Lights of Guidance

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LIGHTS OF GUIDANCE
A Baha'i Reference File
Compiled by Helen Hornby
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I. ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

A. Administrative Order

[1] 1. Established First in America—Not American Production
"The Administrative Order of the Cause, though first established in America, copied as a model by other national Baha'i communities, is not an American production, but is a universal system based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah. It is not simply by coincidence however that it was first initiated and perfected by the American believers."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 29, 1938: Dawn of a New Day, p. 202)

2. Cannot Be Identified with Principles of Present-Day Democracies
"...The administrative order which lies embedded in the Teachings of Baha'u'llah, and which the American believers have championed and are now establishing, should, under no circumstances, be identified with the principles underlying present-day democracies. Nor is it identical with any purely aristocratic or autocratic form of government. The objectionable features inherent in each of these political systems are entirely avoided. It blends, as no system of human polity has as yet achieved, those salutary truths and beneficial elements which constitute the valuable contributions which each of these forms of government have made to society in the past...."
(Postscript written by the Guardian to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, November 18, 1933: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 26)

B. Baha'i Administration

3. The Ideal Instrument to Make Spiritual Laws Function Properly
"He hopes you will devote as much of your spare time as possible to the work of the Cause, especially in impressing upon the believers the importance of the Administration and helping them to really understand its purpose and all it can achieve once they get it to function properly. In other words it is a perfect form which must be animated by the spirit of the Cause. It is the ideal instrument to make spiritual laws function properly in the material affairs of this world."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

June 16, 1945)

4. Purpose of Administration
"Your letter of October 19, 1973 giving a comprehensive survey of developments throughout Australia is of great interest and we commend you on your manifold efforts to promote the Faith throughout that vast continent.

[2] "We urge you ever to bear in mind that the purpose of Baha'i administration is primarily to lend strength and directive to the teaching work and to promote the establishment of the Faith. It should never be regarded as an end in itself but purely as a means to canalize and make effective a spiritual vitality generated by the Word of God in the hearts of the believers.

"The dedication and zeal with which you promote the Cause of God are highly commendable and we will pray at the Sacred Threshold that the process of expansion and consolidation will be greatly intensified as a result of your efforts."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, November 12, 1973)

5. Social Order of Baha'u'llah
"...To accept the Cause without the administration is like to accept the teachings without acknowledging the divine station of Baha'u'llah. To be a Baha'i is to accept the Cause in its entirety. To take exception to one basic principle is to deny the authority and sovereignty of Baha'u'llah, and therefore is to deny the Cause. The administration is the social order of Baha'u'llah. Without it all the principles of the Cause will remain abortive. To take exception to this, therefore, is to take exception to the fabric that Baha'u'llah has prescribed; it is to disobey His law."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 30, 1930: Baha'i News, No. 43, August 1930, p. 3)

6. Relationship of the Cause to the Administration
"Regarding the relationship of the Cause to the Administration: The Baha'i Faith, as the Guardian himself has repeatedly and emphatically stated, cannot be confined to a mere system of organization, however elaborate in its features and universal in its scope it may be. Organization is only a means to the realization of its aims and ideals, and not an end in itself. To divorce the two, however, would be to mutilate the Cause itself, as they stand inseparably bound to each other, in very much the same relationship existing between the soul and body in the world of human existence."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 19, 1939)

C. Baha'i Local Spiritual Assemblies

7. Assemblies Ordained by Baha'u'llah
"Addressing the nations, the Ancient Beauty ordaineth that in every city in the world a house be established in the name of justice wherein shall gather pure

and steadfast souls to the number of the Most Great Name (9). At this meeting they should feel as if they were entering the Presence of God, inasmuch as this binding command hath flowed from the Pen of Him Who is the Ancient of Days. The glances of God are directed towards this Assembly."
(Baha'u'llah: from a newly translated Tablet cited in The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 6, compiled by the Universal House of Justice)

8. Established in Every City—Counsellors to the Number of Baha (9)
"The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established [3] wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Baha (9), and should it exceed this number it does not matter...."
(Baha'u'llah: Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 30, p. 29)

9. Purpose of Spiritual Assemblies
"...These bodies have the sacred obligation to help, advise, protect and guide the believers in every way within their power when appealed to—indeed they were established just for the purpose of keeping order and unity and obedience to the law of God amongst the believers.
"You should go to them as a child would to its parents...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 28, 1941: The Local Spiritual Assembly, compiled by the Universal House of Justice)

10. Their Defender is 'Abdu'l-Baha
"These Spiritual Assemblies are aided by the Spirit of God. Their defender is 'Abdu'l-Baha. Over them He spreadeth His wings. What bounty is there greater than this?... These Spiritual Assemblies are shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and the lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From them the spirit of life streameth in every direction. They, indeed, are the potent sources of the progress of man, at all times and under all conditions."
('Abdu'l-Baha: God Passes By, p. 332 and The Local Spiritual Assembly, pp. 6-7)

11. Assemblies Styled Differently in Future
"...Not only will the present-day Spiritual Assemblies be styled differently in future, but will be enabled also to add to their present functions those powers, duties, and prerogatives necessitated by the recognition of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, not merely as one of the recognized religious systems of the world, but as the State Religion of an independent and Sovereign Power...."
(Shoghi Effendi: The Baha'i World, Vol. III, p. 108)

12. Assembly Operates at First Levels of Human Society
"The divinely ordained institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly operates at the first levels of human society and is the basic administrative unit of Baha'u'llah's World Order. It is concerned with individuals and families whom it must constantly encourage to unite in a distinctive Baha'i society, vitalized and guarded by the laws, ordinances and principles of Baha'u'llah's Revelation. It protects the Cause of God; it acts as the loving shepherd of the Baha'i flock."

