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**This booklet may be shared with Bahá'is
but should not be taken into China.**

(I) A VISION WHICH INSPIRES

China, China, China-ward the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh must march. Where is that holy, sanctified Bahá'í to become the teacher of China! China has most great capability. The Chinese people are most simple-hearted and truth-seeking. The Bahá'í teacher of the Chinese people must first be imbued with their spirit, know their sacred literature, study their national customs and speak to them from their own standpoint, and their own terminologies. He must entertain no thought of his own but ever think of their spiritual welfare. In China one can teach many souls and train and educate such divine personages that each one of them may become the bright candle of the world of humanity. Truly I say the Chinese are free from any deceit and hypocrisies and are prompted with ideal motives.

Had I been feeling well I would have taken a journey to China myself! China is the country of the future. I hope the right kind of teacher will be inspired to go to that vast empire to lay the foundation of the Kingdom of God, to promote the principles of divine civilization, to unfurl the banner of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and to invite the people to the banquet of the Lord.

For the last twenty years I have repeatedly emphasized the matter of spreading the Cause of God. In every city there must be organized assemblies of teaching classes to teach the young how to teach the Cause and prepare them for this most important service.

Every Bahá'í must acquire the lessons of teaching. This will yield results. No other service is as important as this. This service of the promotion of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is the most confirmed service. Every time, one service holds the most supreme importance.

There is one season to harrow the ground, another season to scatter the seeds, still another season to irrigate the fields and still another to harvest the crop. We must attend to these various kinds of activities in their proper seasons in order to become successful. Now is the time of seed-sowing, but it seems to me some of the believers are thinking about crop-getting. This will give them no results. Whosoever is thinking of any other thing, is wasting his time.

The promotion of the principles of Bahá'u'lláh is the most dominant issue before the believers of God.

(*"Star of the West" - 'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 13, No. 7, pages 185-186, from the Diary of Ahmad Sohráb*) (1)

Let the friends in the East and the West both enter the field. Let them awaken and quicken the land of China — a land which has its own world and civilization, whose people constitute one-fourth of the population of the globe, which ranks foremost among all nations in material, cultural and spiritual resources and potentialities, and whose future is assuredly bright. Let them draw that vast and mighty land under the shadow of the Word of God, cause its people to associate with the other nations of the world, and demonstrate the true oneness of mankind, which can alone be established through the power of Bahá'u'lláh.

(23 January 1923 letter from the Guardian to the Bahá'ís of the East) (2)

MOVED CONVEY TO PARTICIPANTS FIRST EUROPEAN CHINESE TEACHING SYMPOSIUM WARMEST GREETINGS AND ASSURANCE LOVING ARDENT PRAYERS AT HOLIEST SHRINE FOR RESOUNDING SUCCESS YOUR EARNEST DELIBERATIONS ABOUT WAYS AND MEANS OF ADVANCING....GOAL OF SHARING TEACHINGS BAHÁ'U'LLÁH WITH CHINESE PEOPLE — A GOAL HAVING ITS ROOTS IN THE TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN.

ON THIS HISTORIC OCCASION CALL UPON FRIENDS REMIND THEMSELVES OF THE MASTER'S STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE WHICH MAKE THEM ESPECIALLY RECEPTIVE TO THE TEACHINGS. HIS PRONOUNCEMENT THAT CHINA IS THE COUNTRY OF THE FUTURE IS NOW, IN THE CLOSING DECADES OF THIS RADIANT CENTURY, BEING LITERALLY FULFILLED. AND WE, THE CHOSEN EXPONENTS OF THE FAITH OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH MUST BE CONSCIOUS OF THE RESPONSIBILITY WE BEAR TO ENLIST THE ACTIVE SUPPORT OF EVER GREATER NUMBERS OF CHINESE PEOPLE UNDER HIS BANNER.

(9 September 1988 message of the Universal House of Justice to the participants in the First European Chinese Teaching Symposium) (3)

You are aware that China has in recent years embarked on a bold new relationship with the rest of the world. It has been engaged in a major effort which invites others to join its Government and people, not only in reducing international tensions, but also in identifying spiritual principles which can shape and sustain enduring social structures towards the building of a better future. In view of the concepts for world order contained in the Bahá'í Writings and the brilliant destiny which they anticipate for the Chinese people, and despite current events and any prospective changes, we have been impelled to conclude that it is timely for knowledge of the Bahá'í Faith to be disseminated on the mainland as widely and as quickly as circumstances and the interest of the Chinese themselves will allow. The development of the Faith in China must proceed along lines that are natural to the independent, self-generating and self-reliant character of the Bahá'í community as well as to the sense of independence, the initiative and motivations of the Chinese people. In those localities where native Chinese have developed an interest in the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, it is vital that they be aided immediately and systematically to obtain profound knowl-

edge of the Faith through access to its literature and through the assistance, to the extent possible and permissible, of knowledgeable Bahá'ís from other parts of the world. Where then they have accepted the Teachings and desire to impart these Teachings to their fellow citizens; or otherwise to engage in activities motivated by their adherence to the Faith, they should be left free to do so according to their own discretion and with due regard for the principles of the Faith and for the attitude of the civil authorities.

