection to allowing one's name to be placed in nomination if nominations are required by law. If nominations are not obligatory and the voter is allowed to write on the ballot paper and vote for the names of those he wishes to be elected, this procedure should be followed by the Bahá'ís."

"It would be preferable, of course, if the election of members of a Barrio Council and Barrio Captains could be strictly in accordance with Bahá'í principles. We would appreciate knowing whether this can be done in ... or whether it may be possible to amend the laws so that this procedure can be adopted in villages where the population is entirely or predominately Bahá'í."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Philippines, April 24, 1972)



B. Governments and Civil Authorities

1. Shun Politics Like the Plague and be Obedient to the Government in Power

"The cardinal principle which we must follow, (in connection with your questions), is obedience to the Government prevailing in any land in which we reside. We cannot, because, say, we do not personally like a totalitarian form of government, refuse to obey it when it becomes the ruling power. Nor can we join underground Movements which are a minority agitating against the prevailing government."

"If a state of Revolution and complete chaos exists in a Country, so that it is impossible to say there is one government in power, then the friends must consult with their National or their Local Assembly, and be guided by what the Assembly considers the proper action to take; in other words which party might be best considered the legal governing authority."

"We see, therefore, that we must do two things — shun politics like the plague, and be obedient to the Government in power in the place where we reside. We cannot start judging how a particular government came into power, and therefore whether we should obey it or not. This would immediately plunge us into politics. We must obey in all cases except where a spiritual principle is involved, such as denying our Faith. For these spiritual principles we must be willing to die. What we Bahá'ís must face is the fact that society is rapidly disintegrating — so rapidly that moral issues which were clear half a century ago are now hopelessly confused, and what is more, thoroughly mixed up with battling political interests. That is why the Bahá'ís must turn all their forces into the channel of building up the Bahá'í Cause and its administration. They can neither change nor help the world in any other way at present. If they become involved in the issues the Governments of the world are struggling over, they will be lost. But if they build up the Bahá'í pattern they can offer it as a remedy when all else has failed."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 21, 1948)
[pg 447]

1. The Bahá'í Cause is Above Political Parties, But the Believers Are Obligated to Whole-Heartedly Obey Existing Political Regime

"At the outset it should be made indubitably clear that the Bahá'í Cause being essentially a religious movement of a spiritual character stands above every political party or group, and thus cannot and should not act in contravention to the principles, laws, and doctrines of any government. Obedience to the regulations and orders of the state is, indeed, the sacred obligation of every true and loyal Bahá'í. Both Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá have urged us all to be submissive and loyal to the political authorities of our respective countries. It follows, therefore, that our ... friends are under the sacred obligation to whole-heartedly obey the existing political regime, whatever be their personal views and criticisms of its actual working. There is nothing more contrary to the spirit of the Cause than open rebellion against the governmental authorities of a country, specially if they do not interfere in and do not oppose the inner and sacred beliefs and religious convictions of the individual...."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 11, 1934)

1. The Bahá'ís Should Obey the Government Even at Risk of Sacrificing Administrative Affairs — In Matters of Faith No Compromise Allowed, Even Though Outcome is Death

"For whereas the friends should obey the government under which they live, even at the risk of sacrificing all their administrative affairs and interests, they should under no circumstances suffer their inner religious beliefs and convictions to be violated and transgressed by any authority whatever. A distinction of a fundamental importance must, therefore, be made between spiritual and administrative matters. Whereas the former are sacred and inviolable, and hence cannot be subject to compromise, the latter are secondary and can consequently be

given up and even sacrificed for the sake of obedience to the laws and regulations of the government. Obedience to the state is so vital a principal of the Cause that should the authorities in ... decide to-day to prevent the Bahá'ís from holding any meeting or publishing any literature they should obey... But, as already pointed out, such an allegiance is confined merely to administrative matters which if checked can only retard the progress of the Faith for some time. In matters of belief, however, no compromise whatever should be allowed, even though the outcome of it be death or expulsion."

(Ibid.)