(Message from the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Naw-Ruz 1974, paragraph 13)

13. Strengthening of Local Spiritual Assemblies—Nerve Centres of Communities*
"Great attention should be paid to the strengthening of Local Spiritual Assemblies which must act as the nerve centres of the Baha'i communities in the towns and villages, promote Baha'i education of the youth and children, and increase cooperation and participation of the believers in Baha'i community life. Travelling teachers and all who are actively engaged in spreading the Message should rededicate themselves to their vital work and set out with [4] renewed enthusiasm. They should aim at assisting as large a number as possible of Baha'i communities to stand on their own feet and become capable of carrying out the thrilling tasks which they are called upon to discharge in the Vineyard of God in this Day."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, February 8, 1972)

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*(See also: No. 1988)

14. Primary Purpose to Promote Teaching Work
"And since the primary purpose for which Local Spiritual Assemblies are established is to promote the teaching work, it is clear that every National Spiritual Assembly must give careful consideration to ways and means to encourage each Local Assembly under its jurisdiction to fulfil its principal obligation ... it is important that Local Assemblies share with the local friends stories of successes achieved by some of them, descriptions of effective presentations found useful by them, examples of various ways that a Baha'i subject could be introduced to inquirers, or illustrations of methods which would enable the believer to relate the needs of society to our teachings. Such information and suggestions could be offered to the friends at Nineteen Day Feasts, through a local newsletter, or by any means open to each Local Assembly. In all these contacts with the believers, each Local Spiritual Assembly should impress upon the friends the unique and irreplaceable role the individual plays in the prosecution of any Baha'i undertaking...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, March 3, 1977)

15. Areas Under Jurisdiction of Local Spiritual Assemblies—National Spiritual Assembly Must Study
"The matter of the areas under the jurisdiction of a Local Spiritual Assembly is one which the National Assembly must study, and apply the principles laid down by the Guardian; namely, that within a municipal area, where the people resident in the area pay taxes and vote, the Assembly can be elected, and holds jurisdiction. Anyone living outside of that area is not a member of that Community, and cannot enjoy the administrative privileges of that Community. Although this will affect your Assembly roll, it will place the work of the Faith on a much sounder basis, and increase the number of Centres where Baha'is reside... It will challenge the friends to work harder to create new Assemblies

and make up for those dissolved...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, June 13, 1956: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, pp. 130-131)

16. Local Spiritual Assemblies—Created by Baha'u'llah in His Kitab-i-Aqdas
"As to your query about the Local Spiritual Assembly, it is indeed a divine institution, created by Baha'u'llah in His Kitab-i-Aqdas as the Local House of Justice. 'Abdu'l-Baha has clearly set out its provenance, authority and duties and has explained the differences between it and other administrative institutions, whether of the past or the present. We refer you to the book 'Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha', sections 37, 38 and 40.

[5] "It is clear that while Local Spiritual Assemblies must supervise all Baha'i matters in their areas, including arrangements for the Nineteen Day Feast, the observance of the Holy Days, the election of the members of the Assembly, promoting the teaching work, caring for the spiritual welfare and Baha'i education of the friends and children, etc., they and the friends themselves must at the same time be good citizens and loyal to the civil government, whether it be a Tribal Council, a Cacique or a municipal authority."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, April 13, 1983)

D. Formation of Local Spiritual Assemblies

17. Forming Local Assemblies—Obligation to Establish
"Shoghi Effendi feels that in any locality where the number of adult believers reaches nine, a Local Assembly should be established. He feels this to be an obligation rather than a purely voluntary act. Only in exceptional cases has the National Spiritual Assembly the right to postpone the formation of an Assembly if it feels that the situation does not warrant such a formation. This right, however, should be exercised if the situation absolutely demands it. As to the principle according to which the area of jurisdiction of a Local Assembly is to be determined, he feels, this is to be the function of the National Spiritual Assembly; whatever principle they uphold should be fairly applied to all localities without any distinction whatever."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 11, 1931: Baha'i News, No. 55, September 1931, p. 1)

18. A Community of Nine Adult Believers Must Form an Assembly by Joint Declaration
"In reply to your letter of 28 October 1980 we are instructed to make the following points:
(1) There is nothing in the directives of the beloved Guardian or in the by-laws of Local Spiritual Assemblies to require that the joint declaration of a new Local Spiritual Assembly be signed. The way the declaration is made is within the discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly to determine, and it

may or may not require signatures.
(2) Wherever at Ridvan there are nine or more adult believers resident in an area properly qualified for the establishment of a Local Spiritual Assembly, the Assembly must be formed at Ridvan.
(3) If the number of adult resident believers is exactly nine the Local Spiritual Assembly must be formed by joint declaration in a manner acceptable to the National Spiritual Assembly and the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly will record the formation of the Local Assembly.
(4) When the Spiritual Assembly is to be formed for the first time and one or more of the adult believers refuses to join in the declaration, the Spiritual Assembly cannot be formed."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iceland, December 2, 1980)

[6] 19. Duty of Every Baha'i to Take Part in Joint Declaration
"The statement that it is a condition to the formation of a Local Spiritual Assembly that there be at least nine adult believers who are ready, willing and able to serve on the Local Assembly, should not be construed as giving any Baha'i the right to refuse to take part in the formation of the Assembly. It is merely a statement of a factual condition. The National Baha'i Constitution specifies: 'When ... the number of Baha'is in any authorized civil area is exactly nine, these shall on April 21st of any year, or in successive years, constitute themselves the Local Spiritual Assembly by joint declaration. Upon the recording of such declaration by the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly, said body of nine shall become established with the rights, privileges and duties of a Local Spiritual Assembly...'. It can therefore be seen that it is the duty of every Baha'i in such a situation to take part in the joint declaration. If a Baha'i, however, refuses to do so he should be helped to realize that he has committed a grave dereliction of his Baha'i duty. In this stage of the development of the Cause a National Spiritual Assembly should not, generally, deprive a believer of his voting rights for such an offence, but should lovingly and patiently educate the friends in the importance of their responsibilities."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, October 12, 1969)

20. Believer Must Be "a Resident" to Participate in the Formation of a Spiritual Assembly—Unusual Cases as Exceptions
"To count as a member of a local Baha'i community for the purpose of forming or maintaining the Local Spiritual Assembly, a believer must be resident in that area of jurisdiction on the First Day of Ridvan. This is the principle. What constitutes 'residence' is a secondary matter for each National Spiritual Assembly to decide, but there is no exception to the principle that a believer must be resident in order to participate in the formation of the Spiritual Assembly.