(15 June 1989 letter from the Universal House of Justice to an institution) (4)

Untold changes and challenges await China and its people in the years to come. The tests and sufferings which also lie ahead can be ameliorated only through our Faith which is at once in harmony with science, is non-political in nature, and has as its highest aims the achievement of world peace and the unity of mankind. This Sacred Cause is the light that will illuminate the Chinese nation and the means by which it can fulfill its glorious destiny predicted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

(25 November 1991 message of the Universal House of Justice to the participants in the International Chinese Teaching Conference in Macau) (5)

Dear Friends, any attempt to present, no matter how briefly, an overview of the potentialities of your region must necessarily take into account the preponderating influence that the Chinese people are to exert on the destiny of human-kind. To them, 'Abdu'l-Baha' has referred as "truth-seeking and "prompted with ideal motives." From among them, He declared, can be raised "such divine person-ages that each one of them may become the bright candle of the world of humanity."

The progress of the Faith in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and the labors of the Chinese believers resident in other parts

of the region, are early indications of that which is yet to come. We turn our expectant eyes towards the Chinese people, confident in their ability to become illumined with the light of Baha'u'llah's Revelation and to apply His Teachings, with characteristic diligence, to the advancement of spiritual and material civilisation.

As larger and larger numbers become imbued with heavenly qualities, and as they make sincere exertions for the progress of their people, they shall, God willing, win the trust of fair-minded leaders and be able to broaden the scope of their endeavors in a land that 'Abdu'l-Baha' has designated "the country of the future."

(Ridvan Message of the Universal House of Justice to a region in Asia, B.E. 153)(6)

(II) SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACT NOW

The Universal House of Justice feels that the time is ripe to intensify our teaching activities inside the People's Republic of China. ...

Your National Spiritual Assemblies are therefore urged to immediately increase your efforts to rally the believers in your respective communities and impress upon them the importance of pioneering to China or going to that country as visiting teachers as soon as possible. ...

The House of Justice is fervently praying to Bahá'u'lláh to bestow His unfailing assistance on all who will now arise to serve the interests of the Cause of God in relation to Chinese people everywhere.

(28 June 1992 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to selected National Spiritual Assemblies) (7)

You have come together at a time that future historians will regard as a turning point in the history of the Cause of God in the Far East. Through the self-sacrificing efforts of the friends in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, a significant large scale response to the message of Bahá'u'lláh has at last begun among the world's Chinese speaking populations.

This development occurs just as far-reaching changes are gathering momentum in mainland China itself. After decades of vicissitudes and often heartbreaking setbacks, the people there are beginning to consider seriously the constructive contribution that spiritual forces can make to the vast social experiment on which they are embarked.

The confluence of these two processes represents a historic opportunity for the Bahá'í world community. Throughout the world, and particularly in major Western countries, influential people from mainland China are eagerly pursuing educational, scientific and commercial activities that will equip them to help their beloved homeland play the role in world affairs that lies ahead of her. To many of these visitors, beneficiaries of one of the world's great cultural heritages and graduates of a school of hard practical experience, the teachings of the Cause offer a resource that they will encounter nowhere else. The implications for the future of the Faith in China are breathtaking.

(20 March 1989 message of the Universal House of Justice to the Participants in the North American Teaching Symposium on Reaching the Chinese) (8)

As Bahá'ís, we have been entrusted with the responsibility of taking the message of Bahá'u'lláh to all of mankind, but only a comparatively small beginning has yet been made to take the teachings to the vast population of China. The Universal House of Justice feels that this task must be regarded as one of the highest priorities for the entire Bahá'í world. In order to assist you with this vital matter, we have been directed to draw to your attention the opportunities that are now open for reaching the citizens of the People's Republic of China, who constitute over 20% of the world's total population.

Individual Bahá'ís with academic, professional, or particular business credentials are urged to take advantage of natural situations in the course of their work to meet their peers from the People's Republic of China. They are also encouraged, whenever feasible, to offer their services in projects which may take them into the Chinese mainland. In this way they may be able to establish cordial contact with high officials as well as with individual Chinese citizens.

Efforts should also be made to increase the awareness of the Bahá'í youth to the importance of meeting Chinese people at school and at work. Furthermore, they should be encouraged to take up studies in the Chinese language and culture when possible and to specialize in their respective professions on aspects related to China. Bahá'í scholars and experts on China are needed to assist in establishing the Faith in China.

(19 April 1989 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to selected Bahá'í Institutions) (9)

These are momentous times in the fortunes of mankind....times of rapid and far-reaching global change which gives rise to fundamental questions of concern about the social order in which we all live. All over the world, but particularly in China, our contemporaries are searching for answers to these questions. This searching appears to have generated a new kind of receptivity which recognizes in the Teachings basis principles which are at once timely, relevant and compelling. The conjunction of this receptivity with the presence of thousands of Chinese in your midst presents an opportunity for teaching that may never recur in your life time. The time is now.

(27 March 1990 message of the Universal House of Justice to the Participants in the Bahá'í International Chinese Symposium) (10)

Humanity is ever more eager to hear the Glad Tidings. The Chinese, in particular, who possess remarkable receptivity to this Divine Message, are in a period of disillusionment and confusion and are searching for the solutions which can advance their people. Now is the time for each of us to intensify our efforts to fulfill the hope of the Master and Shoghi Effendi to have increasing numbers of Chinese enlist in the Cause of God.

