

# **The Universal House of Justice and the Baha'i World**

**1963-1973**

**Peter Smith**

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## 1. Preface to online edition

This book was written many years ago, intended for publication but not wholly completed. It has been lightly edited for posting online.

Changelog: The source document was prepared in WordPerfect on PC. A copy of the unedited original wpd file can be downloaded from [http://bahai-library.com/smith\\_uhj\\_bahai\\_world](http://bahai-library.com/smith_uhj_bahai_world) . This was converted to OpenOffice on Mac, typeset, and exported as PDF. Edits include: author's working notes removed or updated, references to sections not yet written (e.g. introduction, foreword, upcoming chapter references, appendixes) deleted, underdot diacritic markers removed, formatting streamlined, paragraph styles defined/standardize, spellchecked, URLs updated.

-J. Winters, August 2012

## 2. The Establishment of the Universal House of Justice

By the early months of 1963, the final preparations for the International Convention in Haifa and the World Congress in London were in train. The Hands themselves gathered for their annual conclave starting on April 9<sup>th</sup>, giving time to discuss not only the forthcoming meetings, but the completion of the World Crusade; ‘mass conversion and consolidation’; their own activities and plans; the relationship between themselves and the soon to be elected Universal House of Justice; and the financial situation of the Faith.<sup>1</sup>

The First International Convention went ahead as planned on 21-23 April, starting on the morning of the first day with the election of the members of the Universal House of Justice at a gathering in the former home of `Abdu'l-Bahá.<sup>2</sup> Altogether, the members of the 56 national and regional assemblies then established took part, together constituting an electoral college. Most attended in person, the remainder sending in postal ballots.<sup>3</sup> Those elected to the newly-formed Universal House of Justice were as follows:

Mr. Hugh Chance  
Mr. Húshmand Fathe-Azam  
Mr. Amos Gibson  
Dr. Lutfu'lláh Hakím  
Mr. David Hofman  
Mr. H. Borrah Kavelin  
Mr. `Alí Nakhjavání  
Mr. Ian Semple  
Mr. Charles Wolcott.

Of the nine, four (Chance, Gibson, Kavelin, Wolcott) were American; three (Fathe-Azam, Hakím, Nakhjavání) expatriate Iranians; and two (Hofman, Semple) British. Five (Hakím, Kavelin, Nakhjavání, Semple, Wolcott) were members of the International Baha’i Council, whilst the others were members of the American (Chance, Gibson), British (Hofman), and Indian (Fathe-Azam) national assemblies.<sup>4</sup>

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1. For a copy of their agenda see MC 404.
  2. No.7 Haparsim [Persian] Street, Haifa. The Feast of Ridván was held later in the day in the gardens of the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh at Bahjí, and the rest of the proceedings – consultations on various aspects of the progress of the Faith – at the Beit Harofe Auditorium on Wingate Avenue. For the program outline see MC 424-25. The election results were announced to the assembly members by the tellers on the morning of 22 April (MC 429), having already been cabled to the Baha’i world by the Hands (MC 425-26).
  3. The full list of assembly members is given in MC 406-13. The list also indicates that 285 assembly members were expected to attend in person, but in her report on the Convention, Charlotte Linfoot states that 288 were present (BW14: 427), the extra three people presumably originally expecting not to be able to attend, but finally being able to do so. Travel difficulties or other problems prevented the attendance of any members from at least five national assemblies (BW14: 427 – but note that the full list indicates seven assemblies with no members expected to be present: Arabia, Burma, Cuba, Haiti, Iraq, Nicaragua, and Venezuela), and in some instances only a few members were able to attend in person – presumably for reasons of cost. The full list indicates that eight national assemblies (British Isles; Columbia; Central and East Africa; Finland; Iran; Netherlands; South and West Africa; and Switzerland) expected their full membership to be present.

It was no doubt with a sense of enormous relief that the Hands notified the Baha'is of the world of the election results and of their own 'OVERFLOWING GRATITUDE' at Bahá'u'lláh's 'UNFAILING PROTECTION' which had enabled the election of the 'SUPREME LEGISLATIVE BODY' ordained in his book of laws, and which he had promised would receive 'HIS INFALLIBLE GUIDANCE'. This was the 'AUGUST BODY' to which all Baha'is should turn, its destiny being to guide the unfoldment of Bahá'u'lláh's 'EMBRYONIC WORLD ORDER', and to ensure the early dawn of the Golden Age of the Faith, when the 'WORD OF THE LORD' would cover the Earth 'AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA' (MC 425-26).

Following quickly upon the Haifa Convention and the election of the Universal House of Justice, Baha'is from numerous countries gathered together in London for the Faith's first World Congress. This five day meeting (28 April-2 May), held in the Royal Albert Hall in South Kensington, brought together the largest assemblage of Baha'is ever held to that date. Immediately following this event, the members of the newly-elected House of Justice began their first major deliberations, borrowing the British national assembly's meeting room for several days for this purpose. Meanwhile, the Hands who had also gathered in London met in a nearby room to prepare the first draft of a new teaching plan for the House of Justice's consideration and arranging for the future arrangement of their own work.<sup>5</sup>

#### **The message of the Universal House of Justice to the London Congress.**

The Baha'is who had gathered together in London for the Congress had what was in effect a double celebration: for the completion of Shoghi Effendi's Ten Year Crusade and the commemoration of the centenary of the founding of the Faith, and for the reestablishment of what the Baha'is could regard as divinely-guided leadership. This reality was reflected in the first public statement issued by the Universal House of Justice, dated 30 April 1963, and presented to the Congress participants (MU#1). It was read on the House's behalf by David Hofman, the former British Baha'i national secretary.

This was a time of celebration – the 'Most Great Jubilee', commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the declaration of mission by Bahá'u'lláh, himself 'the Promised One of All Ages', in the Ridván garden in Baghdad in April 1863. As such, it marked the fulfilment of a Biblical prophecy in the Book of Daniel.<sup>6</sup> It also marked the ending of the 'first epoch' of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 'Divine Plan', and the successful conclusion of Shoghi Effendi's 'world-

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4. Semple is the only one of the original House members still serving. Hakim, the eldest, resigned in 1967, shortly before his death; Gibson died in office in 1982, and Wolcott in 1987; Hofman and Kavelin resigned in 1988; Chance was not reelected in 1993; and Fathe-Azam and Nakhjavání resigned in 2003.

5. These meetings were held in the British National Baha'i Centre at 27 Rutland Gate, South Kensington (MU, p.7, n.2-1). Twenty Hands signed the London Resolution which summarized their decisions as to their own future organizational arrangements (9 May; see MC 427), two (Leroy Ioas and Musa Banani) being absent – presumably staying in Haifa as per a previous decision of the Hands at the Baha'i World Centre so as to oversee continuing work there and to be on hand lest anything of importance transpired (MC 405-6).

6. "Blessed is he who cometh unto the thousand three hundred and thirty five days" (Dan. 12:12). AB explained that this pointed to one century after Baha'u'llah's declaration, and the spread of his teachings across the world.

encircling Crusade', <sup>7</sup> enabling the Baha'is – 'his lovers and loved ones' – throughout the world to lay 'this glorious harvest of victory' at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh in Shoghi's name (MU#1.2).

The House paid tribute to the work of both Shoghi Effendi and the Hands of the Cause. It was Shoghi Effendi alone who had 'unfolded the potentialities' of the small, 'widely scattered' and 'largely unorganized' Baha'i community which had existed at the time of his accession. This had involved (1) unfolding the 'grand design' of 'God's Holy Cause'; (2) setting the great plans of teaching outlined by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in motion; (3) establishing the institutions at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa-Akka and greatly extending their landed endowments; (4) raising up the first Baha'i temples in the Americas, Africa, Australasia and Europe; (5) developing the Baha'i 'Administrative Order' throughout the world; (6) setting 'the Arc of the Cause' true on its course; and (7) appointing the Hands of the Cause (MU#1.2).

Shoghi's appointment of the Hands had, of course, proven singularly significant following his unexpected death, enabling the Hands to take control of the direction of the Faith. The House did not wish to dwell on the 'appalling dangers' which faced 'the infant Cause' when the Guardian had died, but it was necessary to acknowledge the superb nature of the stewardship which the Hands had exercised. They had kept the ship of the Cause on its course and 'brought it safe to port'. In so doing, the Hands had performed heroically, manifesting a level of labour, self-discipline and sacrifice which elicited the House's 'profound admiration', as well as their love and pride. They shared the present victory with their 'beloved commander', and the 'paeons of joy and gratitude' now due could only be offered if proper acknowledgement was made of the role they had played in bringing about 'this supreme occasion' (MU#1.3).

For its own part, the Universal House of Justice greeted the Baha'is 'lovingly and joyfully', asking them to pray for the spiritual strengthening and speedy development of its members. All nine members had been in Haifa at the time of the election of the House, and they had therefore been able to prostrate themselves at the 'Sacred Thresholds' of the shrines of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, humbly seeking strength and assistance in the 'mighty task' which lay ahead of them. Then, coming to London for the Congress, they had been able to pay homage at Shoghi Effendi's own resting-place. As soon as the House had been able to 'organize its work and deploy its forces', it would carefully examine 'all the conditions of the Cause of God', and communicate appropriately with the Baha'is. In the meantime, all Baha'is should vigorously follow up the opportunities for expanding the Faith which had been opened up by the Ten Year Crusade. They should also ensure that '(c)onsolidation and deepening' went hand-in-hand with 'an eager extension of the teaching work'. Thus would the 'onward march of the Cause' continue unabated 'in preparation for future [expansion] plans'. Moreover, now that widespread public attention was being increasingly drawn to the Baha'is, they should 'brace themselves' and 'prepare their institutions to sustain the gaze of the world, whether it be friendly or hostile, eager or idle' (MU#1.5-1.6).

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7. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had given the Baha'is the goal of global expansion in his *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (1916-17). Shoghi Effendi referred to the accomplishment of this plan as passing through a number of distinct "epochs", the first of which had begun in 1937 with the start of the first American Seven Year Plan (1937-44).

### **The message to the national conventions in May 1963.**

A second major message was sent out to the Baha'i world by the House shortly after the end of the Congress. Dated 7 May, and addressed to all the various national Baha'i conventions,<sup>8</sup> this referred briefly to the organizational arrangements the House had made for its own work (see below, this chapter), and announced that a new plan of teaching and expansion would be launched in a year's time so as to carry the Faith forward 'on the next stage of its world-redeeming mission', specifying a number of tasks which the Baha'is should attend to in the meantime so as to prepare for the plan (MU#2). It also emphasized the importance and significance of the recent Convention and Congress, the Universal House of Justice following the example set by Shoghi Effendi and setting contemporary developments in the Faith in wider context.

Of the two historic gatherings recently held, the first, the International Convention, had been unique, and of 'untold' and 'extreme spiritual and administrative significance', witnessing not only the election of the House of Justice, but the celebration of the Ridván feast by some three hundred Baha'is, daily visits to the Baha'i shrines by large groups of Baha'is of various backgrounds. The second, the Congress, 'permeated by a spirit of such bliss' as could only have come from the 'outpourings' of the heavenly kingdom, had been a 'supreme occasion', and the 'crowning victory' of Shoghi Effendi's lifework. Its outstanding features had included reviews of the progress of the Baha'i Cause; the presentation of new Baha'is from the new races and countries which had been reached during the Crusade and of the 'Knights of Bahá'u'lláh' who had taken his banner to 'the unopened and often inhospitable regions of the earth';<sup>9</sup> the spontaneous outbursts of singing the Baha'i greeting '*Alláh-u-Abhá*' ('God is Glorious') and the meeting of Baha'i 'warriors' known to each other only by name and the service they had performed; the youth gatherings; the 'unprecedented publicity' in the press and on television and the radio; the 'daily stream' of visitors to Shoghi Effendi's grave; and the 'radiant faces' and 'heightened awareness' of the 'true and real brotherhood' of the entire human race within God's kingdom (MU#2.2-2.3).

The House also reaffirmed the tribute it had paid to the Hands of the Cause at the World Congress: these 'precious souls' had brought the Cause safely to victory in the Guardian's name. Thanks were also due to the Auxiliary Board members, the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh and other pioneers, the members of the national and regional assemblies, and Baha'is everywhere for their devoted services and their prayers and sacrifices: together they had attracted great bounties from Bahá'u'lláh (MU#2.4).

### **Institutional arrangements.**

In their message of 7 May (MU#2), the House announced that it had started its work, made the arrangements for its institutional establishment in Haifa, and decided not to have officers of its own.<sup>10</sup> Henceforth, all its communications would be signed '*Universal House of Justice*' over an embossed seal (MU#2.5). A further decision of major import was that the House

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8. Each Baha'i national community normally holds an annual delegate convention during the Ridván period at which the members of the community's national spiritual assembly are elected and the delegates discuss any matters relating to the progress of the Faith in their country. See CEBF, 'convention', loc. cit.

9. Shoghi Effendi bestowed the honorific title 'Knight of Bahá'u'lláh' on anyone who opened some new territory to the Faith during the Ten Year Crusade (SCE 220).

would take over the former offices of the now defunct International Baha'i Council to serve as its official offices, expanding to take over the whole building and thus occupying the space that had hitherto been available for the Western pilgrims.<sup>11</sup> In a message to the Hands in the Holy Land, the House noted that it expected eight of its nine members to be settled in Haifa by the beginning of September (MC 428). In October, the House announced that the next election for its own membership would take place during the Spring of 1968, giving the existing members an initial five year term of office (MU#6.9).

The legal position of the House had also to be settled. Extensive consultations seem to have occurred between the House members and the Hands resident in Haifa after the ending of the London meetings. One immediate consequence was the decision to remove from these Hands their legal title and function as 'Custodians of the Baha'i World Faith', the House of Justice now having assumed the headship of the Faith. This decision was implemented on 7 June 1963, with statements ending the Custodianship being issued by both the House and the Custodial Hands (MC 430, 433). The remaining Hands were formally notified of this change by the Haifa Hands on 14 June. By that date, executive authority as managers of the Palestine or Israel branches of various national assemblies had also been passed from the Custodial Hands to the members of the House of Justice (MC 430-31).<sup>12</sup>

With the election of the House of Justice, the Hands of the Cause also amended aspects of their own functioning. Whilst the legal office of Custodians was to cease, a distinction was to continue to be made between the Hands resident in Haifa and the rest. The basic principles were established by the Hands as a whole during their London meeting: (1) Five of the Hands were assigned to work in the Holy Land. These were responsible for coordinating the international work of the Hands as a collective body, both in relationship to the Continental Hands and the Universal House of Justice; (2) The Hands in Haifa needed a quorum of three to make decisions. At least two of the three were to be from the original five elected to serve in Haifa, but if necessary the third could be one of the Continental Hands, reassigned to Haifa on a temporary basis after appropriate consultations with the other Hands; (3) If a vacancy occurred for any reason amongst the five Hands serving in Haifa, a replacement would be elected by the body of the Hands as a whole; (4) Meetings of the Hands as a collectivity would be called by the Haifa Hands after consultation with the rest; and (5) The Haifa Hands, acting on behalf of the rest and in accordance with their general instructions, would allocate

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10. This is in contrast with the procedure laid down by Shoghi Effendi for local, national and regional assemblies, all of which must elect their own chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer.

11. The decision was formerly communicated to the Hands resident in Haifa on 26 May (MC 428) and to the national assemblies on 16 June (MU#3). The building in question is located at 10 Haparsim Street in the immediate vicinity of the House of `Abdu'l-Bahá and was originally built as a hostel for visiting Baha'i pilgrims from the West. Part of it was taken over by the International Baha'i Council in 1951, and after the Universal House of Justice moved into its own buildings in 1982, it became the offices of the International Teaching Centre. The House of Justice's occupation of the building necessitated changes in the arrangements made for pilgrims.

12. Beginning in 1931, Shoghi Effendi had succeeded in getting a number of Baha'i national assemblies legally incorporated as religious bodies in British administered Palestine. This enabled property deeds to be held in the name of the assembly but administered on their behalf by Shoghi Effendi or his representative. These arrangements were continued after the creation of the state of Israel, and by the time of Shoghi Effendi's death, nine assembly branches had been established (for Alaska, the British Isles, Canada, India and Burma, Iran, New Zealand, Pakistan, and the USA) (RPP 267-68).



whatever international funds were available for the work of the institution (Resolution of 9 May 1963; MC 426).

Addressing the annual Baha'i conventions worldwide on 19 May, the Hands issued what might be seen as their valedictory message at the end of their period of leadership: the Baha'is' 'HEROIC' and 'DEDICATED EFFORTS' throughout the world had assured the 'TRIUMPHANT CONCLUSION' of Shoghi Effendi's Crusade. They now desired to devote their own efforts to the protection and propagation of the Faith in accordance with their functions as laid down in the Baha'i texts, concentrating on the 'ALL IMPORTANT' work of teaching the Faith. In their endeavours, the Hands were 'SUSTAINED' and 'UPLIFTED' by the establishment of the House of Justice as the Faith's 'SUPREME EDIFICE'. They were confident that the spirit released during the 'MOST GREAT JUBILEE' (i.e. the Congress) would inspire the Baha'is to arise to ensure that the 'UNPRECEDENTED TIDE' of victories in the teaching field would continue.

### **3. The work and development of the Universal House of Justice**

#### Contents:

- A. ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.
- B. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

#### Key dates:

- 1963 First International Baha'i Convention (21-23 April). Establishment of the UHJ (21 April). UHJ statement that there can be no more guardians (6 October).
- 1964 Launching of the 9YP (Ridván).
- 1968 Second International Baha'i Convention (21-24 April) and election of the UHJ (21 April).
- 1972 Announcement of decision to build Seat of the UHJ (7 June). Adoption of the Constitution of the UHJ (26 November).
- 1973 Third International Baha'i Convention (29 April-1 May) and election of the UHJ (29 April). Celebration of the centenary of the revelation of the *Kitáb-i Aqdas* (2 May).

During the first few months of its existence, the House of Justice made a number of important decisions regarding its own functioning: (i) it would not have officers (announced 7 May 1963); (ii) it would occupy the whole of the Western Pilgrim House (including the former offices of the International Baha'i Council) as its official offices (16 June 1963); and (iii) the next election of the House of Justice would take place in the Spring of 1968 (October 1963) (2.5; 3.2; 6.9). The House also announced that a new global plan in succession to the Ten Year Crusade would begin at Ridván 1964 (7 May 1963); took over the legal headship of the Faith from the Custodial Hands (7 June 1963); announced that there could be no successor to Shoghi Effendi as guardian (6 October 1963) (MC 430, 433; MU#2.6; 5); and responded to such urgent matters as the destruction of the Ashkhabad Temple and the plight of a group of Baha'is imprisoned in Morocco for their faith.

#### **A. ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.**

**1. Adoption of the Constitution.** One major focus for subsequent developments was what was revealed to be a Nine Year Plan (1964-73). This was formally announced in October 1963, and begun in April 1964. Much of the emphasis of this new Plan was on a global campaign of expansion and consolidation, designed to establish the Baha'i Faith more widely and more deeply in the world, but there was also a very significant part of the Plan devoted to 'World Centre' goals, one of the most important of which concerned the institutional development of the House of Justice itself in terms of the formulation of its own Constitution (MU#14.5). Although the House reported at Ridván 1967, that work on the formulation of its Constitution was 'well advanced' (MU#42.8), a 1968 report for *Bahá'í World* indicated that 'many more months of intensive study and deliberation' would be required before its completion (BW14: 84),<sup>13</sup> and it was not until 26 November 1972, on the Baha'i Day of the Covenant, that the House was able to announce that the work had been completed and Constitution formally adopted (MU#123).

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13. The work required both a careful study of the relevant Baha'i texts and the resolution of various important questions (BW14: 84). A statistical report published in November 1968 noted merely that '(p)reliminary drafts and studies' for the Constitution had been made (BFSI 1).

For the House, the adoption of its own Constitution was a ‘PROFOUNDLY SIGNIFICANT STEP’ in the ‘UNFOLDMENT’ of its mission. The House was the ‘SUPREME ORGAN’ of the future Baha’i World Commonwealth, and its Constitution had been hailed by Shoghi Effendi as the ‘MOST GREAT LAW’ of the Faith. The formulation and formal approval of this document would no doubt ‘FURTHER REINFORCE’ the ties that bound the Baha’i World Centre to national and local Baha’i communities throughout the world, as well as releasing ‘FRESH ENERGIES’ and increase the ‘ENTHUSIASM’ and ‘CONFIDENCE’ of the Faith’s ‘VALIANT WORKERS’ (MU#123).

The Constitution consists of two documents: a Declaration of Trust and a set of By-Laws. The Declaration defined the nature of authority within the Baha’i Faith; delineated the powers and duties of the House of Justice; and outlined the nature of decision making by the members of the House. The By-Laws outlined the overall structure of Baha’i administration (community membership [sec. I]; local and national spiritual assemblies [secs. II-III]; the obligations of assembly members [sec. IV]; the Universal House of Justice itself [sec. V]; Baha’i elections [sec. VI]; the House’s right of review of all assembly decisions [sec. VII]; the Baha’is’ right of appeal against assembly decisions [sec. VIII]; the Boards of Counsellors [sec. IX]; the Auxiliary Boards [sec. X]; and amendments to the Constitution [sec. XI]. With the exception of the sections on the Boards of Counsellors and the Auxiliary Boards, the document can be summarized as follows:

## **2. The Declaration of Trust** (UHJC 3-7).

### **I. Authority within the Baha’i Faith: Revelation, Covenant and the election of the Universal House of Justice.**

1. Bahá’u’lláh was the revealer of God’s word in this day and the source of divine authority. He was the judge, lawgiver, unifier and redeemer for the whole of humankind. He had come to establish the ‘Most Great Peace’, God’s kingdom on Earth, and had formulated the laws, principles and institutions for this new world order. He has instituted a Covenant so as to ‘direct and canalize’ the forces released by his revelation. By this means, the integrity and unity of the Baha’i Faith had been maintained and its expansion stimulated through the successive ministries of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi (Shoghi Effendi being after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘the sole authority in the interpretation of Baha’i Scripture’).

2. This Baha’i Covenant now continued to fulfil ‘its life-giving purpose’ through the ‘agency’ of the Universal House of Justice, a body which as one of the ‘twin successors’ of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,<sup>14</sup> had as its ‘fundamental object’ (i) to ensure the continuity of the divinely appointed authority that flowed from Bahá’u’lláh; (ii) to safeguard the unity of the Baha’is; and (iii) to ‘maintain the integrity and flexibility’ of the Baha’i teachings. The ‘provenance’, ‘authority’, ‘duties’ and ‘sphere of action’ of the House of Justice all derived from the revealed writings of Bahá’u’lláh which, together with the ‘interpretations and expositions’ of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, constituted ‘the binding terms of reference’ of the House of Justice and were ‘its bedrock foundation’ (The authority of these Baha’i texts being ‘absolute and immutable’ until the appearance of the next divine messenger).

3. Because there had been no successor to Shoghi Effendi as guardian, the House of Justice

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14. The guardianship is the other.

was ‘the Head of the Faith’ and its ‘supreme institution, to which all must turn’. For the same reason, it had to (i) carry ‘ultimate responsibility’ for ensuring ‘the unity and progress’ of the Faith; (ii) direct and coordinate the work of the Hands of the Cause; (iii) ensure ‘the continuing discharge of the functions of protection and propagation’ vested in the institution of the Hands; and (iv) provide for ‘the receipt and disbursement’ of the *Huqúqu’lláh*.

4. The Universal House of Justice was first elected on the first day of the Baha’i Ridván festival in the Baha’i year 120 (i.e. 21 April 1963) by the members of the various Baha’i national assemblies, in response to the summons of the Hands of the Cause (as ‘Chief Stewards of Bahá’u’lláh’s embryonic World Commonwealth’), and in accordance with the provisions of `Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will and Testament*. This election brought into being the ‘crowning glory’ of the Baha’i administrative system and the ‘very nucleus and forerunner of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order. The present Declaration of Trust and its attached by-laws were approved (signed and sealed) by the members of the House ‘in obedience to the Command of God and with utter reliance upon Him’ on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of Qawl in the Baha’i year 129 (i.e. 26 November 1972).

## **II. The powers and duties of the House.** These included the following:

1. To ensure the preservation of the Baha’i sacred texts and to ‘safeguard their inviolability’.
2. To ‘analyse, classify, and coordinate’ the Baha’i writings [i.e. the sacred texts and the authoritative interpretations and expositions of `Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi].
3. To ‘defend and protect’ the Baha’i Cause and ‘emancipate it from the fetters of repression and persecution’.
4. To ‘advance the interests’ of the Faith, including the proclamation, propagation and teaching of its message, and the expansion and consolidation of its administrative institutions.
5. To ‘usher in the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh’.
6. To promote the attainment of Baha’i qualities in the lives of individuals and the community.
7. To ‘do its utmost’ for the realization of ‘greater cordiality and comity amongst the nations’ and ‘the attainment of universal peace’.
8. To ‘foster that which is conducive to the enlightenment and illumination of the souls of men and the advancement and betterment of the world’.
9. To enact laws not expressly recorded in the Baha’i sacred texts, and ‘to abrogate according to the changes and requirements of the time, its own enactments’.
10. To ‘deliberate and decide upon all problems which have caused difference’, and ‘to elucidate questions that are obscure’.
11. To ‘safeguard the personal rights, freedom and initiative of individuals’.
12. To ‘give attention’ to ‘the preservation of human honour’, ‘the development of countries’ and ‘the stability of states’.
13. To ‘promulgate and apply the laws and principles of the Faith’, safeguarding and enforcing ‘that rectitude of conduct’ which the ‘Law of God’ enjoined.
14. To ‘preserve and develop’ the Baha’i World Centre, i.e. the Faith’s spiritual and administrative centre ‘permanently fixed in the twin cities of `Akká [Akka] and Haifa’.
15. To ‘administer the affairs of the Baha’i community throughout the world’, guiding, organizing, coordinating and unifying its activities; founding institutions; and ensuring that no Baha’i body or institution ‘abuse its privileges or decline in the exercise of its rights and prerogatives’.

16. To ‘provide for the receipt, disposition, administration and safeguarding of the funds, endowments and other properties that are entrusted to its care’.

17. To ‘adjudicate disputes falling within its purview’; ‘give judgement’ in cases where Baha’i law has been violated; and ‘provide for the enforcement of its decisions’.

18. To ‘provide for the arbitration and settlement of disputes arising between peoples’, and to be ‘the exponent and guardian of that Divine Justice’ which could alone ensure the security of the world and establish ‘the reign of law and order’ within it.

**III. Decision making on the House of Justice.** Bahá’u’lláh had designated the members of the Universal House of Justice as ‘the Trustees of God among his servants and the daysprings of authority in His countries’ (TB) and promised that they would be inspired by God in their decision making. Shoghi Effendi had stated that in their legislative work, they were to prayerfully follow ‘the dictates and promptings of their conscience’. They should acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing in the community and dispassionately consider the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but ultimately they had to reserve for themselves ‘the right of unfettered decision’. They were not responsible in their decision making to those whom they represented, and they were not to be governed by the feeling, opinions and convictions of the mass of the Baha’is or of the [national assembly members] who had elected them. It was the House members alone who had been made the recipients of that divine guidance ‘which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation’.

### **3. The By-Laws (UHJC 8-16).**

**Preamble.** The Universal House of Justice was the ‘supreme institution’ of the Baha’i administrative order. Its ‘salient features’, authority and ‘principles of operation’ had all been ‘clearly enunciated’ in Baha’i scripture and its authorized interpretations. The Baha’i administrative order comprised two separate sections: (i) a series of elected councils, at universal, secondary and local levels, ‘in which are vested legislative, executive and judicial powers over the Baha’i community’, and (ii) ‘eminent and devoted’ Baha’is who, under the guidance of the head of the Faith, were appointed specifically to protect and propagate the Faith.

The Baha’i administrative order was the ‘nucleus and pattern’ of the future ‘World Order adumbrated by Bahá’u’lláh’. It would follow a course of ‘divinely propelled organic growth’, during which its institutions would expand, ‘putting forth auxiliary branches and developing subordinate agencies, multiplying their activities and diversifying their functions’ in accordance with the Baha’i principles ‘for the progress of the human race’.

**[I] Membership in the Baha’i community.** The Baha’i community would consist of all persons recognized by the House of Justice ‘as possessing the qualifications of Baha’i faith and practice’. ‘The rights, privileges and duties of individual Baha’is’ were as set forth in the Baha’i writings and laid down by the House itself. Only those Baha’is who were aged 21 or above could be eligible to vote and hold Baha’i elective office.

**[II] Local spiritual assemblies.** If there were at least nine [adult<sup>15</sup>] Baha’is resident in a

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15. The House does not use the term ‘adult’ (understandably, given that definitions of the age of majority differ from one country to another), but refers to those ‘who have attained the age of twenty-one’. I use the term

locality, they could form a nine member local spiritual assembly. The assembly was to be formed on the first day of the Baha'i Ridván festival [i.e. normally 21 April] and was to be re-formed on the same date in each succeeding year, its members holding office until their successors had been elected. If the number of adult Baha'is was exactly nine, the assembly could be formed by 'joint declaration'. Where there were more than nine adult Baha'is, the adult Baha'is in the locality would convene on the first day of Ridván and elect the assembly.

The 'general powers and duties' of these local assemblies was as defined in the Baha'i writings and the pronouncements of the House of Justice, and they would exercise 'full jurisdiction of all Baha'i activities and affairs' within their localities subject to the provisions of their 'Local Baha'i Constitution'.<sup>16</sup> The local assemblies' geographical areas of jurisdiction would be decided by the responsible national spiritual assembly 'in accordance with the principle laid down for each country by the Universal House of Justice'.

**[III] National spiritual assemblies.** 1. Whenever the Universal House of Justice decided to form a national spiritual assembly in any country or region, it would call for an election of a nine member assembly by a body of delegates at a 'National Convention'. The delegates would be elected by the voting members of the national community in a manner and at a time determined by the Universal House of Justice, and would in turn elect the national assembly in accordance with the provisions of the 'National Baha'i Constitution'.<sup>17</sup> The elected members would remain in office until their successors had been elected [normally a period of one year until the next National Convention].

2. The '**general powers and duties**' of the national assemblies were as set forth in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi and the pronouncements of the Universal House of Justice. Each national assembly would have 'exclusive jurisdiction and authority' over all Baha'i activities and affairs throughout its area of jurisdiction (the geographical area defined by the House). It was charged with seeking 'to stimulate, unify and coordinate' the 'manifold activities' of all the local spiritual assemblies and individual Baha'is in its area, 'and by all possible means assist them to promote the oneness of mankind'. It would also represent its national Baha'i community in relation to other such communities and to the Universal House of Justice.

3. Each **national convention** would be primarily concerned with consultation on 'Baha'i activities, plans and policies' and the election of national spiritual assembly. If a national assembly judged it 'impracticable or unwise' to hold a national convention in a particular year, then it should provide some alternative means by which the annual election and other essential business of the convention could be conducted. When vacancies in the membership of a national assembly occurred [i.e. between the annual election], they were to be filled by a vote of the delegates of the previous convention, either by correspondence or other means decided by the national assembly.

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'adult' here as a convenient abbreviation.

16. This refers to the by-laws of a local spiritual assembly, which are given in model form in the successive volumes of the old series of *Bahá'i World*. [vol. 4?]

17. This refers to Declaration of Trust and By-Laws of a National Spiritual Assembly given in model form in the successive volumes of the old series of *Bahá'i World*.

**[IV] Obligations of members of spiritual assemblies.** Amongst ‘the most outstanding and sacred duties’ of spiritual assembly members [at both local and national level] were the following:

1. To ‘win by every means in their power the confidence and affection of those whom it is their privilege to serve’.
2. To ‘investigate and acquaint themselves’ with the ‘considered views’, ‘prevailing sentiments’ and ‘personal convictions’ of ‘those whose welfare it is their solemn obligation to promote’.
3. To ‘purge their deliberations and the general conduct of their affairs of self-contained aloofness, the suspicion of secrecy, the stifling atmosphere of dictatorial assertiveness and of every word and deed that may savour of partiality, self-centredness and prejudice’.
4. Whilst ‘retaining the sacred right of final decision in their hands, to invite discussion, ventilate grievances, welcome advice and foster the sense of interdependence and co-partnership, of understanding and mutual confidence between themselves and all other Baha’is’.

**[V] The Universal House of Justice.**

1. **Membership.** The House was to consist of nine men<sup>18</sup> who had been elected from the Baha’i community by secret ballot by the members of all national spiritual assemblies at an ‘International Baha’i Convention’. Unless otherwise decided by the House, the election would be held every five years, and those elected would continue in office until their successors were elected and the first meeting of these successors was ‘duly held’.

2. The principal business of **the International Convention** was to elect the members of the Universal House of Justice, ‘to deliberate on the affairs of the Baha’i Cause throughout the world’, and ‘to make recommendations and suggestion’ for the House of Justice’s consideration. The sessions of the Convention would be conducted in whatever the House decided.

3. **The election.** Upon receiving the [House’s] call to the International Convention, each national assembly would submit a list of its members [as potential delegates]. The recognition and seating of the delegates would be vested in the House of Justice, however. Arrangements would be made by the House for delegates who were not able to be present in person to cast their ballots for the election. If the House decided that conditions made it ‘impracticable or unwise’ to hold the Convention in a particular year, it would determine some alternative means by which the election could be held.<sup>19</sup> On the day of the election, tellers appointed in accordance with the House’s instructions would scrutinize and count all the ballots, and then certify the result. If there was a tie vote or votes which prevented the full membership of the

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18. The guardianship and the Universal House of Justice are the only two Baha’i institutions which are ‘gender-specific’, being confined only to men. All other Baha’i institutions (local and national spiritual assemblies, Continental Counsellors, Auxiliary Board members, etc.) may include people of either sex.

19. To date this provision has only been employed once – in the International Convention of 2003, when the House decided that unsettled conditions in the Middle East necessitated the Convention’s cancellation. The election was conducted by postal ballot instead (email from the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies dated 4 April 2003).

House being determined on the first ballot, one of more additional ballots would be held. This additional balloting would only be between those persons tied in the previous ballot, and would continue until all nine members of the House were elected.

4. **Changes affecting the delegates.** If a national assembly member who had voted by mail then ceased to be a member of that assembly before the counting of the ballots at the Convention, his vote would remain valid unless a successor had already been elected on to the assembly and the ballot of that successor had been received by the tellers. If additional voting had to be conducted in the case of a tie vote, the electors would be the national assembly members who were in office at the time the additional vote was taken.

5. **Vacancies in the membership of the House** would occur under the following circumstances: (i) the death of a serving member of the House; (ii) if a House member was dismissed from membership of the House on account of committing ‘a sin injurious to the common weal’; (iii) if the House determined that a serving member was no longer able to fulfil ‘the functions of membership’; and (iv) if the House accepted a resignation from a serving member.

6. **By-elections.** If a vacancy in membership of the House occurred, the House would call a by-election ‘at the earliest possible date’ unless it judged that the next regular election of the entire membership of the House was so close as to justify deferring the filling of the vacancy until then. The voters in a by-election would be the national assembly members in office at the time of the by-election.

7. **Meetings.** The Universal House of Justice would have no officers. It would conduct its meetings and organize its activities as it thought necessary. All its business would be conducted in consultation by the full membership except where it made special provision for certain matters to be dealt with by a quorum of less than the full membership. The first meeting after the House’s election would be called by the member who received the highest number of votes or, if he was absent or incapacitated, by the member who had received the next highest number of votes. If two or more members had received the same highest number of votes, the member calling the first meeting would be selected by lot from amongst these men. All subsequent meetings would be called in the manner decided upon by the House.

8. **Signature.** The House’s signature would be the words [in English] ‘The Universal House of Justice’, or in Persian ‘*Baytu’l-`adl-i a`zam*’ written by the hand of one of its members upon its authority, and then sealed with the House’s seal.

9. **Records.** The House would provide for ‘the recording and verification of its decisions’ in the manner it thought necessary.

**[VI] Baha’i elections.** ‘In order to preserve the spiritual character and purpose of Baha’i elections’, practices that were detrimental to that character and purpose (such as the nomination of candidates and electioneering) would be eschewed. A ‘silent and prayerful atmosphere’ should prevail during the election so that each elector could vote only for those whom ‘prayer and reflection’ inspired him [or her] to. All Baha’i elections would be by secret ballot. Those for the officers of [local or national] spiritual assemblies and committees would



be by majority vote; all the rest would be by plurality vote.<sup>20</sup> Additional ballots would be held in the case of a tie vote or votes. A Baha'i elector's duties and rights could neither be assigned to another or exercised by proxy.

**[VII] The House's right of review.** The Universal House of Justice had the right to review any decision or action of any national or local spiritual assembly in the world, and to approve, modify or reverse that decision or action. The House also had the right to intervene in any matter in which a spiritual assembly was failing to take action or make a decision, either requiring the assembly to take action or itself taking action directly.

**[VIII] Appeals against assembly actions.** Baha'is had the following rights of appeal in administrative matters: (i) An individual Baha'i could appeal against the decision of his [or her] local spiritual assembly to the responsible national assembly. The national assembly would then decide whether to take jurisdiction over the matter or refer it back to the local assembly for reconsideration. In matters relating to the membership of the Baha'i community, the national assembly was obliged to take jurisdiction over the case and make a decision; (ii) Any Baha'i had the right to appeal against a decision by his [or her] national spiritual assembly to the Universal House of Justice, which would then decide whether to take jurisdiction over the matter or to leave it within the final jurisdiction of the national assembly; (iii) In the case of unresolvable 'differences' [i.e. disagreements] between local spiritual assemblies, any of the assemblies involved could bring the matter to the attention of the national assembly which would thereupon take jurisdiction of the case; (iv) A local assembly which was dissatisfied with a decision of its national assembly, or which believed that the actions of the national assembly were having an adverse affect on 'the welfare and unity' of its own local community had the right of appeal to the Universal House of Justice, which would then decide whether to take jurisdiction over the matter or to leave it within the final jurisdiction of the national assembly. In all these cases, the appellant, whether an individual or an assembly, was to first appeal directly to the assembly whose decision was being questioned, either for reconsideration of the case by that assembly or for submission to a higher body. The assembly whose decision was being questioned was obliged to forward the appeal against its decision to the higher authority along with all particulars of the matter. If the assembly refused to do this or failed to do so within a reasonable period of time, the appellant could take the case directly to the higher authority. Local assemblies appealing against the decisions or actions of national assemblies should try to resolve their differences with the national assembly before submitting the case to the Universal House of Justice.

**[IX-X] The Boards of Counsellors and the Auxiliary Boards.**

**[XI] Amendments to the Constitution.** The House's constitution could be amended by its own decision when its full membership was present.

## **B. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS.**

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20. Thus, the elections for spiritual assembly membership are by plurality voting, and those elected are those who receive the greatest number of votes: they do not have to obtain an absolute majority of the votes cast. By contrast, elections for the officers of an spiritual assembly (chairman, secretary, etc.) are by majority voting, and each office bearer must receive an absolute majority of the votes cast.

**4. The Second and Third International Baha'i Conventions.** The Second International Baha'i Convention was held on 21-24 April 1968, and the Third Convention on 29 April-1 May 1973 (BW15: 565-67; 16: 392-95). With the increase in the number of national spiritual assemblies since 1963 from 56 to 81 in 1968, and then 113 in 1973, the total possible number of delegates rose from 504 to 729, and then to 1,017. Not all of these could attend in person, and so sent postal ballots: at the First Convention (in 1963), 288 assembly members had attended (57% of those eligible), at the Third Convention, 412 members attended (41% of those eligible) (BW14: 427; 16: 392).<sup>21</sup>

The primary business of both Conventions was the election of the members of the Universal House of Justice. Practical questions of changes in the House's membership had already received their first public attention in October 1967, when the House announced that it had 'regretfully' accepted the resignation of its eldest member, Dr. Lutfu'lláh Hakím (b.1888; then in his seventy-ninth year), on the grounds that health problems and his advancing age were making it increasingly difficult for him to participate as effectively as he would wish in the House's work. Given the imminence of the next election for the House (April 1968), Hakím accepted a request to continue to serve as a House member until then (MU#48).<sup>22</sup> The other eight members of the 'first' House were all reelected in April 1968, however, and Dr. David Ruhe, the national assembly secretary of the American Baha'is, was elected in Hakím's stead (MU#56). All the serving members were reelected in the third election in 1973 (MU#129).

The delegates were invited to come to the Baha'i World Centre for three days prior to both Conventions so as to have an opportunity to visit the Baha'i shrines and other holy places, pray, and meet with members of other national assemblies.<sup>23</sup> Each Convention lasted three or four days, with the election being held during the first session on the first day, and the rest of the time being spent in listening to talks by the Hands of the Cause and reports on developments in the Faith, and discussing topics selected by the House concerning further progress. In keeping with general style of public self-effacement adopted by the members of the House, the Hands presided over the proceedings and were the dominant voice. Both Conventions included 'Feasts' to celebrate one of the holy days of the Ridván period, and the Third Convention also included a visit to the site of the future Seat of the Universal House of Justice and a celebratory meeting for the centenary of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh's *Kitáb-i Aqdas*.

**5. Agencies of the Universal House of Justice: IBAVC and the Audio-Visual Department.** As the work of the House increased, it decided that it was necessary to form specialist auxiliary agencies to deal with specific tasks. Some of these were located outside of the Baha'i World Centre and others were located in Haifa as departments working directly

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21. The full membership of five national assemblies (Canada, Iceland, Ireland, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) were present at the 1973 Convention. 14 assemblies were unable to send any representatives (BW16: 392).

22. Hakím died a few months later in August 1968.

23. At the 1973 Convention, the House used these three days prior to the Convention proceedings to meet with the Hands of the Cause and discuss developments in the Faith, including plans for new institutions to deal with the expected rapid expansion of the Faith (BW16: 392).

under the House of Justice. The first such agency appears to have been the International Baha'i Audio-Visual Centre (IBAVC), established near Rochester, New York early in 1967 (the House's official announcement was made on 21 February). An Audio-Visual Department directly responsible to the House was established in Haifa as a counterpart to IBAVC (BW14: 91-92). In October 1967, the 'Baha'i International Community', hitherto an agency representing the Baha'is to the United Nations in New York City and responsible to the American national assembly, was effectively upgraded and became a second external agency of the House.

The House noted the establishment of the International Baha'i Audio-Visual Centre in its Ridván message of 1967, hailing it as an 'important supplementary achievement' of the Nine Year Plan. The Centre's function was twofold: (1) to provide 'teaching and deepening aids' to all national assemblies, and (2) to 'store and index audiovisual records' from around the world for the House (MU#42.8). Its specific tasks included 'creating, producing, storing, indexing, marketing and distributing audio-visual material' for the benefit both of the Baha'i World Centre and the national assemblies throughout the world. As a distributor, it was to act as a wholesale supplier to the national assemblies and would not be involved in retail sales. The House hoped that it would become self-supporting. Assignments included arranging audio-visual coverage of the Intercontinental Conferences of October 1967 and the production and distribution of a slide programme of the conferences. IBAVC also worked closely with the House's own Audio-Visual Department, reproducing and distributing copies of the later's sound-slide presentation about the Baha'i Holy Places, *Carmel: The Mountain of God* (1967) (BW14: 91-92).

**6. The announcement of the building of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice.** On 7 June 1972, the House announced that it had decided to begin the planning process prior to the construction of its own Seat (the 'CENTER [of] LEGISLATION [for] GOD'S WORLD-REDEEMING ORDER') by initiating the selection procedure to choose an architect. This decision was necessitated by the expansion of activities at the Baha'i World Centre which itself had resulted from the 'ACCELERATION' in the growth of the Faith at local and national levels and the increasing 'RANGE' of its activities. The House members prayed that the project would be able to progress without interruption so that it could be completed quickly (MU#115).

#### **4. The Universal House of Justice and the Guardianship**

##### **A. THE GUARDIANSHIP AND THE COVENANT.**

**1. The question of the guardianship.** The issue of the guardianship was one which was evidently of immediate concern to the newly-formed House of Justice, requiring both a ‘prayerful and careful’ study of the relevant Baha’i texts and prolonged consideration of the views of the Hands in Haifa. The key decision was announced on 6 October 1963, the House stating that it had found no way in which a second guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi could be appointed. Neither was it possible to legislate to make such an appointment (MU#5). The line of guardians projected in `Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will and Testament* had come to an end, and the Universal House of Justice would have to lead the Baha’i world alone.

As Shoghi Effendi himself had observed, the institutions of the House of Justice and the guardianship were ‘twin institutions’ appointed by Bahá’u’lláh and `Abdu’l-Bahá to be their successors, destined to apply the principles of the Faith, promulgate its laws, protect its institutions, adapt it ‘loyally and intelligently’ to ‘the requirements of progressive society’, and consummate the ‘incorruptible inheritance’ which its founders had bequeathed to the world (WOB 19-20). In this context, the House of Justice’s ruling that it could not legislate for the appointment of any further guardians was profoundly significant. The House commented briefly on this situation in a message which it addressed to all Baha’i in October 1963 (MU#6). Faced with the reality of there being no further guardians, the House had to begin to undertake ‘the heavy tasks laid upon it’, and in accordance with Shoghi Effendi’s own words ‘guide, organize and unify’ the affairs of the Baha’i Movement throughout the world, considering afresh the situation as necessary, and laying down the principles to direct the affairs of the Cause as it deemed advisable (MU#6.2; BA 39, 41).

The Baha’is should be assured. The Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh remained unbroken, and its all-encompassing power remained inviolate. The two unique features which distinguished it from all previous religious covenants still operated and were unchanged, namely, (1) that the revealed word in its original purity and as amplified by the divinely-guided interpretations of `Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, remained immutable, ‘unadulterated by any man-made creeds or dogmas, unwarrantable inferences or unauthorized interpretations’; and (2) that the ‘channel of divine guidance remained open via the Universal House of Justice, an institution founded by Bahá’u’lláh himself, and endowed by him with ‘supreme authority and unfailing guidance’, and able to provide flexibility in the direction of human affairs. In the words of `Abdu’l-Bahá ‘all things’ had to be referred to the House (*Will* 14). Again, as Bahá’u’lláh had asserted, the Baha’i revelation had been established upon an ‘unassailable’ and ‘enduring’ foundation – the ‘(s)torms of human strife’ were powerless to undermine its basis, nor would the ‘fanciful theories’ of men succeed in damaging its structure (MU#6.3; WOB 109).

An implicit example of the divine protection of the Baha’i Cause was also offered in a consideration of the period following the death of Shoghi Effendi. It had been a time of anguish as the Baha’i world found itself suddenly deprived of the guiding hand of its Guardian, yet rather than paralysing the growth of the Faith, that anguish had stiffened the Baha’is’ resolve’ and fired them with zeal to complete the tasks which God had laid upon them. The then recently formed institution of the Hands of the Cause had kept the Baha’is

faithfully to the path ‘which had been shown to us by the pen of divine guidance’, and brought them both to the successful conclusion of Shoghi Effendi’s Ten Year Crusade and the establishment of the House of Justice – itself ‘the culminating point of the construction of the framework of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order’ (MU#6.1).

Yet two facts remained to trouble the thinking of many Baha’is: (1) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had referred to a line of guardians, but the line had ended abruptly after the very first incumbent, and (2) the Universal House of Justice and the guardianship had been envisaged as ‘twin institutions’ which would function together in a complementary manner. Various questions followed, including worries about the right of the Hands of the Cause to call for the election of the House and about the ability of the House to function on its own without the guidance of a guardian.

Responding to such uncertainties, the House of Justice composed three major letters on the issues involved: (i) 9 March 1965; (ii) 27 March 1966; and (iii) 7 December 1969 (MU#23; 35; 75).

**2. The letter of March 1965: The election and infallibility of the Universal House of Justice.** The House’s first major public response to such questions was addressed to the Dutch national assembly on 9 March 1965, and subsequently widely circulated (see MU#23). In it, the House addressed three questions: (1) the propriety of the House’s own election; (2) the authority of the House in the absence of a guardian; and (3) the functioning of the House in the absence of a guardian. As a general comment, the House also stated that it was good if the Baha’is asked about questions which perplexed them. It was better to put such questions ‘freely and openly’ than to allow them to remain as unexpressed burdens on the hearts of devoted Baha’is. There were, of course, ‘mysteries’ in the Baha’i religion, but if one understood the ‘essential tenets’ of the Faith and the ‘indisputable facts’ of any situation, these were not such as to shake one’s belief. The uncertainties which had troubled the Dutch questioners were easily dispelled once the ‘basic principles’ of Bahá’u’lláh’s revelation had been grasped (MU#23.1). When the ‘doubts and misgivings’ of the Baha’is were dispelled then they could devote ‘their every effort’ to spreading the Baha’i message, ‘serenely confident’ that through the power of Bahá’u’lláh’s covenant, all tests which might be received from an ‘inscrutable Providence’ would be overcome (MU#23.25).

**2.1. The election of the House.** For some Baha’is, there evidently remained uncertainties about the election of the Universal House of Justice itself. If it was known that there would be no more guardians, why had the election of the House gone ahead? Had the time for the election been appropriate? Could the International Baha’i Council not have carried on as before?

To these questions, the House replied that at the time of Shoghi Effendi’s death, no one had known that the line of guardians had definitely come to an end. It had been evident, however, that it had been impossible for him to appoint a successor.<sup>24</sup> Circumstances and the explicit requirements of the sacred texts had prevented him from following the provisions of ‘Abdu’l-

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24. He had had no son, and his male relatives (brothers, cousins) had all been declared Covenant-breakers (see Chapter 1).

Bahá's *Will*. This was an obscure situation not covered by any text, and therefore had to be referred to the then as yet unelected House of Justice. Whatever individuals' opinions were at the time, no one – not the Hands of the Cause, the International Baha'i Council, or any other then existing body – could have made a decision upon this 'all-important matter'. Only the House of Justice could make an authoritative pronouncement – and this in itself was an urgent reason for arranging for its early election (MU#23.3).

Following Shoghi's death, the Hands of the Cause conducted the international administration of the Faith in accordance with Shoghi's appointment of them as 'Chief Stewards'. They did this with the complete agreement and loyalty of both the national assemblies and the mass of the Baha'is. The Hands clearly realized that they had not been given any guarantee of divine guidance, however, and therefore concluded that their only safe course would be to follow the instructions and policies of Shoghi Effendi with 'undeviating firmness'. The Guardian's plans up to the end of the Ten Year Crusade were 'explicit and detailed', but the Hands believed that after that point further divine guidance would be essential if the Faith itself was not to be endangered. This was a second 'pressing reason' for calling for the House's election in 1963. The correctness of this date was also confirmed by references by Shoghi Effendi to future post-Crusade plans being under the direction of the House (MU#23.4-6). Accordingly, the Hands went ahead with their election plans.

The Baha'is should realize that the manner in which the Hands had called for the election of the House did not contradict the requirements laid down in the relevant Baha'i texts. There was nothing in the writings stating that the election had to be called by the guardian. To the contrary, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had at one point – when there were renewed threats to his freedom and his own life was in danger – envisaged calling for the House's immediate election.<sup>25</sup> According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, all that was required was for the Baha'is in the various countries of the world to elect their delegates and for these in turn to elect their representatives (i.e. the equivalent of the members of the national spiritual assemblies) and then for these representatives to elect a body which would be the Supreme (i.e. Universal) House of Justice. This process could proceed as long as conditions were favourable, and the elections for the national representatives in Iran, America, India and the rest could proceed without disturbance. The House's establishment did not require all the nations of the world to have been converted to the Baha'i Faith. The elections were to follow the European parliamentary system (MU#23.12-14).

**2.2. The authority of the House of Justice.** Another set of questions related to the authority of the House of Justice in the absence of a living guardian. Shoghi Effendi himself had written that the Baha'i world order would be 'mutilated' if it was divorced from the institution of the guardianship. It would also be permanently deprived of the 'hereditary principle' which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had regarded as 'invariably' having been upheld by the law of

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25. This was in 1907-8, after the arrival in Akka of the second Ottoman commission of enquiry into 'Abdu'l-Bahá's activities, at which time which it was widely believed that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was about to be deported to Fezzan in the North African interior (Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp.117-23; GPB 269-72). In these conditions of imminent danger, 'Abdu'l-Bahá insisted on carrying out his normal activities, apparently unconcerned. At the same time, however, he made contingency plans in case the order of exile was carried out, instructing one of the leading Baha'is, Hájí Mirzá Táqí Afnán, a cousin of the Báb and the chief builder of the Ashkhabad temple to prepare to arrange for the House's election if anything should happen to him (MU#23.15; see also WOB 17).

God. Without the guardianship, ‘the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled’; its stability ‘gravely endangered’; its prestige diminished; the means by which it could take a long uninterrupted view over a series of generations lost; and the necessary guidance ‘to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives’ (i.e. the members of the Universal House of Justice) ‘totally withdrawn’ (WOB 148). How then would the House function without the presence of a guardian?

The House’s response was firstly to point to other passages in the corpus of Baha’i texts which indicated that: (i) Bahá’u’lláh had assured the Baha’is that God’s revelation had been established on an ‘unassailable’ and ‘enduring’ foundation such that the ‘storms of human strife’ would be powerless to undermine its basis (WOB 109); (ii) both the guardianship and the House of Justice had been appointed as institutions to ‘consummate’ the potential inherited from the founders of the Faith (WOB 20); (iii) each of these ‘twin institutions’ had its own distinctive powers, authority, rights and prerogatives, and neither could or ever would ‘infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other’, or seek to curtail its ‘specific and undoubted authority’ (WOB 148, 150); and (iv) whilst being the permanent head of the House of Justice, each successive guardian was never to have the right of ‘exclusive legislation’ or be able to ‘override the decision of the majority of his fellow-members’ of the House (WOB 150) (MU#23.18).

Again, the House noted that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had clearly stated that anything not mentioned in the Baha’i sacred texts should be referred to the Universal House of Justice. It was under ‘the protection, unerring guidance and care of the one true Lord’ (i.e. Bahá’u’lláh). He would guard it from error and protect it ‘under the wing of His sanctity and infallibility’. Whatever it decided – even by majority vote – would be the ‘real truth’. It would immediately resolve any differences of opinions between the Baha’is. Anyone who opposed it would be cast out from the Faith and eventually be defeated (MU#23.11).

Again, in practice, before legislating on any matter, the members of the House carefully and exhaustively studied all the relevant Baha’i texts – including the ‘vast range’ of binding interpretations written by Shoghi Effendi (MU#23.19).

Although the House had not been invested with the guardians’ power of interpretation, it was empowered to do everything that was necessary to establish Bahá’u’lláh’s world order. Its authority guaranteed ‘(u)nity of administration’, whilst ‘(u)nity of doctrine amongst the Baha’is was maintained by the combination of (i) a voluminous body of holy texts and authoritative interpretations and (ii) an ‘absolute prohibition’ on any individual Baha’i claiming that their own understandings of the Faith were authoritative or inspired. In this context, every ‘true believer’ was obliged to combine ‘profound faith’ in the ‘unfailing efficacy’ of Bahá’u’lláh’s message and covenant with the humility of recognizing that no one at the present time could claim to have understood the ‘vastness’ of the Baha’i Cause or to have comprehended its ‘manifold mysteries and potentialities’. An understanding of the ‘full meaning’ of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will* and of the developing world order which it had ushered in would only gradually be revealed to the Baha’is, who should trust to time and to the pronouncements of the House of Justice itself, which would ‘resolve and clarify obscure matters’ (MU#23.20-23).

In passing, the House also noted that there was a ‘profound difference’ between the

‘interpretations’ of Shoghi Effendi as guardian and the ‘elucidations of the Universal House of Justice. Shoghi Effendi had revealed what scriptural passages actually meant. Each of his interpretations was ‘a statement of truth’ which could not be varied. By contrast, the House’s pronouncements on matters which were not revealed in the Baha’i texts were subject to later emendation or abrogation by the House itself. They were supplementary applications of divine law.

**2.3. The functioning of the House of Justice.** Responding to queries about the House’s manner of functioning in the absence of a guardian, the House noted that many aspects of this would be dealt with in its own future Constitution – the formulation of which was one of the major goals of the Nine Year Plan. In the meantime, the House informed the Baha’is that it had the right to expel any of its own members by majority vote if it found him guilty of committing a sin ‘injurious to the common weal’.<sup>26</sup> In the case that a House member was accused of breaking the Baha’i Covenant, the matter would be investigated by the Hands of the Cause residing in Haifa and if necessary, they would expel him from the Faith, subject to the approval of the House – the House communicating the Hands’ decision to the Baha’i world (MU#23.24).

### **3. The message of May 1966: The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice.**

The House returned to questions relating to the guardianship and its own functioning in a letter of 27 May 1966 – addressed to an individual, but again widely circulated (MU#35).<sup>27</sup>

**3.1. On Shoghi Effendi not leaving a will.** `Abdu’l-Bahá had given Shoghi Effendi the authority to appoint a successor (indeed had made such an appointment a duty), yet Shoghi had not done so. Why? The statement which the Hands had made in November 1957 after Shoghi’s unexpected demise was correct: the Guardian had no children of his own, and all the other male descendants of Bahá’u’lláh were either dead or had been declared Covenant-breakers (MC 35-36). Under such circumstances, it had been impossible for Shoghi to appoint a successor: to do so would itself have breached the ‘clear and specific provisions’ of `Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will*. Again, `Abdu’l-Bahá had given the Hands the duty of confirming the appointments of the successive guardians, but after Shoghi Effendi’s death, they had been unanimous that he had neither appointed a successor nor left a will (MU#35.2). The Baha’is should acknowledge that in Shoghi’s ‘very silence’ there was a wisdom and a sign of his ‘infallible guidance’. It was not a matter of his failing to obey Bahá’u’lláh (MU#35.3). More generally, they should remember Shoghi Effendi’s comment that two things were necessary for a growing understanding of Bahá’u’lláh’s world order: the passage of time and the guidance of the Universal House of Justice (MU#35.3).

**3.2. The infallibility of the House of Justice.** The infallibility of the House of Justice when it operated within its own ‘ordained sphere’ had not been made dependent upon the presence

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26. In `Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will*, the right to expel members of the Universal House of Justice for wrongdoing (the committing of a sin ‘injurious to the common weal’) was vested in the guardians (*Will* 14).

27. The House of Justice cites its own letters to individuals on a number of occasions but always omits the name of the individual so as to preserve the confidentiality of the recipient. It has also adopted the same practice when citing letters written to individuals by Shoghi Effendi or by one of his secretaries on his behalf.



of a guardian amongst its members. Although in matters of interpretation, the successive guardians' pronouncements would have been binding, in matters of legislation, it had been envisaged that it would be the decision of the House which would prevail. As Shoghi Effendi had observed, it was the 'exclusive right and prerogative' of the House to make the final decision on laws and ordinances which had not been laid down in Bahá'u'lláh's writings. In such matters, the role of the guardian would simply have been that of the head of the House of Justice. He could have asked the House to reconsider a decision which he considered wrong, but he would not have had the right either to legislate by himself or to override the decision of a majority of his fellow House members (WOB 150; MU#35.4-5).

Of course, Shoghi Effendi had also written that the guardians would have the right to define the 'the sphere of the legislative action' of the House (WOB 148), that is, to state whether or not a particular matter was already covered in the sacred texts and therefore whether or not it was a matter that could be legislated upon by the House. Only a guardian had the right to make such a ruling: no one else. In the absence of a guardian, then, was the House in danger of straying outside its proper sphere of responsibility and thus falling into error? The House's response to this question was threefold: (1) During his thirty-six years as guardian, Shoghi Effendi had already made an 'innumerable' number of such definitions, supplementing those previously made by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The House always made a careful study of all available texts prior to making any legislative decisions; (2) The House – itself assured of divine guidance independently of the guardians – was well aware of the absence of a guardian, and would therefore only approach making a legislative decision when it was sure that it was within its own clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction; and (3) Shoghi Effendi had stated that the two institutions could not and never would infringe upon each other's domains (WOB 150; MU#35.6).

As to the question of what role deductions from the Baha'i writings played in the House's functioning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had given the House the right of deduction from the texts and thus enabled it to provide guidance in response to the changing conditions of society as not everything had been ordained in holy writ and the conditions of society varied by time and place. It would make decisions and establish 'inspired and spiritual' laws 'through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit'. Moreover, he had promised that the House would be under care and protection of God, and that it would not make any decisions which were merely the product of the 'concepts and opinions' of its members (MU#35.7).

Again, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had contrasted the deductions made by the House from those made by Islamic scholars. These learned men had endeavoured to adapt their religion to the changing circumstances of the time, but they had made conflicting deductions. Unlike Islamic scholars, the House could speak with a single voice, and in the present age, the opinions of the learned had no authority unless endorsed by the House (MU#35.7).