"You will see from the above instruction that it is not possible for believers living outside the civil limits of a locality to count as members of that

community. There are, of course, many unusual cases. For example, it may be that a university student spends some six months of the year in the town where his university is, and the other half-year in the home of his parents. In such a case it is normal to permit him to choose which of the two places is to count as his residence for Baha'i purposes; one cannot count as being 'resident' in two places at once. It is, moreover, not essential for a person to be physically present to be resident. There are many instances of a sailor or salesman who spends most of his time moving from place to place but who is indisputably resident in the town where his family lives. All such matters must be decided by the National Spiritual Assembly in the light of the circumstances of each case within the general framework of the definition of 'residence' that it adopts. Such a definition must, of course, be a reasonable one, otherwise the principle would be nullified."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of France, September 18, 1985)

21. Re-Formation by Election or Joint Declaration—Refusal of a Believer to Participate Does Not Prevent Re-Forming Assembly
"In subsequent years the Assembly must be re-formed each Ridvan, either by [7] election, if the number of voting believers exceeds nine, or by joint declaration if the number is exactly nine. The failure or refusal of a believer to take part in the joint declaration would not be a bar to the re-formation of the Assembly.

"Where the number of voting believers resident in a community falls below nine during the course of a year, the Local Spiritual Assembly is not automatically dissolved; it can continue in existence so long as the National Spiritual Assembly has the hope and expectation of being able to restore the number, by enrolment or pioneers. If, however, the number is not restored by the following Ridvan, the Assembly will lapse."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, July 22, 1981)

22. Circumstances Under which an Assembly Should Not Be Immediately Dissolved
"He feels that where the dissolution of an Assembly is in question each case should be treated separately in this sense, that if a member moves away permanently, leaving less than 9 to function, the Spiritual Assembly should not immediately be dissolved if they, its members, see an immediate remedy in view; in other words if they are going to confirm soon, or receive within a reasonable length of time, someone to take the person's place, they need not give up Assembly status. If they do, for insurmountable reason, fall below Assembly status, then they can only be reconstituted on April 21st. Also if certain members temporarily absent themselves from meetings there is no need to dissolve the Assembly; on the contrary the reluctant ones should be educated and encouraged to reassume their spiritual obligations as believers. A Spiritual Assembly is not based on 9 people being available for every single meeting but on 9 resident Baha'is doing their best to discharge their duty to the Spiritual Assembly when they are not prevented by illness or absence or

some legitimate reason for doing so."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 31, 1945)

23. Members of Lapsed Assembly Are Responsible to Notify National Secretary
"...any Assembly which is dissolved must immediately report to the national secretary, who must always keep an up-to-date list of Assemblies. Any dissolved Assembly cannot be reconstituted until the time of election in April...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 13, 1944: The Covenant and Administration, p. 62)

24. Spiritual Assembly Jurisdictions Changes As Civil Units Are Modified
"The general principle is that Local Spiritual Assemblies may be formed in the smallest civil administrative units of the country. If these areas are enlarged or reduced in size by the Government the area of jurisdiction of the Local Spiritual Assembly should likewise be changed."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Zambia, June 8, 1978)

25. Assemblies Cannot Be Formed in Prison
"...the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land have shared with us [8] a portion of the February 3rd letter of ... referring to teaching in the prison in ... and to the formation of Local Assemblies in cell blocks. While this teaching work is commendable those who accept Baha'u'llah under these conditions cannot undertake administrative responsibilities, nor can Local Assemblies be formed in prisons. However, they may observe Nineteen Day Feasts, Baha'i Holy Days, and other Baha'i events. When they return to their own communities they may participate in administrative affairs as well."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, February 9, 1972: Extract from a letter written to another National Spiritual Assembly, June 11, 1964)

26. Qualifications of Assembly Members—Subject to Human Limitations
"With reference to your next question concerning the qualifications of the members of the Spiritual Assembly: There is a distinction of fundamental importance which should be always remembered in this connection, and this is between the Spiritual Assembly as an institution, and the persons who compose it. These are by no means supposed to be perfect, nor can they be considered as being inherently superior to the rest of their fellow believers. It is precisely because they are subject to the same human limitations that characterize the other members of the community that they have to be elected every year. The existence of elections is a sufficient indication that Assembly members, though forming part of an institution that is divine and perfect, are nevertheless themselves imperfect. But this does not necessarily imply that their judgment is defective."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 15, 1935)

27. Qualifications Outlined Applicable to Anyone Elected
"In regard to your question about qualifications of delegates and Assembly members: The qualifications which he outlines are really applicable to anyone we elect to a Baha'i office, whatever its nature. But these are only an indication, they do not mean people who don't fulfill them cannot be elected to office. We must aim as high as we can."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, October 24, 1947: The Spiritual Character of Baha'i Elections, p. 3)

28. Auxiliary Board Members, Eligibility of
"All adult Baha'is, including members of the Auxiliary Board, are eligible to vote in elections for delegates or in elections for members of the Local Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda and Central Africa, April 10, 1966)

29. Board Members May Serve on Assembly Temporarily*
"In all three areas of election, Auxiliary Board members are eligible to be elected. Therefore, a ballot should not be invalidated because it contains the name of a member of an Auxiliary Board. The basic principle involved is that the Board member himself must decide whether or not to accept his election. As you have stated in your letter, if the membership in a Baha'i community drops to nine, including the Auxiliary Board member resident there, the Auxiliary [9] Board member may serve temporarily as a member of the Assembly to preserve its Assembly status."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 25, 1966, cited in the compilation, Auxiliary Board Members)

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*(See also: Nos. 91-92)

30. Annual Elections Provide Opportunity to Remedy Defects the Assembly May Suffer
"For as 'Abdu'l-Baha has repeatedly emphasized Baha'i Assemblies are under the guidance and protection of God. The elections, specially when annual, give the community a good opportunity to remedy any defect or imperfection from which the Assembly may suffer as a result of the actions of its members. Thus a safe method has been established whereby the quality of membership in Baha'i Assemblies can be continually raised and improved. But, as already stated, the institution of the Spiritual Assembly should under no circumstances be identified with, or be estimated merely through, the personal qualifications of the members that compose it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 15, 1935)

