
REFERENCE SUPPLEMENT

COLLECTED PASSAGES ON BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT AND
THE BAHÁ'Í FUNDS

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS
OF THE UNITED STATES

OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

SECOND EDITION

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NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'IS OF THE UNITED STATES
OFFICE OF THE TREASURER
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The present work is produced in a non-final form so that it can be corrected and so that each user will be able to add other materials or passages which he has found especially helpful in their service to the Cause. Our hope is that in this way those who read it will become a permanent, useful source of ideas and guidance in the community's service to the Cause.

Foreword

The second edition of the "Reference Supplement" has been issued to correct some minor errors in the first edition, but more important, to include Messages and guidance from the Universal House of Justice received since January 1993. Again, we hasten to point out that these "References" are not intended to include every passage from the Writings on the subjects of the Fund, development, or the linkages between entrepreneurial activities and the work of the Faith, but rather to supplement materials already in print. In particular, the compilation of the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice entitled *Bahá'í Funds - Contributions and Administration* and the National Spiritual Assembly's manual, *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities: Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies* contain the fundamental references on these subjects.

While a number of those passages are also included here, the primary intent of the present work has been to gather additional references not published in those two main sources, and to group the references so as to facilitate discussions about community development in the United States, management of the Faith's resources, and other subjects.

The present work is produced in a notebook form so that it can be kept current, and so that each user will be able to add other materials or passages she or he has found especially helpful in their services to the Cause. Our hope is that in this way these "References" will become a dynamic, useful source of ideas and guidance in the community's development efforts.

THE CHALLENGE FOR AMERICA

Becoming a Relentless Force for Growth

The Community of the Most Great Name, the leaven that must leaven the lump, the chosen remnant that must survive the rolling up of the old, discredited, tottering Order, and assist in the unfoldment of a new one in its stead, is standing ready, alert, clear-visioned, and resolute. The American believers, standard-bearers of this world-wide community and torch-bearers of an as yet unborn civilization, have girt up their loins, unfurled their banners and stepped into the arena of service. Their Plan has been formulated. Their forces are mobilized. They are steadfastly marching towards their goal. They cannot afford either to turn back or hesitate. The hosts of the Abhá Kingdom are rushing forth, as promised, to direct their steps and reinforce their power. Through their initial victories they have provided the impulse that must now surge and, with relentless force sweep over their sister-communities and eventually overpower the entire human race.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America*, p. 14)

Though the course He [Abdu'l-Bahá] has traced for you seems, at times, lost in the threatening shadows with which a stricken humanity is now enveloped, yet the unfailing light He has caused to shine continually upon you is of such brightness that no earthly dusk can ever eclipse its splendor. Though small in numbers, and circumscribed as yet in your experiences, powers, and resources, yet the Force which energizes your mission is limitless in its range and incalculable in its potency. Though the enemies which every acceleration in the progress of your mission must raise up be fierce, numerous, and unrelenting, yet the invisible Hosts which, if you persevere, must, as promised, rush forth to your aid, will, in the end, enable you to vanquish their hopes and annihilate their forces. Though the ultimate blessings that must crown the consummation of your mission be undoubted, and the Divine promises given you firm and irrevocable, yet the measure of the goodly reward which every one of you is to reap must depend on the extent to which your daily exertions will have contributed to the expansion of that mission and the hastening of its triumph.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 15-16)

American Bahá'ís Standing at New Crossroads

The first stage in this transatlantic field of service which those crusading for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the Western Hemisphere are now entering is a step fraught with possibilities such as no mind can adequately envisage. Its challenge is overwhelming and its potentialities unfathomable. Its hazards, rigors and pitfalls are numerous, its field immense, the number of its promoters as yet utterly inadequate, the resources required for its effective prosecution barely tapped. The races, nations and classes included within its orbit are numerous and highly diversified, and the prizes to be won by its victors incalculably great. The hatreds that inflame, the rivalries that agitate, the controversies that confuse, the miseries that afflict, these races, nations and classes are bitter and of long standing. The influence and fanaticism, whether ecclesiastical or political, of potentially hostile organizations, firmly entrenched within their ancestral strongholds, are formidable.

The members of the North American Bahá'í Community, to whose care the immediate destinies of this fate-laden crusade have been entrusted, are standing at a new crossroads. Behind them is an imperishable record, brief yet illustrious, of feats performed over the entire range of the Western Hemisphere. Before them stretches a vista alluring in its as yet hazy outlines, entrancing in its magnitude, reaching to the far horizons of as yet unconquered territories. They can look back, since that crusade was launched, upon a decade of modest beginnings, of toilsome labors, of richly deserved rewards. They now look forward to successive epochs reaching as far as the fringes of that Golden Age that is to be, glowing in the light of God-given promises, destined to be traversed at the cost of infinite toil and of heroic self-sacrifice.

They can neither retrace their steps, nor falter, nor even afford to mark time. The sands are running out, the short span of six brief years intervening between the present hour and the termination of the second stage of the enterprise on which they have embarked will soon expire.

(Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, pp. 20-21)

Fresh Revelation of Divine Light and Strength Will Guide Community

Faced with such a challenge, a community that has scaled thus far such peaks of enduring achievements can neither falter nor recoil. Confident in its destiny, reliant on its God-given power, fortified by the consciousness of its past victories, galvanized into action at the sight of a slowly disrupting civilization, it will - I can have no doubt - continue to fulfil unflinchingly the immediate requirements of its task, assured that with every step it takes and with each stage its traverses, a fresh revelation of Divine light and strength will guide and propel it forward until it consummates, in the fulness of time and in the plenitude of its power, the Plan inseparably bound up with its shining destiny.

(Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America, p. 26)

American Bahá'í Community Summoned to Loftier Heights

The first to awaken to the call of the New Day in the western world; the first to spontaneously arise to befittingly erect the Mother Temple of the West; the first to grasp the implications, evolve the pattern and lay the basis of the structure of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in the entire Bahá'í world; the first to openly and systematically proclaim the fundamental principles of the Faith, to adopt effectual measures for its defense, to invite the attention of royalty to its teachings, to devise an adequate machinery for the translation, the publication and the dissemination of its literature and to provide the means for the creation of its subsidiary institutions; the first to champion the cause of the oppressed and to generously contribute to the alleviation of the sufferings of the needy and persecuted among the followers of Bahá'u'lláh; the first to inaugurate collective enterprises for the propagation of His Cause; the first to assert its independence in the West; the first to lay an unassailable foundation for the erection of auxiliary institutions designed to multiply its financial resources; and, more recently, the first to achieve, as befits its primacy, the initial task devolving upon it in pursuance of the newly launched

World Spiritual Crusade, this community has abundantly merited, by the quality of its deeds and the magnitude of its exploits, the distinctive titles of the cradle of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, of the vanguard of His world-conquering host, of the standard-bearers of the oneness of mankind, of the chief trustees of the Plan devised by the Center of the Covenant and of the torch-bearers of an as yet unborn world civilization.

(*Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, pp. 110-111*)

The concerted activities of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the North American continent assume, as they multiply and develop, a dual aspect, and may be said to fall into two distinct categories, both equally vital and complementary to each other. The one aims at the safeguarding and consolidation of the work already achieved; the other is designed to enlarge the range of its operation. The former depends chiefly for its success upon the capacity, the experience, and loyalty of wise, resourceful, and judicious administrators who, impelled by the very nature of their task, will be increasingly called upon to exercise the utmost care and vigilance in protecting the interests of the Faith, in resolving its problems, in regulating its life, in enriching its resources, and in preserving the pristine purity of its precepts. The latter is essentially pioneer in nature, demanding first and foremost those qualities of renunciation, tenacity, dauntlessness and passionate fervor that alone can brave the dangers and sweep away the obstacles with which an infant Faith...must needs contend.

(*Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America, p. 21*)

I am impelled, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Most Great Festival, coinciding with a triple celebration - the dedication of the Mother Temple of the West, the launching of a World Spiritual Crusade and the commemoration of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission - to pay warmest tribute to the preeminent share which the American Bahá'í Community has had in the course of over half a century in proclaiming His Revelation, in shielding His Cause, in championing His Covenant, in erecting the administrative machinery of His embryonic World Order, in expounding His teachings, in translating and disseminating His Holy Word, in dispatching the messengers of His Glad Tidings, in awakening royalty to His Call, in succoring His oppressed followers, in routing His enemies, in upholding His Law, in asserting the independence of His Faith, in multiplying the financial resources of its nascent institutions and, last but not least, in rearing its greatest House of Worship - the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the western world.

The hour is now ripe for this greatly gifted, richly blessed community to arise and reaffirm, through the launching of yet another enterprise, its primacy, enhance its spiritual heritage, plumb greater depths of consecration and capture loftier heights in the course of its strenuous and ceaseless labors for the exaltation of God's Cause.

(*Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, pp. 106-107*)

Confidence, Optimism Prerogative of Bahá'ís

He deeply sympathizes with the struggles of the British Bahá'ís at present to perform their task, now reaching the crucial stage, in spite of financial difficulties and shortage of pioneers. It would seem as if all our tasks, all over the world,

including here at the World Center, are becoming increasingly more of a challenge to us. As the time approaches for the ending of the various Plans, Six Year ones, Seven Year, Five Year, etc., the obstacles seem to become greater, and the friends are made to realize that very real, hard, often back-breaking effort and sacrifice is involved! The American Bahá'ís here-to-fore so relatively easily victorious(!), are now feeling a very real squeeze on their resources and determination. The same is true of India, Persia, and the other countries with goals to accomplish within a fixed and rapidly diminishing period! He himself, having undertaken at such a disturbed time to raise at least the first story or arcade of the new part of the Báb's Shrine, finds himself beset with worries, problems and complications which have not only doubled his work, but exhaust and harass him all the time. So at least, let the British friends know that when they struggle and feel hard beset, they are not struggling and worrying alone! Far from it!!

We must expect these things: It is becoming evident that the world is not yet through with its labor, the New Age not yet fully born, real Peace not yet right around the corner. We must have no illusions about how much depends on us and our success or failure. All humanity is disturbed and suffering and confused; we cannot expect to not be disturbed and not to suffer - but we don't have to be confused. On the contrary, confidence and assurance, hope and optimism are our prerogative. The successful carrying out of our various Plans is the greatest sign we can give of our faith and inner assurance, and the best way we can help our fellow-men out of their confusion and difficulties.

(Letter on behalf of the Guardian, Unfolding Destiny, p. 225)

Second Bahá'í Century to Witness Stirrings of World Order

The second century is destined to witness a tremendous deployment and a notable consolidation of the forces working towards the world-wide development of that Order, as well as the first stirrings of that World Order, of which the present Administrative System is at once the precursor, the nucleus and pattern - an Order which, as it slowly crystallizes and radiates its benign influence over the entire planet, will proclaim at once the coming of age of the whole human race, as well as the maturity of the Faith itself, the progenitor of that Order.

(Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America, pp. 96-97)

BUSINESS VENTURES AND DEVELOPMENT

Business Ventures - General Observations

I can only for the moment cite at random certain of these opportunities which stand out preeminently, in any attempt to survey the possibilities of the future: The election of the International House of Justice and its establishment in the Holy Land, the spiritual and administrative center of the Bahá'í world, together with the formation of its auxiliary branches and subsidiary institutions; the gradual erection of the various dependencies of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West, and the intricate issues involving the establishment and the extension of the structural basis of Bahá'í community life; the codification and promulgation of the ordinances of the Most Holy Book, necessitating the formation, in certain countries of the East, of properly constituted and officially recognized courts of Bahá'í law;....

(Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 14)

Business Values and Ethics

In their homes, in their hours of relaxation and leisure, in the daily contact of business transactions, in the association of their children, whether in their study-classes, their playgrounds, and club-rooms, in short under all possible circumstances, however insignificant they appear, the community of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh should satisfy themselves that in the eyes of the world at large and in the sight of their vigilant Master they are the living witnesses to those truths which He fondly cherished and tirelessly championed to the very end of His days.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 130)

Business Ventures, Economic System to Evolve Gradually

As he already pointed out to the Secretary, when he was in Haifa, a National Endowment is at the present time to be considered more in the nature of a token endowment. It need not be in the capital, and can represent a very small investment; indeed as little as one thousand dollars, if a suitable piece of property for that price should be found, would be acceptable.

(On behalf of the Guardian, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 350)

No Technical Teachings on Economics in the Cause

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Directives of the Guardian, pp. 18-20; "Bahá'í News" November, 1948)

Combining Business Ventures and Assembly Activities

We make reference to our previous correspondence in which we stated that Local Assemblies may purchase Hazíratu'l-Quds if funds are already in hand and earmarked for this purpose. Further to that letter and to your minute, we wish to offer the suggestion that San Francisco could use the \$2,000.00 to build an Hazíratu'l-Quds which would include income producing property. The income would undoubtedly be freed from the restriction imposed on the principal sum and could therefore be used for general Bahá'í purposes. At the same time the larger building would provide space for expansion as the Faith develops in San Francisco. Possibly your Assembly knows that the National Hazíratu'l-Quds of Germany is of this nature.

(Letter dated January 6, 1964 from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States)

Investments - General Observations

He leaves such matters as investments, etc., to the discretion of individuals who are free to consult experts and make their own decisions, and he feels this applies also to the shares in the prospective oil land which you asked his advice about.

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, High Endeavors, p. 69)

Regarding Mr. Bolton's question as to whether the Guardian has given any instructions to the friends as to the best way to make their investments secure during the coming world crisis; I am instructed to inform you that no such directions have been given either to any individual believer or to any assembly. The only advice the Guardian wishes to give is that whatever investment the friends make they should do it with the utmost caution, as economic and financial conditions are at present most unstable and even precarious.

(On behalf of the Guardian, Letters to Australia & New Zealand, p. 20)

Investments and the Expansion of Activities

He approves of the Investment Scheme of the Publishing Trust, and he trusts that the members of the community will respond and thus enable your Assembly to expand its publishing activities. He leaves the question of approaching Bahá'ís overseas, should the Trust be in need of further capital, to your Assembly's discretion.

(On behalf of the Guardian, Unfolding Destiny, p. 249)

Importance of Not Over-Extending

In this connection he wishes to say that he is very sorry he could not agree to the proposals you sent him so far. As your Assembly is aware, the Bahá'ís all over the world are building up national institutions and purchasing, in various areas, Temple sites, etc. It is only natural that each Assembly should feel justified in

making an initial suitable investment for its Temple site or its national Hazíratu'l-Quds. However, the Guardian, to whom all the news comes from all over the world, is forced to face the fact that if your Assembly, the Canadian Assembly, the British Community, the Italian-Swiss Assembly etc. etc. each pays as heavy sums for its Bahá'í Temple site or national headquarters as they propose to in these reports, which they send him, the Bahá'í world would never be able to get out of debt. Desirable as each place is, when considered from a local standpoint, it becomes on an international scale, a program that is financially impossible. That is why he urged your Assembly to drastically curtail the area and the price. He has done the same thing in many other parts of the world. He hopes that you will shortly be able to purchase the land required.

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Light of Divine Guidance: Vol 1, p. 215)

The eagerness of the friends to serve, often carries them away, and they forget that a sound sense of business management is also much needed, if we are to harbor our resources and accomplish all our goals.

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Light of Divine Guidance: Vol 1, p. 216)

Reliance on Bahá'u'lláh Enables Formulation of Audacious Plans

The progress of the Cause depends upon many factors....It is...to those factors that are directly the result of the actions of the Bahá'ís that we wish to direct our remarks, because if the Bahá'ís will but do their part - however unpromising the prospect - Bahá'u'lláh is able to open doors and change conditions in ways far beyond our understanding.

The first [factor] is a greater realization of the power of Bahá'u'lláh to reinforce the efforts of those who serve Him, of His promise to do so, and of the impotence of all our deeds without this divine assistance. Any evaluation of a situation is entirely misleading if it does not take this supreme power into consideration; whereas constant consciousness of dependence upon Him enables the Bahá'ís to formulate audacious plans and confidently carry them through to completion in the face of seemingly insuperable obstacles.