**3.3. The principle of inseparability.** As Shoghi Effendi had repeatedly made clear, the House of Justice and the guardianship were 'inseparable' institutions. This did not mean that they could not function independently, however. Indeed, Shoghi Effendi's thirty-six year guardianship had been conducted entirely in the absence of the House. The situation was now reversed: the House of Justice had to function without a guardian. The absence of a living guardian did not mean that the guardianship as an institution had lost its significance and importance. Indeed, it would be just as wrong to argue that the absence of a guardian made all

that had been written about the institution irrelevant and unimportant as it would be to underestimate the power of the Covenant or to try to somehow find a living guardian in these changed conditions (MU#35.9).

**3.4. Faith and the limits of understanding.** ‘Service to the Cause of God’ required ‘absolute fidelity and integrity’ as well as ‘unwavering faith’. For some Baha’is, the absence of a successor to Shoghi Effendi was evidently a major intellectual problem, and a belief that information was perhaps being withheld from the Baha’is ‘for the good of the Cause’ had begun to circulate. The House assured its correspondent that this was not the case (MU#35.2). More generally, it stressed that if it did not always go into detail on some matters this was not because of secretiveness, but rather because the House was determined to refrain from making any statement that could be construed as an ‘unwarrantable’ inference or ‘unauthorized’ interpretation of the Baha’i writings (MU#35.12).

The Baha’is should know that this was God’s Cause. He had promised that its light would not fail. Given this promise, the Baha’is should both be faithful and have faith. Only evil would result if the Baha’is tried to take the responsibility for the future of the Faith into their own hands and tried to force it into ways that they wished. This is what had happened in the past. In previous dispensations, believers had been ‘overanxious’ to encompass God’s message within the framework of their own limited understanding, to define doctrines whose definition was beyond their power, to explain mysteries which were beyond their comprehension at the time, and argue that such-and-such was true because it seemed desirable and necessary. Such compromises with essential truth had now to be scrupulously avoided. The Baha’is had to adhere strictly to the ‘clear texts’, be conscious of the limitations of their own knowledge, and not copy the spiritual pride of the past. Intellectual honesty and humility were required (MU#35.10-11).

**3.5. The role of individual interpretation.** There had to be a clear distinction between the understanding which an individual arrived at as a result of his or her own study of the Baha’i teachings and the authoritative interpretations which could only be made by a guardian. It was to be remembered that in the Baha’i Faith, individual interpretation was regarded as ‘the fruit of man’s rational power’ and was ‘conducive to a better understanding of the teachings’. It was not to be suppressed. At the same time, it was important that disputes and arguments among the Baha’is be avoided, and that the individual Baha’i understood and made clear that his or her interpretations were merely personal views. An individual’s interpretations were not fixed. Rather, their understanding changed continually as he or she grew in comprehension of the teachings. Thus, an individual’s insights could be ‘enlightening and helpful’, but they could also be misleading’. Therefore, Baha’is should learn both to ‘express their own views without pressing them on their fellow Baha’is’ and to ‘listen to the views of others without being overawed or allowing their faith to be shaken’. Indeed the more a Baha’i studied the writings, the more he or she would find in them, and the more he would realize that his previous notions were limited (MU#35.13).

**3.6. Clinging to the Covenant and to the Universal House of Justice.** No matter how much the Baha’is were unable to understand either ‘the mystery’ of Shoghi Effendi’s unexpected death and the absence of a successor, or the implications of this development, they all had to ‘cling with assurance’ to the ‘strong cord’ of the Covenant. They should remember that the Baha’i Cause was ‘organic’. It grew and developed like a living being. It had often faced

crises which had perplexed the Baha'is, but because it was impelled 'by the immutable purpose of God' it had always overcome such crises, and then gone on to 'greater heights' (MU#35.14-15).

In the absence of a living guardian, the Universal House of Justice was 'the sole infallibly guided institution in the world'. It was the House which now bore the responsibility 'for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God in accordance with the revealed Word'. As indicated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, it was the centre to which all Baha'is should turn: everyone should seek guidance from the House, and anyone who turned away from it was in grievous error (*Will* 19-20, 26). Again, Shoghi Effendi had made it clear that, in addition to being the highest legislative body in the Faith, the House was also the 'apex' of the Baha'i administrative system, and the 'supreme organ' of the millennial future Baha'i Commonwealth (GPB 332; WOB 7). Moreover, Shoghi Effendi had specified that the House would be responsible for such 'fundamental functions' as 'the formulation of future worldwide teaching plans'; conducting Baha'i administrative affairs; and 'the guidance, organization and unification' of Baha'i activities throughout the world. He had also indicated that it would function to safeguard 'the integrity and unity' of the Faith, and that its members as a body would be 'the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the lifeblood and ultimate safeguard' of the Baha'i revelation (GPB 213-4; WOB 153). Again, he had predicted that the House would come to be regarded as 'the last refuge of a tottering civilization' (WOB 89) (MU#35.16-17).

**3.7. The performance of necessary functions.** As the House had already stated (above), it was not possible for it to legislate to make it possible to appoint either another guardian or any more Hands of the Cause. It had a duty, however, to do everything it could to ensure the performance of the functions it shared with these 'mighty Institutions' (MU#35.18).

The Baha'is should note that in the Baha'i system, some functions were the exclusive preserve of certain institutions, but that other functions were shared in common, even though one particular institution was designated to take a leading role in their performance. For example, whilst the Hands of the Cause were specifically assigned the duty of protecting and propagating the Faith, the House of Justice and the spiritual assemblies shared the same duty, and indeed every individual Baha'i had an obligation to spread the Faith through teaching. Thus, whilst the House could not undertake any functions which had been exclusively assigned to the guardianship (notably the authority to make authoritative interpretations of the Baha'i sacred writings), there were many functions which it shared with the guardianship, and which it could therefore exercise in the absence of a living guardian. Central here was the 'common' and 'fundamental' objective shared by the two institutions 'to ensure the continuity of that divinely appointed authority' which flowed from Bahá'u'lláh, to safeguard the unity of the Baha'is, and to 'maintain the integrity and flexibility' of the Baha'i teachings (WOB 148; MU#35.8).

Specific duties in this regard were that the House had to devise means whereby the 'functions of protection and propagation' should be properly discharged in the future (see Chapter 5A); 'receive and disburse' the *Huqúqu'lláh*; and make provision for the removal of any individual House member who committed a sin 'injurious to the common weal (*Will* 14). More generally, and above all else and 'with perfect faith in Bahá'u'lláh', it had to 'proclaim His Cause and enforce His Law' so that the millennial Most Great Peace which he had foreseen

would be firmly established and ‘the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth’ accomplished (MU#35.18).

**4. The message of December 1969: Further comments.** The House’s third major letter on matters relating to the guardianship and the House of Justice was dated 7 December 1969 and addressed to ‘an individual Baha’i’ in reply to questions raised by a youth study group. It was again given wide circulation, as the points it raised were evidently felt to be of major significance. The House hoped that its ‘elucidations’ would help the Baha’is understand these matters more clearly, but counselled that too little time had as yet elapsed since the Baha’i system had come into being for its functioning and potentialities to be fully understood (MU#75.18).

**4.1. Unity of meaning.** One of the questions raised was how to reconcile two passages in the authoritative Baha’i texts, and before dealing with the specific issue raised, the House asserted the essential ‘unity of meaning’ of those texts: there could never be any ‘real contradiction’ between them. Thus, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will and Testament* did not in any way contradict the *Kitáb-i Aqdas* of Bahá’u’lláh, but rather confirmed, supplemented and correlated its provisions (see WOB 19). Similarly, the writings of Shoghi Effendi did not contradict the revealed words of Bahá’u’lláh or the interpretations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (MU#75.4).

**4.2. The relationship between the guardianship and the House of Justice.** As set out in the Baha’i texts, the guardians and the Universal House of Justice had ‘certain duties and functions in common’, whilst each institution also operated within its own exclusive, ‘separate and distinct sphere’. Thus, the guardians interpreted the texts and the House legislated on matters not ‘expressly revealed’ in the texts. Within their respective spheres, the pronouncements of each institution were authoritative and binding. According to Shoghi Effendi’s own explicit statement, neither institution could or ever would infringe upon ‘the sacred and prescribed domain of the other’ (WOB 150). Again, given that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had stated that both institutions were under the ‘care and protection’ of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘the shelter and unerring guidance’ of the Báb (*Will* 11), it was impossible to conceive of them as rival centres of authority in conflict with each other: both were vehicles of the same divine guidance (MU#75.5).

Both institutions had general functions beyond their specific responsibilities, and it was in these areas that there were shared duties. Thus, the House also had the general functions of ‘protecting and administering the Cause, solving obscure questions and deciding upon matters that have caused difference’, whilst the guardians were invested with ‘all the powers and prerogatives’ necessary to protect and lead the Faith. According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will*, each successive guardian would also become a life member and ‘irremovable head’ of the House of Justice, and as such would take part in its deliberations (MU#75.6-7).

This was the context in which to place one of the questions raised by the study group, namely the seeming contradiction between ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement in his *Will and Testament* that the Universal House of Justice was ‘freed from all error’ (*Will* 14), and Shoghi Effendi’s statement that it was one of the duties of a guardian to insist that his fellow House members reconsidered ‘any enactment’ that he believed conflicted with the meaning of Bahá’u’lláh’s

writings or departed from their spirit (WOB 150). In practice, of course, if there was a living guardian and he called for the other House members to reconsider a decision, it was inconceivable that they would ignore his request. It should be remembered, however, that both institutions were divinely guided and protected. It was the final judgement of the House which was guaranteed infallibility and not any views expressed during the process of consultation which led up to that final decision being taken. A living guardian functioning as a member of the House of Justice was empowered to ask for decisions to be reconsidered during consultation, but ultimately he was not entitled to overrule a majority decision (MU#75.2, 75.7-9).

In this regard, it was also useful to consider the actual process followed by the House in making its decisions: it first observed 'the greatest care' in studying all relevant Baha'i texts as well as considering the views of all its members. Then, after a long period of consultation, it began to draft a pronouncement, but during this process could decide to reconsider the issue, eventually reaching a quite different final decision or postponing legislation altogether for the time being. In the presence of a living guardian, his views would obviously carry great weight during such a process (MU#75.10).

**4.3. Two authoritative centres.** It was clear from the Baha'i writings that the Baha'is were provided with 'two authoritative centres' to which they should turn after the passing of Bahá'u'lláh: on the one hand, 'the Book', the word of God as revealed in Bahá'u'lláh's writings and interpreted by the properly appointed and divinely inspired interpreters of those writings (i.e. 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi), and on the other, the House of Justice, which would decide on matters not covered by the divine word and its authoritative extensions. Thus, in his writings, Bahá'u'lláh both told his followers to refer to his words and to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as his appointed successor, and ordained the future establishment of the House, whilst in his turn, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explicitly instituted the guardianship; reaffirmed and elucidated the authority of the House; and again told the Baha'is to turn to the sacred writings (MU#75.15).

Of these sources of authority, it was clear that the highest was 'the Book', as this delimited the sphere of action of the House of Justice: the House could only legislate on matters not explicitly revealed in the sacred text and its sphere of legislative action was defined by the authoritative interpreters of 'the Book' (MU#75.75.16).

**4.4. The Universal House of Justice in the absence of a guardian.** Future guardians were clearly envisaged in the Baha'i authoritative texts, but there was no promise or guarantee that the line of guardians would continue indefinitely. Indeed, there were 'clear indications' that the line could be broken, as in the *Kitáb-i Aqdas* itself which referred to authority over Baha'i charitable endowments (*awqáf*) resting first with Bahá'u'lláh, and then after his passing with his male descendants – the *Aghsán* ('Branches'), in this instance taken by the House to include the future guardians, and after them with the House of Justice, if it had been 'established ... by then', and, finally, in the absence of an elected House of Justice with 'the people of Bahá' who spoke not except by his leave and were 'the champions of victory' (KA#42).

The death of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 precipitated the exact situation which had been provided for in the *Aqdas* passage on endowments, that is the line of guardians had ended before the

House had been elected. Without question, this was a ‘grievous loss’ for the Faith, but it did not alter God’s purpose or destroy Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant (MU#75.14). There was, after all, a ‘repeated insistence’ that the Baha’i Covenant was indestructible and God’s purpose for humanity in this day immutable (MU#75.12-14).

On the specific relationship between the guardianship and the House, whilst the guardians were clearly intended to have the authority to define the House of Justice’s sphere of legislative action, this did not mean that the House would stray beyond its proper sphere of action without such guidance. To the contrary, other texts made it clear that the House would be infallible and would never infringe on the guardians’ domain of action (MU#75.17). Specifically, the infallibility of the House was independent of a guardian’s membership of it or his presence at its sessions. Both `Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi had explicitly stated that its elected members would receive ‘unfailing’ divine guidance in their consultations, and Shoghi Effendi had also stated that under no circumstances did the guardianship abrogate or detract from the powers granted to the House by Bahá’u’lláh and confirmed by `Abdu’l-Bahá (MU#75.6).<sup>28</sup> Again, during his thirty-six years as guardian, Shoghi Effendi had actually already provided guidance as to the House’s sphere of action (MU#75.16).

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28. The House also noted that whilst Shoghi Effendi had carefully guided the national and local assemblies during his ministry, both in ‘the painstaking erection’ of the Baha’i Administrative Order and in the formulation of national and local Baha’i constitutions, the assemblies had not been given any guarantee of infallibility in the Baha’i texts. In this regard, the assemblies were unlike the Universal House of Justice. They could, however, receive divine guidance, if they consulted ‘in the manner and spirit described by `Abdu’l-Bahá (MU#75.18).

## **5. The Hands of the Cause and Related Institutions**

### Contents:

- A. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS.
- B. ASPECTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONING.
- C. THE WORK OF THE HANDS AND COUNSELLORS.

### Key dates:

- 1964 The development of the institution of the Hands is made a goal of the Nine Year Plan (April). The UHJ announces that no further Hands of the Cause can be appointed, and authorizes the Hands to appoint Board members to act as their executive assistants (November).
- 1968 Formation of the Continental Boards of Counsellors (June).
- 1972 UHJ statement on 'The rulers and the learned' (24 April).

### **A. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS.**

**1. The Hands of the Cause.** In its first messages to the Baha'is, the Universal House of Justice had paid fulsome tribute to the work of the Hands of the Cause in guiding the Baha'i world to victory in the crisis years following the unexpected death of Shoghi Effendi. The House had also consulted closely with the Hands in Haifa about the future development of the Baha'i Cause, and it had been the Hands as a collectivity who had prepared the first draft of the new Nine Year Teaching Plan which the House launched in April 1964. A close working relationship had been developed, and the House continued to see the Hands as a crucial asset in the work of the Faith, referring to their 'vital responsibility' in its message of October 1963, and appointing them as the 'Standard-Bearers' of the new plan (UM#6.4, 6.6).

Shoghi Effendi had stated that the Hands had the 'dual function' of 'guarding over the security' and of 'insuring the propagation' of the Faith (MBW 127), and the House of Justice reiterated the importance of this dual role. Thus, in their role as protectors of the Faith, the Hands were to continue to take action to expel Covenant-breakers and to reinstate those who sincerely repented – subject in each case to the ultimate approval of the House. At the same time in their propagator role, they were to continue to 'inspire, advise and assist' the national assemblies (MU#6.4).<sup>29</sup>

**2. The development of the institution.** As a functioning institution, the Hands had been formed and developed by Shoghi Effendi, but the close relationship that existed between them and him was institutional as well as personal. As outlined by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his *Will and Testament*, the Hands were to be appointed by the guardians, work in their service, and approve their successors (*Will* 12-13). Having determined that the line of guardians had come to an end, the Universal House of Justice had also to determine what the institutional future of the Hands of the Cause was going to be.

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29. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had also referred to the responsibilities of the Hands in his *Will and Testament*, including the diffusion of 'the Divine Fragrances' (i.e. teaching the Faith to others), the edification of 'the souls of men', the promotion of learning, and the improvement of 'the character of all men'. He had also bidden them to be always 'sanctified and detached from earthly things' (*Will* 12-13).

The 'development of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause' thus became a major goal of the Nine Year Plan (MU#14.5), and in November 1964, the House reported its preliminary decisions following extensive consultations with the Hands during the Hands' recently concluded fourteen day conclave in Haifa (MU#20).<sup>30</sup> The meeting itself had been of 'vital significance' (MU#21.1). Having studied the Baha'i texts and hearing the views of the Hands themselves, the House had concluded that: (1) there was no way in which further Hands of the Cause could be appointed, neither was it possible for the House to legislate to make such appointments possible; and (2) the responsibility for determining matters of general policy relating to the Hands had devolved from Shoghi Effendi to the House of Justice in its role as 'the supreme and central institution of the Faith to which all must turn' (MU#20.4). In this context, it became imperative to find ways in which the Hands' 'appointed functions of protection and propagation' could be extended into the future. This was all the more necessary given the significance of the relationship between the Hands and other Baha'i institutions in relationship to the work of teaching the Faith and to the overall development of the 'Baha'i World Order' (MU#20.2-20.3).

To date, the development of the institution of the Hands by the House of Justice has passed through three main stages, the first (in 1964) involving changes in existing institutions so as to give the Hands more time to concentrate on their most important functions; the second and third (in 1968 and 1973) seeing the establishment of new institutions to take over work formerly performed by the Hands. Although never stated specifically, these changes were obviously made in the realization that the 22 Hands still alive and serving the Faith in 1963 would all age and eventually die, and that they could not be replaced.<sup>31</sup>

**3. Initial changes.** The first move (in 1964) was to help free the Hands 'to devote their entire energies' to the 'vitaly important' duties which had been conferred upon them. This mainly involved changes in the Auxiliary Boards (below), but the House also felt it necessary to remind the Baha'is that the Hands' 'exalted rank and specific functions' made it inappropriate for them to be elected or appointed to Baha'i administrative institutions or elected as delegates at Baha'i national conventions (MU#20.9). At the same time, the larger continents (the Americas and Asia) were subdivided into smaller and more manageable zones for the purposes of day-to-day administrative work.<sup>32</sup>

**The Auxiliary Boards.** In April 1954, to help the Hands in their work, Shoghi Effendi had authorized the appointment by them of 'Auxiliary Boards', comprising individuals who

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30. The meeting was held in late October and early November 1964 (BW15: 169).

31. Of the 32 Hands of the Cause appointed to an active role by Shoghi Effendi, 5 predeceased him, another 4 died during the period of the Custodianship by the Hands, and one (Remey) had been expelled as a Covenant-breaker. During the Nine Year Plan another 5 were to die, leaving a total of 17 Hands – some of them quite elderly – still actively serving the Faith at the end of the Nine Year Plan. A list of the Hands is given below in section C.

32. The Americas were divided into 3 zones: North America (comprising Canada and the continental USA, Hawaii being reassigned to the Australasian continental area); Central America (including Mexico) and the Antilles; and South America. Asia was divided into 2 zones: the 'Middle East', including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Soviet Asia; and 'South and East Asia' comprising the remainder (MU#20.6). One or more Hands were responsible for each zone (BW14: 85).



would function as their ‘deputies, assistants and advisors’ (MBW 59). The establishment of separate Boards for the protection and propagation of the Faith was authorized in October 1957 (MBW 128). Both Boards were organized on a continental basis.

The House quickly acknowledged that the Hands would continue to be assisted in their work by the members of the Auxiliary Boards (MU#6.4), and then, in November 1964, announced that it was calling upon the Hands in each continent to appoint one or more Board members to act in an executive capacity on behalf of each Hand, thereby relieving the Hands of unnecessary administrative work. At the same time, the number of Board members was to be almost doubled, raising the total number worldwide from 72 (8x9) to 135 (15x9).<sup>33</sup>

At this point, the Hands had already discussed the role of the Board members at their London Conclave in May 1963, coming to the decision that the Board members should also be freed from administrative responsibilities relating to the spiritual assemblies so as to be able to devote their full energies to their work for the Boards. Those who were also serving as national spiritual members were therefore asked to decide within the coming eleven months in which capacity they could best serve the Faith. This decision was accepted by the House of Justice, which in turn, in November 1963, directed national assemblies to advise national convention delegates that whilst they could vote for nationally resident Board members to serve on the national assembly if they wanted to, it would be better if they did not – so that the members could concentrate on the work allotted to them. Furthermore, if a Board member was elected, he or she would then have to decide which role they wanted to retain – Board or assembly member. Again, being a Board member was a valid reason for resigning from a national assembly – though an assembly could appeal to the House of Justice if it felt that the resignation of a particular individual would be detrimental to the interests of the Faith (MU#11).

#### **4. The Continental Boards of Counsellors.**

**4.1. The context.** With the decision made that it was not possible for the Universal House of Justice to appoint further Hands of the Cause, and the evident fact that the existing Hands would all eventually die, the House decided that some means should be devised to extend the functions of the institution of Hands (specifically the protection and propagation of the Faith) into the future. By the very nature of the situation, freeing the Hands of less essential work so that they could concentrate their energies on their major functions could be only a temporary expedient. It was only in 1968, however, that an adequate means of extending the Hands’ functions was devised. This took the form of the creation of a new institution, the ‘Continental Boards of Counsellors’, to take over many of the Hands’ functions and much of their work.

**4.2. Formation of the Boards.** Following the second International Convention in April 1968, the House members held prolonged and extensive consultations with the Hands, both on the

33. By continent: in Africa, from 18 to 27; in the Americas, from 18 to 36; in Asia, from 14 to 36; in Australasia, from 4 to 9; and in Europe, from 18 to 27 (MU#20.7). The frequent occurrence of multiples of nine in these figures stems from the importance Baha’is attach to the number 9 as being both the numerical value of the Arabic word ‘Bahá’ (Glory) in the *abjad* system of number-letter equivalence used in Islamic esotericism and as a symbol of ‘perfection, unity and comprehensiveness’ (See CEBF, loc. cit. ‘*abjad*’; ‘numbers’).

overall progress of the Nine Year Plan, and what the House described on 9 May as the 'FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE' of the extension of the Hands' functions (MU#57). The fruits of these deliberations were announced on 21 June 1968, with the news that eleven 'Continental Boards of Counsellors' were to be established, each responsible for a specific geographical area. This was a 'MOMENTOUS DECISION' (MU#58). The details of the Boards' responsibilities were outlined three days later, along with the list of those appointed (24 June; MU#59, 60).<sup>34</sup> The death of one of the Hands (Hermann Grossman) just a few weeks later, in July 1968, underlined the timeliness of this development. As the House itself noted, the Baha'i administrative system was subject to development ('majestic unfoldment') and had been marked by the successive establishment of its various institutions, of which this was the latest (MU#59.1, 59.8).

The decision to establish the new Boards had evidently followed a prolonged period of thought and discussion. During the first four years of the Nine Year Plan, much thought had been given to the question of perpetuating the functions of the Hands, and there had been extensive study of the relevant Baha'i texts. This had culminated in the recent consultations with the Hands. A framework for decision making had become evident: (1) the House saw no way in which additional Hands could be appointed; (2) the absence of a Guardian of the Faith completely changed the relationship between the House and the Hands, and necessitated that the House assume the responsibility for devising some means of extending the Hands' functions into the future; (3) any institutional changes should be made as soon as possible so as to 'reinforce and supplement' the work of the present Hands of the Cause and take 'full advantage' of the opportunity of the Hands themselves to assist in launching and guiding any 'new procedures'; and (4) any new institution must 'grow and operate' in harmony with the already established principles governing the functioning of the institution of the Hands. Developments would be proceed through 'progressive unfoldment' (MU#59).

**4.3. The Counsellors' responsibilities.** Although clearly of far less exalted rank, the Counsellors' responsibilities substantially replicated many of the former functions of the Hands.<sup>35</sup> As had the Hands before them, the new Boards were made responsible for 'the protection and propagation of the Faith'. Their duties were to include: (1) direction of the Auxiliary Boards in their respective regions; (2) 'consulting and collaborating' with the national spiritual assemblies of their region; and (3) keeping both the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House informed of the conditions of the Faith in their region. Thus, the Auxiliary Boards would now report to the Continental Boards and not to the Hands, and the Counsellors would be responsible for appointing or replacing Auxiliary Board members as

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34. See [http://bahai-library.com/uhj\\_institution\\_counsellors](http://bahai-library.com/uhj_institution_counsellors) and [http://bahaikipedia.org/Continental\\_Counsellors](http://bahaikipedia.org/Continental_Counsellors)

35. A report at the end of the Nine Year Plan states that the Counsellors were instructed 'to operate in a manner similar to that set forth by Shoghi Effendi for the Hands of the Cause', and that in particular the Counsellors were asked to refer to Shoghi's 'letter' of 4 June 1957 (BW15: 170). This latter reference is presumably to a cablegram of that date in which Shoghi called upon the Hands and the national assemblies of each continent to work closely together and exercise 'UNRELAXING VIGILANCE' in carrying out their 'SACRED, INESCAPABLE DUTIES' to ensure: (i) the security of the Faith; (ii) the preservation of the 'SPIRITUAL HEALTH' of the Baha'i communities; (iii) the 'VITALITY' of the faith of its individual members; (iv) the proper functioning of its 'LABORIOUSLY ERECTED [administrative] INSTITUTIONS'; (v) the 'FRUITION' of its worldwide enterprises; and (vi) the 'FULFILMENT' of 'ITS ULTIMATE DESTINY' (MU#10.1a; cf MBW 123. Note that the original published version has edited joining words into the original cable).

circumstances required – albeit initially only after consultation with the Hand or Hands who had formerly had this responsibility. In all matters they would work in close collaboration with the Hands (MU#58; 59.2, 59.5).

**4.4. Board areas.** Initially, eleven Boards were formed (3 each in Africa, the Americas and Asia; one each for Australasia and Europe), and a total of 36 individuals appointed as Counsellors, with most of the Boards having a membership of three. The Board areas were as follows: Northwestern, Central and East, and Southern Africa; North, Central, and South America; Western, Southeast, and Northeast Asia; Australasia; and Europe. One member of each Board was appointed as trustee of the Continental Fund for his or her area. The term or terms of service for the Counsellors would be determined and announced at a later date, and during their period of service, Counsellors would not be eligible for membership of local or national assemblies (MU#59.3-4).

**5. The changed role of the Hands of the Cause.** The creation of the Continental Boards significantly changed the role of the Hands, relieving them from even more of the routine work which they had hitherto had to deal with. Freed from oversight of the Auxiliary Boards, the Hands – ‘the Chief Stewards of Bahá’u’lláh’s embryonic World Commonwealth’ and one of the ‘most precious assets’ which the Baha’i world possessed – would be able to concentrate more of their energies on their ‘more primary responsibilities’ of ‘general protection and propagation’ of the Faith, working to preserve the spiritual health and vitality of Baha’i communities throughout the world. Whilst each Hand would continue to have a special concern for Baha’i matters in their own geographical area, all would now be able to operate increasingly on an intercontinental level, assuming a substantially more worldwide role and enabling them to add tremendous impetus to the global diffusion of the Faith and the inspiration of the Baha’is. In this context, the House would call on them to ‘undertake special missions on its behalf’; ‘represent it on both Baha’i and other occasions’; and ‘keep it informed about the welfare of the Cause’ (MU#58; 59.7).

Although freed from routine administrative duties, the Hands would have ‘the prerogative and obligation’ to consult with both the new Continental Boards and the national assemblies on any matter which they considered to affect the interests of the Faith. The Hands residing in Haifa would also act as a liaison between the House of Justice and the Continental Boards. Again, at a future ‘propitious time’, they would help the House in the establishment of the international teaching centre referred to in Shoghi Effendi’s writings (MU#58; 59.6). The Hands also retained the authority – subject to the approval of the House – for the expulsion and reinstatement of Covenant-breakers (BW15: 17-71).

## **6. ‘The rulers and the learned’**

**6.1. The ‘institutions of the learned’.** In April 1972, the House provided further elucidation about the institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors. Created by the House itself in 1968, the Continental Boards had been primarily devised to extend into the future the functions of protection and propagation of the Faith which had been vested in the institution of the Hands of the Cause. Their establishment formed part of a series of developments involving the ‘*institutions of the learned*’, which had earlier seen the creation of the Hands of the Cause and the Auxiliary Boards as functioning institutions, and would in due course no

doubt see other developments, such as the international teaching centre come into being,<sup>36</sup> and the work of the Counsellors expand. Although each of the three existing institutions (Hands, Counsellors and Auxiliary Boards) was distinct and separate from the others, they were all ‘intimately interrelated’, and in one sense different ranks of a single institution (MU#111.4-10).

The ‘learned’ in this context were one of two sections of the Baha’i administrative order, the other being the ‘rulers’, comprising the members of the Universal House of Justice and of the national and local spiritual assemblies. This was a distinction which went derived from Bahá’u’lláh’s Book of the Covenant (*Kitáb-i `Ahd*), in which he had referred to the ‘rulers and learned among the people of Bahá’. By way of elaboration, Shoghi Effendi had referred to the Baha’i learned as comprising the Hands of the Cause and other great teachers whilst the rulers comprised the House and assembly members. He had also noted that in distinction to the religions of the past, decision-making authority in the Baha’i Faith was vested in the assemblies, all operating under the shadow of the Universal House of Justice functioning as the single pivot and centre of the Faith. The dangers of those who ‘accounted themselves as superior in knowledge and elevated in position’ contending for power had been removed (MU#111.3, 111.12-13).<sup>37</sup>

For the House, the Baha’i learned retained ‘the beneficent elements’ of such institutions whilst avoiding all their ‘inherent’ evils. Thus, the Hands and their related bodies comprised individuals of ‘exalted rank’ who played a ‘vital role’ in the progress of the Baha’i Cause and were of ‘fundamental value’ to it. At the same time, however, they had ‘no legislative, administrative or judicial authority’ and were ‘entirely devoid of priestly functions or the right to make authoritative interpretations’. This distinction was a new and unique concept which was not found in previous religions. The Baha’is themselves would only fully grasp the importance of these institutions with the passage of time as the Baha’i community grew and the Baha’is were increasingly able ‘to contemplate its administrative structure uninfluenced by concepts from past ages’. Only then would they properly understand the ‘vital independence’ of the institutions of the rulers and the learned and fully recognize the ‘inestimable value of their interaction’ (MU#111.13-14). As with many other aspects of the administrative order, understanding grew as that order itself developed ‘organically’ in response both to the power and guidance of God, and in accordance with Baha’i community needs as these developed (MU#111.2).

**6.2. The distinction between corporate and individual functioning.** In passing, the House noted the inaccuracy of the distinction which were sometimes made by Baha’is between the two branches of the administration as ‘appointive’ and ‘elective’ arms. It was true that House and assembly members were elected and the Hands, Counsellors and Board members were appointed, but the ‘elective’ arm also included the committees of the assemblies and these were appointed bodies. A better distinction would be between the way in which the

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36. The International Teaching Centre was established in June 1973 (MU#131), shortly after the end of the Nine Year Plan.

37. The enormous power that can accrue to the religiously learned is particularly evident in Shi’i Islam, in which the ‘learned’ (*ulamá*) came to control the legal and educational systems and even vied for political power. The Shi’i *ulamá* also quickly became the main opponents of the Babi and Baha’i religions. See CEBF, loc. cit. ‘*ulamá*’; ‘learned’; Momen.

institutions of the rulers functioned as corporate bodies, whilst those appointed to one of the institutions of the learned operated primarily as individuals (MU#111.11).

**7. Definition in the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice.** In the By-Laws to its own Constitution (November 1972), the House outlined the functioning of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members as follows:

7.1. The institution of the **Boards of Counsellors** had been brought into being by the House in order to extend into the future the Hands of the Cause specific functions of protection and propagation. The members of these Boards were to be appointed by the House for a term of office determined by the House. Each Counsellor only functioned within the geographical zone allocated to him [or her] by the House, and automatically relinquished his appointment if he moved his residence outside the appointed zone. The boundaries of all zones were determined by the House. ‘The rank and specific duties’ of a Counsellor made him ineligible for service on local or national assemblies. If a Counsellor was elected on to the House of Justice, he ceased to be a Counsellor.

7.2. In each zone [of the Continental Counsellors], there would be **two Auxiliary Boards** – one each for protection and propagation of the Faith, the numbers of members of which would be determined by the House of Justice. The members of these Auxiliary Boards would be appointed by the Counsellors from amongst the Baha’is of that zone and would serve under their direction as the Counsellors’ ‘deputies, assistants and advisors’. Each individual Auxiliary Board member would be allocated a specific geographical area in which to serve, and would not function as a Board member outside that area unless specifically deputized by the Counsellors to do so. Auxiliary Board members were eligible for any elected office [e.g. as an assembly member], but if elected to a local or national administrative post, would have to choose between continued membership of the Auxiliary Board and the administrative post. If elected to the Universal House of Justice, he would cease to be a Board member (UHJC 15-16).

## **8. Increases in the numbers of Counsellors and Board members.**

**8.1. Further developments.** After the formation of the Continental Boards of Counsellors in 1968, there were no further institutional changes relating to the ‘institutions of the learned’ until May and June 1973 when the International Teaching Centre was established in Haifa, and some changes were made in the zones of the Continental Boards as well as in their functioning and the total number of Counsellors (MU#131, 132). As these changes occurred after the end of the Nine Year Plan and the period covered by this volume, they will not be considered here.

**8.2. Increases in the numbers of Counsellors and Board members.** On a number of occasions after the Continental Boards had been formed, the House expressed itself well-pleased with their functioning (see below, section C). It also made minor changes to their membership. Thus, in July 1969, the House announced that it had decided to raise the total number of Counsellors by two to 38, with the addition of one Counsellor each to the South American and North East Asian areas (raising their numbers to 4 and 3 respectively). There

was also one change of membership to fill a vacancy that arisen (MU#70).<sup>38</sup> Again, at Ridván 1970, the House noted that it was augmenting this ‘VITAL INSTITUTION’ through the appointment of three additional Counsellors (2 in Europe and 1 in Western Asia) (MU#81), thus raising the overall total to 41 (BW15: 171).

The number of Board members was also increased. In 1964, the total number had been raised from 72 to 135 (see above), and at Ridván 1970, the House further increased the number of Board member posts by 45 to a total of 180. The additions comprised 9 in Africa; 18 in the Americas; 16 in Asia; and 2 in Australasia (MU#81). Over two-thirds of the total number of Board member posts (126 in all) were for the ‘Board for propagation’ (i.e. teaching the Faith, etc.), whilst the remainder (54 posts) was for the Board concerned with the protection of the Faith (BW15: 171).

## **B. ASPECTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONING.**

**9. The Hands and the national assemblies.** One aspect of the Hands’ functioning which the House emphasized was the need for a continued close relationship between them and the national spiritual assemblies. This role had been delineated by Shoghi Effendi in June 1957 (MU#10.1a; cf. MBW 123), and was reiterated by the House in November 1963. The Hands and the national assemblies bore a highly important joint responsibility in both protecting the Baha’is and fostering the worldwide development of the Faith. The two institutions had ‘complementary functions’ which could only be exercised effectively if ‘the greatest degree of understanding and cooperation’ existed between them. Everything possible then should be done to expedite and facilitate the ‘free play of consultation’ between the two (MU#10). The House returned to this topic in November 1964, stating that the development of a close cooperative relationship between the Hands and the assemblies would inevitably strengthen ‘the foundation and functioning of the Cause’. In this context, it was of the ‘utmost importance’ that both Hands and assemblies be ‘fully informed’ of developments that effected the Baha’i Cause in the geographical areas under their purview. Each assembly should therefore work out with the Hands for their continent the most effective methods of keeping them informed as to what was happening (e.g. if they wished, they could share copies of their own minutes, or send the Hands copies of pertinent committee reports). The House also informed the assemblies that the Hands were preparing schedules to meet with the various national assemblies in their regions and would also invite their members to meet with members of the Auxiliary Boards from time to time. The Hands – or Board members appointed to act in their stead – should also be welcomed to attend the sessions of the national conventions and take part in their deliberations. Again, the House reminded the assemblies of their decision that those appointed as Board members should be freed from administrative responsibilities. This included service as committee members and convention delegates. The assemblies were also notified that the increase in the size of the Auxiliary Boards would increase the needs of the Continental Funds – to which both they and local assemblies and individuals were encouraged to contribute (MU#21).

**10. Assemblies, Counsellors and Board members.** In October 1969, the House addressed a number of questions which had been asked regarding the functioning of the new Continental

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38. See [http://bahai-library.com/timeline\\_members\\_uh](http://bahai-library.com/timeline_members_uh)

Boards of Counsellors and the long-established Auxiliary Boards,<sup>39</sup> in particular, the request that the Board members be allowed to work with the national assemblies on a regular basis (MU#72.1).

**10.1. Division of labour.** Firstly, the House stressed that there was a basic division of labour between the spiritual assemblies and the Auxiliary Boards. ‘Authority and direction’ flowed from the spiritual assemblies, and it was the responsibility of the spiritual assemblies, assisted by their committees, ‘to organize and direct’ the work of teaching the Faith. At the same time, however, the power to accomplish tasks resided primarily ‘in the entire body of the believers’, and it was the ‘principle task’ of the Auxiliary Boards to help arouse and release this power. Whilst the assemblies would naturally try to do all they could to stimulate and inspire the Baha’is, the pressure of administrative work would make it difficult for them to spend as much time on this activity as they would wish. Similarly, if the Board members were going to adequately perform their ‘vital’ work of inspiring the Baha’is they should avoid becoming involved in assembly administration (MU#72.2-3).

In this context, regular participation by a Board member in the work of an assembly would endanger the collaborative relationship which should exist between the institutions of the national assembly and the Counsellors, possibly undermining and impairing it. It would also diffuse the time and energies of the Board members involved. If the Board members became involved in the administration of teaching, they might gradually take over the direction of a national committee, thereby usurping the function of the national assembly. Alternatively, the Board member might become merely an agent of the committee or assembly, travelling hither and thither at its direction (MU#72.4).

**10.2. Levels of work.** Another matter was the division of level between the work of the Auxiliary Boards and that of the Continental Counsellors. Both were responsible for ‘advising, stimulating and assisting’ the Baha’is, but the Board members worked closely with the ‘grass roots’ of the community, counselling individual Baha’is, groups and local spiritual assemblies. It was the Counsellors who were responsible for dealing with the national assemblies, although they could also work at the local level if they chose to (MU#72.3).

**10.3. Assembly-Board member contacts.** These distinctions did not mean that there should be no contact between the assemblies and the Board members. Counsellors could ask a Board member to consult with a national assembly for a particular purpose and acting as their deputy. A Board member might also meet occasionally with committees of the national assembly if this was deemed useful for the sharing of information and ideas and the assembly permitted it. In all cases, however, the participation of the Board member should never become regular (MU#72.4).

**10.4. Sharing information.** An important area of collaboration between the Board members and the national assemblies and their committees was the prompt and full sharing of information between them. Thus, Board members should receive reports from national assemblies and national committees about the state of the Baha’i community, and information

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39. The House also circulated a compilation on the work of the Auxiliary Board members (dated 25 March 1969), but this was not widely distributed amongst the Baha’is and is not considered here. Nor has it been reprinted in one of the 3 volumes of the *Compilation of Compilations* series.

from the Board members should be transmitted to the assemblies where relevant (MU#72.5-7).

This said, the Board members' primary source of information about the community should be his or her own direct contacts with local spiritual assemblies, groups and individuals. By this means, both the Counsellors and the national assemblies would have access to 'two independent sources of information about the community': from the national committees and from the Board members (MU#72.7).

**10.5. Recommendations for action.** Again, whilst the Board members could send reports to the national assemblies, they should not include recommendations for action as this would undermine the authority of both Counsellors and national assemblies. Board members should send any recommendations for action which they had directly to their Counsellors, and the Counsellors would then consider these, and only send them on to a national assembly if they approved them, perhaps modifying them in the process. The national assembly in turn was not bound to accept such recommendations: it had access to knowledge and experience of which the Board member might be unaware (MU#72.5-6).

**10.6. Assembly plans.** One particular matter of information sharing was the need for the assemblies to keep the Counsellors and Board members well informed regarding their plans. It was the assemblies which planned and directed the work of the Faith, and if these plans were well known to the Counsellors and Board members, they would be better able to help the assemblies in urging the Baha'is to support them. Indeed, the Board members should continuously direct the attention of the Baha'is to their national assembly's plans and encourage them to enthusiastically support them (MU#72.9). The division of labour between directive authority and encouragement still pertained of course. A Board member might inspire Baha'is to pioneer, but he or she would then refer anyone who offered to pioneer to the appropriate committee which would be responsible for organizing the project (MU#72.2-3).

**10.7. Administrative advice.** Counsellors and Board members were not concerned with administration in the sense that they did not administer, e.g. they did not direct or organize the work of teaching the Faith, and they did not adjudicate about personal problems or conflicts. All such administrative matters were the responsibility of the assemblies. This did not mean that Counsellors and Board members were not concerned with administrative issues, however. To the contrary, it was their responsibility to give advice on administrative matters and observe and report on 'the proper working of administrative institutions'. Thus, if a Board member found that a local assembly was functioning incorrectly, or if a Counsellor found that a national assembly was functioning incorrectly, he or she should consult with the assembly concerned 'in a frank and loving way', drawing the assembly's attention to the relevant Baha'i texts. Again, if a Board member found that a national committee was inefficient, he or she should report the matter in detail to the Counsellors who would then decide on appropriate action. Assemblies sometimes misunderstood this distinction, thinking that Counsellors and Board members should not give advice (MU#72.8).

**10.8. Initiative and freedom of action.** The Counsellors in each continental zone had 'wide latitude' as to how they should carry out their work. Similarly, they should give each Board member 'considerable freedom of action' within his or her own allocated area. Again, whilst



the Counsellors should regularly direct the work of the Board members, the Board members themselves did not have to wait for direction. By the very nature of their work, they should be 'continually engaged in it according to their own best judgement'. They should function even when they had not been given any specific tasks to perform. Of greatest importance, they should build up 'a warm and loving relationship' with the Baha'is in their area so that the local assemblies would 'spontaneously turn to them for advice and assistance' (MU#72.10).

### **C. THE WORK OF THE HANDS AND COUNSELLORS.**

**11. The Hands of the Cause, 1963-73.** Between 1951 and 1957, Shoghi Effendi had appointed 32 individuals to serve as Hands of the Cause. Of these, five predeceased him, four died during the period of the Custodianship (1957-63), and one (Mason Remey) was expelled from the Faith as a Covenant-breaker. This left 22 Hands working in the service of the Faith in 1963 at the time of the establishment of the House of Justice. These are listed below. Of these, a further five (Agnes Alexander, Músá Banání, Hermann Grossman, Leroy Ioas and Tarázu'lláh Samandarí) died during the 1963-73 period.

#### **The Hands of the Cause in 1963.**

NB. Years of birth and death in parenthesis; date of appointment in square brackets: First Contingent, 24 December 1951; Second Contingent, 29 February 1952; Third Contingent, October 1957. Those who died during the 1963-73 period are marked \*.

Shu`á'u'lláh `Alá'í (1889-1984). [Second Contingent].  
\* Agnes Baldwin Alexander (1875-1971). [Individually, 27 March 1957].  
Hasan Balyuzi (1908-1980). [Third Contingent].  
\* Músá Banání (1886-1971). [Second Contingent].  
Abu'l-Qásim Faizí (1906-1980). [Third Contingent].  
John Ferraby (1914-1973). [Third Contingent].  
Collis Featherstone (1913-1990). [Third Contingent].  
`Alí-Akbar Furútan (b.1905). [First Contingent].  
Ugo Giachery (1896-1989). [First Contingent].  
\* Hermann Grossman (1899-1968). [First Contingent].  
Paul E. Haney (1909-1982). [Individually, 19 March 1954].  
\* Leroy Ioas (1896-1965). [First Contingent].  
Jalál Kházeh (1897-1990). [Individually, 7 December 1953].  
Zikrullah Khadem (Dhikru'lláh Khádem) (1904-1986). [Second Contingent].  
Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir (1923-1979). [Third Contingent].  
Adelbert Mühlshlegel (1897-1980). [Second Contingent].  
Enoch Olinga (1926-1979). [Third Contingent].  
John Robarts (1901-1991). [Third Contingent].  
Rúhiyyih Khánum, Amatu'l-Bahá (b.1910). [Individually, 26 March 1952].  
\* Tarázu'lláh Samandarí (1874-1968). [First Contingent].  
William Sears (1911-1992). [Third Contingent].  
`Alí-Muhammad Varqá (b.1911). [Individually, 15 November 1955].

**12. The work of the Hands of the Cause.** With the election of the Universal House of Justice, the Hands were able to refocus their energies and activities on work for the protection

and propagation of the Faith.<sup>40</sup> As before, a group of Hands lived at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa whilst the rest served in the five continents. The Hands in Haifa (now only five in number) were Rúhiyyih Khánum, Abu'l-Qásim Faizí, `Alí-Akbar Furútan, Paul E. Haney, and Leroy Ioas (d.1965). These coordinated the work of the Hands as a whole, and were available for consultation with the House of Justice as needed, but they no longer had to exercise executive authority or be concerned with a mass of administrative work. The continental Hands kept an eye on developments in their respective areas and directed their Auxiliary Boards until the formation of the Boards of Counsellors in 1968. The whole body of the Hands met periodically in Haifa, where again they consulted with the Universal House of Justice on matters of concern. Beyond their institutional functions, the Hands also represented an important emotional link with Shoghi Effendi and the vanished age of the living guardianship.

What was probably now the major part of the Hands' work was concerned with the 'propagation' of the Faith and the inspiration of the Baha'is around the world. In this connection it was the Hands who prepared the initial draft of the Nine Year Plan launched by the House in 1964 (or at least those sections of it dealing with expansion goals), and it was individual Hands who engaged in extensive tours of the Baha'i world, meeting with national assemblies to give advice; speaking at Baha'i conventions, Summer schools and other gatherings; visiting local Baha'i communities and encouraging them in their activities, and sometimes engaging directly in teaching projects, or in important initiatives such as the Spanish Baha'i newsletter begun by the Hand Jalál Kházeh in Brazil and widely circulated in Latin America. The importance of this aspect of the Hands' work increased after the appointment of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, the Hands becoming significantly freer, and many of them embarking on even more extensive journeys. The Hands were also much involved in the work of proclaiming the Faith to prominent people, including a number of heads of state.

The other major responsibility of the Hands was the protection of the Faith, particularly from attacks against its internal integrity – what Baha'is term Covenant-breaking – the Hands maintaining the primary role in the expulsion and reinstatement of Covenant-breakers. In this regard, however, the Hands seem not to have had much to do during this period. Some Remyite activity continued but it was relatively marginal, and there were no new major challenges to the pattern of Baha'i administration and leadership. Of course, at a more minor level, one of the Hands' duties was to be sensitive to any emergent disunities or losses of morale within the various Baha'i communities and identify 'problem' situations, but in the absence of detailed studies it is difficult to assess the extent and importance of any 'morale building' work by the Hands during these years.

Until 1968, most of the 'continental' Hands were responsible for specific geographical zones, each overseeing developments in their zone as well as liaising with their fellow Hands. The system was flexible, and it also evidently recognized the realities of the declining health of

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40. Apart from biographies of Zikrullah Khadem and Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir by their widows (Khadem; Muhájir) and the accounts of Rúhiyyih Khánum's travels (see below), there is as yet no adequate account of the Hands' activities during the 1963-73 decade. Harper provides a useful but general 'brief lives' account of the all the Hands of the Cause since the days of Bahá'u'lláh. The *Bahá'i World* accounts for the period are extremely brief (BW14: 467-71; 15: 577-87).

several of the Hands. In Africa, there were two Hands in East Africa, the expatriate Iranian Músá Banání (d.1971) in Uganda, and the native Ugandan Enoch Olinga, in Kenya, and at different times, the Canadian John Robarts and the American William Sears (both former pioneers) in the south of the continent. When the Continental Boards of Counsellors were formed in 1968, Banání convened the initial meeting for the Central and East African Board, whilst Olinga convened the meeting for the Southern African Board. `Alí-Muhammad Varqá from Iran convened the Board for Northwestern Africa. In the Americas, Ugo Giachery (Italian) and Zikrullah Khadem (Iranian), both living in the United States, together with Jalál Kházeh (Iranian) in Brazil, focussed their attention on Central, North and South America respectively, convening the inaugural meetings of the Continental Boards for their respective zones in 1968. Robarts and Sears from Africa both also spent time in North America during this period. In Western Asia, Shu`á`u'lláh `Alá'í, Tarázu'lláh Samandarí (d.1968) and `Alí-Muhammad Varqá were all based in Iran, though they also travelled extensively. `Alá'í convened the first Continental Board meeting for the Western Asian Counsellors (Varqá convened the meeting for Northwest Africa). In Northeast Asia, Agnes Alexander (d.1971), an American from Hawaii who had been a long-time pioneer in Japan, was the only Hand, remaining in her adopted country until 1967 when ill-health (she was then 92) decided her to return to Hawaii: the Northeast Asian Board was convened by John Robarts from Canada in her stead. In Southeast Asia, the only Hand was Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir (expatriate Iranian) and he was also the convener of the first meeting of the Counsellors for that zone. In Australasia, the only Hand (and the convener of the first Counsellors' meeting) was Collis Featherstone (Australian). Finally, in Europe, there were four Hands, Hasan Balyuzi and John Ferraby in Britain and Hermann Grossman (d.1968) and Adelbert Mühlischlegel in Germany. Ill-health prevented Balyuzi and Grossman from travelling, so Ferraby and Mühlischlegel shared the work of visiting and encouraging the Baha'is. Mühlischlegel convened the first meeting of the European Counsellors.

Other significant aspects of the Hands work included representing the Universal House of Justice at the inaugural conventions of new national Baha'i communities and at major international conferences; overseeing the programme of activities for visiting pilgrims at the Baha'i World Centre (by the Hands in Haifa); and involvement in the management of the extensive Baha'i properties, including many holy places, in Iran (by Shu`á`u'lláh `Alá'í) (BW14: 469). One quite unique contribution was by Tarázu'lláh Samandarí, one of the few remaining Baha'is to have met Bahá'u'lláh, and who in his extensive tours of the Baha'i world – continued until shortly before his death in 1968 at the age of 93 – was able to share his memories and thus bring a greater vividness to many Baha'is' sense of their own religion's origins. Another special contribution was by the Iranian-British Hand Hasan Balyuzi, who used the restrictions on travel imposed by his own declining health to concentrate on his scholarly interests in Baha'i history, and who thus effectively initiated the modern period of Babi and Baha'i Studies.<sup>41</sup>

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41. Balyuzi had lived in Britain since 1932 and had played a key role in the development of the Baha'i Faith in his adopted country. His monograph on *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* (1970) reopened an important scholarly debate and was the first published English-language academic work on Baha'is Studies other than articles since the 1910s. It was followed by his biographies of *Abdu'l-Bahá* (1971), *The Báb* (1973) and *Bahá'u'lláh* (1980), as well as an introduction to Islam for Western readers, *Muhammad and the Course of Islam* (1976), and some other works published posthumously. See BW18: 635-51; Harper 411-25; Momen, 'Hasan M. Balyuzi'.

**Table x. Hands of the Cause who convened inaugural meetings of the Continental Boards of Counsellors (CBC), and who attended the first national Baha’i conventions of new national Baha’i communities and major international conferences, 1963-73.**

**13. ‘Amatu’l-Bahá’ Rúhiyyih Khánum.**<sup>42</sup> Amongst the Hands, Shoghi Effendi’s widow, Rúhiyyih Khánum (b.1910), occupied a unique position. Born Mary Maxwell, and of Canadian-American parentage, Rúhiyyih Khánum married Shoghi Effendi in 1937, becoming his helper and companion as well as serving as his secretary for many years. After her husband’s death in 1957, she acted as the chief rallying point for the Baha’is grieving at the loss of their Guardian and played a major role in the work of the Custodial Hands. After the election of the Universal House of Justice, now aged 52, she embarked on a series of often quite epic journeys that took her to almost all parts of the Baha’i world as well as to remote areas which no Baha’is had yet visited. Meeting with heads of state as well as peasants and tribal peoples, her travels included a nine-month tour of India (1964); a seven-month tour of Latin America (1967-8), focussing on the Amerindian peoples; and four lengthy journeys across Africa (1970-73).<sup>43</sup> She also wrote a biography of Shoghi Effendi, *The Priceless Pearl* (Rabbani, 1969), a condensed version of which appeared in *Bahá’i World* (BW13: 59-205).

**14. The House’s tributes to the Hands.** Over the years, the House renewed its tributes to the Hands and their work. Thus at Ridván 1966, it noted the special missions which the Hands had discharged on its behalf; the teaching tours they had undertaken; the conferences they had organized; their constant work at the Baha’i World Centre; and, ‘above all’, their ‘never-ending encouragement’ of the Baha’is and their ‘watchfulness over the welfare of the Cause of God’. The Hands had given ‘distinction and effective leadership’ to the work of the entire community (MU#34.6). Again, at Ridván 1967, the House referred to the ‘unfailing light’ of the Hands’ services throughout the year. They were a ‘precious legacy’ left to the Baha’i world by Shoghi Effendi, and their place in history was already assured by dint of their appointment to such high office. Their continued and constant services, however, meant that in addition to the honour and respect which was naturally due to them on account of their rank was ‘increasingly added’ the ‘love and admiration’ of the Baha’is. Their present services included encouragement of the national assemblies and of the Baha’is in general to work to achieve the goals of the Plan and to obtain a deeper understanding of the ‘true meaning’ of the Baha’i revelation – a significant contribution to the progress of the Plan which would have a lasting effect on the development of the Baha’i community (MU#42.9).

At Ridván 1970, the House cabled that it was moved to pay ‘LOVING TRIBUTE’ to the Hands for their ‘BRILLIANT SERVICES’ in ‘BLAZING TEACHING TRAILS’ across the surface of the planet and in ‘UPLIFTING’ and advising the Baha’is on all continents (MU#81).

At Ridván 1971, the House referred to the ‘thankfulness and delight’, and even ‘wonder and astonishment’ that was evoked by the Hands’ continuing travels and other services. Their

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42. The title ‘Amatu’l-Bahá’ means ‘Handmaiden of Bahá’ and was bestowed on several prominent women Baha’is.

43. For accounts of these trips by her travelling companion, Violette Nakhjavání (daughter of the Hand Músá Banání and wife of Universal House of Justice member `Alí Nakhjavání), see Nakhjavání, *Amatu’l-Bahá*, and *Great African Safari*. See also BW15: 588-607.

deeds were such as 'to eclipse the apostles of old' and conferred 'eternal splendor' on the present period of Baha'i history. On behalf of the Baha'is everywhere, the House members offered the Hands 'reverent love and gratitude' (MU#96.7). At Ridván 1973, the House paid tribute to the 'loved and revered' Hands. They had rendered 'sacrificial and distinguished service' throughout the Plan, inspiring the Baha'is; helping the national assemblies; and promoting the teaching work. They had played a vital role in the success of the Plan in all parts of the world, and the 'lagging fortunes' of several national communities had been 'revolutionized' by a visit by one of the Hands, who had inspired 'swift and energetic action' which had then been followed by 'astonishing results' that had completely reversed the community's prospects. The Hands had also added 'distinguished works to the literature of the Faith' (MU#128.10).

**15. The House's praise of the work of the Continental Boards of Counsellors.** In its Ridván message of 1969, the House described the formation of the Boards of the Counsellors as the 'most significant and far-reaching development' of the past year. Established only after 'full consultation' with the Hands, the new Boards had both strongly reinforced the activities of the Hands of the Cause as an institution and made it possible for the Hands as individuals to extend their services across the continents, so that their love, wisdom and spirit of dedication became 'universally available' to the Baha'is. The House expressed itself well satisfied at the 'exemplary manner' in which the Counsellors had embarked on their 'high duties' under the guidance of the Hands (MU#68.2).

In July 1969, the House again praised the 'devoted efforts' and exemplary services of the Continental Boards during their first year of service. The 'loyalty, steadfastness and devotion' of the newly appointed Counsellors had reinforced the vital work of the Hands (MU#70). Again, at Ridván 1970, the House referred to the 'EFFECTIVE REINFORCEMENT' of the 'NOBLE WORK' of the Hands which the able and dedicated Counsellors and their Auxiliary Boards were performing. Together, these bodies were a 'VITAL INSTITUTION' of the Faith (MU#81). Again, at Ridván 1973, the House stated that the Counsellors, 'advised and guided' by the Hands, and 'working in close collaboration with them' had already performed 'outstanding and distinguished services' during their brief period of office (MU#128.11).

## Part II. EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION.

### 6. The Nine Year Plan, 1964-1973.

#### A. CONTEXT.

**1. The conception of the Plan.** Much of Baha'i activity during the period covered by this book was centred on the goals of the Nine Year Plan (Ridván 1964-Ridván 1973) set by the Universal House of Justice. This plan followed the general format of Shoghi Effendi's ten-year 'Global Crusade' (1953-63), itself partly an implementation of the 'Divine Plan' of worldwide teaching outlined in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (1916-17).

From the time of its establishment, the Universal House of Justice was evidently determined to continue the pattern of action planning inherited from Shoghi Effendi, utilizing the momentum already built up in the Ten-Year Plan. The actual work of preparing the draft of a new plan for the House of Justice's consideration was begun by the Hands of the Cause during their meeting in London after the World Congress (MU, p.7, n.2-1), and the House referred to the upcoming plan in their message to the national conventions in May 1963 (MU#2), declaring that it would be launched in a year's time, at Ridván 1964, listing some of its major objectives, and outlining a number of tasks which should be undertaken immediately in preparation for it. The formal announcement of what was to be a nine-year plan (Ridván 1964-Ridván 1973) was made in October 1963 (MU#6), and the plan launched in April 1964 (MU#14).

**2. The context of sacred time.** Following the example of Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice prepared the Baha'is for the tasks ahead by related the work of the new plan to various patterns of sacred time outlined in the Baha'i writings.

**2.1. The 'second epoch' of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan.** One such pattern was of the successive epochs in the 'unfoldment' of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan. Thus, in implementing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's vision of global expansion, Shoghi Effendi had referred to the national and international plans carried out under his direction as constituting 'the initial epoch' in the 'unfoldment' of his grandfather's Divine Plan (MBW 31; c.f. CF 32; MA 101). Starting in 1937, with the First American Seven Year Plan, this first epoch would culminate with the completion of the Ten Year Plan in 1963 – an event noted by the House of Justice in their statement to the London Congress (MU#1.2).<sup>44</sup>

The 'first epoch' of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's plan having been completed, the House's announcement of a new plan was described as the opening of the 'second epoch' of the Divine Plan. This would be 'the next stage' of the Baha'is' 'world-redeeming mission' (MU#2.6). The Baha'i Cause was now 'firmly rooted' in the world. Divinely blessed 'beyond compare', and riding the crest of 'a great wave of victory', the Baha'is should now press forward, confident in the

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44. Shoghi Effendi divided the first epoch into three stages, corresponding to the first and second American Seven Year Plans (1937-44; 1946-1953), and to the Global Crusade (1953-63).

‘power and protection’ of Bahá’u’lláh, who would ‘through storm and trial’ and ‘toil and jubilee’ use his devoted followers to bring the ‘life-giving waters’ of his revelation to ‘a despairing humanity’ (MU#2.12). The ‘outposts of the Cause’ had been established ‘in the remotest corners of the earth’, and the Baha’is had witnessed the beginnings of large-scale conversion. The ‘foundations of the Kingdom’ had been securely laid, and the framework raised. The Baha’is’ task was now to ‘consolidate these achievements’, safeguard their own institutions, and ‘gather the peoples and kindreds of the world’ into the ‘Ark’ built by the ‘Hand of God’ (MU#6.5).<sup>45</sup>

**2.2. The ‘third epoch of the Formative Age’.** Shoghi Effendi had also described the development of the Baha’i religion as passing through three ages: (1) an initial ‘Apostolic’ or ‘Heroic’ Age covering the first seventy-seven years of Babi-Baha’i history, and comprising the ministries of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (1844-1921); (2) a present ‘Formative’ or ‘Iron’ Age; and (3) a future millennial ‘Golden Age’ (CF 4-5). During the Formative Age, the Baha’is were responsible for consolidating and expanding their religion, a complex and prolonged process, which could again be sub-divided into a series of epochs. In this framework, the first epoch of the Formative Age began with the preliminary development of the Baha’i Administrative Order under Shoghi Effendi and the work to implement ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan through the first centrally organized systematic expansion plan (the American Seven Year Plan, 1937-44). The second epoch was to see the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, and the further ‘unfoldment’ of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan (CF 5-6).<sup>46</sup>

Extending this framework, the House announced in October 1963 that the Faith had now entered the third epoch of the Formative Age, during which it should (1) grow rapidly in size; (2) ‘increase its spiritual cohesion and executive ability’; (3) ‘develop its institutions’; and (4) ‘extend its influence into all strata of society’ (MU#6.10).