31. Absence of Nomination in Baha'i Elections—A Distinguishing Feature
"As to the practice of nomination in Baha'i elections, this the Guardian firmly believes to be in fundamental disaccord with the spirit which should animate

and direct all elections held by the Baha'is, be they of a local or national character and importance. It is, indeed, the absence of such a practice that constitutes the distinguishing feature and the marked superiority of the Baha'i electoral methods over those commonly associated with political parties and factions. The practice of nomination being thus contrary to the spirit of Baha'i Administration should be totally discarded by all the friends. For otherwise the freedom of the Baha'i elector in choosing the members of any Baha'i Assembly will be seriously endangered, leaving the way open for the domination of personalities. Not only that, but the mere act of nomination leads eventually to the formation of parties—a thing which is totally alien to the spirit of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 4, 1935)

32. Baha'i Electoral Procedures Develop Spirit of Responsibility
"In addition to these serious dangers, the practice of nomination has the great disadvantage of killing in the believer the spirit of initiative, and of self-development. Baha'i electoral procedures and methods have, indeed, for one of their essential purposes the development in every believer of the spirit of responsibility. By emphasizing the necessity of maintaining his full freedom in the elections, they make it incumbent upon him to become an active and well-informed member of the Baha'i community in which he lives."
(Ibid.)

33. Freedom of Believers to Choose—Should Be Choicest, Most Varied Elements
"...I do not feel it to be in keeping with the spirit of the Cause to impose any limitation upon the freedom of the believers to choose those of any race, [10] nationality or temperament, who best combine the essential qualifications for membership of administrative institutions. They should disregard personalities and concentrate their attention on the qualities and requirements of office, without prejudice, passion or partiality. The Assembly should be representative of the choicest and most varied and capable elements in every Baha'i community."
(From a letter of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 11, 1933: The Spiritual Character of Baha'i Elections, p. 3)

34. Believers Should Become Intelligent, Well-Informed and Responsible Electors*
"To be able to make a wise choice at the election time, it is necessary for him to be in close and continued contact with all of his fellow-believers, to keep in touch with all local activities, be they teaching, administrative or otherwise, and to fully and whole-heartedly participate in the affairs of the local as well as national committees and assemblies in his country. It is only in this way that a believer can develop a true social consciousness, and acquire a true sense of responsibility in matters affecting the interests of the Cause. Baha'i community life thus makes it a duty for every loyal and faithful believer to become an intelligent, well-informed and responsible elector, and also gives him the opportunity of raising himself to such a

station. And since the practice of nomination hinders the development of such qualities in the believer, and in addition leads to corruption and partisanship, it has to be entirely discarded in all Baha'i elections."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 4, 1935)

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*(See also: No. 68)

35. Canvassing is Deprecated
"The strength and progress of the Baha'i Community depend upon the election of pure, faithful and active souls.... Canvassing is deprecated....
"Baha'i elections of the Community are ... sanctified from all traces of canvassing and plotting that characterize the activities of the perfidious."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the friends in Persia, April 9, 1932: The Spiritual Character of Baha'i Elections, p. 3)

36. Reference to Personalities Before Election
"I feel that reference to personalities before the election would give rise to misunderstanding and differences. What the friends should do is to get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals, but should stress the necessity of getting fully acquainted with the qualifications of membership referred to in our Beloved's Tablets and of learning more about one another through direct, personal experience rather than through the reports and opinions of our friends."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of Akron, Ohio, May 14, 1927: Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 46)

37. Avoid Intrigues
"Beware, beware lest the foul odour of the parties and peoples of foreign lands in the west, and their pernicious methods, such as intrigues, party politics and [11] propaganda—practices which are abhorrent even in name—should ever reach the Baha'i Community, exert any influence whatsoever upon the friends, and thus bring all spirituality to naught. The friends should, through their devotion, love, loyalty and altruism, abolish these evil practices, not imitate them. It is only after the friends completely ignore and sanctify themselves from these evils, that the spirit of God can penetrate and operate in the body of humanity, and in the Baha'i Community."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the friends in Persia, January 30, 1923: The Spiritual Character of Baha'i Elections, p. 1)

38. Election Day
"On the election day the friends must whole-heartedly participate in the elections, in unity and amity, turning their hearts to God, detached from all things but Him, seeking His guidance and supplicating His aid and bounty."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the friends in Persia, February 27, 1923: The Spiritual Character of Baha'i Elections, p. 1)

39. Prayer and Reflection Before Voting
"...the elector ... is called upon to vote for none but those whom prayer and reflection have inspired him to uphold. Moreover, the practice of nomination, so detrimental to the atmosphere of a silent and prayerful election, is viewed with mistrust, inasmuch as it gives the right ... to deny that God-given right of every elector to vote only in favour of those who he is conscientiously convinced are the most worthy candidates."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 27, 1927: Baha'i Administration, p. 136)

"...in the time of election, the friends should be in the mood of prayer, disinterestedness and detachment from worldly motives. Then they will be inspired to elect the proper members to the assemblies."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 7, 1924)

40. Procedure for Voting by Mail
"The same procedure in voting should be followed, namely, the ballot should be placed and sealed in an unmarked inner envelope and that envelope placed in an outer envelope marked with the name of the voter..."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, January 21, 1973)

41. No Quorum Required for Election of an Assembly
"No quorum is required in the holding of an election for a Local Spiritual Assembly. This rule also applies in the case of by-elections. The mere fact that less than nine vote for the members of the Local Spiritual Assembly does not invalidate the election.