Armed with this consciousness, the believers should then approach the winning of the goals of the Nine Year Plan with the spirit that will achieve them. This Plan is a stage in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The achievement of its goals is of the utmost urgency and importance because the followers of Bahá'u'lláh are engaged in a race against time. Mankind is being engulfed in the ruin precipitated by its own folly; the longer we Bahá'ís delay in achieving the tasks that God lays before us, the greater is the suffering of our fellow men....The believers should consider the goals, recognize that they are intended to be won, decide what is needed to win them, and then, however hopeless the prospect may seem, set out determinedly to do whatever is needed, confident that Bahá'u'lláh will reinforce them with His Hosts and will open the doors of victory before them.

These...points are closely interlinked, for it is reliance upon Bahá'u'lláh that will enable the friends to pioneer, it is the awareness of the imperative nature of the goals that will inspire them to do so and will guide them to choose their posts, and it is their sacrifice in arising to leave their homes that will call down upon them the divine confirmations and will, through living experience, deepen their love for God, their awareness of His ever-present care, and their reliance upon Him in every aspect of their lives.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of January 11, 1971 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany)

Private Initiative

Regarding the publication of Bahá'í periodicals in America, there is no doubt whatsoever that every individual Bahá'í is free to inaugurate and conduct any magazine of his own provided that nothing is published therein which in the estimation of the National Assembly tends in the least to become detrimental or injurious to the highest interests of the Cause. Within these limits, and these limits only, private initiative should in no wise be discouraged and is indeed highly praiseworthy. It is for the National Assembly, however, to exercise its judgment as to what extent the resources at their disposal enable them to aid financially the individual undertakings of the friends. Should the response of the friends and Assemblies to the appeals made on behalf of the National Fund be prompt, sustained and generous, the National Assembly will, I am certain, justify its sympathy, good-will and genuine cooperation with every individual Bahá'í enterprise. I would, however, at this early state of our work, strongly urge, nay entreat, the friends not to dissipate their efforts, but to seek, after frank, mature and continuous deliberation, to arrive at a common conclusion as to the most urgent requirements and needs of the hour, and having unified their views to strive to uphold and enforce them with promptitude, wholeheartedness and understanding.

(Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, pp. 76-77)

Social and Economic Development

General Observations

From the foregoing passages and allusions it hath been made indubitably clear that in the kingdoms of earth and heaven there must needs be manifested a Being, an Essence Who shall act as a Manifestation and Vehicle for the transmission of the grace of the Divinity Itself, the Sovereign Lord of all. Through the Teachings of this Day Star of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, pp. 67-68)

Human education signifies civilization and progress - that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great

inventions and discoveries and elaborate institutions, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal.

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 8*)

The third requirement of perfection is to arise with complete sincerity and purity of purpose to educate the masses: to exert the utmost effort to instruct them in the various branches of learning and useful sciences, to encourage the development of modern progress, to widen the scope of commerce, industry and the arts, to further such measures as will increase the people's wealth. For the mass of the population is uninformed as to these vital agencies which would constitute an immediate remedy for society's chronic ills.

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 39*)

It is especially gratifying to see you realize the fact that when the world has developed and been enlightened enough through the unseen powers of the Almighty, to be led to the teachings and spirit of the Cause, it will be our shameful task to go round proclaiming such principles as we were taught so many years before and none of which we had lived up to.

(*On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Dawn of a New Day, p. 191*)

...the projects of social and economic development now to be undertaken are a natural stage of growth of the Bahá'í community and are needed by the community itself although they will, of course, benefit a much wider segment of society. The Bahá'í world is in no position financially or from the point of view of manpower, to launch undertakings for the economic and social development of populations in areas where there are but few believers. The greatest need of all peoples is for the Faith itself, so that they may know the destiny towards which they as individuals and as members of society must strive, and will learn from the teachings those virtues and methods which will enable them to work together in harmony, forbearance and trustworthiness...First comes the illumination of hearts and minds by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and then the grassroots stirring of the believers wishing to apply these teachings to the daily life of their community.

(*Universal House of Justice, letter dated May 8, 1984 to a National Spiritual Assembly*)

Role for Outside Assistance

Erelong will your brethren from Europe and America journey to Persia. There they will promote to an unprecedented degree the interests of art and industry. There they will rear the institutions of true civilization, promote the development of husbandry and trade, and assist in the spread of education....Assuredly they will come; assuredly they will contribute in making of the land of Iran the envy and the admiration of all the peoples and nations of the world.

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá'í Administration, p. 173*)

Bahá'ís as the Leaven

May this community, the leaven placed by the hands of Providence in the midst of a people belonging to a nation, likewise young, dynamic, richly endowed with

material resources, and assured of a great material prosperity by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, play its part not only in lending a notable impetus to the world-wide propagation of the Faith it has espoused, but contribute, as its resources multiply and as it gains in stature, to the spiritualization and material progress of the nation of which it forms so vital a part.

(*Shoghi Effendi, Messages to Canada, p. 21*)

Development - A Process of Building Community

Conscious of their high calling, confident in the society-building power which their Faith possesses, they press forward undeterred and undismayed, in their efforts to fashion and perfect the necessary instruments wherein the embryonic World Order of Bahá'u'lláh can mature and develop. It is this building process, slow and unobtrusive, to which the life of the world-wide Bahá'í Community is wholly consecrated, that constitutes the one hope of a stricken society. For this process is actuated by the generating influence of God's changeless Purpose, and is evolving within the framework of the Administrative Order of His Faith.

In a world the structure of whose political and social institutions is impaired, whose vision is befogged, whose conscience is bewildered, whose religious systems have become anemic and lost their virtue, this healing Agency, this leavening Power, this cementing Force, intensely alive and all-pervasive, has been taking shape, is crystallizing into institutions, is mobilizing its forces, and is preparing for the spiritual conquest and the complete redemption of mankind. Though the society which incarnates its ideals be small, and its direct and tangible benefits as yet inconsiderable, yet the potentialities with which it has been endowed, and through which it is destined to regenerate the individual and rebuild a broken world, are incalculable.

(*Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 195*)

Expansion Increases Available Resources

The Final Phase of the Plan must now be carried forward with still greater energy, with still nobler self-sacrifice, with a clearer vision of the historic import of the work which is to be accomplished, with a mightier determination to bring it to a successful conclusion. The resources at the disposal of the community must, as a result of its expansion, be continually augmented and carefully extended.

(*Shoghi Effendi, Unfolding Destiny, p. 215*)

Development Part of Formative Period

The Formative Period, the Iron Age, of that Dispensation was now beginning, the Age in which the institutions, local, national and international, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh were to take shape, develop and become fully consolidated, in anticipation of the third, the last, the Golden Age destined to witness the emergence of a world-embracing Order enshrining the ultimate fruit of God's latest Revelation to mankind, a fruit whose maturity must signalize the establishment of

a world civilization and the formal inauguration of the Kingdom of the Father upon earth as promised by Jesus Christ Himself.

(*Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 324*)

Potentialities of the Cause for Ordering of Human Affairs

A wider horizon is opening before us, illumined by a growing and universal manifestation of the inherent potentialities of the Cause for ordering human affairs. In this light can be discerned not only our immediate tasks but, more dimly, new pursuits and undertakings upon which we must shortly become engaged....

The powers released by Bahá'u'lláh match the needs of the times. We may therefore be utterly confident that the new throb of energy now vibrating throughout the Cause will empower it to meet the oncoming challenges of assisting, as maturity and resources allow, the development of the social and economic life of peoples, of collaborating with the forces leading toward the establishment of order in the world, of influencing the exploitation and constructive uses of modern technology, and in all these ways enhancing the prestige and progress of the Faith and uplifting the conditions of the generality of mankind.

(*Universal House of Justice, Ridván letter, 1983*)

Development to Proceed Gradually

He considers that the formation of a school at this time is premature. It would involve us in heavy responsibilities which for the sake of public opinion would have to be discharged efficiently and in an exemplary manner, and he does not consider that we have the resources or the facilities at present to embark on such a project. There is no reason why the subject cannot be reconsidered at a future date.

(*On behalf of the Guardian, Unfolding Destiny, p. 309*)

He was also pleased to hear the Summer School property will be gradually developed and serve the friends and the Community at large in other ways. He thanks you for the plan of it sent under separate cover.

(*On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Arohanui: Letters to New Zealand, p. 66*)

Immediate Action Required; Funds Dispensed Gradually

The third [area where immediate action is required] is in the prosecution of programs of social and economic development. Bahá'í communities in many lands have attained a size and complexity that both require and make possible the implementation of a range of activities for their social and economic development which will not only be of immense value for the consolidation of these communities and the development of their Bahá'í life, but will also benefit the wider communities within which they are embedded and will demonstrate the beneficial effects of the Bahá'í Message to the critical gaze of the world. Funds for the initiation and carrying out of these projects will be dispensed very gradually and with great care in order not to undermine the natural growth and sense of responsibility of these communities, but the field is so vast, the opportunities so far-reaching, that the need will stretch the resources of the Cause to the uttermost.

(*The Universal House of Justice, letter of January 2, 1984*)

Material Development to Parallel Spiritual Growth

Every outward thrust into new fields, every multiplication of Bahá'í institutions, must be paralleled by a deeper thrust of the roots which sustain the spiritual life of the community and ensure its sound development. From this vital, this ever-present need, attention must at no time be diverted; nor must it be, under any circumstances, neglected, or subordinated to the no less vital and urgent task of ensuring the outer expansion of Bahá'í administrative institutions.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Letters to Australia & New Zealand*, p. 76)

It is indeed a great privilege for you all to be able to labor in this Divine Vineyard, and to lay down the basis of the spiritual as well as the material development of your ancient and beloved country.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance: Vol 1*, pp. 22-23)

Principal Cause of Mankind's Suffering Not Material

...we must not allow ourselves to forget the continuing, appalling burden of suffering under which millions of human beings are always groaning -- a burden which they have borne for century upon century and which it is the mission of Bahá'u'lláh to lift at last. The principal cause of this suffering, which one can witness wherever one turns, is the corruption of human morals and the prevalence of prejudice, suspicion, hatred, untrustworthiness, selfishness and tyranny among men. What they desperately need is to know how to live their lives -- they need to know who they are, to what purpose they exist, and how they should act towards one another; and, once they know the answers to these questions they need to be helped to gradually apply these answers to everyday behavior. It is to the solution of this basic problem of mankind that the greater part of all our energy and resources should be directed.

(Universal House of Justice, letter dated November 19, 1974 to a National Spiritual Assembly)

Spiritual Principles Facilitate Discovery of Practical Measures

These are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonizes with that which is immanent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures.

(Universal House of Justice, *Promise of World Peace*, pp. 15-16)

Methods and the Conceptual Foundation

Concerning the methods to be adopted for the realization of your urgent task, Shoghi Effendi approves of the suggestion that some business firms open branches in new districts and thus provide Bahá'í settlement by this means.

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 88)

At this stage of social and economic development, a project directory for fund-raising is not deemed timely, although summaries are available of Bahá'í projects worldwide. Emphasis on the process of attracting funds could detract from the critical process of community-building, which is a central purpose of development. Efforts to be attractive to possible donors could introduce the distasteful element of competition and exert undue influence on the type of development activities given principal support. To avoid the often-held idea that more money will bring faster development, the focus is on the true criteria for measuring success: greater unity in the community, increased reliance upon community consultation, and enhanced ability to apply the spiritual Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to the problems of society. These accomplishments will hasten the arrival of the New World Order.

(From a letter dated November 21, 1989 from the Universal House of Justice to an individual)

If any of the European pioneers are really in need of relief parcels for their personal use, there is certainly no objection to sending them some. However, he certainly would not send relief for those whom they are teaching or contacting, as this would seem in the nature of either a reward or an enticement for those attracted to the Faith.

(From a letter dated November 25, 1947 on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

Your feeling that the Bahá'í teachings on social and economic justice must find expression in the Bahá'í community and in society at large is, of course, entirely correct. The priorities and the methods of implementation must, however, be carefully considered. In a recent letter addressed to an individual believer the Universal House of Justice wrote:

"The first step in the reconstruction of human society is for individuals to accept Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for this age and to begin to strive, as well as they can, to follow His Teachings in their individual and in their communal lives. Conversion is but the first step, yet it is the essential one. Without it no amount of expertise or scientifically based knowledge will have a lasting effect, because the fundamental motivating and sustaining power will be lacking.

"As the Bahá'í community grows it will acquire experts in numerous fields - both by Bahá'ís becoming experts and by experts becoming Bahá'ís. As these experts bring their knowledge and skill to the service of the community and, even more, as they transform their various disciplines by bringing to bear upon them the light of the Divine Teachings, problem after problem now disrupting society will be answered. In such developments they should strive to make the utmost use of non-Bahá'í resources and should collaborate fully with non-Bahá'ís who are working in the same fields. Such collaboration will, in the long run, be of far more benefit than any attempt now to treat such scientific endeavors as specifically Bahá'í projects operating under Bahá'í institutions and financed by investment of Bahá'í funds.



"Paralleling this process, Bahá'í institutional life will also be developing, and as it does so the assemblies will draw increasingly upon scientific and expert knowledge - whether of Bahá'ís or of non-Bahá'ís - to assist in solving the problems of their communities.

"In time great Bahá'í institutions of learning, great international and national projects for the betterment of human life will be inaugurated and flourish.

"The Bahá'í work for the reconstruction of human society can thus be seen to comprise three streams; the most fundamental is the spreading of the Word of God, the winning of the allegiance of ever greater numbers of men and women to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and the establishment of the Bahá'í Administrative Order; concurrent with this is the contribution to human advancement and to the progress of the Bahá'í community made by individual Bahá'ís in the pursuit of their daily work; and then there are the projects and institutions for human advancement launched and operated by Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies as their resources grow and the range of their activities expands. It is for the Universal House of Justice to direct the energies of the believers in these various channels and to make known what activities are timely and have priority."

The House of Justice considers that it is not now timely to consider the establishment of special investment funds for the financing of development programs. What is needed is for the friends to give the Bahá'í Fund itself their unstinting support, thus supplying the life-blood for the manifold and steadily diversifying activities of the Bahá'í communities throughout the world. Wherever development programs in the fields of education, agriculture, social life, etc. are found to be both necessary and feasible in Bahá'í communities, they are already being launched to the degree that circumstances allow, and this is a process that will be steadily augmented, especially in areas where the Faith is winning rapid acceptance by the people.

(From a letter dated November 30, 1977 on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

It is clear from the Ridván message that the Bahá'í world community will have to be increasingly engaged in a program of service through development projects which not only will uplift the Bahá'í communities involved but also will benefit non-Bahá'ís wherever the projects may be carried out. The National Spiritual

Assembly of the United States is certainly free to form a private voluntary non-profit agency which would be a focus of American activities in this promising field.

(Letter dated June 7, 1983 on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual)

Financing of Projects

...it is permissible to apply for and accept grants or donations from foundations, charitable agencies or government sources which as a normal practice subsidize radio work intended as a public service, and provided that such service will constitute a substantial portion of your programming, that the funds so received will not be used for work undertaken particularly for the Faith, and that care is taken to ascertain whether potential donors and the purpose of their gifts are acceptable to your Assembly.

However, fund-raising through direct appeals to non-Bahá'í listeners is inappropriate, but donations spontaneously contributed by non-Bahá'ís may be accepted in much the same way as gifts from the agencies previously mentioned. A point to bear in mind is that a Bahá'í radio station should strictly uphold a standard for its operations that will guard its programs against being confused in the public mind with the radio programs sponsored by other religious groups. The latter programs often involve fund-raising activities which, if associated with Bahá'í programs, would eventually undermine the prestige of the Faith and expose its institutions to certain dangers.

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

1. Many projects will be self-supporting financially from the very beginning; others may be partially assisted in the initial stages by local or national Bahá'í funds; others may involve financial assistance from non-Bahá'í sources. All should aim at becoming independent of continued support from outside whether from Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í sources, whether in finance or manpower. These factors, however, should be considered and firmly provided for before a project is launched.
 2. Any projects started by the Cause should be designed to grow soundly and steadily, and not to collapse from attrition. In other words, external assistance and funds (Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í) may be used to make surveys, to initiate activities, to bring in expertise, but the aim should be for each project to be able to continue and develop on the strength of local Bahá'í labor, funds and enthusiasm.
 3. It is within the discretion of each National Spiritual Assembly to decide what assistance, if any, it will give to local development projects launched in its country.
 4. If a project is of special value to a community, but its financial resources are limited, the National Spiritual Assembly, in consultation with the Counsellors, should determine the extent of financial assistance needed and submit its report to the Universal House of Justice. The House of Justice will then decide:
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- a) Whether it can give any assistance from the international funds of the Faith.
- b) Whether it will call on another national Bahá'í community to give assistance.
- c) Whether it will authorize the National Assembly to apply to the civil authorities for financial or other assistance.
- d) Whether the project is to be submitted to some international or national non-Bahá'í funding body for financial assistance.