**2.3. The ‘ten-part process’.** In a lengthy message, written at the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade on 4 May 1953 to the All-America Baha’i Intercontinental Conference, Shoghi Effendi had described the Crusade as the ninth in a series of stages which had begun with the beginning of prophetic revelation symbolized by the Biblical/Quranic figure of Adam and would culminate in the future ‘Golden Age’ when ‘the light of God’s triumphant Faith’ would have ‘suffused and enveloped the entire planet’.<sup>47</sup> The tenth and final part would extend over

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45. The reference here is to a metaphorical arc of salvation analogous to the arc constructed by Noah.

46. Following the Universal House of Justice’s announcement of the inception of the ‘fourth epoch’ of the Formative Age in January 1986 (MU#447.7), the House’s Research Department prepared a detailed summary of the references to epochs by Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. This gives the following dates. For the epochs of the Formative Age: 1<sup>st</sup> epoch, 1921-1944/46; 2<sup>nd</sup> epoch, 1946-1963; 3<sup>rd</sup> epoch, 1963-1986; 4<sup>th</sup> epoch, 1986-present. For the epochs of the unfoldment of the Divine Plan: 1<sup>st</sup> epoch, 1937-1963; 2<sup>nd</sup> epoch, 1964-present. See MU#451.

47. The first nine stages were: (1) The ‘slow and steady growth’ of ‘the tree of divine revelation’ through the progressive revelations of the Manifestations of God, including Moses, Zoroaster, the Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad, watered by the blood shed by the martyrs who had given their lives for these faiths; (2) The ‘fruition of this tree’ with the appearance of the Báb (1844); (3) The ‘grinding of this sacred seed’ in ‘the mill of adversity’ through the Báb’s execution in Tabriz in 1850, and the yielding of its oil; (4) The ignition

‘numerous crusades’ and ‘successive epochs of both the Formative and Golden Ages of the Faith’, and would first see the penetration of the divine light into all the remaining territories of the globe and the erection of the Baha’i Administrative Order throughout the world, and then finally, the culmination of God’s plan for humanity through the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth and the birth of a world civilization (MBW 153-56). Writing at the start of its own Nine Year Plan, the House of Justice affirmed that this tenth stage had now been entered, and would extend over this and a prolonged series of future plans (MU#14.1, 14.3).

**2.4. The centenary of the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*.** The House noted that the end of the plan, in 1973, would coincide with the centenary of the revelation of Bahá’u’lláh’s book of laws, the *Aqdas*, and expressed the hope that the ‘befitting’ celebrations of that anniversary would be made by an ‘organically united’ world Baha’i community which had both been victorious in its completion of the goals set, and was firmly established and dedicated to the service of God and to the ‘final triumph of His Cause’ (MU#14.10). Relating the work of the Plan to various anniversaries would be another characteristic of the House’s messages.

## **B. OBJECTIVES, GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

**3. Immediate objectives.** Prior to the commencement of the new plan, the House called upon the existing national assemblies to direct and oversee preparatory work. Thus, in May 1963, immediately after its members had taken office, the House identified a number of ‘urgent’, ‘immediate’ and ‘essential’ tasks: (1) Pioneers were to be maintained at their posts and the national assemblies were to direct new pioneers to open unopened territories or to consolidate those which had already been opened; (2) All local spiritual assemblies should be strengthened through ‘a firm establishment of Baha’i community life and an active teaching program’; (3) In the case of those national assemblies which were based on only a small number of local assemblies, every effort should be made to increase the number of assemblies prior to Ridván 1964. More generally, the ‘great work’ of teaching had to be extended everywhere. This had reached a ‘high intensity’ by the end of the Ten Year Plan, leading in some instances to the beginning of mass conversions to the Baha’i Cause, and should not be allowed to slacken pace now. Rather, it should increase, particularly as all Baha’is were now able to draw on the ‘vast spiritual powers’ that had been released as a result of the London Congress and the emergence of the House itself (MU#2.7-2.8). Again, all expansion plans depended on adequate financial means, and the launching of the new plan required a ‘constant flow’ of contributions to the International Fund so as to build up sufficient reserves by April 1964. To this end, the House called on every Baha’i to give attention to this ‘vital and pressing matter’, and noted the importance of the principle of ‘universal participation’, in that if every single Baha’i was able to make an offering – great or small – then they would thereby identify themselves with the work of the Cause (MU#2.11).

In October 1963, the ‘first step’ inaugurating the plan was announced with the projected

of this oil through Bahá’u’lláh’s revelatory experience in the Black Pit prison in Tehran (1852); (5) The ‘clothing of that flickering light’ in the ‘lamp of revelation’ in Bahá’u’lláh’s Ridván declaration of mission in 1863; (6) The ‘spread of the radiance of that light’ during the remainder of Bahá’u’lláh’s ministry (- 1892); (7) The projection of this light across the American, European and Australasian continents during the ministry of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (1892-1921); (8) The initial worldwide diffusion of the light during the early part of the Formative Age (1921-1953); and (9) The Ten Year Crusade (1953-63).



formation of nineteen new ‘national’ and regional spiritual assemblies at Ridván 1964. These additions involved breaking up of 6 of the large sub-continental assemblies that had existed in Africa, Asia and the Pacific at the end of the Ten Year Crusade, so the overall total of assemblies in the world was raised from 56 to 69 (MU#6.7).<sup>48</sup> One specific need also required urgent attention. This was the as yet unfulfilled goal of the Ten Year Crusade to complete the Baha’i House of Worship near Frankfurt in Germany. Although the structure of the building had been completed, the interior decoration still had to be done, utilities installed, access roads laid, the grounds landscaped, and a caretaker’s house built. Rapid completion of these tasks was imperative, especially as any delay was likely to add considerably to the estimated \$210,000 now required for the work. National assemblies should accordingly allocate substantial budgets so as to ensure immediate completion (MU#2.9).

**4. The goals of the Nine Year Plan.** The overall objectives of the plan were twofold: (i) the extensive expansion of the Faith and (ii) universal participation by the Baha’is in the life of the Faith, and the House saw all the specific goals of the plan as contributing to these (MU#14.4, 14.8). The plan effectively comprised two substantive sections: expansion and consolidation goals, themselves distributed amongst the 69 national spiritual assemblies in the form of separate national plans (MU#6.8), and Baha’i World Centre goals. In addition, the House laid emphasis on a number of more qualitative goals, which individual Baha’is could set themselves.

**4.1. Expansion and consolidation goals.** Worldwide, the plan required the following:

- 1. The opening of 70 ‘virgin territories’ (i.e. places where there had never been any Baha’is), and the resettlement of another 24.<sup>49</sup>
- 2. An increase in the number of national spiritual assemblies from 69 to 108.
- 3. An increase in the number of local spiritual assemblies to over 13,700, at least 1,700 of which were to gain legal status (incorporation).
- 4. An increase in the number of localities where Baha’is resided to over 54,000.
- 5. The building of two more Baha’i Houses of Worship, one each in Asia and Latin America.
- 6. The acquisition of 32 teaching institutes; 52 national Baha’i centres; 54 national endowments (land held by each national assembly); and sites for 62 future Baha’i Houses of Worship.
- 7. Wide extension of civil authority recognition of Baha’i holy days and marriage certificates.
- 8. The translation of Baha’i literature into 133 additional languages and its enrichment in the major languages in which translations had already been made.
- 9. The establishment of 4 new Baha’i Publishing Trusts.
- 10. A vast increase in the financial resources of the Faith (MU#14.6).

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48. The new assemblies were: 1. North West Africa; 2. West Africa; 3. West Central Africa; 4. Uganda and Central Africa; 5. Kenya; 6. Tanganyika and Zanzibar; 7. South Central Africa; 8. South and West Africa; 9. The Indian Ocean; 10. The Hawaiian Islands; 11. The South Pacific Ocean; 12. The South West Pacific Ocean; 13. North East Asia; 14. Korea; 15. Malaysia; 16. Indonesia; 17. Vietnam; 18. Thailand; 19. The Philippines.

49. In its message of October 1963, the House referred to the need to bring ‘God’s healing Message’ to all those territories which had been set as goals during the Ten Year Crusade but had not yet been opened, and to ‘all the remaining independent states of the planet’ (MU#6.8).

**4.2. The role of the individual.** By itself, expansion of the Faith was insufficient. The healthy development of the Baha'i religion also required the involvement and 'dedicated effort' of each individual Baha'i in terms of: (1) teaching the Baha'i Faith to others; (2) living a Baha'i life; (3) contributing to the Baha'i fund; and, most particularly, (4) the constant endeavour to increase one's understand the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation (MU#14.7).

**4.3. World Centre tasks.** A number of major tasks were to be accomplished at the Baha'i World Centre:

- 1. Publication of a synopsis and codification of Bahá'u'lláh's book of laws, the *Kitáb-i Aqdas* (Most Holy Book).
- 2. Formulation of a Constitution for the Universal House of Justice.
- 3. Development of the institution of the Hands of the Cause so as to extend its appointed functions of protection and propagation into the future.
- 4. Continued collation and classification of the Baha'i sacred writings, together with those of Shoghi Effendi.
- 5. Continued efforts to emancipate the Faith 'from the fetters of religious orthodoxy' and to gain recognition for it as an independent religion.
- 6. Preparation of a plan to develop and beautify the entire area of Baha'i property surrounding the Baha'i shrines in Haifa and Bahjí.
- 7. Extension of the existing Baha'i gardens on Mount Carmel.
- 8. Development of the relationship between the Baha'i International Community and the United Nations.
- 9. Holding of Oceanic and International Baha'i Conferences.
- 10. Coordination of worldwide plans to commemorate the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation to the kings and rulers of his day starting in 1867-68 (MU#14.5).

**5. Responsibilities.** The national spiritual assemblies were placed in immediate control of the work (as 'the generals of the Army of Light') under the overall guidance of the Universal House of Justice, and the Hands of the Cause were appointed as the 'Standard Bearers' in what was effectively a new crusade (MU#6.6). It was the responsibility of each of the national Baha'i communities to 'seize its tasks', and immediately consider how best to accomplish them within the allotted years. Each needed to raise its own band of pioneers, consecrate itself to 'unremitting labor', and 'set out on its mission'. The 'army of God' would be inspired and protected by the Hands of the Cause, aided by the members of the Auxiliary Boards – their deputies, assistants and advisors (MU#14.10-14.11).

It was the duty of the Baha'is to 'seize the opportunities of the hour'. This was their 'golden opportunity'. Regardless of whatever convulsions might yet be precipitated by 'the waywardness of a godless and materialistic age', and 'however grievous' might be impact of world events on Baha'i plans and endeavours, the Baha'is should press forward, confident that 'all things' were within God's 'mighty grasp', and secure in the knowledge that if they but played their part, 'total and unconditional victory' would inevitably be theirs (MU#14.11).

**6. Inter-assembly collaboration projects.** A significant feature of the Nine Year Plan was the extent to which the House called upon national assemblies to collaborate in the accomplishment of specific goals. These included the opening, resettlement and consolidation of particular territories; the establishment of national assemblies; the acquisition of *Hazíratu'l-Quds*, temple sites, and other property goals (Winter/Summer schools, teaching institutes); the translation, enrichment and publication of Baha'i literature; and specific teaching projects. Altogether, 219 such projects were identified, each with two designated assemblies: one to assume responsibility for the project and the other to assist in its accomplishment. The result was to create a web of linkages between assemblies, and presumably to foster the development of a sense of international Baha'i solidarity as well as aiding the accomplishment of particular goals. Thus, the Argentinian Baha'is were asked to assist in the acquisition of a temple site in Central Africa as well as helping the Chileans open Tierra del Fuego and the Bolivians increase the amount of Baha'i literature in Quechua; the Hawaiian Baha'is were asked to help with the development of Baha'i literature in the Filipino languages of Tagalog and Ilocano; and the Finnish Baha'is were directed to help in the acquisition of a teaching institute in Kenya and the consolidation of the Faith in Russian Republic. The three assemblies which were given the most collaboration work to do were the USA (26 projects); Iran (Persia) (22 projects), and the British Isles (17 projects). By continent, Europe was given the largest number of assistance goals (74), followed by the Americas (68), Asia (57), Australasia (19), and Africa (1) (BW14: 116-22).

## 7. Worldwide expansion and consolidation.

### Contents:

- A. WORLDWIDE EXPANSION.
- B. NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY FORMATION.
- C. OFFICIAL RECOGNITION & PROPERTY ACQUISITION.
- D. PUBLISHING, TRANSLATION AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY.

### **A. WORLDWIDE EXPANSION.**

A primary objective of the Nine Year Plan was to continue and consolidate the expansion work of the Ten Year Crusade throughout the world. The Crusade had led to an enormous growth in the number of Baha'i groups and spiritual assemblies worldwide, as well as the establishment of at least a nominal Baha'i presence in almost every country of the world as well as in most significant dependent territories and islands. It had been an impressive achievement, and the House clearly wished to ensure both that the gains of this recent expansion were strengthened and not lost, and that all remaining 'unopened' territories and islands were secured as quickly as possible.<sup>50</sup>

**1. Territorial expansion.** Some indication of the success of the Ten Year Crusade in terms of the global expansion of the Faith can be gained from a table of territories<sup>51</sup> (countries, colonies, islands) opened to the Faith in various time periods up to 1963 (HISC 9-11; see also BW13: 460-62). Thus, during the Báb's ministry (1844-53), the [then Babi religion] was established in only two territories: Iran and Iraq, the latter at that time consisting of several Ottoman provinces. By 1892, the year of Bahá'u'lláh's passing, this had increased to a total of 15 territories (an addition of 13). Further progressive increases were achieved by 1921 (to 35), 1953 (to 128), and 1963 (to 259) (See Table 8.1, below). It is of note that just over half of the listed territories – 131 out of 259 – had been 'opened' during the Ten Year Plan. A separate listing gives an additional 61 territories as having been opened to the Faith between Ridván 1963 and Ridván 1968 (BW14: 142-45).

**Table 8.1. Territories "opened to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh", 1844-1963.**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Increment</b>
1844-53. The ministry of the Báb	2	0
1853-92. The ministry of Bahá'u'lláh	15	13
1892-1921. The ministry of `Abdu'l-Bahá	35	20
1921-53. The major part of Shoghi Effendi's ministry	128	93
1953-63. The Ten Year Crusade.	259	131

*Source:* HISC 9-11; BW 13: 460-62.

Exactly what counts as a 'territory' is somewhat problematic of course: colonial territories

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50. Thus the House's instructions immediately after its establishment that pioneers were to be maintained at their posts and that national assemblies were to be ready to direct new pioneers to open unopened territories or to consolidate those which had already been opened (7 May 1963; MU#2.7).

51. Confusingly, these are referred to as 'countries', when many are not.

become independent states, which may or may not coincide with previous administrative divisions, and there are no fixed and objective criteria to determine which particular islands or island groups are to be listed separately.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the similar listing of ‘countries, significant territories and islands’ covering the period up to 1968, expanded the total of previously opened territories to 37 by 1921 and 262 by 1963, so that the grand total by 1968 was of 323 territories (BW14: 142-45). By 1973, however, some consolidation of the recognized territories had been decided upon (no doubt reflecting the transformation of many former colonial lands into independent states), and a global total of 335 opened territories was given for Ridván 1973 – an increase of 95 over a now recalculated figure of 240 territories for 1964 (BW15: 291). Unfortunately, a listing of individual territories was no longer given, only total numbers by continent (see Table 8.2a), so a detailed comparison between the older and newer figures is not possible.

**Table 8.2. Territorial expansion, 1964-73.**

**(a) Countries, significant territories and islands where the Baha’i Faith is established.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>World</b>	<b>Africa</b>	<b>Americas</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>Australasia</b>	<b>Europe</b>
Ridván 1964	240	51	58	56	21	54
Ridván 1973	335	66	97	70	33	69
Increment	95	15	39	14	12	15

*Source:* BW15: 291-94.

**(b) Nine Year Plan goals.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>World</b>	<b>Africa</b>	<b>Americas</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>Australasia</b>	<b>Europe</b>
Opening	70	9	27	9	6	19
Resettlement	24	6	4	8	4	2

*Source:* BW14: 109-111.

The Nine Year Plan goal was for the opening of 70 new territories and the resettlement of another 24 (Table 8.2 (b)). For the most part, the goal territories listed were islands, the only (15) countries identified as goals being the following: the newly independent African nations of Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Upper Volta (modern Burkina Faso);<sup>53</sup> Dominica, St. Kitts-Nevis and St. Vincent in the Caribbean; Mongolia and North Vietnam in Asia; and Albania, Liechtenstein and Rumania in Europe. Several of the what were then the constituent republics of the Soviet Union were also listed (BW14: 109-111).

52. For example, the modern state of Ghana, comprises a number of separate former colonial territories (Ashanti Protectorate, British Togoland, Gold Coast, and Northern Territories Protectorate), which are all listed separately in the list of territories opened by 1963 (#72, 134, 145, 222); the former colonies of French Equatorial Africa and French West Africa were later broken down into a number of independent states; the British Channel Islands are listed as a single entity (#153), even though they comprise a number of islands which have distinctive and separate administrative and constitutional statuses.

53. These had all formerly been part of the former vast colonies of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa – both of which had been opened during the Ten Year Crusade.

**2. Localities and local spiritual assemblies.** Two ready measures of the extent of Baha’i expansion are the number of localities in which Baha’is reside and the number of local spiritual assemblies which have been formed. Although the definition of what exactly constitutes a locality may vary somewhat from one country to another,<sup>54</sup> and there have sometimes been changes in these definitions within a country over time, the locality statistics give us an approximate picture both of the overall increase in the extent of the Baha’i ‘presence’ worldwide and the relative size of the Baha’i communities in particular countries. As local spiritual assemblies (LSAs) can only be formed when a local Baha’i group has at least nine adult members (of 21 years or above), LSA figures indicate the presence of at least a small congregation of Baha’is.<sup>55</sup>

The Ten Year Crusade had seen more than a fivefold increase (5.3) in the number of localities worldwide – from 2,700 in 1953 to 14,437 in 1963, and an almost sevenfold increase (6.6) in the number of local assemblies – from 670 to 4,437 (UHJDS, Memorandum, p.3).<sup>56</sup> By 1964, there were Baha’is residing in over 15,000 localities worldwide and 4,566 local spiritual assemblies had been established (some 30 percent of the localities). The Nine Year Plan goal was to more than triple the number of localities and triple the number of assemblies (to 54,102 and 13, 737 respectively),<sup>57</sup> but the final achievements by 1973 were well in excess of these goals: to almost 70,000 localities (x4.6) and over 17,000 local assemblies (x3.7) (see Table 8.3).

**Table 8.3. Localities and local spiritual assemblies, 1964-73 (% in parenthesis).**

Region	LSAs (%)		Total localities (%)		Groups and ‘isolated centres’	
	1964	1973	1964	1973	1964	1973
Africa	1,361 (29.8)	4,990 (29.3)	3,277 (21.6)	15,245 (21.9)	1,916	10,047

54. When the statistics for localities and local assemblies were first presented in the early volumes of *Bahá’i World*, the definition of the civic areas represented by each was not clearly established, and it was only as Shoghi Effendi began to regularize the statistics that he obtained from the various parts of the Baha’i world that more rigorous definitions for local areas based on civic districts were adopted. By necessity the definition of these areas varied from one country to another, depending on the local administrative system employed, with a complex range of divisions including hamlets, villages, parishes, rural and urban districts, townships and cities.

55. As with the locality figures, the definition of a local spiritual assembly area may vary from one country to another and in a few cases within a country over time.

56. UHJDS, Memorandum of May 1988, p.3. This source sometimes gives slightly different figures from the ones given in *Bahá’i World*. Where they are available, I have cited the ‘official’ statistics published in *Bahá’i World*.

57. For some national Baha’i communities, the Nine Year Plan also called for the establishment of local spiritual assemblies – or in some cases groups or localities – in every state, province or major administrative district of the country. The Turkish Baha’is were given the even more specific goals of having at least one Baha’i living in every major town and village which Bahá’u’lláh had visited during his sojourn in their country and of establishing local assemblies along the Black Sea coast (BW 14: 122).

Americas	707 (15.5)	3,234 (19.0)	3,483 (22.9)	15,860 (22.8)	2,776	12,548
Asia	2,234 (48.9)	8,029 (47.1)	7,262 (47.8)	34,892 (50.2)	5,028	26,816
Australasia	82 (1.8)	379 (2.2)	411 (2.7)	1,456 (2.1)	329	1,049
Europe	182 (4.0)	405 (2.4)	753 (5.0)	2,088 (3.0)	571	1,673
World	4,566 (100)	17,037 (100)	15,186 (100)	69,541 (100)	10,620	52,133

Source: BW15: 291-94.

It is of note that both localities and assemblies are highly unevenly distributed between the continents, with about half of each being in Asia in both 1964 and 1973, whilst Africa (with about 22% of the localities and 30% of the assemblies), and the Americas (with 23% of the localities in both years and 16% of the assemblies in 1964 and 19% in 1973), account for most of the remainder. By contrast, Australasia and Europe have a very small share of the total – about two percent of the localities and assemblies in the case of Australasia, and between three and five percent of the assemblies in the case of Europe. Australasia has only a small population, of course, but the population of Europe is very large, and the small number of localities and assemblies it has is a clear indication of the slower rate of growth of the Faith in that continent.

A slightly variant set of figures (Table 8.4), indicates progressive annual increments in the number of localities and local spiritual assemblies, with increasing momentum towards the end of the Plan. Only one year (1967) shows a downturn in the number of local assemblies.<sup>58</sup>

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58. The downturn could be the result of the collapse of weaker local spiritual assemblies, or the non-recognition by national assemblies of improperly formed local assemblies, or losses caused by changes in civic areas, or a combination of these factors.

**Table 8.4. The total number of localities and local spiritual assemblies (LSAs) by year, 1963-73.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Localities</b>	<b>LSAs</b>
1963	14,437	4,437
1964	17,650	4,863
1965	22,244	5,988
1966	25,229	6,079
1967	28,207	5,560
1968	30,158	6,467
1969	34,425	7,719
1970	40,362	9,867
1971	49,673	12,378
1972	58,191	13,506
1973	69,012	16,003

*Source:* Calculated from UHJDS, Memorandum, 15 May 1988, p.3.

**3. Populations.** Detailed published figures for the size of various Baha’i populations are rare. Indeed, it was not until 1984 that the Baha’i World Centre provided a public estimate of the number of Baha’is worldwide, and then, apparently, only in response to media pressure (UHJDS, Memorandum, pp.4-5). In 1985, the Universal House of Justice itself gave a global figure for the Baha’i community “of some three to four million people” (UHJ, *Promise*, p.19).

There may well be several reasons for this silence by Baha’i leaders and official bodies over the years. One reason may well have been a wish not to reveal the total number of Baha’is when they were still unimpressively few in number – emphasizing instead the impressive extent of Baha’i expansion, but it is likely that other factors were also involved, notably a lack of reliable figures from some national Baha’i communities, including Iran, the original homeland of the Faith. Whilst in some Baha’i national communities, there is a long tradition of keeping and regularly updating membership statistics, this task has undoubtedly proved more difficult in societies in which many Baha’is live in remote rural areas, or in which definitions of membership may be more ambiguous.<sup>59</sup>

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59. All religious movements must make decisions about who to include in their estimates of membership, established religions often adopting far more inclusive criteria than newer ‘sectarian’ movements more concerned with the ‘purity’ of membership. Thus, in addition to the movement’s core membership of active believers, the movement’s leadership may decide to include: (i) less active members who participate occasionally in activities; (ii) individuals who were born into the religion but are not actively involved; and (iii) the families of members, including children. Additional complications arise in those countries in which individuals are automatically considered to belong to the state religion or to a communal religious grouping unless they officially opt out of membership – an option which may be legally or socially difficult. Again, in some countries, the reality or threat of persecution may lead to a penumbra of covert believers who avoid public identification. Again, in some countries (e.g. Japan and India), multiple religious memberships are common. There is as yet no proper and comprehensive study of various definitions of Baha’i membership on a worldwide basis or of changing definitions in individual Baha’i communities over time.



The best estimate for Baha'i numbers which is currently available for the period under consideration suggests that in 1963, at the end of the Ten Year Crusade, there were well over half-a-million Baha'is worldwide (583,000), this figure including youth and children, and that by the end of the Nine Year Plan, this figure had quadrupled to almost two-and-a-half million (2,444,000) (Table 8.5). Estimates for the number of adult Baha'is over the same period show an increase from 221,000 to almost 1.2 million.<sup>60</sup>

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60. The estimates are based on the statistical returns received by the Department of Statistics at the Baha'i World Centre from the various national Baha'i communities, with extrapolations for the number of children and youth being made for those communities with reported adult memberships of over a thousand. Since 1987, the Department has begun to collect far more detailed demographic data from the national assemblies enabling it to prepare more accurate estimates for Baha'i populations (UHJDS, Memorandum of May 1988, p.5).

**Table 8.5. Estimated number of Baha'is worldwide by year, 1963-73.**

Year	Adult Baha'is	Total (including youth and children)
1963	221,000	583,000
1964	306,000	601,000
1965	390,000	754,000
1966	463,000	903,000
1967	608,000	1,183,000
1968	627,000	1,202,000
1969	692,000	1,350,000
1970	798,000	1,622,000
1971	961,000	1,959,000
1972	1,059,000	2,216,000
1973	1,199,000	2,444,000

*Source:* UHJDS, Memorandum, 15 May 1988, p.5.

Turning to the continental distribution of Baha'is (Table 8.6), we see the massive predominance of Asia throughout the period – 62% of the world total in 1963 and 64% in 1973. Africa and the Americas (25% and 11% respectively in 1963 and 14% and 20% in 1973) make up most of the remainder. Australasia (1.1% and 1.5%) and Europe (0.8% and 0.7%), by contrast, make up only a tiny proportion of the total.

**Table 8.6. Estimated total Baha'i populations by continent, 1963-73 (% in parenthesis).**

Year	Africa	Americas	Asia	Australasia	Europe	World
<b>1963</b>	145,700 (24.97%)	61,900 (10.6%)	364,400 (62.46%)	6,500 (1.1%)	4,900 (0.8%)	583,400 (100%)
<b>1968</b>	181,700 (15.1%)	122,500 (10.2%)	879,800 (73.2%)	9,100 (0.8%)	8,900 (0.7%)	1,202,000 (100%)
<b>1973</b>	339,700 (13.9%)	479,000 (19.6%)	1,572,000 (64.3%)	36,000 (1.47%)	17,200 (0.7%)	2,444,000 (100%)

*Source:* Calculated from UHJDS, Memorandum. 15 May 1988, p.6.

## **B. NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY FORMATION.**

**4. The role of the national spiritual assemblies.** Although national coordinating bodies had developed in various parts of the Baha'i world during the headship of `Abdu'l-Bahá,<sup>61</sup> it was Shoghi Effendi who standardized their formation as 'national spiritual assemblies' – institutions with directive authority for the various 'national' Baha'i communities. With the development of formal teaching plans from 1937 onwards, the national assemblies naturally became closely involved in the work of propagating the Faith, Shoghi Effendi assigning them particular goals to accomplish in term of both internal and external growth and consolidation.

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61. In Iran and Asiatic Russia, the local spiritual assemblies of Tehran, Ashkhabad and Baku assumed the role of central coordinating assemblies. The North American Bahai Temple Unity (est.1909) performed a similar role in the United States and Canada. All these bodies were later replaced by national spiritual assemblies.

Thus, during the Ten Year Crusade it was the national assemblies which were given the primary responsibility for the achievement of most of the Crusade's objectives, and in like manner, the Universal House of Justice described the national spiritual assemblies as the "generals" of the Nine Year Plan (MU#6.6). In practical terms, it was the national assemblies which bore the responsibility for the achievement of the majority of the assigned numerical goals, as well as for the detailed preparatory planning and implementation which went with that responsibility. In both Ten Year Crusade and the Nine Year Plan, each assembly was given its own separate plan, with newly formed assemblies being assigned specific goals as they came into being.

**5. National spiritual assembly formation up to 1963.** During the earlier part of Shoghi Effendi's ministry, the number of organized national Baha'i communities was very small, and between 1923 and 1953, he only authorized the formation of fourteen national spiritual assemblies, two of which (in the Soviet regions of the Caucasus and Turkestan) had to be disbanded due to unfavourable political circumstances.<sup>62</sup> Thus, in 1953, at the start of the Ten Year Crusade, there were only twelve national assemblies worldwide: the British Isles (i.e. the United Kingdom and Ireland) (formed in 1923); Germany and Austria (1923); India and Burma (1923, later renamed to include Pakistan in 1947); Egypt and the Sudan (1924); the United States of America and Canada (1925) – with Canada later achieving its Baha'i independence with the establishment of its own national assembly (1948); Iraq (1931); Australia and New Zealand (1934); Persia (Iran) (1934);<sup>63</sup> Central America and the Antilles (1951); South America (1951); and Italy and Switzerland (1953) (UHJDS, "National and Regional Spiritual Assembly Formation"). It will be noted that whilst a few of these assemblies were only for a single country, several were binational and two covered vast regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Ten Year Crusade called for an enormous increase in the number of national assemblies, and all told an additional 44 assemblies were formed by 1963, raising the overall total to 56. Fourteen of these assemblies were formed prior to Shoghi's decease in 1957, and the rest under the direction of the Hands. In most cases, a general pattern was followed of first forming multinational regional assemblies and then later forming sub-regional and specifically national assemblies from these. Thus, the increment of 44 assemblies between 1953 and 1963 represented the formation of 59 new assemblies at the cost of the dissolution of 15 regional and binational assemblies, some of which had been only transitional bodies formed during the Crusade itself. Shoghi Effendi also introduced the innovation of having a 'national' assembly for a sub-national area – for the discontinuous American state of Alaska in 1957 (UHJDS, "National and Regional Spiritual Assembly Formation").

**6. National spiritual assembly formation since 1963.** National assembly formation continued as an important objective of the Nine Year Plan. Thus, the "first step" taken to prepare for the Plan was the formation of nineteen new 'national' and regional spiritual

62. The assemblies for the Caucasus and Turkestan were formed in 1925 but due to governmental restrictions had to be formally dissolved in 1939 (UHJDS, "National and Regional Spiritual Assembly Formation").

63. The old name of 'Persia' was officially retained by the Baha'is until 1957 (UHJDS, "National and Regional Spiritual Assembly Formation").

assemblies at Ridván 1964. These additions involved the breaking up of six of the large sub-continental assemblies that had existed in Africa, Asia and the Pacific at the end of the Ten Year Crusade, so the overall total of assemblies in the world was raised by 13 from 56 to 69 (MU#6.7).<sup>64</sup> In the Plan itself, the House called for the total number of assemblies worldwide to be raised from 69 to 108 (a net gain of 39), with the dissolution of 7 existing regional assemblies and the formation of 46 new national assemblies. The areas covered by 6 of the existing regional assemblies would also be reduced (BW14: 105-6). Almost all of the new assemblies called for were formed,<sup>65</sup> so that with the establishment of additional assemblies not called for in the Plan, the total number of national assemblies at Ridván 1973 was 113 – just over double the number that existed in 1963, and a net gain of 44 from the beginning of the Plan (see Table 8.7).<sup>66</sup>

**Table 8.7. National spiritual assemblies.**

**(a) In selected years by continent**

Year	World	Africa	Americas	Asia	Australasia	Europe
Ridván 1963	56	4	24	10	3	15
Ridván 1964	69	10	24	15	5	15
Ridván 1968	81	14	26	20	6	15
Ridván 1973	113	30	30	25	11	17

**(b) Increments, goals and changes.**

Increments, 1963-73	57	26	6	15	8	2
Increments, 1963-64	13	6	0	5	2	0
Increments, 1964-73	44	20	6	10	6	2
9YP Goals (new [+] and	108 (+46-7)	30 (+26-6)	28 (+4)	23 (+8)	10 (+6-1)	17 (+2)

64. The new assemblies were: 1. North West Africa; 2. West Africa; 3. West Central Africa; 4. Uganda and Central Africa; 5. Kenya; 6. Tanganyika and Zanzibar; 7. South Central Africa; 8. South and West Africa; 9. The Indian Ocean; 10. The Hawaiian Islands; 11. The South Pacific Ocean; 12. The South West Pacific Ocean; 13. North East Asia; 14. Korea; 15. Malaysia; 16. Indonesia; 17. Vietnam; 18. Thailand; 19. The Philippines.

65. Given the rapid political changes taking place in Africa during these years, some of the new assemblies were eventually formed under different names or with different combinations of countries than originally planned (e.g. Lesotho rather than Basutoland Niger was eventually included in a joint assembly with Dahomey and Togo rather than with Nigeria as listed in the original Nine Year Plan goals (BW14: 105)).

66. For details see the accounts of the developments by continent and region (Ch. X-x).

dissolved [-] assemblies shown in parenthesis)						
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*Sources:* Calculated from BW13: 468-69, 947-51; BW14: 105-6, 560; BW15: 291-94;<sup>67</sup> MU#6.7.

The increases in the number of national assemblies were particularly marked in Africa, where the total number of assemblies increased from 4 in 1963 to 30 in 1973 – an addition of 26 assemblies; Asia (from 10 to 25, and increase of 15); and Australasia (from 3 to 11, an increase of 8). Increases in the Americas (by 4, from 24 to 30) and Western Europe (by 2, from 15 to 17) were quite modest by contrast, separate national assemblies for all major countries in these regions having been formed during the Ten Year Crusade.

Details of the year-by-year increases in the number of national assemblies are given in Table 8.8. It will be seen that the majority of increments occurred in five years: 1964 (+13), 1967 (+11), and the three-year span, 1970-72 (+31).

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67. BW15: 291-64 erroneously gives the figures for Ridván 1963 and not Ridván 1964.

**Table 8.8. The total number of national and regional spiritual assemblies by year, 1963-73.**

Year	Total NSAs <sup>1</sup>	Increment	New NSAs <sup>1</sup>	Dissolved NSAs <sup>1</sup>
1963	56	0	0	0
1964	69	13	16	3
1965	69	0	0	0
1966	70	1	1	0
1967	81	11	13	2
1968	81	0	0	0
1969	82	1	2	1
1970	93	11	15	4
1971	100	7	9	2
1972	113	13	21	8
1973	113	0	[1] <sup>2</sup>	0

*Source:* Calculated from UHJDS, “National and Regional Spiritual Assembly Formation”, and idem, Memorandum, 15 May 1988, p.3.

*Notes:*

1. Includes both national and regional spiritual assemblies.
2. Achieved after the formal ending of the Nine Year Plan and not included in the Plan gains.

Of the goals set, only five were not achieved (Algeria, Cambodia, a joint assembly for Ethiopia and Somalia, Southern Arabia, and Zanzibar). In the case of Zanzibar, the non-formation of an assembly was presumably because of the union of that country with Tanganyika shortly after the Nine Year Plan had commenced (to form the new country of Tanzania, 1964), obviating the need for a separate administration. In Cambodia’s case, growing political instability and the devastation of war and civil war may have convinced the Baha’is to delay the establishment of a separate administration. The postponement of the formation of the remaining three assemblies was no doubt linked to sensitivities about the visibility of the Baha’is in the Arab world – directly in the case of Algeria and Southern Arabia, and indirectly in the case of Ethiopia-Somalia, with Ethiopia continuing to act as the base for the North East Africa assembly whilst the persecution of the Egyptian Baha’is continued. Persecution also necessitated the dissolution of the Iraqi national spiritual assembly (1972), one of the most venerable in the Baha’i world (est. 1931).

As to the eleven ‘bonus’ assemblies, three were in the African region (Botswana, Chad, the Seychelles); two in the Americas (Puerto Rico, the Windward Islands); five in Asia (Bangladesh, Brunei (later Eastern Malaysia and Brunei), Kuwait, Sikkim, Singapore); and one was in Australasia (the North West Pacific, centred in the Carolines)..

### **C. OFFICIAL RECOGNITION & PROPERTY ACQUISITION.**

**7. Legal and official status.** It was Shoghi Effendi’s policy to try and obtain both legal status

for Baha'i assemblies and governmental recognition of Baha'i holy days (and of the right of Baha'is to take those days off work) and marriages, wherever this was possible. The first of these objectives was particularly important in giving Baha'i institutions the right to own property as legally-constituted bodies, whilst the second has been an important means of increasing the public recognition of the Faith and of gaining greater prestige in wider society. The House of Justice has continued to pursue both objectives.<sup>68</sup>

All such goals necessarily depend on favourable external circumstances – the willingness of governments or other legal agencies to accord recognition to Baha'i institutions. Thus, the House noted in May 1964 that 'recognition goals' – the legal incorporation of national and local spiritual assemblies; applications to gain official recognition for Baha'i marriage certificates and holy days – should only be embarked upon when it seemed reasonably likely that they could be achieved (MU#16.9). In the case of legal incorporation, it has proven relatively easy to register or incorporate most of the national assemblies (see Table 8.9). Thus, in 1963, 38 out of 56 national assemblies (68%) were incorporated, whilst by 1973, 90 out of 113 assemblies (80%) were incorporated – well in excess of the overall Plan goal of 65 assemblies. Only in Asia did a substantial number of assemblies fail to obtain legal status (7 out of 10 not incorporated in 1963; 12 out of 25 not incorporated in 1973).

**Table 8.9. Incorporated national spiritual assemblies** (total number of assemblies in parenthesis).

Year	World	Africa	Americas	Asia	Australasia	Europe
Ridván 1963	38 (56)	3 (4)	19 (24)	3 (10)	3 (3)	10 (15)
Ridván 1973	90 (113)	25 (30)	28 (30)	13 (25)	9 (11)	15 (17)

*Sources:* Calculated from BW13: 468-69; BW15: 291-94.<sup>69</sup>

Success in incorporating local assemblies has been far more limited (see Table 8.10) – reflecting both the strict legal criteria which an assembly must meet so as to gain corporate status and the relative weakness of many local assemblies. Thus, in 1964, only 413 local assemblies out of a worldwide total of 4,566 (9.0%) had been incorporated, and whilst the number of incorporated assemblies had almost quadrupled by 1973 (to 1,556 – exceeding the goal of 1,386), these still only represented 9.1 percent of the total.

As with the locality and local assembly figures, it will be noted that there are considerable disparities between the continents in terms of local incorporation: whilst Asia and Africa have the largest numbers of local assemblies, they have the smallest proportion of assemblies to have gained legal status: with 2-3% in the case of Africa, and 3-9% in Asia. By contrast, quite a high proportion of local assemblies in the Americas (32-16%), Australasia (40-20%) and Europe (34-31%) have achieved legal status.

68. The Nine Year Plan called for the incorporation of 65 national spiritual assemblies; local spiritual assembly incorporations to be raised to 1,386 – including at least one in each states of the USA; Baha'i marriage certificates to be recognized in 87 countries; and Baha'i holy days to be recognized in 95 countries (BW 14: 106, 114-16, 123, 135).

69. BW15: 291-64 erroneously gives the figures for Ridván 1963 and not Ridván 1964.

**Table 8.10. Local spiritual assembly incorporation and official recognition.**

(1) Region	(2) Incorporated LSAs (as % of total LSAs in parenthesis) <sup>1</sup>		(3) Countries recognizing Baha'i holy days		(4) Countries recognizing Baha'i marriage	
	1964	1973	1964	1973	1964	1973
Africa	34 [2.4]	142 [2.8]	7	11	5	7
Americas	223 [31.5]	522 [16.1]	5	23	8	10
Asia	61 [2.7]	689 [8.6]	4	10	7	9
Australasia	33	76	3	10	3	10



	[40.2]	[20.1]				
Europe	62 [34.1]	127 [31.4]	1	10	2	4
<b>World</b>	<b>413</b> <b>[9.0]</b>	<b>1,556</b> <b>[9.1]</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40</b>

Source: BW15: 291-94.

Note: Figures in parenthesis calculated from Table 8.3.

Overall, the total number of countries in which Baha'i holy days and/or marriage have been officially recognized by the authorities is limited, with respectively only 20 and 26 countries in 1964, and 64 and 40 in 1973 – less than the Plan goals of gaining recognition of Baha'i marriage certificates in 87 countries, and of Baha'i holy days in 95 countries (BW 14: 114-16).<sup>70</sup>

Some individual achievements were also of particular significance, notably: (1) the realization of the 'long-sought' legal recognition of the Faith in Italy (in 1966), which resulted in the legal incorporation of the national and all local spiritual assemblies and enabled the Baha'is to establish their own publishing trust, an achievement hailed by the House of Justice as a "MILESTONE" in the progress of the Faith in "HEART" of "CHRISTENDOM"; and (2) the recognition of the Faith as one of Iceland's religions (by Ridván 1967), enabling the local assembly in Reykjavik to be legally incorporated, its chairman to perform Baha'i marriages and burials, Baha'i institutions to be given certain tax

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70. An alternative source gives the total number of national assemblies to have gained official recognition for Baha'i marriage within their area of jurisdiction by 1984 as 49. Of these, ten had gained recognition before the end of the Ten Year Crusade in 1963, and another thirty during the 1963-73 period. The assemblies listed are as follows:

**Up to the end of the Ten Year Crusade (10):**

- 1939 United States
- 1949 Hawaii; Haiti
- 1950 Brazil
- 1953 Alaska
- 1956 Liberia
- 1958 Australia; Canada
- 1961 New Zealand; Panama.

**The 1963-73 period (30):**

- 1964 Finland
- 1965 Rhodesia
- 1966 Iceland
- 1968 Fiji; Korea (South); Pakistan
- 1969 Lebanon; Philippines
- 1970 Virgin Islands; Bermuda; Trinidad and Tobago; Malaysia
- 1971 Swaziland; Tanzania; Solomon Islands; Puerto Rico; Tonga; Norway
- 1972 Bangladesh
- 1972 Taiwan; Sweden; Ghana; Zambia
- 1973 Kiribati; Singapore; Uganda; Laos; Caroline Islands; Samoa; Papua New Guinea.

It will be noted that 7 of the assemblies are in Africa, 10 in the Americas, 9 in Asia, 10 in Australasia, and 4 in Europe. See *Baha'i International News Service* 143 (March 1985), p.13.

exemptions, and Baha'i holy days to be observed (MU#39; 42.5).

**8. Property acquisition.** Both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice have set the Baha'i national assemblies the goal of acquiring properties, specifically a suitable building to serve as a national Baha'i headquarters and the seat and meeting place of the national assembly (the national *Haziratu'l-Quds*);<sup>71</sup> a site for a future Baha'i temple; and a 'national endowment' – a piece of land owned by the assembly.<sup>72</sup> Each national assembly and projected national assembly area should have one of each, and both in 1963/4 and 1973, almost all assemblies had achieved these goals (see Table 8.11), with the acquisition of temple sites evidently proving the most difficult objective: in 1963/4 only 46 out of 56 assemblies had such sites, whilst by 1973, 15 out of 113 assemblies still lacked temple sites.

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71. On the *Haziratu'l-Quds* ('Sacred Fold') see CEBF, loc. cit.

72. For a list of the acquisition goals for national *Haziratu'l-Quds*, temple sites and endowment lands see BW 14: 107-9. Writing in May 1964, the House noted that in the case of national Baha'i centres it was sufficient for the building to be a 'modest structure' as long as it was sited in a 'dignified location' within the civil limits of the city or town specified in the plan (temple sites, by contrast, did not have to be within the city limits as long as they were located close to the city). National endowments were for the moment purely token land purchases. Extensive acquisitions were not necessary, and the goal could be achieved quite simply through a land donation by one of the Baha'is (MU#16.6-7).

**Table 8.11. National headquarters, endowments and temple sites.**

Region	National <i>Hazíratu'l-Quds</i>		National endowments		Temple sites [No. of Temples in parenthesis]	
	R1964	R1973	R1964	R1973	R1964	R1973
Africa	4	31	4	29	5 [1]	26 [1]
Americas	24	29	24	28	22 [1]	26 [2]
Asia	9	25	9	22	8 [0]*	21

Australasia	3	10	3	8	3 [1]	9 [1]
Europe	15	17	15	17	8 [1]	16 [1]
World	56	112	56	104	46 [4]	98 [5]

Source: BW15: 291-94.

**Other property goals.** The House also set some national spiritual assemblies – mostly in poorer parts of the world – goals of establishing teaching institutes (32);<sup>73</sup> institutions for Baha’i learning (‘Summer’ and ‘Winter’ Schools) (4), Baha’i-operated public schools (in Burma and Uganda), and local *Haziratu’l-Quds* and endowments (in 20 and 10 countries respectively) (BW 14: 114, 123). A goal of building two Baha’i temples was also set, and the national spiritual assemblies of Iran and Iraq were directed to acquire specific Baha’i holy sites (BW 14: 122).<sup>74</sup>

#### **D. PUBLISHING, TRANSLATION AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY.**

**9. Translations.** An essential adjunct to the successful consolidation of the Baha’i Faith as a global religion is the ready availability of its literature in a large number of languages. This was an objective on which Shoghi Effendi had placed much emphasis, encouraging the Baha’is to translate both Baha’i scripture and expository works into indigenous languages around the world as part of the expansion plans which he initiated. This same policy was continued by The Universal House of Justice.

Already, by 1964, Baha’i literature had been produced in some 323 languages (including the languages of Esperanto and Interlingua), and the Nine Year Plan called for translations to be made into an additional 133 languages (BW14: 111-12). In the event, translations were made into an additional 266 languages, giving a final total of 589 languages by 1973.<sup>75</sup> By

73. Writing in May 1964, the House explained that teaching institutes were an activity rather than a place as such, and were intended to deepen the knowledge of the Baha’is so as to prepare them to participate actively in the teaching work. In some countries, however – particularly where mass teaching was already taking place – a modest structure could be built or purchased in the rural areas where the mass teaching was actually occurring. Elsewhere, the institutes could be conducted in local Baha’i centres, or in rented accommodation such as those used for most Baha’i Summer Schools (MU#16.8).

74. In Iran, the Baha’is were to acquire two sites associated with the Báb, the prison of Mákú and his place of execution in Tabriz. They were also to transfer the remains of the Báb’s wife to a chosen site and construct her tomb. In Iraq, the Baha’is were to acquire the site of the Ridván Garden in Baghdad (where Bahá’u’lláh had first declared his messianic status to his immediate followers in 1863) and identify and transfer the remains of the Báb’s mother (BW 14: 122). In the event, it appears that it was not possible to achieve any of these objectives. However, another fortress in which the Báb had been imprisoned (at Chihriq) was acquired (MU#42.5).

75. There would seem to be some slight discrepancy between these figures and others which are available. Thus, a statistical summary prepared by the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land in 1963 lists 309 languages ‘in which Baha’i literature has been translated and printed’ (131 for Asia and Australasia combined, 97 for Africa, 41 for Europe and 40 for the Americas), with an additional 9 languages into which Baha’i literature was in the process of being translated (HISC 11-13). A supplementary ‘*Addenda*’ summarizing additional achievements in 1963-64 lists 37 ‘New languages into which Baha’i literature has been translated and printed’ (Hands, *Addenda* 6), a figure which would mean that literature had been translated into at least 346 (309+37) languages. To add further confusion, the *Bahá’i World* listing for Ridván 1963 gives 300 languages ‘into which Baha’i literature has been translated’ (127 for Asia and

continent, the largest group of languages were African (32% of the total), followed by languages of the Americas (30%), Asia (17%), Australasia (12%), and Europe (9%) (Table 8.12, BW15: 291-94).

Evidently, the amount of Baha'i literature translated into some of these languages was quite limited in extent – amounting perhaps to little more than a prayer or two, but clearly for an increasing number of languages, the available Baha'i literature was better developed, including both scripture and works of exposition.<sup>76</sup> In this context, it is of note that one of the goals of the Nine Year Plan was for the enrichment of Baha'i literature through additional publications in 45 languages (5 in the Americas, 23 in Asia and 17 in Europe) (BW14: 112-13).

The House emphasized that the translation of Baha'i literature into new languages was urgent in that it helped determine the effectiveness of the teaching work. It should also be carefully coordinated with the settlement of pioneers into the areas where the languages were spoken (MU#16.10).

**Table 8.12. Languages and publishing trusts.**

Region	Languages into which Baha'i literature has been translated		Baha'i publishing trusts	
	R1964	R1973	R1964	R1973
Africa	115	186	1	1

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Australasia combined, 94 for Africa, 42 for Europe and 37 for the Americas) (BW13: 462-64) – with translations into another 9 languages in process. Both the 309 and 300 figures include Esperanto (listed as a European language). There may also be a small error in the figure for Australasian languages for 1973: the figure given in *Bahá'i World* is 68, but only 67 are actually listed (BW15, cf pp.293, 714-5, 716). This would give a total figure worldwide of 586 languages excluding the two invented ones. I am not at present able to resolve these complexities.

76. Some indication of the extent of Baha'i literature available in 1963 is given in a lengthy listing of selected titles in various languages (BW13: 1063-1110). Languages with at least 5 published titles excluding pamphlets included the following: Albanian, Arabic, Burmese, Danish, Dutch, English, Esperanto, Finnish, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Kanarese, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, and Urdu. If works in manuscript or mimeograph copy were also included, then Armenian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Indonesian, Korean, Norwegian, Samoan, Serbian, Sesutho, Swahili, and Swedish should be added. Unfortunately, volume 13 of *Bahá'i World*, covering the years 1954-63, is the last to include so much detailed information on Baha'i publications and translations.

Americas	37	100	3	3
Asia	99	179	2	5
Australasia	28	68	0	0
Europe	42	54	2	6
<b>World</b>	<b>321*</b>	<b>587*</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>

Source: BW15: 291-94, 703-4.

\*Excludes Esperanto and Interlingua.

**10. Publishing.** Baha'i books were produced by a variety of publishers. By the end of the Ten Year Crusade in 1963, a total of 8 national Baha'i publishing trusts had been established (in Argentina, Brazil, Britain, Germany (the Federal Republic), India, Iran, Uganda, and the United States of America) (BW13: 476).<sup>77</sup> The Nine Year Plan called for the establishment of four more (in Belgium, Italy, Pakistan and Tunisia) (BW14: 113), but in the event, a total of 7 new trusts were established, bringing the overall total to 15 by 1973 (BW15: 703-4). In addition to those planned in Belgium, Italy and Pakistan, there were new trusts in Spain, Sweden, and Taiwan. A trust formed in the Lebanon presumably took the place of the trust originally projected for Tunisia as a publisher for Arabic Baha'i literature.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to the publishing trusts (bodies with a separate legal existence from their respective national spiritual assemblies), official Baha'i publishing was also conducted by publishing committees established by a number of national assemblies. There were also a small number of independent publishers specializing in the production of Baha'i literature, notably George Ronald of Oxford in England (established in 1947 and effectively the first independent Baha'i publisher in the world). The Universal House of Justice also established its own publishing arm.

77. Apart from the British Publishing Trust, established in 1937 and the first in the world, the other trusts were all formed during the Ten Year Crusade (HISC 8). The American Publishing Trust replaced the earlier Publishing Committee.

78. The full list of Baha'i publishing trusts in 1973 was:

- Argentina
- Belgium†
- Brazil
- Germany (Federal Republic)
- India
- Iran
- Italy\*
- Near East (Beirut)\*
- Pakistan\*
- Spain\*
- Sweden\*
- Taiwan\*
- Uganda
- United Kingdom (formerly British Isles)
- United States

Trusts established in the early years of the Nine Year Plan (1964-68) marked †. Those established in the later years (1968-73) marked \*.

Between them, these trusts, committees and private publishers were able to generate an increasing volume of Baha'i literature in most of the major languages of the world, most particularly in English, but also in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Persian, Portuguese and Spanish. Perhaps even more than had been the case during the guardianship of Shoghi Effendi, English was the preeminent language of Baha'i publishing as well as of international Baha'i discourse.<sup>79</sup> Persian-language Baha'i works remained relatively difficult to obtain outside of Iran, the Pahlavi regime tacitly permitting the Iranian Baha'is to lithograph quantities of literature for their own use, but not allowing large scale publication (CEBF, 'publishing', loc. cit.).

**11. Ethnic diversity.** One of the objectives which Shoghi Effendi had set the Baha'is was to increase the diversity of their membership, both in terms of social background and what we would nowadays refer to as ethnicity. By reaching out to all groups within their societies, the Baha'is would both proffer their 'life-giving' message to all peoples and demonstrate to all that the Baha'i Faith was able to unite people of diverse backgrounds. The concept of human diversity is extremely complex of course. In some societies, particular linguistic, religious, 'tribal' and perceived racial differences are significant and sharply defined. In others they are not. Again, the definition of significant difference varies greatly from one society to another, whilst the ethnic identity of particular individuals may vary from one context to another.

These complexities notwithstanding, Shoghi Effendi himself prepared lists of 'Races represented in the Baha'i World Community', 'Minority groups and races' which had been contacted by the Baha'is, and 'African tribes represented in the Baha'i Faith'.<sup>80</sup> The Hands of the Cause followed this example and provided lists of races and tribes represented in the Faith at the end of the Ten Year Crusade in 1963 (71 'races', 348 African tribes, 83 Amerindian tribes, and 87 Asian and Pacific tribes and peoples) (BW13: 464-68).<sup>81</sup>

For its part, the Universal House of Justice as part of the Nine Year Plan prepared a list of 55 'Minority groups and races' which were 'to be increasingly taught and enrolled [in the Faith]' (BW14: 113). Under its direction, lists were also prepared of 'Tribes and peoples represented in the Baha'i Faith' as of Ridván 1968 – with 662 for Africa, 165 for the Americas, 228 for Asia, and 64 for Australasia (1,119 in total); and of 'Major ethnic and language groups

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79. Some small indication of the preeminence of English is provided by a select list of general introductory and expository Baha'i books provided by the Baha'i World Centre for 1973. Of 42 titles, 34 were available in English, 18 in Spanish, 12 in French, 10 in German, 9 in Portuguese, 5 in Persian, and 4 in Arabic. Most of the books in languages other than English were translations from English, but there were six Spanish and two German works which had evidently been authored in those languages and had not been translated into any other language (BW15: 753). A similar list of 17 major published works of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá comprised 16 in English, 14 in Persian, 13 in German, 11 in French, 10 in Arabic, 9 in Spanish, and 5 in Portuguese (BW15: 751).

80. See Shoghi, *The Bahá'í Faith, 1844-1952: Information Statistical & Comparative*, pp. 11-12. The numbers given (all for 1952) are 30 'races' (for the most part nationalities), 15 minority groups (mostly Amerindian groupings), and 12 African tribes.

81. HISC lists an extra African tribe (the Shona) (p.18). In the *Addenda*, a further 83 tribal groups are listed as being represented in the Faith by 1964 (23 in Africa, 16 in the Americas, and 14 in Asia) (Hands, *Addenda* 6-7).

represented in the Baha'i World Community' – 92 in all (BW14: 167-87). In the summary report at the end of the Plan, only overall numbers were given, however: with an increase in the worldwide number of 'Indigenous tribes, races and ethnic groups represented in the Baha'i Faith' from an estimated 518 for 1964 to 1,607 for 1973 (BW15: 291, see Table 8.13). Given the ambiguity of concepts like 'tribe' and 'race', these lists and figures raise major definitional problems, but the overall picture is clear enough: during the Nine Year Plan – as previously in the Ten Year Crusade, the Baha'is were successful in significantly increasing the ethnic diversity of the community.

**Table 8.13. 'Indigenous tribes, races and ethnic groups' represented in the Baha'i community.**

<b>Region</b>	<b>R1964</b>	<b>R1973</b>
Africa	348	1,012
Americas	83	234
Asia	73	261
Australasia	14	78
Europe	unknown	22
<b>World</b>	<b>518 [est.]</b>	<b>1,607</b>

*Source:* BW15: 291-94.



## **8. Progress and implementation.**

**1. The process of implementation.** Having set the Baha'is of the world a detailed set of goals for the Nine Year Plan, the House of Justice then guided them through a process of implementation, reporting on progress made, reminding them of goals that still needed to be achieved, establishing priorities for action, and responding to particular difficulties and opportunities which emerged as time went by.

Progress towards the accomplishment of the goals therefore contained an element of flexibility – so that the planning of future activity could be adjusted in response to what had already been achieved. Thus, the judgement of when a particular new national assembly was ready to be formed depended on the rate of progress that was occurring within the territory in question, and additional goals could be added if circumstances were favourable.<sup>82</sup> Again, national assemblies were told that if they experienced any difficulties in the implementation of their specific goals, or needed any clarification about the goals, they should contact the House (MU#16.11), and there was evidently a continuing process of consultation between the House and individual national assemblies, as well as between the Hands (and later the Counsellors) and the assemblies. In order to provide effective overall direction of the Plan, the House needed both effective national assemblies (who did the bulk of the work of implementation) and regular, accurate and up to date information on what was going on in every part of the Baha'i world.

One element of planning which the House of Justice favoured was the phasing of goals, national assemblies being instructed that if they had been given what appeared to be a particular demanding goal, they should consider phasing the task systematically (sending a copy of this 'internal plan' to Haifa when it had been worked out). The House itself came to identify – and amend – a series of phases in the overall work of the Plan, four phases ((1) Ridván 1964 to Ridván 1966; (2) Ridván 1966 to October 1967; (3) October 1967 to Ridván 1969; (4) Ridván 1969 to Ridván 1973) eventually being referred to (below).

The House issued regular summaries of progress made, mostly in the form of an almost annual Ridván message addressed to 'the Baha'is of the world'.<sup>83</sup> These messages reported

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82. For example, in September 1966, having previously stated that nine new national spiritual assemblies would be formed at the following Ridván, the House announced that changed circumstances meant that the formation of the Cambodian assembly would have to be postponed, but that three additional national assemblies (Belize, Laos and Sikkim) would be formed (MU#38) – Sikkim being supplementary to the Plan. Similarly, in August 1969, the House announced that an additional assembly – for Central Africa – would be established at the following Ridván in light of "the succession of victories, resulting from the prodigious efforts exerted by the devoted friends [Baha'is]" (MU#71). Again, the changing situation in East Pakistan – soon to become Bangladesh – led to the formation of a separate national assembly there (supplementary to the Plan) in 1972.

83. For the 1965 message see MU#24; for 1966 see MU#34; for 1967, MU#42; for 1969, MU#68; for 1970, MU#81; for 1971, MU#96; for 1972, MU#110; and for 1973, MU#128. The House did not send its customary Ridván message in 1968 – the time of the Second International Baha'i Convention (21-24 April), but instead sent a cable to the national conventions in May (MU#57). The Ridván message for 1970 unusually also took the form of a cable, and was addressed to all national assemblies rather than 'The Baha'is of the World'.

outstanding achievements over the previous year, identified problems, set immediate goals, notified the Baha'is of forthcoming developments, and invariably praised the work and assistance of the Hands of the Cause.

**2. The first phase: Ridván 1964 to Ridván 1966.** During the first two years of the Plan, The House of Justice issued major messages on mass teaching (MU#18) and the need for 'universal participation' (MU#19); established continental pioneer committees and an International Deputization Fund to promote pioneering; and issued the first of its major calls for international pioneers. The Langenhain temple in Germany was also dedicated for public worship, preparatory work on the Panama temple project begun, and means found to lighten the work load of the Hands of the Cause, including the appointment of more Auxiliary Board members.

There was also substantial progress in several aspects of the Plan's national goals,<sup>84</sup> and by Ridván 1965, the House was able to report that 17 new territories had been opened to the Faith and 6 others resettled (MU#24.4). A year later, it noted that as a result of pioneer moves, 24 additional new territories had been opened to the Faith, 4 more resettled, and 93 strengthened (MU#34.2-3). There were also substantial increases in the number of localities in which Baha'is resided, as well as large-scale increases in the number of Baha'is – most notably in India, where the total number of Baha'is exceeded 140,000 by Ridván 1965 (MU#24.2).<sup>85</sup> Again, several of the property, legal incorporation, official recognition, and translation goals had already been won. Only one new national spiritual assembly was formed (Brunei, supplementary to the Plan), but the House felt that sufficient progress had been made for another nine assemblies to be formed in 1967 – later raised to 11 (MU#34.5; 38).

**Ridván 1965.** Commenting on the situation at Ridván 1965, the House asserted that the 'tide of victory' which had carried the Baha'is of the world to the World Congress (the 'Most Great Jubilee') was still rising. 'A ceaseless shower of divine confirmations' was raining upon the Baha'is' efforts, as evidenced by the many 'noteworthy achievements' of the first year of the Plan (MU#24.1). The worldwide Baha'i community evidenced two conditions: (i) within the Faith, the capacity of the Baha'is to accomplish whatever definite goals were assigned, and (ii) an almost universal sense of 'an impending breakthrough to large-scale conversion' (MU#24.5-24.6). The foundations for 'great victories' were now being laid, and the Baha'is would be able to pursue these with concentration, resolution and relentlessness as the Plan progressed (MU#24.13). The 'majestic process' which had been launched by Shoghi Effendi with the calling of the Ten Year Crusade was gathering momentum. The Baha'i world community had then been widely-scattered and obscure, so that posterity might well be awestruck at the way in which what was still a small section of the human race was developing 'the very pattern and sinews of world order'. This process was 'divinely-

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84. Already in May 1964, the House reported two cases of almost immediate accomplishment of particular objectives (MU#16.2).