"As you know, the National Assembly can always look into the circumstances surrounding a Local Spiritual Assembly election and use its discretion in determining whether, considering all circumstances, the existence of the Local Spiritual Assembly should be recognized."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, April 16, 1969)

[12] 42. Baha'i Elections for Spiritual Assemblies—Cast Nine Votes, Neither More nor Less*
"Concerning the question you have asked as to whether in elections for Spiritual Assemblies the electors should cast exactly nine votes, or may cast less than this number. Inasmuch as Spiritual Assembly membership, according to the principles of Baha'i Administration, has been limited for the present to nine members, it follows that no electoral vote can be effective unless it is cast for exactly that number. It is, therefore, the sacred duty of every Baha'i elector to cast nine votes, neither more nor less, except under special circumstances so as to insure that the results of the elections for the Spiritual Assembly will be effective and on as wide a basis of representation as possible."

(From a letter dated March 27, 1940 written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles)

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*(See also: Nos. 80-95)

43. Believer Has Right to Vote for Himself

"A believer has the right to vote for himself during the election time, if he conscientiously feels the urge to do so. This does not necessarily imply that he is ambitious or selfish. For he might conscientiously believe that his qualifications entitle him to membership in a Baha'i administrative body, and he might be right. The essential, however, is that he should be sincere in his belief, and should act according to the dictates of his conscience. Moreover, membership in an assembly or committee is a form of service, and should not be looked upon as a mark of inherent superiority or a means for self-praise."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan and Burma, March 27, 1938: Dawn of a New Day, pp. 200-201)

44. Votes Confidential

"One's vote should be kept confidential. It is not permissible to make any reference whatsoever to individual names. The friends must avoid the evil methods and detestable practices of the politicians. They must turn completely to God, and with a purity of motive, a freedom of spirit and a sanctity of heart, participate in the elections; otherwise the outcome will be chaos and confusion, serious difficulties will ensue, mischief will abound and the confirmation of God will be cut off."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the friends in Persia, January 16, 1932: The Spiritual Character of Baha'i Elections, p. 2)

45. Secret Ballot

"Let them exercise the utmost vigilance so that the elections are carried out freely, universally and by secret ballot. Any form of intrigue, deception, collusion and compulsion must be stopped and is forbidden."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the friends in Persia, January 16, 1932: The Spiritual Character of Baha'i Elections, p. 2)

46. Results of Election Should Be Accepted

"...Once Assembly elections are over, the results should be conscientiously and [13] unquestionably accepted by the entire body of the believers, not necessarily because they represent the voice of truth or the will of Baha'u'llah, but for the supreme purpose of maintaining unity and harmony in the Community. Besides, the acceptance of majority vote is the only effective and practical way of settling deadlocks in elections. No other solution is indeed possible."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

47. Breaking of Tie Votes

"Regarding your question about the breaking of tie votes, a balloting to break

such a tie vote for members of a Spiritual Assembly may be held after the first day of Ridvan if necessary, but obviously the day of balloting should not be delayed too long."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of El Salvador, July 4, 1972)

48. If Enrolled Believer Withdraws—Subsequently Elected to Spiritual Assembly
"Regarding your last question, if, prior to local elections an enrolled believer withdraws from the Faith and this leads to the removal of his name from Baha'i membership, and yet he is subsequently elected to the Local Assembly, such votes as have been cast in his name are disregarded without invalidating the remaining votes on the ballots. If, however, the process of withdrawal has not taken place, that is, the believer refuses on the day of election to participate and expresses then his desire to withdraw from the community, and yet he is subsequently elected to the Assembly, since his withdrawal is generally unknown to the friends, in such a case the remaining eight elected members should meet, consider the withdrawal, and if his name has to be removed from Baha'i membership, a by-election should be held to fill the vacancy."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, December 11, 1979)

49. Mass Migrations
"Local Assemblies cannot be formed any time during the year, unless it is for the first time. The House of Justice fully understands the problems you face each year in forming the ... Assemblies due to the mass migration of the friends during the pine nuts harvest. However, the Assemblies in that area cannot be elected before January 15 or after May 15, as you have suggested. We have noted from your letter that not all of the ... friends may migrate to the higher regions during the Ridvan period, which means that those remaining at home may hold elections. Those Baha'is who leave their homes and are absent during the Ridvan period may leave their votes with those believers remaining behind, who will on the First Day of Ridvan count the ballots and report the results of the election to the National Spiritual Assembly or its representative.

"If all the friends from one Spiritual Assembly jurisdiction go away to work at different locations and there is nobody left in the village to receive their votes, they may write out their ballots before dispersing and send them to the National Assembly or to any committee appointed by that body, who at Ridvan will open and count the votes and inform the Baha'is when they return home of those elected to the Local Assembly.

[14] "When the entire Baha'i population of a village moves away together to a new location and is absent during the Ridvan period, they may elect their Assembly at Ridvan and function as a Local Assembly when they return home."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Chile, January 1, 1984)

50. When Conditions Beyond Human Control Prevent Election of Assembly at Ridvan
"Local Spiritual Assemblies which have not been re-elected during the Ridvan period must be considered as groups. However, there may be cases when conditions beyond the control of the local believers exist, such as, as you have said, the Baha'is had left the community because of flooding, or extremely inclement weather conditions made it impossible to hold the election. In such cases which, by their very nature, should be rare, the National Spiritual Assembly may use its discretion in recognizing the Local Spiritual Assembly, considering it a group, or decide to hold the election of such Local Spiritual Assemblies at a later date when the friends have returned to their communities."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, September 5, 1983)

51. Should Guide Believers During Year in Proper Administrative Procedures
"The conditions of limited manpower, of difficulties in travelling and of illiteracy among the local people are found in varying degrees in other countries of the world, and we have always and everywhere urged the National Spiritual Assemblies concerned to guide and teach the friends in proper Baha'i administrative procedures, not only during the weeks immediately preceding local elections but indeed throughout the year, so that the friends would await the advent of Ridvan with anticipation and determine to observe and uphold correct principles of Baha'i administration."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 24, 1973)

E. Annual Conventions

52. The Functions of the National Convention
"The assembled delegates at a National Convention have two basic functions—to elect and to recommend...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 8, 1967)

"...The function of the Convention is purely advisory and though the advice it gives is not binding in its effects on those on whom rest the final decision in purely administrative matters, yet, the utmost caution and care should be exercised lest anything should hamper the delegates in the full and free exercise of their functions. In discharging this sacred function no influence whatever, no pressure from any quarter, even though it be from the National Assembly, should under any circumstances affect their views or restrict their freedom. The delegates must be wholly independent of any administrative agency, must [15] approach their task with absolute detachment and must concentrate their attention on the most important and pressing issues."
(From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, August 18, 1933: The National Spiritual Assembly, pp. 23-24)

53. Election of Delegates to National Conventions

"As you are aware, some national communities elect their delegates to the National Convention on the basis of areas which have Local Spiritual Assemblies, while in other, larger, national communities delegates are elected on the basis of electoral units in which all adult believers have the vote.