5. National Assemblies should not appeal to the civil authorities, to non-Bahá'í foreign sources, to other National Assemblies or to believers outside their jurisdiction without prior approval of the Universal House of Justice.

(From a document dated December 1985 from the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Center entitled "Some Guidelines for Social and Economic Development Projects")

Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific pursuits centering around the Dependence of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervor, can never hope to achieve beyond the meagre and often transitory results produced by the contemplations of the ascetic or the communion of the passive worshiper.

Shoghi Effendi

THE HOLIEST MASHRIQU'L-ADHKÁR AND ITS DEPENDENCIES

The auxiliary buildings of the House of Worship should likewise be erected there: the hospital, the schools and university, the elementary school, the refuge for the poor and indigent; also the haven for orphans and the helpless, and the travelers' hospice.

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Memorials of the Faithful, p. 20*)

...(A) lofty, imposing edifice surrounded completely by gardens of variegated flowers, with nine avenues leading through them, nine fountains and pools of water. Such is its matchless, beautiful design. Now they are building a hospital, a school for orphans, a home for cripples, a hospice and a large dispensary. God willing, when it is fully completed, it will be a paradise.

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 71*)

Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific pursuits centering around the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervor, can never hope to achieve beyond the meagre and often transitory results produced by the contemplations of the ascetic or the communion of the passive worshiper. It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper himself, much less to humanity in general, unless and until translated and transfused into that dynamic and disinterested service to the cause of humanity which it is the supreme privilege of the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to facilitate and promote. Nor will the exertions, no matter how disinterested and strenuous, of those who within the precincts of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be engaged in administering the affairs of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, fructify and prosper unless they are brought into close and daily communion with those spiritual agencies centering in and radiating from the central Shrine of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Nothing short of direct and constant interaction between the spiritual forces emanating from this House of Worship centering in the heart of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and the energies consciously displayed by those who administer its affairs in their service to humanity can possibly provide the necessary agency capable of removing the ills that have so long and so grievously afflicted humanity. For it is assuredly upon the consciousness of the efficacy of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, reinforced on one hand by spiritual communion with His Spirit, and on the other by the intelligent application and the faithful execution of the principles and laws He revealed, that the salvation of a world in travail must ultimately depend. And of all the institutions that stand associated with His Holy Name, surely none save the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can most adequately provide the essentials of Bahá'í worship and service, both so vital to the regeneration of the world.

(*Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 186*)

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is one of the most vital institutions in the world, and it hath many subsidiary branches. Although it is a House of Worship, it is also connected with a hospital, a drug dispensary, a traveller's hospice, a school for orphans, and a university for advanced studies. Every Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is connected with these

five things. My hope is that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will now be established in America, and that gradually the hospital, the school, the university, the dispensary and the hospice, all functioning according to the most efficient and orderly procedures, will follow. Make these matters known to the beloved of the Lord, so that they will understand how very great is the importance of this 'Dawning-Point of the Remembrance of God.' The Temple is not only a place for worship; rather, in every respect is it complete and whole.

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 99-100*)

Without attempting an exhaustive survey of the distinguishing features and purpose of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, I should feel content at the present time to draw your attention to what I regard certain misleading statements that have found currency in various quarters, and which may lead gradually to a grave misapprehension of the true purpose and essential character of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

It should be borne in mind that the central Edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, round which in the fullness of time shall cluster such institutions of social service as shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant, should be regarded apart from these Dependencies, as a House solely designed and entirely dedicated to the worship of God in accordance with the few yet definitely prescribed principles established by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

(*Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 184*)

It is consecrated exclusively to worship, devoid of all ceremony and ritual, is provided with an auditorium which can seat 1600 people, and is to be supplemented by accessory institutions of social service to be established in its vicinity, such as an orphanage, a hospital, a dispensary for the poor, a home for the incapacitated, a hostel for travelers and a college for the study of arts and sciences.

(*Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 350*)

I am hopeful by Divine Bounty and Grace, that the beloved ones of God may be confirmed in the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and all its accessories, which are accounted by the basic foundations. These are: School for orphan children, Hospital and Dispensary for the poor, Place for the incapable (i.e. home for crippled), College for the higher Scientific Education. The meaning is this: that in every place first a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár must be founded; then a School for the education for orphan children, and the poor; then the Hospital and Medical Dispensary must be founded; then the Home of the Cripple; then the College of higher Scientific Education. In every city a great Mashriqu'l-Adhkár must be founded after this order. Now we hope, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár may be founded in Chicago. After its foundation the important accessories must gradually be founded....

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í News #131 p. 6*)

Concerning the copy of a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá which you had enclosed in your letter of October 20th and in which the Master defines the order in which Temple accessory buildings are to be constructed; this Tablet, Shoghi Effendi feels, should not be interpreted too rigidly as giving strictly the exact order in which these accessories are to be built. Nor should it be regarded as providing an exhaustive list of the buildings which will in future be erected around the central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. The International House of Justice will have to lay down definitely the number and order of these future Temple accessories, and to define their relationships to each other, and to the Temple itself....

As to the question of the relationship of an administrative building to the Temple; this also will have to be defined in future, but whatever the actual form which such relationship may assume, and whatever its details, it should be based on the general principle that these two sets of Bahá'í institutions embody two vital and distinct, yet inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service. The central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which is exclusively devoted to purposes of worship, represents the spiritual element, and therefore fulfills a primary function in every Bahá'í Community, whereas all other Temple accessories, whether of a strictly administrative, cultural or humanitarian character, are secondary, and come next in importance to the House of Worship itself.

(From a letter dated January 28, 1939 written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

This Bahá'í teaching of human fellowship and kindness implies that we must be always ready to extend every assistance and help we can to those who are in distress and suffering. Bahá'í charity is of the very essence of the Teachings and should therefore be developed in every Bahá'í community. Charitable institutions such as orphanages, free schools and hospitals for the poor, constitute an indispensable part of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. It is the responsibility of every local Bahá'í community to insure the welfare of its poor and needy members, through whatever means possible.

But, of course this extension of assistance to the poor, in whatever form, should under no circumstances be allowed to seriously interfere with the major collective interest of the Bahá'í community, as distinguished from the purely personal interests of its members. The demands of the Cause transcend those of the individual, and should therefore be given precedence. But these two phases of Bahá'í social life, though not of equal importance, are by no means contradictory. Both of them are essential, and should be fostered, but each according to its own degree of importance. It is the responsibility of Bahá'í Assemblies to decide when individual interests should be subordinated to those affecting the collective welfare of the community. But, as already stated, the interests of the individual should always be safe guarded within certain limits, and provided they do not seriously affect the welfare of the group as a whole.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian dated June 26, 1936 to an individual believer)



An outpouring of treasure, no less copious than the blood shed so lavishly in the Apostolic Age of the Faith by those who in the heart of the Asiatic continent proclaimed its birth to the world, can befit their spiritual descendants, who, in the present Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, have championed the Cause, and assumed so preponderating a share in the erection of its Administrative Order, and are now engaged in the final stage of the building of the House that incarnates the soul of that Faith in the American continent. No sacrifice can be deemed too great to insure the completion of such an edifice - the most holy House of Worship ever to be associated with the Faith of the Most Great Name - an edifice whose inception has shed such a luster on the closing years of the Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, which has assumed a concrete shape in the present Formative stage in the evolution of our beloved Faith, whose dependencies must spring into existence in the course of successive epochs of this same Age, and whose fairest fruits will be garnered in the Age that is to come, the last, the Golden Age of the initial and brightest Dispensation of the five-thousand-century Bahá'í Cycle.

"A most wonderful and thrilling motion will appear in the world of existence," are 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own words, predicting the release of spiritual forces that must accompany the completion of this most hallowed House of Worship. "From that point of light," He, further glorifying that edifice, has written, "the spirit of teaching... will permeate to all parts of the world." And again: "Out of this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, without doubt, thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be born. It marks the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth."

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 69)

FUNDRAISING, FUND APPEALS, AND GIVING BY NON-BAHÁ'ÍS

The Bahá'í Fund

The Purpose and Privilege of Giving

How great, how very great, the gulf that separateth Us from them who, in this Day, are occupied with their evil passions, and have set their hopes on the things of the earth and its fleeting glory! Many a time hath the court of the All-Merciful been to outward seeming so denuded of the riches of this world that they who lived in close association with Him suffered from dire want. Despite their sufferings, the Pen of the Most High hath, at no time, been willing to refer, nor even to make the slightest allusion, to the things that pertain to this world and its treasures. And if, at any time, any gift were presented to Him, that gift was accepted as a token of His grace unto him that offered it. Should it ever please Us to appropriate to Our own use all the treasures of the earth, to none is given the right to question Our authority, or to challenge Our right. It would be impossible to conceive any act more contemptible than soliciting, in the name of the one true God, the riches which men possess.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, pp. 201-202)

Contributions Surest Way of Lifting Mankind's Burden of Misery

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

(From a letter dated December 8, 1947 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Amount of Contribution Not as Important as Universal Participation

...(T)he friends should be made to appreciate the benefits which come from regular and systematic contributions to the National Fund. The amount of the contribution is not as important as universal participation.

(Universal House of Justice, letter dated November 15, 1963)

Deciding How Much of One's Wealth to Give to the Cause

The House of Justice would never go to the extreme of telling the friends that now is the time to give their retirement and long-range savings to the Fund. It sets forth the needs of the Cause, and calls upon the believers for sacrifice, but the degree and

manner of his sacrifice depends on each believer's own faith and good judgment in light of his responsibilities. Again and again in His Writings Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes the need for moderation in all things, and He upholds the importance of using wisdom in all we do and say.

It has been a problem for devoted believers in every age to decide how much of their worldly wealth they should give to the Cause of God, and how much they should use to meet their many responsibilities of life such as educating their children, preparing for their old age so that they will not be a burden on others and so forth. You will recall the story of the Muslim who asked Muhammad whether he should tie up his camel or trust in God that it would not run away.

Muhammad's answer was that he should tie up his camel and trust in God! In this Dispensation, by the institution of the Huqúqu'lláh, Bahá'u'lláh has provided us with a measure. We are all obliged to pay that portion of our savings that is God's Right. What remains thereafter is ours to use at our own discretion, for our own purposes, in promoting the work of the Cause and helping others less fortunate than ourselves. In the Hidden Words Bahá'u'lláh revealed:

O My Servant! The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.

While, in the twelfth Glad-Tidings He said:

The most despised of men in the sight of God are those who sit idly and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of material means, placing your whole trust in God, the Provider of all means. When anyone occupieth himself in a craft or trade, such occupation itself is regarded in the estimation of God as an act of worship; and this is naught but a token of His infinite and all-pervasive bounty.

Thus to earn a livelihood is a spiritual obligation, and one should not consciously place oneself in a position where one would have to beg others to support one.

It is against this background of responsibility for oneself and one's family that one should estimate the degree to which one can sacrifice for the Funds of the Faith. There is a great range of things that one can do without jeopardizing one's future security, and only each individual can estimate what these things are.

(Letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, March 9, 1992)

Only Believers May Support Bahá'í Work

As I have already intimated in the course of my conversations with visiting pilgrims, so vast and significant an enterprise as the construction of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West should be supported, not by the munificence of a few but by the joint contributions of the entire mass of the convinced followers of the Faith. It cannot be denied that the emanations of spiritual power and inspiration destined to radiate from the central Edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

will to a very large extent depend upon the range and variety of the contributing believers, as well as upon the nature and degree of self-abnegation which their unsolicited offerings will entail. Moreover, we should, I feel, regard it as an axiom and guiding principle of Bahá'í administration that in the conduct of every specific Bahá'í activity, as different from undertakings of a humanitarian, philanthropic or charitable character, which may in future be conducted under Bahá'í auspices, only those who have already identified themselves with the Faith and are regarded as its avowed and unreserved supporters should be invited to join and collaborate. For apart from the consideration of embarrassing complications which the association of non-believers in the financing of institutions of a strictly Bahá'í character may conceivably engender in the administration of the Bahá'í community of the future, it should be remembered that these specific Bahá'í institutions, which should be viewed in the light of Bahá'u'lláh's gifts bestowed upon the world, can best function and most powerfully exert their influence in the world only if reared and maintained solely by the support of those who are fully conscious of, and are unreservedly submissive to, the claims inherent in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In cases, however, when a friend or sympathizer of the Faith eagerly insists on a monetary contribution for the promotion of the Faith, such gifts should be accepted and duly acknowledged by the elected representatives of the believers with the express understanding that they would be utilized by them only to reinforce that section of the Bahá'í Fund exclusively devoted to philanthropic or charitable purposes. For, as the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh extends in scope and in influence, and the resources of Bahá'í communities correspondingly multiply, it will become increasingly desirable to differentiate between such departments of the Bahá'í treasury as minister to the needs of the world at large, and those that are specifically designed to promote the direct interests of the Faith itself. From this apparent divorce between Bahá'í and humanitarian activities it must not, however, be inferred that the animating purpose of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh stands at variance with the aims and objects of the humanitarian and philanthropic institutions of the day. Nay, it should be realized by every judicious promoter of the Faith that at such an early stage in the evolution and crystallization of the Cause such discriminating and precautionary measures are inevitable and even necessary if the nascent institutions of the Faith are to emerge triumphant and unimpaired from the present welter of confused and often conflicting interests with which they are surrounded. This note of warning may not be thought inappropriate at a time when, inflamed by a consuming passion to witness the early completion of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, we may not only be apt to acquiesce in the desire of those who, as yet uninitiated into the Cause, are willing to lend financial assistance to its institutions, but may even feel inclined to solicit from them such aid as it is in their power to render. Ours surely is the paramount duty so to acquit ourselves in the discharge of our most sacred task that in the days to come neither the tongue of the slanderer nor the pen of the malevolent may dare to insinuate that so beauteous, so significant an Edifice has been reared by anything short of the unanimous, the exclusive, and the self-sacrificing strivings of the small yet determined body of the convinced supporters of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. How delicate our task, how pressing the responsibility that weighs upon us, who are called upon on one hand to preserve inviolate the integrity and the identity of the regenerating Faith of

Bahá'u'lláh, and to vindicate on the other its broad, its humanitarian, its all-embracing principles!

(*Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, pp. 182-184*)

Discretion of Assembly in Using Funds for Community's Benefit

And as the progress and execution of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of local as well as national Spiritual Assemblies, a Bahá'í Fund be established, to be placed under the exclusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. All donations and contributions should be offered to the Treasurer of the Assembly, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Cause, throughout that locality or country. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund. The members of the Spiritual Assembly will at their own discretion expend it to promote the Teaching Campaign, to help the needy, to establish educational Bahá'í institutions, to extend in every way possible their sphere of service. I cherish the hope that all the friends, realizing the necessity of this measure, will bestir themselves and contribute, however modestly at first, towards the speedy establishment and the increase of that Fund.

(*Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, pp. 41-42*)

Local Assembly Goal Program

General and National Interests Take Precedence

The beloved Guardian has explained that the general and national interests of the Cause take precedence over local ones; thus contributions to local funds are secondary to those to national funds. However, the stability of the National Assembly rests on the firmness of the Local Spiritual Assemblies, and in the matter of educating the friends in the importance of the fund, it is often most practical and efficacious to concentrate at first on the development of the local funds and the efficient operation of the Local Spiritual Assemblies. Then, once the friends understand the principle, and learn from the experience at a local level, they will more easily understand the importance of the national fund and the work of the National Spiritual Assembly.