85. The Ridván message for 1965 states that the number of centres where Baha'is resided had increased from over 15,000 at Ridván 1964 to over 21,000 (15,168 to 21,006) – an increase of almost 6,000 in a single year. In the same period, the number of Baha'is in India had increased by more than 30,000 to over 140,000 (MU#24.1). The Department of Statistics figures cited in Chapter 8, give the locality figures as 17,650 (1964) and 22,244 (1965).

propelled' and would continue 'its historic course' until it reached its final consummation in the promised kingdom of God on Earth (MU#24.23).

The House also presented the Baha'is with four 'challenging and immediate' tasks:

- (1) the dispatch of 461 international pioneers;
- (2) to raise 'the intensity of teaching to a pitch never before attained' so as to achieve the 'vast increase' in Baha'i numbers called for in the plan;
- (3) to acquire as rapidly as was possible the remaining property goals of the Plan; and
- (4) to prepare national and local plans for a global proclamation of the Faith to 'the generality of mankind' which would begin in the Autumn of 1967 (MU#24.7-14). These activities would include the holding of six intercontinental conferences.

**Ridván 1966.** Marking the end of the second year of the Plan at Ridván 1966, the House lauded the movement of 505 pioneers during the course of the year. This was the largest number of individuals ever to pioneer in a single year, and there was every hope that with the exception of 34 posts which were to be opened only if conditions were favourable, all the immediate appeal goals would be filled or have firm commitments for settlers. The 'gratitude and admiration of the entire Baha'i world' went out to 'this noble band' of dedicated Baha'is who had responded to the call (MU#34.1-2). The 'splendid achievements' in pioneering and teaching, together with the 'enthusiastic attention' given to the preparation of proclamation plans for 1967 had 'sealed with success' what the House now identified as the first phase of the Nine Year Plan. A 'second phase' would now begin (MU#34.7).

**3. The second phase: Ridván 1966 to October 1967.** At Ridván 1966, the House announced that a second phase of the Plan was now beginning, during which the Baha'is of the world would have to prepare and 'arm' themselves for the third phase, which would consist of a period of proclamation, starting in October 1967 with the six intercontinental conferences and continuing until the end of the Nine Year Plan. Five tasks faced the Baha'is as it entered this second phase of the Plan:

- (1) to complete the settlement of pioneers and to dispatch others as needed;
- (2) 'intensive preparation' for the third phase of the Plan through the development of new 'teaching measures' and the expansion of the various Baha'i funds;
- (3) acceleration of the provision of Baha'i literature – particularly translation and publication in those languages in which there was as yet little or no material;
- (4) the acquisition of the remaining property goals; and
- (5) the development of the Panama Temple Fund (MU#34.7-8).

The House also called for a "constant stream" of travelling teachers, and more generally, directed the attention of the Baha'is to the importance of more intensive teaching (again, "to a pitch never before attained"); support for the Baha'i funds; and individual responsibility. '(H)eroic deeds' were now called for, such as were only performed 'by divinely sustained and detached souls' (MU#34.9-11, 17).

The following eighteen months saw achievements in all these areas. The House of Justice also issued guidance on such topics as the Baha'i funds; teaching, consolidation and deepening; the nature of the forthcoming proclamation campaign; and the increasingly important role played by youth.

In March 1967, the House noted its pleasure at the progress of the Plan so far: almost all of the accessible goal territories which had needed to be opened to the Faith had now been settled; a programme of progressive consolidation and continued expansion was being pursued; plans for the Panama temple were well advanced; the various property goals were being steadily acquired; 81 of the 108 national assemblies called for in the Plan would soon be in existence (eleven additional national spiritual assemblies were formed in 1967, more than originally planned); and the opening of the proclamation period was fast approaching. Projects at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa-Akka which had been held in abeyance so as to concentrate financial resources elsewhere were now to proceed (MU#40.1-2). At Ridván 1967, the House also reported the formation of over 6,000 new local assemblies and the completion of about 200 international travel-teaching projects. Moreover, in 53 territories, the full number of local assemblies, groups and localities called for in the Plan had already been achieved (MU#42.3).

In its Ridván message of 1967, the House acknowledged 'with thankful hearts' the evidences of 'Divine favor' with which Bahá'u'lláh unfailingly sustained and confirmed the 'dedicated efforts' of the Baha'is worldwide, and 'unhesitatingly' affirmed its confidence that the Baha'is would achieve 'complete victory' through their 'determination and sacrificial efforts' (MU#42.1). The House regarded the various 'visible achievements' that had been gained to be the consequence of the Faith's 'organic vitality'. There was constant movement throughout the worldwide Baha'i community, reminiscent of 'the ceaseless surge of the sea'. This was 'the real cause of its growth'. At the same time there were constant services – assemblies facing difficult problems, devising plans and shouldering responsibility for national and local communities growing in numbers and consciousness; committees striving to accomplish objectives; young Baha'is 'in eager and dedicated activity'; individuals and families striving to teach the Faith or hold a fireside gathering – and these services attracted 'the confirmation of Bahá'u'lláh'. Indeed, the more these services were supported by prayers and 'intense dedication' and the more extensive they became, the more they released into the world 'a spiritual charge' which 'no force on earth' could resist, and which eventually would necessarily bring about 'the complete triumph' of the Baha'i Cause (MU#42.7).

In terms of the tasks that now needed to be addressed, there was a requirement both for more pioneers, more financial resources, and to prepare for the global proclamation campaign that was to start in October 1967. Underlying these endeavours, however, was the imperative to pay constant attention to the development of each national Baha'i community's homefront. These were the 'solid bases' from which all Baha'i expansion began. They were the sources of manpower and administrative experience for all expansion activity whether at home or abroad, and this was reflected in the predominance given to them in terms of Plan goals – assemblies and groups to be established and new Baha'is to be gained. The systematic approach of several national assemblies in adopting annual quotas for achieving these goals was highly recommended (MU#42.13).

The House also directed the Baha'is to consider anew what was meant by 'deepening', and to develop a profounder understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's purpose for the human race. The House was '(m)indful of the countless expressions of divine love' which were found in the Baha'i scriptures and was aware of 'the extraordinary nature of the crisis' which was now facing humanity, and because of this called upon the Baha'is to realize that 'very great things' were expected from them at the present time (MU#42.26).

**4. The third phase: October 1967 to Ridván 1969.** The House of Justice had originally intended the third phase of the Plan to run from October 1967, with the holding of six intercontinental conferences and opening of the proclamation campaign, all the way through to the end of the Plan (MU#34.7), but evidently later decided that delineation of a fourth phase (from Ridván 1969) would be useful. As planned, the proclamation campaign began in October 1967, involving a massive effort to attract public attention to the existence of the Faith worldwide. The campaign and the conferences are discussed in later chapters.

Apart from the ongoing work on the plan goals and the proclamation campaign, the third phase also saw the House of Justice assuming direct representation of the Baha'i International Community at the United Nations; the reelection of the Universal House of Justice at the Second International Convention (Ridván 1968); the establishment of the Continental Boards of Counsellors (June 1968); and the holding of a large international conference in Palermo, Italy (23-25 August 1968), followed by a mass pilgrimage to Baha'i World Centre (26-31 August) to commemorate the centenary of the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in Akka. The House also issued an important reminder that the Baha'is should not involve themselves in politics (December 1967).

**Ridván 1968.** In April 1968, the Second International Convention was held in Haifa and the House did not send its customary Ridván message. Instead, it sent a short cable to all national Baha'i conventions shortly after the International Convention delegates had returned to their homes, praising the 'DEDICATED SPIRIT' and 'MATURE DELIBERATIONS' of the Haifa meeting, and hailing the 'GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY' presented by the national conventions to 'GALVANIZE' the Baha'is as the 'CRUCIAL MIDWAY POINT' of the Nine Year Plan approached. Now was the time for the Baha'is to direct all their efforts to the achievement of 'EVERY REMAINING GOAL' of the Plan, as well as simultaneously extending and accelerating the universal proclamation of the Baha'i message. With the 'UTMOST LOVE', the House called upon all Baha'is to make a 'SACRIFICIAL OUTPOURING' of their energies and resources so as to advance the 'REDEEMING ORDER' of Bahá'u'lláh, an Order which was the 'SOLE REFUGE' of the 'MISDIRECTED' the 'HEEDLESS' millions of the world's population. The House prayed that the Baha'is would be rewarded for their dedication and ardour with 'COMPLETE' and 'GLORIOUS' victory. The House also announced that its members had held prolonged consultations with the Hands of the Cause regarding the development of the Faith (the formation of the Continental Boards of Counsellors was announced shortly after this) (MU#57).

**Notes of concern.** Despite the achievements that had already been made, by the Summer of 1968, the House of Justice was evidently concerned that the accomplishment of some of the Plan goals was lagging behind. This was evidenced by the House's message to the Palermo Conference participants in August 1968, in which it noted that whilst much had been accomplished, the midway point of the Nine Year Plan had now [almost] been reached, but more than half of the goals had yet to be won, with the greatest shortfalls being in the opening of new territories where Baha'is resided and the formation of local spiritual assemblies – which in turn inevitably affected the ability to establish new national assemblies. A dramatic upsurge in 'effective teaching' was now needed. So too were more pioneers, travelling teachers and funding, the House hoping that the conference would

generate ‘a great spiritual dynamic’ which would reinforce the already rising momentum of activity and carry the Baha’is to victory by the end of the Plan (MU#63.9).

Again, in September 1968, the House expressed its concern that whilst the Plan was now almost half over, there were substantial shortfalls in progress towards the attainment of some goals, notably the formation of new local spiritual assemblies and the opening of new localities where Baha’is resided: an additional 6,997 assemblies (76% of the goal) and over 22,800 localities (59% of the goal) had to be gained. Hundreds of pioneers and travelling teachers were needed, many of whom would serve in their own countries. The Baha’is worldwide should join ‘in the true spirit of universal participation’, and win the remaining Plan goals ‘while there is yet time’. Each individual should assume his or her ‘full measure of responsibility’ so that everyone could share ‘the laurels of accomplishment’ at the end of the Plan. Those who were not able to pioneer or travel teach should contribute to the International Deputization Fund. The House members prayed that the centenary of Bahá’u’lláh’s exile which had just been commemorated would mark a ‘significant turning-point’ in the fortunes of the Plan (MU#66.3-5).

**Ridván 1969.** Reviewing the year just ended at Ridván 1969, the House noted that the “Cause of God” had continued to pursue “its majestic course”, with the extension of the range of the Faith’s activities and influence. A year of “remarkable activity” had begun with the Second International Convention and the new election of the House, and had been marked both by the establishment of the new institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors (the ‘most significant and far-reaching development’ of the year, which had fulfilled the Nine Year Plan goal of extending the institutional functions of the Hands of the Cause, and later the Palermo Conference and the mass visitation of Baha’is to Bahá’u’lláh’s shrine which followed it. More generally, the Baha’is had managed to attract increasing attention to the ‘healing message’ of the Faith, both through the success of the campaign to distribute copies of the compilation *The Proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh*, and through the Baha’is’ utilization of the United Nations’ designation of 1968 as Human Rights Year to both strengthen their ties with the UN and to proclaim the Faith and its teachings. Progress towards many of the objectives of the Plan was also proceeding well, with ‘great strides’ towards the achievement of the property acquisition, translation, and assembly incorporation goals. Preparatory work for the Panama temple was well advanced, and another two national assemblies were now forming – with another ten planned for the following year. The pace of expansion and consolidation had accelerated, and if ‘fostered and fed’ would become a ‘full tide of victorious achievement’ (MU#68.2-8).

**5. The fourth phase: Ridván 1969 onwards.** In its Ridván message for 1969, the House also announced that a ‘fourth phase’ of the Nine Year Plan was now beginning. After five years of ‘strenuous labour’, the ‘Baha’i World Community’ was ‘bearing the laurels of outstanding victories’. In this new phase, the most pressing need continued to be a rapid increase in the number of Baha’is and in the number of localities opened to the Faith and of ‘well-grounded’ local assemblies formed. This would be the ‘hallmark’ of the new phase of the Plan, and would create the ‘essential foundation’ for the erection of the remaining national spiritual assemblies called for in the Plan. The ‘present condition of mankind’ offered ‘tremendous opportunities’ for the Baha’is, and their activities would be ‘strongly reinforced’ by their continuing proclamation campaign, international travelling teaching, and inter-assembly

cooperation. A ‘sacrificial outpouring’ in support of the Baha’i funds and the ‘raising up’ of a ‘mighty host’ of pioneers was also needed – the House making its second major call for pioneers at this time (MU#68.10-12).

The ‘happy consummation’ of the Plan was now ‘faintly discernable on the far horizon’. The work was well advanced and was blessed by the ‘never-ceasing confirmations of Bahá’u’lláh’. The entire Baha’i community worldwide was committed to ‘complete victory’. Victory would only be gained through a combination of factors, however. These were: (1) hard work; (2) realistic planning; (3) ‘sacrificial deeds’; (4) intensification of the teaching work; and (5) the constant endeavour by every Baha’i to live up to the standards of the Faith. This last factor was the most important of all (MU#68.13).

**More appeals for action.** In a series of successive messages, the House made further appeals for action by the Baha’is. Thus, in November 1969, it called upon the Baha’is worldwide to join the members of the House in prayer during the nineteen day feast for the month of Sultán (the Feast of Sovereignty on 19 January), so that ‘we will all become so imbued with zeal, courage and enthusiasm’ that nothing would be able to delay the Baha’is’ ‘victorious onward march’ during the remainder of the Plan (MU#73.6).

Again, in its Ridván message for 1970 (which took the form of a cable rather than the customary letter), the House noted that the Baha’i ‘world community’ had “AMPLIFY DEMONSTRATED” its ability to scale the heights of devotion and sacrifice and win ‘ASTONISHING VICTORIES’ for its ‘WORLD-REDEEMING’, ‘WORLD-HEALING’, and ‘WORLD-UNITING’ Faith. The Nine Year Plan had already been marked by great achievements in pioneering; proclamation; the public recognition of the Faith; the upsurge in youth activities; the acquisition of Baha’i properties; the commencement of construction work for the Panama temple; and developments at the Baha’i World Centre. The ‘URGENT’, ‘IMMEDIATE’ and ‘VITAL’ need now was to concentrate attention both on increasing the number of Baha’is, of localities where Baha’is resided and of local spiritual assemblies; and to fill the large number of remaining pioneer goals. ‘TOTAL VICTORY’ required more pioneers, as well as more funds and more new Baha’is. The Hands, Counsellors, and Auxiliary Board and national and local spiritual assembly members, together with ‘EVERY SINGLE FOLLOWER’ of the Faith, were all therefore ‘SUMMONED’ to exert the ‘UTMOST EFFORT’ during the remaining years of the Plan. The achievement of this step in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan would endow the Baha’i community with the capacity needed for its administrative agencies to undertake the next stage in the implementation of the ‘SUPREME PURPOSE’ of Bahá’u’lláh’s revelation, that is, the unification of mankind and the establishment of the ‘LONG PROMISED’ Kingdom of God on Earth (MU#81).

Again, in August 1970, the House expressed its members’ prayer that the ties uniting the national Baha’i communities would be reinforced, that they would evince ‘GREATER CONSECRATION’ in meeting the challenging tasks which still lay ahead, and that there would be ‘WIDER PARTICIPATION’ from ‘ALL RANKS’ of the Baha’is (MU#85). Three months later, in November, it referred to the ‘challenging and crucial’ closing period of the Nine Year Plan that the Baha’is were now entering. At its end, what greater gift could they give to Bahá’u’lláh than ‘the proclamation of Victory’ in his name (MU#86.1). In December, it reported that there was insufficient support for the Baha’i International Fund, and called for increased contributions (MU#87). Again, in February 1971, the House appealed to the

Baha'is to seize the "UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES" of the present hour and "SPARE NO EFFORT" until the remaining goals of the Plan were fully accomplished, thereby attracting Bahá'u'lláh's "INESTIMABLE BLESSINGS" to themselves and their communities. In particular, the pioneers who were scheduled to move into the territories of the new national spiritual assemblies that were about to be established at Ridván 1971 should settle in their posts "WITHOUT DELAY". The Baha'is in the communities that were to establish national assemblies were to 'BRACE THEMSELVES' so as to exert a 'SUPREME EFFORT' and establish as many local spiritual assemblies as possible in the 'FAST FLEETING' weeks that remained, and so strengthen the foundations of the new national assemblies (MU#92).

**Major achievements and activities.** Meanwhile, the major Plan goal of national spiritual assembly formation was beginning to move forward rapidly. By 1969, only 13 additional assemblies had been formed since the beginning of the Plan (16 new assemblies and 3 regional assemblies disbanded), but in the next three years, an additional 31 were formed. Eight major oceanic and continental conferences were also held (1970-71), and the Panama Temple finished and dedicated for worship (April 1972).

**Ridván 1971.** In its Ridván message for 1971, the House referred to a 'new horizon', with intimations of 'thrilling developments', that could now be discerned in the 'unfolding life' of the Faith. This new horizon would be reached through 'complete victory' in the Nine Year Plan. The Plan itself was now 'well advanced': in a year's time the total number of national spiritual assemblies would be 114, six more than originally called for in the Plan; building work on the Panama temple would be finished before the end of the year; the recent international conferences had been a great success, releasing a "wonderful spirit" as well as practical benefits; and there had been a good response to the urgent appeal which the House had had to make four months previously for greater support for the International Baha'i Fund. It was evident, however, that '(r)estrictive measures' against the Faith in a number of countries would make completion of their goals 'virtually impossible', and the Baha'is in those countries who enjoyed the freedom to teach the Faith were therefore encouraged to so surpass their own goals as to 'amply compensate' for the disabilities suffered by their less fortunate coreligionists (MU#96.3-6, 8).

Two major objectives of the Plan remained unfulfilled: the formation of new local spiritual assemblies (10,360 were now in existence, but 14, 966 – an extra 4,606 – were called for in the Plan), and the opening of new localities where Baha'is resided (46,334 at present, with a goal of 54,503 – an extra 8,169).<sup>86</sup> The overall goal figures were in sight, but the time remaining to the end of the Plan was short. Moreover, the total statistics concealed major differences between national communities. The growth of the Faith was uneven both between and within communities, with some communities exceeding their goals whilst other faced 'extreme difficulties' in attaining theirs. Total victory was achievable, but 'mutual help' and an increase in the existing momentum was necessary (MU#96.9). One specific action that was called for was a reinforcement and support of the 'army' of travelling teachers. All of the Baha'is, but particularly the youth, were challenged to consider how much time they could devote to the Faith during the remaining two years of the Plan. Some could undertake teaching visits of short- or long-term duration; others could deputize travelling teachers

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86. In percentage terms, the called for increases were 44.4 percent for assemblies, and 17.6 percent for localities.



financially, or undertake tasks which would free would-be teachers for the teaching work. Thus, the Baha'is would be able to build up a final and united 'surge' of activity that would carry the Plan to victory (MU#96.8).

For the present, the Baha'is needed to focus their energies on their immediate task of accomplishing the goals of the Plan. Victory in this regard was the best preparation for the future and 'the means of developing new powers and capacities' in the community itself. The House members remained confident that 'the Army of Light' (i.e. the Baha'is) would grow in strength and unity such that by the end of the Plan, it would have scaled 'the heights of yet another peak' in a path that led ultimately 'to the broad uplands of the Most Great Peace' (MU#96.11).

**Further encouragement.** In July 1971, the House called upon the Baha'is to commemorate the forthcoming fiftieth anniversary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing to rededicate themselves to winning the remaining Plan goals. Ideally, yet more 'active and dedicated' promoters of the Faith would join those were already helping to win the existing victories so that 'we may all meet our obligations and discharge our sacred trust'. This was a 'crucial stage' in the development of the Plan, and if all remaining goals were quickly won, it would be possible to devote the remaining months of the Plan to 'an even greater expansion of the Faith' as it proceeded on its 'onward march towards the spiritual conquest of the planet' (MU#99.4).

In February 1972, the House announced that the total number of localities in which Baha'is resided worldwide was now 56,645 – more than 2,500 in excess of the original Plan goal. The Baha'is in those areas where the goals were not yet won were urged exert the 'UTMOST EFFORT' during the remaining months of the Plan to win the goals so that they could join the ranks of their 'VICTORIOUS BRETHREN' – who were urged to continue their 'VIGOROUS BRILLIANT EXPLOITS'. The House members were offering prayers of thanksgiving for the divine bounties which surrounded the 'SACRIFICIAL EFFORTS' of the 'LOVE-INTOXICATED' Baha'is (MU#106).

## **6. The final year: Ridván 1972-Ridván 1973.**

**6.1. Ridván 1972.** In its Ridván message for 1972, the House described the Baha'i world at the opening of the final year of the Plan as 'poised for overwhelming victory'. Divine bounties had never ceased 'to rain down upon' this 'blessed' and 'ever-developing embryonic world order', and confirmations continued to attend its efforts. Since the Nine Year Plan began, 'extraordinary advances' had been made in organized and planned Baha'i teaching activities worldwide, the Panama temple was now being dedicated, and a total of 113 national assemblies were about to be formed. The goals for property acquisitions and the establishment of teaching institutes were 'well in hand', and in those countries in which it was possible, the legal incorporation of assemblies and the official recognition of Baha'i marriages and holy days were 'making good progress' (MU#110.1-4). One community (Fiji) bore the laurels of first achieving every one of its goals and led 'the procession of rejoicing and victorious communities within the Army of Light' (MU#110.9).

The main matter of continuing concern for the House remained the achievement of some of the national goals for locality numbers and local assembly formation. It was true that the overall total of localities now exceeded the Plan goal, and that over 260 territories had

achieved or surpassed their goals, but in some 60 or so territories the target figures had still to be met. Achievement of these remaining goals had to be given ‘absolute priority’. It was expected that large numbers of local assemblies would be formed during the present Ridván period [1972], and as soon as the latest figures had been received for assembly and locality numbers in each country, detailed listings of the unfulfilled goals would be sent to all national assemblies ‘for urgent release’ to the Baha’is. The House called on national assemblies to greatly extend ‘the principle of collaboration’ between assemblies, and, as long as it did not jeopardise their own success, those assemblies which had already achieved their goals or would achieve them very soon were asked to consider helping those assemblies which were facing difficulties by supplying pioneers and travelling teachers. There were also international pioneer goals still to be met (MU#110.5-7).

The Baha’is’ ‘immediate and inescapable task’ was to ensure that every remaining attainable Plan goal was achieved. This had to be done ‘at all costs’, even it meant that other cherished plans had to be deferred. No sacrifice could be refused, and what was ‘most important’ had to take precedence over what was merely ‘important’. One last ‘supreme effort’ would surely lead to success. The Baha’i youth were worthy of emulation: their recent surge forward into the vanguard of proclamation and teaching was supported ‘by long-sustained, precedent and continuing prayer’. They had stormed ‘the gates of heaven’ with their prayers, and all Baha’is could do the same, for Bahá’u’lláh was ‘the Hearer of prayers’ and would surely come to their assistance (MU#110.9).

## **6.2. Final preparations for the ending of the Plan.**

-(i) **Assembly formation.** In May 1972, the House announced a significant alteration in normal Baha’i administrative practice, namely, that new local spiritual assemblies could be formed at any time during the final year of the Plan as soon as the number of local adult Baha’is was nine or more. They would not have to wait until 21 April (the first day of Ridván) as was the normal practice. This innovation was introduced so as to ‘stimulate the teaching work’, particularly in those areas where there were large scale entries into the Faith, and increase the number of assemblies which could be reelected on 21 April 1973 without outside assistance (MU#113).

-(ii) **Formal celebrations.** In June 1972, when the end of the Nine Year Plan was in sight, the House of Justice announced that the formal ending would coincide with both the Third International Baha’i Convention at the Baha’i World Centre and a centenary commemoration of Bahá’u’lláh’s revelation of his Most Holy Book, the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*.<sup>87</sup> This event would be celebrated in the Holy Land by the assembled national spiritual assembly members on the Twelfth Day of Ridván [2 May 1973]. Baha’is throughout the world should hold their own national and local celebrations on that day so that they could share in the observance for this ‘highly significant centenary’. The celebrations should be for Baha’is only. The ending of the Plan would be followed by ‘the next stage’ in the promised series of crusades (MU#116.1-2).

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87. The exact period during which the *Aqdas* was composed and the date on which it was completed are uncertain (Shoghi Effendi dates it to shortly after Bahá’u’lláh’s transfer to the house of ‘Údí Khammár, circa 1873 (GPB 213)). The choice of Ridván 1973 as the centenary for its completion had evident symbolic value as further hallowing the end of the Nine Year Plan, whilst at the same time giving the Baha’is a definite occasion on which to consider the significance of the *Aqdas*. The House had already referred to 1973 as the *Aqdas* centenary year in their Ridván messages for 1965 and 1971 (MU#24.20; 96.11), as well as in a message to pioneers in November 1970 (MU#86.1).

In addition to this observance, the Baha'is should also undertake a widespread and month-long proclamation campaign starting on the first day of the Ridván festival [21 April] and continuing until the holy day commemoration of the Declaration of the Báb [22 May]. This campaign should include publicity on both the completion of the Plan and the holding of the International Convention (MU#116.3).

## **7. The achievements of the Plan.**

**7.1. Expansion goals.** The Nine Year Plan ended at Ridván 1973. In its commemorative message to the Baha'is of the world, the House announced that an 'overwhelming victory' had been achieved, and gave thanks for the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh which had enabled this victory to be achieved. The 'Army of Light' had achieved both of the central objectives of its second global campaign: it had surpassed the set goals for the expansion of the Faith and it had attained 'a truly impressive degree of universal participation' (MU#128.1).

The Baha'i Cause was now both enormously more widespread and 'more firmly grounded' than it had been in 1964. The 'expansion' achievements during the nine years of the Plan were as follows:

- (1) 95 new territories had been opened to the Faith;
- (2) the number of national spiritual assemblies had been increased from 69 to 113 [i.e. an increase of 44], five more than the total set in the Plan;
- (3) the total number of local spiritual assemblies had been increased by 12,000 to over 17,000 (3,000 in excess of the goal);
- (4) the total number of localities had increased by 54,000 to 69,500 (15,000 in excess of the goal);
- (5) Baha'i literature had been translated into an additional 225 languages, bringing the total to 571;
- (6) 69 temple sites, 56 national Baha'i centres, and 62 national endowments had been acquired, raising the total numbers of each to 98, 112 and 104 respectively;
- (7) the total number of teaching institutes and Summer and Winter School properties was now 50;
- (8) 15 Baha'i Publishing Trusts had now been established, producing Baha'i literature in the major languages of the world;
- (9) the Mother Temple of Latin America had been built and dedicated;
- (10) a total of 3,553 Baha'is had responded to the House's two appeals for pioneers, 2,265 of whom were still at their posts (MU#128.2-3).

## **7.2. Other achievements.**

-(i) **Official recognition.** Some goals were dependent upon external circumstances, and their achievement could not be controlled by the Baha'is. Of these, 90 national assemblies and 1,556 local assemblies (181 more than called for) had gained legal incorporation, and official recognition had been gained for Baha'i holy days in 64 countries, and the Baha'i certificate of marriage in 40 (MU#128.2).

-(ii) **International conferences and worldwide proclamation.** The intensive worldwide proclamation of the Faith initiated in October 1967 with six simultaneous intercontinental would continue far into the future. Already, a special edition of English-language translations

of Bahá'u'lláh's writings had been presented to 142 heads of state, and the nine subsequent oceanic and continental conferences [1970-71] had also given 'great impetus' to the proclamation programme. Attended altogether by almost 17,000 Baha'is, the fifteen conferences had attracted a great deal of publicity both in the press and on radio. The conferences had also been made the occasion for acquainting various dignitaries with the Baha'i message (MU#128.8).

-(iii) **World Centre goals and the United Nations.** There had been important developments at the Baha'i World Centre in terms of the adoption of a Constitution by the Universal House of Justice; the collation and classification of Baha'i texts; the production of the Synopsis and Codification of Bahá'u'lláh's *Kitáb-i Aqdas*; and the development Baha'i buildings and grounds in the Haifa-Akka area. The Plan years had also seen the establishment of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, and significant development in Baha'i relations with the United Nations.

-(iv) **Three portentous developments.** The House also identified three 'highly portentous' developments which had occurred during the years of the Nine Year Plan. These were: (1) 'the advance of youth to the forefront of the teaching work; (2) 'a great increase in the financial resources of the Faith; and (3) 'an astonishing proliferation' of assistance projects between national spiritual assemblies (See below) (MU#128.12).

**7.3. Difficult countries.** In some countries, the Baha'is had not been able to achieve the goals set, either because of overt persecution or limitations on their freedom to actively promote the Faith. In others, legal and physical obstacles had prevented the Baha'is achieving certain goals – mostly those involving the gaining of official recognition or legal incorporation. Anticipating these barriers to expansion, the House had stated that some goals were subject to favourable circumstances, and when it became obvious that some of these goals could not be met, called upon the Baha'is who lived in countries in which they were free 'to practice and promote' the Faith to exceed their own goals and thus ensure that the overall goal totals would be achieved (MU#128.16).

**8. Inter-assembly assistance and collaboration projects.** A significant feature of the Nine Year Plan was the extent to which the House called upon national assemblies to collaborate in the accomplishment of specific goals. These assistance projects were evidently highly successful, and at the end of the Plan, the House referred to the 'astonishing proliferation' of these projects as being one of the Plan's most 'highly portentous' developments (MU#128.12), and to the Faith's 'own international relations' as having become far more closely knit (MU#128.2).

Altogether, 219 international assistance projects were set as goals in the Nine Year Plan, but by the end of the Plan, the original goal had been far exceeded, and over 600 such projects had been completed. Each project involved two designated national assemblies and communities: one to assume responsibility for the project and the other (generally geographically remote from the first) to assist in its accomplishment. The assistance given might involve providing financial, pioneering or teaching support, and included the opening, resettlement and consolidation of particular territories; the establishment of national assemblies; the acquisition of *Hazíratu'l-Quds*, temple sites, and other property goals

(Winter/Summer schools, teaching institutes); the translation, enrichment and publication of Baha'i literature; and specific teaching projects (for a list see BW 14: 116-22). An additional development had been international cooperation in the publication of Baha'i literature in Spanish, French and various African languages. A 'vast field' of fruitful endeavour in this regard lay open for the future (MU#128.15).

The House stated that the intention of this conception had been 'to strengthen the bonds of unity' between different parts of the Baha'i world which had 'different social, cultural and historical backgrounds' (MU#128.15), and clearly the result of these projects was to create a web of linkages between assemblies, and presumably to foster the development of a sense of international Baha'i solidarity, as well as aiding the accomplishment of particular goals. Thus, for example, the Argentinian Baha'is were asked to assist in the acquisition of a temple site in Central Africa as well as helping the Chileans open Tierra del Fuego and the Bolivians increase the amount of Baha'i literature in Quechua; the Hawaiian Baha'is were asked to help with the development of Baha'i literature in the Filipino languages of Tagalog and Ilocano; and the Finnish Baha'is were directed to help in the acquisition of a teaching institute in Kenya and the consolidation of the Faith in the Russian Republic. The three assemblies which were given the most work to do were the USA (26 projects); Iran ('Persia'<sup>88</sup>) (22 projects), and the British Isles (17 projects). By continent, Europe was given the largest number of assistance goals (74), followed by the Americas (68), Asia (57), Australasia (19), and Africa (1) (BW 14: 116-22).

## **9. Preparing for the future.**

**9.1. Preparing for after the end of the Plan.** As the Nine Year Plan neared its end, the House began to prepare the Baha'is for future activities. Thus, in January 1973, the House announced that the next international teaching plan would begin at Ridván 1974, and expressed its pleasure that some national assemblies had already formulated plans for coming Baha'i year after the end of the Nine Year Plan. All assemblies should emulate this action, specifically working to accomplish two objectives:

(1) To strengthen 'the foundations' of their existing achievements through 'all means suited to their circumstances', particularly by 'developing and enriching Baha'i community life' and 'fostering youth activity'.

(2) To continue the expansion of the Faith, 'trying new openings and possibilities' which they had not been able to fully explore when they were under 'the pressure of other priorities' (MU#124).

Each national assembly should make its plan for the coming year now, and send the House of Justice its report by 1 April 1973 at the latest, so that a 'consolidated summary' of all the reports could be presented to the Third Baha'i International Convention' [26 April-2 May 1973]. This summary would then provide the Convention delegates with inspiration and be a source of new ideas when they consulted about the challenges which lay ahead during the

88. English-language Baha'i sources (including the House of Justice) commonly continued to call Iran by its old European name of Persia until the 1970s. The Iranian Baha'i national spiritual assembly adopted the modern name for the country in its own English-language title in 1957 (UHJDS, "National and Regional Spiritual Assembly Formation"). The change of the country's official name was made on the orders of Reza Shah in 1935, and it was not until 1956/57 that the Iranian government revoked the prohibition on foreigners calling the country by the old name (Avery 1, 469).

next plan and beyond. The achievements of this preparation year would also enable the Baha'i community to begin 'the next stage of its 'ever-unfolding destiny' (i.e. the next plan) with 'even greater assurance'. The year would also give the national assemblies opportunity to prepare for the next plan. Conditions obviously differed from one area to another, and each assembly needed to adopt goals which were best suited to its own 'particular circumstances and possibilities', but a broad based campaign would be the most effective (MU#124).

**9.2. Future possibilities.** The House also made several references to possible future developments. Thus, in its Ridván message of 1971, it speculated that in the near future, Baha'is were likely to be forced to consider new issues and face new tasks as a result of the twofold process of 'the steady progress and consolidation of the Cause' and 'the progressive disintegration' of the 'moribund' environing society.<sup>89</sup> These comprised the following obligations and necessities: (1) to devise new approaches to teaching; (2) to demonstrate the Baha'i way of life more clearly to 'a disillusioned world'; (3) to make Baha'i administrative institutions more effective; (4) to strengthen the authority of national and local assemblies so as to be able to deal with larger Baha'i communities; (5) to develop 'the international character' of the Faith; and (5) to establish the international Baha'i teaching agency referred to in previous general letters<sup>90</sup> (MU#96.10).

Again, in its Ridván 1973 message, the House stated that the progress of the Faith was gathering with 'increasing momentum', and that 'in God's good time', the Baha'i community would have 'traversed the stages' predicted for it by Shoghi Effendi,<sup>91</sup> and raised 'the fair mansions of God's Own Kingdom' on this 'tormented planet'. In those mansions, humanity would find surcease from its 'self-inflicted' confusion, chaos and ruin, and the hatreds and violence of the present age would be 'transmuted into an abiding sense of world brotherhood and peace'. All this would be accomplished within the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh (MU#128.21).

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89. This twofold process had been delineated by Shoghi Effendi in *The Unfoldment of World Civilization* (WOB 161-206). See further, below.

90. This is a reference to the International Teaching Centre, established in June 1973 shortly after the end of the Nine Year Plan (MU#131).

91. Shoghi Effendi predicted that the Faith would pass through seven successive stages of development: (1) "unmitigated obscurity"; (2) being actively repressed; (3) "complete emancipation"; (4) "being acknowledged as an independent Faith" on terms of "full equality with its sister religions"; (5) "its establishment and recognition as a State religion"; (6) "its assumption of the rights and prerogatives associated with the Baha'i state"; and (7) "the emergence of the world-wide Baha'i Commonwealth" (ADJ 12; cf. MBW 155).

## **9. Teaching, Consolidation and Deepening.**

### Contents:

- A. 'TEACHING THE MASSES'.
- B. CONSOLIDATION.
- C. DEEPENING.
- D. THE WORLD CRISIS.

**1. Teaching, consolidation and deepening.** In modern Baha'i terminology, '*teaching*' refers to the endeavour to attract more people to the Baha'i Faith and its teachings. In Christian terms, a Baha'i 'teacher' is an evangelist for the Baha'i 'gospel'. '*Consolidation*' refers to the process of Baha'i community development, whereby new Baha'is become spiritually transformed, united and devoted to the Baha'i Faith and cohesive and active local Baha'i groups develop. It includes the process of forming and maintaining properly functioning local spiritual assemblies. '*Deepening*' refers to the process by which Baha'is deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Faith through study, discussion and meditation.<sup>92</sup>

### **A. 'TEACHING THE MASSES'.**

**2. The Baha'i concept and practice of teaching.** The importance of 'teaching the Cause' is much emphasized in the Baha'i writings, and there are numerous passages encouraging the Baha'is to teach their religion and to try to attain the spiritual qualities required of a true and effective Baha'i teacher (a recognition that the teacher's conduct may be even more important than their words).

Several different types of teaching are recognized by Baha'is: the *direct* presentation of Baha'i religious beliefs – in particular of Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be the promised one of all religions; an *indirect method*, in which the teacher speaks generally about the Baha'i principles before turning to the Faith's key beliefs; the teaching of *individuals*; and *mass teaching* – the presentation of the Baha'i Faith to large numbers of people, often in the context of a local community, and in the hope of sparking mass conversion.

Given the hostility of most orthodox religious leaders in Iran and the real dangers of persecution and martyrdom, some Babi and much subsequent Baha'i teaching endeavour was fairly circumspect ('indirect'), with the Babi or Baha'i teacher speaking about general issues until they could judge whether their co-locator was 'ready' to be challenged with the Faith's central teachings. This approach was supported by Bahá'u'lláh's own counsel that whilst not fearing persecution, his followers should teach prudently 'with wisdom' (*hikmat*).<sup>93</sup> In the case of the Babis, a number of leading missionaries also made public proclamations of the Babi message, and there were several instances in which local communities converted to the Babi religion *en masse* following the example of a local religious leader – leading in some cases to local conflict and the massacre of the Babis. The Baha'is were more careful, and most of their teaching endeavour in Iran focussed on seeking individual conversions until a brief period of relative religious freedom in the early years of the twentieth century enabled

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92. See CEBF, 'consolidation', 'deepening' and 'teaching', loc. cit.

93. See CEBF, 'wisdom', loc. cit.

them to conduct public meetings.<sup>94</sup>

Outside of the Middle East, Baha'i expansion could proceed far more openly, with public meetings being organized to present the Baha'i teachings and the publication of introductory books on the Faith as teaching aids. Even so, small-scale meetings with a group of friends and enquirers in someone's home ('firesides') often proved to be the most effective way of securing individual conversions, ensuring that expansion tended to be fairly limited in extent. This situation only began to change during the Ten Year Crusade as Baha'i teachers in a number of rural areas of the 'Third World' (including Bolivia, India, the Mentawai Islands of Indonesia and Uganda) encountered a mass response to their message and the modern era of 'mass teaching' and 'entry by troops' began.<sup>95</sup>

**3. The teaching appeals of the House of Justice.** The larger scale of conversions which had occurred in several areas of the Baha'i world during the Ten Year Crusade were a source of enormous excitement at the time and the Universal House of Justice was concerned to encourage the Baha'is to continue such endeavours and extend them to more parts of the world and so attract significant enrolments of new Baha'is. The House thus appealed repeatedly for the Baha'is to expand their teaching activities, as well as conveying practical advice to the national assemblies of the world as to how 'mass teaching' might be conducted.<sup>96</sup>

**3.1. The message of July 1964: 'Teaching the Masses'.** The first major discussion of this topic was given in a letter which the House of Justice sent to all the national assemblies on 13 July 1964 (MU#18). Here, the House argued that when 'the masses of mankind' were awakened and entered 'the Faith of God', a 'new process' was set in motion and a 'new civilization' began to develop. Although the masses of humankind were 'steeped in traditions of their own', they were receptive to the divine call, and when they truly responded to the newly expressed Word of God, they became so influenced by it that they transformed those who came into contact with them. Such had been the case with the emergence of Christianity and Islam (MU#18.1).

In this context, God's standards were different from those of men. Humans valued the acceptance of a cause by people of distinction, fame and status, deeming such acceptance a measure of the greatness of the cause. By contrast, God valued every individual – great or small. Thus, the 'unsophisticated people of the world' – who formed the majority of its population – had the same right to know of the Cause of God as any others. Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh had stated that he had brought his message for all peoples and to bring the entire

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94. There is as yet no proper study of the history of the Babi-Baha'i communities in Iran. For a few brief comments see SBBR 48-56, 86-99, 175-80. See also CEBF, 'Babi radicalism', and 'Iran', loc. cit.

95. Again, there is as yet no adequate study of these developments with the exception of two PhD theses on the main area of initial mass conversion in India (the Malwa area of Madhya Pradesh). See Garlington and Garrigues on Malwa. More generally see CEBF, 'expansion', loc. cit; SBBR 190-95.

96. The main references are the messages of 13 July 1964 (MU#18), Ridván 1965 (MU#24), 2 February 1966 (MU#30), and Ridván 1966 (MU#34). See also a letter of 26 October 1967 directed to those assemblies already engaged in mass teaching, and a second letter of 31 October 1967 addressed to all national assemblies (MU#51, 52).



human race to God's revelation, and that every individual soul had the capacity to recognize 'the signs of God' (GWB 96, 105-6). Therefore, every national assembly should seek to organize Baha'i teaching activities in such a balanced way that all sections of society had access to the Faith – not concentrating on one section, and including in their endeavours those sections which were remote and difficult to reach. The success of such a strategy had already been demonstrated in the dramatic results which had occurred in those countries in which the Baha'is had succeed in teaching 'the masses' (MU#18.2-3). Now, teaching 'the waiting masses' was a reality facing every national assembly (MU#18.18).

**3.2. The Ridván message of 1965.** The House again called attention to the importance of teaching in its message of Ridván 1965. The Baha'is should seek to 'raise the intensity of teaching to a pitch never before attained' so that the 'vast increase' in Baha'i numbers called for in the plan could be achieved. This goal would be won by a combination of universal participation and 'constant action'. Every individual Baha'i had a part to play – and was capable of playing it, for 'every soul meets others', and as Bahá'u'lláh had promised, whoever arose to aid his Cause would be rendered victorious by God. This was a time of 'golden opportunity' for the Baha'is because in the face of increasing confusion in the world, people were losing faith in human remedies to resolve the world's problems and were therefore willing, and in many places eager, to listen to the 'divine remedy'. Realization was at last dawning that 'There is no place to flee to' save God (MU#24.12).

**3.3. The message of February 1966: 'Further thoughts about mass teaching'.** The House returned to the subject of mass teaching in a letter dated 2 February 1966, and addressed to those national assemblies which were engaged in mass teaching. Their work had attracted the admiration of the rest of the Baha'i world. Mass teaching was of tremendous importance, the large-scale conversions which had followed it marking the beginning of a new stage in the development of the Faith. It was therefore vital that the process of teaching the masses not only be maintained but actually accelerated. The victories gained also needed to be preserved (MU#30).

**3.4. Ridván 1966: Raising 'the Intensity of Teaching'.** The House again emphasized the importance of teaching in its Ridván message of 1966. Every individual Baha'i, as well as every Baha'i institution worldwide must needs meet the challenge of raising 'the intensity of teaching' to a pitch that had never before been attained. Only thus could the 'vast increase' in new Baha'is called for in the plan be achieved. This call was directed particularly to those Baha'is who lived in countries in which they had the freedom to teach their religion – in a number of others, the Baha'is were now subject to oppression, or at least to restrictions and official surveillance. The local and national administrative bodies (the assemblies and their committees) should organize and promote the teaching work through 'systematic plans'. These should involve regular 'fireside' meetings in the Baha'is' homes; public meetings, receptions and conferences; weekend, Summer and Winter schools; and youth conferences – all of which were 'vigorously upheld' at the present time – and, in addition, 'a constant stream' of travelling teachers (MU#34.9-10).

**4. The practicalities of teaching.** The House also dealt with the practical aspects of the teaching work in these messages, as well as in two letters in October 1967: the first, dated 26 October 1967, directed to those assemblies already engaged in mass teaching, and the second,

dated 31 October 1967, addressed to all national assemblies (MU#51, 52).

**4.1. Teaching all strata of human society.** Much of Baha'i teaching endeavour outside of Iran until the 1950s had focussed on urban areas, and almost universally, the predominant element in the various Baha'i communities tended to consist of literate and relatively well-educated 'middle class' urbanites. Rural communities and the manual working classes of the cities were largely neglected. The 'breakthrough' that had occurred in a few countries during the Ten Year Crusade was partly due to success in taking the Baha'i messages to the villages. This point was noted by the House: in those countries in which the Baha'is had succeed in teaching 'the masses', they had 'poured out' their time and effort in rural areas to the same extent they had previously done in cities and towns (MU#18.2). Again, the House emphasized that at present, the 'paramount goal' of Baha'i teaching work was to carry the Baha'i message 'to every stratum of human society and every walk of life'. The national assemblies should therefore make every effort to present 'the healing Word of God' to everyone: rich, poor, learned, illiterate, old, young, devout, atheistic, those who lived in 'remote hills and islands' and in 'teeming cities', suburban businessmen, labourers in the slums, nomadic tribesmen, farmers, and university students. All should be consciously included in Baha'i teaching plans. The assemblies should remember, however, that the same presentation of the Baha'i teachings would not appeal to everyone: 'the method of expression' and the approach by the Baha'is should vary 'in accordance with the outlook and interests of the hearer'. An approach that was designed to appeal to everyone would usually only attract a middling group, leaving those at either extreme untouched. The assemblies also needed to be aware that eager responses to the Baha'i teachings were often found 'in the most unexpected quarters'. They should therefore be ready to respond quickly to any response, success in 'a fertile area' awakening a response in others who might have been uninterested (MU#52).

**4.2. Simplicity and love.** The urban-focussed teaching of the past had often emphasized intellectual 'proofs' of the Faith. The House noted that when teaching unsophisticated people, the Baha'is should be careful to present the Baha'i message 'in the same simplicity' as was found in the Baha'i texts. The Baha'is should show 'genuine and divine love' in their contacts. Again, the heart of an 'unlettered soul' was extremely sensitive, and any prejudice on the part of the Baha'i teacher or pioneer would be immediately sensed (MU#18.3). The Baha'is should teach 'with conviction, determination, love and lack of prejudice, using a language that was simple and 'addressed to the heart' (MU#18.18).

As a corollary of this simplicity of approach, the Baha'is did not need to insist on the high standards of knowledge of the Faith that had often hitherto been expected before new Baha'is were inducted into the community. It was not necessary for the new Baha'is to know all 'the proofs, history, laws, and principles of the Faith' before they declared themselves as Baha'is. What was necessary was that they became 'enchanted with the beauty' of the Baha'i teachings and touched 'by the love of Bahá'u'lláh'. This was 'the spark of faith', and initially, all the new Baha'is needed in addition was basic knowledge concerning the central figures of the Faith<sup>97</sup> and the awareness that there were laws which they must follow and 'an administration they must obey' (MU#18.4).

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97. The term 'Central Figures' (of the Faith) is commonly used by Baha'is to refer to the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

**4.3. Consolidation** (see further, below). The House emphasized that after declaring themselves as Baha'is, the new believers should not be left to their own devices, but rather 'patiently strengthened and lovingly helped to develop into full Baha'i maturity'. This could be achieved through correspondence, the dispatch of visitors, conferences and training courses. Thus they would be gradually won over to what Shoghi Effendi described as 'the unreserved acceptance of whatever has been ordained in the teachings' (MU#18.5; MA 11). Specific methods which had been found useful included:

-(i) Immediately sending materials to the new Baha'is to let them know that their declaration of faith had been accepted and that they were now members of the Baha'i community. Such materials could take the form of simple printed cards portraying a Baha'i theme or principle (MU#18.10).

-(ii) Holding training courses in the rural areas (usually of about two weeks duration) and/or weekend training conferences. These training courses and conferences enabled a selected group of the new Baha'is to be given a more detailed introduction to the Faith and involved in further Baha'i teaching projects. They could be held in Baha'i homes or in rented accommodation: it was not necessary to wait until buildings to serve as Baha'i institutes had been acquired (MU#18.11-13).

**4.4. Effective administration.** It was essential that the office of the national assembly or the responsible teaching committees stay in close touch with developments through reports and correspondence (MU#18.17-18). It was entirely up to the individual national assembly to decide what committee structure it might adopt so as to ensure the best results in the extension of its own teaching work, but 'an efficient teaching structure' had to be adopted so that the work could be carried out quickly and in accordance with the principles of Baha'i administration (MU#30.2).

**4.5. The choice of competent teachers.** Reliance should not be placed only on pioneers or city-based Baha'is as teachers. Attention had to be given to was the selection of competent teachers from amongst the indigenous population of the country. These were individuals who would eventually bear the brunt of the work of propagating the Faith in their own homelands (MU#30.2). Again, the House noted that many national assemblies had found it necessary to select Baha'is as travelling teachers so as to expedite their teaching plans more quickly. It was necessary to exercise 'care and discretion' in the selection of these teachers, however. The assemblies should remember that people who were mostly illiterate were not able to read the Baha'i writings for themselves so as to derive spiritual sustenance from them directly. Instead, illiterates were liable to become largely dependent on their contacts with visiting teachers. In this context, the 'spiritual calibre or moral quality' of the chosen teachers became enormously important, and those who were selected should therefore be chosen primarily on the basis of their 'pure spirit' and their 'true love for the Cause', and of 'their capacity to convey that spirit and love to others'. Knowledge of the Baha'i teachings was also important, but was secondary to this moral-spiritual quality. Wonderful results would be obtained if the assemblies could ensure to as great an extent as possible that all travelling teachers were 'pure and sanctified souls' who served the Faith only out of 'true devotion and self-sacrifice' (MU#51).

**4.6. Difficulties and disappointments.** The House also noted several problems which some national assemblies had encountered in their mass teaching work:

-(i) Finding that the new Baha'is were less enthusiastic about their new-found faith than expected, or were not following a Baha'i lifestyle, or had begun to hope that becoming a Baha'i might lead to material advantages. In all these cases, it was necessary to remember that the process of nursing a new Baha'i into full spiritual maturity was a slow one, requiring 'loving education and patience' (MU#18.16).

-(ii) Experience showed that when material facilities (schools, dispensaries, hospitals, clothes, food) were offered to the people who were being taught, then many complications arose. Therefore, when 'teaching among the masses', the Baha'is should be careful 'not to emphasize the charitable and humanitarian aspects of the Faith as a way to win recruits'. It was the response to God's message and the recognition of his messenger that was the prime motive of teaching (MU#18.4).

-(iii) In order to obtain rapid and more impressive results, some teaching committees placed emphasis on the number of new declarations rather than the quality of teaching. Similarly, some travelling teachers might not teach the new Baha'is thoroughly, or even give false reports of their 'successes' (MU#18.16).

In all these cases, the responsible assemblies should not become discouraged, but rather send teachers in to the rural areas in teams, or at intervals, so as to better ascertain what was going on and rectify any anomalies (MU#18.17).

**5. The House's role.** In encouraging the development of mass teaching, the House of Justice acted both as a central collecting point for the varied experiences of individual national spiritual assemblies and a source of guidance drawn from the Baha'i texts.

**5.1. A central record.** The Universal House of Justice noted that it wished to keep a full-scale record of the progress of the mass teaching work. Therefore, the national assemblies should send copies of the published materials they were currently using in areas of large-scale conversions (e.g. forms, cards, pamphlets, pictures, audiovisual aids, deepening books). The assemblies should also provide the House with 'adequate explanations' of how the materials were being used and comments as to their usefulness. They should also feel free to tell the House about any problems they had encountered and to share any recommendations they might wish to make. Prompt replies on these issues were requested so that 'an early evaluation' of the mass teaching work could be made (MU#30.7).

**5.2. The compilation on teaching the masses (May 1967).** In order to help the Baha'is gain a clearer understanding of 'the importance and nature of the teaching work among the masses', the House prepared a compilation of references to the subject from Shoghi Effendi's writings,<sup>98</sup> confident that the implementation of its principles would aid the Baha'is in their teaching work. The compilation was sent out to the national assemblies on 11 May 1967, the

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98. Including extracts from letters written on Shoghi Effendi's behalf. The compilation 'Teaching the Masses' is reprinted in 2CC 61-71.

House expressing the hope that it would help the Baha'is appreciate better: (1) how to present the teachings of the Faith; (2) 'the attitude that must govern those responsible for enrolling new believers'; (3) the need to educate the new Baha'is, deepening them in the Baha'i teachings and gradually weaning them away from their former allegiances; (4) the 'necessity of keeping a proper balance between expansion and consolidation'; (5) the importance of involving the local indigenous Baha'is in the Baha'i teaching work and the administration of the Baha'i community; (6) the need to formulate budgets 'within the financial capabilities of the community', and the 'worthy goal' for each national Baha'i community to become financially self-supporting; (7) 'the importance of fostering the spirit of self-sacrifice' in the hearts of the Baha'is; (8) 'the preferability of individuality of expression' within the Baha'i administrative system to 'absolute uniformity'; and (9) 'the lasting value of dedication and devotion' in the work of teaching the Faith (MU#43).

**5.3. The qualities of the teacher.** The House enclosed a second compilation with its two letters of October 1967. This consisted of a series of extracts from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi on the spiritual qualities to which Baha'i teachers should aspire (MU#52.5-20). The national assemblies – particularly those engaged in mass teaching – were instructed to include study of these quotations in the deepening programmes which were offered to the Baha'is in their teaching institutes (MU#51.4). Again, whilst the assemblies should carefully develop their teaching plans, they should never allow such plans to eclipse 'the shining truth' expounded in the extracts: that it was 'the purity of heart, detachment, uprightness, devotion and love' of the Baha'i teacher that attracted 'divine confirmations' and enabled him or her to win the hearts of others for the Baha'i Cause. The teacher's knowledge of worldly learning was unimportant (MU#52.4).

## **B. CONSOLIDATION.**

**6. The twin processes.** In discussing the importance of mass teaching, the House frequently linked teaching with the process of consolidation. Thus, in its message of July 1964, the House referred to the expansion and consolidation of the Faith as 'twin processes' that had to go 'hand in hand'. The Baha'is should not break off teaching projects aimed at furthering the expansion of the Faith in order to consolidate and deepen the knowledge and faith of the new Baha'is. The two processes stimulated each other: increasing the new Baha'is understanding of the Faith generated further expansion; the enrollment of new believers created a new communal spirit amongst the Baha'is which reinforced the work of consolidation (MU#18.6).

Again, in its message of February 1966, the House reminded the national assemblies that they should constantly bear in mind that 'expansion and consolidation' were inseparable and interdependent processes which had to go hand in hand: as Shoghi Effendi had noted, it was vital that 'a proper balance' between these two 'essential aspects' of the Faith's development be maintained (see ANZ 76). Thus, whilst it was important to expand the range of the Baha'i community and bring multitudes of people into the protective shadow of the Faith, it was also very important to ensure (1) that the spiritual life of the individual Baha'i was 'continuously enriched'; (2) that local communities were becoming 'increasingly conscious of their collective duties'; and (3) that the Baha'i administrative institutions were operating efficiently (MU#30.2-3).

Similarly, in its message of Ridván 1966, the House emphasized that consolidation had to be

‘(s)imultaneous and coequal’ with the ‘vast, ordered and ever-growing teaching effort’. The two processes were essential and ‘inseparable parts’ of Baha’i expansion. The proper balance between the two had to be maintained, particularly as the Baha’is entered ‘the era of large-scale conversion’. Inevitably, teaching went first, but not to follow it with a plan of consolidation would be to leave the Baha’i community unprepared to receive large numbers of new converts in the future. As Shoghi Effendi had stressed: every expansion of Baha’i activities had to be paralleled with a ‘deeper thrust’ into the community’s spiritual roots (ANZ 76). The Baha’is should never lose sight of this ‘vital’ and ‘ever-present’ need (MU#34.13).

**7. The nature of consolidation.** As to what should be included under the heading of consolidation, the House provided an important definition in its message of Ridván 1966. Consolidation consisted of two elements: (1) the establishment of Baha’i ‘administrative institutions’ (i.e. primarily local assemblies), and (2) ‘a true deepening’ of the new Baha’is in the ‘fundamental verities of the Cause’ and in its spiritual principles’. These later comprised: (i) understanding that the ‘prime purpose’ of the Faith was the establishment of the unity of mankind; and (ii) instruction in Baha’i standards of private and public life (see further below) (MU#34.13).

### **C. DEEPENING.**

**8. Practical deepening.** In discussing the need for consolidation, the House also referred to the need to gain a basic knowledge of what it meant to be a member of the Baha’i community – what I am here describing as ‘practical deepening’.

In its message of February 1966, the House emphasized the importance of the national assemblies reinforcing the process of consolidation by making proper arrangements for the new Baha’is to be deepened in their knowledge of the Faith. Therefore, the assemblies should consult with the Hands of the Cause and gain the assistance of the members of the Auxiliary Boards, who, together with those travelling Baha’i teachers selected by the national assembly or its teaching committees, should be continuously encouraged to conduct deepening courses and make regular visits to meet with local spiritual assemblies, local communities, and individual Baha’is in the teaching areas (MU#30.4).

The House addressed the question of what the new Baha’is should learn of the Faith in several letters:

-(i) In its letter of July 1964, it noted that national assemblies in mass teaching areas had found it useful if in visiting the local village Baha’i communities, Baha’i teachers gave instructions in ‘basic Baha’i knowledge’, i.e. Baha’i morality, the importance of teaching, prayer, fasting, nineteen day feasts, and Baha’i elections. It was of particular importance that the new Baha’is should be encouraged to contribute to the Baha’i funds so as to give them a sense of participating as responsible members of the Baha’i community as a whole. National assemblies should facilitate donations by accepting contributions in kind as well as cash. Proper receipts should always be given (MU#18.10-14).

-(ii) In February 1966, the House stated that the subjects which members of Auxiliary Boards

and travelling teachers should include in their discussions with local Baha'is were as follows:

- 1. The 'extent of the spread and stature of the Faith today'.
- 2. The importance of the daily obligatory prayers – or at least of the short prayer.
- 3. The need to educate Baha'i children in the Baha'i teachings and to encourage them to memorize some of the prayers.
- 4. The stimulation of Baha'i youth to participate in the life of the Baha'i community by such means as giving talks and – if possible – having their own activities.
- 5. The necessity of abiding by the Baha'i marriage laws (to have a Baha'i ceremony; obtain parental consent; observe monogamy; to be faithful to the marriage partner) and of abstaining from all intoxicating drugs, including alcohol.
- 6. The importance of the local Baha'i fund, and of the need for the Baha'is to understand that whilst the act of contributing to the fund was voluntary, it was also both a privilege and a spiritual obligation. Methods of facilitating contributions and the local assembly's use of the local fund to serve the interests of its community and of the Faith should also be discussed.
- 7. The importance of the Nineteen Day Feast, and the fact that it should be a joyful occasion and the rallying point of the entire community.
- 8. The manner of Baha'i elections, including the teaching of simple balloting methods for people who were illiterate and of the need to have one literate person (even a child) present throughout the election process. If necessary, repeated workshops could be organized on this subject.
- 9. The 'all-important' teaching work itself together with the need to continuously deepen the Baha'is in the essentials of the Faith. The Baha'is should be made to realize that in teaching the Faith to others, they should aim to make those who became Baha'is both active supporters and teachers of the Faith in their turn. The teachers should look to attracting others to the Faith both in their own localities and in neighbouring centres (MU#30.5).

All these points were to be placed in the context of the importance of the local spiritual assembly, and the assemblies themselves should be encouraged to vigorously examine these 'vital functions', so that each assembly would become 'the very heart' of local community life, even if this meant that they became burdened with the local community's problems. The Baha'is should understand that the 'law of consultation' was extremely important, and that it was to their own local assembly that they should turn: abiding by its decisions, supporting its projects, cooperating with it wholeheartedly in its promotion of the interests of the Faith, seeking its advice and guidance in the solution of personal problems and in the adjudication of any disputes which arose between them (MU#30.6).

-(iii) Again, at Ridván 1966, the House stated that instruction in Baha'i standards of behaviour 'in all aspects of private and public life' should in particular include: daily prayer; the education of children; the observance of the Baha'i marriage laws; abstention from politics; the obligation to contribute to the Baha'i funds; the importance of the nineteen day feast; and the opportunity to acquire a sound knowledge of present-day Baha'i administrative practice (MU#34.13).

**9. Significant understanding.** In addition to listing basic aspects of Baha'i practice which new Baha'is should be taught, the House of Justice reminded all Baha'is of the importance of

seeking to gain a more profound understanding of the significance of the Faith. The key text here was the Ridván message of 1967, in which the House noted that Shoghi Effendi had urged the Baha'is to 'strive to obtain a more adequate understanding of the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's stupendous Revelation', describing such striving as 'the first obligation' of every loyal Baha'i, which should be the object of their 'constant endeavor' (WOB 100). For the House this placed 'the obligation of deepening in the Cause' firmly on every Baha'i.