(16 May 1990 message of the Universal House of Justice to the Participants in the International Chinese Teaching Symposium in Paraguay) (11)

As you may know, the House of Justice is eager to see more experienced and knowledgeable Bahá'ís settle in China. It was therefore pleased at the prospect of your relocating there in the future. Without question, your understanding of that country and your professional contacts will be invaluable to furthering the Cause of God in that land.

(1 August 1991 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) (12)

(III) TO ACT, BUT ACTING WITHIN THE PARAMETERS

Yet China remains one of our highest priorities. The victories we will win in the immediate years ahead in that vast and receptive land will have a profound impact on the worldwide advancement of the Cause.

The parameters within which we must work in China are clear. Freedom of religion exists, but there are limits to this freedom that must not be overstepped. Although these limits are often stated in ambiguous terms, it is evident that we are not to engage in public teaching. The Faith is not one of the recognized religions of the country, and we do not feel it would be prudent to seek recognition at this time. Therefore, for the time being, we will have no administrative structures in China. Proselytization is prohibited, but, as Bahá'ís do not impose their Faith on others, this is not an issue for us. Officials who encounter the principles and teachings of the Faith are often attracted to them, but they cannot be expected to endorse the Faith openly. Within this reality, the Friends and the institutions that guide their steps must proceed in a manner which is characterized by both courage and wisdom.

The receptivity of the Chinese people, thriving in spite of limited religious freedom, has shaped an approach to teaching which has proven highly effective. Pioneers or travelling teachers easily establish bonds of friendship with the Chinese who, more often than not, inquire about their friends' beliefs and convictions. Receptivity is so high that from this simple beginning, and in a relatively short time, small groups of believers can be formed who are able to meet informally, well within the limits set by the laws of the country.

Another major component of the plan is the fostering of relations between Bahá'í professionals in as many fields of human endeavour as possible and their colleagues in China. As a first step, Bahá'í professionals are urged to visit Chinese universities, institutes and other organizations. If consistently pursued, some of the connections made during these visits can lead to joint research and action projects that offer the opportunity to analyse issues of great concern to Chinese society in the light of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. Moral education, the advancement of women and the strengthening of the family are among the areas that are proving to be fertile grounds for joint exploration. Yet another major concern of the plan is the enrichment of Bahá'í literature in Chinese, especially the large-scale production of a package of core literature.

Circumscribed as the above strategies may be, China is such a vast country that addressing them alone represents an immense field of activity. Its challenges can be met only if a large number of Bahá'ís become engaged in teaching the Chinese people. Inspiring the friends to set their sights on China, offering them guidance and orientation, and assisting them in their pioneer and travel-teaching plans are tasks that call for your vigilant attention. In carrying out these tasks, you must ensure that only Bahá'ís have access to information about plans and activities and that Bahá'ís residing in China are not contacted indiscriminately.

Given the complexity of the issues involved, the orientation of pioneers and travelling teachers will require special attention in your plans to serve the needs of the Cause in China. Orientation must not only acquaint the friends with the conditions in China, but also instill in them an appreciation for the extraordinary cultural heritage of the Chinese people and familiarize them with the manner in which the Message of Bahá'u'lláh can be presented to them. The question of deepening methods also needs to be clearly addressed.

(30 August 1993 letter from the Universal House of Justice to selected National Spiritual Assemblies) (13)

Concerning the visits of the Bahá'í delegations to Beijing, these were courtesy calls paid to relevant government departments and institutions to open doors for future exchanges. As the House of Justice has explicitly asked the friends not to approach the Chinese authorities to seek official recognition for the Faith at this juncture, the delegations did not broach this subject with the officials. Now is the time for friendly contacts and exchanges at all levels of Chinese society. It is believed that as the Chinese become more and more aware of the genuine spirit of service that motivates Bahá'ís to work in China, full official recognition will come naturally in due time. In the meantime, as you know, all Bahá'ís going into China are asked to observe the guidance given in the document "General Guidelines for Bahá'ís Entering China", that is, briefly, they should not proselytize or hold large meetings, but rather earnestly try to serve the people of China, answer their questions about the Faith, and welcome them as believers when they express their belief in Bahá'u'lláh.

(20 September 1994 letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) (14)

The religious policy of China remains restrictive at present, and the friends must exercise wisdom and sensitivity in determining the extent to which their activities related to that country are publicized, in order not to jeopardize the position of the Faith in China. There are certain words and phrases commonly used by the friends which, within the Bahá'í community, carry special meanings. Some of these, such as "teaching campaigns", "goals", "plans", "Pioneers" and "teachers", may give the wrong impression to the Chinese authorities, who are trying to protect their people from certain outside influences. To the extent possible, this type of terminology should be avoided in any mode of public communication concerning China, such as newsletters, bulletins and publications, which, in one way or another, could come under the scrutiny of Chinese officials. Also, it is best not to send

Bahá'í newsletters into China, with the exception of *One Country* and similar publications which have been designed for dissemination to the public.