(*Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 259*)

National Assemblies May Suggest Contribution Level

National Assemblies should avoid instructing their Local Spiritual Assemblies to allocate a certain percentage or portion of their local funds towards specific purposes. They may, however, suggest that the Local Assemblies contribute funds for priority projects at the national budget and suggest that the communities try to underwrite a part of the national budget. Any National Assembly is, of course, empowered to prevent an institution under its jurisdiction from taking any action

regarding the use of funds which would not be to the best interests of the Cause. Such cases, however, are rare...."

(On behalf of the House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 262)

As to contributions to the National Fund, it is not permissible to impose a tax or an assessment on Local Assemblies, but you may certainly inform Local Assemblies of the needs of the National Fund and may suggest a certain percentage as a guide to them in making contributions. In doing this you may point out that support of the National Fund is an obligation not only of the believers, but of all Local Assemblies as well. It is permissible, however, for a Local Assembly to fix a percentage of its receipts as an amount to be contributed to the National Fund.

(On behalf of the House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 261)

Useful Method of Stimulating Contributions

As a method of stimulating contributions, certain National Spiritual Assemblies have for some time adopted a method of assessing, to the degree that they are able, the financial capacities of their local communities. Having done this, the National Assembly shares with the Local Spiritual Assembly of each community which shows a sufficient level of activity and capacity information on the needs of the national and international funds, and suggests that the Local Assembly consider setting a goal for contributions. In so doing, the National Assembly proposes what it feels to be a reasonable figure for such a goal, leaving it to the Local Assembly to make the final decision itself in light of its knowledge of local circumstances.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of November 18, 1991 to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

Fund Appeals and Solicitation of Contributions

Wide Range of Fund-Raising Activities Available

There is, however, a wide range of fund-raising activities in which Bahá'ís may engage. For example, Bahá'í institutions are free to approach governments or institutions which hold themselves out as wishing to fund charitable activities, to apply for grants to assist in specific humanitarian projects. A Bahá'í School which has both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í pupils is free to raise funds for its own development by such activities as concerts, etc...or by appeals to parents; in this instance, a humanitarian institution is clearly identified, and the funds are being collected in its name rather than in the name of the Faith. Another example is that of a Bahá'í who wishes to sell an item he owns to the general public for a fair market price; he is free to use the proceeds for any purpose he wishes, including contributing them all or part, to the Bahá'í Fund, provided he does not represent to the public that the sale is being conducted for the benefit of the Faith.

There would be no objection to the Bahá'í community's joining with others to give a concert or undertake some other similar activity to raise funds for a deserving charity. Such activities or even the making of donations to humanitarian work should be, and should be seen to be, acts of sincere assistance and co-operation. In

choosing to engage in such fund-raising, a Bahá'í community would need to ensure that assisting the charity would not have partisan political implications or support purposes contrary to the interests of the Faith. It would need to watch carefully that its involvement in such activities does not divert its energies from the vital work of teaching the Faith and consolidating its Institutions.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, dated August 20, 1987)

Need for a Mature Approach to Contributing

We have considered your letter of March 25, 1970 informing us of the programs you intend to launch in support of the fund for the erection of the Panama Temple.

...We feel that the friends should be encouraged to approach their responsibility to contribute to the various funds in a mature manner, and that we should not have to resort to various devices for this purpose.

There is certainly no objection to the friends devising, on their own, ways and means of reminding themselves of the need to contribute, including the use of coin boxes. And there is no objection to the friends discussing their ideas among themselves, but we think that there should be no organized program adopted along the lines you propose. Conversely, the National Assembly should do nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the friends. Rather, they should seek to lead the friends slowly and lovingly to a true understanding of Bahá'í stewardship and sacrifice.

(The Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US, April 3, 1970)

Need for Funds Not Only Now but Throughout Years to Come

In relation to the Fund, however, the rate of contributions has slowed seriously, and we feel it is timely to draw to your attention that our letter of 2 January 1984 was not an appeal for a one-time herculean effort, but was intended to inform the whole world community of the present great challenges and opportunities which are not only immediate but require also a long-range, sustained increase in the efforts and self-sacrifices of the friends, both in service and in contributing from their financial resources to the advancement of the Faith.

...the devoted followers of Bahá'u'lláh have...every opportunity to contribute regularly and sacrificially to the work of the Cause. It is to a greater realization of the privilege and responsibility of supporting the multiple activities of our beloved Faith that we call you all at this critical time in world history, and remind you that to support the Bahá'í funds is an integral part of the Bahá'í way of life. The need is not only now, but throughout the years to come, until our exertions, reinforced by confirmations from on high, will have overcome the great perils now facing mankind and have made this world another world - a world whose splendor and grace will surpass our highest hopes and greatest dreams.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated January 3, 1985)

Giving Is Voluntary/General Appeals Welcome

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

(*Shoghi Effendi, Directives of the Guardian, pp. 13-14*)

The Need to Adapt Appeals to Hearer

The same presentation of the teachings will not appeal to everybody; the method of expression and the approach must be varied in accordance with the outlook and interests of the hearer. An approach which is designed to appeal to everybody will usually result in attracting the middle section, leaving both extremes untouched.

(*Universal House of Justice, Prominent People, p. 4*)

Dispelling Discouragement with the State of the Budget

We fully appreciate the herculean task involved in exciting the believers to again supply a lion's share of the funds that will be required for the prosecution of another world-encircling teaching plan. We are confident that it can be accomplished. Many times during the past three decades your Assembly, with nothing but an abiding faith to sustain you, embarked courageously on objectives seemingly impossible to attain. We think it would be well for you to review again those fateful years in the light of your future responsibilities. It would be interesting to compare your annual budgets in terms of active membership and dollar value; to list the accomplishments of your community year by year at home and abroad; and to reassess your present position in relation to what has already been done. If these factors could be dramatically presented to the believers, we feel they would be stimulated to arise once again to the needs of the hour.

....The success of the preceding plans has been due, in large measure, to the willingness of the Chief Prosecutors of the Divine Plan to boldly accept the challenges in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, with inadequate financial reserves, and with a homefront of less than optimum strength.

....We feel that whatever discouragement may have expressed itself in the state of the budget...can be quickly dispelled when the believers' sights are raised to encompass the splendor of their mission in the unfoldment of the successive stages of the establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

(*Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US, letter dated February 17, 1964*)

No Public Display of Contributing or Pledging

Undoubtedly there will be a time on the program of each Conference during which the needs of the Fund will be called to the attention of the friends, and facilities will be provided where the believers can quietly give contributions or record pledges. There should be no public display of contributing or pledging.

(The Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US, April 3, 1967)

Designation of Individual Memorials through Contributions

It is always possible for believers to earmark contributions for particular purposes, but with regard to contributions given for the upkeep of the gardens at the World Center, we cannot designate any particular planting in memory of an individual.

However, it is possible to indicate that the contribution was a memorial contribution and that it has been earmarked for upkeep of the gardens.

(The Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US, December 30, 1968)

Personal Efforts to Raise Funds Distinct from Solicitation for the Faith

First there is the principle that any believer may sell personal services or property to anyone and do with the proceeds as he wishes, including giving any or all of them to Bahá'í purposes. Thus if a Bahá'í concert artist gives a concert to which admission is charged, he is free, if he so wishes, to give the money so earned to the Fund or to any charity of his choice. In giving the concert, however, he should not represent to non-Bahá'ís that the concert is for the benefit of the Bahá'í Fund or is given on behalf of Bahá'ís for a charity, which brings us to the second principle: that it is improper for Bahá'ís to solicit funds from non-Bahá'ís in the name of the Faith for any purpose. If a non-Bahá'í insists on making a monetary contribution it may be accepted with the express understanding that it will be used only for charitable or philanthropic purposes, but such contributions should be discouraged, not encouraged.

(The Universal House of Justice: from a letter to a Local Spiritual Assembly, March 19, 1973)

We have your letter of 28 March 1966 inquiring as to whether Bahá'ís may accept honoraria or expenses for talking on the Faith at non-Bahá'í events.

As to honoraria, obviously it is preferable for individuals to present the Faith without receiving any fee. However, there is no objection to a Bahá'í receiving his travel and other expenses in connection with the talk.

(The Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 25, 1966)

Sale Proceeds May Benefit Bahá'í Service Projects

I feel that only such goods as are owned by believers, whether made by Bahá'ís or non-Bahá'ís, may be sold in the interests of the Temple or any other Bahá'í

institutions, thus maintaining the general principle that non-believers are not, whether directly or indirectly, expected to contribute to the support of institutions that are of a strictly Bahá'í character. As to the manner of the disposal of Bahá'í property for such purposes, and the channel through which the sale may be effected, I feel that no rigid rule should be imposed. Individual Bahá'ís are free to seek the help of private individuals or Spiritual Assemblies to act as intermediary for such transactions. We should avoid confusion on the one hand and maintain efficiency on the other, and lay no unnecessary restrictions that would fetter individual initiative and enterprise.

(From a letter of the Guardian dated January 4, 1929 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US)

Definition of Solicitation

Whenever high dignitaries of Persia came to that city (Constantinople) they would exert themselves to the utmost soliciting at every door such allowances and gifts as they might obtain.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 69)

1. To entreat or petition (a person) for, or to do, something; to urge, importune; to ask earnestly or persistently. 2. To incite or move, to induce or persuade, to some act of lawlessness or insubordination. 3. To incite, draw on, allure, by some specious representation or argument.

(Selected definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary)

No Solicitation Tolerated

I need not enlarge at the present moment upon what I have stated in the past, that contributions to the local and national Funds are of a purely voluntary character; that no coercion or solicitation of funds is to be tolerated in the Cause; that general appeals addressed to the communities as a body should be the only form in which the financial requirements of the Faith are to be met; that the financial support accorded to a very few workers in the teaching and administrative fields is of a temporary nature; that the present restrictions imposed on the publication of Bahá'í literature will be definitely abolished; that the World Unity activity is being carried out as an experiment to test the efficacy of the indirect method of teaching; that the whole machinery of assemblies, of committees and conventions is to be regarded as a means, and not an end in itself; that they will rise or fall according to their capacity to further the interests, to coordinate the activities, to apply the principles, to embody the ideals and execute the purpose of the Bahá'í Faith.

(Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 9)

Solicitation of Funds in One Country for Activities in Another

Regarding solicitation of funds in your country for activities abroad, here again the House of Justice has repeatedly stated that it does not wish Bahá'í institutions of any country to appeal for funds to the Bahá'ís of another country, unless the National Spiritual Assembly of that country permits it. This does not mean that individuals are not free to contribute to a Bahá'í project in any country that they wish. However, an organized and indiscriminate appeal for funds to individuals,

say, in the United States by the friends from another country, should not be made without the consent of your National Assembly.

(Letter dated August 13, 1986 from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

Gifts from Non-Bahá'ís

Bahá'í Institutions Are Gifts from Bahá'u'lláh to the World

The question you have raised in connection with the recommendation made by the Convention delegates this year to the effect of installing a Radio Sending Station in the Temple involves a fundamental principle governing the Temple Fund which the Guardian has already explained in several communications. He wishes me to stress again that under no circumstances the believers should accept any financial help from non-Bahá'ís for use in connection with specific administrative activities of the Faith such as the Temple construction fund, and other local or national Bahá'í administrative funds. The reason for this is twofold; first because the Institutions which the Bahá'ís are gradually building are in the nature of gifts from Bahá'u'lláh to the world; and secondly the acceptance of funds from non-believers for specific Bahá'í use would, sooner or later, involve the Bahá'ís into unforeseen complications and difficulties with others, and thus cause incalculable harm to the body of the Cause.

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf, dated July 12, 1938, to an individual believer)

Non-Bahá'í Gifts Used for Charity

All gifts by non-Bahá'ís are to be used for charity only.

(Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, p. 87)

Your kind letter of 26 November 1988 inquiring about the permissibility of donations from non-Bahá'ís for Bahá'í-sponsored charitable institutions has been received at the Bahá'í World Center.

It is true that Bahá'ís do not solicit contributions from non-Bahá'ís for the Bahá'í Funds and that as a general rule when non-Bahá'ís, on their own initiative, contribute funds to Bahá'í institutions, the practice is to devote such contributions to the promotion of charitable projects of benefit to the public. Increasingly, as circumstances permit, Bahá'ís are sponsoring or otherwise participating in such projects.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of December 19, 1988 to an individual)

We are asked to point out that the friends should not solicit contributions from non-Bahá'ís for the Persian Relief Fund. If such contributions are spontaneously

received from non-Bahá'ís, the Local Assembly should ensure that such funds are spent only for humanitarian purposes.

(From a letter dated July 18, 1982 on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

Non-Bahá'í Gifts, the Temple Dependencies and Hazíratu'l-Quds

It is...clear that far from contributions from non-Bahá'ís being encouraged they should actually be discouraged, and accepted only of the prospective donor "insists on a monetary contribution", and with the express understanding that it would be used only for charitable or philanthropic purposes....such charitable contributions may not be used toward "assistance of long-time Bahá'í pioneers who are now aged or ill". We also feel that for the present, at least, no part of the subsidies for the "Bahá'í Home" should come from non-Bahá'í contributions.

(The Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US, February 8, 1966)

In answer to your first question, it is not permissible to accept gifts from non-Bahá'í firms or individuals to be applied to the cost of acquiring Temple land or the Hazíratu'l-Quds.

(The Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US, October 30, 1966)

Non-Bahá'í Gifts Not Encouraged

The Universal House of Justice feels that there is no objection now to using gifts from non-Bahá'ís toward the operation or maintenance of the Bahá'í Home but that such gifts should not be encouraged.

(From a letter dated September 19, 1976 on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

In returning a contribution to a donor, however, we feel it is not appropriate to suggest that the donor return it as a contribution for charitable purposes.

(The Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US, December 23, 1966)

Gifts by Children of Non-Bahá'ís

The Universal House of Justice has received your letter asking whether children of non-Bahá'ís or children one of whose parents is a Bahá'í are allowed to contribute to Bahá'í Funds, and we have been asked to say that in both cases, if the child wishes to be a Bahá'í and his parents do not object, he may be treated as any other Bahá'í child. However, if the parents object to their child's being a Bahá'í, his contribution may be accepted for charitable purposes, including use for Bahá'í schools where both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'ís are accepted as pupils.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, August 31, 1975)

Permissible to Seek Grants for Public Service Activities

Your Assembly has requested guidance from the Universal House of Justice in the matter of funds from non-Bahá'í sources for the operation of the radio station soon to be constructed at the Louis Gregory Institute in Hemingway, South Carolina. We are asked to convey its advice.

As indicated in the telex addressed to you on 22 March, it is permissible to apply for and accept grants or donations from foundations, charitable agencies or government sources which as a normal practice subsidize radio work intended as a public service, and provided that such service will constitute a substantial portion of your programming, that the funds so received will not be used for work undertaken particularly for the Faith, and that care is taken to ascertain whether potential donors and the purposes of their gifts are acceptable to your Assembly.

However, fund-raising through direct appeals to non-Bahá'í listeners is inappropriate, but donations spontaneously contributed by non-Bahá'ís may be accepted in much the same way as gifts from the agencies previously mentioned. A point to bear in mind is that a Bahá'í radio station should strictly uphold a standard for its operations that will guard its programs against being confused in the public mind with the radio programs sponsored by other religious groups. The latter programs often involve fund-raising activities which, if associated with Bahá'í programs, would eventually undermine the prestige of the Faith and expose its institutions to certain dangers.

