

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

14 October 1998

Mr _____

Australia

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The International Teaching Centre received your emails of 25 March and 20 August 1998 containing various queries and forwarded them to the Universal House of Justice. Your emails were referred to the Research Department for further study, and we enclose a copy of a memorandum prepared in response. The delay in our response is regretted, but it is hoped that this information provides the clarification you seek.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Sandra Buanil (signed)
For Department of the Secretariat

Enclosure with one attachment

cc: International Teaching Centre (with enclosure and attachment)

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice
From: Research Department

Date: 13 October 1998

Ten queries on various subjects

The Research Department has studied the queries contained in email messages of 25 March and 20 August 1998 to the International Teaching Centre from Mr _____. We have numbered his queries consecutively beginning with those in the earlier email, and answer them below in turn.

25 March 1998

1. Who took care of Mírzá Mihdí when Bahá'u'lláh was exiled to Baghdád?

There is apparently very little information available on this subject. In *Robe of Light* it states that the only one of Bahá'u'lláh's relatives who came to say farewell on the day He left for Baghdád was "lady Ásíyih's mother who was to care for her little grandchild Mihdí".¹ According to Ásíyih *Khánúm: The Most Exalted Leaf*, "[Ásíyih *Khánúm's*] mother's name is not mentioned in any of the available historical sources."² We found no reference to "an aunt named Mariam" in connection with Mírzá Mihdí.

2. Use of the title "Holy Family"

The Research Department has not found any explicit guidelines in the Bahá'í Writings regarding the appropriate use of the title "Holy Family". It appears to be a general term which has meant different things at different historical times. The following extract from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi illustrates how he used the terms "Holy Family" and "Holy Household":

As to your question whether the members of the Holy Family fulfil, as such, any specific function in the Administrative Order, or in the teaching field: the Guardian wishes me to state that, while the members of the Holy Household, who stand loyal to the Cause, are entitled to every respect and consideration by the believers, yet there is no such function which they can inherently claim by being related to the Centre of the Cause. The believers, moreover, are not under any obligation to rise at the entrance or exit of any member of the Holy Family at the meetings. The higher the station of those who have the privilege of being related by ties of blood to the Centre of

¹ David S. Ruhe, *Robe of Light* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1994), p. 165.

² Baharieh Rouhani Ma'ani, Ásíyih *Khánúm: The Most Exalted Leaf* entitled *Navváb* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1993), p. 8.

the Cause the greater indeed must be their responsibility to serve, and thus prove in deeds their worthiness to occupy such an exalted and responsible position.

(26 January 1939 to an individual)

3-4. Capitalization of personal pronouns

Regarding the appropriate treatment of personal pronouns referring to the Manifestations of God, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, the convention to be followed is based on the Guardian’s own guidance and example. With regard to English usage, Shoghi Effendi endorsed the capitalization of all pronouns referring to the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as a mark of respect for the Stations of the Central Figures of the Faith. In a letter dated 22 November 1949 written on his behalf to an individual it is stated:

In regard to your question about capitalizing the pronouns: the Guardian realizes this looks a little strange to non-Bahá’ís, but he feels we, being believers, and having the full sense of the Stations of the Central Figures of our Faith, should do this as a sign of respect under all circumstances.

It is important to note, however, that there are some exceptions to this rule. The following observation regarding some of the Guardian’s translations of Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings is made on behalf of the House of Justice to a Publishing Trust:

Moreover, it is observable in some of the Guardian’s translations of passages in which Bahá’u’lláh refers to Himself, that Shoghi Effendi has capitalized the pronouns when they indicate the Manifestation in His relationship to mankind, but has made them lower case when the passage is contrasting the Manifestation with the Godhead.

(27 March 1989)

We also note that the Guardian used lower case pronouns when translating ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s references to Himself, for example, in his translation of *The Will and Testament*, and in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s prayers.

It is also interesting to observe that in the Guardian’s statement quoted above, the pronoun “he”, referring to the Guardian, is not capitalized. The House of Justice affirms this convention by following it in its own writings. For example, in the statement below the House does not capitalize “his” or “writings” with respect to the Guardian. It also emphasizes that “in introductory books or books about the Faith in the English language”, capitalization of pronouns is “left to the personal choice of the author”. We read:

In English translations of the Sacred Bahá’í Writings personal pronouns referring to the Manifestations of God or to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá should invariably be capitalized; in the Guardian’s writings in English his own style must be followed.

capitalization of pronouns relating to the Manifestations of God and to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in introductory books or books about the Faith in the English language is left to the personal choice of the author.

(3 February 1975)

Regarding Mr ____’s query about capitalizing “It” and “Body” when referring to Bahá’u’lláh’s remains after His passing, it seems to us that the foregoing discussion will assist him in coming to his own conclusions.

5. Language used by Shoghi Effendi in his English writings

As Mr ____ may be aware, the House of Justice makes clear that the English translations of the Guardian represent a high standard in their nearness to the style and spirit of the original Texts, a standard towards which all translators of the Sacred Writings are encouraged to strive. However, the Research Department has not found any statement in the Bahá’í Writings which suggests that in their own writing, the believers should follow the same literary style used by the Guardian, and our perusal of works by Bahá’í authors has not revealed any particular uniformity of style.

It may also be helpful to Mr ____ to note that every book by a Bahá’í must, before publication, undergo a review under the authority of the National Spiritual Assembly of the country where the book will be published.

6. Obtaining a copy of Mr ‘Alí Nakhjavání’s talk given on 25 December 1984

The Research Department notes that in his second email dated 20 August 1998,³ Mr _____ states that he has contacted Mr Nakhjavání directly on this matter.