In conveying news of activities in China, the friends should limit themselves to what has appeared in bulletins of the Bahá'í International News Service and to Bahá'í participation in events which may be well known to the Chinese authorities, such as the Beijing International Book Fair, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and radio or television broadcasts. Furthermore, in general, the names or photographs of Bahá'ís who are resident in China, whether they be local believers or pioneers, should not be publicized. Information on employment and educational opportunities available in China may be publicized without hesitation.

Bahá'ís are the sincere well-wishers of the Chinese people, interested in contributing to the advancement of their culture and the progress of their country. The attitude of the believers living there is not that of missionaries, and they do not proselytize. However, this does not mean that, as individual believers, they do not share openly the Teachings of our Faith with others in China. Given the receptivity of the Chinese people, many readily accept Bahá'u'lláh after having learned of His Message and having studied some of His Writings. And, of course, they are warmly welcomed into the ranks of His followers. There are no administrative structures in China to guide the affairs of the believers; nor is there any community activity in which they may take part. However, often the believers feel inspired to explore ways of applying Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation to the social reality of China in order to contribute to the spiritual and material advancement of that country. These ideas establish the context within which the friends can describe Bahá'í activities in China, whenever they find it necessary to do so.

(3 January 1995 letter from the Universal House of Justice to selected National Spiritual Assemblies) (15)

Sharing the Message of Bahá'u'lláh in a natural way as you have been doing with those with whom you have come into contact — discussing the Faith with them on an individual basis or in informal groups of two or three people, helping them to understand the Teachings, and deepening them until they learn to share the Message in a similar way with others — is indeed an effective approach for the promotion of the Cause in China, one which the House of Justice hopes will be pursued by all pioneers with more and more vigour. The Bahá'í Committee for China is dedicating a great deal of its energy towards assisting pioneers and native believers in that vast country to put into practice this approach.

However, the holding of meetings by pioneers attended by large numbers, such as you have mentioned in your letter, is not wise, and the Universal House of Justice has advised the Bahá'í Committee for China to discourage it. As you may know, there have been cases in the past in other cities where, for a time, the situation appeared open; large gatherings were held by pioneers with no difficulty, and even local believers were enthusiastic about the possibilities. Without warning, the police suddenly interfered and brought all activity to a halt. Of course, in the subsequent investigations, the police were impressed with the spirit of service and sincerity demonstrated by the Bahá'ís and became convinced that they are the well-wishers of China. Nonetheless, such occurrences interrupt a natural process of the growth of the Faith.

(15 January 1995 letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual) (16)

Freedom of religion exists in China; however, the Bahá'í Faith is not one of the recognized religions at present. Since the House of Justice does not feel the time is yet ripe for us to seek recognition from the government, we have no administrative structures in that country and therefore do not register Bahá'ís. The prohibition of

proselytization is not an issue for us, since, according to the explicit Teachings of the Faith, we do not impose our belief on others. Believers are encouraged to share the Teachings with others in a natural way, usually as one friend sharing his beliefs and convictions with another. In doing so, they are to avoid activities, such as large gatherings, which could be construed as attempts to create organized communities. The believers in China should be made well aware of these parameters so that they do not reach the conclusion that their belief in Bahá'u'lláh is illegal.

(3 March 1995 letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í Committee for China) (17)

We should have complete faith that any attempt to suppress the Cause of God can only add to its strength and further its expansion. Nevertheless, each believer should always exercise wisdom and good judgement in the practice of his religious beliefs and in his teaching activities so as to avoid bringing upon himself unnecessary adverse actions from the authorities. It is also of utmost importance that all should strictly observe the Bahá'í principle of loyalty to the government and non-involvement in politics.

(7 January 1993 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an institution) (18)

(IV) LEST WE FORGET THE FUNDAMENTALS

Great as are the services rendered by pioneers, and unforgettable as are the deeds they accomplish, they cannot take the place of the indigenous element which must constitute the bedrock of the community, carry on its own affairs; build its own institutions, support its own funds, publish its own literature, etc. A mother gives birth to a child, but the child then has to grow for itself. The older it gets, the more responsible it is for its own acts.

(From a letter dated 3 July 1956 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly) (19)

The Bahá'í message of hope and our conviction in the glorious future of China restores their courage and self-confidence. During your visit there you should not hesitate to share the sacred gift with the thirsty souls whenever an opportunity presents itself. Our motive should not be to convert the Chinese people but to offer them divine principles which will help them solve their difficulties and advance their own people.

(14 January 1992 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) (20)

First, Bahá'ís are the sincere well-wishers of the Chinese people, interested in contributing to the advancement of their culture and the progress of their country. Our attitude is not that of missionaries. We do not proselytize. We are interested in helping the Chinese people apply the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh to their own reality in order to solve important social issues. This should form the basis of our discussions on China not only with non-Bahá'ís but also among ourselves.

(20 January 1994 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an institution) (21)

The continuation of the dedicated service of those pioneers already settled must also be an objective at this time. The pioneers now in the field and those who will aspire to fulfill permanent goals must consider anew the true spirit of this service. The acceptance of a life of tests, the purity of dedication and example of an inner spiritual condition which manifests itself in every attitude will have a profound effect not only on the Bahá'ís but on many people in each country.