As to the nature of deepening, the House focussed on the need to gain 'a clearer apprehension of the purpose of God for man', and most particularly his immediate purpose 'as revealed and directed by Bahá'u'lláh'. To this end, the Baha'is should study the writings of the Faith to answer the following questions: (1) What was Bahá'u'lláh's purpose for the human race? (2) For what ends did Bahá'u'lláh submit 'to the appalling cruelties and indignities heaped upon Him'? (3) What did Bahá'u'lláh mean by 'a new race of men'? And (4) What were the 'profound changes' which Bahá'u'lláh would bring about? The Baha'is should 'immerse themselves' in the 'ocean' of the Baha'i writings to seek their answers, organizing 'regular study classes for its constant consideration', and reinforcing their efforts by conscientiously following the requirements of daily prayer and reading of 'the Word of God' enjoined upon all Baha'is by Bahá'u'lláh (MU#42.23-24).

As to what Bahá'u'lláh's purpose was, the Baha'is should realize that his 'glorious mission' was to establish a divine civilization, the promised Kingdom of God. This was what he – and also the Báb, `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi – had suffered for. They had come to free humanity from 'material fetters', and enable all people to 'attain unto true liberty', and 'abiding joy'. Their vision had penetrated 'to the very purpose of human life', and its realization required what Shoghi Effendi referred to as 'an organic change in the structure of present-day society' (WOB 43).

This vision was completely different from contemporary concepts of 'human well-being and happiness'. Indeed, the Baha'is should be constantly on their guard 'lest the glitter and tinsel of an affluent society' led them to think that the objectives of humanitarian movements or of enlightened statesmen were the same as their own. Such goals as the extension to the whole of humanity of the benefits of a high standard of living, education, medical care or technical knowledge were only 'superficial adjustments to the modern world'. They would come after people had turned to the Kingdom of God (MU#42.23).

The House also differentiated deepening from merely acquiring knowledge about the Baha'i Faith. It was useful to have a 'detailed and exact knowledge of the present structure of Baha'i Administration', or of the bylaws of spiritual assemblies, or of the 'many and varied applications of Baha'i law under diverse conditions prevailing around the world', but this was not deepening (MU#42.23).

#### **D. THE WORLD CRISIS.**

**10. Message to the Palermo Conference, August 1968.** One aspect of the Baha'i message which the Universal House of Justice stressed on a number of occasions was the uniquely salvific nature of that message itself. In a world which successive Baha'i leaders had characterized as suffering because of turning away from its redeemer, the Baha'i message was ultimately the only solution to the world's problems. Within this framework, the teaching



efforts of the Baha'is assumed wider significance.

Thus, in its message to the Palermo Conference, the House reminded the Baha'is that the writings of the Faith were quite clear about the contemporary world crisis. Forcibly and repeatedly they set forth the truth that the 'violent disruption' which had seized 'the entire planet' was 'beyond the ability of men to assuage' unless they were aided by God's revelation. The 'old order' could not be repaired, and was being 'rolled up before our eyes'. The 'moral decay and disorder' which were 'convulsing human society' had to 'run their course', there was nothing the Baha'is could do to either arrest or divert them (MU#63.4).

Unable to save the decaying old order, the Baha'is were given instead the task of building up the new world order of Bahá'u'lláh. They should concentrate all their efforts upon this objective 'with single-minded devotion', and not allow themselves to be deflected by 'the desperate expedients' of those who sought 'to subdue the storm' that was 'convulsing human life' by means of programmes of political, economic, social and educational change. Having raised Bahá'u'lláh's 'Divine System', the Baha'is should shelter within its 'impregnable stronghold' where, 'safe from the darts of doubtfulness', they could 'demonstrate the Baha'i way of life' to the wider world. The 'acute distinction' between model Baha'i communities and contemporary society would inevitably arouse the interest of the more enlightened non-Baha'is, and as 'the world's gloom' deepened further in the future, 'the light of Baha'i life' would shine ever brighter until eventually it would attract 'the disillusioned masses' and cause them to enter the haven of Bahá'u'lláh's covenant. Only this would bring them peace, justice and 'an ordered life' (MU#63.5).

Every Baha'i community, therefore, no matter how large or small, should be distinguished by its 'abiding sense of security and faith, its high standard of rectitude, its complete freedom from all forms of prejudice, the spirit of love among its members and for the close knit fabric of its social life'. Thus would it stand out more brilliantly from the declining society which environed it and attract people to become Baha'is (MU#63.5).

**11. November 1969: A 'fateful hour in human history'.** In November 1969, the House issued a fresh appeal for the Baha'is to teach the Faith, linking the need for teaching to the sufferings of humanity as a whole.

This was a 'fateful hour in human history'. The world situation was worsening, and was fraught with the 'pain of war, violence and the sudden uprooting of long-established institutions'.<sup>99</sup> As the tide of catastrophic events mounted, governments and peoples in both 'the developed and developing nations', as well as various secular and religious institutions found themselves 'helpless to reverse the trend'. Instead they stood 'bewildered and overpowered' by the 'magnitude and complexity' of the problems that faced them. Alas, the response of many people seemed to be merely 'to stand aside and wring their hands in

99. The late 1960s were widely seen as a period of crisis by many commentators, with 1968 in particular coming to be seen as a new 'year of revolutions' comparable to 1848. Events of the period included the continuing American war in Vietnam leading to massive student demonstrations in many countries; what was seen as a near-revolution in France; the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia to suppress a popular liberalization movement; race riots in the United States and the assassination of the popular Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King and the Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy.

despair', or to join in a 'babel of shouting and protestations' which offered 'no solution to the woes and afflictions plaguing our age' (MU#73.1).

For Baha'is, however, the present state of disorder could be seen as fulfilling the prophecies of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as the 'oft-repeated warnings' of `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi about 'the inevitable fate of a lamentably defective social system, an unenlightened leadership and a rebellious and unbelieving humanity'. Again, although the present circumstances were 'tragic and awful in their immediate consequences', they were doubtless serving 'to sharpen the focus' on the 'indispensability' of the Baha'i teachings to 'the needs of the present age' and would provide the Baha'is with 'many opportunities' to reach those 'countless waiting souls' who were 'hungry and thirsty for Divine guidance'. Indeed, an increasing number of 'thoughtful and fair-minded' people were recognizing the 'evidences of Divine chastisement' in the present clamour of 'contention, grief and destructions' which was now reaching 'such horrendous proportions', and were 'turning their faces towards God' and becoming 'increasingly receptive to His Word' (MU#73.1-2).

The Baha'is should therefore seize the teaching opportunities of the present time 'before it is too late'. All Baha'is should be awakened 'to the immediacy of the challenge' so that each one of them could 'assume his share of the responsibility' for taking the Baha'i teachings 'to all humanity'. Universal participation, itself 'a salient objective' of the Nine Year Plan had to be 'pressed towards attainment in every continent, country and island of the globe'. Every Baha'i – no matter how 'humble or inarticulate' – had to become 'intent on fulfilling his role as a bearer of the Divine Message'. No true Baha'i could remain silent whilst around them 'men cry out in anguish for truth, love and unity to descend upon this world' (MU#73.3).<sup>100</sup>

Peace and spiritual progress in the world were only possible when the Baha'i message reached into the hearts of men and transformed them. To this end, it was 'imperative' for every Baha'i to set him- or herself individual teaching goals. Examples of these would include following `Abdu'l-Bahá's admonishment that each Baha'i should endeavour to lead at least one new soul to the Faith each year and Shoghi Effendi's exhortation to hold a 'fireside' (an informal Baha'i discussion group) in their homes once every Baha'i month. Just these alone would 'assure final and complete victory' in the Plan, but many Baha'is had the capacity to do much more. Again, both `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi had often called upon the Baha'is 'to consciously strive to be more loving, more united, more dedicated and prayerful than ever before' so that they could overcome the atmosphere of present-day society which was 'unloving, disunited, careless of right or wrong and heedless of God' (MU#73.4-5).

**12. The old order and the new**. In addition to these explicit calls to Baha'i activity as a response to the world's ills, the House also echoed Shoghi Effendi's distinction between a declining old world order and the newly emergent order embodied by the Faith.<sup>101</sup> Thus, in its

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100. The House therefore called for a worldwide time of prayer during the nineteen day feast for the month of Sultán (the Feast of Sovereignty, 19 January) that 'we will all become so imbued with zeal, courage and enthusiasm' that nothing would be able to delay the Baha'is' 'victorious onward march' during the remainder of the Plan (MU#73.6).

101. See in particular, Shoghi Effendi's lengthy letter of 11 March 1936 to the Baha'is of the West, *The*

Ridván message of 1969, the House referred to the ‘vivid contrast’ between the continued progress of the Faith and the ‘chronic unrest afflicting human society’. The events of the past year had underlined this contrast, the ‘old order’ disintegrating further, whilst the Baha’i Cause had ‘pursued its majestic course’, with a year of ‘remarkable activity’ (MU#68.1).

Environging crisis necessitated greater consolidation of the Baha’i community. Thus, at Ridván 1971, the House referred to the new issues and new tasks which it believed the Baha’is would soon have to face as a result of the twofold process of ‘the steady progress and consolidation of the Cause’ and ‘the progressive disintegration’ of the ‘moribund’ enviring society. These would include the need to demonstrate the Baha’i way of life more clearly to ‘a disillusioned world’ (MU#96.10).

Again, at Ridván 1972, the House stated that the success of the teaching plan forced upon the Baha’is’ attention the ‘new requirements’ of the ‘ever-growing’ Baha’i world order both ‘for its own organic life’ and in relation to ‘the disintegrating world society’ in which it was set. The divergence between the Faith and ‘the ways of the world’ was becoming ‘ever wider’. Yet the two had to come together! Thus, the Baha’i community had to increasingly demonstrate its ability to redeem the ‘disorderliness’, ‘lack of cohesion’, ‘permissiveness’ and ‘godlessness’ of modern society. To do this, the laws, religious obligations, and moral principles of Baha’i life along with standards of ‘dignity, decency and reverence’, had to become ‘deeply implanted’ in Baha’i consciousness and the life of the community, and the ‘purposes and standards of the Cause’ had to be well understood and ‘courageously upheld’. In turn, this process required that there was a marked development in the ‘maturity and effectiveness’ of local assemblies. The influence of the Counsellors and Board members also had to develop and spread ‘through the entire fabric of the Baha’i community’, and a ‘vast systematic program’ for the production of Baha’i literature had to be promoted (MU#110-8).

## 10. Pioneering & Travel Teaching.

### Contents:

- A. PIONEERS AND PIONEERING.
- B. TRAVEL TEACHING.

### Key dates:

- 1965 Appointment of continental pioneering committees (February). The first call for international pioneers (Ridván).
- 1966 The call for volunteer travelling teachers (Ridván).
- 1969 The second call for pioneers (Ridván).

### **A. PIONEERS AND PIONEERING**

**1. The Baha'i concept of pioneering.** In Baha'i parlance a 'pioneer' is someone who has left their own home and established their residence in another locality or country in order to help spread the Baha'i Faith.<sup>102</sup> Much of the modern conceptualization of pioneering (and the term itself) was developed by Shoghi Effendi during the various teaching plans which he devised from the 1930s onwards, but the concept and practice dates back to the earliest days of the Faith – often interlinked with what in modern Baha'i terminology is referred to as 'travel teaching' (below).

From the Babi period onwards, the Babi and Baha'i Faiths have been promulgated by enthusiastic missionary teachers,<sup>103</sup> a good number of whom were specifically concerned to establish new centres for the religion by means of visiting or transferring their residence to new towns and provinces. The remarkable spread of Babism within a few short years throughout a very large part of Iran as well as into the Shi'i holy cities of Iraq demonstrated the effectiveness of this strategy, and it was continued by Bahá'u'lláh after the emergence of the Baha'i Faith as the main successor movement to Babism. Thus, under Bahá'u'lláh's direction, Baha'i teachers visited and settled in the Levant, Egypt, Russian Turkestan, the Caucasus and British India. Bahá'u'lláh also heaped praises on those who had forsaken their homes in order to teach his Cause – such an action was “the prince of all goodly deeds”, and those who performed it would be strengthened by the power of the “Faithful Spirit” and accompanied by a “company of our chosen angels” (GWB 333 #157). Similarly, `Abdu'l-Bahá oversaw a widespread expansion of the Faith into North America, Europe and Japan which was partly generated and consolidated through the dispatch of travelling Baha'i teachers and pioneers. `Abdu'l-Bahá also gave the North American Baha'is a blueprint for global expansion in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, naming the countries, territories and islands which he wished the Baha'is to take the Faith to; commenting on the spiritual qualities which Baha'i teachers should manifest; and noting such practicalities as the need for teachers to learn the languages of those they sought to teach (LG 570; TDP).

Building on this heritage, Shoghi Effendi encouraged pioneers to settle in the various parts of the world in which there were as yet few or no Baha'is, and honouring those who pioneered

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102. See CEBF, 'pioneers, pioneering', loc. cit.

103. Baha'is often dislike to refer to their international teachers as 'missionaries', arguing that as whilst pioneers may receive temporary financial assistance they are neither employees nor ministers of the Baha'i Faith.

as “holy souls”, “Bahá’u’lláh’s crusaders” and “Baha’i warriors” (MA 16; MBW 49).<sup>104</sup> The importance of pioneering was also stressed by the Universal House of Justice, as in May 1964, where it referred to the “vital importance” of the pioneer goals of the plan. Such goals involved the establishment of “points of light” in new territories, further diffusing “the radiance of the Faith of God”. This diffusion of light was directly linked to the prestige and “international status” of the Faith (MU#16.5).

**2. The continental pioneer committees.** When the Universal House of Justice was first established, primary responsibility for the settlement of international pioneers rested with the national spiritual assemblies involved together with their appointed pioneer committees. By February 1965, however, the House had decided that in order to expedite the settlement of pioneers, five continental pioneer committees should be established. Each committee was to be appointed by and responsible to a particular national spiritual assembly: the British assembly for Africa;<sup>105</sup> the United States for the Americas; Iran for Asia; Australia for Australasia; and Germany for Europe. The assemblies involved were assigned this duty in February 1965, and were at the same time provided with general terms of reference for the new committees (MU#22). The responsibility for the African committee was transferred to the Uganda assembly in the following year (March 1966) (MU#31.6).

The continental committees were ‘service committees’, charged with assisting the national assemblies and their relevant committees and acting as a contact points and information exchanges to assist with the planning and processing of pioneer moves. They were intended to supplement rather than replace any existing administrative arrangements which assemblies may have made regarding the placement and settlement of pioneers. The committees were not to assume direct responsibility for the settlement of pioneers but were everywhere to work through the regular Baha’i administrative system. Because of the urgency of the need, the committees should be established almost immediately (the House expected to receive the names of the newly-appointed committee members together with each committee’s contact address within 30 days), so that full details could be sent to all national assemblies and the committees themselves could be fully functional by the coming Ridván (21 April). The secretary of each committee should be a competent and knowledgeable Baha’i who had the time, ability and facilities for conducting an extensive correspondence. All of the members of the committee should combine good organizational skills with ‘an aptitude for dealing with problems in a warm and loving Baha’i way’. Specific tasks which the committees should perform included determining travel and subsistence budgets for pioneers; compiling information on pioneer needs in their respective continents, including special skills which might be needed (e.g. language abilities); compiling useful information on those territories which needed pioneers (e.g. work opportunities, living conditions); and putting would-be pioneers in contact with the assemblies responsible for the places in which they might settle (MU#22). An ‘International Deputization Fund’ was also established in Haifa by the House of Justice to provide ‘supplementary support’ for specific pioneering projects when other funds

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104. Those who pioneered during the Ten Year Crusade were given the honorific title of ‘Knights of Bahá’u’lláh’. See CEBF, loc. cit.

105. The original ‘Africa Campaign’ (1951-53) which had marked the beginning of widespread Baha’i teaching work in sub-Saharan Africa was international in scope but was under the overall coordination of the British national assembly.

were not available, and all Baha'is were subsequently encouraged to contribute to it (MU#24.11).<sup>106</sup>

### **3. Calls for pioneers.**

**3.1. The first call for pioneers (1965).** News of the formation of the new pioneer committees was communicated to the Baha'i world in the House's Ridván message for 1965, along with an appeal for the settlement of 461 pioneers during the course of the coming Baha'i year. This figure was based on a 'careful estimate' of immediate needs after consultation with all national assemblies, and entailed the settlement of pioneers to open the 54 remaining unopened ('virgin') territories assigned in the plan; resettle 18 territories which had to be left unoccupied by previous pioneers; 'reinforce' areas where the Baha'is were too few or the Baha'i communities insufficiently cohesive to initiate effective teaching plans; and expand Baha'i activities in areas where mass teaching was already taking place.<sup>107</sup> All Baha'is were encouraged to consider 'the challenge' of pioneering, regardless of wealth, age, sex, length of Baha'i membership, or degree of present involvement in Baha'i activities (MU#24.7-24.10).

By December 1965, the House was able to report that 93 pioneers had so far settled in their posts, thus opening fifteen new territories. Another 167 Baha'is were in the process of moving, giving a total of 295 individuals who had so far responded to the call. Over the next four months, 200 more pioneer moves would be needed in order to fill the remaining goals. The fate of the pioneer call therefore hung in the balance, and the House was praying fervently that the requisite number of 'HEROIC SOULS' would soon arise to meet the challenge of this 'CRITICAL HOUR'. Any national assembly that needed funding to support pioneer moves should apply immediately to the International Deputization Fund. It was imperative that all goals apart from those which were dependent on favourable conditions be filled, with those which involved opening new territories or resettling presently unopen territories being given priority. The House expressed its confidence that the Baha'is' spirit of devotion would ensure that a 'BRILLIANT VICTORY' would be obtained (MU#28).

Further mention was made of the need for pioneers was made in the House's Ridván message for 1966, where one of the specific and urgent tasks for the year was identified as the completion of existing pioneer settlement goals and the dispatch of supplementary pioneers where this was necessary (MU#34.8). This was followed by a specific message on the consolidation of pioneering goals, dated 5 June 1966, and addressed to all the national assemblies, in which the House stated that its members were praying that the Baha'is worldwide could 'rise above their local and personal problems', realize the needs of the Faith 'at this juncture' in its 'inexorable onward development', and offer 'their measure of service and assistance' on 'the altar of sacrifice' with 'complete self-abnegation' and 'wholehearted devotion' to Bahá'u'lláh's 'infinitely precious Cause' (MU#36.3).

At Ridván 1969, the House announced that in the end a total of 505 individuals had arisen as

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106. The principle of deputization was derived from a verse of Bahá'u'lláh, in which he called upon those who were not able to 'arise and promote' the Baha'i Cause to appoint someone else who would proclaim God's revelation on his behalf (GWB 196-97).

107. By continent, the needs were as follows: 86 for Africa; 96 for the Americas; 191 for Asia; 29 for Australasia; and 59 for Europe (MU#24.10).

pioneers in response to this first call (the ‘greatest feat of organized pioneering’ to that time), settling in unopened and ‘weakly held’ territories (MU#68.12).

**3.2. Supplementary needs (Ridván 1967).** In its Ridván message for 1967, the House again noted the ‘brilliant pioneering feat’ of the second year of the Plan. The moves already made were beginning to reveal their ‘beneficent effects’, but more pioneers were now urgently needed for the ‘consolidation and development’ of the Faith in the newly opened or reopened territories. The ‘immediate requirement’ was for 209 pioneers to settle in 87 listed territories.<sup>108</sup> This was a ‘highly meritorious’ field of service and was open to all Baha’is. Anyone who wished to respond to this call should study the list of territories and contact their own national assembly (MU#42.12).

**3.3. The second call for pioneers (1969).** A second major call for pioneers was made at Ridván 1969. The House declaring that the ‘magnificent achievement’ of the pioneers of 1965-66 should now be surpassed, with a total of 733 pioneers being needed to settle in 184 specified territories (48 in Africa, 40 each in Asia and the Americas, 38 in Europe and 18 in Australasia). Detailed information was sent out to national assemblies to ensure that ‘this vital mobilization of Baha’i warriors’ was accomplished as quickly as possible. Whilst ‘primary responsibility’ had been assigned to those assemblies judged ‘most able’ to meet the pioneer needs, all Baha’is everywhere should consider whether they could respond to this call, either by themselves becoming pioneers or by deputizing others to go in their stead (MU#68.12).

The response to this second call evidently disappointed the House of Justice, and at Ridván 1970, it stated that 479 out of the 733 pioneer goals set the previous Ridván as a minimum objective were still unfilled (MU#81). Again, in August 1970, it wrote to all national assemblies, restating the urgency of the appeal that had been made over a year before at Ridván 1969: to date, only 330 of the pioneer posts then identified had been filled (in a few cases additional pioneers had also arrived to supplement the Baha’is in these posts). To fill the remaining goals already identified required a further 417 pioneers,<sup>109</sup> and a recent review of pioneer requirements worldwide revealed that a further 204 places desperately needed support, either so as to win the minimum number of assemblies or localities called for in the Plan or to rapidly reinforce work in successful mass teaching areas and so help retain ‘precious gains’. Despite ‘the magnitude of this undertaking’ and the ‘grave challenge’ which national communities faced in achieving their homefront goals, the House felt it necessary to point out that these international pioneering goals were minimum requirements. The ‘valiant’ Baha’is throughout the world were summoned to participate in this ‘vital’ undertaking. The time available was short and the effort required was ‘truly formidable’. Those who responded to the call should do so ‘promptly and decisively’. Although assigned to specific national assemblies for completion, the goals could be filled by Baha’is from any national community (MU#83).

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108. Full details of the needs and requirements for each goal was sent to the national assemblies concerned and to the continental pioneer committees. Although this was effectively a second call for pioneers, the House counted only the 1965 and 1969 appeals as ‘major calls’ for pioneers (MUHJ#128.3).

109. With 330 pioneer posts out of the 733 called for already filled, only 403 would have remained – not 417 as here stated, an addition of 14 posts. I am not able to explain this discrepancy.

The response was evidently still insufficient, and at Ridván 1972, the House reported that there were 267 international pioneer goals that had yet to be met (75 in Africa, 57 in the Americas, 40 in Asia, 30 in Australasia, and 65 in Europe). Baha'is everywhere were asked to consider whether they might arise to fill these goals 'while there is yet time' (MU#110.7).

**3.4. The final figures.** Although the response to the House's second call for pioneers had been less than the House had hoped, the movement of the 'army' of international pioneers during the course of the Plan had been extremely impressive. As the House noted at the conclusion of the Plan in Ridván 1973, counting both the major calls for pioneers and supplementary appeals for particular posts an overall total of 1,344 pioneer moves had been called for. In response, 3,553 pioneers had actually moved, 2,265 of whom were still at their posts (MU#128.3).

**4. Guidance on pioneering.** To move large number of volunteer Baha'i teachers from one country to another involves both numerous practicalities and the generation and maintenance of enthusiasm on the part of the pioneers to cope with the challenges and difficulties which living in a foreign country may entail. As the House reminded the national assemblies in May 1964, it was essential to ensure that the enthusiasm for pioneering generated at the various national conventions should be maintained and directed wisely and energetically (MU#16.5).

**4.1. The completion and consolidation of the goals.** The House addressed some of the practicalities of the dispatch of pioneers in a specific message on the consolidation of pioneering goals, dated 5 June 1966, and addressed to all the national assemblies (MU#36).

The House began by praising the pioneering accomplishments of the previous Baha'i year as 'historic and dazzling'. Nevertheless, they emphasized that it was essential not to lose sight of the need of filling those remaining gaps which were still open and of the 'ever-present necessity' of reinforcing the pioneer moves that had been made with a 'well-conceived program of consolidation'. Thus, the following tasks now required attention:

-1. Those national assemblies which were responsible for supplying manpower should find and dispatch the requisite pioneers to fill the remaining goals as soon as possible. They should also 'expedite the completion of those projects which are in process'.<sup>110</sup>

-2. Those pioneers who had already settled or were in the process of settling in their posts were to be reminded that their movement to a particular territory was not intended to be merely some symbolic short stay to enable the Baha'is to say that the territory had been opened and had received such-and-such a number of pioneers. The objective of all pioneer moves was both to establish the Baha'i Faith 'securely and firmly' in the hearts of the local people, and to ensure that the Faith's 'divinely ordained institutions' were 'understood, adopted and operated' by the new local Baha'is. It was not enough merely to enroll some native believers. The pioneers should understand that no matter how great the sacrifices involved, perseverance in their posts was an act of 'devoted service', and according to the

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110. This is an example of the House using a functional style of English in a practical communication with national assemblies. It contrasts with the use of a more 'exalted' style of English in many of the House's general messages to the Baha'is.



Baha'i writings would have 'an assured reward' in both this life and the afterlife.

-3. The pioneer goals of the previous year had been minimum figures. Every national assembly should carefully assess the needs of the territories under its jurisdiction. If an assembly felt that more pioneer settlers were needed for a particular territory, they should submit a report to the House, detailing specific recommendations as to the number needed and whether there was any preference for a particular nationality.<sup>111</sup>

-4. It was not enough for national assemblies to have simply sent pioneers to their assigned goal territories. In all cases, it was of 'vital importance' to consider the 'practical aspects' of pioneering. Thus, the financial responsibilities assigned under the previous year's goals would continue until the objectives had been 'permanently and securely maintained'. If any assembly was unable to meet its financial obligations in this regard, it should apply for assistance from the International Deputization Fund (MU#36.1-2).

In the same letter, the House asked the pioneers 'and settlers', as well as the responsible national assemblies to note that the initial stages in the work of establishing the Faith in a new territory were surrounded by an 'obscurity' which protected the Faith from hostile attention. In this situation, the Baha'is should be patient, tactful and wise, and not seek to attract public attention until 'receptive souls' had responded to the Baha'i call and their hearts had been touched by its message.

**4.2. The November 1970 message to pioneers.** The House addressed the 'psychological' aspects of pioneering in November 1970 in a message sent to all international and homefront pioneers via their national assemblies. Praising the 'spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion' which had animated so many Baha'is to leave their homes and 'hoist the banner of the Faith' and promote its teachings in almost every populated area of the world, the House members wished to comfort the hearts, upraise the spirits and strengthen the loins of the pioneers by calling to their attention certain passages from the Baha'i writings. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh had referred to great blessings that would come to those who had left their own countries in order to teach the Faith. The service of such individuals was 'the prince of all goodly deeds' and they would be strengthened by the divine spirit (GWB 334). Again, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had expressed his own frustrated desire to travel to promote the divine teachings, calling upon the Baha'is to do this in his stead (TDP 7.8). For his part, Shoghi Effendi had written of the need for pioneers to 'plod on', staying at their posts in the face of difficulties and acting as the channels for the transmission of a divine grace that would spread through them and 'gradually permeate the world'. Implicitly, the House also encouraged the present pioneers to stay at their posts at the present crucial period in the Plan (MU#86).

**4.3. Some clarifications.** In letters to individual national assemblies, the House further clarified certain issues.

-(i) Thus, in a long letter to the American assembly on 2 July 1965, it made the following points:

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111. In some instances, individuals of particular nationalities might find it easier to get entry documents or work permits from the civil authorities in a certain territory. Again, particular language abilities might be advantageous in certain goal areas.

-1. It reminded them of Shoghi Effendi's statements that whilst pioneers might well be given financial assistance in the process of settling into their pioneer posts, this was only a temporary measure – the pioneers should try to obtain paid employment in their pioneer posts and did not constitute the equivalent of a paid and professional clergy. The pioneer was neither an employee or a minister.

-2. Pioneering (like teaching the Faith) was a duty enjoined upon all Baha'is. No special qualifications or training was necessary. Any Baha'i who moved to another area in order to spread the Faith was a pioneer (Just as anyone who taught the Faith to others was a teacher).

-3. Although it was desirable for would-be pioneers to consult with a responsible committee before going to their chosen pioneer posts, it was not necessary for them to do so. A Baha'i who left his or her home spontaneously to teach the Faith elsewhere was just as much a pioneer as one who had consulted a committee before going.

-4. Assemblies had a general duty to give financial assistance to those Baha'is who were unable to support themselves: not just to pioneers who had not yet found work in their pioneer posts. A committee which was providing financial assistance to a pioneer had the right to terminate that assistance when it deemed it 'right and proper'. If such assistance was terminated, the committee should offer the pioneer his travel expenses to return home or to go to some other place where he could earn his living, however.

-5. A committee did not have the right to 'recall' a pioneer from his or her chosen field of service.

-6. A pioneer who went to live in a country or territory under the jurisdiction of another national assembly came under the authority of that assembly and the assembly of their original homeland no longer had any jurisdiction over them. If the pioneer was to receive financial assistance this would normally be paid by the national assembly of the pioneers homeland, but this was purely for the sake of simplicity. Whatever method that was most expedient would be chosen.

-7. If a pioneer went to an area in which there were as yet no Baha'is, then he or she would normally become the channel of communication between any new Baha'i group that was formed and the responsible national Baha'i committee. However, the pioneer had no special administrative status, and as soon as a local assembly was formed, the assembly would become the channel of communication. The pioneer's special status ceased when an assembly came into being, and any services which he might perform as a teacher or advisor would be simply because of being an older and more experienced Baha'i and not because of being a pioneer. If the pioneer had settled in an area in which there were older and more experienced local Baha'is then he or she might find that they were receiving counsel and spiritual support from these local Baha'is rather than vice-versa.

-8. The pioneer's dwelling had no special significance, and Baha'i meetings should be held wherever was most convenient – not infrequently in the homes of new Baha'is rather than the often cramped quarters of the pioneer (LG 570-72, #1937).

-(ii) In other letters to national assemblies, the House made the following additional points:

-1. Those national assemblies which received international pioneers should devise means for the pioneers and local Baha'is to work together in close harmony, taking advantage of the help which the pioneers were eager to offer in support of the work of teaching and deepening, and "demonstrating to a sceptical world the undivided solidarity and exemplary unity" of the Baha'i community (letter to all national assemblies, 6 July 1969, LG 581, #1966).

-2. Assemblies' dealings with pioneers should be characterized as much as possible by consultation and encouragement. They could encourage pioneers to settle in goal areas and consult with them as to where they could best be of service, but if the pioneer was financially self-supporting the assembly had no right to direct them to live in one place rather than another. If a pioneer had agreed to go to a particular area with the understanding that they would receive initial financial assistance and then refused to go, the financial assistance could naturally be withdrawn, of course, but in this instance the pioneer needed to be given ample opportunity to become self-supporting (letter to the Austrian assembly, 30 March 1970, LG 573-74, #1940).

-3. Pioneers needed to settle where they could become self-supporting, and this depended on local circumstances. A national assembly that was receiving an international pioneer might have particular places in which they wanted pioneers to settle, but if the incoming pioneer was not able to settle in the designated goal area, they should settle where they could, and the assembly should find some other way of filling the specified goal – for example through 'homefront pioneering'.<sup>112</sup> Any Baha'i who had settled in another country in order to teach the Faith was to be counted as a pioneer – regardless of whether they were able to settle in designated goal areas. They were free to settle where they wished, and even in those cases in which financial assistance was being provided, the assemblies should not subject them to 'rigid rules' (letter to unnamed national assembly, 30 March 1971, LG 573, #1938).

## **B. TRAVEL TEACHING.**

**5. Travelling teachers.** By March 1966, the House of Justice had decided to augment the work of the pioneers with international travelling teachers. This was not in itself new: the movement of travelling Baha'i teachers to other countries – where they would tour around looking for opportunities to present the Baha'i teachings to interested seekers, generate publicity for the Faith, and encourage the work of any local resident Baha'is – has a long history, as exemplified by the activities of such individuals as Jamál Effendi (Sulaymán Khán Tunukábuní, d.1898), who travelled extensively in India, Southeast Asia and Central Asia from the 1870s onwards; Charles Mason Remey (1874-1974), who visited virtually every single Baha'i community that then existed during the early 1900s; and Martha Root (1872-1939), the first Baha'i to make an extended tour of South America (in 1919), and the Baha'i world's premier itinerant teacher during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>113</sup> What was new was the extent

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112. A 'homefront pioneer' is one who pioneers within their own national Baha'i community.

113. See the individual entries in CEBF (loc. cit.).

of this travel teaching and the sustained emphasis placed upon it by the House.

The call for volunteer travelling teachers was made at Ridván 1966 (MU#34.10-12), but initial notice that a call would be made had already been communicated to the national assemblies on 18 March 1966 so as to give them opportunity to prepare to utilize the volunteer teachers they received, as well as to place the topic of travel teaching on the agendas of their annual national conventions and encourage volunteers (MU#31). The planned movement of teachers should be fully operational by the beginning of the proclamation period (October 1967), and would then be 'relentlessly pursued' for the remainder of the Nine Year Plan (MU#34.11).

Bahá'u'lláh had praised the movement of teachers 'from place to place' when it was undertaken 'for the sake of God' and referred to the influence such movement exerted on the world, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá had urged a constant movement of teachers 'to all parts of the world' (ADJ 84; TDP 8.11). In accordance with these words, the House now sought to generate 'a constant stream of visiting teachers to every locality'. By visiting countries other than their own, Baha'is could stimulate both proclamation and teaching efforts internationally. Ideally, the teachers would be self-financing, but if a project was judged to have particular value, the House itself might give it support from the International Deputization Fund. Offers of service could be for any length of time, and should be directed in the first instance to the volunteer's own national assembly or to the continental pioneer committees – the committees having been given the responsibility for assisting the national assemblies implement and coordinate the teaching tours. The teachers should recall 'Abdu'l-Bahá's injunction to be 'sanctified and free from every attachment' when they travelled (MU#31; 34.10-12).

At Ridván 1967, the House expressed itself well-pleased with the results of the call for travelling teachers made a year previously. To date, about 200 travelling teacher projects had been completed (including 78 in Europe, 43 in the Americas, 27 in Asia, and 25 in Australasia), and the House hoped that constant expansion of this activity would occur (MU#42.6).

## 11. Proclamation.

**1. The idea of proclamation.** The idea of a global proclamation campaign was raised by the Universal House of Justice in its Ridván message of 1965 in connection with the commemoration of the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's own proclamation of his message to the world's leaders, which began symbolically with the revelation of the *Súra of the Kings* (*the Súratu'l-Múluk*) in Edirne (Adrianople) in c.1867.<sup>114</sup> Dating this tablet to September/October 1867, the House determined that the 'fate-laden' centenary would commence at the Feast of Mashíyyat (27 September) 1967,<sup>115</sup> with specially appointed representatives visiting the site of Bahá'u'lláh's house in Edirne on behalf of the Baha'is of the world. Six simultaneous intercontinental conferences would then follow in October (in Australia, Germany, India, Panama, Uganda and the USA), and these in turn would be followed by national and local observances organized by all the national spiritual assemblies. The successful carrying out of these plans would constitute a commemoration of the sacred event they recalled which was both 'befitting' and 'commensurate with the resources of the Baha'i World community' (MU#24.14, 24.16-19).

The conferences themselves would sound the 'opening notes' of a period of proclamation which would continue until the centenary of the revelation of the *Kitáb-i Aqdas* in 1973. Planning for this proclamation period required 'ardent and imaginative study' by all national and local assemblies worldwide. National assemblies were asked to consider appointing national proclamation committees to prepare 'feasible and effective plans'. The House also drew the Baha'is' attention to a 1943 message by Shoghi Effendi outlining what a 'carefully conceived' and 'efficiently co-ordinated' proclamation campaign should include – with speeches, articles in the press, radio broadcasts, contact with sympathetic eminent people, conferences, banquets, and special broadcasts – and what aspects of the Faith should be emphasized (its universality, its aims and purposes, episodes in its dramatic history, testimonials to its transforming power, the character and distinguishing features of its promised world order) (MA 62; MU#24.20, 24.22).

In a later message (at Ridván 1966), the House announced that the proclamation period, starting in October 1967, would constitute the 'third phase' of the Nine Year Plan (MU#34.7).

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114. The *Súra of the Kings* (*the Súratu'l-Múluk*) was an Arabic tablet of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to the 'kings of the earth', summoning them to heed Bahá'u'lláh's call, cast away the things they possessed, and follow God (see CEBF, loc. cit. 'Kings'). Shoghi Effendi had regarded it as sounding the 'opening notes' of a period of general and specific exhortation to the rulers and political and religious leaders of the world which continued until the revelation of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, in which Bahá'u'lláh had declared himself to be the messianic 'King of Kings' referred to in the Bible (GPB 171-76, 202-14). Although containing passages addressed to particular individuals – notably Sultan Abdulaziz (reg.1861-76) and his ministers – the tablet to the Kings was not sent out to its addressees. It was, however, widely circulated amongst the Baha'is as an evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's glory. It was followed by a number of other letters addressed and sent to individual world leaders – including Emperor Napoleon III of France, Queen Victoria of Britain, Tsar Alexander II of Russia, Pope Pius IX, and Násiru'd-dín Sháh of Iran. Additional leaders (the German and Austro-Hungarian emperors) were addressed in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (c.1873) (CEBF, loc. cit. 'Rulers').

115. The 'nineteen day feast' is held at the beginning of each Baha'i month as a devotional, administrative and social focus for the life of each local Baha'i community (see CEBF, loc. cit. 'Calendar', 'Feast').

**2. The Ridván message of 1967.** The House returned to the topic of the forthcoming proclamation campaign in its Ridván message for 1967. For more than a century, the Baha'is had 'toiled' to teach their religion, making 'heroic sacrifices', 'dedicated services' and 'prodigious efforts' to establish 'outposts of the Faith' in all the chief countries, territories and islands of the world and to 'raise the framework' of the Baha'i administrative system around the globe. Despite all this work, the Faith still remained largely unknown, however. Now, 'at long last', 'enthraling' new opportunities would be in prospect as the Baha'is embarked on an intensive and enduring global proclamation campaign designed to take the 'healing message' of the Faith to 'every stratum of human society'. The message was that the promised one of all religions had come and that the purpose of his revelation was 'the unity and well-being of the human race' (MU#42.15).

The 'long-to-be-sustained' campaign would start in October 1967, its 'opening notes' being the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's own proclamation. It would then gather momentum through the remainder of the Nine Year Plan, and possibly becoming the 'spearhead' of other, future plans to be launched continually until humanity had recognized and 'gratefully acclaimed' Bahá'u'lláh as its lord and redeemer (MU#42.15).

**Observances and commemorations.** The initial observance of the centenary would consist of special prayers at Bahá'u'lláh's shrine at Bahjí attended by the members of the House of Justice and the six Hands of the Cause who would be making the special pilgrimage to Edirne on behalf of all the Baha'is in the world. After consultations, the six Hands – Rúhiyyih Khánúm, Abu'l-Qásim Faizí, `Alí-Akbar Furútan, Ugo Giachery, Paul Haney and Tarázu'lláh Samandarí – would then proceed to Edirne, gathering in the former house of Bahá'u'lláh in that city for prayers and meditation on 27 September.<sup>116</sup> Thereafter, the six Hands would part, each attending one of the International Conferences as the House of Justice's representatives. Each of the Hands would carry a copy of a photograph of Bahá'u'lláh, which those who attended the conferences would be privileged to view. They would also bear a message to the conferences from the House and would each address the conference they attended on their own behalf (MU#42.17-18).

The conferences would inaugurate the proclamation period, and be used as venues for the national assemblies in their respective continents to share their plans for proclamation with the other assemblies. Between the conferences and Ridván 1968, Baha'is worldwide would be able to have their own meetings to commemorate the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation, 'that wonderful period in human history when the clouds of Divine bounty' had showered 'their treasures' upon humanity 'in lavish profusion', and the 'portals' of God's kingdom had been thrown open, such that those 'who had eyes to see' had been able to witness 'the new Jerusalem' – 'a new heaven and a new earth' – coming down from God (MU#42.17, 42.19). [N=biblical refs].

**The proclamation campaign.** For its own part, the House of Justice would be presenting a special edition of a compilation of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamatory writings, *The Proclamation of*

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116. The House members would simultaneously gather at the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí for prayers (MU#42.17). For the safety of the Faith, no other Baha'is were to be permitted to travel to Turkey at the time of this gathering (MU#41).

*Bahá'u'lláh*, to heads of state during the opening of the proclamation period, bringing the message which Bahá'u'lláh had addressed to the world leaders of his day to their modern-day successors. A general edition of this same book would be made available to the Baha'is in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish editions (MU#42.16).

Worldwide proclamation was an 'unknown sea' on which the Baha'i world would soon sail. It would add another dimension to the work of the Baha'is, and should therefore become a regular part of Baha'i activities in all those countries in which the Baha'is were free to publicize their religion – being included in budgets and assigned to national and local committees for 'study and implementation'. More generally, proclamation activities should be coordinated with other programs designed to accomplish the goals of the Nine Year Plan. In this regard, as it developed, proclamation would 'complement and reinforce' the 'twin processes of expansion and consolidation', rendering both more effective. Thus, all proclamation efforts were to be sustained by teaching (particularly at the local level) and proper preparation made to provide further information to the 'thousands' of people who might now hear of the Faith (MU#42.21).

As the proclamation campaign approached, it also became imperative for the Baha'is to gain a deeper and clearer understanding of what Bahá'u'lláh's purpose was for the human race (see Chapter 11, section C). The 'dedicated striving' of this true deepening assumed greater importance became as the proclamation of the Faith became effective, increasing attention would be directed to Bahá'u'lláh's claims, and opposition to the Faith could then well follow (MU#42.25).

The House reminded the Baha'is that not all communities would be able to join in the proclamation campaign: Baha'is in many countries suffered from varying degrees of restriction and oppression which would altogether prevent or severely restrict public activities of any kind on their part. The House sent such Baha'is a message of special love and assurance, and conveyed the love and admiration of their fellow Baha'is in freer lands, who – in gratitude for their freedom – it encouraged to 'blaze abroad' such a proclamation of the Baha'i message as might 'pave the way for the eventual emancipation of the entire body of the Faith' (MU#42.20).

**3. 'The nature and purpose of proclamation'**. The House offered further comments on 'the nature and purpose of proclamation' in a general letter to the national assemblies, dated 2 July 1967 (MU#45).

For the House, the enthusiasm already engendered within the Baha'i community in its preparations for 'the challenging months and years ahead' was a source of elation. Yet more preparation was needed, however. The international conferences which would open the proclamation period were only just over three months away, and the national assemblies should now begin to plan what they were going to do. The conferences would then give the assemblies opportunity to exchange ideas and coordinate plans – an activity which in itself would be stimulating and greatly increase the momentum of Baha'i activity throughout the world.

In their preparations, the assemblies should consider the following points:

-1. Proclamation was ‘the diffusion of God’s Word’. It was not merely a publicity campaign. It comprised a number of activities of which publicity was only one.

-2. One of the most important aspects of proclamation was contacting prominent people. The Universal House of Justice itself would convey the Baha’i message to all heads of state, but each national assembly had the duty to contact leaders of thought and other prominent national figures in its own country, and acquaint them with the fundamental aims, history, present status and achievements of the Faith. These contacts should be conducted with ‘the utmost wisdom, discretion and dignity’, and should not be rushed. Any publicity that was connected with approaches to prominent people should be very carefully evaluated so that it was neither ‘unwise or discourteous’.

-3. Proclamation was also to include ‘a series of teaching programs designed to reach every stratum of human society’. These should be pursued ‘diligently and wisely, using every resource’.

-4. Publicity itself should be ‘well-conceived, dignified and reverent’. A ‘flamboyant approach’ might well draw much initial attention but also produce a long-term revulsion which would be hard to overcome. Shoghi Effendi always set a standard of ‘dignity and reverence’, and this is what the Baha’is should uphold, particularly in any musical or dramatic presentations. Specifically, photographs of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá should not be used indiscriminately. This dignity of approach did not mean that the activities of the Baha’i youth had to be stultified: one could be exuberant without being irreverent or undermining the dignity of the Cause’.

-5. Each country had its own particular conditions, and each national assembly should decide what kind of proclamation activity was appropriate for its own country. There was no need to follow or copy programmes which had been initiated by other national assemblies.

-6. Follow-up was always of ‘supreme importance’. Proclamation, expansion and consolidation were mutually helpful activities and should be carefully interrelated. In this regard, plans should be wisely made and appropriate to local circumstances: in one place it might be desirable to open a teaching campaign with publicity, in another, it might be better to establish a solid local Baha’i community before publicizing the Faith or contacting prominent people (MU#45).

**4. The inauguration of the proclamation period.** The visit of the Hands to Edirne in September 1967 and the Intercontinental Conferences in the following month went ahead as planned, the House notifying the Baha’i world of the conferences’ success on 15 October (MU#47).

In its message to the conferences, the House reviewed the historical significance of the event that was being celebrated,<sup>117</sup> and then turned to consider the importance both of the worldwide

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117. As the House of Justice noted, Bahá’u’lláh’s proclamatory writings in Edirne were part of series of changes which marked a significant change in the nature of his religious role and teachings – a new ‘stage’ in the Faith’s ‘divinely ordained destiny’. The context – only briefly alluded to by the House – followed on



proclamation campaign that was now starting and of the conferences themselves as sources of inspiration for action by the Baha'is in fulfilling the goals of the Nine Year Plan. A hundred years ago, Bahá'u'lláh himself had begun to proclaim his Faith to the wider world. It was now time for his followers to again proclaim that divine message, both to the leaders and to the masses of the world. By these efforts, the Baha'is would be able not only to aid 'the Faith of God' to 'emerge from obscurity into the arena of public attention', but also to demonstrate 'the independent character' of the Faith's mission through 'steadfast adherence to its laws', and to brace themselves in preparation for the attacks that were 'bound to be directed against its victorious onward march'. The hundred years which had elapsed since Bahá'u'lláh's original proclamation of his mission had been a 'respite' for humanity. The struggle between 'the forces of darkness' – defined as 'man's lower nature' – and 'the rising sun of the Divine teachings' which drew humankind to its 'true station' would now intensify. In this context, 'the fate of humanity' depended 'in very large measure' on the efforts of the Baha'is (MU#46.3).

**5. *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh.*** The compilation of Bahá'u'lláh's writings prepared by the House of Justice was entitled *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*.<sup>118</sup> It included general passages addressed collectively to the kings and religious leaders of the world, to the 'Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein', and to 'the elected representatives of the people in every land', as well as specific passages addressed to the great rulers and leaders of his day – Napoleon III, Alexander II, Victoria, Wilhelm I, Franz-Joseph, Abdulaziz, Násiru'd-dín Sháh and Pope Pius IX.<sup>119</sup>

In its introduction (pp. ix-xiv), the House's stated that the selected passages represented "the essence" of Bahá'u'lláh's "mighty" proclamation of a century ago. Bahá'u'lláh had proclaimed that

"the long-promised age of world peace and brotherhood had at last dawned and that He himself was the Bearer of the new message and power from God which would transform the prevailing system of antagonism and enmity between men and create the spirit and form of the destined world order" (p. ix).

At that time, the world had been dominated by mostly autocratic monarchs and Bahá'u'lláh's call to those rulers had been "either ignored or rejected", so that his "wise counsels" and "dire warnings" had gone unheeded. Viewing a world which was '*at the mercy of rulers so drunk*

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directly from a schismatic crisis within what was then a small community of Babi exiles in the city, the majority of the exiles (and ultimately of the Babis in Iran and elsewhere) siding with Bahá'u'lláh, and coming to refer to themselves as 'Baha'is' (followers of Bahá), whilst a minority chose to follow Bahá'u'lláh's half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá (Subh-i Azal), and came to be called 'Azalis' (followers of Azal). In the House of Justice's words, Bahá'u'lláh now became 'the visible Center and Head of a newly established Faith', and the 'independent character' of the Baha'i movement as being distinct from Babism was established. The first pilgrimages by Baha'i devotees to their leader and the first laws of the new religion (of pilgrimage and fasting) soon followed. Shoghi Effendi's account of the Edirne period of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry is found in GPB 163-80. See also Balyuzi, *King of Glory*.

118. The English edition runs to about 140 pages in all, including the introduction (xiv+127 pp.).

119. On the Baha'i writings to and concerning these rulers see CEBF under the individual's name.

with pride' that they could not discern clearly 'their own best advantage', Bahá'u'lláh had stated that the prevailing order of human affairs appeared 'lamentably defective', and was characterized by increasing division and strife. He warned that 'divine chastisement' would in time assail most of the rulers he had addressed, and would "engulf in ruin the peoples of the world". That old world order was now being 'rolled up'. In time, it would be replaced by a new order based on the unity of the entire human race. The achievement of that unity was the purpose of the Baha'i Faith "and the aim of all Baha'i activity" (pp. ix-x).

Bahá'u'lláh's message was one of hope, love and practical reconstruction. The present generation were reaping the "appalling results" of its forebears' rejection of Bahá'u'lláh's divine call, but today there were "new rulers" and "new people" and perhaps they might hear and either avoid or mitigate "the severity of impending catastrophe". It was with this hope and because it believed that it was its "sacred duty" that the House of Justice was repeating Bahá'u'lláh's call, and it was in the same hope and belief that Baha'is worldwide would do their utmost to bring to their fellows "the redeeming fact of this new outpouring of divine guidance and love". The House believed that they would not labour in vain (pp. xiii-xiv).

**6. Presentations to heads of state.** The House had prepared a special de lux edition of *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* for presentation to heads of state. Initially, it had been intended to present this to 140 heads of state, but 142 eventually received the book.<sup>120</sup> Each of these special copies contained a personal letter to the recipient. Most of the copies appear to have been presented personally to the individual head of state – or his or her representative – by a delegation from the Baha'i community of that state or by a special representative of the House of Justice. At least 55 were sent via the respective countries' ambassadors at the United Nations. Two or three were sent by post (BW 14: 206).<sup>121</sup>

There is as yet no overall account of the presentation of this book to the heads of state or of their responses to it. Several leaders responded warmly, and the *Bahá'í World* reports that most copies were "courteously acknowledged". In its own report, *Bahá'í World* reproduced copies of only two of the letters of acknowledgement: from the American president, Lyndon B. Johnson, dated 6 October 1967, and from the private secretary of the Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, dated 5 January 1968 (BW 14: 207-8).<sup>122</sup> It also published photographs of the presentations to the King of Thailand, Phumipon Adulyadet (November 1967); the presidents

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120. In October 1967, the House stated that 140 heads of state were being presented with the book (MU#46.4), and in its Ridván message of 1969, reported that 122 of these had by then received it (MU#68.4). By Ridván 1973, the total had risen to 142 (MU#128.8). *Bahá'í World, Vol. 15* gives the final total as 141 (BW 15: 180).

121. The brief report in *Bahá'í World* (BW 14: 206) implies that all 140 copies had by then been presented, but this particular volume of *Bahá'í World*, whilst published in 1974, only officially covers the period up to 1968, by which date many copies of the special edition had not yet been presented (see note 7).

122. Johnson's letter stated that all "thoughtful and farsighted men" respected the mission of the Baha'is and shared their goal of world unity. Their hope was "the hope of men of goodwill everywhere". Noting "the growing good" done by the Baha'is, Johnson claimed that their purpose was "the purpose of America", and that on "every front", the United States pressed forward "for a world where hatred has no place and where all may walk in peace and live in freedom, decency, and understanding" (BW 14: 207). The letter from Queen Juliana's secretary is simply a polite acknowledgement.

of Ecuador, Dr. Otto Arosemena (April 1968) and of Paraguay, Gen. Alfredo Stroessner (November 1967); and the private secretary to the President of Botswana (BW 14: 209-10).

**7. Malietoa Tanumafili II.** Amongst the heads of state to receive a copy of *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* was the Malietoa Tanumafili II of Western Samoa.<sup>123</sup> Formally presented with the book on 27 October 1967 by the Hand of the Cause Ugo Giachery, the Malietoa subsequently expressed his interest in becoming a Baha'i, made his declaration of faith in person to Giachery in February 1968, and wrote to the House of Justice expressing his acceptance of the Faith on 19 February 1968. Replying to this letter, the House members noted their "awe and wonderment" at the significance of this first conversion to the Faith of a ruling monarch – a fulfilment of prophecies of Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>124</sup> It was a "momentous event" in the history of the Faith, and news of it would eventually fire the hearts of the Baha'is "with new zeal and enthusiasm" so that they would be able to rise "to new heights of endeavour in their God-given role in the quickening of mankind" (BW 15: 180-83).

Initially, the Malietoa – with the full concurrence of the House of Justice – decided not to make a public declaration of his faith, deeming that it was not yet necessary or propitious. He did meet with certain of the Baha'is from time to time, however, and he let it be known to his immediate circle that he had become a Baha'i. He made his acceptance of the Faith publically known in a letter, dated 31 March 1973, to the delegates to the Third International Convention (BW 15: 181-83), the House responding by stating that the significance of this acceptance of the Faith by a "reigning monarch" was an event that would only be properly understood in centuries to come. For the present, it crowned all the other victories with which Bahá'u'lláh had blessed the Baha'is during the Nine Year Plan (MU#130).

**8. The general proclamation campaign.** In its message to the Baha'is gathered at the International Conferences in October 1967, the House of Justice stated that it had begun the proclamation campaign by presenting the compilation of Bahá'u'lláh's writings to the heads of state. It was now up to the Baha'is to take the Baha'i message to 'the rest of humanity'. In this venture the Baha'is were neither alone nor helpless. Instead, sustained by their mutual love and empowered through their administrative order, 'the Army of Light' could achieve such victories as would 'astonish posterity'. The time was ripe and the opportunities were without limit (MU#46.4).

No proper study of the proclamation campaign which followed has as yet been published, and its results are therefore difficult to assess. Certainly, many high-ranking dignitaries, including senior political and religious leaders and other people of prominence were presented with copies of *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* – the House of Justice referring at Ridván 1969 to "thousands" of officials and leaders who had so far received copies (MU#68.4). More generally, the Baha'is' public profile in many countries seems to have been raised as a result

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123. [Western] Samoa is a constitutional monarchy within the British Commonwealth. It achieved its independence in 1962. Its population in 1981 was just over 158,000. A photograph of the Malietoa appears as the first frontispiece in *Bahá'i World, Vol. 15*.

124. Dowager Queen Marie of Romania (1875-1938) paid public tribute to the Baha'i teachings after she first encountered them in 1926 and was regarded as a Baha'i by Shoghi Effendi. See CEBF, 'Marie', loc. cit.

of the campaign, with the Faith receiving attention in the national mass communications media in many places for the first time (MU#68.5).

It would also seem evident that the impact of the proclamation campaign of 1967-73 extended far beyond the Nine Year Plan itself. In many countries, the Baha'is gained greater experience of how to present their religion in public, and these publicity skills were readily preserved for future use. It would seem reasonable to suggest that the campaign which began in 1967 marked the beginnings of a process of 'emergence from obscurity' for the Baha'i which gathered pace after 1973 and has continued to the present day. As the House had noted in 1967, the proclamation campaign was not necessarily confined to the Nine Year Plan (MU#42.15). Writing in 1969, and referring to the Faith's 'healing message' being proclaimed to the peoples of the world, the House stated that the volume of that call was increasing 'day by day' and would continue to do so into the future as it penetrated 'every stratum of society' (MU#68.5).

## **12. International conferences.**

### Key dates:

- 1963 London World Congress (28 April-2 May).
- 1964 Dedication of Frankfurt Temple (4 July), followed by European Teaching Conference (5 July).
- 1967 Six conferences: at Kampala; Chicago/Wilmette; Panama City, Panama; New Delhi; Sydney; Frankfurt (October).
- 1968 Palermo, Italy (23-25 August), followed by mass pilgrimage to Baha'i World Centre (26-31 August).
- 1970 Two conferences: at Rose Hill, Mauritius; La Paz, Bolivia (both 14-16 August).
- 1971 Six conferences arranged as 3 pairs: at Monrovia, Liberia and Singapore (1-3 January); Kingston, Jamaica and Suva, Fiji (21-23 May); Sapporo, Japan and Reykjavik, Iceland (3-5 September).
- 1972 Dedication of Panama Temple (29-30 April), followed by International Teaching Conference (1-2 May).

**1. Baha'i internationalism.** International contacts between Baha'is have been an important part of Baha'i life since the expansion of the Faith beyond its original Islamic milieu, reflecting the self-consciously global sense of identity felt by many Baha'is.

From the time of the initial development of Baha'i groups in the West during the 1890s, Baha'is have self-consciously seen themselves as members of a global religion. Although the numbers of Baha'is who lived outside of the Faith's traditional Islamic heartland remained very small, the idea of belonging to a diverse global community was very attractive to many Baha'is and emphasized through such means as the visits and tours of Baha'i teachers from other countries and the distribution of Baha'i periodical literature amongst 'national' Baha'i communities.

A new element of 'Baha'i internationalism' was introduced by Shoghi Effendi in the 1950s, with the holding of a series of four intercontinental conferences in 1953 at the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade – one each for Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. This was followed by his plans for a second series of intercontinental conferences in 1958 and an international congress in 1963, which was eventually held in London (BW 13: 311-32; 14: 57-80. See above, Chapter 2).<sup>125</sup>

**2. Conferences held under the aegis of the Universal House of Justice.** Following the evident success of the London congress, and emulating the earlier conferences, the House decided to hold its own series of international conferences during the course of the Nine Year Plan. This was announced as a plan goal in 1964, and the locations of the first set of conferences, six in all, were announced at Ridván 1965 and scheduled for October 1967 as part of the opening of the global proclamation campaign (MU#24.17). The venues were Kampala for Africa; Wilmette [and Chicago] for North America; Panama City for Latin America and the Caribbean; New Delhi for Asia; Sydney for Australasia; and Frankfurt for Europe. The first of a second set of conferences ('Oceanic Conferences') would be held during August 1968 on one of the Mediterranean islands to commemorate Bahá'u'lláh's

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125. The conferences of 1953 were held in Kampala, Uganda; Chicago, USA; New Delhi, India; and Stockholm, Sweden. Those of 1958 were held in Kampala; Wilmette, USA; Singapore (as a replacement for a proposed conference in Jakarta); Sydney, Australia; and Frankfurt, Germany.

voyage across the Mediterranean Sea hundred years previously (MU#24.21). It was later decided that this conference would be located at Palermo in Sicily (MU#53). At Ridván 1969, it was announced that a further eight oceanic and continental conferences would be held in 1970-71. The venues would be La Paz in Bolivia (for the South American continent) and Rose-Hill in Mauritius (for the Indian Ocean) in August 1970; Monrovia, Liberia (for Africa) and Jakarta, Indonesia (for the South China 'Seas' and Southeast Asia in general) in January 1971;<sup>126</sup> Suva, Fiji (for the South Pacific) and Kingston, Jamaica (for the Caribbean) in May 1971; and Sapporo, Japan (for the North Pacific) and Reykjavik, Iceland (for the North Atlantic) in September 1971 (MU#68.6). Two additional conferences were held in connection with the dedications of the Frankfurt and Panama temples (4-5/6 July 1964 and 29 April-2 May 1972 respectively).

**3. The European Teaching Conference of 1964.** The new temple at Langenhain was dedicated for public worship on 4 July 1964, with Rúhiyyih Khánum acting as the official representative of the Universal House of Justice. Only one other Hand – John Ferraby from England – was present. The dedication was followed by a European Teaching Conference (5-6 July). Altogether, some fifteen hundred Baha'is were in attendance, including Baha'is from at least 14 countries outside Europe as well as delegates and Baha'is from the various Baha'i communities of Europe. Apart from gaining a rare opportunity to view the portraits of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb,<sup>127</sup> the Baha'is listened to several addresses by Rúhiyyih Khánum (in both English and German), in one of which she stressed the importance of mass teaching. Reports were also given by each of the European national assemblies; messages of greeting announced from Baha'is in other parts of the world; and group discussions held on various aspects of the work of the Nine Year Plan (teaching, cooperation between European national spiritual assemblies, publishing and translation, contact with the mass media, the exchange of news, and finances). The Baha'is were also able to use the dedication as a means of gaining considerable publicity in the press and on radio and television. A special inaugural service was also held before the formal dedication to which regional and local government figures and other guests were invited, and a public meeting was held at which there were addresses on the "Baha'i House of Worship" (in German by Dr. Eugen Schmidt) and "Humanity in Crisis" (in English by Rúhiyyih Khánum) (BW 14: 484-88).

The House of Justice's messages to the Conference referred mostly to Baha'i developments in Europe.

**4. The Intercontinental Conferences of October 1967.** The House of Justice announced the

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126. In view of the continuing difficulties encountered by the Indonesian Baha'is in holding public meetings due to government restrictions on the Faith, the conference planned for Jakarta was later relocated to Singapore. This was the second such relocation. The Asian intercontinental conference planned for Jakarta in September 1958 also had to be moved to Singapore (BW 13: 331-32).

