

Guidance for Today and Tomorrow

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Note: Since all but one of the excerpts included in the print version of this publication are already available elsewhere at this site (see the List of Sources), only the items not available elsewhere online have been provided below: the Table of Contents, the Preface, and one quotation of Shoghi Effendi, originally from the European Teaching Committee Manual (1948), p. 11--in this work included under a subsection of "The Administrative Order" titled The Universal Bahá'í Organism.

Guidance for Today and Tomorrow (Unique Elements)

1. Table of Contents
2. Preface
3. The Universal Bahá'í Organism (this book's one quotation not available elsewhere on-line or in print)
4. List of Sources

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PREFACE

THIS work gives a selection from the writings of Shoghi Effendi, appointed Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith in the Will of the last of its Three Central Figures, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He occupies a unique position in Bahá'í history. Since assuming office in 1921 he has guided the world-wide Bahá'í Community through the early stages of establishing the Administrative Order which is destined in due course to form the pattern and nucleus of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The Universal House of Justice, ordained to support this World Order as a twin pillar to the Guardianship, has not yet come into being. Shoghi Effendi has had to guide and nurse alone the infant National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í World which will, when more fully developed, elect and support the Universal House of Justice. Although the Guardianship is not a legislative institution, he has had to evolve the basic principles of Bahá'í Administration for use throughout the Bahá'í World. Bahá'ís believe the writings of the Guardian to be inspired. They do not constitute Revelation, as do the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb; they are not regarded as holy in the way that the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are holy. Nevertheless, it is an essential part of Bahá'í that the Guardian receives guidance from God through the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh when he is interpreting Bahá'í Scripture. This book is therefore authoritative on the implications of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh for the various subjects it treats.

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Every word of the passages contained in it is significant. There are no loose phrases, no vague evasions of crucial issues. The style is one which renders it possible to state basic truths in parentheses and to list in one sentence the chief events of a lifetime. Such writing needs, and is worthy of, study,

for the implications of its phrases are almost as important as the explicit statements made.

The Guardian's writings are both eternal and particularly suited to the moment.

Eternal, because they expound fundamental principles which for ever guide mankind; suited to the moment because the principles are expounded with reference to the present state of the world and of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

They are not passing essays to be read once and laid aside; they are life-lines of the future, a source of guidance to unborn generations.

Yet their author is but a man. He has not, and definitely denies having, any higher order of spirit than other men. The guidance he gives comes from the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh. Shoghi Effendi is the Guardian, not the Revealer, of the Message sent by God to lead mankind to its high destiny. He is the channel of God's mercy fulfilling Bahá'u'lláh's promise "This is the day which shall not be followed by night." Future generations alone can appreciate the contribution he has made to saving mankind from the deadening slough of spiritual degradation into which it has sunk.

Principles of Selection

Extracts from letters of the Guardian enumerating the principles of Bahá'í administration are contained in an-

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other compilation.* This selection consists of more general statements.

In order to present as comprehensive a collection as possible in a brief space, two leading principles have been applied. When the Guardian has given similar guidance about a subject on more than one occasion, the shorter of the two versions has been chosen. Consequently the book contains a rather high proportion of passages in which much guidance is concentrated in few words. Further, an attempt has been made to avoid passages containing more quotation from Bahá'í Scripture than original writing. As the interpreter of Bahá'í Holy Writings, Shoghi Effendi often quotes a number of scriptural passages to illustrate and confirm his interpretation. Some of the extracts in this book omit a few of these or close before the original quotations are completed.

* "Principles of Bahá'í Administration", Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1950.

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SECTION VII. THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER)

5. THE UNIVERSAL BAHÁ'Í ORGANISM

Should we build up the administrative world order to a point of absolute perfection but at the same time allow it to be hampered or disconnected from the channels within, through which channels the Holy Spirit of the Cause pours forth, we would have nothing more than a perfected body out of touch with and cut off from the finer promptings of the soul or spirit. If, on the other hand, the influxes and goings forth of the spirit are scattered, diffused, and

subjected wholly to the more or less imperfect guidance and interpretation of individual believers, lacking both the wisdom secured through consultation and also the lights of real unity which shine through consultative action and obedience thereto—a disordered and disorganized activity would be witnessed which would but dimly reflect the divine purpose for this age, which is no less than the establishment of the reign of divine love, justice, and wisdom in the world, under and in conformity to the Divine Law.

In the body of man, which is the true divine example or parallel, the spirit, when in ideal control of all the lesser parts of the organism, finds the utmost harmony throughout the whole body—each part is in perfect reciprocity with the other parts. The commands and impulses of the spirit are obeyed by the body and the body in turn in its actions and functions identifies and determines the expression the spiritual impulses shall take. This is divine unity—and this law being universal and found in every created object in the universe, has full application to the universal Bahá'í organism made up of

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believers everywhere, which has been established by the Manifestation of God.

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- VI. 1. Bahá'í Administration, p. 176
2. Heart of the Entire Planet
- [[note: this passage is also in Messages to America 1932-1946, pp. 32-36]]
- VII. 1. Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 53
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5. European Teaching Committee Manual (1948), p. 11
- [note: the preceding passage is quoted above]
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- [note: this preceding essay is also published in Citadel of Faith pp. 25-26]
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- 2. God Passes By, p. xiii
- 3. God Passes By, p. 410

NOTE: All references are to the American editions current in 1953, except that "Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh" refers to the British edition then current.

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