(From a letter dated April 10, 1983 on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

Admission Charged to Aid Bahá'í Public School

As regards the question of the Bahá'í School in India: As this institution is run by Bahá'ís but for the benefit of both Bahá'ís and any other group sending its children there, he sees no reason why a school concert should not receive money from the public attending, and use it for the school itself. It is not the same as a bazaar where the things sold are solely for the Bahá'í Fund.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, dated June 30, 1952, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

SAFEGUARDING AND ACCOUNTING FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

(See also section on Earmarking and Appendix 2)

The Need to Safeguard Limited Resources

Much as I rejoice in witnessing the abundant signs of unflinching energy that characterize in various fields and distant lands the mission of the valiant warriors of the Cause, I cannot help observing that, driven by their impetuous eagerness to establish the undisputed reign of Bahá'u'lláh on this earth, they may by an undue multiplication of their activities, and the consequent dissipation of their forces, defeat the very purpose which animates them in the pursuit of their glorious task. Particularly do I feel that this necessity for a careful estimation of the present resources at our disposal and of cautious restraint in handling them applies in a peculiar manner to the swiftly expanding activities of the American Believers, whose mission increasingly appears to be to give the lead and set the example to their brethren across the seas in laying a secure foundation for the permanent institutions of the Bahá'í Faith. That I feel is chiefly the reason why such stress has been laid in the past upon the necessity for consultation on the part of individual believers with their elected national representatives in the matter of initiating plans of action above and beyond the plans which the deliberations of the National Spiritual Assembly have already evolved. In the matter of affiliation with bodies and organizations that advocate ideals and principles that are in sympathy with the Bahá'í Revelation; in establishing magazines beyond those that already are designed to advance openly and indirectly the interests of the Bahá'í Teachings; in the financial support we may sooner or later be called upon to extend to philanthropic institutions and the like; in advancing the cause of any particular activity to which we may feel sentimentally inclined; - these, as well as all similar undertakings, we should only approach after having definitely ascertained, through careful deliberation with those who are in a responsible position, that the institutions representing the paramount interests of the Cause are already assured of adequate and continuous assistance. Nothing short of the spirit of earnest and sustained consultation with those whom we have prayerfully and of our own accord placed in the forefront of those who are the custodians of the priceless heritage bequeathed by Bahá'u'lláh; nothing less than persistent and strenuous warfare against our own instincts and natural inclinations, and heroic self-sacrifice in subordinating our own likings to the imperative requirements of the Cause of God, can insure our undivided loyalty to so sacred a principle - a principle that will for all time safeguard our beloved Cause from the allurements and the trivialities of the world without, and of the pitfalls of the self within. I entreat you, well-beloved brethren, to resolve as you never have resolved before to pledge undying loyalty and sleepless vigilance in upholding so essential a principle in the course of your manifold activities, that yours may be the abiding satisfaction of having done nothing that may tend in the least to impede the flow or obscure the radiance of the rejuvenating spirit of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 140-141)

Funds to Serve Broad Community Interests

Your Assembly must decide, as the Guardian already told dear Mr. Schopflocher when he was here, upon the advisability of maintaining the Laurentian School, in an objective spirit. The Guardian can only outline to you the principle, which is that Bahá'í funds should not be invested in building up a place that has dear associations for a number of the friends, but is not going to really serve a large group of believers.

The Guardian's point is that National Bodies when creating national institutions, should use sound judgment, because of the financial investment involved.

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Messages to Canada, p. 26)

Acquisition of Local Hazíratu'l-Quds to be Balanced with Other Needs

The Universal House of Justice, and indeed the entire Bahá'í world, is grateful to the American Bahá'í Community for the major role it has assumed, in obedience to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, in taking the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to remotest corners of the earth...The contribution you have made is staggering and unforgettable.

We can...understand the...needs outlined in your letter of September 30 including the need of some communities to acquire Hazíratu'l-Quds.

At the same time we are certain you will recognize that your needs in the United States must be balanced against the need to consolidate the victories of the Ten-Year Crusade as well as the urgency of carrying Bahá'u'lláh's healing Message to other people throughout the world ere it is too late. The Universal House of Justice feels that the United States must not jeopardize its spiritual primacy, and that it must gird itself to raise the major share of the financial reserves which will be necessary to prosecute the Nine-Year Teaching Plan to be announced at Ridván, 1964...it is evident that the United States remains a chief source of financial support for the propagation of the Faith throughout the world as well as a vital source of administrative ability....

In line with the principles recited above, we feel that Local Spiritual Assemblies which already have funds available for the acquisition of a local Hazíratu'l-Quds should be permitted to proceed with plans for purchase or construction within the limitation of funds already earmarked for this purpose. However, new funds should not be started nor should plans be made to acquire Hazíratu'l-Quds in those communities where funds are not presently available except under the most urgent circumstances. If any individual cases arise in which it appears that an exception should be made, you are free to present the facts and your recommendations to the Universal House of Justice for consideration.

(Universal House of Justice, letter dated October 23, 1964 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

Assemblies to Harbor Limited Resources, Set Priorities

Regarding the matter of ...: individual Bahá'is are always encouraged to travel and teach, and no doubt he has been of much assistance in Germany. The Guardian, however, feels your Assembly was quite right in considering that your limited financial resources should be spent supporting pioneers, rather than a travelling teacher to Germany.

The eagerness of the friends to serve, often carries them away, and they forget that a sound sense of business management is also much needed, if we are to harbour our resources and accomplish all our goals.

(On behalf of the Guardian, Light of Divine Guidance: Vol 1, p. 216)

Standards of Integrity and Honesty in Fund Management

The distressing problems of misuse of funds described in your letter can be resolved in the long run only through a process of loving education of the friends. It is through the dissemination among the believers of appropriate texts from the Writings of the Faith, through carefully prepared articles on this subject based on the Holy Texts and published in your newsletter, and through talks at conferences, summer schools and other Bahá'í gatherings, as well as discussions of these fundamental issues with the friends at such meetings, that you will be able to gradually attain your objective.

As to the immediate problems you cite in your letter: you should consider each case separately, arrange for representatives of the National Assembly to meet with that individual, explain lovingly to him such standards as the sanctity of Bahá'í funds, the importance of integrity and honesty in handling money entrusted to one's care, and the test inherent in man's desire to possess material things. Arrangements could also be made at such a meeting for the individual to pay his debt in instalments he will reasonably be able to meet.

Your Assembly is quite right in stating that if there is trend to misuse Bahá'í funds, and this trend is left unchecked, the practice can become contagious and do harm to the Faith and to the individuals concerned. However, wisdom and understanding are important, so that best results can be achieved.

It is important for your Assembly, in future, to explain to persons who are entrusted with the money of the Faith that in view of the National Assembly's obligation to protect Bahá'í funds, the Assembly will hold them responsible for all monies they receive, and they should therefore render proper accounts to the National Spiritual Assembly, be faithful custodians of God's trust, and be assured that such honesty and faithfulness will be richly rewarded from on High.

(Universal House of Justice, letter dated May 18, 1980)



As the activities of the American Bahá'í community expand...the institution of the National Fund...acquires added importance, and should be increasingly supported by the entire body of believers, both in their individual capacities, and through their collective efforts, whether organized as groups or as local Assemblies.

Shoghi Effendi

EARMARKING

Note: The notation "UHJ" refers to the Compilation *Bahá'í Funds: Contributions and Administration of the Universal House of Justice*, 1988 Canadian edition.

Freedom to Specify Purpose of a Gift

With regard to the Bahá'í Fund, recently established amongst the friends, I trust that the matter now stands clear to everyone throughout the country. As I have previously intimated, although individual friends and local Assemblies are absolutely free to specify the object and purpose of their donations to the National Spiritual Assembly, yet, in my opinion, I regard it as of the utmost vital importance that individuals, as well as local Assemblies, throughout the land should, in view of the paramount importance of National Teaching and as an evidence of their absolute confidence in their national representatives, endeavor, however small at first, to contribute freely towards the upkeep and increase of the National Bahá'í Fund, so that the members of the National Assembly may at their full discretion expend it for whatever they deem urgent and necessary.

(*Shoghi Effendi, UHJ, p. 3*)

Givers Encouraged to Make Unrestricted Gifts

Both orally and in his letters Shoghi Effendi has tried to encourage the friends to contribute to the Central Fund and has made an effort to explain the advantages that we would have in having a large Central Fund and in giving regular appropriations to each of the different activities of the Cause. And yet in spite of that, Shoghi Effendi has expressly stated that the friends are not in the least required to send their contributions unlabelled but are absolutely free to state whether they wish it to go to the Central Fund or to some specific fund such as the Temple. And moreover the friends must be assured that funds that are labelled will never be used except for the specified purpose. Mrs. ...'s aim in that letter is to encourage them to send unlabelled contributions which as long as they do not at all require the funds is quite in conformity with Shoghi Effendi's desire.

(*Letter of February 19, 1926 on behalf of the Guardian to Corinne True*)

With regard to the National Fund, it must not be felt that the believers are required to send unlabelled contributions to the Fund but that it is only extremely desirable to do so. Individuals are free to specify the purpose of their donations.

(*Ibid., addendum in the Guardian's handwriting*)

Regarding your question about contributions: it is up to the individual to decide; if he wishes to donate a sum for a specific purpose, he is free to do so; but the friends should recognize that too much labelling of contributions will tie the hands of the Assembly and prevent it from meeting its many obligations in various fields of Bahá'í activity.

(*On behalf of the Guardian, UHJ, p. 12*)

Whatever is contributed to the National Assembly for a specific purpose should be expended for that purpose only, but I would encourage the friends to send unlabelled contributions in order not to tie the hands of the National Assembly

although I do not in the least require them to do so. I will pray for your success from all my heart.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 15)

Gift for Specific Purpose To Be Used Only for that Purpose

The beloved Guardian was very emphatic that contributions to Bahá'í funds, given for specified purposes, may be used only for those purposes, unless the donor consents to a change. If the Assembly cannot use the contribution for the purpose specified, it may refuse to accept it. Alternatively it could consult the donor and suggest that he release the contribution for general purposes or transfer it to another specified one, but no pressure should be exerted to force his acquiescence. On the other hand, once money has been contributed to an Assembly, it is the property of that Assembly, even though earmarked for a specific purpose, and the donor has no right to change its purpose unilaterally. The Assembly, however, may, at its own discretion, accept his request to do so.

(*Universal House of Justice, UHJ*, p. 26)

Assembly Must Determine Whether Gift Supports Budget or Is Separate

We fully realize the problem of additional clerical work in forwarding small contributions to the Holy Land...but care must be taken not to violate for any reason the right of the individual believer to earmark his contribution.

The need, therefore, is to make clear to the individual believers and local Spiritual Assemblies how they should express their earmarkings so that the National Assembly can know whether a contribution is intended to be towards any particular segment of the national budget or to be a separate contribution merely passed through the National Assembly. In view of the Guardian's statement* one should assume that, unless there is an indication to the contrary, an earmarked contribution is intended to be over and above the allocation made out of the National Fund.

(*The Universal House of Justice to the National Assembly of the US, January 18, 1968*) *The Guardian's statement is quoted below

In general, although it is permitted for the friends to earmark contributions, it is apparent that it is often better that the friends allow the Assembly to use their contributions without restricting them.

(*Universal House of Justice, UHJ*, p. 24)

Both Individual and Collective Responsibility to Support the Fund

As the activities of the American Bahá'í community expand...the institution of the National Fund...acquires added importance, and should be increasingly supported by the entire body of believers, both in their individual capacities, and through their collective efforts, whether organized as groups or as local Assemblies.

(Shoghi Effendi, *UHJ*, p. 9)

...it is only evident that unless the flow of donations is regularly maintained by means of generous and continual support by all the believers, individually and collectively, the National Fund will never be able to meet the needs...of the Cause.

(On behalf of the Guardian, UHI, p. 10)

*...you mentioned the sum of...as being included in the...allocated from your Assembly's Budget to the World Center. The principle involved is as follows: The Guardian feels that your Assembly when allocating its annual budget, and having stipulated what sum is for the purposes of the International Center of the Faith, should immediately pigeon-hole that sum to be at the Guardian's disposal. Any monies received as contributions from the Bahá'ís for the International Center should not be credited to this account which represents a national joint contribution, and has nothing to do with individual or local contributions forwarded to the World Center in your care.

(On behalf of the Guardian, UHI, p. 12; statement referred to in January 1968 letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Assembly of the US)

He does not feel that it is desirable to lay down any conditions for giving to the Bahá'í Fund. This is an entirely personal matter, and each believer must act according to his own judgment and the needs of the Faith....decisions in these matters rest with each individual Bahá'í.

(On behalf of the Guardian, UHI, p. 11-12)

Contributions to Every Fund May Be Sent Directly

I am moved to renew my fervent plea addressed to all national and local Assemblies and believers...to arise and determinedly gird up their loins to contribute, through curtailment of budgets, adequate appropriations from national and local funds, as well as direct sustained individual donations, to insure uninterrupted financial support, however great the sacrifice involved, however heavy the burdens, however distracting the successive crises of the present hour.

(Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Bahá'í World, p. 9)

Emergence of independent sovereign state in Holy Land...as well as projected acquisition of extensive properties in close neighborhood of the Most Holy Tomb of Bahá and the precincts of the Shrine on Mount Carmel, Haifa...demand henceforth reorientation and necessitate increasing financial support by Bahá'í National Communities of East and West, through curtailment of national and local budgets....Moreover, participation of individual believers, through contributions directly transmitted to the Holy Land are imperative and beyond the scope of the jurisdiction of National and local Assemblies.

(Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Bahá'í World, p. 14)

Appeal to the twelve National Assemblies and individuals to insure a steady augmentation of these [Continental] Funds through annual assignment in National budgets and by individual contributions.

(Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Bahá'í World, p. 59)

Believer's Prerogative of Contributing Directly to All the Funds

In educating the friends to be conscious of contributing to the fund as a fundamental element of Bahá'í life, the Assembly should make them aware of the individual believer's prerogative of contributing directly to all the funds of the Faith: international, continental and national as well as local.

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 259)

Accounting for Earmarked Contributions

Care must be taken that the purpose of earmarking is not defeated. Thus the use of earmarked funds to defray the expense of particular items in your budget has the effect of reducing, pro tanto, the amount of general contributions needed to be applied to the budget. In effect, this practice may result in there being no difference between an earmarked contribution and one not earmarked. For example: A friend may earmark a contribution for the Bahá'í International Fund. To apply this to the contribution to the Bahá'í International Fund from your National Fund would be wrong unless the earmarking so specifies. Funds earmarked merely to the Bahá'í International Fund should be sent to the World Centre in addition to whatever contribution is made from the National Fund.

(Universal House of Justice, UHI, p. 21)

This question of proper accounting for earmarked funds is very important. The account books of any Assembly should be designed in such a way that will always clearly distinguish between earmarked funds and funds freely at the disposition of the Assembly, so that there will be no danger of the Assembly's inadvertently commingling them and spending earmarked funds for the wrong purpose.

(Universal House of Justice, UHI, p. 26)

We have been asked to call your attention to the principle that earmarked funds such as those for the purchase or maintenance of properties, for special teaching projects, etc., should not be used for other purposes, but should be held in a special account until expended for the purpose for which they were given. This is true whether the funds are from the World Center, from individuals or from other sources. If the project for which the funds have been given is abandoned, the contribution should be returned to the donor unless he agrees that it may be used for other purposes. Strict adherence to the principles regarding the earmarking of funds is extremely important for many reasons, including the maintaining of the confidence of the friends in matters pertaining to the Fund.

(Universal House of Justice, UHI, p. 23)

The Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh Fund will contain any contributions that are earmarked for this purpose and the interest thereon.

(Universal House of Justice, letter dated October 25, 1964 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the US)

As to the proceeds from the sale of Bahá'í property, if it was acquired by the use of the general funds of the Faith and no earmarking of contributions is involved, the only principle to be applied is that first stated above, namely, that the national community should not be without a Hazíratu'l-Quds, endowment or Temple site, as the case may be. If the property was donated or purchased with funds earmarked for that specific purpose, the proceeds of the sale of the property retain the earmarking unless the donor has specifically provided otherwise. If the donor or donors are living, they may, of course, release the earmarking. If the donor or donors are not living, or refuse to release the earmarking, the proceeds should be used for the same purpose. If that purpose has already been fulfilled (i.e. an alternate property has already been acquired), the surplus should be used to the extent possible in a manner having regard for the original intention of the donor or donors, e.g. to maintain or improve the property. In case of doubt, the matter should be referred to the Universal House of Justice.

(Universal House of Justice, UHI, p. 24)



THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Riḍván 150

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

We have come to the King of Festivals in the undiminished glow of the marvellous benedictions of the Holy Year through which we have just passed, confirmed, renewed and energized in our sacred pursuits. For it was a time when the Abhá Beauty shed upon His worldwide community the radiance of His grace in such effulgence as to invest with astonishing success the efforts of His followers to observe so significant a double anniversary as the centenary of His Ascension and of the inauguration of His Covenant. It was the memorial pause that yielded a proclamation of the Most Great Name that resounded throughout the earth as never before; but what was so clearly an external phenomenon was quite markedly a reflection of an inner attainment to a deeper understanding of our relation to Bahá'u'lláh than hitherto obtained. The greater appreciation in ourselves of the universality of the community, of its embodiment of the first and over-arching principle of His Faith, has left a new and compelling impression upon our hearts; the effects of that awareness were strikingly demonstrated at the commemoration in the Holy Land last May and more broadly at the World Congress last November, as if to confirm our assurance in these desperately troubled times that the world of humanity is moving inexorably towards its as-yet elusive destiny of unity and peace. Indeed, during the Holy Year, we were transported on the wings of the spirit to a summit from which we have seen the fast-approaching glory of the Lord's immemorial promise that all humankind will one day be united.