1. Principle of Obedience to Government Does Not Oblige Bahá'í Teachings to be Identified with Political Program

"There is one more point to be emphasized in this connection. The principle of obedience to government does not place any Bahá'í under the obligation of identifying the teachings of his Faith with the political program enforced by the government. For such an identification, besides being erroneous and contrary to both the spirit as well as the form of the Bahá'í Message, would necessarily create a conflict within the conscience of every loyal believer."

"For reasons which are only too obvious the Bahá'í philosophy of social and political organization cannot be fully reconciled with the political doctrines and conceptions that are current and much in vogue to-day. The wave of nationalism, [pg 448] so aggressive and so contagious in its effects, which has swept not only over Europe but over a large part of mankind is, indeed, the very negation of the gospel of peace and of brotherhood proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. The actual trend in the political world is, indeed, far from being in the direction of the Bahá'í teachings. The world is drawing nearer and nearer to a universal catastrophe which will mark the end of a bankrupt and of a fundamentally defective civilization."

"From such considerations we can well conclude that we as Bahá'ís can in no wise identify the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with man-made creeds and conceptions, which by their very nature are impotent to save the world from the dangers with which it is being so fiercely and so increasingly assailed."

(Ibid.)

1. Employment with the Foreign Service

"Bahá'ís are permitted to apply to the International Communication agency for employment with the United States Foreign Service..."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 7, 1979)

"The House of Justice feels that it would be permissible for you to accept the position of Vice-Consul on the understanding that you are not required to become involved in political activities. The House of Justice urges you to pay particular attention to this matter so that you do not enter

upon a course that, at a later stage, would inevitably lead you into political affairs such as policy-making discussions with the Consul General on political matters. The House of Justice feels sure that you are aware of this point and of the delicate line that must be drawn."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 15, 1984)

1. Bahá'ís Must Be Loyal to Their Spiritual Assembly and at the Same Time to Civil Government, Whether Tribal Council, a Cacique or a Municipal Authority

"As to your query about the Local Spiritual Assembly, it is indeed a divine institution, created by Bahá'u'lláh in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas as the Local House of Justice. Abdu'l-Bahá has clearly set out its provenance, authority and duties and has explained the differences between it and other administrative institutions, whether of the past or the present. We refer you to the book 'Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá', sections 37, 38, and* "

"It is clear that while Local Spiritual Assemblies must supervise all Bahá'í matters in their areas, including arrangement for the Nineteen Day Feast, the observance of the Holy Days, the election of the members of the Assembly, promoting the teaching work, caring for the spiritual welfare and Bahá'í education of the friends and children, etcetera, they and the friends themselves must at the same time be good citizens and loyal to the civil government, whether it be a Tribal Council, a Cacique or a municipal authority."

"In another national community, where the number of believers had increased to the point where the population of some villages had become 100% or almost 100% Bahá'í, the House of Justice upheld the above principles and stated that in each such village, while they should elect their Local Spiritual Assembly, they should [pg 449] continue to elect the local Council as required by the Government, and the functions of these two bodies should be kept distinct, even if their memberships were identical."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, April 13, 1983)

1. Elective or Appointive Posts in Government Should Be Accepted Only if They Do Not Contravene Given Guidelines

"It is better if the friends avoid accepting either elective or appointive posts of the nature described in your letter... Such posts should only be accepted if in the process of obtaining the appointment, in winning the election, or in discharging their duties they do not contravene Bahá'í principles. This includes the following:

That they do not campaign for election."

"That they do not contravene the guidelines set forth by the beloved Guardian in the following passage:

'Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster. Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen. Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them. Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world. It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representatives, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must necessarily involve. Let them affirm their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Bahá'u'lláh, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to become worthy agencies of that Divine Polity which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men.'