The worldwide expansion of the Cause compels the roots of the Faith in every land to penetrate deep. The penetration initially takes place within an existing culture, and it is our duty to be sensitive to the growth of the Faith within the framework of the people. The requirements of the Cause at a given time in a given country may call for solutions different from the experience of the pioneer. Sensitivity is called for in assisting the indigenous population in every country to emerge. Human resources are required for the Faith at the grass roots. Thus, when lovingly assisted, these friends will, through their knowledge of and experience with their own people, be able to take a lead in fostering rapid expansion.

(18 September 1989 letter from the International Teaching Centre to all Counsellors) (22)

The House of Justice is pleased that you are interested in participating in this international conference in China and hope to give seminars to professional colleagues while there. It encourages you to take advantage of this opportunity and submit a paper to the conference for presentation. You may include Bahá'í Teachings in your presentations in China, attributing them to Bahá'u'lláh, and referring to Him by titles such as a great moral educator, a great spiritual educator, or the expounder of principles for a prosperous global civilization.

(19 May 1994 letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) (23)

It has been suggested that Bahá'í scholars who have been officially invited to give lectures on the Faith in China may wish to bring along Bahá'í books to present to their host organizations as well as public libraries in the cities they visit.

(21 December 1994 letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í Committee for China) (24)

(V) FORMULATING OUR PRESENTATION

As you are aware, historically the world-view of the Chinese has been heavily influenced by Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and more recently Communism. This is the primary reason why existing secondary Bahá'í literature in English, which is mainly directed at westerners from a Judeo-Christian background, does not address the cultural viewpoint of the vast majority of the Chinese people. The matter of literary style of Chinese translation of Bahá'í literature, while important, appears to be of lesser concern. The House of Justice feels that this void may be filled through original writings aimed at the distinctive cultural heritage and contemporary thoughts of the Chinese as well as translation of carefully chosen selections from Bahá'í literature. Further, it seems that topics which are closely linked to the needs of social and economic development in China will be particularly appealing. Such topics include the role of education, equality of men and women, the importance of moral values, family life, harmony of science and religion, the concept of God and the role of religion.

(4 March 1991 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an institution) (25)

As you may know, the basic qualifications for one to be accepted as a Bahá'í are the same for everyone regardless of race or national origin. It is true that for Chinese inquirers in general, especially the ones who are from the People's Republic of China, their concept of spiritual reality often differs greatly from that current in the West. If on their initial contact with the Faith they perceive that they are being offered something foreign to their basic assumptions, many will indeed turn away. ... In essence, the points in your letter and the purpose of your article come down to the question of how to introduce the Bahá'í concept of God to an inquirer who is a professed atheist either from traditional upbringing or as a result of a rigid communist education.

It is impossible to omit acceptance of the concept of "God" altogether from the teaching of a new believer, because our Scriptures are replete with references to Him and our most fundamental spiritual exercises, such as the saying of the Obligatory Prayers, require our acceptance of God. The important thing in teaching the Faith to those of Chinese background is to be sure that we use what Bahá'u'lláh has revealed on the subject, and the commentaries that have been given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Blessed Beauty has explained the reality of the Almighty using a variety of terms and definitions, such as the "innermost Spirit of Spirits", "eternal Essence of Essences", "the invisible and unknowable Essence", "the sovereign Lord, the incomparable and all-glorious Ruler of the universe, Who, out of utter nothingness, hath created the reality of all things" and the One Who "is, and hath from everlasting been, one and alone, without peer or equal, eternal in the past, eternal in the future, detached from all things, ever-abiding, unchangeable, and self-subsisting." Both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have written at length on the ultimate unknowability of the Essence of God Himself, and have explained the many ways in which His reality is manifested in the persons and lives of the Divine Manifestations. Therefore, instead of asking an inquirer whether he believes in God, it would be more fruitful for the teacher to expound the Teachings on the subject, and ascertain whether the inquirer accepts them.

(13 February 1991 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) (26)

The depth of your understanding of the Faith and your attachment to its principles constitute a great factor which enables you to broaden the path of serving the Cause amongst Chinese officials and citizens.

The House of Justice was very happy to know that you have told the officials of your government that by becoming a Bahá'í you have become more patriotic. It particularly appreciates your understanding

of the Faith as far as love of one's country is concerned. Shoghi Effendi has expounded on this important subject in the following passage printed in "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh":

"Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá'u'lláh. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples, and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity."

(6 May 1991 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to individual believers) (27)

The people of China certainly will be attracted to discussions of the Bahá'ís which address the social, educational and historical background of their own country and may thereby be guided to recognize that adherence to Bahá'í principles will bring peace and prosperity to their homeland and to all mankind.

(22 May 1991 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual) (28)

(VI) RAISING UP HUMAN RESOURCES

— OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY

The highest priority of the Faith in China is the raising up of confirmed Bahá'í teachers from its own population. Pioneers can serve an invaluable role in this process through their contacts with the Chinese, and by especially nurturing individuals who are disposed to becoming active teachers of the Cause. The aim is to develop in various localities throughout China core groups of local believers who will carry out the immense teaching work ahead.