The thrilling details of the happenings throughout the year are too numerous to describe here, for the workings of the Holy Spirit were universally felt, imbuing the activities of the friends with a mysterious force. Let it suffice, then, to recall such highlights as the gathering last May of the largest number of Bahá'ís to participate in an event in the Holy Land; the circumambulation of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh by the representatives of virtually every nation; the presence of the majority of the living Knights of Bahá'u'lláh at the time of the depositing of the Roll of Honour at the entrance door of the Most Holy Shrine; the unprecedented size of the World Congress and the vast variety of its participants, including a huge body of youth who engaged in their own auxiliary programme; the procession of the representatives of the races and nations of the world on that spectacular occasion; the satellite broadcast which linked the Congress and the World Centre with all the continents. These were of a rare category of experience, and they have immortalized the fame of the centennial commemorations.

The innumerable, imaginative efforts undertaken by the friends around the world, from remote villages to great cities, in observance of these important anniversaries illustrated afresh the profound degree to which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has been consolidated, and they generated the teaching work in many areas, with unusual and surprising results. The unprecedented publicity accorded the purpose and activities of the Holy Year through the mass media in large and small countries, the notice given by legislative bodies and public officials to the centennial, the gestures of recognition and appreciation of

the Faith by governmental agencies, the involvement of representatives of the Bahá'í International Community in major global events, including the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro last June, in connection with which a public monument bearing an inscription from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and a large imprint of the Greatest Name was dedicated -- such developments gave clear indications that the profile of the community has been raised in the public eye.

Apart from all these outstanding events and developments, but of even greater magnitude because of its far-reaching implications for the whole human race, was the release at Naw-Rúz of the annotated English translation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book. We draw a stage closer, then, to a time envisaged by 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "When the laws of the Most Holy Book are enforced," the Master said, "... universal peace will raise its tent in the centre of the earth, and the blessed Tree of Life will grow and spread to such an extent that it will overshadow the East and West."

The centennial year was also a period in which the situation in the world at large became more confused and paradoxical: there were simultaneous signs of order and chaos, promise and frustration. Amid the convolutions of the current global state of affairs, but with such feelings of wonder and joy, courage and faith as the Holy Year has induced in our hearts, we, at this Riḍván, in the one hundred and fiftieth year of our Faith, are embarked upon a Three Year Plan. Its brevity is compelled by the swiftly changing tides of the times. But the Plan's primary purpose is indispensable to the future of the Cause and of humankind. It is the next stage in the unfoldment of the divine charter of teaching penned by the Centre of the Covenant. The Plan will be a measure of our determination to respond to the immense opportunities at this critical moment in the social evolution of the planet. Through resolute pursuit of its stated objectives and full realization of its goals, as suited to the circumstances of each national community, the way will be made clear for a fit projection of the role of the Faith in relation to the inevitable challenges facing all humanity towards the end of the fast-fleeting, fate-laden twentieth century.

A massive expansion of the Bahá'í community must be achieved far beyond all past records. The task of spreading the Message to the generality of mankind in villages, towns and cities must be rapidly extended. The need for this is critical, for without it the laboriously erected agencies of the Administrative Order will not be provided the scope to be able to develop and adequately demonstrate their inherent capacity to minister to the crying needs of humanity in its hour of deepening despair. In this regard the mutuality of teaching and administration must be fully understood and widely emphasized, for each reinforces the other. The problems of society which affect our community and those problems which naturally arise from within the community itself, whether social, spiritual, economic or administrative, will be solved as our numbers and resources multiply, and as at all levels of the community the friends develop the ability, willingness, courage and determination to obey the laws, apply the principles and administer the affairs of the Faith in accordance with divine precepts.

The new Plan revolves around a triple-theme: enhancing the vitality of the faith of individual believers, greatly developing the human resources of the Cause, and fostering the proper functioning of local and national Bahá'í institutions. This is to lend focus to requisites of success as the Plan's manifold goals are pursued in these turbulent times.

Against the conspicuous signs of moral decadence which daily is corroding the foundations of civilized life, these graphic words of Bahá'u'lláh assume an acute urgency: "The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it?" Such words have particular implications for the actions of anyone who has recognized the Lord of the Age. A crucial consequence of this recognition is a belief that impels acceptance of His commandments. Depth of belief is assured by the inner transformation, that salutary acquisition of spiritual and moral character, which is the outcome of obedience to the divine laws and principles. Towards this end the release of the annotated Kitáb-i-Aqdas in English, and its anticipated early publication in other major languages, provide a mighty infusion of divine guidance for realizing the vitality of faith which is essential to the spiritual well-being and happiness of individuals and the strengthening of the fabric of the community. No less essential to nourishing this vitality is the cultivation of a sense of spirituality, that mystic feeling which unites the individual with God and is achieved through meditation and prayer.

Training of the friends and their striving, through serious individual study, to acquire knowledge of the Faith, to apply its principles and administer its affairs, are indispensable to developing the human resources necessary to the progress of the Cause. But knowledge alone is not adequate; it is vital that training be given in a manner that inspires love and devotion, fosters firmness in the Covenant, prompts the individual to active participation in the work of the Cause and to taking sound initiatives in the promotion of its interests. Special efforts to attract people of capacity to the Faith will also go far towards providing the human resources so greatly needed at this time. Moreover, these endeavours will stimulate and strengthen the ability of Spiritual Assemblies to meet their weighty responsibilities.

The proper functioning of these institutions depends largely on the efforts of their members to familiarize themselves with their duties and to adhere scrupulously to principle in their personal behaviour and in the conduct of their official responsibilities. Of relevant importance, too, are their resolve to remove all traces of estrangement and sectarian tendencies from their midst, their ability to win the affection and support of the friends under their care and to involve as many individuals as possible in the work of the Cause. By their constantly aiming at improving their performance, the communities they guide will reflect a pattern of life that will be a credit to the Faith and will, as a welcome consequence, rekindle hope among the increasingly disillusioned members of society.

As National Spiritual Assemblies, with the ready support of the Continental Counsellors, chart the course to be followed in this brief span, the World Centre will attend to coordinating widely diverse activities throughout the planet, giving further direction to the external affairs of the Faith as the Bahá'í International Community is drawn more deeply into dealing with world issues. It will do this while at the same time pursuing with deliberate speed the gigantic building projects on God's Holy Mountain, which constitute part of a process clearly perceived by Shoghi Effendi as synchronizing with two no less significant developments: the establishment of the Lesser Peace and the evolution of Bahá'í national and local institutions. By the end of the Plan all remaining construction phases of the Mount Carmel projects will have been set in motion; the structural framework of the International Teaching

Centre, the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Extension to the International Archives Building will have been raised up; and seven terraces below the Shrine of the Báb will have been completed.

The dramatic expansion of the work of the Cause in recent years and the developments expected during this new Plan demand material resources which have not been adequate for some time, even though substantial increases have been made in the contributions to Bahá'í Funds. The economic crises so widely reported seem destined to grow even worse, but neither the economic nor other pressing problems confronting humanity will ultimately be resolved unless the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is given due regard by nations and peoples and unless it receives the adequate material support of its avowed adherents. May the friends everywhere consider, together with their Bahá'í institutions and individually, undaunted by the uncertainties, the perils and the financial stringency afflicting nations, what must now be done by each and all to meet this inescapable, sacred responsibility resting upon them.

Our appeal for immediate, redoubled and sustained action on all aspects of the Plan is addressed primarily to the individual believer of every locality, who possesses within himself or herself the measures of initiative that ensure the success of any global Bahá'í enterprise, and "on whom, in the last resort," as our beloved Guardian plainly stated, "depends the fate of the entire community". The goals of the Three Year Plan will not be easily won, but they must be magnificently achieved, whatever the sacrifice. There should therefore be no hesitation or delay on the part of individuals or Spiritual Assemblies in attending to them, lest the problems of mankind pile up unchecked, or the rise of internal crises slows us down. Let it ever be borne in mind that we earn our victories through test and trial; we turn crisis to the advantage of progress by seizing the opportunity it provides to demonstrate the viability and winning power of our principles. In the onward surge of the Cause of God, crisis and victory have always alternated and have ever proven to be the staple of progress. As we savour the triumphs of the Holy Year, let us not forget the reality of this recurrent experience. Let us also remember that our blessings are equal to our challenges, as repeatedly shown by our glorious history.

Beloved friends: Do not be dismayed or deterred. Take courage in the security of God's law and ordinances. These are the darkest hours before the break of day. Peace, as promised, will come at night's end. Press on to meet the dawn.

The Universal House of Justice



RECENT GUIDANCE FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Development, Supplementing Contributions and Fee-for-Service Enterprises

You have given much thought to finding other ways of increasing your material resources....It is entirely within the purview of your Assembly to devise wise means for this purpose by adopting methods that rest on a sound basis of fiscal management, one which avoids the snares and pitfalls of entrepreneurial speculation. But, however helpful such methods might be, they should be seen only as providing a supplement to the fundamental source of support for the Funds, namely, the contributions of individual believers offered in the spirit of service and sacrifice to the Cause of God. The foundation of the Funds should be strengthened and sustained principally on the basis of such contributions. Real growth of your material resources will come about through two primary means: increase in the number of believers, and increase in the effectiveness of the education of the believers concerning their spiritual obligations, among which is financial support of Bahá'í institutions....

The House of Justice...offers you the following guiding comments on two aspects of the development initiatives you have mentioned:

1. **Developing financial service entities.** If you decide that it is feasible to proceed with offering basic banking services for the friends, you should make it abundantly clear that they are entirely free to accept or ignore such services. No measure of pressure of any kind should be put on them to comply with your plans. Anyone accepting the services should feel equally free to withdraw his involvement at any time.
2. **Creating a network of fee-for-service companies.** There can be no doubt that the ability of the Bahá'í community to give tangible expression to its principles will enhance its expansion and consolidation while at the same time providing valuable services to humanity. Your approach should be guided by the understanding that all the teachings of our Faith are a gift from God to which all people are entitled; and our first obligation as Bahá'ís is to present them as effectively as we can without regard for material reward. In a word, the principles of the Faith are not a commodity for sale.

Where, however, the social application of principles or teachings of the Faith calls for a degree of formal training, involving the employment of various measures of expertise and the use of prepared material, physical facilities, etc., or requiring the establishment of academic or other social institutions, it is reasonable for fees to be charged for services rendered. Nonetheless, for a Bahá'í, such activities should be conducted primarily as a service to humanity and there should be no profit motive involved. It is practical, of course, that the fee structure be such as to enable reasonable returns from which can be drawn the means to extend the service being rendered. Under no circumstances should such service projects be regarded as channels of revenue for the Bahá'í funds.

You will need to be certain that the human and other resources exist to ensure the success of such services, because failure to live up to the expectations awakened by your stated objectives can bring disrepute upon the community. As your proposals in this respect have largely to do with the public, the financial arrangements must be able

to withstand rigorous public scrutiny. In general, your steps in these matters will need to be measured and gradual, each one building on the success of the previous one.

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, April 26, 1993, to a National Spiritual Assembly)

Offering Consulting Services Within the Bahá'í Community

The House of Justice was happy to note the willingness of a number of Bahá'ís with professional training in race relations and conflict resolution to offer their services to the Bahá'í community. The questions you have raised concerning the basis on which their services may be rendered to the Bahá'í community for a fee are important and delicate. Recently, (a) National Spiritual Assembly sought the guidance of the House of Justice on a related matter....The following excerpt...may be helpful to you in finding answers to your own questions:

[Portions of the preceding letter are quoted.]

Although this advice was given in relation to proposals for services intended mostly for consumption by the non-Bahá'í public, the sense of it should guide professionals in relation to the Bahá'í community. Moreover, in view of the sensitive nature of these issues, in specific cases those concerning should consult with the Spiritual Assemblies, Local or National. Where believers with professional training are called upon to render expert services to the Bahá'í community, it is not unreasonable to expect that they would be remunerated for such services; this is a matter for discussion and agreement of all concerned. What is paramount is that these professionals not in any way regard the Bahá'í community as a target for commercial enterprise.

(On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, May 3, 1993, to an individual)

STATEMENT OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

WORLDWIDE SATELLITE BROADCAST

26 November 1992

To the Bahá'ís of the World

A full century has gone by since the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh was established and set in motion. And we extend to the members of His community our loving greetings as they are assembled today at the World Congress in New York and at auxiliary conferences on all continents, or as they otherwise participate in the observance of this centennial occasion.

We are particularly pleased that we have been afforded a special opportunity to pause for a moment, together with our fellow-believers, to gather our thoughts, to see how we have fared since 1892, and to consider where we are now headed. This enables us to engage in a symbolic act which by its very nature exemplifies the purpose of the Covenant — a Covenant intended by its divine Author to unite the races and nations of the earth.

Sublime emotions surge in our hearts as we survey the dramatic history and amazing progress of these one hundred years. At the time of the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, the Bahá'í community was contained within the borders of no more than fifteen countries, the vast majority of its members living in His native Iran. The community now embraces the entire planet. We rejoice at the spirit of unity which is evident in its steady consolidation through the workings of the Administrative Order to which the Covenant has given birth. Our cumulated experience has clearly demonstrated the efficacy of the Covenant. The genuine unity it induces greatly encourages our expectation that all of humanity can and will be united.

We have toiled to build a community at a period when the world has witnessed startling changes which have profoundly altered the character of society and plunged it into an unprecedented state of worry and confusion. Indeed, the world in its current condition has lost its bearings through the operation of forces it neither understands nor can control. It is a period in which great dynasties and empires have collapsed in rapid succession, in which powerful

ideologies have captured the hearts of millions only to expire in infamy, in which two world wars wreaked havoc on civilized life as it was known at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the wake of such horrendous disruptions, there have been unexampled advances in the realms of science, technology and social organization; a veritable explosion of knowledge; and an even more remarkable burgeoning in the awakening and rise of masses of humanity which were previously presumed to be dormant. These masses are claiming their rightful places within the community of nations which has greatly expanded. With the simultaneous development of communications at the speed of light and transportation at the speed of sound, the world has contracted into a mere neighbourhood in which people are instantly aware of each other's affairs and have immediate access to each other. And yet, even with such miraculous advances, with the emergence of international organizations, and with valiant attempts and brilliant successes at international cooperation, nations are at woeful odds with one another, people are convulsed by economic upheavals, races feel more alienated than before and are filled with mistrust, humiliation and fear.

Collateral with these changes has been the breakdown of institutions, religious and political, which traditionally functioned as the guideposts for the stability of society. Even the most resilient of these seem to be losing their credibility as they have become preoccupied with their own internal disorder. This calls attention to the emptiness of the moral landscape and the feeling of futility deranging personal life. Thoughtful commentators write apprehensively about the fall of culture and the consequent disappearance of values, the loss of the fullness of the inner life, a technological civilization facing an increasingly serious crisis. They write, moreover, of the human species as being at the end with its wisdom and being unable to control itself, of the need for divine wisdom and foresight, and of the human psyche as being far removed from recognizing this need.

These ominous comments reflect the universal consequences of a failed understanding as to the purpose of God for humankind. It is in this particular respect that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh sheds new light; it refreshes our thoughts; it clarifies and expands our conceptions. His Teachings imbue us with the abundance of God's love for His creatures; they impress upon us the indispensability of justice in human relations and emphasize the importance of adhering to principle in all matters; they inform us that human beings have been created "to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization" and that the virtues that befit the dignity of every

person are: "forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth".