7. The reference for a statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

He asks for the source of the statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “When the village is reconstructed, then the cities will be also”, quoted in the article entitled “Microfinance: a powerful tool for social transformation”, published in *One Country* (October–December 1996), volume 8, issue 3, page 3.

The original source of this statement is George Orr Latimer’s *The Light of the World*. This work contains transcripts of table talks with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in which Mr Latimer and some other pilgrims participated during their pilgrimage to Haifa, 16–27 November 1919. According to this book, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made the statement during “the evening meal”, 17 November 1919, in response to a pilgrim’s query: “Will not the economic problems be solved first in America and will the United States be able to lay a just foundation and be an example to the world?”⁴ In the transcript of His response, the statement in question appears as follows: “The solution begins with the village, and when the village is reconstructed, then the cities will be also.”⁵

³ “Some thoughts on the Lesser Peace”, 20 August 1984.—M.W.T.

⁴ *The Light of the World* (Boston: 1920), pp. 45–6. [Now available on the internet.]

⁵ idem, p. 47.

For Mr ____'s convenience, we have attached a copy of the relevant pages from *The Light of the World*.

20 August 1998

8. Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1930), three volumes

This three-volume work is out of print, and we have not located it on the Internet. Book sellers near to Mr — who deal with rare and out-of-print books might be able to assist him in obtaining these volumes.

As he may be aware, the translations in this compilation are early and not authoritative. Some of these translations have since been updated for publication elsewhere; in other cases, the original Tablet has not yet been identified or is unavailable, and the accuracy of the translation cannot be verified. Therefore, he may wish to refer quotations taken from *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* to the Bahá'í World Centre for study.

9. *Qur'án: The Final Testament*

The Research Department has found the following information on this book through the Internet:

Qur'án: The Final Testament, translated by Rashad Khalifa; paperback, (August 1992), US\$7.95

Ordering information can be obtained through Amazon Books <www.amazon.com>.

10. Correct disconnected letters which begin Surah XXVII

The Research Department agrees with Mr — that the disconnected letters “TÁ SÁD” which begin Surah XXVII in the Rodwell translation of the Qur'án are incorrect. These letters should be “TÁ SÍN”.

Attachment

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

*"Is there need for any one
to say that the sun is shining!
Its own appearance is
sufficient."—'Abdu'l-Bahá*



HAIFA, PALESTINE
NOVEMBER 16–27, 1919

hands of France. France will hold Syria, temporarily, but in the end it will come under English control. Now France will remain there temporarily. Syria will progress. Especially Palestine, in the same way as Egypt. Egypt has progressed very much under the English.

“If the Muslims, Christians and Jews unite, there will be great progress. The Jews are unpopular now, but they will progress, and they will come here to reside. In the Books of the Prophets this promise has been given and in the Tablets of the Blessed Beauty for the Jews of Persia, He has written that the promises which have been given to you, ‘that you will be gathered together,’ will be fulfilled. Forty years ago He wrote this. Many of the Jews of Persia have become Bahá’ís and blessed souls have entered the Cause.”

QUESTION: “Will all the return to Palestine?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Some of them will come, but not all. There are twenty-five million of them in the world. They cannot all be gathered in Palestine, for there is not room. There is room for one million more Jews. No more than that.”

Mr Randall: “How long did Bahá’u’lláh reside in Haifa?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Several times He came here. He remained for a month or two.”

Mr Randall: “Will not the economic problems be solved first in America and will the

United States be able to lay a just foundation and be an example to the world?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Certainly. The economic question will have great importance in Europe and America. This question is impossible of solution except through the Religion of God. Day by day it is settled, then it comes up again. It cannot be settled save by the Religion of God. Labour will not be satisfied in any way. In Egypt, for example, wages have been increased thirty per cent. Notwithstanding this they are not content. Where there is an agitation of the masses, it will not be quieted, until it reaches its climax. At last, things will come to such a state, that they will say: 'The factories belong to us and the capitalists will get their share from us.' It will come to that. 'We will apportion the share they ought to receive, for instance, one-tenth.' They will take nine-tenths. Everything will become chaotic. At last it will reach such a state that the world of humanity will come to an absolute stand-still. Even the labourer will go hungry. Then absolutism will return, so that the Government may remedy it. For instance, if the workingmen of a factory strike, it will be useless; the Government will become so powerful. Nothing save the Religion of God will solve it. Nothing save the Religion of God. This will include both; the capitalists and labourers will be freed.

“The solution begins with the village, and when the village is reconstructed, then the cities will be also. The idea is this, that in each village will be erected a store-house. In the language of Religion it is called the House of Finance. That is a universal store-house, which is commenced in the village. Its administration is through a committee of the wise ones of the community, and with the approval of that committee all the affairs are directed.

Seven revenues

“First, whatever contributions are necessary, they obtain from the bank at interest. For instance, they borrow from the bank at three per cent and loan to the public at four per cent. Any farmer who is in need of implements, they supply and give him all his necessities. When the crop is harvested, it will be the first income (of the store-house). The first revenue is this. But this revenue is not equally distributed. For instance, a person may have a crop of one thousand kilos and this is only sufficient for his wants and living. From him nothing will be taken because he needs it all. If something is taken from him, he will remain hungry. But again, there may be one whose needs require one thousand kilos and his income is two thousand kilos. From him one-tenth is taken. Again, one needs two thousand kilos, but his income is ten thousand kilos. From him