"In view of the growth of the Faith and the developing life of the Baha'i communities, the Universal House of Justice has decided that, notwithstanding that in some countries the number of believers and of Local Spiritual Assemblies is still small, the time has come for delegates to National Conventions everywhere to be elected on the basis of electoral units, but with the option of introducing certain differences from the procedures followed to date. These differences are explained below and are designed to make the system adaptable to the variations in the make-up of the many Baha'i communities and in the geography of the lands in which they are situated.

"When establishing the electoral unit basis for the election of delegates, a National Spiritual Assembly should divide the territory under its jurisdiction into electoral units, based on the number of adult Baha'is in each area, in such a way that each unit will be responsible for electing preferably one delegate only.

"In addition to the voting, the opportunity for consultation with the delegates is important. Hitherto this has been achieved by calling a convention in each unit to which all the believers in that electoral unit are invited. The voting for delegates has then taken place at the unit conventions with provision for voting by mail for those who do not attend. In some areas these meetings have been very fruitful and have helped to foster collaboration among the believers in the unit. However, in other areas, no doubt for a number of reasons, attendance at unit conventions has been very low, as has been the voting by mail, and this has meant that the delegates have been elected by a relatively small proportion of the electorate. National Assemblies are free to call unit conventions if they find they are successful, but if they find problems of attendance they may follow the alternative method described below.

"Where holding unit conventions has proved ineffective, or does not seem to be a viable procedure, a National Assembly may divide each electoral unit into sub-units of a convenient size. A meeting could then be held in each sub-unit to which all the adult believers residing therein would be invited. This should result in the participation of a large number of the believers. It is important to remember, however, that the delegate to be elected represents the entire unit and therefore, although the voting may be carried out in sub-units, each voter has all the adult believers resident in the entire unit to choose from in voting for the delegate.

"In some countries, it may even be too difficult to expect the believers throughout a sub-unit to gather together at a certain time, and so it would not be practical to hold sub-unit meetings. In such places a central point in each sub-unit could be chosen for the establishment of a polling station to which the friends would come to leave their ballots on the voting day as and when they can do so.

[16] "Each National Spiritual Assembly should study and master the broad outlines of this system. All matters of detail should be decided by the National Assembly which should ensure that the friends are fully informed and thoroughly understand what they are expected to do. The help and advice of the Counsellors and their Auxiliary Board members and assistants could be sought in working out these details and in educating the friends. It may also be desirable for the National Assembly to appoint a special national committee to organize the elections and to oversee them through unit or sub-unit committees or representatives. Such matters of detail could include the following:

—The number of delegates to be allocated to each unit. Although one for each unit is preferable, this may not be practicable in certain instances, such as in a unit which contains one or more very large local communities. In such cases it may be necessary to make the unit large enough to be the electoral base for two or possibly three delegates.

— The number and size of sub-units. These could be as many as there are Local Spiritual Assemblies in a unit, the boundaries being so delineated as to include the surrounding isolated believers and Baha'i groups. It may even be necessary in some remote areas to have sub-units in which there are no Local Spiritual Assemblies.

— The body to be responsible for organizing a unit convention or sub-unit meeting or for establishing and supervising a polling station. This could be a centrally located, firmly established Local Spiritual Assembly or a committee.

— The day or days on which the elections should take place. Elections could be carried out in different sub-units on different days, extended over a reasonable period of time, if this is felt to be desirable.

— The manner in which ballots are to be cast, collected, counted, and consolidated with other ballots from the same unit.

— Procedures to be followed in consultation, if the procedure chosen allows for consultation.

— A method for monitoring the balloting to ensure that proper Baha'i procedures are followed, that the ballots are safeguarded, and that a Baha'i voter cannot cast more than one ballot.

— The procedure for holding a second ballot should there be a tie-vote for the delegate.

— The means for announcing to the friends in all units the names of their elected delegates.

"It is the hope of the Universal House of Justice that the implementation of these instructions this year and thereafter will promote Baha'i solidarity, broaden the basis of representation at the National Conventions and that thereby the work of the Faith in each country will be characterized by greater efficiency and enhanced harmony."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all

National Spiritual Assemblies, July 21, 1985)

54. Area of Assembly Jurisdiction Not to be Subdivided for Electoral Districts
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 14 April 1986 and [17] has instructed us to confirm the principle that the area of jurisdiction of a Local Spiritual Assembly should not be sub-divided by boundaries of districts for the election of delegates to the National Convention. We are asked to explain the policy in more detail, as follows.
"The basic guideline for the fixing of the boundaries of electoral districts which was given in the letter of 21 July 1985 was that a National Spiritual Assembly should divide the territory under its jurisdiction into electoral units, based on the number of adult Baha'is in each area, in such a way that each unit will be responsible for electing preferably one delegate only. Later in the letter it was further clarified that although one delegate for each unit is preferable, this may not be practicable in certain instances, such as in a unit which contains one or more very large local communities. In such cases it may be necessary to make the unit large enough to be the electoral base for two or possibly three delegates.
"In some national Baha'i communities which are comparatively small numerically in relation to the number of delegates allocated for their National Conventions, it may be found that, to avoid sub-dividing localities (i.e., the areas of jurisdiction for Local Spiritual Assemblies), it will be necessary to have some electoral districts elect more than three delegates. This does not matter, as long as the principle of proportionality is followed as closely as possible."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of France, June 3, 1986)

55. Delegates Assigned According to Numerical Strength
"Delegates must be assigned according to the numerical strength of a Baha'i community uniformly in all parts of the country. The question as to whether the friends are active or not is not to be taken into consideration; all persons accepted by you as Baha'is must be included on the voting list. Of course, if some of the believers cannot be found after reasonable efforts have been made to locate them, they need not be counted on the voting list."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of French Guiana, January 20, 1987)

56. Inactivity Does Not Justify Removing Name from Voting List
"Mere inactivity on the part of a believer does not justify removing his name from the voting list. Neither is it in accordance with Baha'i principles to take into account the degree of activity in allocating delegates. Believers whose whereabouts are unknown should be considered quite separately from those who are inactive, and a distinction is to be made between those who are interested in the Faith but remain inactive and those whose inactivity indicates complete lack of interest to the extent that they no longer consider themselves to be Baha'is."
(Ibid.)