"The application of the above principles is left to the discretion of your National Spiritual Assembly."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, October 12, 1977)

1. The Faith is Not Opposed to True Interests of Any Nation

"The Faith is not opposed to the true interests of any nation, nor is it against any party or faction. It holds aloof from all controversies and transcends them all, while enjoining upon its followers loyalty to government and a sane patriotism. This love for their country the Bahá'ís show by serving its well-being in their daily activity, or working in the administrative channels of the government instead of through party [pg 450] politics or in diplomatic or political posts. The Bahá'ís may, indeed are encouraged to mix with all strata of society, with the highest authorities and with leading personalities as well as with the mass of the people, and should bring the knowledge of the Faith to them; but in so doing they should strictly avoid becoming identified, or identifying the Faith, with political pursuits and party programmes."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assemblies of Africa, February 8, 1970)

1. Not Our Purpose to Violate Any Country's Constitution

"...Let them proclaim that in whatever country they reside, and however advanced their institutions, or profound their desire to enforce the laws, and apply the principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, they will, unhesitatingly, subordinate the operation of such laws and the application

of such principles to the requirements and legal enactments of their respective governments. Theirs is not the purpose, while endeavoring to conduct and perfect the administrative affairs of their Faith, to violate, under any circumstances, the provisions of their country's constitution, much less to allow the machinery of their administration to supersede the government of their respective countries."

(From a letter of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 21, 1933: World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 65-66)

1. **Bahá'ís Obey the Law, Federal or State**

"...Bahá'ís obey the laws, Federal or state, unless submission to these laws amounts to a denial of their Faith. We live the Bahá'í life, fully and continuously, unless prevented by the authorities. This implies, if it does not categorically state, that a Bahá'í is not required to make a judgment as to the precedence of Federal or state law — this is for the courts to decide."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 30, 1965: National Bahá'í Review, No. 32, August, 1970, p. 1)

1. **Obedience to Just Governments — What It Means**

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

"The Guardian does not think any part of this statement of his is suitable for publication in the Press. The less 'politics' is associated in any way with the name Bahá'í, the better. It should always be made clear that we are a religious non-political community, working for humanitarian ends."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Teaching Committee for Central America, July 3, 1948) [pg 451]

1. **Taking of Oaths**

"In reply to your letter of September 12th the Universal House of Justice asks us to refer you to a letter on this subject written on behalf of the beloved Guardian on July 11th, 1956 to your National Spiritual Assembly:

'Regarding taking oaths, there is nothing in the Teachings on this subject. As a Bahá'í is enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh to be truthful, he would express his truthfulness, no matter what the formality of the law in any local place required of him. There can be no objection to Bahá'ís conforming to

the requirements of the law court whatever they may be in such matters, as in no case would they constitute in any way a denial of their own beliefs as Bahá'ís.'

"The above direction makes it clear that Bahá'ís may take an oath, if required, on any sacred book. The Universal House of Justice considers that it may be preferable for them to do so on a Bahá'í book, if possible."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, September 20, 1973)

1. Implicit Obedience to Administrative Regulations

"To all administrative regulations which the civil authorities have issued from time to time, or will issue in the future in that land, as in all other countries, the Bahá'í community, faithful to its sacred obligations towards its government, and conscious of its civic duties, has yielded, and will continue to yield implicit obedience...."

(Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, p. 372, Wilmette, 1987 ed.)

1. There is No Objection to Taking Case to Civil Court if Assembly and Bahá'ís Are Unable to Negotiate a Settlement of a Dispute

"...The House of Justice ... states that believers should take their differences to the Spiritual Assembly and abide by the decision of the Assembly. However, if Bahá'ís cannot negotiate a settlement of a dispute between them, and if the Spiritual Assembly cannot succeed in arbitrating a solution to the dispute, then there is no objection to the Bahá'ís having recourse to the civil courts. The Assembly should not hesitate to refuse to act in a case which it is satisfied is more properly a question for the law courts. However, the Assembly does not have the authority to prohibit a believer from having recourse to the civil courts if he decides to do so."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, cited in a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, February 9, 1983)

1. Let the World Know the Real Aim of Bahá'u'lláh

"...We should let the world know what the real aim of Bahá'u'lláh was. Up to the present the Unity of Mankind was only of an academic importance. Now it is becoming more and more a subject for international statesmen to think of. It is coming to the field of practical politics. It is therefore a wonderful chance for us to come to the front and expound the teaching which is the goal and aim of the social precepts of Bahá'u'lláh. Shoghi Effendi hopes that the friends will re-echo this call to an organic unity of mankind until it forms part of the conscious faith of every living man in [pg 452] the world. Great judgment should be however practiced lest we be misunderstood and our Faith be classed among radical movements."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 28, 1932)

