

IV. Relation to the Outside World

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi

Original English



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...as the Movement grows in strength and power the National Spiritual Assemblies should be encouraged, if circumstances permit and the means at their disposal justify, to resort to the twofold method of directly and indirectly winning the enlightened public to the unqualified acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith. The one method would assume an open, decisive and challenging tone. The other, without implying in any manner the slightest departure from strict loyalty to the Cause of God, would be progressive and cautious. Experience will reveal the fact that each of the methods in its own special way might suit a particular temperament and class of people, and that each, in the present state of a constantly fluctuating society, should be judiciously attempted and utilized.

It is I feel for the national representatives of the believers in every land to utilize and combine both methods, the outspoken as well as the gradual, in such a manner as to secure the greatest benefit and the fullest advantage for this steadily-growing Cause....

...

As the Movement extends the bounds of its influence and its opportunities for fuller recognition multiply, the twofold character of the obligations imposed on its national elected representatives should, I feel, be increasingly emphasized. Whilst chiefly engaged in the pursuit of their major task, consisting chiefly in the formation and the consolidation of Bahá'í administrative institutions, they should endeavour to participate, within recognized limits, in the work of institutions which, though unaware of the claim of the Bahá'í Cause, are prompted by a sincere desire to promote the spirit that animates the Faith.

In the pursuit of their major task their function is to preserve the identity of the Cause and the purity of the mission of Bahá'u'lláh. In their minor undertaking their purpose should be to imbue with the spirit of power and strength such movements as in their



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restricted scope are endeavouring to achieve what is near and dear to the heart of every true Bahá'í. It would even appear at times to be advisable and helpful as a supplement to their work for the Bahá'ís to initiate any undertaking not specifically designated as Bahá'í, provided that they have ascertained that such an undertaking would constitute the best way of approach to those whose minds and hearts are as yet unprepared for a full acceptance of the claim of Bahá'u'lláh.

These twofold obligations devolving upon organized Bahá'í communities, far from neutralizing the effects of one another or of appearing antagonistic in their aims, should be regarded as complementary and fulfilling, each in its way, a vital and necessary function.

It is for the national representatives of the Bahá'í Cause to observe the conditions under which they labour, to estimate the forces that are at work in their own surroundings, to weigh carefully and prayerfully the merits of either procedure, and to form a correct judgement as to the degree of emphasis that should be placed upon these twofold methods. Then and only then will they be enabled to protect and stimulate on one hand the independent growth of the Bahá'í Faith, and on the other vindicate the claim of its universal Principles to the doubtful and unbelieving.

From a letter 20 February 1927 written by Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, 'Bahá'í Administration', p. 124

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The Guardian feels that it is a pity that, through the over-enthusiasm of the official concerned, a school building was placed at the disposal of the Bahá'ís before any official decision had been made as to whether it was possible for them to send a teacher there.

We must be very careful in our dealings with the public, particularly officials, lest we create situations which cause us embarrassment, and may belittle our prestige in non-Bahá'í eyes.

The Guardian attaches the greatest importance to your work; and is delighted to see that you are carrying on your various projects with so much enthusiasm and devotion.

It would be ideal if an offer, such as that made, could be accepted; but as the Cause has so many burdens to bear at this time, we are forced to do as 'Abdu'l-Bahá said — give up the important for the most important.

From a letter 29 December 1951 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Comité Nacional de Enseñanza Bahá'í para los indígenas