The growth of the Cause of God in China necessarily demands careful and patient efforts over a long period of time.

(9 June 1991 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an institution) (29)

At this juncture, it is of the utmost importance that all the friends in demonstrate through their daily activities their loyalty to the Government and the non-political nature of the Bahá'í Faith. You are also encouraged to consult on ways and means which the Chinese believers can practice Bahá'í principles in their own professions in order to contribute to the development of their country.

(29 December 1989 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) (30)

The Universal House of Justice was pleased to receive your report on the trip undertaken last summer. The report demonstrates, once again, how much can be achieved in a few days by a band of dedicated travelling teachers whose aim is to help deepen the Chinese believers, inspiring them to study the Writings and share the Teachings with others.

(25 April 1995 letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í Committee for China) (31)

The purpose of such [institute] training is to endow ever-growing contingents of believers with the spiritual insights, the knowledge, and the skills needed to carry out the many tasks of accelerated expansion and consolidation, including the teaching and deepening of a large number of people—adults, youth and children.

It is therefore of paramount importance that systematic attention be given to devising methods for educating large numbers of believers in the fundamental verities of the Faith and for training and assisting them to serve the Cause as their God-given talents allow.

They [training institutes] will help to develop in each participant a deep love for Bahá'u'lláh, a good understanding of His essential Teachings and an awareness of the importance of developing the spiritual life of each individual through prayer, meditation and immersion in the Sacred Writings. They will also cover such practical matters as how to teach the Faith, for there are too many who, for lack of confidence in their ability to do so, are hesitant to convey the Message.

Your participation in institute programmes, through which you will deepen your knowledge of the Faith, cultivate your inner spiritual lives and develop abilities of service, will enable you to intensify your individual and collective exertions in the teaching field and will result in a commensurate acceleration in the expansion of your communities.

They [institute programmes] should seek to develop in the participants a good understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's essential Teachings and to help them acquire those skills and abilities that will enable them to serve the Faith effectively. They should also strive to imbue their hearts with a deep love for Bahá'u'lláh—a love from which stems a desire to submit oneself to His Will, to obey His laws, to heed His exhortations and to promote His Faith.

These centres of Bahá'í learning will have as their goal one very practical outcome, namely, the raising up of large numbers of believers who are trained to foster and facilitate the process of entry by troops with efficiency and love.

(April 1998 "Training Institutes document" prepared for and approved by the Universal House of Justice) (32)

Our hopes, our goals, our possibilities of moving forward can all be realized through concentrating our endeavours on the major aim of the Divine Plan at its current stage – that is, to effect a significant advance in the process of entry by troops. This challenge can be met through persistent effort patiently pursued. Entry by troops is a possibility well within the grasp of our community. Unremitting faith, prayer, the promptings of the soul, Divine assistance – these are among the essentials of progress in any Bahá'í undertaking. But also of vital importance to bringing about entry by troops is a realistic approach, systematic action. There are no shortcuts. Systematization ensures consistency of lines of action based on well-conceived plans. In a general sense, it implies an orderliness of approach in all that pertains to Baha'i service, whether in teaching or administration, in individual or collective endeavour. While allowing for individual initiative and spontaneity, it suggests the need to be clear-headed, methodical, efficient, constant, balanced and harmonious. Systematization is a necessary mode of functioning animated by the urgency to act.

(Ridvan Message of the Universal House of Justice, B.E. 155) (33)

As translated into programmes and projects by national and local institutions, the Plan, among other things, gives direction, identifies goals, stimulates effort, provides a variety of needed facilities and materials to benefit the work of teachers and administrators. This is of course necessary for the proper functioning of the community, but is of no

consequence unless its individual members respond through active participation. In so responding, each individual, too, must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfilment to the life of any Bahá'í.

(Ridvan Message of the Universal House of Justice, B.E. 155) (34)

Pioneers must show the kind of leadership which fosters the capacity for growth in others, allowing them to arise to new levels of service. This leadership in assisting the indigenous believers to arise should be one of the objectives of short term pioneers as well. Significant advances for the Cause would result if each such pioneer, for example, would personally assist a number of local friends to become workers in the Faith. We hope that the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board Members will be alert to the needs and conditions of the pioneers in their areas of responsibility and try to assist them to develop this broader understanding. The Counsellors should feel free to suggest the scheduling of courses at institutes and summer schools that would help those who have been in the field a long time to have a more profound understanding of the current developments in the Cause, of the processes and kinds of actions under way in other parts of the world which are effective means for the present thrust toward maturity. Such courses will assist the pioneers to re-think their role, to become spiritually and emotionally renewed. The pioneers are often exhausted and some, while taking care of the necessities of living, may have lost the vision of their high calling, and be in need of consultation and the sharing of recent communications from the World Center which such institutes and courses would provide. Opportunities must also be provided for enlightened

training of those entering the field for the first time.
**(18 September 1989 letter from the International Teaching
Centre to all Counsellors) (35)**

(VII) LAWS OF PERSONAL STATUS **– ENCOURAGING EACH OTHER**

In addition, at the present time, a believer who has Chinese citizenship is not bound by Bahá'í laws of personal status such as those governing marriage and divorce, nor is he required to formally terminate his membership in any organization, including those which may be religious or political in nature. However, he should be educated in Bahá'í laws and principles and should, as a matter of conscience, endeavour to practise these to the best of his ability.