1. Non-Interference in Political Affairs — We Must Shun Pronouncements About Systems of Politics and Not Write About Current Political Affairs

"There is one fundamental point which Shoghi Effendi wishes me to emphasize. By the principle of non-interference in political matters we should not mean that only corrupt politics and partial and sectarian politics are to be avoided, but that any pronouncement on any current system of politics connected with any government must be shunned. We should not only take sides with no political party, group or system actually in use, but we should also refuse to commit ourselves to any statement which may be interpreted as being sympathetic or antagonistic to any existing political organization or philosophy. The attitude of the Bahá'ís must be one of complete aloofness. They are neither for nor against any system of politics. Not that they are the ill-wishers of their respective governments but that due to certain basic considerations arising out of their teachings and of the administrative machinery of their Faith they prefer not to get entangled in political affairs and to be misinterpreted and misunderstood by their countrymen."

"In the light of this principle it becomes clear that to contribute articles on current political affairs to any newspaper must inevitably lead the writer to express, directly or in an indirect manner, his view and his criticisms on the subject. He is, in addition, always liable to be misinterpreted and misunderstood by the politicians. The best thing to do, therefore, is simply not to write on current politics at all."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 2, 1934)

1. One Method by which One Can Criticize the Present Day Socio-Political Order

"There is, however, one case in which one can criticize the present social and political order without being necessarily forced to side with or oppose any existing regime. And this is the method adopted by the Guardian in his 'Goal of a New World Order'. His criticisms of the world conditions beside being very general in character are abstract; that is, instead of condemning existing institutional organizations it goes deeper and analyzes the basic ideas and conceptions which have been responsible for their establishment. This being a mere intellectual and philosophical approach to the problem of world political crisis, there is no objection if you wish to try such a method, which immediately carries you from the field of practical politics to that of political theory. But in view of the fact that no clear-cut line can be drawn between theory and practice you should be extremely careful not to make too free a use of such a method."

(Ibid.)

1. Kingship in the Future

"As to your query whether or not there will be kingship throughout the world in future, the Universal House of Justice calls to your attention Shoghi Effendi's statement on page 219 of 'God Passes By': [pg 453] 'The establishment of a constitutional form of government, in which the ideals of republicanism and the majesty of kingship, characterized by Him as 'one of the signs of God', are combined, He recommends as a meritorious achievement.'"

"In 'The Promised Day Is Come' on pages 73 to 76, the Guardian quotes many passages from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh lauding the principle of kingship and envisaging an increase of

monarchies in the future. The House of Justice suggests that a study of this section of the book will provide you with the understanding you seek."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 29, 1977)

1. **President Wilson and Dr. Jordan**

"With regard to Ex-President Wilson and Dr. Jordan, it seems fairly clear that both of these men were considerably influenced by the Bahá'í Teachings; but at the same time it is well to avoid making dogmatic statements that they 'got all their principles from Bahá'u'lláh', or the like, as we are not in a position to prove such statements, and to make claims which we cannot prove weakens instead of strengthening our position."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 16, 1925)



C. Government Employees

1. **Those Engaged in Government Service Should Perform Their Duties with Utmost Fidelity, Trustworthiness...**

"As for those who are engaged in government service, they should perform their duties with the utmost fidelity, trustworthiness, rectitude, uprightness, integrity and high-mindedness. Let them not tarnish their good repute by pursuing personal interests, nor, for the sake of transient worldly benefits, make themselves objects of public odium and outcasts of the Threshold of Grandeur."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: from a previously untranslated Tablet: Trustworthiness: A Cardinal Bahá'í Virtue, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, January 1987)

1. **Government Employees Should Perform Deeds and Actions of the Highest Degree of Rectitude and Honesty**

"Ye who are the sincere well-wishers of the state, who are the dutiful and compliant subjects of the government, should occupy yourselves in constant service. Anyone who entereth the employ of the government should show forth in all his deeds and actions the highest degree of rectitude and honesty, of temperance and self-discipline, of purity and sanctity, of justice and equity. If, God forbid, he should be guilty of the least breach of trust, or approach his duties in a slack or desultory fashion, or extort so much as a farthing from the populace, or seek to further his own selfish interests and personal gain — then it is certain that he shall be deprived of the outpourings of God's grace."