127. These are regarded as sacred by Baha'is and can normally only be viewed at the International Baha'i Archives Building in Haifa. Copies are frequently displayed at major international conferences. The ceremonial of the viewing on this occasion was symbolized by Rúhiyyih Khánum anointing each viewer with attar of roses before they approached the portraits. The Haifa portraits comprise a photograph of Bahá'u'lláh and paintings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

locations for its first series of intercontinental conferences at Ridván 1965 as part of its plans for the forthcoming proclamation period. The six conferences would be held simultaneously in October 1967 in Frankfurt, Kampala, New Delhi, Panama City, Sydney and Wilmette,<sup>128</sup> and together they would sound the ‘opening notes’ of the proclamation campaign. Each would be convened by the responsible national spiritual assembly (MU#24.17, 20). A year later, in its Ridván message of 1966, the House stated that the conferences would have a threefold purpose: (1) to commemorate the centenary of the beginning of Bahá’u’lláh’s own proclamation of his mission; (2) to proclaim the ‘Divine Message’ anew; and (3) to deliberate on the tasks which still needed to be accomplished during the remaining years of the Nine Year Plan (MU#34.7). Further definition was given in Ridván 1967, the House expressing the hope that the conferences would prove to be ‘focal points of the love and prayers’ of the Baha’is everywhere, as well as ‘magnets’ which would attract the spiritual powers which alone could confirm their work, and ‘potent sources of unity, spiritual enthusiasm and realistic planning’. Surely, the conferences would again demonstrate ‘the spirit of joy’ which pervaded such gatherings and reinforce the Baha’is determination ‘to seize whatever means and opportunities’ they might find to ‘raise the Divine call’. In addition to having a significant role in inaugurating the proclamation period, the conferences were to be used for the discussion of the remaining goals of the Plan. National assemblies should ensure that they were represented at them (MU#42.19).

Altogether the conferences were attended by some 9,200 Baha’is (MU#47.2).<sup>129</sup> The House of Justice was officially represented at each of the conferences by one of the Hands of the Cause (Tarázu’lláh Samandarí at Chicago/Wilmette;<sup>130</sup> Paul Haney at Frankfurt; `Alí-Akbar Furútan at Kampala; Abu’l-Qásim Faizí at New Delhi; Rúhiyyih Khánúm at Panama City; and Ugo Giachery at Sydney). Most of the other Hands were also present, albeit only briefly in some cases because of ill health: Zikrullah Khadem (Dhikru’lláh Khádém) and John Robarts at Chicago; John Ferraby, Adelbert Mühlshlegel and (briefly) Hermann Grossmann at Frankfurt; Enoch Olinga and (briefly) Músá Banání and William Sears at Kampala; Shu`á’u’lláh `Alá’í, Rahmatu’lláh Muhájir and `Alí-Muhammad Varqá at New Delhi; Jalál Kházeh at Panama; and Collis Featherstone at Sydney. Only two of the Hands (out of the then 21) – Agnes Alexander and Hasan Balyuzi – were unable to attend at all. All the conferences were attended by members of the national spiritual assemblies and Auxiliary boards for their region, in addition to local Baha’is and visitors from other parts of the Baha’i world.

In addition to consultations about such matters as teaching the Faith, proclamation, and the work towards winning the goals of the Nine Year Plan, an experimental intercontinental radio-telephone linkage was attempted that succeeded in briefly linking up attendees at most of the conferences, enabling a representative from each conference to convey greetings to the participants at the other conferences.<sup>131</sup> A slide show produced at the Baha’i World Centre,

128. The Wilmette conference was mostly held in various venues in the neighbouring city of Chicago.

129. Over 3,000 at New Delhi; 3,000 at Chicago- Wilmette; 1,600 [or 1,700] in Frankfurt; 660 [or over 700] at Panama; over 450 in Kampala; and over 350 in Sydney (BW 14: 223, 229, 232, 239, 243, 249, 253).

130. Originally Leroy Ioas was to have been the House of Justice’s representative at the Chicago/Wilmette conference, but he died shortly after being given the assignment and was replaced by nonagenarian, Tarázu’lláh Samandarí (MU#24.17, 42.10).

131. The African and Asian conference link-ups encountered problems. In Kampala, the audio linkage had to go

*Carmel, the Mountain of God*, and a CBS film about the Faith, *And His Name Shall Be One*, were widely shown. Many participants volunteered to become pioneers. Extensive publicity was also achieved and meetings and receptions for national dignitaries were held. The gathering in Panama had particular significance it was the first Baha'i intercontinental conference ever held in Latin America, and included the ceremonial laying of a cornerstone for the projected Panama Baha'i temple (BW 14: 221-58).

Writing to the conference participants, the House called upon the Baha'is to consider 'the urgent needs of the Cause today'. At a time when humanity as a whole was entering 'the dark heart' of an 'age of transition', the course which the Baha'is should follow was clear: to achieve the assigned goals of the Nine Year Plan and to proclaim the Baha'i message. The House would pray that the conferences would act as 'centers of spiritual illumination' which would inspire the Baha'is to 'redouble their efforts in further expanding and consolidating the Faith ...'; arise to fill the remaining pioneer goals; undertake travelling teaching projects; and offer generous contributions to the various Baha'i funds, particularly to 'the vital project' of erecting the Panama temple. It was the House members' 'ardent hope' that as a result of the conferences, 'valiant souls' would emerge who would arise 'with noble resolve' and 'in loving service' so as to ensure 'the successful and early accomplishment' of the 'sacred tasks' which lay ahead (MU#46.3; 46.5-6).

Commenting on the conferences success, the House of Justice noted the large number of attendees, and the fact that this included almost all of the Hands of the Cause, as well as large numbers of Board members and representatives of nearly all of the national assemblies. The House also noted the presence of members of many tribal groups from Asia, Africa and the Americas. The participants had had what the House described as the 'INESTIMABLE PRIVILEGE' of viewing copies of a portrait photograph of Bahá'u'lláh. The Hands representing the House brought with them the spirit of both the Holy Land and Edirne. The conferences had been distinguished by the making of some of the initial presentations of the proclamatory messages of Bahá'u'lláh to heads of state; the 'FRUITFUL DELIBERATIONS' which had been held about the accomplishment of the remaining goals; the expression of international Baha'i solidarity through the use of an 'INGENIOUS' scheme linking the conferences together for a period through a telephonic exchange; the laying of the cornerstone of the Panama temple by Rúhiyyih Khánum – reinforcing the 'SPIRITUAL POTENCIES' of the new phase; and the large number of pioneer offers (over 230) which had been made. The House members offered their prayers that the Baha'is in every land would be endowed with a 'FRESH MEASURE' of 'CELESTIAL STRENGTH' so that they would be able to pursue with 'INCREASED VISION' the goals which had been set and thereby contribute to the establishment of God's kingdom in the hearts of men (MU#47). Cables were also sent to each of the conferences individually (BW 14: 228, 238, 242, 245, 252, 258).

## **5. The Palermo Conference and the mass pilgrimage (1968).**

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via London and New York, and whilst the Hand of the Cause Enoch Olinga was apparently able to transmit a message, no message was received in return. In New Delhi 'emergency-use' taped telephone messages were played when communications broke down (BW 14: 246, 254). The telephone linkage was timed for the late morning in the Americas, late afternoon in Germany, evening in Uganda and India, and 2 a.m. in Sydney (BW 14: 241).



**5.1. Announcement.** The first of the second series of conferences called by the House resembled the conferences at the beginning of the proclamation period in that it was also a commemoration of an event in Baha'i history. The basic details were announced by the House of Justice in November on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh on 12 November 1817: the conference would be held in Palermo, Sicily in August 1968 – in the heart of the sea on which Bahá'u'lláh himself had sailed a hundred years previously prior to his incarceration in the prison of Akka.<sup>132</sup> The conference would have a double purpose: to consider the 'MOMENTOUS FULFILMENT' of the 'AGE-OLD' prophecies regarding the triumph of God's messenger over every 'GRIEVOUS CALAMITY', and to consult on plans for the propagation of the Baha'i Cause throughout the islands and bordering lands of the Mediterranean Sea. After the conference, the participants were invited to travel on to the Holy Land to attend the commemoration of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in Akka (on these 'SACRED SHORES'), and to 'RECONSECRATE' themselves at the threshold of his shrine in preparation of prosecuting the 'GLORIOUS TASKS' which lay ahead (MU#53).

**5.2. The conference.** The conference itself extended over four days (22-25 August). Over 2,300 Baha'is from 67 countries were in attendance. In addition to Ugo Giachery, the only Italian Hand and the House of Justice's representative, another ten Hands were present (Faizí, Ferraby, Furútan, Haney, Khadem, Kházeh, Muhájir, Mühlischlegel, Olinga and Sears). The programme included speeches from various of the Hands; reports on the progress of the Faith around the world, progress on the Panama temple project, the proclamation activities of several national spiritual assemblies and of Baha'i activities in the Mediterranean region; and an appeal for pioneers. A public meeting was also held at which various local officials were guests, and the provincial governor was given a copy of the book, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* (BW 15: 73-79).

**5.3. The message from the House of Justice.** The House's message to the Palermo Conference began by describing the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's voyage on the Mediterranean Sea a century before. Forced upon him by 'the two despots who were His chief adversaries' (i.e. the Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz and the Iranian Shah Násiru'd-dín), this was his fourth banishment, and came at a time when 'the tide of His prophetic utterance was in full flood'. In Edirne, Bahá'u'lláh had already begun the proclamation of his message to humankind; the 'sun of His majesty had reached its zenith'; and, as witnessed by the devotion of his followers, the respect accorded him by the general population, and the esteem with which he was held by some Ottoman officials and by representatives of foreign powers, 'His ascendancy had become manifest'. He was now sent, however, in what was a determined attempt to extirpate his Cause 'once and for all', to 'a remote, obscure and pestilential outpost of the decrepit Turkish empire'. This was a major crisis with potential for disaster. 'Consigned to a prison cell', separated from the majority of his followers, unable to associate with even his fellow exiles, and debarred from access to those to whom his message was to be addressed, 'it was apparent that by all earthly standards the ship of His Cause must founder', and 'His mission wither and die' (MU#63.1-2).

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132. Bahá'u'lláh and his companions had left Edirne on 12 August 1868 and travelled to Gallipoli on the north shore of the Dardanelles, and then, after a few days wait, been shipped to Akka, arriving in that city on 31 August (BKG 255-79; GPB 179-82). The Palermo conference was held on 23-25 August 1968, and the mass pilgrimage to Haifa and Bahjí (the first and so far only one of its kind) on 26-31 August.

This was not to be. It was ‘the Lord of Hosts’ with whom his enemies were dealing. ‘Knowing the sufferings which faced Him’, he sought to instill ‘confidence and fortitude’ into his followers, immediately sending them ‘sublime Tablets’ which asserted ‘the power of His Cause to overcome all opposition’. ‘All the afflictions which men could heap upon Him were thrown back from the rock of His adamantine will like spray from the ocean’. Through his fortitude and his ‘patient submission to the affronts of men’, his ‘divine genius transformed the sombre notes of disaster into the diapason of triumph’. Whilst his worldly fortunes were at their nadir he raised ‘His standard of victory’ above the prison city of Akka and ‘poured forth’ the ‘healing balm’ of Book of Laws, the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*, upon mankind (MU#63.3).

Bahá’u’lláh’s exile from Edirne to Akka was unique then in religious history. The journeys of the prophets of the past – Abraham’s migration from Ur to the region of Aleppo, Moses’ passage towards the Promised Land, Mary and Joseph’s flight into Egypt with the infant Jesus, and even the emigration (Hegira) of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina – could not compare to it (MU#63.1).

For the House of Justice, Bahá’u’lláh’s exile and its consequences was an ‘awe-inspiring’ and ‘supernal’ episode, contemplation of which provided the basis for ‘a clearer understanding of our own times’, a ‘more confident view of their outcome’, and a ‘deeper apprehension’ of the part which the Baha’is had to play in the midst of what evidently a period of increasing ‘moral decay and disorder’ in the wider world (MU#63.4-5).

The Jewish, Christian and Islamic civilizations had all flourished in the islands and surrounding lands of the Mediterranean, and it was thus befitting that this first Baha’i oceanic conference was held on one of the chief islands of this ‘great sea’. These were lands of ancient civilizations which had witnessed the heroic and self-sacrificial deeds of the early Christians and the glory of Islam’s golden age. Now they had been endowed with a ‘spiritual potentiality’ which could dissolve the ‘encrustations’ of what had once been glorious but were now ‘moribund social orders’, and so radiate once again ‘the light of Divine guidance’. Thus, Bahá’u’lláh (‘the King of kings’), ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (the Centre of his father’s Covenant), and Shoghi Effendi (‘the Sign of God on earth’) had all journeyed upon this sea. Within its depths were enshrined the remains of the Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker,<sup>133</sup> and around its shores lay the dust of Baha’i apostles, martyrs and pioneers. During the Ten Year Crusade some 46 pioneers (‘Knights of Bahá’u’lláh’) had opened 7 of its islands and 5 of its territories. As to the future, eight national assemblies had been established here during Shoghi Effendi’s ministry, and even more would be established in forthcoming plans, including assemblies on the major islands as envisioned by Shoghi Effendi (MU#63.6-8).

Future progress depended upon the outcome of the present plan, however, and a dramatic upsurge in ‘effective teaching’, together with more pioneers, travelling teachers and funding were all now needed. The House hoped that the enthusiasm, prayers and ‘spirit of devotion’ generated amongst the participants at this conference would lead to ‘a great spiritual dynamic’ which would help ensure victory. Again, those who would soon be privileged to

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133. Dorothy Baker (1898-1954) was a well-known American Baha’i public speaker and administrator. She also travelled extensively internationally to promote the Faith. She died in January 1954 after her plane exploded whilst flying near the island of Elba. See Freeman; Harper 191-201.

participate in the observance of the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in Akka in a few days time should pray to him that 'such bounties and favors' would descend upon the Baha'is everywhere that they would demonstrate their love for him by such 'deeds of sacrifice and devotion' as would outshine those of the past and sweep away all obstacles in the way of the 'onward march' of the Faith (MU#63.9-10).

**5.4. The mass pilgrimage.** Over 1,800 Baha'is travelled from Palermo on to Haifa to participate in the largest mass pilgrimage ever made to the Baha'i holy sites in the Haifa-Akka area (26-31 August). Apart from visiting the shrines and other holy places, the pilgrims were able to view the portraits of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb in the Archives Building and on 31 August attend a commemorative meeting at Bahjí for Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in the Holy Land (BW 15: 81-86).<sup>134</sup> Two days after the formal ending of the pilgrimage, on 2 September, Tarázu'lláh Samandarí, the nonagenarian Hand of the Cause who had been in one of the last remaining Baha'is to have met Bahá'u'lláh, died, having been on his sick bed in hospital during the commemoration. Many of the pilgrims were able to return to attend the funeral, which with almost a thousand people in the cortège became one of the largest and most impressive to have taken place in Haifa since the time of `Abdu'l-Bahá (BW 15: 415-16).

**5.5. The House's comments on the conference.** Commenting on the results of the Palermo Conference in September 1968 shortly after it had ended, the House praised the 'burst of eager enthusiasm' on the part of 'determined and dedicated' Baha'is in attendance who had pledged to contribute their share to the winning of the remaining goals of the Nine Year Plan. These included over 125 who offered to pioneer and more than 100 who volunteered to travel teach. There had also been a 'generous outpouring' of financial contributions. Surely, it mused, if the 'entire Baha'i world' had been present at the conference – and so shared in its enthusiasm – all the remaining plan goals would have been quickly won. Those who had not attended were assured that they too could share in the winning of the goals (MU#66.1-2).

The House referred to the Palermo Conference and more particularly to the mass visitation to the Holy Land which had followed it in its Ridván message of 1969. Paying homage to the founder of their Faith, over 2,000 Baha'is had commemorated his arrival in the Holy Land with 'deep awareness' of the 'spiritual import' of this 'long prophesied' event. It had been an 'inexpressibly poignant contrast' to Bahá'u'lláh's actual arrival one hundred years previously, rejected by the world's rulers and derided by the local people. Such was his 'conquering power' and 'undefeatable might' (MU#68.3). Again, at Ridván 1973, the House identified the mass pilgrimage – held close to Bahá'u'lláh's burial place, the *qiblih* of the Baha'i world – as one of the most important events which had occurred during the Nine Year Plan, marking the arrival of 'the Promised One of all ages' in the Holy Land, this arrival itself having been promised in the scriptures of past religions (MU#128.17).

## **6. The conferences of 1970-71.**

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134. The total number of Baha'is in attendance at the commemoration of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in the Holy Land is alternatively given as "nearly" and "more than" 2,000 (MU#67.2; 68.3). This figure will have included people who were not part of the pilgrimage group from Palermo such as the World Centre staff and the group of youth helpers who had come to Haifa to act as guides to the pilgrims.

**6.1. The conferences.** In its Ridván message of 1969, the House had announced the number and scheduling of the other oceanic and continental conferences that would be held during the Plan. Altogether, there would be eight, arranged in four pairs and spaced out over a thirteen month period between August 1970 and September 1971. The conferences held were as follows:

1. For the Indian Ocean at Rose Hill, Mauritius and South America at La Paz, Bolivia (both 14-16 August 1970);
2. For Africa at Monrovia, Liberia and the South China Seas (and Southeast Asia in general) at Singapore [Originally planned for Jakarta] (1-3 January 1971);
3. For the Caribbean at Kingston, Jamaica and the South Pacific at Suva, Fiji (21-23 May 1971); and
4. For the North Pacific at Sapporo, Japan and the North Atlantic at Reykjavik, Iceland (3-5 September 1971).

There was a two year gap following the Palermo Conference before the first two of these conferences were held.

These eight conferences resembled those held earlier in the Plan.<sup>135</sup> As previously, the conferences were attended by a large number of Baha'is (almost 6,000) from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds.<sup>136</sup> The House of Justice sent one of the Hands of the Cause to each conference as its representative: William Sears to Mauritius; Rúhiyyih Khánum to Bolivia; Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir to Liberia; Enoch Olinga to Singapore; Zikrullah Khadem to Jamaica; Collis Featherstone to Fiji; `Alí-Akbar Furútan to Japan; and John Robarts to Iceland. Although most of the conferences were attended by more than one Hand, these included only two of the Hands (Kházeh and Haney) who were not official representatives – several of the Hands attending more than one conference. The fact that only ten of the Hands attended these conferences presumably reflects the increasing frailty of many of them. The extra attendees were: Kházeh and Muhájir at Rose Hill; Rúhiyyih Khánum at Monrovia; Featherstone at Singapore; Robarts at Kingston; Muhájir at Suva; Featherstone and Muhájir at Sapporo; and Haney at Reykjavik. Large numbers of Continental Counsellors and members of the Auxiliary Boards and national spiritual assemblies were also in attendance. In addition to the customary speeches, reports and discussions, there was at least one concert (in Jamaica) of Baha'i artistes, reflecting the greater role that the performing arts had recently come to play in the public activities of many Baha'is.<sup>137</sup> Several of the conferences were also the occasion

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135. *Bahá'í World* provides “A pictorial report” of the conferences adapted from a slide/filmstrip programme prepared by the Audio-Visual Department at the Baha'i World Centre (BW 15: 296-316). It is not very informative.

136. For the figure of almost 6,000 see BW 15: 314. These included over 1,000 in Mauritius; 641 in Bolivia; 500 in Liberia; over 1,200 in Jamaica; over 400 in Fiji; 625 in Japan; and over 750 in Iceland: a total of at least 5,116. No figure is given for the Singapore conference (BW 15: 300, 301, 304, 306, 308, 309, 312).

137. There was a significant change in the role of music in Baha'i meetings in many parts of the world from roughly the late 1960s onwards. This was particularly marked in the West, where it was associated with a large-scale influx of young Baha'is and in North America of minority group members which had an impact on the 'cultural style' of the Faith (See Smith, 'The Baha'i Faith in the West'). The Jamaican Baha'i concert included American entertainers: the jazz musician Dizzy (John Birks) Gillespie, the opera singer Geraldine Jones, and the popular musicians Seals and Crofts (BW 15: 307).

for making useful contacts with prominent people and gaining extensive publicity. As in 1967, telephonic greetings were exchanged between conferences being held at the same time.

**6.2. The House of Justice's messages.** The House sent messages to each of the conferences. Although many of points made refer to the specific conditions in the regions concerned (and will therefore be discussed in the regional chapters below), there are many common themes, most notably an insistence on the urgency of completing the various goals of the Nine Year Plan. The more general points included the following:

(i) The House's message sent jointly to the first two conferences (in Bolivia and Mauritius in August 1970) expressed its members' 'eager expectancy' regarding the results of the conferences. The recent centenary of the martyrdom of Mírzá Mihdí (23 June 1970) was a reminder that 'the promotion and establishment' of the Faith had always been achieved through 'sacrifice and dedicated service'. Indeed, these conferences were themselves a testimony to the 'creative power', 'fruitfulness' and 'invocation of Divine confirmations' which resulted from 'sacrificial service to the Cause of God'. Thus, whilst both countries had been specifically mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, the Cause had remained 'virtually unknown' in these regions as recently as thirty-five years ago. Yet, now, both were the venues for 'these historic Conferences'. The participants at both conferences were charged with 'the redemption of mankind' from its godlessness, ignorance, confusion and conflict. This should be their aim, and they would succeed – as those before them had succeeded – 'by sacrifice to the Cause of God'. The deeds and services that were now required of them would shine in the future even as the work of their 'spiritual predecessors' in establishing the Faith in those regions shone today (and would shine forever 'in the annals of the Cause'). The members of the House of Justice shared the participants' 'spiritual delight' at their gatherings, and prayed that their deliberations on the objectives of the Plan and the 'spiritual fellowship' which they would enjoy would result in 'immediate and determined plans' to complete the assigned tasks, and so prepare the way for still greater triumphs in the future and the eventual establishment of God's kingdom on Earth (MU#82).

(ii) In its message to the Monrovia conference in January 1971, the House expressed the hope that the conference would become 'a sun' from which 'rays of spiritual energy and inspiration' would 'stream forth' to all parts of that 'vast continent', galvanizing the Baha'is to action in teaching the Faith and pioneering so that they would rapidly achieve the assigned goals of the Plan (MU#88.5). Its hopes for the Singapore conference being held at the same time were that its deliberations would 'engender a new wave of enthusiasm'; cement the bonds of love between the various national communities of the region ever more firmly; and result in practical planning for the implementation of the newly assigned additional goals. The House looked forward eagerly to the report on the conference (MU#89.5-6).

(iii) At Ridván 1971, the House noted with pleasure the 'wonderful spirit' that had been released and 'practical benefits' which had accrued at the four oceanic and continental conferences that had so far been held. Their success reinforced the House members' 'high hopes' that the remaining four conferences would each be a resounding success and result in more pioneers and travelling teachers; a greater proclamation of the Baha'i message; and 'a raising of the spirits and devotion' of the Baha'is (MU#96.5).

(iv) In its message to the Caribbean Conference in May 1971, the House emphasized that

time was now short. The Nine year Plan was fast approaching its 'triumphant end', but the needs of the Faith remained great and many. 'No effort' could be foregone; 'no opportunity' should be wasted. The conference participants had gathered to consult on the 'vital requirements' of the Plan at a 'highly significant moment', and it was the House members' prayer that 'every session of this historic meeting' would attract divine blessings, and that 'each soul', 'armed with the love of God' and imbued with God's purpose for a struggling humanity, would arise to activate – 'beyond all present hopes' – the 'vast spiritual potentialities of the Americas' (MU#97.2, 97.4). A similar message was sent at the same time to the participants at the South Pacific Conference.

(v) In September 1971, the House referred to the final conferences at Reykjavik and Sapporo as bringing the series of gatherings to a 'triumphant close'. The House members also prayed that 'untold blessings and confirmations' might be showered upon the participants at Reykjavik as they laboured to advance the Cause, and that their 'brows be crowned with victory' (MU#100.7, 101.6).

**7. The Panama temple dedication (1972).** The final conference of the Nine Year Plan was that for the second temple dedication: at Panama, the dedication of the temple (28-30 April 1972), being followed by an International Teaching Conference (1-2 May). Over 4,000 Baha'is were in attendance, including Rúhiyyih Khánum, as official representative of the House of Justice, Ugo Giachery and Zikrullah Khadem. Counsellors, Board members and 26 representatives of national spiritual assemblies were also present; so too were many Amerindian Baha'is. Proceedings included prayers, a viewing of the portraits of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, music and singing, the reading of congratulatory messages from around the Baha'i world, speeches and discussion about aspects of service to the Faith, and a call for pioneers (103 volunteered). A public meeting and a banquet for local dignitaries were arranged (BW 15: 632-41)..

**8. An overall assessment.** It is difficult to come to an overall assessment of these eighteen conferences. It is likely that their primary value for many Baha'is was emotional and spiritual rather than intellectual. Although the Hands of the Cause travelled extensively visiting national Baha'i communities, the conferences provided one of the main opportunities for gaining inspiration from the surviving members of this small group of dedicated Baha'is who had worked so closely with Shoghi Effendi. Often the Hands referred to Shoghi Effendi in their speeches, helping newer Baha'is to identify more closely with one who had had such a forceful role in the development of the Faith in recent times. Again, for those Baha'is who were unable to undertake the pilgrimage to the Baha'i World Centre, the conferences provided perhaps the only opportunity to view the sacred photograph of the founder of their religion. There was also the emotional impact of meeting other Baha'is from around the world, whether old friends or new. In this, the conferences reinforced what we might term the spirit of 'international Baha'i solidarity', helping believers who might otherwise live in often small local groups to further develop their sense of being part of an international movement.<sup>138</sup> Those who attended the conferences were also able to help relay something of

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138. The total cumulative attendance was in the region of 17,000 for the 15 'regular' conferences (i.e. excluding the London Congress and the two temple dedications) (MU#128.8), but this figure doubtless includes many

the 'spirit' they had felt whilst attending back to their local communities.

At an intellectual and administrative level, the conferences also provided a useful means of learning the latest news of developments in the Baha'i world, and of discussing various aspects of Baha'i work dealing with the various goals and new ideas of the Nine Year Plan.

The conferences also came to have an increasing practical value as occasions for gaining publicity and proclaiming the Faith to dignitaries (the House of Justice itself noted this as a major accomplishment of the conferences (MU#128.8)). Again, they generated large numbers of pioneer offers and significant cumulative contributions to the Baha'i Funds.

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individuals who went to more than one conference.

### 13. Temples.

**1. Baha'i Houses of Worship.** Apart from the Baha'i shrines, the buildings of the Baha'i World Centre, and the various places of religious significance related to the lives of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and `Abdu'l-Bahá, the most important Baha'i buildings are the temples or Houses of Worship.<sup>139</sup>

These are as yet few in number – only two had been constructed prior to the Ten Year Crusade: at Ashkhabad (Ishqábád), in what is now Turkmenistan, and at Wilmette, Illinois,<sup>140</sup> and it was initially one of Shoghi Effendi's goals in the Ten Year Crusade to double the number of temples through the construction of additional edifices in Tehran and in Germany (MBW 42, 54). In the event, a major wave of persecution directed against the Iranian Baha'is in 1955 caused Shoghi to substitute Kampala in Uganda for Tehran as the site of a new temple, and later to add Sydney in Australia as a fifth site (MBW 90, 111). Of these three new temples, work on the Kampala and Sydney temples proceeded briskly, and both were dedicated for worship in 1961. The first temple dependency – a home for the aged at Wilmette – was also opened (1959). Work on the German edifice (at Langenhain in the Taunus Hills, near Frankfurt-am-Main), proved more difficult, however, a long string of legal problems, seemingly caused by church opposition to the project, delaying the start of construction until 1960, so that it was not until the Spring of 1963 that the temple structure was finally completed, and by the time of the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, it had not yet been opened for worship (BW 13: 704-48).

**2. The Frankfurt and Ashkhabad temples.** Almost immediately upon taking office, the House of Justice had to deal with temple issues. The first of these concerned the Frankfurt temple – designated by Shoghi Effendi as the 'Mother Temple of Europe' (MBW 100), and one of the few unfulfilled goals of the Ten Year Crusade. Accordingly, the House made completion of the temple an urgent priority, referring to it in its first message to national conventions in May 1963. Although the structure of the building was finished, the interior decoration still had to be done, utilities installed, access roads laid, the grounds landscaped, and a caretaker's house built. Rapid completion of these tasks was imperative, especially as any delay was likely to add considerably to the estimated \$210,000 now required for the

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139. The Baha'i temple or 'House of Worship' ideally forms part of a larger complex of institutions, collectively referred to as the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* (Ar. 'Dawning-place of the remembrances [or mention (*dhikr*)] of God'). The term was used by both Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá, the later specifying that the central house of worship should be linked to a number of subsidiary buildings, including a hospital, drug dispensary, traveller's hospice, school, and university, these philanthropic institutions being open to those of all religions. See CEBF *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, loc. cit. LG 605-11; SWAB 94-100.

140. Both of these were started during the ministry of `Abdu'l-Bahá. Construction work on the first, at Ashkhabad (Ishqábád), in what is now was then, Russian Turkestan, started in 1902, the external decoration finally being completed in 1919. Work on the second temple, at Wilmette, began in 1920, but due to financial problems, it was not until 1931, that the actual superstructure was completed – the interior ornamentation was not completed until twenty years later, in 1951. Meanwhile, in 1928, the Ashkhabad temple had been expropriated by the Soviet authorities, and then, in 1938, converted into an art gallery, leaving the American temple as the only one in Baha'i hands. Further news of the Ashkhabad temple, and of the once flourishing Baha'i community which had once used it, effectively ceased until the 1960s.



work. National assemblies were accordingly directed to allocate substantial budgets so as to ensure immediate completion (MU#2.9).

The work to complete the required tasks proceeded rapidly, and by the Summer of 1964, the temple was ready for use. The dedication ceremony was held on 4 July, the House of Justice hailing the construction as ‘a project of untold significance and tremendous potential’ for the spread of the Baha’i Cause in Europe. As a major goal of the Ten Year Crusade, the temple’s dedication during the opening months of the new plan made it a ‘striking link’ between the two crusades, and as such was an example of the ‘organic progress’ of the Faith, in which the seeds sown in one period bore fruit in the next. It endowed the Baha’i community with ‘new and greater capacities’ so that it could win ‘still greater victories’ (MU#17.1).

Just a few months after taking office, in August 1963, the House also had to announce the latest news it had received about the Ashkhabad temple. It transpired that it had been seriously damaged in an earthquake in 1948, leaving it vulnerable to cumulative damage caused by the annual heavy rains. Finally – presumably in 1963 – the Soviet authorities had decided to demolish the entire building and clear the site.<sup>141</sup> The House noted that according to a report it itself had recently received, the building had eventually become so unsafe that it endangered surrounding houses, so that even if the Baha’is had been able to regain control of it, they would have had no choice but to raze it themselves (MU#4). The House sent an appeal to the Soviet Communist Party Chairman Nikita Krushchev asking him to set aside the grounds of the former temple as a public park and to erect a suitable marker indicting the significance of the site to the Baha’is but received no reply (BW 14: 480).

**3. The Panama Temple.** The Nine Year Plan itself called for the construction of two new temples: at Tehran and Panama City. As in the Ten Year Crusade, circumstances made it impossible to proceed with temple construction in Tehran, but the Panama project went ahead smoothly, the House of Justice announcing the opening of a construction fund at Ridván 1966, and itself contributing an initial \$25,000 for the new fund. Baha’is worldwide were asked to contribute ‘liberally and continuously’ towards this ‘significant and inspiring project’, contributions being sent directly to the Panamanian Baha’i national assembly. Fifty designs had already been received, and the House was already considering the recommendations made by the Panamanian assembly (MU#34.8).<sup>142</sup> A year later, at Ridván 1967, the House announced that a design had been chosen (by the non-Baha’i English architect Peter Tillotson) and an architectural consultant (Robert McLaughlin<sup>143</sup>) appointed to advise the House on the construction. Detailed planning work on the temple by the two men had already started (MU#42.11). Two years later again, at Ridván 1969, the House was able to report that the temple site had been prepared for construction and all was now set pending

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141. The date of demolition was not specified, but a 1963 photograph of the ruined building is reproduced in *Bahá’i World* (BW 14: 481).

142. The Panamanian Baha’i national spiritual assembly opened the competition for temple designs in 1965, and eventually received designs from a total of 54 architects (BW 15: 648).

143. McLaughlin, Dean Emeritus of the School of Architecture at Princeton University, had formerly been a member of the American Baha’i national assembly and had been a member of the technical advisory board for the construction of the interior of the Wilmette temple.

the approval of final plans and specifications and the placing of building contracts (MU#68.7).

The foundation stone of the new temple was laid by Rúhiyyih Khánum on Sunday, 8 October 1967 during the international conference held in Panama at the start of the proclamation period, the sacredness of the event being marked by the placement within the stone of dust and roses brought from the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh (BW 14: 224, 494; MU#46.5; 47.2). The House announced that the event marked the beginning of the next phase in 'the planning and construction of this important edifice'. Final working plans and specifications now had to be drafted, bids obtained, and contracts for construction placed, culminating in the planned commencement of building work in January 1969. Ever-increasing amounts of money would be needed to support the work, and to this end, the House appealed to all national assemblies to now consider how much of their budget they were going to allocate to the temple during the current year, and to inform the Panamanian Baha'i assembly of the amount pledged and by what date it would be transmitted. The national assemblies should also encourage all local spiritual assemblies and individuals under their jurisdiction to contribute to this project. All allocated funds should be transmitted directly to Panama as soon as was possible (MU#50).

By Ridván 1971, the House was able to announce that the temple was scheduled to be completed by December, and that its formal dedication for worship would take place in a year's time, at Ridván 1972 (MU#96.4). The formal dedication of the temple was held in March 1972 (BW 15: 632-41). In its message to the gathering, the House lauded the completion of this 'historic project', which had been 'one of the most important goals' of the Nine Year Plan. The Baha'is were reminded that this was the 'Mother Temple' for the whole of Latin America, and was built at a place specifically identified by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as having special significance.<sup>144</sup> The temple was a 'Silent Teacher' that glorified the Faith and brought 'untold joy' to the hearts of the Baha'is everywhere. Those whose 'loving generosity and sacrifice' had helped raise it were privileged. It was 'a crown' to the labours of all those who had striven to establish the Faith in Latin America, and a 'rallying point' for all the Baha'is in those lands, both those who belonged to 'the blessed [American] Indian peoples' and those others who enriched the ethnic diversity of the region. It was a 'mighty achievement' which would be 'a fountainhead of spiritual confirmations', endowing the Baha'i community with 'new and greater capacities', and enabling the Baha'is – 'particularly in this privileged land of Panama' – to win victories that would 'eclipse all their past achievements' (MU#108.1-2). In its Ridván message, the House offered 'loving congratulations' to the Panamanian Baha'i assembly on behalf of the Baha'is worldwide for the completion of the project. The 'imaginative and inspiring concept' of the architect had been 'wonderfully realized' (MU#110.2).

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144. The House made the same points (that the Panama temple would be the 'Mother Temple' for the whole of Latin America, and gained further significance from being situated in a country specifically identified by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as having great future importance) in its letter to the Baha'is gathered at an international conference for the Caribbean region held in Jamaica in May 1971 (MU#97.1). 'Abdu'l-Bahá had twice stressed the future importance of Panamanian Republic in his *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. This was where the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans came together via the Panama Canal and it was a centre for travel from the Americas to the other continents of the world. It was where "the Occident and the Orient" found each other united, and once the Baha'i teaching had been established there, they would unite East and West and North and South (TDP 33, 96).

The temple itself – “on its mountaintop between the two greatest oceans and the two American continents” (MU#97.1) – was built on a site some seven miles north of the centre of Panama City at an elevation of 225 metres above the City, and could be seen from both the Pacific Ocean, the Panama Canal and the Inter-American Highway. The original Panamanian temple site had been purchased in 1954, but on closer examination in 1966 was judged to be insufficiently accessible and at too high an altitude for the temple, and after extensive negotiations it proved possible to exchange it for a site of the same size (25,804 sq m) on top of Cerro Sonsonate (Singing Mountain).<sup>145</sup> After agreeing to cover the cost of an access road the Baha’is were able to purchase an additional plot of 92,160 square metres, giving them a total area of 117,964 square metres (28.73 acres). Preparatory work included the construction of a 1,800 metre long access road from the Trans-isthmian (Inter-American) Highway (1967) and lowering the basaltic hilltop by 11 metres (36 feet) to provide a large level shelf for the temple and its surrounding gardens, together with a car park, lodge, public rest rooms and a meeting-room (BW 15: 643-49).

In addition to the general requirement that all Baha’i temples be nine-sided and domed, the House of Justice specified that the Panama temple should incorporate indigenous characteristics and seat between five and six-hundred people (BW 15: 645).<sup>146</sup> With Mayan and other Meso-American designs in mind, the architect designed a two-unit structure consisting of a base in the shape of an elongated nine-pointed star truncated on the inside and surmounted by a parabolic dome. The base has an outer diameter of 61 metres (200 feet) and encloses an auditorium 26 metres (85 feet) in diameter. The separate arms of the star are linked together by a 5 metre (16 feet) high balcony overlooking and surrounding the auditorium. The shell-like 20 metre (65 feet) high dome begins at the balcony level, giving the building an overall height of 28 metres (92 feet) including the entrance steps. Using a computer to generate its exact complex shape and employing modern construction methods enabled the dome to be built as a thin (about 4-inches thick) single solid structure. The whole building is made out of reinforced concrete – utilizing the ‘Gunitite’ concrete extrusion method for the first time in Panama, and the outside of the dome is covered in mosaic tile whilst the inside is covered with acoustic plaster. The floors of both the auditorium and balcony are covered with terrazzo (a polished surface of marble chips set in mortar) and the seating (for 550 people) is made out of native mahogany. Light enters the temple through the open grille-gated doorways and the arched openings at the base of the dome. There is no glazing – so that breezes and rain clouds can pass through the temple (BW 14: 642-49).

**4. Tehran.** Although a large area of land had been obtained for the future Baha’i temple in Tehran – the design of which had been approved during the Ten Year Crusade<sup>147</sup> – the construction of the building was one of the few major goals of the Nine Year Plan that proved

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145. The published temple statistics give a figure of 25,804 sq m (6.37 acres) for both the original and replacement sites (BW 15: 647). Robert McLaughlin gives a slightly lower figure for the replacement site (25,570 sq m, about 6.3 acres) (BW 15: 643).

146. That is roughly the same range as the temples in Uganda (over 400), Australia (500), and Germany (450-600), and appreciably smaller than the American temple (over 1,100), or the later (1986) Indian temple at New Delhi (1,200) (CEBF 241).

147. For a drawing of the temple design by the architect (C. M. Remy) see BW 14: 495.

impossible to accomplish due to the hostility of the environing society. Nevertheless, by the end of the Plan, the House was able to report that everything had been made ready 'for immediate action' whenever the Iranian situation became propitious. This included the signing of initial contracts and the preparation of detailed drawings. Geological surveys of the site were also being made (MU#128.16). A wall had also been built around the property (BW 14: 495). The temple remains unbuilt to the present day.

## 14. Commemorations

### 1. The importance of commemorations.

One aspect of the structuring of time which was closely followed by the House of Justice – as by Shoghi Effendi before it – was to link contemporary Baha'is with the events of 'their' Baha'i past, thus both sacralizing the present and providing a basis for identity – as well as sometimes a focus for activity.<sup>148</sup> In this regard, the 1963-73 period saw a number of significant centenaries, as well as fiftieth anniversaries and a hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary (sesquicentennial) (Table 15.1).

**Table 15.1. Chronology of significant commemorations, 1963-73**

1963	Centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of mission in the Garden of Ridwán in Baghdad (April 1963).
1966	Fiftieth anniversary of the composition of the first of the <i>Tablets of the Divine Plan</i> [26 March-22 April 1916] (MU#32).
1967	(27 September) Centenary of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh's <i>Súri-yi Mulúk</i> [1867].
1967	(12 November) Sesquicentennial of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh [1817].
1968	(31 August ) Centenary of the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in Akka [1868].
1970	(23 June) Centenary of the death of Mírzá Mihdí [1870].
1971	(28 November) Fiftieth anniversary of the death of `Abdu'l-Bahá [1921].
1973	Centenary of the revelation of the <i>Kitáb-i Aqdas</i> [c.1873].

Most of these commemorations concerned the life of Bahá'u'lláh, notably the sesquicentennial of his birth in 1817 (1967), and the centenaries of his Ridván declaration in 1863 (1963), his arrival in Akka in 1868 (1968), and the revelation of his Tablet to the Kings (*Súri-yi Mulúk*) and Most Holy Book (*Kitáb-i Aqdas*) – commemorated by the House of Justice in 1967 and 1973 respectively. The centenary of the death of Bahá'u'lláh's son, Mírzá Mihdí, was also commemorated (1970), as were two fiftieth anniversaries linked to `Abdu'l-Bahá: the composition of the first of his *Tablets of the Divine Plan* in 1916 (1966) and his passing in 1921 (1971).

Some of these commemorations were used as important structural elements both in the development of the Faith and the patterning of the Nine Year Plan. The Ten Year Crusade itself, of course, was designed to run until the centenary of the Ridván declaration, and the decision by the Hands of the Cause to call for the election of the Universal House of Justice at that time gave the event an added spiritual significance – which the House of Justice noted (above). In its turn, the House chose to end its own first plan with the 1973 centenary of the revelation of the *Aqdas*, and used the 1967 centenary of the start of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation to the kings as the initial focus for the worldwide proclamation campaign which it initiated. It also drew attention to what it saw as the signal significance of Bahá'u'lláh's exile from Edirne to Akka and marked the 1968 centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in Akka with organizing what became the largest mass-pilgrimage hitherto made to the Baha'i shrines

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148. The same process of identity formation and maintenance is seen in the emphasis on learning about Babi-Baha'i history as part of 'deepening' in the Faith. Thus, contemporary Baha'is, including both those of Baha'i descent and later converts, could gain a sense of common descent from their 'spiritual ancestors' in the heroic period of their religion – as in the formation of 'Dawn-Breaker' Baha'i youth singing groups formed in several parts of the world during the 1960s who took their name from Shoghi Effendi's epithet for the heroically-portrayed early Babis.

**2. The fiftieth anniversary of the passing of `Abdu'l-Bahá.** Of the other anniversaries, the one which received the most emphasis was in November 1971, with the fiftieth anniversary of the passing of `Abdu'l-Bahá on 28 November 1921. Writing to all national assemblies prior to this event in July, the House of Justice noted with approval that some national assemblies had already begun to plan a 'befitting' commemoration, and asked that all assemblies devote three days – from the Day of the Covenant on 26 November to the anniversary of the passing on 28 November – to a series of activities commemorating the event. These should include special gatherings and conferences, organized at either national or local level or both, and should focus on three main themes: (1) the Baha'i Covenant; (2) the 'Formative Age'; and (3) the life of `Abdu'l-Bahá. On the 'memory-laden' night of the commemoration itself, the Hands of the Cause and the members of the Universal House of Justice, together with resident and visiting Baha'is at the Baha'i World Centre would visit the Shrine of `Abdu'l-Bahá on behalf of all Baha'is throughout the world and would pray both for 'the stalwart champions of the Faith' who were winning fresh triumphs in 'so many fields of service'; for the 'self-sacrificing' Baha'is without whose 'sustained assistance' most of those victories could not be achieved; and for those who were 'inspired to join the ranks' of 'the active and dedicated promoters' of the Cause 'at this crucial stage in the development of the Plan'. The House members hoped that these gatherings would intensify the consecration of the Baha'is everywhere and provide them with an opportunity – especially during 'the watches of the night' at the hour of the passing itself<sup>149</sup> – to renew their 'pledge to Bahá'u'lláh', and to 'rededicate themselves' to the accomplishment of those Plan goals that still remained unwon (MU#99).<sup>150</sup>

**3. The 'Formative Age'.** It is of note that the House called upon the Baha'is not just to commemorate the passing of `Abdu'l-Bahá, but also to examine and study the significance of the 'Formative Age' which Shoghi Effendi declared had begun after that passing.<sup>151</sup> In its Ridván message earlier in the year, the House had reminded the Baha'is that the passing of `Abdu'l-Bahá had simultaneously marked both the end of the 'Heroic Age' and the opening of

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149. The passing – often referred to as 'the Ascension' – of `Abdu'l-Bahá is commonly commemorated at the actual hour of his death at about 1 a.m. As with the commemoration of the 'Ascension' of Bahá'u'lláh (about 3 a.m. on the 29 May), the commemoration lends itself to a night-time vigil which for those participating may reinforce the sense being present at a meeting of special spiritual significance. Although the term 'Ascension' is of Christian origin, its Islamic and Baha'i usage is an extremely respectful way of referring to the natural death of a revered religious figure – it is the spiritual reality of the deceased which has 'ascended' to heaven and not their bodily remains. See Walbridge 243, 247.

150. For accounts of commemorations in several countries see BW15: 126-28.

151. Shoghi Effendi distinguished between three great 'Ages' of the Faith. During the first of these, the 'Heroic' or 'Apostolic' Age of the Faith (1844-1921), two Manifestations of God – the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh – had brought divine revelations; the Baha'i Covenant had been established; and `Abdu'l-Bahá had provided the Baha'is with an exemplar for their lives. This age ended with the passing of `Abdu'l-Bahá, and was followed by a new Formative Age (1921-), during which the 'spiritual fecundity' and 'creative energies' of the revelatory period were crystalized and shaped in the form of Baha'i administrative institutions. This was to be a lengthy period of transition which would eventually lead to a future 'Golden Age', which was the promised Kingdom of God on Earth (CF 4-6; GPB xiii-xv, 324).

the 'Formative Age' of the Faith's development and the birth of the Baha'i 'Administrative Order', 'the nucleus and pattern' of the future World Order of Bahá'u'lláh (MU#96.1). Commenting on its own message, the House called upon all national assemblies to 'formulate and implement' plans to educate the Baha'is about the significance of the 'Formative Age'. If the Baha'is were to understand this matter then their faith would be greatly strengthened, and at the same time they would be better able to present the Baha'i message to the 'waiting world'. The House provided a short compilation of extracts from Shoghi Effendi writings on the subject to help further study,<sup>152</sup> advising the national assemblies that the subject should be examined at Summer Schools and special teaching institutes and conferences, or as the assemblies thought best (MU#95.1-3).

The House also pointed to the tremendous achievements that had been made during the first fifty years of the Formative Age, most of it under the leadership of 'the dynamic and beloved figure of Shoghi Effendi', and dominated by him. Shoghi had dedicated his life to the 'systematic implementation' of the provisions of the two 'charters' for action provided by 'Abdu'l-Bahá: his *Will and Testament* for the development of Baha'i administration, and the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* for the campaigns of teaching. The results were the 'fruits' of these charters: the growth of the Baha'i community worldwide from a few hundred localities ('centres') in 35 countries in 1921 to over 46,000 localities in 135 independent states and 182 significant territories and islands by 1971; the raising of the Baha'i Administrative Order throughout [much of] the world; the resultant recognition of the Faith by many governments and civil authorities; accreditation 'in consultative status' to the United Nations' Economic and Social Council; and the beginning of large-scale Baha'i conversions ('Abdu'l-Bahá had promised 'entry by troops' into the Baha'i community) in many parts of the world (MU#96.1). The Baha'is should never forget that the current Nine Year Plan, like Shoghi Effendi's Ten Year Crusade before it, and all the other plans which would follow it, were but phases in the implementation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan set out by him in the fourteen letters by that name to the North American Baha'is (MU#96.2).

**4. Other commemorations.** Three other commemorations are of note:

**4.1. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first of the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (March 1966).** The fiftieth anniversary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's revelation of the first of the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, addressed to the North American Baha'is in 1916-17,<sup>153</sup> was celebrated in March 1966. Unlike the other commemorations, it was essentially a regional event confined to the successor communities of the original recipients. In its cable marking the event, the House members stated that they would pray that the observance of the anniversary by the American and Canadian Baha'is would be a source of "RENEWED ENTHUSIASM" and "DEDICATION" both to accomplish the remaining goals of the Plan, and to win "FRESH LAURELS" of victory (22 March 1966, MU#32).<sup>154</sup>

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152. See MU#95.4-24.

153. There were fourteen letters in all, an initial series of eight composed between 26 March and 22 April 1916, and a second series of six letters composed between 2 February and 8 March 1917. See CEBF, '*Tablets of the Divine Plan*', loc. cit.

154. The cable was sent to the American national spiritual assembly (chronologically the senior North American national assembly), with instructions that it should share it with the assemblies of Canada, Alaska and

**4.2. The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's birth (November 1967).** The sesquicentennial of Bahá'u'lláh's birth (12 November 1817) was celebrated in November 1967. In addition to the commemoration, the House of Justice encouraged the Baha'is to use the event to attract publicity, noting that the coincidence of the anniversary of such an event – that had been 'so momentous to the fortunes of humanity' – and the start of the global proclamation campaign provided the Baha'is with a 'splendid opportunity' to bring 'both the spiritual and social import' of the Faith to public attention. They should emphasize not just the message of the Faith but also 'the historical fact of a new Revelation, with all its implications of a new and worldwide civilization'. Accordingly, non-Baha'is should be welcomed to the Baha'is' celebrations of this event, including to their devotional meetings, so that non-Baha'is could be attracted by the prayers and the Baha'is' fervour as well as the 'exalted tone' of the Baha'i writings (MU#44). On the day of the commemoration, the House referred to the 'INESTIMABLE BOUNTIES' which God had conferred through Bahá'u'lláh (His 'SUPREME MANIFESTATION'). These bounties would ensure the fulfilment of the 'GLORIOUS' and 'LONG PROMISED' Kingdom of God on Earth which was now evolving in the womb of a 'TRAVAILING AGE', and which was destined to confer undreamt of peace and felicity upon mankind (MU#53).

**4.3. The centenary of the death of Mírzá Mihdí (June 1970).** In 1970, the Baha'i world commemorated the centenary of the death of one of Bahá'u'lláh's younger sons, Mírzá Mihdí (1848-70), entitled by him 'the Purest Branch' (*ghusn-i athar*). Apart from `Abdu'l-Bahá, the only son born by Bahá'u'lláh's first wife Navváb to survive infancy, Mihdí had served as one of his father's amanuensis and had been with him in barracks of Akka. Praying one night on the roof of the building, he had fallen through an open skylight on to a wooden crate below, dying of his injuries the following day (23 June 1870). Bahá'u'lláh had been greatly grieved by the boy's death, equating it with an act of martyrdom, and agreeing to his son's dying request that he should accept his life 'as a ransom' for those Baha'is who wanted to attain his presence but were unable to. Bahá'u'lláh also referred to the death as a sacrifice made so that the Baha'is might be 'quickenened' and 'all that dwell on earth' united (GPB 188; MA 33-34; Ruhe 35-37).

Writing to all national assemblies in March 1970, the House announced that there would be an observance at Mihdí's grave in Haifa<sup>155</sup> on the day of the commemoration, at which time 'his pure example and sacrifice for all mankind' would be remembered. Baha'is worldwide should commemorate this 'highly significant event' by uniting in prayer 'for the regeneration of the world and the unification of its peoples' (GPB 348). It was up to individual assemblies whether or not they organized national commemorations (MU#80).

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Hawaii (its 'daughter' assemblies, formed respectively in 1948, 1957, and 1964).

155. The body of Mírzá Mihdí was initially buried in a cemetery outside the Akka city wall, but was transferred to Haifa by Shoghi Effendi in December 1939, together with the remains of Navváb (Rabbani, *Priceless Pearl* 259-63).



### **Part III. ASPECTS OF BAHA'I LIFE.**

#### **15. The Role of the Individual**

Like Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice repeatedly emphasized the role of the individual in the work of the Faith. In particular, the House stressed the importance of 'universal participation', of living the Baha'i life, and of freedom from prejudice and the negative impacts of tribalism.

**1. Universal Participation.** The importance of the individual was emphasized at the very outset of the Nine Year Plan in April 1964, when the House of Justice made 'universal participation' in the life of the Cause by all Baha'is one of the twin overall objectives of the Plan – the other being the expansion of the Faith (MU#14.4, 14.8). Specifically, the healthy development of the Baha'i religion required the involvement and 'dedicated effort' of each individual Baha'i in terms of four elements: (1) teaching the Baha'i Faith to others; (2) living a Baha'i life; (3) contributing to the Baha'i fund; and, most particularly, (4) the constant endeavour to increase one's understanding of the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation (MU#14.7).

In September 1964, the House provided the Baha'is with a general letter explaining the significance and scope of 'universal participation' (MU#19). Bahá'u'lláh had compared the world to a human body (ESW 62): in the same way, the Baha'is of the world – 'the army of God' – could be seen as members of a single body, in which each individual cell and organ had its part to play. No cell, no matter how humble, lived apart from the body as whole, whether in terms of serving it or receiving from it. Indeed, when every cell played its part, the body as a whole would be healthy, vigorous, radiant and able to respond to all the demands made on it. The Baha'is were a global community, an organic collectivity, united in its aspirations and methods, seeking assistance and confirmation from the same divine source, and illumined 'with the conscious knowledge of its unity'. In such a body, the participation of every individual Baha'i was of the 'utmost importance', constituting 'a source of power and vitality' that was as yet unknown to the world. It was doubtful that every single Baha'i had as yet found his or her 'fullest satisfaction in the life of the Cause', but as the Faith pressed on towards its maturity the situation would develop in which 'every soul' lived for the Cause, receiving from it health and assurance, together with 'the overflowing bounties of Bahá'u'lláh' which were diffused through his divinely-ordained order (MU#19.4).

Having enthusiastically started to work for the expansion of the Faith (the other objective of the Nine Year Plan), the Baha'is should now turn with equal enthusiasm to 'the requirements of universal participation'. Not everyone was called upon to give public talks or serve on Baha'i administrative bodies, but, in addition to engaging in teaching the Faith to others, every Baha'i could pray, fight his or her own spiritual battles – trying to make their own 'inner life and private character' mirror forth the principles of the Faith, and contribute to the Baha'i funds. If each and every Baha'i carried out these three 'spiritual duties', there would be an astonishing 'accession of power' experienced by the community as a whole. The 'real secret' here lay in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's frequently expressed wish that the Baha'is should love each other, offer each other constant encouragement, work together, and be 'as one soul in one body'. Every individual would then receive 'spiritual health and vitality' from the

community as a whole – itself an illumined spiritualized body (MU#19.2, 19.5-6).

The House turned again to the role of the individual in its Ridván message in 1966, linking the ‘inescapable’ duties of the Baha’is to the worsening plight of humanity. At a time when there was a ‘growing hunger for spiritual truth’, the Baha’is should take up the task that had been given them of ministering to the crying needs of an afflicted world. This was their opportunity. In this context, ‘(t)he challenge to the individual Baha’i was ‘never-ending’. This was true in ‘every field of service’, but most particularly in teaching, when the longed-for era of Baha’i expansion seemed to have arrived. The Baha’is should remember that Shoghi Effendi had written: that if they neglected their mission then ‘others’ would take it up (MU#34.15; BA 66).

Again, in December 1970, the House stated that universal participation ‘in every aspect of the Faith’ – contributing to the Baha’i funds; teaching the Faith; deepening; living the Baha’i life; administering the affairs of the Baha’i community; and, most of all, the life of prayer and devotion to God – would endow the community with such strength that it would be able to overcome ‘the forces of spiritual disintegration’ that were ‘engulfing the non-Baha’i world’, and itself become ‘an ocean of oneness’ that would ‘cover the face of the planet’ (MU#87.7).

**2. Living the Baha’i life.** One fundamental aspect of universal participation was for the Baha’is to try to live lives of virtuous conduct and devoted service to the Baha’i Cause: to ‘live the life’.<sup>156</sup>

The need for such behaviour was much emphasized in the Baha’i writings, and was explicitly linked to the progress of the Faith, as in an oft-quoted passage from the writings of Shoghi Effendi in 1924 (cited by the House of Justice in April 1964) that ‘One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth ... the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh’ (BA 66).

The importance of this principle of the Faith was reiterated by the House on a number of occasions, as in its initial announcement of the Nine Year Plan in October 1963, when it advised the Baha’is that in preparation for the forthcoming plan, they should ‘deepen in spiritual understanding’ and ‘show to the world a mature, responsible, fundamentally assured and happy way of life, far removed from the passions, prejudices and distractions of present day society’. This could be accomplished by ‘constant study’ of the ‘life-giving’ Baha’i scriptures combined with ‘dedicated service’. Reliant only upon God, the Baha’is could promote his cause and establish the divine kingdom on Earth. Only thus could they prove their love for the founders of the Faith, prove the truth of their divine mission, and demonstrate the validity of their sacrifices (MU#6.10).

**The challenge to the individual.** Again, at Ridván 1966, when discussing the ‘inescapable’ duties of the Baha’is to ministering to the crying needs of an afflicted world, the House bade the Baha’is to ponder Bahá’u’lláh’s admonition to them that as they were the first to be

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156. One of the earliest uses of the phrase seems to be in a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi on 14 February 1925. See 2CC: 3.

recreated by the divine spirit in this day, their behaviour towards their neighbours should be such ‘as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God’ (GWB 316-7). In a world in which humanity was plunging ever deeper into a condition so terrible that Bahá’u’lláh had refused to describe it, the Baha’is had to be distinctively different, and to increasingly ‘stand out as assured, oriented and fundamentally happy beings’, conforming to a standard of behaviour which directly contrasted with ‘the ignoble and amoral attitudes of modern society’. The Baha’is’ behaviour should be the source of their ‘honor, strength and maturity’. The Baha’i community as a whole should be distinguished by its ‘vigor, unity and discipline’. The wider society was ‘doomed’, and during the ‘turbulent years’ ahead, it would be subject to ‘increasing confusion’ and ‘despair’. In this context, the contrast between the Baha’i community and the wider society (with its ‘feverish tempo’) would grow more marked, drawing ‘the eyes of humanity to the sanctuary of Bahá’u’lláh’s world-redeeming Faith’ (MU#34.16).

Again, at Ridván 1969, the House referred to the vital importance of every Baha’i constantly endeavouring to conform their own inner lives to the ‘glorious ideal’ which had been set for human beings by Bahá’u’lláh and had been exemplified in the life of `Abdu'l-Bahá. In particular, `Abdu'l-Bahá provided a ‘divine example’ of a life that was an ‘inevitable and spontaneous expression’ of his inner self. His actions were not based on ‘a pattern of expediency’. Similarly, Baha’is would only be able to model themselves on his example if their own inner spirits became the ‘wellsprings’ of their ‘attitudes and actions’. The ‘disciplines’ of prayer and the practice of the Baha’i teachings would help their inner spirits to mature and grow. Thus would they ‘promote the accomplishment of God’s purpose’, ensure the triumph of his Faith, and not only gain victory at the end of the Plan in 1973, but carry the community forward to ‘the as yet unapprehended vistas of the Most Great Peace’ (MU#68.13).

***The Pattern of Baha’i Life.*** As another example of the House’s concern with this principle, in November 1972, it arranged for the British Baha’i assembly to send one copy of an old compilation of theirs – *The Pattern of Baha’i Life* (1948) – to each of the other national assemblies in the world. The House also sent out an addendum of its own from the writings of Shoghi Effendi to accompany the British compilation, asking the assemblies to use the materials to help their Baha’is to develop a ‘fuller understanding of what it means to be a Baha’i’ and guide and assist them ‘to pattern their personal lives’ in accordance with the Baha’i teachings.<sup>157</sup> The national assemblies were to use the material as they best thought fit (e.g. purchasing and distributing copies of the British compilation and mimeographing or printing the House’s addendum, or preparing a compilation of their own), but whatever they did, it was important that ‘the moral and spiritual admonitions’ contained in the Baha’i writings were widely disseminated amongst the Baha’is and properly understood and that the Baha’is were encouraged to follow these teachings. The Baha’is should remember Shoghi Effendi’s admonition that the Baha’i Faith would only triumph to the extent to which the Baha’is own inner life and private character mirrored the eternal principles of Bahá’u’lláh (MU#122, citing BA 66).

**3. Freedom from prejudice.** In July 1972, the House addressed all national assemblies on

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157. For a revised (1990) version of the House’s compilation see 2CC: 1-27.

the subject of prejudice. The fundamental purpose of the Baha'i Faith was 'the realization of the organic unity of the entire human race', and Bahá'u'lláh had taught that prejudice in its various forms destroyed 'the edifice of humanity'. It was necessary then for Baha'is to eliminate all forms of prejudice from their lives. For the House, this included prejudices of race, religion, political party, nation, tribe, class, culture, education and age. To be a Baha'i entailed not allowing prejudice in any form to be manifest in one's life. One's outer life should mirror one's beliefs, and one should endeavour 'with a fierce determination' to eliminate any defect from one's thoughts and acts. If Baha'is followed this teaching, their lives would be distinguished from their 'non-Baha'i associates'. Baha'is should not allow fear of rejection by others to deter them from their goal of living a Baha'i life. Other people should be able to see that the Baha'is lived their lives according to the tenets of their faith and did not follow 'each passing whim or current fashion'. Baha'i institutions should inculcate this principle 'in the hearts' of the Baha'is through every means at their disposal – including Summer schools, conferences, institutes and study classes (MU#117.2-3).