As the members of our community have pursued their plan for teaching His Faith, they have grown to appreciate more adequately the purpose of the multifarious processes of change which have been at work during the course of the century. "Such simultaneous processes of rise and fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos, with their continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other, are," our Teachings tell us, "but aspects of a greater Plan, one and indivisible, whose Source is God, whose author is Bahá'u'lláh, the theatre of whose operations is the entire planet, and whose ultimate objectives are the unity of the human race and the peace of all mankind."

Disunity is the crux of the problems which so severely afflict the planet. It permeates attitudes in all departments of life. It is at the heart of all major conflicts between nations and peoples. More serious still, disunity is common in the relations between religions and within religions, vitiating the very spiritual and moral influence which it is their primary purpose to exert. "Should the lamp of religion be obscured," Bahá'u'lláh asserts, "chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness, of justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine."

In an elaboration of these dreadful consequences, our Teachings state that "when, as a result of human perversity, the light of religion is quenched in men's hearts . . . a deplorable decline in the fortunes of humanity immediately sets in, bringing in its wake all the evils which a wayward soul is capable of revealing. The perversion of human nature, the degradation of human conduct, the corruption and dissolution of human institutions, reveal themselves, under such circumstances, in their worst and most revolting aspects. Human character is debased, confidence is shaken, the nerves of discipline are relaxed, the voice of human conscience is stilled, the sense of decency and shame is obscured, conceptions of duty, of solidarity, of reciprocity and loyalty are distorted, and the very feeling of peacefulness, of joy and of hope is gradually extinguished."

Such, unfortunately, is the state to which institutions and individuals have come in our time. Against this background the requirements of the Covenant assume even more critical importance than before. There can be no doubt that if our community is to cope with the situation, it must advance rapidly towards the next phase in its evolution. It will be a phase in

which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh must of necessity anticipate a deep encounter with the forces operating with such bewildering ferocity throughout the world. Let us, therefore, take this propitious occasion to review the covenantal arrangement which generates and sustains our actions.

The foundation of our belief rests on our recognition of the sovereignty of God, the Unknowable Essence, the Supreme Creator, and on our submission to His will as revealed for this age by Bahá'u'lláh. To accept the Messenger of God in His Day and to abide by His bidding are the two essential, inseparable duties which each soul was created to fulfil. One exercises these twin duties by one's own choice, and by so doing performs an act which may be regarded as the highest expression of free will with which every human being is endowed by an all-loving Creator. The vehicle in this resplendent age for the practical fulfilment of these duties is the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. It is the instrument by which belief in Him is translated into constructive deeds.

The oneness of humankind is the pivotal principle and ultimate goal of His mission. This principle means far more than the reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and goodwill among people: "It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced." The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh embodies the spirit, instrumentality and method to attain this essential goal. In addition to laying down, in His Book of Laws, the fundamentals for a new World Order, Bahá'u'lláh, in the Book of His Covenant, confirmed the appointment of His Son Abdu'l-Bahá as the interpreter of His Word and the Centre of His Covenant. As the interpreter, Abdu'l-Bahá became the living mouth of the Book, the expounder of the Word; as the Centre of the Covenant, He became the incorruptible medium for applying the Word to practical measures for the raising up of a new civilization. The Covenant is, therefore, unique as a divine phenomenon, in that Bahá'u'lláh, further to conferring upon Abdu'l-Bahá the necessary authority to fulfil the requirements of His singular office, vested in Him the virtues of perfection in personal and social behaviour, that humanity may have an enduring model to emulate. In no annals of the past is there recorded such an arrangement for ensuring the realization of the purpose of the Manifestation of God.

This Covenant is the guarantee against schism; that is why those who occasionally attempt to create a cleavage in the community utterly fail in the long run. Similarly, the incessant persecution the community has been forced to endure for more than a century in the

land of Bahá'u'lláh's birth has not succeeded in destroying its identity or undermining its organic unity. The glorious, ultimate effect of this arrangement will be to ensure the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, as promised in the Holy Books of old and as proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh Himself.

"The Day of the Promise is come," He clearly announces, "and He Who is the Promised One loudly proclaimeth before all who are in heaven and all who are on earth: 'Verily there is none other God but He, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!' I swear by God! That which had been enshrined from eternity in the knowledge of God, the Knower of the seen and unseen, is revealed. Happy is the eye that seeth, and the face that turneth towards, the Countenance of God, the Lord of all being."

Indeed, the coming of Bahá'u'lláh ushered the world into a new age, making possible the beginning of a wholly new relationship between humanity and its Supreme Creator. The characteristics of this relationship are summed up in the Covenant inaugurated upon His passing a century ago. Its spiritual dynamic and cohesive power, its unifying principles and practical institutional provisions are a pattern for the healing of the ills afflicting our fractured societies and defective social systems. The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh gives new meaning to humanity's checkered history; it imparts a fresh impulse to human striving. "Like unto the artery," Abdu'l-Bahá states, it "beats and pulsates in the body of the world." The pervasive influence it exerts is at the heart of the derangement of human affairs; it drives the accelerating transition from the old order to the new World Order envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh. "Soon," He writes, "will the present day Order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead." And He explains: "The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this Most Great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System, the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed."

Let those seriously concerned about the state and fate of the world give due attention to the claims of Bahá'u'lláh. Let them realize that the storms battering at the foundations of society will not be stilled unless and until spiritual principles are actively engaged in the search for solutions to social problems. Let us, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, redouble our effort in the exercise of our sacred duty to acquaint all humanity with the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá'u'lláh. Let them discover that, "Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remould its institutions in a

manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world." Let us, with patience and humility, respond to challenging or skeptical questions while unfolding the purposes of this Law. Let them know that 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."

Let us by word and example show that "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." Finally, let them appreciate that "it calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race"; that "it insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world"; that "it repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other"; that "its watchword is unity in diversity".

It is especially noteworthy that coincidental with this Bahá'í Holy Year are the commemorations of other world-shaking occurrences which, centuries ago, commenced processes destined to attain their glorious consummation in the Promised Day of God. The ultimate resolution of the profound issues to which they gave rise, and which have ripened with the passage of time, is discernible in the eventual realization of the world-embracing System of Bahá'u'lláh.

Our thoughts turn to the history of Abdu'l-Bahá's epic journey to the West and particularly to North America where, in New York, He disclosed to His western disciples the implications of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. It was, in a sense, an act of renewal, prospective of the consolidation of the union of the Old and New Worlds into one global entity. Surnamed by Him "City of the Covenant", New York resonates with the effects of that experience of eighty years ago. Then it was still the major entryway to the "Land of Promise" for millions of people seeking new horizons. Now it is recognized as a gathering place for the leaders of nations, an international venue for efforts at achieving unity in the political realm. Its very atmosphere vibrates with the hopes of a world seeking to set its affairs in order. Today, the hearts of the Bahá'ís throughout the earth are focused on this City of the Covenant wherein many thousands of their fellow-believers, from all parts of the planet, have assembled in the second Bahá'í World Congress. The presence there of such a widely varied representation of

the human race is an affirmation of the unific power of the Covenant which the event was convened to celebrate.

In this season of beginnings and of the commemorations of beginnings, we Bahá'ís set for ourselves a new measure of effort, one more daring and persistent than before. May our words proclaim, and our deeds demonstrate, that there is only one God, only one religion, only one race. And few though we be, may we thus fulfil our duty towards Bahá'u'lláh, towards His Covenant, and, indeed, towards all humankind.

The Universal House of Justice

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
BAILÁÍ WORLD CENTRE

20 October 1983



To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The soul-stirring events in Bahá'u'lláh's native land and the concomitant advance into the theatre of world affairs of the agencies of His Administrative Order have combined to bring into focus new possibilities in the evolution of the Bahá'í world community. Our Riḍvān message this year captured these implications in its reference to the opening before us of a wider horizon in whose light can dimly be discerned new pursuits and undertakings upon which we must soon embark. These portend our greater involvement in the development of the social and economic life of peoples.

From the beginning of His stupendous mission, Bahá'u'lláh urged upon the attention of nations the necessity of ordering human affairs in such a way as to bring into being a world unified in all the essential aspects of its life. In unnumbered verses and tablets He repeatedly and variously declared the 'progress of the world' and the 'development of nations' as being among the ordinances of God for this day. The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal of His Revelation, implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth. The indispensability of this coherence is unmistakably illustrated in His ordination of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the spiritual centre of every Bahá'í community round which must flourish dependencies dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific advancement of mankind. Thus, we can readily appreciate that although it has hitherto been impracticable for Bahá'í institutions generally to emphasize development activities, the concept of social and economic development is enshrined in the sacred Teachings of our Faith. The beloved Master, through His illuminating words and deeds, set the example for the application of this concept to the reconstruction of society. Witness, for instance, what social and economic progress the Iranian believers attained under His loving guidance and, subsequently, with the unfailing encouragement of the Guardian of the Cause.

Now, after all the years of constant teaching activity, the Community of the Greatest Name has grown to the stage at which the processes of this development must be incorporated into its regular pursuits; particularly is action compelled by the expansion of the Faith in Third World countries where the vast majority of its adherents reside. The steps to be taken must necessarily begin in the Bahá'í Community itself, with the friends endeavouring, through their application of spiritual principles, their rectitude of conduct and the practice of the art of consultation, to uplift themselves and thus become self-sufficient and self-reliant. Moreover, these exertions will conduce to the preservation of human honour, so desired by Bahá'u'lláh. In the process and as a consequence, the friends will undoubtedly extend the benefits of their efforts to society as a whole, until all mankind achieves the progress intended by the Lord of the Ages.

Cont'd/...

It is indeed propitious that systematic attention be given to this vital sphere of Bahá'í endeavour. We are happy, therefore, to announce the establishment at the World Centre of the Office of Social and Economic Development, which is to assist the Universal House of Justice to promote and coordinate the activities of the friends throughout the world in this new field.

The International Teaching Centre and, through it, the Continental Boards of Counsellors are poised for the special responsibilities which devolve upon them to be alert to possibilities for extending the development of social and economic life both within and outside the Bahá'í Community, and to advise and encourage the Assemblies and friends in their strivings.

We call now upon National Spiritual Assemblies to consider the implications of this emerging trend for their respective communities, and to take well-conceived measures to involve the thought and actions of Local Spiritual Assemblies and individuals in the devising and implementing of plans, within the constraints of existing circumstances and available resources. Progress in the development field will largely depend on natural stirrings at the grassroots, and it should receive its driving force from those sources rather than from an imposition of plans and programs from the top. The major task of National Assemblies, therefore, is to increase the local communities' awareness of needs and possibilities, and to guide and coordinate the efforts resulting from such awareness. Already in many areas the friends are witnessing the confirmations of their initiatives in such pursuits as the founding of tutorial and other schools, the promotion of literacy, the launching of rural development programs, the inception of educational radio stations, and the operation of agricultural and medical projects. As they enlarge the scope of their endeavours other modes of development will undoubtedly emerge.

This challenge evokes the resourcefulness, flexibility and cohesiveness of the many communities composing the Bahá'í world. Different communities will, of course, perceive different approaches and different solutions to similar needs. Some can offer assistance abroad, while, at the outset, others must of necessity receive assistance; but all, irrespective of circumstances or resources, are endowed with the capacity to respond in some measure; all can share; all can participate in the joint enterprise of applying more systematically the principles of the Faith to upraising the quality of human life. The key to success is unity in spirit and in action.

We go forward confident that the wholehearted involvement of the friends in these activities will ensure a deeper consolidation of the community at all levels. Our engagement in the technical aspects of development should, however, not be allowed to supplant the essentials of teaching, which remains the primary duty of every follower of Bahá'u'lláh. Rather should our increased activities in the development field be viewed as a reinforcement of the teaching work, as a greater manifestation of faith in action. For, if expansion of the teaching work does not continue, there can be no hope of success for this enlarged dimension of the consolidation process.

Ultimately, the call to action is addressed to the individual friends, whether they be adult or youth, veteran or newly-enrolled. Let them step forth to take their places in the arena of service where their talents and skills, their specialized training, their material resources, their offers of time and energy and, above all, their dedication to Bahá'í principles, can be put to work in improving the lot of man.

May all derive enduring inspiration from the following statement written in 1933 by the hand of our beloved Guardian:

"The problems which confront the believers at the present time, whether social, spiritual, economic or administrative will be gradually solved as the number and the resources of the friends multiply and their capacity for service and for the application of Bahá'í principles develops. They should be patient, confident and active in utilizing every possible opportunity that presents itself within the limits now necessarily imposed upon them. May the Almighty aid them to fulfil their highest hopes."

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

*The Universal
House of Justice*

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

13 August 1989

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice has instructed us to thank you for your letter of 21 July 1981 and to send you the following advice.

The House of Justice has received a number of recommendations from individual believers during the past ten years that an institution similar to Shirkat-i-Nawnahálán be founded, now that the original institution in Iran has been confiscated. Its response to all such recommendations is that it is not timely to take such a step. Although Nawnahálán was a Bahá'í bank, under the aegis of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, it was run as a separate institution.

If a number of believers, such as those with whom you are associated, wish to form a private bank or engage in any other kind of joint business venture, they are, of course, entirely free to do so, but it should be conceived entirely as a private, commercial undertaking, and entered into on sound business lines.

The House of Justice is aware that your discussions have arisen from the desire of all the members of your group to advance the interests of the Faith, and it asks us to assure you of its prayers on your behalf.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Lorana Kerfoot
For Department of the Secretariat

cc: ✓ National Assembly of the United States



THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

7 August 1985

To National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Development of the local and national funds of the Faith

This letter and the annexed memorandum of comments are addressed primarily to those National Spiritual Assemblies whose communities include large numbers of materially poor people but inasmuch as the principles expressed, as distinct from some of the procedures suggested, are of universal application, they are being sent to all National Assemblies.

There is a profound aspect to the relationship between a believer and the Fund, which holds true irrespective of his or her economic condition. When a human soul accepts Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for this age and enters into the divine Covenant, that soul should progressively bring his or her whole life into harmony with the divine purpose - he becomes a co-worker in the Cause of God and receives the bounty of being permitted to devote his material possessions, no matter how meagre, to the work of the Faith.

Giving to the Fund, therefore, is a spiritual privilege, not open to those who have not accepted Bahá'u'lláh, of which no believer should deny himself. It is both a responsibility and a source of bounty. This is an aspect of the Cause which, we feel, is an essential part of the basic teaching and deepening of new believers. The importance of contributing resides in the degree of sacrifice of the giver, the spirit of devotion with which the contribution is made and the unity of the friends in this service; these attract the confirmations of God and enhance the dignity and self-respect of the individuals and the community.

To re-emphasize the spiritual significance of contributing to the Faith by all members of the Bahá'í community, we quote the following extract from a letter of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Central and East Africa dated 8 August 1957:

"...All, no matter how modest their resources, must participate. Upon the degree of self-sacrifice involved in these individual contributions will directly depend the efficacy and the spiritual influence which these nascent administrative institutions, called into being through the power of Bahá'u'lláh, and by virtue of the Design conceived by the Centre of His Covenant, will exert. A sustained and strenuous effort must henceforth be made by the rank and file of the avowed upholders of the Faith..."

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of Finance

23 April 1990

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The development of the work on Mount Carmel, with its vast financial implications, has prompted us to re-examine various matters and to implement new procedures, where needed, for more efficient use of our financial resources. A well planned cash-flow management system is essential to ensure steady and uninterrupted work on the Mount Carmel Projects for the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb and the Buildings on the Arc.

The Universal House of Justice has instructed us to write to you to seek your kind co-operation in the following areas:

1. **Donations of Real Estate** - From time to time the Universal House of Justice receives donations or bequests of real estate from individual believers. For legal reasons the title to such gifts of land or buildings usually has to be registered in the name of the National Spiritual Assembly of the country where it is situated. We keep at the World Centre a register of such donations, but we have recently been informed by National Spiritual Assemblies of gifts of property that they have been holding on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, but of which we had received no notification from the donor.

To assist us in compiling a complete list of such properties for the information of the Universal House of Justice in case it wishes to sell them to meet the needs of the Mount Carmel Projects and the Bahá'í International Fund, we would appreciate it if each National Spiritual Assembly would notify us, by the end of July, of any that it is holding or is aware of. We shall check this information against our records and request further details in due course, if necessary. Forms are enclosed to assist you in providing this information.