(Ibid.)

1. Those Who Are Selected to Serve the Public Should Perform Their Duties in a Spirit of the True Servitude

"Those persons who are selected to serve the public, or are appointed to administrative positions, should perform their duties in a spirit of true servitude and ready [pg 454] compliance. That is to say, they should be distinguished by their goodly disposition and virtuous character, content themselves with their allotted remuneration and act with trustworthiness in all their doings. They should keep themselves aloof from unworthy motives, and be far removed above covetous designs; for rectitude, probity and righteousness are among the most potent means for attracting the grace of God and securing both the prosperity of the country and the welfare of the people. Glory and honour for man are not to be found in fortunes and riches, least of all in those which have been unlawfully amassed through extortion, embezzlement and corruption practised at the expense of an exploited populace. Supreme honour, nobility and greatness in the human world, and true felicity in this life and the life to come — all consist in equity and uprightness, sanctity and detachment. If a man would seek distinction, he should suffice himself with a frugal provision, seek to better the lot of the poor of the realm, choose the way of justice and fair-mindedness, and tread the path of high-spirited service. Such a one, needy though he be, shall win imperishable riches and attain unto everlasting honour."

(Ibid., p. 11)

1. Those Who Enter Service of the Government Should Shun All Forms of Venality and Corruption

"If any of the friends should enter into service of the government, they should make their occupation a means of drawing nearer to the divine Threshold: they should act with probity and uprightness, rigorously shun all forms of venality and corruption, and content themselves with the salaries they are receiving, taking pride, rather, in the degree of sagacity, competence and judgement that they can bring to their work. If a person content himself with a single loaf of bread, and perform his duties with as much justice and fair-mindedness as lieth within his power, he will be the prince of mortals, and the most praiseworthy of men. Noble and distinguished will he be, despite his empty purse! Pre-eminent will he rank among the free, although his garb be old and worn! For man, praise and glory reside in virtuous and noble qualities; honour and distinction in nearness to the divine Threshold."

(Ibid.)

1. If One Abuses His Position with the Government Through Corrupt or Mercenary Behavior...

"If one of the friends ... be appointed to a high administrative office, he should strive diligently, to perform the duties committed to his charge with perfect honesty, integrity, sincerity, rectitude and uprightness. If, however, he abuse his position through corrupt or mercenary behaviour, he will be held in detestation at the Threshold of Grandeur and incur the wrath of the Abha Beauty — nay, he shall be forsaken by the One True God and all who adore Him. So far from acting thus, he should content himself with his salary and allowance, seek out the way of righteousness, and

dedicate his life to the service of state and people. Such must be the conduct and bearing of the Bahá'ís. Whoso transgresseth these bounds shall fall at length into manifest loss."

(Ibid.) [pg 455]

1. If a Man Deals Faithlessly with a Just Government, He Deals Faithlessly with God

"All government employees, whether of high or low rank, should, with perfect integrity, probity and rectitude, content themselves with the modest stipends and allowances that are theirs. They should keep their hands unsullied and preserve their fair name from blemish.... If a man deals faithlessly with a just government he shall have dealt faithlessly with God; and if he render it faithful service he shall have rendered that service to God."

(Ibid.)

1. Content with Wages Received, They Should Not Stain Their Character Through Acts of Bribery and Fraud nor Misappropriate a Single Penny

"Those souls who are employed in government departments should approach their duties with entire detachment, integrity and independence of spirit, and with complete consecration and sanctity of purpose. Content with the wages they are receiving, they should see that they do not stain their fair character through acts of bribery and fraud. Were one of the friends in this day to misappropriate so much as a single penny, the sacred mantle of God's Cause would become sullied by his action and the shame of it would attach to the whole community. Heaven forbid! Nay, rather, the government and people should come to repose such trust in the Bahá'ís as to wish to commit all affairs of state throughout the provinces into the chaste, pure hands of God's well-beloved."

(Ibid.) [pg 456]