Living a Baha'i life became increasingly important as the Faith spread worldwide, the number of Baha'is increased and Baha'i institutions became 'more perfected'. The Baha'is should mirror forth the teachings of the Faith each day in their lives, so that their acts, attitudes and words became a magnet which drew sincere people to the Baha'i teachings. To allow prejudice of any kind to enter one's life would mean that one was 'guilty before God' of causing a setback to the progress and 'real growth' of the Faith (MU#117.1, 117.3).

**4. Tribalism.** In a long letter to African national spiritual assemblies in February 1970 reminding the Baha'is of the need to avoid involvement in party politics (see below), the House also dealt with the topic of tribalism as a particular difficulty which faced African Baha'is at the present time: its comments readily relate to any 'tribal'-type conflict anywhere in the world.

The House noted that tribal tensions were now increasing across the African continent, and the Baha'is might therefore find themselves not only living in an atmosphere characterized by intertribal fear, mistrust and hatred, but also themselves come under pressure from their non-Baha'i fellows to give their first loyalty to their own tribe and aggressively pursue its interests. This presented them with an immediate challenge because as Baha'is they would be 'convinced that mankind is one and must be viewed as one entity' (MU#77.7-11).

The Baha'i attitude towards tribal identity and the like was straightforward: Baha'is could be attached to their tribes and clans just as they could be to their families and their nations, but they could not allow these attachments to conflict with their 'wider loyalty' to humanity as a whole. Thus, as Shoghi Effendi had indicated, the Faith advocated 'unity in diversity'. It did not seek to suppress diversity based on ethnicity, history, language and tradition, but called for such differences to be subordinated to 'the imperative claims of a united world' (MU#77.8-9).

At a time of increasing tribal tension, therefore, the Baha'is should be vigilant lest – God forbid – 'any trace' of prejudice or hatred entered their midst. Their endeavour should be to bring into the Faith 'an ever larger representation of the various tribes in each country', and, at the same time, through a 'complete lack of prejudice' and the love which they had both for

their fellow Baha'is and for their non-Baha'i neighbours, demonstrate the power of the 'Word of God' to their countrymen. In this way, they would provide – for the scrutiny of their national leaders – 'a shining example of a unified community' which worked together 'in full concord and harmony' and which demonstrated 'a hope that is attainable' and a pattern that could be emulated (MU#77.10). The Baha'is should call on their fellows to 'forget and forgo their differences and join them in obedience and service to God's Holy Command in this Day' (MU#77.2).

The Baha'is should also remember that any discrimination against a tribal or other minority group within the Baha'i community was a violation of the spirit of the Faith. It was an obligation to protect the just interests of minorities within the community and to ensure that they were able to enjoy equal rights and privileges. Indeed, in Baha'i administrative matters, minority group members were to be accorded priority. This was a 'noble standard' and the Baha'is should never deviate from it, even if 'the course of events or public opinion' brought pressure to bear on them because of it (MU#77.11).

As in other matters, the principles of the Faith regarding tribalism were clear. If the Baha'is were uncertain what the correct course of action should be in specific situations, they should consult with their national spiritual assembly as to how the general principles should be applied. The House hoped and prayed that the national assemblies, acting in 'full collaboration' with the Continental Boards of Counsellors and the Auxiliary Boards, would act as 'loving shepherds to the divine flock', and protect the Baha'is from 'the evil influences' which surrounded them, guiding them 'in the true and right path', and assisting them to attain 'a continuously deeper understanding', 'a firmer conviction', and 'a more consuming love' for the Baha'i Cause which they were 'so devotedly seeking to promote and serve' (MU#77.12-13).

## 16. Youth.

**1. Youth activities.** Young people – mostly young men in their twenties – played an important role in the emergence of Babism in the 1840s, and to a lesser extent in the subsequent development of the Baha’i religion. The category (and concept) of ‘Baha’i youth’ only seems to have emerged in the 1930s, however.<sup>158</sup> Specific developments at that time included the establishment of a national Baha’i youth committee for the United States and Canada and of local youth groups in London and Baghdad (all in 1933), and the institution of a henceforth regular section on “Youth activities in the Bahá’í world” in the biennial *Bahá’í World* volumes, commencing with that for the 1932-34 period (BW 5: 370-88). Activities specifically involving youth thus became an established part of Baha’i community life and teaching endeavour, even though their role seems to have remained overshadowed by other Baha’i activities. This situation changed in the 1960s, and the period covered by this book.

There is as yet no proper study of the extent and role of youth activity in the various Baha’i communities of the world during the 1963-73 period,<sup>159</sup> but it is evident that there were major increases in the number of Baha’i youth in many countries at this time, and that these large-scale influxes of new Baha’is made a significant contribution to Baha’i activity worldwide.<sup>160</sup> Much of this activity formed part of wider community endeavour, but many activities were also organized specifically for youth, including youth teaching teams, projects and singing groups. Specific youth teaching plans were also formulated in some communities, and in many parts of the world, Baha’i clubs at universities and colleges were established and youth magazines and bulletins published. Many youth also became international travelling teachers, and the “greater percentage” of the 3,553 international pioneers who served during the Nine Year Plan were youth (BW 15: 326).

Organizationally, national youth committees played an important role, and those national assemblies which had not already done so now appointed such bodies. A large number of

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158. There is no precise definition of Baha’i youth in universal use. In terms of Baha’i membership and administration, the important ages are 15 (when an individual is deemed to have attained spiritual maturity and is therefore subject to adult religious duties such as obligatory prayer and fasting) and 21 (when an individual can receive his or her voting rights and take part in the Baha’i electoral system and be eligible for election to spiritual assemblies). The 15-21 age group has therefore tended to become the ‘core constituency’ of Baha’i youth, but in sociological terms, those a little older or younger easily constitute part of the same group. Conscious of the modern dislike of many younger teenagers to be labelled as children, some Baha’i communities have invented a category of ‘junior youth’ (those aged 13 and 14 in the UK). In general, individuals aged 21 and over remain ‘youth’ for as long as they wish to define themselves as such and continue to participate in Baha’i youth activities.

159. On youth activities during this period see BW 14: 259-76; 15: 326-47.

160. For example, some 60 percent of those who became Baha’is in Ireland in [Baha’i year] 1964-65 were youth, and many of the most “important and difficult goals” of the Nine Year Plan in Ireland were accomplished by them (BW 14: 272). Again, there was a 35 percent increase in the number of Baha’i youth in the USA in 1966-67 – compared to a 13 percent increase for the community as a whole (BW 14: 259n). Other indications of the importance of youth are provided by sample surveys of Baha’i communities in Britain and Los Angeles in 1979: the number of people in the 15-30 age group being respectively 46.6 and 39.8 percent (out of totals of 148 and 118). By contrast, a sample of North American Baha’is in 1936-37 (N = 542) included only 13.8 percent in the 15-30 age group (Smith, ‘West’, p.40).

youth conferences were also held – presumably as a means of enthusing and directing youth activity. Many countries which had not previously conducted national Baha’i youth conferences now began to do so, including: Brazil (from 1965); the United States and Honduras (both 1968); Australia and Japan (both 1969); Botswana (1970); and Pakistan (1972). Several transnational conferences were organized, often under the aegis of the appropriate Continental Board of Counsellors, including the first European continental youth conference (in Madrid in 1969); the first regional conference for the South Pacific Islands (in Apia in 1970); the first International Baha’i Youth Winter School in Salzburg (over the new year period in 1970-71); the first regional conference for Western Asia (in New Delhi in 1971); and the first Youth Summer School for Southern Africa (in Swaziland in 1972). In Latin America, four separate international conferences were organized in various parts of the region (Paramaribo, Surinam; Cali, Columbia; Rosario del Tala, Argentina; and Puebla City/Acatepec, Mexico, 1972-73) (BW 14: 267; 15: 327-43).

**2. The wider context.** The reason for the relatively sudden and certainly dramatic increase in the importance of Baha’i youth activities during the 1960s is undoubtedly related to contemporary wider social trends, specifically the emergence of an assertive and semi-autonomous youth culture, centred in the West but exerting an attraction to teenagers and young adults in many parts of the world. In part a matter of cultural expression, particularly in music, appearance and dress, the emergent ‘youth culture’ was also linked to political dissent and protest in several countries. Multi-faceted in nature, the new youth culture mixed youthful exuberance and alienated rebellion against traditional norms with social concerns. Again, there was a new openness to experimentation, not only in matters of sexual behaviour and drug use, but also in adhesion to unconventional forms of religiosity. In this context, relatively large numbers of young people became Baha’is in a number of countries and the Baha’i youth as a group began to play a more significant role in the development of the Baha’i communities in many parts of the world.

**3. ‘Three fields of service’: the message of June 1966.** Clearly wishing to canalize the energies of the increasing numbers of young Baha’is, the Universal House of Justice chose to address two general messages to ‘the Baha’i youth in every land’, the first (“Three fields of service”) dated 10 June 1966, and the second (‘Pioneering and education’) dated 9 October 1968.

**3.1. The importance of youth.** In its message of June 1966, the House noted that the increasing achievements of Baha’i youth in “country after country” in advancing the work of the Nine Year Plan were arousing the admiration of their fellow Baha’is. This was as it should be. Indeed, throughout the history of the Faith young people had played a ‘vital part’ in its promulgation. Thus, the Báb himself had only been twenty-five years old when he declared his mission and many of his inner circle of disciples, the Letters of the Living, had been even younger; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had shouldered heavy responsibilities in the service of his father whilst still a young man from the days of the Iraq exile onwards;<sup>161</sup> Mírzá Mihdí, the ‘Purest

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161. According to Baha’i tradition, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was born on 23 May 1844. This would have made him 8 years old at the time of his father’s arrest and imprisonment in the Black Pit of Tehran and 12 when Bahá’u’lláh returned to Baghdad from Kurdistan. From this time onwards he seems to have begun to start assisting his

Branch' (1848-70), a younger son of Bahá'u'lláh, had offered up his life as a sacrifice that the Baha'is might 'be quickened' and 'all that dwell on earth be united' at the age of 22 (GPB 188); Shoghi Effendi had still been a student at Oxford when his grandfather died and he was 'called to the throne of his guardianship';<sup>162</sup> and many of the pioneers during the Ten Year Crusade (the 'Knights of Bahá'u'lláh') had been young people. It should therefore never be imagined that an individual had to wait until he or she was of mature years before rendering 'invaluable services' to the Cause (MU#37.1).

As to the present generation of Baha'i youth and their successors, the House noted the opportunities which were available to them and outlined the 'fields of service' which they could pursue.

Baha'i youth, like all young people, were likely to make many decisions which would set the course of their future lives. This was when they would probably choose their career, complete their education, begin to earn their own living, marry and start to raise their own families. Most importantly of all, it was during their youthful years when a person's mind was at its most questing and the spiritual values which would guide his or her future life would be adopted. These general factors presented Baha'i youth with their 'greatest opportunities' – as well as their greatest challenges and tests. The opportunities were to 'truly apprehend' the teachings of the Faith and give then to their contemporaries. The challenges were 'to overcome the pressures of the world' and 'to provide leadership' for their own and succeeding generation. The tests were to enable them 'to exemplify in their lives the high moral standards set forth in the Baha'i Writings'. As Shoghi Effendi had stated, it was the Baha'i youth who could contribute particularly decisively to the virility, purity and 'driving force' of the Baha'i community; and upon them depended both the 'future orientation' of the community's destiny and 'the complete unfoldment' of its divinely-endowed potentialities (MU#37.2, citing ADJ 22).

Apart from these general characteristics of youthfulness, young people in their teens and twenties now faced a 'special challenge' and were able to 'seize an opportunity' that was 'unique' in the whole of human history. They were living in a time of change, both within the Faith and in the wider environing society. During the Ten Year Crusade, the Faith had expanded 'with the speed of lightening' over the world's major territories and islands and enormously increased its manpower and resources; entry of new converts had occurred 'by troops'; and the structure of the Baha'i administrative order had been completed. The result was that the Faith had become 'firmly established in the world'. A further process of change was now beginning, in which the Baha'i religion was 'perceptibly emerging' from the obscurity which had surrounded it for most of its history and was 'arising to challenge the outworn concepts of a corrupt society' and to 'proclaim the solution for the agonizing problems of a disordered humanity'. More than this was involved, however, and both the condition of the world and the place of the Faith in it would change 'immeasurably' during the near future, in what was 'a highly critical phase' in an era of transition (MU#37.3).

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father, eventually as a secretary and copyist, and had already penned a well-received treatise (a commentary on a Quranic verse) before the family left Baghdad in 1863 – when he was aged 18. By the time the family arrived in Syria in 1868, on the final stage of their exile, he was 24 years old and already responsible for the practical arrangements for the entire Baha'i exile group.

162. Shoghi Effendi was aged 24 when he became Guardian.



**3.2. The three fields of service.** Young people now faced three ‘great fields of service’ in which they could simultaneously remake ‘the character of human society’ whilst at the same time preparing themselves for their careers (MU#37.4).

(1) First was their study of the Baha’i teachings, the spiritualization of their lives, and the forming of their characters according to Baha’i standards (Their ‘inner life’ should grow ‘through prayer, meditation, service and study of the teachings’). This constituted the foundation of all other accomplishments. As the moral standards of envioning societies in all parts of the world collapsed and decayed, the Baha’is should increasingly stand out ‘as pillars of righteousness and forbearance’. A Baha’i’s life should be characterized by truthfulness and decency. He or she should ‘walk uprightly’ amongst others, dependent only upon God, but linked ‘by bonds of love and brotherhood’ with all human beings, simultaneously detached from ‘the loose standards’, ‘decadent theories’, ‘frenetic experimentation’ and ‘desperation of present-day society’, whilst at the same time looking upon his or her neighbours ‘with a bright and friendly face’, acting as a ‘beacon light’ and ‘haven’ for those who would emulate the Baha’i’s ‘strength of character’ and ‘assurance of soul’ (MU#37.5, 37.9).

(2) The second field of service was teaching the Faith, particularly to their fellow youth. This was intimately linked to the first. Like other young people, youthful Baha’is had not yet acquired the responsibilities of a family or of a long-established home or job. As such, it was much easier for them to choose where they would live, study or work. In the wider world, youth travelled around seeking amusement, education and experiences. For their part, youthful Baha’is could harness this mobility into service for mankind and the Faith, choosing where to live or travel and what work to do on this basis. Again, they should remember that amongst the non-Baha’i youth they met were ‘some of the most open and seeking minds in the world’, and as such ready to learn of the Faith (MU#37.6).

(3) The third field of service was preparation for their later years. Baha’i parents had an obligation to educate their children, and it was likewise the duty of the children to become educated and learn a trade or profession, so that they in turn could earn a living and support their families. For a Baha’i youth, such preparation was itself a service to God. They should also think in what ways they could best develop their own ‘native abilities’ for service to humanity and the Baha’i Cause (for example, as farmers, teachers, doctors, artisans, or musicians). The Baha’i community needed men and women of many skills and qualifications, particularly as it grew in size and in the extent and diversity of its involvement in the life of wider society. Again, preparation for a career could also be combined with teaching the Faith and pioneering (MU#37.7).

**3.3. Other matters.** Whatever they might choose to study, Baha’i youth had the advantage of being the recipients of God’s revelation for the present age. Because this revelation shone ‘like a searchlight’ on so many aspects of human life and knowledge and of the problems which baffled modern thinkers, Baha’i students at school or university might often find themselves ‘in the unusual and slightly embarrassing position of having a more profound insight into a subject than their instructors’. Again, Baha’is had to learn, at an earlier age than most, to weigh the information they received rather than to accept it blindly. With this attitude, they should develop the ability ‘to learn everything’ from their teachers, showing ‘proper humility’, whilst at the same time, relating everything that they learned to the Baha’i

teachings so that they would be enabled ‘to sort out the gold from the dross of human error’ (MU#37.8).

Alongside these fields of service, Baha’i youth should take part in the life of the Baha’i community as a whole, helping to promote a society in which all generations – the elderly, middle-aged, youth and children – were ‘fully integrated’ and made up ‘an organic whole’. In so doing, they should refuse to carry over the generational antagonisms and mistrust which bedevilled modern society and demonstrate ‘the healing and life-giving nature of their religion’. Again, the Baha’i youth had the opportunity to learn the practice of Baha’i administration through participation in conferences, Summer schools and nineteen day feasts and through service on committees. Thus they could learn the ‘wonderful’ but difficult skill of Baha’i consultation – in which all egoism and unruly passions were subjugated, and frankness, freedom of thought, courtesy, openness of mind, and wholehearted acquiescence in majority decisions were all cultivated. By demonstrating the efficiency, vigour, and ‘access of unity’ which arose out of true consultation, they could trace ‘new paths of human corporate action’. At the same time, they would show ‘the futility of partisanship, lobbying, debate, secret diplomacy and unilateral action’ which characterized modern affairs (MU#37.9).

The youth should consider all these matters, both individually and collectively, consulting about them and taking steps to deepen their knowledge of the Baha’i teachings, develop their characters in emulation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life, and acquiring those skills which would enable them to best serve both God, the Baha’i Cause and humanity (MU#37.10).

**4. ‘Pioneering and education’: the letter of October 1968.** Over two years after its first general letter to Baha’i youth, the House sent out a second (9 October 1968). It noted that one of the ‘many remarkable advances’ which had been made in the fortunes of the Faith over the previous two years had been the enrollment of ‘a growing army’ of young Baha’is who were eager to serve the Faith. The zeal, enthusiasm, steadfastness and devotion of these young men and women ‘in every land’ was a source of joy and assurance (MU#67.1).

The House members themselves had had a chance to observe at first hand the qualities of ‘good character, selfless service and determined effort’ exemplified in the youthful volunteer helpers who had served at the Baha’i World Centre during the recent mass pilgrimage, and the House expressed its gratitude for the example they had shown as well as their ‘loving assistance’.<sup>163</sup> Many of these youth helpers had offered to pioneer, but over and again they were perplexed by the question of whether to finish their education before pioneering.<sup>164</sup> No doubt every young Baha’i who wanted to dedicate their life to the advancement of the Faith asked themselves the same question (MU#67.2-3).

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163. The House of Justice invited 60 Baha’i youth volunteers to help in work related to the mass pilgrimage of August 1968 – registration, guiding the pilgrims at the Baha’i holy places, etc. The volunteers came from Iran, Turkey, Western Europe (Britain, France, Germany, Ireland), Ethiopia and the United States. (BW 15: 327).

164. The House was placing great emphasis on the urgent need for pioneers and travelling teachers at this time, as in its message to the Palermo Conference (August 1968, see MU#63.9) and its general letter to the Baha’is of the world on 8 September 1968 (MU#66).

There was no 'stock answer' to this question which applied to all situations. Circumstances varied from one person to another, and Shoghi Effendi himself had given different answers to different individuals. Each individual had to decide for themselves how they could best serve the Faith. Nevertheless, there were a number of general factors which should be considered:

-1. When one became a Baha'i, one should dedicate one's whole life to the progress of the Baha'i Cause, with every talent or faculty being 'ultimately committed to this overriding life objective'. Choices about education and pioneering should be made within this framework. Thus, by continuing one's education one might later become a more effective pioneer. Alternatively, the present urgent need for pioneers, 'whilst possibilities for teaching are still open', might outweigh the advantages of further education in increasing pioneering effectiveness. It was not an easy decision, and often it was the spirit which prompted the pioneering offer which was more important than the individual's academic attainments.

-2. One's liability to military service might be a factor in the timing of a pioneer offer.

-3. Outstanding obligations to others, including those who were dependent on one for support, might have to be discharged.

-4. It might be possible to combine a pioneering project with a programme of academic study, or a period of pioneering might be regarded as a useful gap in one's education, enabling one to return later to education with a more mature outlook.

-5. One might be particularly qualified to fill a specific and urgent pioneer goal for which there were no other offers.

-6. The need for pioneers would remain for many generations, and there would undoubtedly be many future calls for service [so that an individual could wait].

-7. The principle of consultation applied. One might be obligated to consult others – such as one's parents, one's local or national assembly, or a pioneering committee.

-8. One should pray and meditate on what one's course of action should be. Indeed, this was often the only way in which the answer would come. In this, one should remember the Baha'i principle of 'sacrificial service' and the 'unfailing promises' which Bahá'u'lláh had 'ordained' for those who arose to serve his Cause.

The House members were 'mindful' of the many important decisions which Baha'i youth had to make 'as they tread the path of service to Bahá'u'lláh', and prayed that all would be divinely guided and attract divine blessings (MU#67.3-4).

**5. Further comments by the House.** In its letter of greetings to the European Baha'i Youth Conference at Fiesch in Switzerland in July-August 1971, the House referred to the "course of history" as having brought the present generation of young Baha'is "an unprecedented opportunity and challenge". Around the world all youth shared a common rejection of the "old world". Unlike their non-Baha'i contemporaries, however, Baha'i youth had something to put in its place – Bahá'u'lláh's World Order. The Baha'i youth had already demonstrated

that they were “fully capable of meeting the challenge” which “evolution” had placed before them. They should also consider that the more they understood “the purpose of Bahá’u’lláh” and “the method” by which he would achieve his purpose, the greater would be his success (BW 15: 336).

The House also made reference to youth in its Ridván message of 1972, describing the recent surge of the Baha’i youth into the vanguard of the teaching and proclamation work as being ‘one of the most encouraging and significant trends in the Faith’ (MU#110.9). Again, at Ridván 1973, at the close of the Nine Year Plan, the House identified the ‘advance of youth to the forefront of the teaching work’ as one of the most ‘portentous developments’ which had occurred during the Plan. This ‘upsurge’ had been ‘heartwarming’, and had changed ‘the face of the teaching work’. Previously ‘impenetrable barriers’ had been broken down or overpassed by teams of eager, dedicated and prayerful young Baha’is who had presented the divine message in ways that were ‘acceptable to their own generation’, and from this beginning, the message had spread – and was still spreading – ‘throughout the social structure’. The entire Baha’i world had been ‘thrilled’ by this development. Baha’i youth who had rejected ‘the values and standards of the old world’ were ‘eager to learn and adapt themselves to the standards of Bahá’u’lláh’, and so offer the Baha’i message to fill the gap ‘left by the abandonment of the old order’ (MU#128.12-13).

**6. Music and culture.** Closely associated with the increasing role of youth in the Baha’i community was the greater emphasis that was placed on music, both as an element in Baha’i community life and as an increasingly important teaching medium. The latter included both “musical firesides” by various singers and instrumentalists and a variety of singing groups.<sup>165</sup> One of the most well-known of these groups was the “California Victory Chorus” organized in 1966, and similar groups were soon established in a number of other countries. Young, enthusiastic, and often interracial, such groups readily became “musical ambassadors” for the Baha’i community to the wider world, gaining media attention, appearing in formal concerts and public places, and in “a dissonant age” conveying a “message of hope, joy and confidence” (BW 14: 275). The House of Justice responded enthusiastically to these developments, encouraging Baha’i institutions to help promote them, and issuing a compilation of Baha’i writings on music in March 1972 (2CC 73-82; MU#107). Also of note were a few prominent musicians who publicly announced that they were Baha’is and sometimes referred to the Baha’i teachings during their performances – most famously the jazz trumpeter John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie, but also the American pop duos England Dan and John Ford Coley and Jimmy Seals and Dash Crofts (BW 15: 344; CEBF 164, 256).

The large-scale influx of youth into the Faith also led to cultural changes in a number of national Baha’i communities – perhaps particularly noticeably in the formerly rather staid communities of Europe, North America and Australasia, where the new youth converts included those whose dress and demeanour were more unconventional, a development which led to a greater diversity of cultural styles within many communities.<sup>166</sup>

165. For a brief overview see BW 14: 272-75; 15: 343-46.

166. There is a marked difference in the appearance of the Baha’i youth pictured in the 1963-68 and 1968-73 volumes of *Bahá’i World*, with those in the earlier volume looking conventionally respectable – with many of the young men wearing neckties, whilst many of those in the later volume are clearly less conventional

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in dress and, in the case of the men, hair length (BW 14: 261-75; 15: 325-47). In retrospect, the comment by the editor of the 1963-68 volume of *Bahá'í World* which included “excesses in deportment and dress” amongst the evidences of “the wave of immorality and permissiveness” that was sweeping through the youth of the world and to which Baha’is were opposed (BW 14: 259) seems rather dated.

## **17. Law and administration.**

### Contents:

- A. QUESTIONS OF BAHÁ'Í LAW.
- B. MATTERS OF BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION.

### **A. QUESTIONS OF BAHÁ'Í LAW.**

Although empowered to enact new Baha'i laws in the light of the changing circumstances of the world, during its first decade, the Universal House of Justice seems to have largely confined itself to reiterating principles already enunciated in the Baha'i writings, particularly those of Shoghi Effendi.<sup>167</sup> Particular issues which were examined were sexuality and the need for obedience to the law of God in one's personal life; Baha'i holy days; non-involvement in politics; and self-defence.

**5. Sexuality and obedience to the law of God in one's personal life.** In February 1973, the House sent a copy of part of a letter it had recently sent to an individual Baha'i to all national assemblies as the letter judged to be of general interest. It concerned the need for obedience to Baha'i law, particularly in matters of sexual behaviour (MU#126).<sup>168</sup>

**5.1. The law of God.** The House stated that 'our spiritual lives' were governed with laws which were directly comparable to the laws which governed a human being's physical life – just as when the well-being of the body depended upon supplying it with certain foods and maintaining it within a certain temperature range. These spiritual laws were the laws revealed in each age by the successive Manifestations of God, and obedience to them was of vital importance if each human being was to develop 'properly and harmoniously'. Obedience to these laws also impacted on humanity in general, The development of the individual and of the wider society were interdependent. An individual who violated the spiritual laws would cause injury both to his own development and to that of the environing society. Similarly, the condition of a society had a direct effect on the condition of the individuals who lived within it (MU#126.2).

It was the task of the Baha'is to obey 'the law of God' in their own lives, and gradually win the acceptance of the rest of humanity to this law as revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. This was a challenge, particularly in present-day society, when it was difficult to follow the laws of Bahá'u'lláh because the standards of the Faith were so much at variance with accepted social practices. Nevertheless, there were some laws which were 'so fundamental' to the 'healthy functioning' of society that they had to be upheld regardless of the circumstances. In recognition of human frailty, some Baha'i laws would be applied only gradually, but these too had to be followed once they had been applied. Only by following Baha'i law could society be reformed and prevented from sinking into an 'ever worsening condition' (MU#126.3).

For the Baha'is, the purpose of the present life was to prepare one's soul for the afterlife. One

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167. In this regard, it does not seem to have made much distinction between general letters penned personally by Shoghi Effendi and letters to individual Baha'is, many of which were written on Shoghi's behalf by one of his secretaries.

168. *Bahá'í World* includes this letter in the section on "Youth activity" (BW 15: 348-51).

had to learn to control and direct one's 'animal impulses' and not be a slave to them. Life in this world consisted of 'a succession of tests and achievements'. Sometimes one fell short, but at other times one made new spiritual advances. The course sometimes seemed very hard, but it was evident that, time and again, the individual who steadfastly obeyed the law of Bahá'u'lláh, no matter how hard it seemed, grew spiritually, whilst the person who compromised obedience to the law for the sake of 'his own apparent happiness' was eventually seen to have been 'following a chimera' – not attaining the happiness he sought, whilst at the same time retarding his spiritual advance and perhaps bringing new problems upon himself (MU#126.4).

By upholding Baha'i law 'in the face of all difficulties' one both strengthened one's own character and influenced others. A common example of this was obedience to the Baha'i law which required parental consent for marriage. It was not uncommon for consent to be withheld by non-Baha'i parents for reasons of bigotry or racial prejudice, but over and again, the parents became profoundly influenced by their children's firm obedience to the Baha'i law, and eventually not only gave their consent to the marriage but came to have a closer relationship with their child (MU#126.5-6).

**5.2. Sexual behaviour.** Applying this principle of obedience to divinely ordained law, the House of Justice reiterated some of the Baha'i teachings regarding sexual behaviour.

-(i) **Chastity.** The Baha'i teaching on sexual intercourse was very clear: it was only permissible between a married couple. Baha'is should therefore be chaste before marriage and faithful within it (MU#126.8). In this regard, whilst marriage was highly desirable for Baha'is (in part as a means of channelling sexual impulses), and Bahá'u'lláh had strongly recommended that they marry, it was not 'the central purpose of life'. If a person had to wait a long time before finding a spouse, or if they remained single, it did not mean that they would be unable to fulfil their life's purpose (MU#126.9).

-(ii) **Homosexuality.** According to the Baha'i teachings, homosexuality was 'a distortion' of the individual's nature which should be controlled and overcome. Like transsexuality, it was a 'sexual problem' which might have a medical aspect, in which case medical assistance should certainly be sought. In any case, an individual should never reconcile themselves to such a condition, but should struggle against it. This might be hard to do, but so might the struggle of a heterosexual person to control his or her desires. In both cases – as in much else in life – the exercise of self-control itself had a beneficial effect on the progress of the soul (MU#126.9).

**5.3. Breaches of the law.** Breach of the Baha'i laws on these matters would lead to sanctions, and in the annex to his book of laws, Bahá'u'lláh stated that the one of the functions of the Universal House of Justice would be to determine the punishments for different degrees of offence against the prohibition on immorality. In this regard, the attitude of a spiritual assembly was quite different from that of an individual. Whilst individuals were enjoined to exercise 'loving forgiveness' and 'forbearance' in their relations with others, concerning themselves with their own sins and not the sins of others, assemblies had a duty 'to administer the law of God with justice' (MU#126.8).

**6. Professional opinion.** This letter on obedience to divine law is also interesting in its attitude towards professional opinion in psychology. The individual to whom the House had originally sent the letter was evidently a doctor who worked mostly as ‘a counsellor in family and sexual problems’. As the House noted, most of the people who turned to this person for counselling would not be Baha’is, and therefore would not accept the laws of Bahá’u’lláh, nor see any reason to follow them. The counsellor would no doubt advise them according to his or her own study and professional experience – ‘a whole fabric of concepts about the human mind, its growth, development and proper functioning’. This was not sufficient, however. As a Baha’i, the counsellor knew what Bahá’u’lláh had taught about the purpose, nature, and proper conduct of human life. This was divinely revealed ‘and therefore true’. It would inevitably take time before the counsellor had both studied the Baha’i teachings so that he/she clearly understood them and also worked out how they modified his professional concepts. Over time, he would ‘undoubtedly’ find his understanding of the human problems involved changed and developed as the light of his growing knowledge of the Baha’i teachings illumined the guidance of his own professional knowledge and judgement. By this means, he would come to see ‘new and improved ways’ of helping the clients who came to see him (MU#126.10).

Of course, it was not uncommon for a scientist to have reevaluate his or her thinking as a result of discovering some new factor in the course of research that necessitated ‘a revolution in thinking over a wide field of human endeavour’. In this context, psychology was still ‘a very young and inexact science’, and as a consequence of this, Baha’i psychologists who knew ‘the true pattern of human life’ from the Baha’i teachings would be able to make ‘great strides’ in its development and at the same time ‘help profoundly in the alleviation of human suffering’ (MU#126.10).

**7. Baha’i holy days.** Writing to national assemblies in January 1966, the House of Justice drew attention to the importance of Baha’is observing the Baha’i law of abstaining from work on nine Baha’i holy days. Shoghi Effendi had indicated that those who had independent businesses or shops should certainly not work on those days, and that those who were government employees should seek to be excused from work on religious grounds, or, if this was not possible, at least seek to have the independent status of their religion recognized and their right to observe their own holy days acknowledged. It was a matter of conscience, and as such binding upon all Baha’is. Those with children should also seek to have them excused from their school on such days. National assemblies should consider this question carefully, bringing it to the attention of the Baha’is under their jurisdiction so that the ‘mass of believers’ would uphold and observe these laws. The House also stated that obedience to this law would facilitate and enhance the Nine Year Plan goal of gaining official recognition of Baha’i holy days, a goal which the House linked directly to gaining the recognition by the civil authorities of the Baha’i Faith as ‘an independent religion enjoying its own rights and privileges’ (MU#29).

**8. Politics.** One topic of major and continuing concern to the House was the relationship of Baha’is to politics. Shoghi Effendi had insisted that Baha’is should strictly avoid involvement in political matters, banning Baha’i membership in political parties and the making of public comments on current political disputes and personalities (LG 441-43, 445, 451; WOB 63-7,



198-9), and the House sought to reinforce the Baha'is' adherence to this principle.

**8.1. The first statement: the Baha'is' task.** The House's first major statement on politics came in **December 1967** in the form of the circulation of a lengthy extract from a letter sent in response to an individual's question on this subject. The House's view was that the question of political involvement, and indeed of all Baha'i conduct in relation to 'the problems, sufferings and bewilderment' of others should be seen in the light both of 'God's purpose for mankind in this age' and of the processes which God had set in motion for the achievement of his purpose. Central here was the understanding that according to Bahá'u'lláh the first essential step towards achieving 'the peace and progress of mankind' was its unification'. Second was union of all the world's peoples into 'one universal Cause' – the religious message embodied in the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Only thus could 'the revivification of mankind and the curing of all its ills' be achieved. Most people today, however, took a very different point of view: not only did they not accept the Baha'i teachings, but they saw the [preliminary] step of world unity as an 'ultimate' and 'almost unobtainable goal', and concentrated instead on remedying the other ills from which humanity suffered – unaware that these other ills were merely the 'symptoms and side effects' of the basic problem of disunity (MU#55.2-4).

**The major and minor plans.** Shoghi Effendi had referred to two great processes as being at work in the world. The first of these was the 'great' or 'Major' Plan of God', which, working through humanity as a whole, would 'in God's due time' lead to the political unification of the world – the 'Lesser Peace'. The second process was the 'Minor Plan' that had been given to the Baha'is to accomplish, and would eventuate in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth (the 'Most Great Peace'). Under the first plan, humanity would become like a united but lifeless body. The second process would cause life to be breathed into this lifeless body, creating true spiritual unity. The first plan was 'tumultuous in its progress', 'tearing down barriers to world unity and forging humankind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and experience'. It proceeded 'mysteriously', in ways directed by God alone. The Minor Plan, by contrast, was clearly delineated, requiring the Baha'is to consciously labour to erect the framework of the divine kingdom in accordance with the 'detailed instructions' and 'continuing divine guidance' which they received via the head of their religion [i.e. nowadays through the Universal House of Justice] (MU#55.5-6).

According to this framework, the primary obligations of the Baha'is were clear – they were to devote all their energies to the work of establishing the divine kingdom. This was their 'most important and fundamental work', and there was no one else to undertake it. Thus, whilst Baha'is should feel love and compassion for their fellow humans as well as anguish in the face of their immediate sufferings, and indeed should help them 'whenever' the occasion presented itself, they should not allow these feelings and activities to divert them from their primary task. They should remember that whilst there were hundreds of thousands of people who were 'well-wishers of mankind', who devoted their lives to relief work and charity, there were only 'a pitiful few' to undertake the work which God wanted most: to accomplish the spiritual awakening and regeneration of humanity.

When Baha'is involved themselves in politics, it was often because they believed that they could somehow aid their fellows better by some activity outside the Faith. This was both a mistaken belief and 'a dangerous delusion'. Shoghi Effendi's guidance was clear: at a time

when society itself was ‘rapidly disintegrating’ and formerly straightforward moral issues were becoming ‘hopelessly confused’, the Baha’is could only help humankind by building up the Faith as the only remedy for the world’s ills. It was not possible for the Baha’is [or anyone else] to change ‘the faulty systems of the world’ from within. The Baha’is should study the Guardian’s instructions on this matter (MU#55.9). The House also noted its pragmatic concern that at a time when the world situation was very confused, ‘unwise’ political acts or statements by a Baha’i in one country could lead to grave setbacks to the Faith there or elsewhere, even including loss of Baha’i lives (MU#55.1).

**8.2. The second statement: the necessity of non-interference.** The House returned to the topic of politics in a lengthy letter to African national spiritual assemblies in **February 1970**. The Baha’is should know that whilst the ‘Army of the Cause’, advancing to conquer ‘the hearts of men’ at the bidding of Bahá’u’lláh, could never be defeated, its rate of advance could be slowed down by ‘acts of unwisdom and ignorance’ on the part of the Baha’is themselves. For this reason, the House wished to clarify some of the issues that seemed to have ‘blurred the vision’ of some of the Baha’is in the past, causing them to commit ‘errors of judgement’ which had ‘retarded the progress of the Faith in their countries’ (MU#77.3).

The most important issue of concern was a lack of appreciation of the Baha’i principle of ‘noninterference in political affairs’. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi had given the Baha’is ‘clear and convincing reasons’ why they should uphold this principle, and these could be summarized as follows:

-1. The ‘true cause’ of the ills from which humanity suffered from was disunity. It was a poison ‘sapping the vigor of present-day society’. These ills could not be cured by any political union devised by world leaders, no matter how perfect. Only the Baha’i Cause – ‘God’s Faith’ – could cure the present ills. It was the ‘sole source of salvation’ for humanity. In this context, the Baha’is should devote themselves to the work of the Faith, as this was ‘the greatest aid and only refuge for a needy and divided world’. There were many humanitarians who devoted their efforts to adding to the people’s material well-being through charity and relief work, but only the Baha’is could do the work which God most wanted done.

-2. The Baha’i Community was a worldwide organization which was aiming ‘to establish true and universal peace on earth’. If a Baha’i worked for one political party in order to defeat another, it was a negation of the spirit of the Faith. Party political involvement necessarily entailed repudiation of some or all of the Baha’i principles of peace and unity. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated: the Baha’is didn’t belong to any party, they were the party of God.

-3. If Baha’is were given the right to support a particular political party, that right would have to extend to all regardless of their political persuasions. The result would be that within the ranks of a religion whose primary mission was to unite all the world’s people as ‘one great family under God’ there would be Baha’is opposed to each other on party political grounds. This would make it impossible for them to set ‘the example of unity and harmony’ which the world was seeking.

-4. If Baha’i institutions became involved in politics, then they would arouse antagonism rather than love. By taking a particular political stand in one country, they would necessarily change the perceptions which people in other countries had of the Faith’s aims

and purposes. By becoming involved in political disputes they would no longer be able to change or help the world, but would themselves become ‘lost and confused’. The Baha’is would best serve ‘the highest interests of their country’ and ‘the cause of true salvation for the world’ by giving their full support to ‘the divine system of Bahá’u’lláh’. In a world situation which was now so confused, and in which ‘moral issues which were once clear’ had become mixed up with ‘selfish and battling factions’, the Baha’is should ‘sacrifice their political pursuits and affiliations’ (MU#77.4).

Whilst Baha’is should strictly refrain from becoming involved in politics, this did not mean that they were against any party of faction. The Faith held aloof, however, ‘from all controversies’, transcending them all. Nor was the Baha’i Faith opposed to the ‘true interests’ of any nation. Rather, the Baha’is were enjoined to be loyal to the government of their country and sanely patriotic. Their love for their country should be shown by serving its well-being in their daily activities, or by working through the ‘administrative channels of the government, however, instead of through party politics or in diplomatic or political posts’. Again, they were encouraged to mix with all strata of society, including its ‘highest authorities’ and ‘leading personalities’, as well as the mass of the people. They should bring the knowledge of the Faith to them all, but in so doing they should strictly avoid identifying themselves or the Faith with ‘political pursuits’ or ‘party programs’ (MU#77.4e).

The House hoped that this summary would help the Baha’is both to follow the Baha’i teachings on this matter ‘intelligently and radiantly’ and to explain the Baha’i attitude to anyone who questioned its ‘wisdom and usefulness’ (MU#77.4).

**9. Self-defence.** In May 1969, the House replied to a request by the Canadian national assembly for guidance ‘on individual conduct in the face of increasing civil disorder in North American cities’ (MU#69). The House noted two general principles which were found in the Baha’i texts:

-1. Writings of Bahá’u’lláh which were already widely available stated that it was preferable to be killed ‘in the path of God’s good pleasure’ than to kill. In the case an organized religious attack directed against the them, the Baha’is should therefore never turn to any kind of warfare as this was strictly forbidden.<sup>169</sup>

-2. In a previously untranslated letter, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated that in the case of attack by robbers or highwaymen, Baha’is should not surrender themselves, but should try – as far as circumstances permitted – to defend themselves, later lodging a complaint with the government authorities. Similarly, Shoghi Effendi had written that a Baha’i should resist an assault by ‘an irresponsible assailant’, and that in these circumstances, one would be justified in protecting one’s life. Again, a letter on his behalf indicated that Baha’is were justified in defending their lives in emergency situations in which there was no legal force at hand to appeal to.

The House stated that the same principles applied in cases of civil disorder. However, in the specific case of the United States, it had recently advised the national assembly there that

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169. Bahá’u’lláh explicitly forbade holy war (*jihád*). See CEBF, ‘holy war’, loc. cit.

under present circumstances it was preferable if Baha'is did not buy or own firearms for the protection of themselves and their families. Other than this, for the present, it did not wish to go beyond these general guidelines. Responses to attacks were a matter of conscience, and one had to use one's own judgement as to how far self-defence should go, and when to stop lest it 'deteriorate into retaliation' (MU#69).

**B. MATTERS OF BAHA'I ADMINISTRATION.** Again, with the exception of the major innovations of drafting its own Constitution, declaring the appointment of further guardians and Hands of the Cause impossible, and creating the new institution of the Boards of Counsellors, the House largely reiterated established Baha'i policies on most administrative matters. In addition to circulating many compilations of Baha'i texts on administrative matters, the House issued statements on consultation; recordings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's voice; Baha'i publishing; the definition of a functioning local spiritual assembly; and newsletters.

**10. Compilations.** The House of Justice's ('conservative') practice of largely restating established administrative policy was embodied in its distribution of an increasing number of compilations of the relevant Baha'i texts on various matters – a practice which it has continued to follow up to the present day.

**10.1. The compilation on local spiritual assemblies.** One of the earliest examples of this practice was provided in August 1970, when the House circulated a short compilation of passages from the Baha'i writings on local spiritual assemblies, in part because the principles involved were new to many Baha'is who were now being called upon to serve on local assemblies.<sup>170</sup>

Commenting on the compilation, the House noted that no attempt had been made to provide a complete collection of relevant texts, but it was hoped that the passages provided would both 'suffice as an introduction to a more profound study of the subject', and 'lead to a more efficient functioning' of local assemblies everywhere. National assemblies should share the compilation with the Baha'is under their jurisdiction as quickly as possible, having the passages translated into local languages as necessary and ensuring in particular that members of local assemblies received copies. The House also noted that as the system of Baha'i administration expanded worldwide, it behoved everyone associated with it to familiarize themselves with its principles, 'understand its import', and 'put its precepts into practice'. Only as individual local assembly members deepened themselves 'in the fundamental verities of the Faith' and in the 'proper application' of Baha'i administrative principles regarding the operation of the local assemblies would this institution 'grow and develop toward its full potential' (MU#84).

**10.2. Other compilations.** The House also circulated a number of other compilations on various topics in Baha'i administration and practice during this period. In all cases, the House sent copies of the compilation to national assemblies, and then left the manner of its distribution up to them. The compilations included:

- 1. In January 1970, a compilation of Shoghi Effendi's letters about contributions to

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170. For a revised (1990) version see 2CC 39-60.

the **Baha'i funds** (MU#76).<sup>171</sup>

-2. In November 1971, a compilation of Shoghi Effendi's writings about '**the spiritual character of Baha'i elections**' (MU#103).<sup>172</sup>

-3. In March 1972, a compilation on Baha'i writings on '**music and singing**' (released at this time because music and singing were now playing 'such an important and effective part' in the work of teaching the Faith) (MU#107).<sup>173</sup>

-4. In April 1972, a compilation of extracts from letters written by Shoghi Effendi or on his behalf on the objectives and operating principles of Baha'i '**summer schools**', together with quotations from messages from the Universal House of Justice on '**Teaching Institutes**' (The House noting the 'increasing importance' of such schools) (MU#109).<sup>174</sup>

-5. In June 1972, a compilation of extracts from letters written by Shoghi Effendi or on his behalf about the '**National Spiritual Assembly**', so that both assembly members and others could appreciate this 'vital institution' better (The House noted that it was not 'a complete compilation of all the available texts on the subject') (MU#114).<sup>175</sup>

-6. In August 1972, a compilation from Shoghi Effendi's writings on Baha'i national '**newsletters**' (MU#120; see below).

**11. Consultation.** In March 1970, the House replied to a letter from the Canadian national assembly about the process of decision-making on spiritual assemblies. It emphasized that the Baha'i process of consultation was very different from the decision-making processes found in the wider world. Ideally, Baha'is who consulted together would arrive at a unanimous decision, and only when this was not possible decide the matter by prayerful voting. The majority decision of the assembly arrived at in this way then became the decision of the whole assembly, and not just of the majority who had voted for the measure. If an individual assembly member felt that he needed to be given more information or listen to further discussion about a matter before he could properly and intelligently make a decision, then he should voice his concerns, and the assembly would then decide if further consultation was needed before putting the matter to a vote (MU#79.1-5).

In cases of majority voting, all that was necessary was for a majority of those present to vote for the motion in order for it to be carried. If a majority was not in favour, the motion was defeated. There was no question of formally 'abstaining'. If an assembly member felt unable to vote for a motion for whatever reason (including not yet having made up his mind), then he was effectively voting against it (MU#79.6).

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171. For a revised (1989) version see 1CC 529-50.

172. For a revised (1989) version see 1CC 315-18.

173. For a revised (1990) version see 2CC 73-82.

174. For a revised (1990) version see 1CC 25-44 (under the heading 'Centres of Baha'i Learning').

175. For a revised (1990) version see 2CC 83-136.

**12. Recordings of `Abdu'l-Bahá's voice.** In February 1971, the House noted that the recent ready availability of tape and cassette recorders in almost country of the world created new means for the dissemination of Baha'i talks and other audio materials, and thus provided 'a powerful new instrument' for both teaching the Faith and deepening the Baha'is' understanding of it. One caution was necessary, however, namely the playing of the recording of `Abdu'l-Bahá's voice. As Shoghi Effendi had stated, the Baha'is should only play this recording on special occasions and should listen to it 'with the utmost reverence'. This was a precious relic, and it should be treated in a way that preserved the dignity of the Faith (MU#93).

**13. Baha'i publishing.** In March 1971, the House issued a memorandum on the principles of Baha'i publishing and related matters. This followed extensive consideration of these matters, and was done in recognition of the need for a 'great increase' in the provision of Baha'i literature worldwide, and in the hope that a clear set of guidelines would both 'stimulate the supply of new works' and 'liberate the channels of publication and distribution' (MU#94.1). The House encouraged Baha'i authors to provide 'a constant stream of new works', including introductions to the Faith, commentaries on the Baha'i writings, dissertations on various aspects of the Baha'i teachings, textbooks, histories, reviews, and audiovisual works. All were needed, either to stimulate the study of the Faith or to help promote the work of teaching the Faith (MU#94.3q).

**13.1. Review.** The House regarded it as essential that at this 'early stage' in the development of the Faith all creative works by Baha'is on Baha'i subjects were subject to official review prior to 'submission for publication'. This included books, pamphlets, translations, poems, songs, radio and television scripts, films and recordings, and applied whether the intended publisher was Baha'i or not. Material that was purely for local consumption should be approved by the responsible local assembly, other material which was of national interest fell under the aegis of the national spiritual assembly and should be examined by its reviewing committee. Review was a 'temporary' measure and would eventually be abolished when the Faith was more firmly established (MU#94.3a-b).

The purpose of review was to 'protect the Faith from misrepresentation and to ensure dignity and accuracy in its presentation'. To this end, national assemblies could appoint reviewing committees of two or three Baha'is who had both an adequate education and knowledge of the Faith. They should check that the submitted work was adequate, in conformity with the Baha'i teachings, and dignified in style. As promptly as they could, the reviewers should prepare a report on the submitted work for the final approval of the national assembly. They might if they wished call attention to grammatical and spelling mistakes, but such editorial matters were not really their concern, but rather for the publisher and author to deal with (MU#94.3c, 3f).

**13.2. Translations of Baha'i texts.** Shoghi Effendi's translations of Baha'i sacred texts from Persian and Arabic into English were generally to be regarded as the standard for all Baha'i scriptural translations. Thus, an author writing in English would normally use Shoghi Effendi's translations as these were the most authentic. Works by other translators could only

be used if these had already appeared in an approved publication. Newly translated passages had to be approved by the Universal House of Justice itself, as did any use of translations which had not been given official approval. Again, with the exception of some oriental languages (e.g. Turkish, Urdu), new translations into languages other than English had to be made from Shoghi's English language translations where these existed, or otherwise from already approved translations by others. Translations from sources other than these could only be made with the approval of the House of Justice (MU#94.3d-e).

**13.3. International review.** Each national assembly had the right to review any work published or republished within its area of jurisdiction with the sole exception of works by Hands of the Cause which were reviewed at the Baha'i World Centre. National assemblies were encouraged to accept reviews of work which had been carried out by other national assemblies but they were not bound to. Assemblies receiving manuscripts from outside their own area of jurisdiction should inquire whether or not the submitted work had already been reviewed by another assembly, and if it had previously been refused approval, the reasons for this refusal (MU#94.3g-h).

**13.4. Baha'i publishers.** Baha'i publishers could only publish a work about the Faith if it had already been approved for publication by the national assembly of the country where it was to be published. They were not required to print an approval notice in the published work, and were under no obligation to publish a work just because it had been approved for publication by the responsible national assembly (MU#94.3i-j, n).

**13.5. Matters of style.** Baha'i publishers would adopt their own house style and make their own arrangements for editing works prior to publication. Any changes in an approved manuscript (including additions and deletions) which changed the meaning of a passage would have to be re-reviewed, however. In transliterating oriental terms into a language using the Roman alphabet, the publisher would also have to ensure that the transliteration system adopted by Shoghi Effendi was used.<sup>176</sup> Cables in English should be printed exactly as received, without interpolating any of the implied words (MU#94.3k-m).<sup>177</sup>

**13.6. Baha'i authors.** Baha'i authors could submit their works for review to any national assembly in the world and send the reviewed work to any publisher for consideration for publication (As long as approved for publication by the national assembly of the country where it was to be published had been given). When a work was being published by a non-Baha'i publisher, the author should ensure that the Baha'i system of transliteration was used. Authors should welcome review and could facilitate the process by submitting sufficient copies for each member of the reviewing (MU#94.3o-p).

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176. In 1923, Shoghi Effendi initiated a policy of having a uniform system of transliteration of Persian and Arabic terms in English, and insisted that it be used in all Baha'i publications (BA 43). The main elements of this system are given in all volumes of the old series of *Bahá'í World* from volume 2 onwards. The system itself is based on one adopted by the Tenth International Congress of Orientalists at Geneva in September 1894. See Momen, "The Baha'i system of transliteration".

177. In subsequent messages in 1974 and 1981, the House of Justice stated that in editing cables, it was permissible to add transliteration to oriental words, add apostrophes and correct transmission errors of spelling where appropriate, capitalize according to publisher's house style, and replace the word 'STOP' with a period mark at the end of a sentence (MU 188n).

**13.7. The sale and distribution of Baha'i literature.** Baha'i publications which had been reviewed and published in one country could be offered for sale anywhere in the world, and it was hoped that Baha'i publishers and those involved in distributing Baha'i books and other published works would cooperate in supplying Baha'is, the commercial book trade and libraries with publications from any country.

Baha'i publishers had the right to advertise their publications and to promote their sales amongst the Baha'is in all countries in any legitimate manner. Publishers did not have the right to insist that a national assembly or its publishing committee or trust stock, promote or advertise any work, however. Nor did they have a right to receive mailing lists of Baha'is from any national assembly, although they could compile lists of their own if they wished.

If a national assembly felt that a particular book would be damaging to the best interests of the Faith in their country, then they could ask the publisher and author not to promote it there. The assembly could not ban distribution or purchase, however, as all Baha'is had the right to purchase approved books from anywhere in the world.

Baha'i publishers should send copies of every new book and every new edition to the Baha'i World Centre (MU#94.3r).

**14. Local spiritual assemblies.** In July 1972, the House replied to questions from the Bolivian Spiritual Assembly about what exactly a 'functioning' local spiritual assembly was. The reply was evidently judged to be of wider interest and was given general circulation (MU#118). The House began by stating that at the present both local and national spiritual assemblies were 'newly born' institutions, which were only 'embryos' of the 'majestic institutions' which they would eventually become. For the most part, they were still struggling to establish themselves 'both in the Baha'i community and in the world'. Thus, whilst local spiritual assemblies had been given a 'lofty station' in the Baha'i writings, it should be realized that their development would be gradual and at times painful (MU#118.1-2).

In this context, it was perfectly proper for national assemblies to encourage local assemblies to achieve the lofty ideal set out in the Baha'i writings, and to specifically tell them what certain of the minimum requirements for their functioning were, but the national assemblies should not use non-attainment of these standards as grounds for withholding recognition from weak local assemblies. Indeed, the standards which assemblies should achieve would change over time in response to changing conditions: the assemblies would follow a path of evolutionary change. The Universal House of Justice could outline 'the most salient objectives' which should be followed by local assemblies, but it would not be useful for it to lay down minimum standards of assembly functioning which were applicable in every country in the world. The standards for proper functioning would necessarily differ from one country to another, and might even differ from one district to another within the same country (MU#118.3).

The pattern of assembly functioning and the objectives which assemblies should aspire to attain were laid out in the compilation on local spiritual assemblies which the House of Justice had sent out to all national assemblies in August 1970 and in the published assembly



by-laws,<sup>178</sup> and these documents should be restudied and discussed with the responsible Continental Counsellors. The ‘most salient’ objectives were as follows: (i) to ‘act as a loving shepherd to the Baha’i flock; (ii) to promote ‘unity and concord’ amongst the Baha’is; (iii) to direct the Baha’i teaching work; (iv) to ‘protect the Cause’; (v) to arrange for nineteen day feasts, anniversaries and regular community meetings; (vi) to familiarize the local Baha’is with its plans and invite the community to offer its recommendations; (vii) to promote the welfare of youth and children; and (viii) to participate, as far as circumstances permitted, in humanitarian activities. In relationship to individual Baha’is, the local assembly should ‘continuously invite and encourage’ each one to (i) study the Faith; (ii) deliver its ‘glorious message; (iii) live in accordance with its teachings; (iv) contribute ‘freely and regularly’ to the Baha’i fund; (v) participate in community activities; and (vi) ‘seek refuge’ in the assembly for advise and help when needed (MU#118.4; 118.7).

In terms of its own administration, the assembly should (i) meet regularly; (ii) ensure that all members were currently informed of its activities; and (iii) ensure that its secretary and treasurer carried out their duties properly, and that the treasurer held and disbursed all Baha’i funds to its satisfaction, keeping proper accounts and issuing receipts for all contributions. In the meetings of the local assembly, the members should endeavour to develop the skills required for the ‘difficult but highly-rewarding’ art of Baha’i consultation, a process which required both great self-discipline on the part of all members and ‘complete reliance’ on the power of Bahá’u’lláh. Many assemblies found that it was useful to appoint special committees responsible to it to deal with such matters as teaching, observance of feasts and anniversaries, and consulting about personal problems. In all cases submitted for its consideration, the assembly had to ‘uphold the standard of justice in delivering its verdict’, and in relationship to both the Baha’i community and the outside world, it should ‘strive to evince the qualities of leadership’<sup>179</sup> (MU#118.5-6).

**15. Newsletters.** In August 1972, the House distributed a compilation of extracts from the letters of Shoghi Effendi or written on his behalf on the subject of newsletters. By way of commentary, it noted that ‘the initiation, regular publication and distribution of a Baha’i newsletter’ was one of the ‘vital functions’ of every national assembly. Such newsletters were a means of (i) ‘promoting understanding and unity’ amongst the Baha’is; (ii) ‘stimulating their interest and deepening their knowledge of the teachings’; and (iii) ‘coordinating the activities of the Faith’. Each national assembly should study the compilation and take ‘effective steps’ to ensure that such a newsletter was ‘issued and widely distributed’ amongst the Baha’is, and consider how the standard of any newsletter might be improved. It was recognized that in some countries it was necessary to issue the newsletter in more than one language, and in some countries, it might also be desirable for responsible local assemblies to issue local newsletters (MU#120).

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178. When the New York local assembly obtained legal incorporation in 1932, it also adopted a set of by-laws to describe its functioning (BW4: 159-65), and this became the model for all subsequent local assembly by-laws. It was republished in its original or amended form in the sequent volumes of the old series of *Bahá’i World*.

179. According to Shoghi Effendi the ‘first quality of leadership’ was ‘the capacity to use the energy and competence that exists in the rank and file’ of the followers (MU#118.6a).

## Part IV. THE BAHA'I WORLD CENTRE

### 18. The Development of the Baha'i World Centre

#### 1. The Baha'i World Centre.

The 'Baha'i World Centre' is the spiritual and administrative centre of the Baha'i Faith. It physically consists of a number of Baha'i holy sites, administrative buildings, surrounding gardens and various other places in the Haifa-Akka area of what is now northern Israel.<sup>180</sup>

The area became important for Baha'is as soon as Bahá'u'lláh first arrived in the Ottoman prison city of Akka in 1868, all places subsequently associated with his life there becoming holy places for Baha'is. The most important of these is the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh himself, located in a small building next to the mansion of Bahjí, where Bahá'u'lláh resided from 1879 until his death in 1892, and about three kilometres north of Akka. The modern city of Haifa – located along the ridge of Mount Carmel to the south of Akka, and across a large bay – also became important for Baha'is, particularly after `Abdu'l-Bahá enshrined the remains of the Báb there (1909), established his residence in the city (1910), and was interred in a vault of next to that of the Báb (1921), thus giving that shrine added holiness for the Baha'is. In Haifa, other places of Baha'i significance include the House of `Abdu'l-Bahá (and later of Shoghi Effendi), a Baha'i burial ground, and a stretch of land above the Báb's Shrine which Shoghi Effendi designated as an 'Arc' along which various major Baha'i buildings would eventually be built.<sup>181</sup>

**2. Developments under Shoghi Effendi.** At the time of `Abdu'l-Bahá's death in November 1921, the extent of Baha'i property holdings in the Haifa-Akka area was relatively limited. In the Akka area, the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh was under the control of the Baha'is, but the adjoining mansion of Bahjí was occupied by `Abdu'l-Bahá's antagonistic half-brother, Muhammad `Alí, and his partisans. The mansion was also subject to a complex ownership agreement in which several of Bahá'u'lláh's rival descendants had shares. The House of `Abbúd, in which Bahá'u'lláh had resided for several years (1871-77) was occupied by the Baha'is, and there were also several Baha'i-owned gardens (the Ridván, Firdaws and Ashraf gardens) close to the city along the small Na`mayn river, which Bahá'u'lláh had liked to visit (Ruhe 101-104). In Haifa, Shoghi Effendi had ownership of his grandfather's house, the joint shrine of the Báb and `Abdu'l-Bahá, two house in which pilgrims could stay, and various plots of land. There were also properties owned by Baha'is in the area of the Sea of Galilee (RPP 228; Ruhe 57).

One of the major accomplishments of Shoghi Effendi's guardianship was the physical

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180. For convenient summaries see CEBF, 'Akka'; 'Arc'; 'Bahjí'; 'Haifa'; and 'Shrine of the Báb'. See also 'Baha'i World Centre', loc. cit. For more detail see Ruhe.

181. The first building on the Arc was the International [Baha'i] Archives, completed in 1957. This was followed by the Seat of the Universal House of Justice (formally occupied in 1983), and later the International Teaching Centre and Centre for the Study of the Tests, now both nearing completion. An international Baha'i library will be constructed in the future. See CEBF, 'Arc, buildings of'; 'International Archives', loc. cit.

development of the Baha'i World Centre.<sup>182</sup> This task involved a number of separate projects, including the regularization of legal ownership; the acquisition of the mansion of Bahjí (1929), and its subsequent renovation; the extension of the Shrine of the Báb (1929) and the later construction of an elaborate enveloping golden-domed superstructure (1948-53); the establishment of the 'Monument Gardens' at the centre of the 'Arc' above the Báb's shrine (from 1932); the construction of the International Baha'i Archives building (1955-7); and the acquisition of extensive areas of land so as to provide space for future Baha'i building projects and to ensure that the immediate vicinities of the Baha'i shrines retained their peaceful calm and were protected from the encroachments of urban development. With regard to land acquisition, Shoghi Effendi's widow estimated that Baha'i holdings in 1921 probably amounted to less than 10,000 square metres in Haifa and a mere 1,000 square metres at Bahjí, whilst by 1957 these areas had increased to 230,000 and 257,000 square metres respectively (RPP 267).<sup>183</sup>

### **3. The Baha'i buildings and gardens in the Nine Year Plan.**

**3.1. Plan goals.** The major goals of the Nine Year Plan included 'the preparation of a plan for the befitting development and beautification of the entire area of Baha'i property' surrounding the Baha'i shrines in Haifa and Bahjí, as well as 'extension of the existing gardens on Mount Carmel' (MU#14.5).