2. **Contributions in kind** - The World Centre often receives contributions in kind, such as jewellery, gold coins, carpets, and objets d'art to be sold for the benefit of international funds of the Faith.

We would appreciate it if you would let it be known to the friends that it would be more advantageous, when they wish to make such donations, if they would sell the object themselves and send the proceeds, since both the reception of the items at the World Centre and their disposition can cause considerable expense and time-consuming problems.

Valuable carpets and other items that are received unexpectedly in Israel can give rise to fines for the absence of an import licence, and high storage and clearance charges, and are also exposed to pilfering and damage. Neither can these items nor jewellery be sold in Israel without difficulty, nor is the market here necessarily a good one for such transactions.

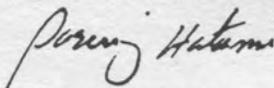
These remarks are made, not to discourage the generosity of the friends in making contributions in kind, but merely to assist them in realizing their purpose in the most effective way for the work of the Cause.

Items with historical and/or sentimental (to the Cause) value, will be dealt with separately and on a case by case basis. For such items the individual donor should be asked to first send to the Bahá'í World Centre photographs of each item, with full description, and intended use. The individual then will be advised as to the best and safest method of shipment, if such an item is needed at the Bahá'í World Centre.

3. Gifts not for Sale - Friends also sometimes donate articles for the use of the World Centre. These are treated differently from any of the above, and are not the subject of this letter.

The Universal House of Justice will greatly appreciate your assistance in these matters.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,



For the Department of Finance

Enclosure

cc: The International Teaching Centre
The Hand of the Cause of God
Dr. 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá, Trustee of Ḥuqúqu'lláh



**Appendix 2: Guidance from the House of Justice on
Custodianship of the Assets of the Faith - February,
1992**

All Local Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Friends,

The Universal House of Justice has provided the National Spiritual Assemblies with guidelines related to the custodianship of the assets of the Faith which are presented in their report. Since the same principles are valid in the case of Local Assemblies we are enclosing a copy for your guidance. The guidelines should be applied in full or in part as appropriate to the size and development of your Assembly.

We are especially pleased to be able to share this information with you now as we prepare to enter a particularly important administrative year, the Holy Year, which will be followed immediately by the next Plan.

With warm regards,



Robert C. Henderson
Secretary-General

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

536 SHERIDAN ROAD, WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091 • (708) 869-9039 • CABLE: BAHÁ'Í WILMETTE

February 24, 1992

To All Local Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Baha'i Friends:

The Universal House of Justice has provided the National Spiritual Assemblies with guidelines related to the custodianship of the assets of the Faith which are committed to their care. Since the same principles are valid in the case of local funds, we are enclosing a copy for your guidance. The guidelines should be applied in full or in part as appropriate to the size and development of your community.

We are especially pleased to be able to share this information with you now as we prepare to enter a particularly significant administrative year, the Holy Year, which will be followed immediately by the next Plan.

With warm regards,



Robert C. Henderson
Secretary-General

1. Method of bookkeeping and accounting: These vary from country to country in accordance with differences in practice and law. They also need to be adapted to the size and complexity of the funds managed by a National Spiritual Assembly. Every National Assembly, therefore, is urged to employ a competent qualified accountant, if there is one available, who will be able to advise it on how to set up a good system and, if necessary, train the Treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly and his assistant(s) in operating it.
2. The importance of regular auditing: No matter how honest and painstaking a Treasurer and his staff may be, it is human to err, and errors in accounting can give rise to very serious results if not caught promptly. It is, therefore, of fundamental importance for every National Spiritual Assembly to have its books of account audited by a competent professional auditor at least once a year, even if it is not required to do this by the law under which it is incorporated.
3. The importance of regular reporting: The National Assembly as a body has an inescapable responsibility for the care of the funds entrusted to it, and it must ensure that it receives frequent reports from the Treasurer. Such reports should show the income and expenditure of the funds for the period in sufficient detail for the National Assembly to understand clearly what is taking place. They should also show the opening and closing balance on each fund and indicate the assets and liabilities composing each fund balance. Comments should also be included to draw the Assembly's attention to any unusual or unexpected items and to the trends which are indicated by the current figures. This will enable the National Assembly to monitor the condition and progress of the funds and to give all the believers clear information on the way the funds are being used and on the financial needs of the community. Such sharing of information will do much to increase the believers' confidence in the National Assembly and will encourage them to support the funds of the Faith for whose progress they so eagerly yearn.
4. Dealing with income: The greater part of the income of any Bahá'í national fund comes from contributions. Every contribution, including contributions in kind, should be meticulously receipted and accounted for. Receipts should be preprinted with sequential numbers, so that each receipt can be easily related to the contribution it acknowledges. Earmarked funds should be recorded and reported separately, and such funds should be used only for the purpose intended.
5. Proper care of land and buildings: Land and buildings require much care and attention. Even if the property is a vacant plot of land, there is always the danger of encroachment by neighbours or of settlement by squatters, and a National Spiritual Assembly may find itself involved in long and expensive legal proceedings if it does not ensure that responsibility for the care and protection of such property is assigned to specified and competent individuals or committees who are required to submit regular reports to the National Assembly, at least once a year, reviewing the condition of the property, supplementing their reports, wherever possible, by current photographic documentation of the site and structures.
6. Protecting other assets: As in the case of land and buildings, responsibility for the safe keeping and preservation of all other assets of the National Spiritual Assembly should be clearly assigned to specified Bahá'ís or committees, and they should be required to submit regular reports to the National Assembly, reviewing the condition of the assets. The National Assembly itself must ensure that proper provision is made for preserving the value of financial reserves by wise and careful investment.

7. Budgeting: In order to be able to correctly plan its work, avoid extending itself beyond its financial capacities, and ensure that the best use is made of the resources of the community, a National Spiritual Assembly needs to prepare a budget. . . . The budget should include not only estimated expenditures for the year, analysed under various headings, but also an estimate of the expected contributions and other income, and information as to the balances of funds on hand, or expected to be on hand, at the beginning and end of the period. Whenever possible, a two-to three-year forecast of major income and expenditure categories should be prepared in order to assist in determining and controlling long-term projects, as well as to help in smoothing the year-to-year transition for the National Assembly.
8. Controlling and recording expenditure: This is an area in which safeguards need to be established, and clear procedures followed. The National Spiritual Assembly itself has ultimate responsibility for the wise and economical use of the funds of the Faith, but it cannot, as a body, approve every payment. It must devolve authority for expenditure on its committees and other agencies responsible for carrying out the work of the Cause. At the same time the National Assembly must retain overall control. The budget adopted for the year will be an essential instrument for achieving this, if it is accompanied by a clear reporting system. By such a system, the Treasurer's Office can oversee the way in which the committees and other agencies are using the funds, can relate these expenditures to the income from contributions, and can provide regular reports to the National Assembly. It will also have to combine the expenditures into one coherent set of accounts at the end of the year. The individual in charge of the administration of the funds should be given proper training and guidelines before being entrusted with the funds.
9. Custody of records: It must be clear that the financial records of the National Fund belong to the Assembly and not to the individual Treasurers. Therefore, a procedure should be established whereby an outgoing Treasurer hands over all books of account, etc., to the incoming Treasurer, and whereby older records are placed in the archives of the National Assembly.

Appendix 3: Letters & Policies of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

536 SHERIDAN ROAD, WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091 • (708) 869-9039 • CABLE: BAHÁ'Í WILMETTE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

23 February 1982

Dear Bahá'í Friend:

The National Spiritual Assembly has asked that we reply to your letter of 6 February 1982 in which you ask about the Shaklee organization.

The National Spiritual Assembly does not have any specific information regarding this company other than articles which appear in the press from time to time. It has elected not to issue any specific guidelines regarding either Shaklee or Amway.

There are, however, some basic considerations that are relevant for Bahá'ís when they are considering becoming involved with a company like Shaklee or Amway, or any other company. If one's association with the company becomes the cause of disunity in the Bahá'í community, one's business practices or one's association with the company should immediately be discontinued. Under no circumstances should a Bahá'í activity or gathering be used as an opportunity to promote a product or solicit sales. If further investigation should reveal that the company's practices contradict Bahá'í principles, then disassociation would be indicated. If a Bahá'í does decide to accept employment with such a company, he must remember to pursue that employment in a spirit of moderation. His job cannot become the all-consuming passion of his life.

The National Spiritual Assembly brings these matters to your attention as they represent some of the problems which have been experienced by the friends in such undertakings. The National Spiritual Assembly is confident that your concern and love for the Faith will guide you in making your decisions.

With respect to your question as to whether you should take such a question as this to your Local Spiritual Assembly, the National Spiritual Assembly would appreciate it if the friends would turn first to their

will to a very large extent depend upon the range and variety of the contributing believers, as well as upon the nature and degree of self-abnegation which their unsolicited offerings will entail. Moreover, we should, I feel, regard it as an axiom and guiding principle of Bahá'í administration that in the conduct of every specific Bahá'í activity, as different from undertakings of a humanitarian, philanthropic or charitable character, which may in future be conducted under Bahá'í auspices, only those who have already identified themselves with the Faith and are regarded as its avowed and unreserved supporters should be invited to join and collaborate. For apart from the consideration of embarrassing complications which the association of non-believers in the financing of institutions of a strictly Bahá'í character may conceivably engender in the administration of the Bahá'í community of the future, it should be remembered that these specific Bahá'í institutions, which should be viewed in the light of Bahá'u'lláh's gifts bestowed upon the world, can best function and most powerfully exert their influence in the world only if reared and maintained solely by the support of those who are fully conscious of, and are unreservedly submissive to, the claims inherent in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In cases, however, when a friend or sympathizer of the Faith eagerly insists on a monetary contribution for the promotion of the Faith, such gifts should be accepted and duly acknowledged by the elected representatives of the believers with the express understanding that they would be utilized by them only to reinforce that section of the Bahá'í Fund exclusively devoted to philanthropic or charitable purposes. For, as the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh extends in scope and in influence, and the resources of Bahá'í communities correspondingly multiply, it will become increasingly desirable to differentiate between such departments of the Bahá'í treasury as minister to the needs of the world at large, and those that are specifically designed to promote the direct interests of the Faith itself. From this apparent divorce between Bahá'í and humanitarian activities it must not, however, be inferred that the animating purpose of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh stands at variance with the aims and objects of the humanitarian and philanthropic institutions of the day. Nay, it should be realized by every judicious promoter of the Faith that at such an early stage in the evolution and crystallization of the Cause such discriminating and precautionary measures are inevitable and even necessary if the nascent institutions of the Faith are to emerge triumphant and unimpaired from the present welter of confused and often conflicting interests with which they are surrounded. This note of warning may not be thought inappropriate at a time when, inflamed by a consuming passion to witness the early completion of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, we may not only be apt to acquiesce in the desire of those who, as yet uninitiated into the Cause, are willing to lend financial assistance to its institutions, but may even feel inclined to solicit from them such aid as it is in their power to render. Ours surely is the paramount duty so to acquit ourselves in the discharge of our most sacred task that in the days to come neither the tongue of the slanderer nor the pen of the malevolent may dare to insinuate that so beauteous, so significant an Edifice has been reared by anything short of the unanimous, the exclusive, and the self-sacrificing strivings of the small yet determined body of the convinced supporters of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. How delicate our task, how pressing the responsibility that weighs upon us, who are called upon on one hand to preserve inviolate the integrity and the identity of the regenerating Faith of

Concerning the copy of a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá which you had enclosed in your letter of October 20th and in which the Master defines the order in which Temple accessory buildings are to be constructed; this Tablet, Shoghi Effendi feels, should not be interpreted too rigidly as giving strictly the exact order in which these accessories are to be built. Nor should it be regarded as providing an exhaustive list of the buildings which will in future be erected around the central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. The International House of Justice will have to lay down definitely the number and order of these future Temple accessories, and to define their relationships to each other, and to the Temple itself....

As to the question of the relationship of an administrative building to the Temple; this also will have to be defined in future, but whatever the actual form which such relationship may assume, and whatever its details, it should be based on the general principle that these two sets of Bahá'í institutions embody two vital and distinct, yet inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service. The central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which is exclusively devoted to purposes of worship, represents the spiritual element, and therefore fulfills a primary function in every Bahá'í Community, whereas all other Temple accessories, whether of a strictly administrative, cultural or humanitarian character, are secondary, and come next in importance to the House of Worship itself.

(From a letter dated January 28, 1939 written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

This Bahá'í teaching of human fellowship and kindness implies that we must be always ready to extend every assistance and help we can to those who are in distress and suffering. Bahá'í charity is of the very essence of the Teachings and should therefore be developed in every Bahá'í community. Charitable institutions such as orphanages, free schools and hospitals for the poor, constitute an indispensable part of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. It is the responsibility of every local Bahá'í community to insure the welfare of its poor and needy members, through whatever means possible.

But, of course this extension of assistance to the poor, in whatever form, should under no circumstances be allowed to seriously interfere with the major collective interest of the Bahá'í community, as distinguished from the purely personal interests of its members. The demands of the Cause transcend those of the individual, and should therefore be given precedence. But these two phases of Bahá'í social life, though not of equal importance, are by no means contradictory. Both of them are essential, and should be fostered, but each according to its own degree of importance. It is the responsibility of Bahá'í Assemblies to decide when individual interests should be subordinated to those affecting the collective welfare of the community. But, as already stated, the interests of the individual should always be safe guarded within certain limits, and provided they do not seriously affect the welfare of the group as a whole.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian dated June 26, 1936 to an individual believer)



An outpouring of treasure, no less copious than the blood shed so lavishly in the Apostolic Age of the Faith by those who in the heart of the Asiatic continent proclaimed its birth to the world, can befit their spiritual descendants, who, in the present Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, have championed the Cause, and assumed so preponderating a share in the erection of its Administrative Order, and are now engaged in the final stage of the building of the House that incarnates the soul of that Faith in the American continent. No sacrifice can be deemed too great to insure the completion of such an edifice - the most holy House of Worship ever to be associated with the Faith of the Most Great Name - an edifice whose inception has shed such a luster on the closing years of the Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, which has assumed a concrete shape in the present Formative stage in the evolution of our beloved Faith, whose dependencies must spring into existence in the course of successive epochs of this same Age, and whose fairest fruits will be garnered in the Age that is to come, the last, the Golden Age of the initial and brightest Dispensation of the five-thousand-century Bahá'í Cycle.

"A most wonderful and thrilling motion will appear in the world of existence," are 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own words, predicting the release of spiritual forces that must accompany the completion of this most hallowed House of Worship. "From that point of light," He, further glorifying that edifice, has written, "the spirit of teaching... will permeate to all parts of the world." And again: "Out of this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, without doubt, thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be born. It marks the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth."

(*Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, p. 69*)

FUNDRAISING, FUND APPEALS, AND GIVING BY NON-BAHÁ'ÍS

The Bahá'í Fund

The Purpose and Privilege of Giving

How great, how very great, the gulf that separateth Us from them who, in this Day, are occupied with their evil passions, and have set their hopes on the things of the earth and its fleeting glory! Many a time hath the court of the All-Merciful been to outward seeming so denuded of the riches of this world that they who lived in close association with Him suffered from dire want. Despite their sufferings, the Pen of the Most High hath, at no time, been willing to refer, nor even to make the slightest allusion, to the things that pertain to this world and its treasures. And if, at any time, any gift were presented to Him, that gift was accepted as a token of His grace unto him that offered it. Should it ever please Us to appropriate to Our own use all the treasures of the earth, to none is given the right to question Our authority, or to challenge Our right. It would be impossible to conceive any act more contemptible than soliciting, in the name of the one true God, the riches which men possess.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, pp. 201-202)

Contributions Surest Way of Lifting Mankind's Burden of Misery

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

(From a letter dated December 8, 1947 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Amount of Contribution Not as Important as Universal Participation

...(T)he friends should be made to appreciate the benefits which come from regular and systematic contributions to the National Fund. The amount of the contribution is not as important as universal participation.

(Universal House of Justice, letter dated November 15, 1963)

Deciding How Much of One's Wealth to Give to the Cause

The House of Justice would never go to the extreme of telling the friends that now is the time to give their retirement and long-range savings to the Fund. It sets forth the needs of the Cause, and calls upon the believers for sacrifice, but the degree and

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