57. Replacement of Delegates

"There is no provision in the National Baha'i Constitution for replacement of a delegate and this is, therefore, a matter left to the decision of each National Spiritual Assembly. In general, one of the following procedures is followed. If a delegate dies or becomes unable to serve before Convention, the believer polling the next highest number of votes may replace him, or another election may be [18] held. If a delegate ceases to be able to serve after the Convention and there is need for a by-election to the National Spiritual Assembly, you may decide whether or not the delegate should be replaced, and if so, how. In the event of an elected delegate removing to another place, either before or after Convention, you may decide whether to replace him or allow him to continue as an elected delegate. Whatever procedure is adopted should be uniformly followed in all such cases."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Argentina, July 3, 1973)

58. National Spiritual Assembly Determines Timing in Respect to Unit Conventions

"...all matters of detail concerning Unit Conventions are left to the discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly and this includes the timing of the allocation of delegates and the holding of the Unit Conventions. The House of Justice points out, however, that the allocation of delegates should be left as late as possible so that the National Assembly will be able to take into consideration any increases in membership which would affect the number of delegates assigned."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Kenya, March 29, 1987)

59. Consultation Between Delegates and the National Spiritual Assembly

"I fear this letter will reach you after the closing of the convention, but I hope that it will serve to assure you of the necessity of adopting for future conventions the essential method of a full, frank and unhampered consultation between the National Assembly and the assembled delegates. It is the vital duty of the delegates to unburden their hearts, state their grievances, disclose their views, and explain their motives. It is the duty of the National Assembly to give earnest, prompt and prayerful consideration to the views of the delegates, weigh carefully their arguments and ponder their considered judgements, before they resort to voting and undertake to arrive at a decision according to the dictates of their conscience. They should explain their motives and not dictate; seek information and invite discussion."

(From a postscript to a letter dated April 13, 1927, written by the Guardian to the Spiritual Assembly of Montreal, Canada: Extracted in Baha'i News, No. 18, June 1927, p. 3)

60. Status of Members of the National Spiritual Assembly at the National Convention

"Concerning the status of members of the N.S.A. at Convention sessions, the Guardian feels that the members of both the incoming and the outgoing

assemblies should be given the full right to participate in the Convention discussions. Those members of the N.S.A. who have been elected delegates will, in addition to the right of participation, be entitled to vote. The Guardian wishes thereby to render more effective the deliberations and the recommendations of the national representatives. He feels that the exercise of such a right by the members of the N.S.A. will enable them to consult more fully with the assembled delegates, to exchange fully and frankly with them their views, and to consider collectively [19] the interests, needs and requirements of the Cause. This, he believes, is one of the primary functions of the Convention."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 25, 1933)

61. Preferably Delegates Attend Convention in Person
"...It should, however, be made clear to every elected delegate—who should be continually reminded—that it is a sacred responsibility and admittedly preferable to attend if possible in person the sessions of the Convention, to take an active part in all its proceedings, and to acquaint his fellow-workers on his return with the accomplishments, the decisions and the aspirations of the assembled representatives of the ... believers."
(From a letter written by the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 24, 1925: Baha'i Administration, pp. 91-92)

62. If Delegate Cannot Pay Own Expenses
"...In the matter of attendance of delegates at Conventions, the desirability of the friends themselves being self-supporting should be pointed out by the National Assembly. If a delegate cannot pay his own expenses in attending the Convention, the Local Assembly or the believers in the electoral unit from which the delegate comes should be encouraged by the National Assembly to defray such expenses, so that only when funds are unavailable from those sources, the National Assembly is approached to consider offering financial assistance. The same principle holds true about other activities, such as attendance at Institutes, Conferences and Summer Schools."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a number of National Spiritual Assemblies, February 9, 1967)

63. New Blood Adds to Energy of the Group
"Shoghi Effendi has never said that the members of the National Assembly have to be renewed partially every year. The important thing is that they should be properly elected. It would be nice if there should be new members elected, for new blood always adds to the energy of the group and will keep up their spirit. But this depends entirely upon the will of the delegates as represented in the result of their voting."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 27, 1932: Baha'i News, No. 67, October 1932, p. 4)

64. Election of New Members on the National Spiritual Assembly—Duty of Friends to Acquaint Themselves with Fellow Believers

"As regards the election of new members on the National Assembly, Shoghi Effendi finds no other practical method that is in conformity with the spirit of the teachings, except through better acquaintance of the friends during the annual conventions and summer schools. It is the duty of the individual friends to come to know one another and find out who are the persons best fitted to become members of that body. This is a slow process but surely the best one and gives the greatest amount of freedom of choice to the electors. It is the duty of the friends individually to become more intelligent voters and vote only after studying the situation conscientiously."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 16, 1933)