This goal was evidently given low priority initially, with the House of Justice directing the attention of the Baha'is to other more urgent tasks. Then, in March 1967, the House announced that it was now time to devote greater effort to the physical development of the Baha'i World Centre and to other World Centre goals (7 March 1967; MU#40). Since the establishment of the House in 1963, its primary concerns at the Baha'i World Centre had comprised the following work on physical structures: (1) basic minimum essential repair work on the Baha'i holy places; (2) establishing the House of Justice's own administrative offices; (3) reorganizing pilgrimage accommodation; (4) developing a suitable housing program for those who worked at the World Centre (including the Hands and House members and their families); and (5) formulating plans for the expansion of the Baha'i gardens and 'taking the first steps in their initiation'.<sup>184</sup> These were all essential things that had to be done, but the House had endeavoured to keep the expense of these activities to a minimum so that the maximum resources could be directed towards the teaching work worldwide (MU#40.3-4).

It was now time to turn to the World Centre goals. Work on the other major projects of the Plan (pioneer settlement, teaching work, property acquisitions, etc.) was proceeding well, and work on major tasks at the World Centre could no longer be postponed. In terms of 'buildings and grounds', the work required was of '(e)xtensive beautification' of the lands surrounding

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182. See Giachery; RPP 228, 231-47, 259-67, 285-86, 290.

183. By 1963, Baha'i land holdings dedicated to the Shrines of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb also included almost 2.4 million square metres in the Jordan Valley and 10,530 square metres in the district of Gaza. In addition, 35,700 square metres of land had been purchased as a site for the future construction of a Baha'i temple on Mount Carmel (Hands 30).

184. The House had also been involved with the tasks of gathering its support staff, collating and indexing the Baha'i sacred texts and the writings of Shoghi Effendi, and of fostering relations with the Israeli government and the United Nations (MU#40.3).

the shrines in Haifa and Bahjí, as well as of the site for the future Baha'i temple on Mount Carmel. This was necessary both for its own sake and in order to protect these lands from encroachment by the rapidly growing cities within the boundaries of which they lay. It was also necessary to make plans for providing for an ever-increasing number of Baha'i pilgrims (MU#40.5).

**3.2. Bahjí.** Developments at Bahjí included the rerouting of an unpaved sand road which had run close to the mansion on the eastern side and bisected the Baha'i property. This was finally accomplished in 1968 (several earlier unsuccessful attempts had been made to have it closed from about 1951 onwards), its removal enabling the formal gardens to be extended to the east of the mansion and a second quadrant of gardens laid out in the northeast, similar in design to the first quadrant. [nb. Ruhe 119 shows road as it was]. The removal of the road also made it possible to erect a fence around the perimeter of the Baha'i property, giving the gardens greater protection (BW14: 87). Later, gardens were also developed in the southeastern quadrant, and the garden directly south of the mansion was extended to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teahouse (see below), with plantings and paths under the old olive trees. A new 400 metre entrance path was constructed between a gate on the northern boundary to the Collins Gate, and beautified with shrubs, trees and lamp-posts. A new western gate was also built, leading to a car park – facilitating the arrival of larger numbers of pilgrims. Altogether, by the end of the Plan over 125,000 square metres of land had been developed (BW15: 174).<sup>185</sup> Basic repairs and maintenance were also carried out: the roof of the mansion was retiled and the whole mansion repainted; the portico of Bahá'u'lláh's shrine was rebuilt; the pilgrim house was re-roofed; and the ornamentation on the Shrine was re-painted and re-gilded, as were the gates and ornaments in the gardens (BW14: 88).<sup>186</sup>

**Figure 18.1. The Bahjí properties.**

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185. The gardens of the southeast quadrant amounted to 25,000 square metres (*Statistical 3*).

186. The House of 'Abbúd in Akka was also repainted (BW14: 88).

Northwest Quadrant ( <i>Haram-i Aqdas</i> ) [1]			Northeast Quadrant [2]
	Shrine	Mansion	
	Formal garden Olive grove 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teahouse		Southeast Quadrant [3]

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One particular component of these developments was noted in November 1969, when the House of Justice was pleased to announce the acquisition of further 'VITALLY NEEDED' and 'MUCH DESIRED' land at Bahjí. The newly acquired land was adjacent to the mansion property and surrounded the 'teahouse' of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.<sup>187</sup> Added to the existing Baha'i property it provided an 'additional safeguard' to the Bahjí property and enabled the gardens to be extended. Formal negotiations to acquire the land had been initiated by Shoghi Effendi almost two decades previously and had now finally been concluded by means of an even exchange with some other Baha'i land originally given to the Faith by Hájí 'Alí Yazdí in 1933 as an endowment property dedicated to the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. The important role played by this property in the acquisition of the land surrounding the teahouse represented a 'glowing tribute' to the memory of this venerable and devoted servant of Bahá'u'lláh (MU#74.3-4).<sup>188</sup>

**3.3. Mount Carmel.** The basic plan of development of the Baha'i properties in the vicinity of the Shrine of the Báb had been laid down by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi: (i) there would be nine terraces below the Shrine and another nine above it, and (ii) the Baha'i world administrative centre and other important buildings would be constructed on the 'far-flung arc' which centred on the graves of members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family (sister, brother, mother and wife). At the House's request, an eminent Baha'i architect was asked to prepare tentative plans, first for the gardens above the Shrine, and subsequently for the whole area in consonance with the basic plan. These plans were approved by the House and used as the basis for a town planning scheme which was to be submitted to the Haifa municipality. Extensive repairs and maintenance of the existing buildings and gardens, together with a number of substantive improvements to the existing properties were also made: the Pilgrim House was re-roofed; the ornamentation of the Shrine and garden gates and ornaments were re-painted and re-gilded; the flat roof section of the Shrine was repaired; the eastern wing of the terrace in front of the Shrine was extensively repaired following the collapse of a retaining wall; new soil was added to higher levels of the gardens which had become eroded; a fence was built around the Baha'i property (including the temple site – see below); the garden and parking space next to the Pilgrim House was developed; the Arc and the main entrance were paved; a wall was built along the southern side of UNO Avenue on the

187. 'Abdu'l-Bahá lived in Akka and did not have a room in the Bahjí mansion. After his father's death, he used a building on the southern perimeter of the property as somewhere to stay when he visited his father's shrine. This was his 'teahouse' (Ruhe 114, 225-6 n.19.1).

188. On Yazdí see BW9: 624-25. The teahouse itself had been acquired during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi.

perimeter of the Baha'i gardens, and the pavement was extended along the same stretch of road; the hillside immediately above this wall (the future site of the first upper terrace) was covered by a temporary informal rock-garden; the floodlighting of the Archives Building, which had been envisaged by Shoghi Effendi, was implemented and the floodlighting of the Shrine and Monument Garden extended; all the electrical circuits in the gardens were rewired; the main gate to the Shrine (from UNO Avenue) was closed to vehicles because of the steady increase in the number of visitors to the Shrine; and a wrought iron gate was erected at the entrance to the path which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had used for a time to approach the Shrine. A new formal garden to the immediate southwest of the Shrine was completed in 1971 (BW14: 87-88; 15: 174-77).<sup>189</sup>

**4. Supplementary achievements.** Several projects which were supplementary to the goals of the Nine Year Plan were also achieved:

**4.1. The purification of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.** For Baha'is, the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí is the most sacred place on Earth – the Baha'i *qiblah*, towards which they turn in prayer.<sup>190</sup> Correspondingly, the area surrounding the shrine is regarded as an area of great sanctity, the integrity and spiritual purity of which must be preserved. From this perspective, the complex has undergone a series of 'purifications', as the presence and remains of Covenant-breaking members of Bahá'u'lláh's family have been removed. At the time of Bahá'u'lláh's passing, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's half-brother, Muhammad-'Alí, and other Covenant-breaking relatives had been in occupation of the mansion of Bahjí and other adjacent buildings. Shoghi Effendi had finally acquired possession of the mansion in 1929 after it had fallen into a state of disrepair and Muhammad-'Alí had left (Shoghi had then set about the considerable task of repairing and refurbishing it). The Covenant-breakers had remained in occupation of some surrounding buildings, however, and it was not until 1957, that Shoghi Effendi gained possession of the last of these, the Hands of the Cause overseeing the demolition of these houses and their replacement by gardens some months after his death (BW13: 248-49; MC 51; RPP 231-34).<sup>191</sup>

One further act of purification remained, however. Muhammad-'Alí's younger brother, Mírzá Díyá'u'lláh (Zia'ullah) had been buried in the inner precincts of Bahá'u'lláh's shrine itself. To the House of Justice's pleasure, Díyá's relatives finally asked for the remains to be moved for reburial elsewhere. Communicating this news to the Baha'i world on 11 November 1965, the House referred to the history of the successive stages whereby Bahjí had been purified of any remaining symbols of the Covenant-breakers' former presence. This 'CLEANSING' of

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189. Taken together the Baha'i lands at Bahjí and on Mount Carmel amounted to almost 550,000 square metres by 1968. Of these, less than half had then been developed into gardens, the House acknowledging that the development of the remainder would take many years and require 'vast financial resources' (BW14: 87; 15: 174; *Statistical* 3).

190. The *qiblah* (Ar.) is the 'point of adoration' to which believers turn in prayer. For Muslims, this is the Ka'ba in Mecca, but for Baha'is it is the tomb of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí. See CEBF, '*Qiblah*', loc. cit.

191. Shoghi Effendi described the expropriation of the final house as marking the 'purification' of the *Haram-i-Aqdas* from the 'trace' of the 'contamination of the Covenant-breakers' (MBW 124). He used the term *Haram-i-Aqdas* (the 'most holy sanctuary' or precincts) to refer to the area immediately surrounding the tomb, and more specifically to the northwestern quadrant of gardens.

the 'INNER SANCTUARY' from 'PAST CONTAMINATION' marked the consummation of the process, and presaged the eventual construction of a 'BEFITTING MAUSOLEUM' as anticipated by Shoghi Effendi (MU#26).

**4.2. The Carmel Obelisk.** In December 1971, the House announced that after many years of difficult negotiations, the obelisk marking the site of the future Baha'i temple on Mount Carmel had been erected. The project had been started by Shoghi Effendi during the early years of the Ten Year Crusade, and the materials (over 20 tons of marble) fabricated in Italy and shipped to Haifa at his instructions. The structure was erected in August 1971, and was almost 11 metres in height. A small formal garden was subsequently developed around its base (BW15: 177; MU#105).

**4.3. Mazra'ih.** In March 1973, the House announced the purchase of the mansion of Mazra'ih after several years of 'PATIENT', 'PERSISTENT', and 'DETERMINED' negotiations. This was the first house in which Bahá'u'lláh had lived after he was able to move out of the walled prison city of Akka, staying there for two years (June 1877-September 1879) before settling in the Bahjí mansion. The Mazra'ih property was only rented, however, and it was not until 1950, after a lapse of over fifty years, that Shoghi Effendi had been able to reacquire control over the property when he secured a lease on the building.<sup>192</sup> Thereafter, the lease was extended until the 1973 purchase. The House noted that this new addition to the Baha'i endowments in the Holy Land included approximately 24,000 square metres of land extended into the plain on the mansion's eastern side which was highly suitable for cultivation as gardens (MU#127; 128.18; Ruhe 87-94).<sup>193</sup>

**4.4. Seat of the Universal House of Justice.** As noted above, in June 1972, the House of Justice announced that it had decided to begin to plan for the construction of a building to serve as its own Seat. This project would be the first major new Baha'i building on Mount Carmel since the completion of the International Archives Building [in 1957] and had been envisaged by Shoghi Effendi as one of a number of buildings along the 'FAR FLUNG ARC' centring on the burial sites of the sister, brother and mother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Thanks were due to Robert McLaughlin for his 'OUTSTANDING SERVICES' in preparation for this 'HISTORIC UNDERTAKING'. The House members prayed that the project would be able to progress without interruption so that it could be completed quickly (MU#115).

**5. Pilgrimage.** During the lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh, many Baha'is undertook the often long and arduous journey to visit him, 'attaining the presence' of a personage who was the centre of their faith and devotion. After his death, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in turn became a focus of devotion,

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192. The house was occupied from 1931 until 1947 by a British Baha'i lady, Mrs. Lilian McNeill, who helped persuade her husband, a retired Brigadier-General, to rent the place. The house was initially in a state of considerable disrepair, but the McNeills restored it and planted a garden (Ruhe 91-93).

193. On 24 September 1980, the Universal House of Justice announced that almost 50,000 square metres of additional land had been acquired so as to provide 'PROTECTION' for the mansion in the face of rapid development in the area (MU#264.2).

but Baha'is now also visited the Haifa-Akka region in order to pray at the shrines of Bahá'u'lláh and later of the Báb as well as to gain an audience with the head of their Faith. Something of the same pattern has continued to the present day, but during the guardianship of Shoghi Effendi pilgrimages to the shrines and holy places of the Baha'i World Centre became organized into the form of small groups of pilgrims who would come for an assigned period of time. As had become the practice under `Abdu'l-Bahá, the pilgrims were normally divided into separate 'Eastern' and 'Western' groups so as to facilitate communication within each group – Shoghi Effendi could speak to the Iranian pilgrims in Persian and to the Western pilgrims in English or French.<sup>194</sup> Several changes were made in these practices following the election of the Universal House of Justice.

One decision that was made almost immediately was to combine the formerly separate Eastern and Western pilgrimage groups into one. This was necessitated by the House's choice of the former Western Pilgrim House as its official office and its use of the former accommodation space. This amalgamation of the groups had been anticipated by Shoghi Effendi. All pilgrims now met as a single group and were accommodated together in the former Eastern Pilgrim House and its adjacent buildings close to the Shrine of the Báb (MU#3).

The House also needed to respond to the growing numbers of Baha'is from around the world who were now able to apply for permission to come on pilgrimage. Thus, at Ridván 1969, the House announced a major change in arrangements for pilgrims. Fulfilling a long-held hope, it now wished to make it much easier for all Baha'is who wanted to make the pilgrimage to the Baha'i World Centre to do so. The new arrangements would begin in October 1969: the size of each pilgrimage group would be quadrupled and the number of groups invited each year would be increased so that nearly six times the present number could come. Shoghi Effendi had described the pilgrims as the 'lifeblood' of the World Centre, and the House anticipated that this great increase in their numbers would 'greatly augment' the spiritual development of the 'Baha'i World Community' as a whole. The pilgrims would be able to pray at the sacred shrines; visit the places 'hallowed by the footsteps, sufferings and triumphs of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá'; and meditate in the 'tranquillity of these sacred precincts', 'beautified with so much loving care' by Shoghi Effendi (MU#68.9-10).

Although clearly separate from the regular pattern of pilgrimage, the period covered by this book also saw four large-scale visitations of Baha'is to the Baha'i World Centre. Three of these were the successive international conventions called to elect the Universal House of Justice, the 288 national assembly members who attended the first (in 1963) constituting 'the greatest mass pilgrimage' that had ever been made to the World Centre up to that date (BW14: 427).<sup>195</sup> This figure was massively surpassed in August 1968, when over 1,800 Baha'is came to Haifa to join in the commemoration of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in Akka a hundred years before (BW15: 85).

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194. Possible cultural clashes were also minimized: Middle Eastern Baha'is normally displayed extreme reverence towards Shoghi Effendi and in their visits to the shrines, whilst Westerners tended to be far more informal in their interactions and devotions.

195. At the Third Convention, in 1973, 412 delegates attended (BW16: 392).





## 19. Work on the Baha'i Texts

The major goals of the Nine Year Plan included two relating to Baha'i texts: (i) the publication of a 'synopsis and codification' of Bahá'u'lláh's book of laws, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, and (ii) 'continued collation and classification of the Baha'i Sacred Scriptures' and of the writings of Shoghi Effendi (MU#14.5).

**1. The synopsis and codification of the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*.** Bahá'u'lláh's book of laws, the *Kitáb-i Aqdas* (the Most Holy Book) was completed in about 1873. Shoghi Effendi described it as perhaps 'the most signal act' of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry, and as the 'Mother Book' of the Baha'i dispensation and the 'Charter' for Bahá'u'lláh's 'future world civilization' – his 'New World Order' (GPB 213, 214), and in his own book, *God Passes By*, provided a short summary of its contents (1944) (GPB 213-16). Despite the *Aqdas*'s importance, Shoghi Effendi did not translate it into English, nor did he circulate it outside the Middle East (IND 210; see below). He did, however, instruct the Egyptian Baha'is to prepare a codification of the Baha'i laws relating to 'personal status' (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and the like) as a legal document to be submitted to the Egyptian government (BW14: 84), and set himself the goal of producing a codification of the 'laws and ordinances' of the *Aqdas* as part of the Ten Year Crusade (MBW 42), later noting that a synopsis of the book was 'an essential prelude to the eventual translation and publication of its entire text' (MBW 78). Preparation of the synopsis had apparently begun by April 1955, but it remained uncompleted by the time of Shoghi Effendi's death, and the Hands of the Cause handed on his handwritten notes to the House of Justice after its election (BW13: 252; 14: 84). These consisted of a synopsis and codification in English, together with supplementary notes in Persian (SCA 7).

Although 'considerable progress' had been made on the synopsis by Shoghi Effendi (MU#128.5), completion of the work on the *Aqdas* codification during the Nine Year Plan proceeded slowly. At Ridván 1967, the House merely reported that work on it was continuing (MU#42.8), and a 1968 report on the progress of Plan goals noted that '(p)reliminary studies' had been completed, but that studies of 'supplementary documents' to the *Aqdas* had yet to be made. In addition to the 'Annex' to the book (the 'Questions and Answers'),<sup>196</sup> which had already been included in Shoghi Effendi's draft, these comprised: (i) tablets of Bahá'u'lláh which elaborated and elucidated some of the laws; (ii) '(s)ubsidiary ordinances' in other tablets which were designed to supplement the provisions of the *Aqdas*; and (iii) letters and writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi which interpreted *Aqdas* laws.<sup>197</sup> There was also the Egyptian codification of the laws of personal status referred to above, as well as several

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196. The 'Questions and Answers' comprise the responses to a number of questions posed to Bahá'u'lláh regarding the details of his laws by Mullá Zaynu'l-Ábidín ('Zayn'ul-Muqarrabín'), an eminent Baha'i who was qualified as an Islamic jurist (see Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'is*, pp. 274-76; CEBF, 'Zayn'ul-Muqarrabín', loc. cit.).

197. Similarly, in a letter of 6 December 1965, the House listed the necessary tests that might need to be included with the published text as follows: (1) the 'Annex' to the *Aqdas*, the 'Questions and Answers', the series of replies by Bahá'u'lláh to questions about the book posed by Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín; (2) other writings of Bahá'u'lláh which elaborated and elucidated the *Aqdas* laws or which established 'subsidiary ordinances' to supplement those of the *Aqdas*; and (3) those letters and writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi which interpreted the *Aqdas* laws. The House also indicated that it might be necessary to add explanations and footnotes to elucidate the book's provisions (MU#27.4b).

[Persian language] compilations by Baha'i scholars which attempted to classify the laws and collate writings connected with those laws (BW14: 84).

In January 1973, the House was finally able to announce that the synopsis and codification of the book had been completed. It would be published at Ridván, synchronizing with centenary celebration of the revelation of the *Aqdas* by Bahá'u'lláh. The publication of this book would surely constitute 'ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT STEP' in the Path leading the Baha'i community to 'FULL MATURITY' and the establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh (MU#125). The *Synopsis and Codification* itself is a 19-page document (SCA 35-53), to which have been appended 9 pages of notes, and which is prefaced by a compilation of the passages of the *Aqdas* already translated and published by Shoghi Effendi in various works (SCA 11-30). As the House noted, the work had been completed 'according to the pattern' set by Shoghi Effendi in his notes, and constituted 'an essential prelude' to the publication of the full text. The translation of the *Aqdas* should be made 'by a competent body of experts', and be 'copiously annotated with detailed explanations'— including reference to other relevant writings of Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, as well as elucidations of some passages in the book and explanations of religious, cultural and historical contexts (SCA 6-7).<sup>198</sup>

**2. Questions about the delay in translation of the *Aqdas*.** The fact that the *Aqdas* was obviously a central Baha'i text but had not yet been officially translated into English by the Baha'is mystified some Baha'is outside the Middle East, perhaps particularly after a literalistic non-Baha'i translation was published in 1961.<sup>199</sup> Having received a number of enquiries about this matter, the House issued a general statement on the subject on 6 December 1965. First, they cited a 1941 letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Indian Baha'is which stated that the reasons the *Aqdas* had not yet been circulated were that: (1) the Faith was neither yet ready nor sufficiently mature to put all the legal provisions of the book into effect, and (2) the book needed to be supplemented by detailed explanations and translated by a competent body of experts (IND 210). Commenting on this letter, the House observed that Shoghi Effendi had also stated that many of the *Aqdas* laws (fasting, obligatory prayer, the consent of parents before marriage, the avoidance of alcoholic drinks, monogamy) were already universally applicable to the Baha'is and should be strictly observed, whilst others would only apply in the future when the state of society had changed. It also listed a number of supplementary texts which might have to be included with the *Aqdas* when it was published, all of which required careful research and translation' (MU#27). The House also noted that not only was a synopsis of the book in the process of preparation, but that a significant proportion of it had already been translated into English (a list of these was provided) (MU#27.3).

The House provided further commentary in its introduction to the *Synopsis and Codification*,

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198. The official Baha'i translation of the *Aqdas* into English was published in 1992.

199. Mírzá Husayn `Alí Bahá'u'lláh, *Al-Kitáb al-Aqdas, or the Most Holy Book*. [Mírzá Husayn `Alí Bahá'u'lláh, *Al-Kitáb al-Aqdas* ...]. Trans. and ed. Earl E. Elder and William M. Miller. London: Luzac, Royal Asiatic Society, 1961. Miller, a long-time Presbyterian missionary in Iran, was later the author of an extremely hostile account of the Baha'i Faith – *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings*. South Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1974.

describing the ‘divinely-purposed delay’ in the revelation of Baha’i law, and the subsequent ‘gradual implementation’ of its provisions as examples of the Baha’i ‘principle of progressive revelation’ which applied within the ministry of each prophet. Thus, Bahá’u’lláh himself had likened each successive religion to the rising of the Sun, its rays growing in intensity from dawn till noon so that humanity was able to gradually adapt to its heat. In this manner, it had been twenty years after the initial intimation which Bahá’u’lláh had received of his mission before he revealed the *Aqdas*, and even then he had not distributed it immediately. Then, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had ‘revealed interpretations’ which were ‘of fundamental importance in understanding the laws of the *Aqdas*’. He had also ‘delineated the features of the Administrative Order’, ‘the laws and principles of which Bahá’u’lláh had already formulated’. Again, Shoghi Effendi had only started ‘to apply and enforce’ those laws of the *Aqdas* which he regarded as ‘timely and practicable to apply’ and ‘which were not in direct conflict with civil law’. Both ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi had also directed most of their attention to the spread of the Faith rather than the application of Baha’i law (SCA 5-6).

No doubt in keeping with this concept of progressive revelation, the House also announced that the publication of the *Synopsis and Codification* did not increase the number of laws that were binding on the Baha’is. It would inform the Baha’is when additional laws became binding, and provide whatever ‘guidance and supplementary legislation’ as would be necessary for their application. The Baha’is were reminded that Shoghi Effendi had stated that certain laws were in any case formulated for application in a future society, and not in the ‘chaotic conditions’ that prevailed today (SCA 7). The House made two additional points: (i) although Bahá’u’lláh’s writings on his laws and ordinances were voluminous, he had deliberately left gaps that were to be filled later by the House, and (ii) certain passages in the *Aqdas* referred to laws and practices of ‘previous dispensations’, and as such could be easily ‘misconstrued’ by anyone who was not ‘thoroughly informed’ of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings and ‘fundamental purposes’. Thus, ‘inadequate translations’ could be ‘seriously misleading’ (SCA 4,6).

**3. The collation and classification of the Baha’i writings.** One of the goals of the Nine Year Plan was the ‘continued collation and classification’ of the Baha’i sacred writings, together with those of Shoghi Effendi. As the House itself emphasized, this was important because the writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were not just sacred Baha’i scripture but were also sources for its own decisions on the ‘application of Baha’i laws’ and ‘the elucidation and extension of basic administrative principles’. Their study also informed the House in its ‘all-important function’ of legislating on matters not explicitly recorded in the Baha’i writings. In all these matters, the ‘illuminating interpretations and directions’ of Shoghi Effendi (not themselves regarded as scripture) were also of crucial importance (MU#54.2).

Writing at Ridván 1973, the House reported that the collation and classification of Baha’i scripture and of the writings of Shoghi Effendi had been ‘carried forward in ever increasing volume’ at the Baha’i World Centre (MU#128.4). Elsewhere, the progress towards this goal was described as ‘remarkable’ (BW15: 171). By 1973, a total of 10,900 original documents (manuscript books, letters, etc.) had been collected in Haifa, together with authenticated copies of another 18,600 documents – a combined total of 29,500 items. Of these, almost half (14,430) were from Shoghi Effendi, a third (10,690) from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and the remainder (4,380) from Bahá’u’lláh (BW15:171).

**Table: Baha'i texts collected in Haifa by 1973.**

Source	Originals	Copies	Totals
Bahá'u'lláh	2,600	1,780	4,380
`Abdu'l-Bahá	6,000	4,690	10,690
Shoghi Effendi	2,300	12,130	14,430
Totals	10,900	18,600	29,500

Source: Calculated from BW 15: 171.

All of these documents had been studied and important passages excerpted and classified under 400 general subject headings (MU#128.4). There had already been considerable work on the classification and collation of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá during the guardianship of Shoghi Effendi, both by Shoghi himself and by Baha'is in Iran who had responded to his call for help. A special committee of the Iranian national assembly continued to work 'assiduously' on this task as part of the activities of the Nine Year Plan (BW 14: 85; MU#54.3).

**4. The letters of Shoghi Effendi.** Writing to national assemblies in December 1967, the House of Justice alerted the Baha'is that one major weakness in the present collection and collation of Baha'i texts concerned Shoghi Effendi's writings. Whilst much work had already been done on the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá, no such similar work had yet been done on the writings of the Guardian apart from on those of his letters which had already been published. At best, there was only partial collation. There were also apparently many extant letters which were not yet included in the House's collection of Shoghi Effendi's unpublished letters. Such a lack was significant because newly discovered letters might well add additional nuances to the understanding of some Baha'i principle or the application of a law (MU#54.3).

The national assemblies were therefore instructed to carefully check through their own archives and correspondence files to find any letters by Shoghi Effendi or letters written on his behalf by one of his secretaries which had not yet been forwarded to the Baha'i World Centre – a checklist of letters already in the House's possession was included for reference. The assemblies should also check if any of their committees had such letters in their files as well as appealing to the Baha'is under their jurisdiction to send any such letters which they not already sent to Haifa (MU#54.4-5).

In this later regard, individuals had an inherent right to keep any letters which they had received and in turn pass them on to their families, but the House asked that in those cases where individuals wished to retain the original, photostatic copies be forwarded to Haifa either directly or via the appropriate national assembly. Where necessary the assembly should undertake the photocopying on the individual's behalf or even make careful typed or handwritten copies where photocopying facilities were not available. The House would respect individual's requests to preserve the confidentiality of letters dealing with personal subjects (MU#54.5).

This success of this appeal can be judged by the predominance of Shoghi Effendi's letters in the collection of documents amassed by 1973 (above). As to the collation of Shoghi Effendi's writings, a department of the House of Justice itself was permanently involved in making extracts from his writings and indexing important passages. The Hands of the Cause in Haifa had also rendered 'invaluable help' in this regard. The materials studied included extracts from his letters published in the American periodical *Bahá'í News*, compilations made by several assemblies and individuals, and the copies which Shoghi kept of all outgoing cables. Also studied were the letters and cables which Shoghi Effendi had received, most of which he had preserved. These comprised some 26,000 items – 20,000 from the West and 6,000 from Iran and the East. These had also been sorted into chronological order, classified according to subject matter, and collated with Shoghi's replies. By examining the reports and questions in the incoming mail, it was possible to come to a much greater understanding of the replies. The fact that Shoghi had made notations in pencil on the margins of the letters from the East instructing his secretary how to answer the letters was also of great importance, and these marginal notes had been typed up and added to the collection of extracts from his writings (BW14: 85-86; 15: 171).

The value of this work on the Baha'i texts was enormous. For the House itself, it provided a growing corpus of material to which it could refer in the process of considering 'the manifold problems' with which it was faced (BW 14: 85). The assemblage of texts had also enabled the House to prepare and distribute fifteen compilations on various topics of interest to the Baha'is (by 1973), and these had been shared with either all national assemblies, or in some cases with selected assemblies (BW 15: 171).<sup>200</sup> It is also noticeable that the House's letters are often peppered with quotations from the Baha'i writings, increasingly including previously unfamiliar passages translated into English from Persian.

**5. Major publications of the House of Justice.** During the Nine Year Plan, the House published several other important works in addition to the *Aqdas* synopsis described above.

**5.1. The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh.** One 'compilation' of particular importance made by the House was of already published translations of Bahá'u'lláh's messages to the kings and rulers of his day. These were published together for the first time in the book, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* (1967; see also BW14: 1-29), which was prepared as part of the proclamation campaign that began in that year. Editions were prepared in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish (MU#42.16).

**5.2. Bahá'í Holy Places at the World Centre.** A second significant work was a compilation of passages related to Baha'i pilgrimage and the various important Baha'i sites in the Haifa-Akka area (*Bahá'í Holy Places at the World Centre*, 1968).

**5.3. Bahá'í World.** The House also continued publication of the *Bahá'í World* series which

200. These included compilations on: 'teaching the masses' (May and October 1967, MU#43; 52); the work of the Auxiliary Board members (March 1969, MU#72.5); Baha'i funds (January 1970, MU#76); local spiritual assemblies (August 1970, MU#84); 'the spiritual character of Baha'i elections' (November 1971, MU#103); 'music and singing' (March 1972, MU#107); Summer schools (April 1972, MU#109); the national spiritual assembly (June 1972, MU#114); Baha'i national newsletters (August 1972, MU#120); and the pattern of Baha'i life (November 1972, MU#122).

had been started under Shoghi Effendi's direction during the 1920s. Thus, volume 13, covering the nine year period, 1954-63 (almost the whole of the Ten Year Crusade) was prepared under the House's supervision and published in 1970. The volume was unusually lengthy and included a long essay on Shoghi Effendi by his widow, Rúhiyyih Rabbání (pp.58-205), effectively the first detailed account of the Guardian's life.

## 20. External Relations

**1. External affairs.** Any religious movement must necessarily exist in some sort of relationship with the wider world. Although the actual range of relationships which may develop are very varied, and are partly defined by agencies in the wider world, all religious movements are forced to make decisions about such questions as the attitudes they adopt towards individuals who are not believers, as well as towards other organizations and towards the state. Again, religions may be forced to decide how to respond to persecution by outsiders. These various decisions may be explicitly articulated by the religion's leadership or may develop in more implicit form as a result of the actions and beliefs of the adherents as a whole.

In the case of the Baha'i Faith, policies towards the wider world have been explicitly articulated by the successive leaders of the Faith, and for the most part go back to the religion's founder. In this regard, Bahá'u'lláh's stance towards the wider world was very clear: the Baha'is should pursue a policy of wise and peaceful teaching of their religion to others; all forms of militant action in religion (*jihád*) – including defensive struggle – were strictly prohibited; both religious and secular leaders in Iran were to be morally condemned for their persecution of the Babis and of the Baha'is, but no attempted action was to be taken against them; endeavour should be made to gain toleration from the state authorities; Baha'is were to be obedient to established governments; the Baha'i message was universal in its scope and Baha'i missionary endeavour should eventually be global in its reach; and traditional Shi'ite notions of the ritual impurity of unbelievers were rejected and kindness towards the followers of all religions advocated.<sup>201</sup> One additional element in the Baha'i stance towards the wider world emerged later under Shoghi Effendi: strict non-involvement in political action, especially when it involved party-politics.<sup>202</sup>

The Nine Year Plan included two goals relating to what we might term the Baha'i Faith's 'external affairs': (i) continued efforts to emancipate the Faith 'from the fetters of religious orthodoxy' and to gain recognition for it as an independent religion; and (ii) development of the relationship between the Baha'i International Community and the United Nations.

**2. Recognition and freedom** At the present time, Baha'i communities around the world range widely in terms of their degree of freedom to conduct their activities. At one end of the continuum are those countries in which Baha'is are free to teach their religion to others; form spiritual assemblies; and gain legal recognition (so that spiritual assemblies can gain corporate status and hold property, etc.). At the other extreme are those countries (at the moment most notably Iran) in which the Baha'is are liable to suffer severe persecution, with Baha'i activity (or even membership) being illegal, and individual Baha'is being subject to possible arrest and even execution on the basis of their religious beliefs, and in which extra-judicial killings of Baha'is may go unpunished. In between these extremes are (i) those

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201. See CEBF, 'Bahá'í Faith and other religions'; 'government, Bahá'í attitude towards'; 'interfaith dialogue'; 'holy war'; 'tolerance', loc. cit.

202. See CEBF, 'politics', loc. cit.



countries in which Baha'i activities are allowed but legal recognition is not possible; and (ii) those countries in which Baha'i activities are subject to some degree of restriction (e.g. individual Baha'is are free to practice their religion and small-scale Baha'i meetings can be held, but no public teaching of the Faith is permitted). The Baha'is' objective in every country is to gain both as much freedom for their activities as possible, to achieve official recognition of the Faith as an independent religion, and to obtain legal status.

During the 1963-73 decade, considerable gains were made in achieving official recognition and legal status in many countries (see Chapter 7.C), and the worldwide proclamation campaign led to some notable achievements in raising the public profile of the Faith, but there were also a number of countries where the Baha'is encountered difficulties. Five countries occasioned particular concern. Four of these were referred to in the House's Ridván letter of 1966: (i) Iran, where the Baha'is were denied their 'elementary rights' and the Faith was still 'largely proscribed'; (ii) Iraq, where the national Baha'i centre and one of the local centres had been seized, and Baha'i activities had been severely restricted; (iii) Egypt, where Baha'i properties remained confiscated [since 1960], and a number of Baha'is had been recently arrested and were now awaiting trial; and (iv) Indonesia, where new oppression had broken out, the national Baha'i centre having been seized and organized Baha'is activities forbidden (MU#34.9). The fifth country of concern was Morocco, where a number of Baha'is had been arrested in 1962, but subsequently released. As the House noted, the Baha'is in various other countries were also subject to 'restrictions and surveillance' (MU#34.9).<sup>203</sup> In most of the Communist world Baha'i activity was completely impossible.

Short summaries of the situations in these countries will be provided in the relevant chapters on regional developments. The difficulties experienced by the Baha'is in some countries had an impact on the Nine Year Plan, of course. Thus at Ridván 1971, the House referred to the restrictive measures directed against the Faith in various (unnamed) countries, as varying in severity from 'outright oppression' to the 'imposition of disabilities', and noted that these made the completion of Plan goals in these countries almost impossible (MU#96.8).<sup>204</sup>

In some countries, the Baha'is experienced only temporary difficulties, but in others they faced well-entrenched opposition. In this context, the anonymous author of the *Bahá'í World* report for 1968-73, summarizing the achievements of the Nine Year Plan, stated that the Baha'i writings clearly indicated that the emancipation of the Faith 'from the fetters of religious orthodoxy' was an objective that would have to be pursued 'over a prolonged period', culminating in the future 'universal recognition of the Faith and the emergence of its World Order' (BW15: 172).

**3. Relations with the United Nations.** After the United Nations came into being in 1945, as

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203. In all cases, it reported, the Baha'is were 'steadfast and confident', and looked forward to their future emancipation and the 'eventual triumph' of the Cause (MU#34.9).

204. Although the countries referred to are not named, the relevant geographical regions are (the Middle East, Northwest Africa, "the fringes" of East Africa, "certain areas" of Southeast Asia), and it is therefore possible to suggest which countries had probably attracted the House's concern: Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, the Sudan, Brunei, Indonesia, Laos – all countries in which Baha'i expansion plans met with difficulties at this time.

an evidently stronger version of the old League of Nations, Shoghi Effendi hailed its formation as a further step in the process that would eventually lead to the global political order of the Lesser Peace (CF 33). He also valued Baha'i involvement with the work of the new body, and welcomed the accreditation which it accorded to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada in 1947, and more particularly UN recognition in 1948 of the 'Baha'i International Community' as an international non-governmental organization representing all the existing Baha'i national assemblies, seeing this as heralding 'world recognition for a universal proclamation' of the Faith (CF 48).<sup>205</sup> The Baha'i International Community was initially only given observer status, however, and functioned as an agency under the American national assembly

Subsequent Baha'i involvement with the United Nations included representation as observers at various conferences of the UN and related bodies; the preparation of privately circulated Baha'i position papers on topics such as human rights, UN charter revision and genocide; and the use of the UN as a means of trying to influence world opinion in defence of the Baha'is under attack in Iran (1955-56) and Morocco (1962) (BW15: 358-64).

One of the tasks which the House of Justice set itself during the Nine Year Plan was the development of the relationship between the Baha'i International Community (today often known as the BIC) and the United Nations. As an initial step towards this goal, the BIC established its own offices in New York in 1965. Then, in 1967, the House decided that the time had come to apply for the BIC to be raised from observer to consultative status as a non-governmental organization. In this connection, the House also took over the function of representing the BIC from the American assembly and for the first time appointed a full-time observer, Dr. Victor de Araujo (BW15: 364-5).<sup>206</sup> News of this 'SIGNIFICANT STEP' was communicated to the national assemblies worldwide in October 1967 (MU#49). Consultative status (to ECOSOC, the UN's Economic and Social Council) was finally achieved in May 1970, thereby enabling the BIC to participate in all sessions of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies as well attending all conferences and seminars organized under its aegis (BW15: 366). As the House noted when it 'JOYFULLY' announced news of this achievement, the new status accorded to the BIC gave the Faith both greater prestige, influence and recognition. Not only was the Nine Year Plan goal thereby attained, but Shoghi Effendi's 'LONG CHERISHED HOPE' was fulfilled, and the twenty years of 'PERSISTENT EFFORTS' by the Baha'is at the UN finally rewarded (MU#78).<sup>207</sup> Further institutional developments were the appointment of a BIC representative to attend UN-related meetings in Geneva (Mrs. Janet Lindstrom, August 1971); a BIC representative for Africa (Dr. 'Aziz Navidi, 1971); and an

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205. See CEBF, 'Bahá'í International Community (BIC)', loc. cit.

206. Araujo replaced Mrs. Mildred Mottahedeh, who had served as part-time Baha'i observer at the UN for almost twenty years (BW15: 364). BIC's consultative status (Category II) was that given to "organizations which have a special competence in, and are concerned with, only a few of the fields of activity covered by the Council [i.e. ECOSOC], and which are known internationally within the fields for which they have or seek consultative status" (BW 15: 366).

207. The House's announcement of the achievement of consultative status was dated 18 February 1970, and as such predates the formal decision of ECOSOC (27 May). It came shortly after the unanimously favourable decision taken by ECOSOC's Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (12 February), however, and it must therefore be assumed that final approval of the Committee's decision was almost a foregone conclusion (BW15: 366; MU#78).

Executive Assistant to the New York representative (July 1972). To cope with the increasing volume of work an alternate for the Geneva representative was also appointed (February 1973 – the New York representative already had one) and New York's BIC office moved into a larger office space (BW 15: 369).

**4. Baha'i activities linked to the UN.** The United Nations' own concerns provided the Baha'is with opportunities to disseminate their views on various matters. The BIC itself first participated in a UN-related session in an official capacity in late Summer 1970, when it participated in the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. It subsequently attended further meetings of the Sub-Commission in addition to the annual sessions of the Economic and Social Council; the Commission on Human Rights; and the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, as well as the biennial meetings of the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women. It was also invited to send representatives to special seminars for UN member-states for the International Year for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1971) and the UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), and to contribute its first position statement (on Development and Decolonization) in 1972. Contact with the UN Office of Public Information (OPI), begun in 1948 was also continued, the BIC in this instance working together with individual national Baha'i communities – as “member-affiliates”, as in two OPI-sponsored Regional Conferences of Non-Governmental Organizations in Addis Ababa (February 1970) and Buenos Aires (August 1972), in both of which large and multi-national Baha'i delegations were a significant presence. A further indication of the Baha'i “presence” at the UN was the election of the Baha'i representative on to the Executive Committee of Non-Governmental Organization with OPI and his two stints of service as an officer of the Committee (BW 15: 366-73).

Baha'is at a local and national level also increased their involvement with UN-related activities during this period, the BIC acting as a central office of information to provide national spiritual assemblies with suggestions and materials for the observance of the annual United Nations and Human Rights Days, as well as the various thematic “International Years” for Human Rights (1968), Education (1970), and Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1971). Again, many national assemblies became informally accredited with the various overseas branches of the OPI (United Nations Information Centres) (BW 15: 372-73).

BIC involvement with the work of the UN and the greater public profile which this gave the Faith also gave the Baha'is easier access to national missions as well as UN officials, contacts which proved to be of use both in relationship to the global proclamation campaign and the sensitive matter of trying to secure support for action to curtail or prevent instances of anti-Baha'i discrimination (BW 15: 372-73).

## 21. The Baha'i Funds

**1. The need for funding.** The activities of the Baha'i Faith are funded by the voluntary contributions of the Baha'is, whether to the various local, national and international funds or via the payment of *Huqúqu'lláh* ('the Right of God') (see below). Financial contributions from non-Baha'is for the direct work of the Faith are not accepted.<sup>208</sup>

Given the voluntary nature of Baha'i contributions, the Universal House of Justice made a number of general appeals to the Baha'is, reminding them of the importance of supporting the Baha'i funds and advising them as to the particular financial needs of the time. Thus, in its very first letter to national Baha'i conventions in May 1963, the House emphasized the importance of adequate funding for the work of the Faith – all the expansion and development of the Faith envisaged in the Nine Year Plan depended upon it. Every Baha'i should be conscious of "this vital and pressing matter", and each national assembly should pay particular attention to "the principle of universal participation", whereby each Baha'i could make some offering to the fund – whether small or large – and thus identify himself with the work of the Cause throughout the world. (MU#2.11).

Again, in November 1963, the House called upon each national assembly to seek to develop its own national fund. It was understood that many Baha'i communities still did not have sufficient resources to fully sustain their administrative and teaching work, but all should seek to devise a program and budget which would enable them to become self-sustaining as rapidly as possible. In order to do this, the Baha'is needed to gain an appreciation of the bounties which came from 'regular and systematic' contributions to their national fund. The amount that was contributed was less important than the universality of participation – as emphasized by a letter of Shoghi Effendi to a relatively poor African national assembly in 1957. The House members prayed that God's bounties would be granted to the growing Administrative Order so that it would be able to take his healing message to all the world's peoples (MU#9).

Similarly, in December 1963, the House addressed the Baha'is worldwide about the individual's responsibility to support the Baha'i funds (MU#13). With the rapid approach of the Nine Year Plan, it wanted all Baha'is to be aware of the financial needs of the Faith at all levels: local, national, continental, and international. As the Faith continued to expand and diversify, its financial needs increased, and it became ever more necessary for the individual Baha'i to consider how much he or she could contribute. This was a spiritual responsibility, in which what was important was the degree of sacrifice on the part of the giver, the love with which the gift was made, and unity of the Baha'is in the service of giving. It was not the amount contributed as such which was important: both rich and poor could give to equal spiritual effect – and receive the 'spiritual confirmations' which giving would entail (MU#13.1-13.2). In the midst of a civilization that was 'torn by strifes and enfeebled by materialism', the Baha'is were building a new world. They now faced 'opportunities and responsibilities of vast magnitude and great urgency'. Each Baha'i should resolve not to allow himself to be 'seduced' by the 'ephemeral allurements' of the environing society, nor to be drawn into 'its feuds and short-lived enthusiasms'. Rather, he or she should transfer all

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208. See CEBF, 'funds', loc. cit.

that they could from the ‘old world’ of the wider society to that new world which they were building and which constituted the ‘vision’ of their longing (MU#13.7).

As further encouragement, in January 1970, the House provided the Baha’is worldwide with a compilation of extracts from Shoghi Effendi’s letters on the Baha’i funds – in order ‘to assist the friends everywhere in the proper appreciation of the importance and meaning of contributing’ to the funds, as well as to remind them of the ‘underlying principles’ that should govern ‘the offering and administration of these funds’. National assemblies were encouraged to use the compilation as they thought best, whether in conferences, Summer schools, deepening classes, or newsletters and the like (MU#76).<sup>209</sup>

**2. The International Fund.** Shoghi Effendi had established a central fund in Haifa to support the work of the Baha’i World Centre and where necessary to subsidize those national assemblies which had little money of their own – such as many of those in the ‘Third World’. As the House noted in May 1963, this International Fund then had particular importance because of the need to build up “sufficient reserves” so as to be able to launch the Nine Year Plan in 1964 (MU#2.11).

The House also emphasized the importance of the International Fund in a general letter on Baha’i funds in December 1963. The importance of this central fund were particularly great at the present time because the rapid expansion of the Faith was taking place in areas in which the Baha’is were extremely poor. In such circumstances, no matter how much the local Baha’is sacrificed, they would never be able to produce sufficient funds to support Baha’i activities, and the House therefore used the International Fund to help support activities in these relatively impoverished areas. The monies available were not adequate, however, and several times in the past few months, requests for assistance had had to be refused. Yet, these were the very areas in which teaching was most successful, with a ten- or perhaps hundredfold greater result than in other parts of the world in terms of new Baha’is for a given amount of money expended on Baha’i activities. The International Fund was also used by the House to help newly established national assemblies start their work; to contribute to major international undertakings such as the projected oceanic conferences; and to develop and beautify the lands surrounding the Baha’i shrines in the Haifa and Bahjí (MU#13.4-13.5).

The House’s concern with support for the International Fund grew as it turned increasingly to the task of accomplishing the various Nine Year Plan goals that were to be centrally funded. Thus, in its Ridván message of 1966, it made a further general appeal for support of the Baha’i funds, writing that ‘The onward march of the Faith’ was dependent upon ‘a very great increase in contributions to the various funds’, but noting that there was now a particular need for more money so as to meet the increasingly heavy expenditures entailed by various forthcoming projects. The most expensive of these were likely to be the development and beautification of the Baha’i shrines and the gardens on Mount Carmel and the building of two new Baha’i temples (later reduced to one), but the called-for intensification of ‘the worldwide process of teaching and consolidation’, further pioneering needs, and the development of international travel teaching would all require financial support. The flow of funds needed to be ‘uninterrupted’. The Baha’is should remember that only those who were openly declared

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209. A revised version of the compilation is in ICC 529-50.

members of the Faith were ‘privileged’ to contribute financially to the building of a new world order. Because this group was small, much more was required of them – their responsibilities in this matter being commensurate with ‘the bounty’ they received by being ‘the bearers of the Name of God in this day’ (MU#34.14).

A further appeal for funds was made in March 1967, when the House alerted the national assemblies to the pressing needs of the International Fund. The development of various Baha’i World Centre goals (beatification of the Baha’i lands in Haifa-Bahjí; the development of the auxiliary institutions of the House; work on the Baha’i texts) had so far been delayed so that Baha’i resources could be concentrated on the teaching work, but it was not possible to delay these projects any longer. Again, the House needed to pay for the forthcoming international conferences and the Second International Convention, and to give ‘vital’ financial assistance to the work of the Hands of the Cause and the national assemblies (MU#40.5). The ‘minimum budget requirements’ of the International Fund had already nearly doubled since the time of the House’s establishment in 1963, and an even greater flow of funds would be needed to support the additional tasks which now had to be attended to. Every national assembly should therefore consider how much it could allocate to the International Fund in its budget for the forthcoming year – in some cases, the assemblies might decide to double, triple, or even further increase their contributions. Each assembly should notify the House of its decision by 21 April. This was a ‘vitally important matter’, and the House members would pray that the Baha’is worldwide would respond ‘wholeheartedly’ to this call (MU#40.6-8).

Again, in their Ridván message for 1967, the House called the Baha’is to note the ‘pressing and ever-growing needs’ of the Baha’i fund. There were ‘great projects’ which were already underway or would soon be started which required ‘very large amounts of money’ for their realization.<sup>210</sup> Sustained and ‘sacrificial’ contributions were needed from the Baha’is – ideally by means of ‘universal participation in giving’, whereby every Baha’i contributed something according to his or her personal circumstances. The national and local assemblies were urged to pursue this goal with ‘vigor and imagination’, and the Baha’is were reminded that the fact that only they could contribute to the fund was both their honour and their challenge (MU#42.14).

**3. Increasing inflation and the budgetary crisis of 1970.** The increasing costs which had to be borne by the International Fund led to a brief budgetary crisis in 1970. One factor in this crisis was undoubtedly the rising levels of inflation in the world economy which both increased the costs of many items and for some people presumably lowered the amount of monies they might have available for contributing to the Baha’i funds.<sup>211</sup>

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210. The projects included the building of the Panama temple; the physical development of the Baha’i World Centre; support for teaching programs in many parts of the world; and the development of new national assemblies (MU#42.14).

211. One estimate for inflation in the seven leading “advanced capitalist countries” (i.e. the USA, Canada, Japan, West Germany, France, Italy and the UK) gives an average rise in consumer prices of 3 percent per annum in 1965 rising to 7.8 percent by 1973 (Armstrong et al. 264). In 1960-63, US consumer prices had been increasing on average by 1.3 percent per annum, but by 1970 they were increasing by 5.9 percent (Wee 80). Inflation in these nations would in turn have an effect on the world economy as a whole.

**3.1. Inflation and property acquisition.** The House of Justice was conscious of the impact of inflation from the beginning of the Nine Year Plan onwards and counselled the Baha'is accordingly. This was most obvious in relation to of the numerous property goals which the House had set the Baha'i world as part of the Plan – the acquisition of national Baha'i centres (*Haziratu'l-Quds*), sites for future Baha'i temples, 'national endowments', and teaching institutes. Necessarily, property acquisitions were particularly subject to the impact of inflation. Thus, in its May 1964 guideline notes on aspects of the Plan, the House reminded the national assemblies that property prices were soaring virtually everywhere, and called on the responsible national assemblies to therefore purchase appropriate properties as soon as the funds became available (MU#16.6).

Again, at Ridván 1965, the House urged the Baha'is to complete their property goals quickly. Hinting at the impact of future inflation, it noted that the speedy completion of these projects would not only later save major expenses, but would endow the Faith with properties that would become increasingly valuable. An additional advantage to early completion of these goals would be that this would leave the Baha'is free to concentrate their energies and resources on other goals in the later stages of the Nine Year Plan (Presumably this meant teaching the Faith and financing the World Centre goals). These 'basic possessions' would be 'embryos' of mighty future institutions', but it should be this generation who acquired them – both 'for its own protection' and as 'gifts to prosperity'. Accordingly, those national assemblies which had been given property goals should give high priority to their acquisition (MU#24.13). The House reiterated the urgency of acquiring the remaining property goals in its Ridván letter for 1966: growing inflation was now affecting 'nearly the whole world', and if the Baha'is waited too long, then the financial burden of obtaining what they needed would become excessive (MU#34.8).

The House also noted the impact of inflation on the Baha'i funds in general. Thus, in its 1967 Ridván message, it referred to the worldwide spread of inflation, which 'inevitably and seriously' affected the expenses which had to be borne by the Baha'i fund. Only by larger donations and by the involvement of a larger number of contributors could this problem be solved. Also of note was the impact of inflation on the more affluent: causing personal incomes as well as the costs of living to increase (MU#42.14).

**3.2. The crisis.** The documents presently available do not enable us to describe the exact details and timing of the crisis in the International Fund.<sup>212</sup> Certainly, in December 1970, the

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Contributory factors included heavy American expenditure on the Vietnam War, social welfare payments, wage rises and increasing business credit (Armstrong et al. 263-68; Wee 69-70, 80-81). Inflation is invariably unequal in its impact, enabling some people to become richer whilst making others relatively poorer.

212. It seems probable that there was a period of increasing pressure caused by the rising demands that were being placed on the International Fund long before the crisis point was reached. Thus, at the time of the Palermo Conference in August 1968, the House announced that henceforth the International Deputization Fund, which so far had been used only to support pioneering moves and travel teaching, would now also be available to assist in any national projects which were vital to the completion of the Plan (MU#66.3), that is, to act as an additional source of funding for what had previously been a responsibility of the International Fund, and presumably to make up for a shortfall in that fund.

House reported a 'grave crisis' in the state of the Fund caused by a marked growth in necessary expenditures coinciding with a 'steep reduction in contributions'. It was to be noted that since 1963, the work at the Baha'i World Centre and internationally had expanded so much that the House had had to more than quadruple the International Fund's annual budget in the following years. In the present year (1970-71), some 58 percent of the Fund was being expended outside the World Centre on such projects as assistance to national spiritual assemblies (56 out of the present 94 assemblies were not financially self-supporting and received a large part or even all of their funding from the World Centre); contributions to the work of the Hands of the Cause and Continental Boards; defence of the Faith in lands in which the Baha'is were facing persecution; and the expanded activities of the Baha'i International Community at the United Nations. Meanwhile, recently established national assemblies were busy acquiring the Baha'i centres, temple sites, national endowments and teaching institutes that were essential for the 'proper development' of the Baha'i administration and the deepening of the Baha'is. Again, several hundred thousand dollars were required to complete the work on the Panama temple. The material resources of the Faith were thus 'stretched to their uttermost' (MU#87.1-3).

It was a 'crucial' and 'critical' moment in the progress of the Plan. In many countries, multitudes of people were eager to become Baha'is, whilst in others, great efforts were needed to awaken people in societies which were 'materially advanced but spiritually backward'. The activities of the Baha'is and the expenditure of funds needed to be increased in order to 'seize the opportunities' which presented themselves, but could not be due to the decline in income (MU#87.1-2).

As an emergency response to the present crisis, the House had decided to postpone certain projects at the World Centre – including further development of the gardens at Bahjí, the start of an extension of the terraces below the Shrine of the Báb, and the development of additional office facilities. Other work could not wait, however, notably improvements in the International Archives Building to protect valuable original Baha'i scriptures and relics from the high humidity and increasingly polluted atmosphere in Haifa. Reluctantly then, the House was compelled to reduce its next two quarterly remittances to those national assemblies it was helping financially by 10 percent, and the assemblies involved should therefore reduce their own budgets to take account of this. Such cuts and restrictions in Baha'i activities were not the real answer, however. They could only be a temporary measure at a time when humanity as a whole stood 'in such dire need' of the Baha'i message. Rather, what was needed was 'universal participation' of every Baha'i in the work of the Cause (MU#87.4-5).

In this context, the House noted that globally poor Baha'is 'vastly' outnumbered wealthy ones, and that this majority would grow rapidly as mass teaching [which was largely concentrated in poorer areas] continued to spread. Necessarily, Baha'is from richer communities would continue to be the main supporters of the International Fund for the immediate future, and would thereby also continue to assist mass teaching work by poorer communities. This said, it became increasingly urgent for the Baha'is in the mass teaching areas 'to finance their own activities to an ever greater degree'. Ultimately, the 'backbone' of the Fund had to be regular contributions by every Baha'i. Baha'is who were poor would only be able to make small contributions, but a large number of such small amounts combined to form 'a mighty river' that could carry forward the work of the Cause. Universal participation in giving involved the Baha'is in a unity in sacrifice which drew divine confirmations upon



them (MU#87.6).

All Baha'is were asked to 'ponder these matters deeply', and to join the members of the House of Justice in 'fervent prayer' that 'this momentary crisis' would prove to be 'a providential test' that would spur the Baha'is to 'new heights of dedication and triumphant achievement'. Worldwide economic difficulties were undoubtedly one factor in the decline in contributions, but sacrificial endeavour was needed so as to ensure that the work of the Faith went forward without impediment (MU#87.2, 87.8).

The crisis seem to have been quickly over. Thus, at Ridván 1971, the House was able to report that there had already been a 'magnificent response' to its December appeal from some parts of the Baha'i world, and that if this 'manifestation of devotion and sacrifice' continued and became more widespread, the threat to the achievement of the remaining Plan goals would be removed. The House also noted that the serious condition that it had reported in December was due to 'various unforeseen [and unmentioned] circumstances' (MU#96.6).

**4. A retrospective view.** Writing at the end of the Nine Year Plan, at Ridván 1973, the House expressed delight at the financial support the Baha'is had given, identifying the 'vast increase in the financial resources of the Faith' as having been one of the most 'highly portentous' developments during the Plan. The House had appealed for support for the International Fund, and there had been a 'heartwarming response', but the Baha'is had also sacrificially supported the local, national and continental funds. This support was a 'practical proof' of the Baha'is' love for the Faith, and it had enabled the work of the Plan to go forward, with the support of pioneers and travelling teachers; the raising of [a] Baha'i temple; the acquisition of Baha'i properties; the purchase of Baha'i holy places in Iran and the Holy Land; and 'the development of educational institutions' and of 'all the multifarious activities of a vigorous, onward-marching, constructive world community' (MU#128.12, 128.14).

Other significant developments regarding Baha'i funding during the Plan were the strengthening of the administration of the *Huqúqu'lláh* prior to its extension to other parts of the world (below), and the establishment of an International Deputization Fund to assist pioneers and travelling teachers – later extended to the funding of important national projects (below) (MU#128.14).

The House also noted that contributions to all of the various funds of the Faith would never cease to be a service that was open to all Baha'is, and that the future growth of the Faith would require further and 'ever-increasing' contributions. Specifically regarding the International Fund, the House stated that some 60 percent of all its monies went to assist the work of [the poorer] national spiritual assemblies, promote the teaching work, and defend the Faith in those countries where it was under attack. This was vital, for without this support, the expansion and deepening work of many national assemblies would be paralyzed (MU#128.14).

**5. Some practicalities.** On several occasions, the House noted practical aspects relating to the efficient and effective use of Baha'i moneys.

-1. Thus, in November 1963, the House instructed those poorer assemblies which were in need of financial assistance to contact it directly, rather than appealing to other national assemblies for help. Mutual assistance between assemblies needed to be authorized by the House (MU#9.3).

-2. Again, in December 1963, the House counselled the Baha'is that every local and national assembly should endeavour to become self-supporting and to expend its funds with 'wisdom and economy'. If they did this then they would be able to make substantial contributions to the international and continental funds, thus (i) enabling the House to provide vital assistance to the work of new and impoverished Baha'i communities and meet international goals, and (ii) supporting the work of the Hands of the Cause and their Auxiliary Boards – institutions "assiduously fostered" by Shoghi Effendi which were destined to render 'increasingly important services' in the forthcoming years (MU#13.5-13.6).

-3. The House itself responded to perceived need in the establishment and definition of funds, as most obviously in the creation in 1965 of the International Deputization Fund to assist pioneers and travelling teachers (MU#24.11), and the later extension of this fund in August 1968 to help cover any national projects which were vital to the completion of the Plan (MU#66.3).

**6. *Huqúqu'lláh.*** *Huqúqu'lláh* ('the Right of God') is effectively a payment on capital gains ordained by Bahá'u'lláh in his *Kitáb-i Aqdas* and offered to the head of the Faith – at the present time the Universal House of Justice. Payment is voluntary, but is regarded as a spiritual obligation for Baha'is. The payment basically consists of nineteen percent of new capital gains for anyone who has more than a certain minimum level of wealth.<sup>213</sup>

Payment of *Huqúqu'lláh* was made universally applicable to the Baha'is worldwide in 1992, and until then was regarded as an obligation for Middle Eastern Baha'is only. An English-language compilation of Baha'i writings on the subject was issued by the Universal House of Justice in 1985 (MU#430; ICC 489-527), and included translated passages from Persian letters of the House written during the 1963-73 period. These mostly reiterated the basic Baha'i teachings relating to the *Huqúqu'lláh*, viz., that payment is a binding spiritual obligation and privilege which purifies the individual's wealth and is a means of spiritual confirmation; that it is payable only to the centre of the Cause; that it is distinct from and takes precedence over other contributions to the Baha'i funds; and that whilst solicitation of payment is not allowable, the Iranian national assembly should issue general appeals to the Baha'is reminding them of their obligation to pay. The House also asserted its own control over the *Huqúqu'lláh* (October 1963) and asked the Trustee of the *Huqúqu'lláh* (the Hand of the Cause 'Alí-Muhammad Varqá) to designate local and provincial representatives in Iran and "neighbouring countries" to facilitate payment (ICC 518-22). In other letters written during this period the House reiterated that Western Baha'is were not yet required to make these payments – although they could if they wished; that payment was a matter of conscience – including cases where individuals deliberately sought excuses to justify not paying; and that the details and computation of payment were left up to the individual (ICC 522-23).

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213. The minimum level of wealth is set at 19 *mithqáls* (i.e. 69.2 grams) of gold excluding residence, place of business and household furnishings. See CEBF, '*Huqúqu'lláh*'; '*mithqál*', loc. cit.