(18 December 1992 letter from the Universal House of Justice to a selected National Spiritual Assembly) (36)

For the present the friends in China may wish to limit the collection of funds only for a specific need on an ad hoc basis. It may be inadvisable to establish a permanent fund as it signifies the formation of a religious organization or community.

(26 January 1993 letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í Committee for China) (37)

The House of Justice feels that you should continue your practice of encouraging the Chinese friends in China to expend their resources on travel teaching and other services as there are no administrative institutions in their country to receive contributions from them. Furthermore, at the present time, it is best not to promote contributions to the Mount Carmel Projects among the Bahá'ís in China.

As the law of Huqúqu'lláh is applied universally, the believers in China should be helped to deepen their knowledge of this sacred law. They should, however, be advised that in order to fulfil their obligation, they only need to calculate the amount they owe but retain the sum

in their possession until the day when payments can be properly made.

(5 June 1994 letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í Committee for China) (38)

Regarding the use of alcohol in food, you are, of course, familiar with the following quotation from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi:

"As regards the question you asked: Under no circumstances should Bahá'ís drink. It is so unambiguously forbidden in the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh that there is no excuse for them even touching it in the form of a toast, or in a burning plum pudding; in fact, in any way."

In the case of the believers in China, however, you should also bear in mind the following passage of the beloved Guardian in "The Advent of Divine Justice" describing how those who arise to propagate the Cause of God should assist new believers in drawing closer to Bahá'u'lláh:

"Let him refrain, at the outset, from insisting on such laws and observances as might impose too severe a strain on the seeker's newly awakened faith, and endeavor to nurse him, patiently, tactfully, and yet determinedly, into full maturity, and aid him to proclaim his unqualified acceptance of whatever has been ordained by Bahá'u'lláh.

"It is in the light of these two statements that you will need to decide how to deal with the question of the use of alcohol in food preparation in China. As for the Chinese believers themselves, it would be too early in the development of the Faith in China to make an issue of the use of alcohol in the preparation of food. Now is the time for their attention to be focused on acquiring a profound understanding of the more essential aspects of the Bahá'í Teachings. From

reports received at the Bahá'í World Centre, the House of Justice understands that, in general, Bahá'í pioneers in China explain to their friends that they do not drink alcohol, and their openness in this respect has never been the cause of problems or misunderstandings.

(13 September 1994 letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual) (39)

As you may know, Bahá'ís residing in China are advised not to communicate with the Bahá'í World Centre directly from China. Neither would it be wise for those who are citizens of China to apply for a passport for the sole purpose of visiting the World Centre, since this might expose them to various risks such as being questioned about their religious belief. However, if your Bahá'í friend in China already holds a Chinese passport and has another genuine reason to travel abroad, and her itinerary will allow, she would be welcome to come for a three-day visit. In that case, it would be understood that she may not necessarily be able to seek permission for the visit prior to her arrival. She should, if possible, advise the World Centre of her expected arrival as soon as she is in a position to do so.

(13 January 1995 letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual) (40)

(VIII) ABOVE ALL ELSE — UNITY

As you know, unity among the Bahá'ís, regardless of their numbers or which part of the world they may be in, is of paramount importance to the Faith.

(29 October 1992 letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í Committee for China) (41)

The situation you describe in your letter is an unfortunate one in which disagreements about the direction and operation of a project hamper continued collaboration. ... This, however, should not cast a shadow over a friendship that has developed throughout years of working together.

The field of service in China is so vast that steadfast friends such as yourself and can follow separate courses of action suited to their own abilities and inclinations, while remaining united in the love for Bahá'u'lláh and providing one another with moral support.

(13 April 1995 letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual) (42)

(IX) GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR BAHÁ'ÍS ENTERING CHINA (JUNE 1992) – SHOULD BE INTERNALIZED

The following guidelines are offered as general guidance related to your conduct as a Bahá'í while in the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). Their purpose is to assist you to avoid offending anyone or acting in a manner which might contravene the laws of the land. They may be shared with other interested Bahá'ís but should not be taken into China.

Before finalizing plans to go to China, you should contact your National Spiritual Assembly and the Bahá'í Committee for China and, except in unusual circumstances, allow enough time to receive any needed guidance and instructions from those bodies.

SHARING BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S MESSAGE IN CHINA

The citizens of China are, in general, very receptive to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and there is freedom to share the Faith in the Chinese mainland so long as it is kept on an individual, one-to-one basis.

More than ever before, this is the time to accelerate the expansion and consolidation of the Faith in China. The Universal House of Justice has expressed the hope that a much greater number of the friends will use business, professional, or educational opportunities to relocate to that country or to visit there.

In China as elsewhere, exemplifying the Bahá'í teachings in daily action exerts a powerful influence on others and is likely to be the most effective means of attracting attention to the Cause. You may, when you

feel it appropriate, introduce in conversation the spiritual and social principles of the Faith. You should, however, be careful not to give any impression that you are proselytizing. If a person manifests genuine receptivity, you may introduce the Faith and its Founder by name. Through a wise and flexible approach to offering the message, your experience in China should be very rewarding. In your many contacts with the Chinese people, you will enrich your understanding of their culture, their beliefs, and their approach to subjects akin to the Baha'i teachings.

Wisdom should be exercised in mentioning the Bahá'í concept of God and religion in view of the education background of your listeners. It has been found helpful when first introducing Bahá'u'lláh, for example, to present Him as the author of certain principles which will raise civilization to new heights and to share His words on such subjects. If the person proves receptive, then further ideas could be shared.

It is especially important to constantly bear in mind the Bahá'í principle of abstaining from all political comments, particularly those which might be construed as critical of any regime, whether of the East or the West. As the Guardian has clearly indicated: "Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions."

It will be very useful for you to establish circles of friends in China apart from those who have already embraced the Faith so as to gain new opportunities to present the Teachings to others. If you are visiting a place where there are resident Bahá'ís, you may let them know that you are at their disposal but avoid conveying the idea that they should organize activities for you or introduce you to Chinese Bahá'ís whom you have not met.

You may offer hospitality to Chinese citizens at hotels where you stay or at your residence. Outings are also a good way to deepen friendships. Gatherings of Chinese Bahá'ís, however, should preferably be organized by the Chinese believers themselves. The size, length, time, place, and frequency of such activities should be acceptable to local practices and the authorities. In general, social get-togethers with Chinese citizens for the purpose of sharing news of the Faith or discussing its tenets should be limited to a few individuals who may have natural reasons to associate with each other, such as students of the same class and their teachers. Large meetings to discuss the Faith should be avoided, especially those involving a mix of foreigners and Chinese. Foreign Bahá'ís may gather in small groups at their discretion for prayer, commemoration, or social functions.

NEW BELIEVERS

Citizens of China who accept the Faith are not required to sign an enrollment card—a verbal declaration of Faith is sufficient. Inevitably, the major share of the teaching and consolidation work will fall on the shoulders of the Chinese believers themselves. Therefore, you should from the outset encourage new believers inside China to deepen their knowledge of the Faith and to share the message with their fellow countrymen, especially members of their families and trusted friends. Nonetheless, every care should be taken not to place such believers in difficult situations. New believers are not to be pressured in any way but left to decide independently their own level of involvement in the development of the Faith in China. You should also be sensitive to the fact that a Chinese believer may not wish to be identified as a Bahá'í to others, especially those whom he does not already know.

You are asked to supply the Bahá'í Committee for China and the World Center with any details you may have regarding new Bahá'ís and/or contacts in China and their connection with you. Information such as

names, addresses, and whether or not they wish to be contacted are particularly useful. All this will remain confidential to everyone except the Bahá'í institutions concerned.

BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION

In accordance with current policies of the Chinese authorities concerning religious activities, there is no development of Baha'i administration in China. No Baha'i organizations should be devised within the country at this time. Since there are no Local Spiritual Assemblies in China, it follows that Nineteen Day Feasts are not held.

You should not deliberately seek out Chinese officials to present them with information on the Faith or attempt to obtain legal recognition for the Faith. However, if an occasion presents itself for you to meet government officials, you may, when it seems appropriate and natural, discuss principles of the Faith or let it be known that you are a Bahá'í.

If you are directly asked about the status of the Faith on the Chinese mainland, you may say that there are no Bahá'í communities or institutions established there, although there are, no doubt, individual believers in various localities. You may also mention the existence of Bahá'í organizations around the world, including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.

SHARING BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE

You may give Bahá'í literature to Chinese believers or receptive contacts at their request. but this is preferably done in private. Similarly, you may loan them your personal Bahá'í material. In general, you should let the Chinese Bahá'ís be the ones to share literature with their families and friends as they deem appropriate and wise.

Single copies of Bahá'í materials of a general spiritual nature may be mailed into China from overseas in response to requests from people in that country.

CORRESPONDENCE SENT TO AND FROM CHINA

When writing letters to be mailed to and from China, you may mention the Faith by name and discuss Bahá'í activities which take place outside of China. However, since mail is sometimes censored in China, there should be no mention of Bahá'í activities which concern that country, including your teaching work there or those of other Bahá'ís. You should refrain from referring to your Chinese correspondents as Bahá'ís unless otherwise instructed by them.

If you need to get in touch with the Bahá'í World Center or any of the institutions of the Faith while in China, the correspondence should be sent via a trusted person outside of the country or be addressed to an individual who is a member of the institution concerned.

The above applies to all forms of written communication, transmitted electronically or otherwise, as well as telephone communication.

HOW TO RESPOND TO REQUESTS FOR MATERIAL ASSISTANCE

When in China you may be approached by citizens or institutions of the People's Republic of China requesting material assistance. Such approaches may take the form of a proposition for a joint venture, request for donations of equipment or money, or request for sponsorship of an individual to leave China. It is very important for you not to make any promise that you yourself are not able and willing to carry out. Moreover, you should not give any undertaking on behalf of Bahá'í institutions.

**This booklet may be shared with Bahá'ís but should
not be taked into China.**

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