[20] 65. Consultation Among Delegates of a Region Prior to Convention—No Objection, if the Baha'is Are Mature Enough
"The House of Justice sees no objection to consultation among the delegates of a region prior to the Convention, if they wish to undertake this. Indeed, one of the important functions of a Regional Convention, at which the delegates are elected, is for the delegates to consult with the believers present so that they may be familiar with their views and interests in preparation for their own participation in the National Convention. As you know, any believer at the National Convention can request a delegate to put forward a point for him, and the delegate is free to do this if he so wishes; likewise, there would be no objection to one delegate's speaking on behalf of all the delegates from his region to save time, if they and he agree. On the other hand, one must remember that the National Convention is a national Baha'i institution, and that every delegate should have in the forefront of his mind the interests and needs of the Cause throughout the nation, not merely those of the region from which he happens to have been elected. All these details are secondary matters, not covered in the National Baha'i Constitution, and therefore it is for the National Spiritual Assembly to make decisions where they are called for. In one country the delegates may be mature enough to have prior consultation in regional groups; in another it might indeed lead to 'caucusing' or other undesirable developments. The National Spiritual Assembly must ensure that not merely the letter but also the spirit of Baha'i elections and consultation is upheld."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 26, 1983)

66. National Spiritual Assembly Present as an Institution at the National Convention
"The National Spiritual Assembly is present at the Convention as an institution, and its members are present as individual participants in the consultations. These two facts are not incompatible. All the delegates and the members of the National Spiritual Assembly should take part in the Convention in the spirit of free, frank, loving Baha'i consultation. Most Baha'is perform many different functions in their lives. Very often a member of the National Assembly is also a delegate, a member of a Local Assembly, a member of one or more committees, and possibly also an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member.

These multiple functions should not prevent him from expressing his views frankly and courteously in any consultation."
(Ibid.)

67. Only Delegates May Vote in the National Convention
"Only the delegates may vote at the National Convention, whether it be in the election of the National Spiritual Assembly or in arriving at decisions. Some decisions at the Convention can be implemented immediately, such as a decision to send a cable of news or greetings to the World Centre or to another Baha'i body, but most are decisions on whether or not to make a specific recommendation to the National Spiritual Assembly."
(Ibid.)

[21] 68. Each Voter Must Vote for the Nine Best Suited for Election—Not Betray Sacred Trust*
"It is a basic principle of elections for Baha'i Spiritual Assemblies that each voter must vote for the nine people who, in his or her opinion, are best suited to serve. He may have a low opinion of all those who are eligible, but his duty is to vote for those nine from among them who, in his estimation, best meet the standards for service on a Spiritual Assembly. This is how it is possible to vote for exactly nine names. Since the membership of an Assembly is nine, it would give rise to a number of statistical anomalies if voters were permitted to record votes for fewer or more than nine names. In any one election there are not usually many cases where a voter accidentally makes a mistake and includes a name of an ineligible person, so the statistical effect is slight, and there is no need to invalidate his whole ballot. As you point out, a believer who does not wish to vote for nine, may achieve his end by purposely including the names of those who are ineligible, but this would be a betrayal of the trust placed in him as a Baha'i voter. One cannot control such actions, but like any action contrary to the spirit of the Faith, they are detrimental and should be strongly discouraged."
(Ibid.)

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*(See also: No. 34)

69. National Convention Must Be Convened During Ridvan
"Concerning the dates of your National Convention, the Convention must begin, and the election of the National Assembly must take place, before sundown on 2nd May. It is permissible to extend the Convention beyond May 2nd, as long as it is convened during Ridvan."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Paraguay, June 22, 1986)

70. Election of National Spiritual Assembly to be Held at Midpoint in the Convention
"It was noted that although you held a Convention of two days' duration, the election of the new National Spiritual Assembly was scheduled to take place immediately after the election of Convention officers; that is very early in the program. You should know that Shoghi Effendi stated that the election of

the National Spiritual Assembly should be held as nearly as possible at the midway point of Convention."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Chile, July 17, 1983)

71. National Teaching Conference and National Convention Should Not Be Held at the Same Time
"In response to your letter of 25th June 1982 asking whether or not it would be permissible to hold a national teaching conference either simultaneously with the National Convention or in the days immediately before or following the Convention, we have been asked by the Universal House of Justice to inform you that the National Convention, for whatever number of days it is arranged, should be independent of a national teaching conference. They should not be [22] held simultaneously, but whether the conference is held before or after the Convention is left to your discretion."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, July 22, 1982)

72. Attendance Record of National Spiritual Assembly Members May Be Provided to Convention Delegates
"In the matter of reporting to the delegates to the National Convention on the attendance record of the outgoing National Spiritual Assembly, the House of Justice confirms that this is entirely within the discretion of your National Assembly. You could, if you wish to do so, include this information in the National Assembly report to the Convention. The same guidance applies to providing information to the believers in a local community about the attendance record of the members of the outgoing Local Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, July 26, 1981)

73. Workshops During National Convention Not Suitable
"He does not feel that workshops are suitable at the National Convention, the time at the disposal of the delegates is short, and the whole purpose of delegates to a Convention is that as a body they should take up the affairs of the Cause presented for discussion and air ideas and make recommendations. No doubt the workshop itself is a good technique and should be used at summer schools and even if found desirable, at Conferences, but for the Convention it is out of place."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 25, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 226, December 1949, p. 2)

74. Delegates Have Specific Administrative Duties
"The delegates have specific administrative duties to perform as a body and to divide them into smaller groups to consult upon matters which are the business of the Convention as a whole is not correct, particularly as the time of the delegates is limited."
(Ibid.)

75. Non-Delegate Can Be Permitted to Address Convention—Permissiveness Not to be Abused

"If a suggestion that a non-delegate be permitted to address the Convention is approved by the delegates, this is in order. The National Assembly, however, should be careful that such a permissiveness is not abused, as it will defeat the original purpose of stimulating the delegates and deprive them of the limited time at their disposal to engage in their vital deliberations. The delegates should bear in mind that they have business to attend to, and in all such cases the benefits of the Convention should be considered."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Argentina, September 18, 1968)

76. Auxiliary Board Members Present at National Convention

"Auxiliary Board members present at a National Convention do not have the [23] privilege of the floor unless deputized by the Continental Board of Counsellors or given the privilege of the floor by the Convention."

(To all Continental Boards of Counsellors from the Universal House of Justice, March 25, 1969)

77. Desirable Auxiliary Board Members Be Left Free from Administrative Duties

"National Assemblies in whose areas of jurisdiction Board Members reside, should point out to the delegates at Convention that whilst teaching and administrative duties are not mutually exclusive, it is desirable that Auxiliary Board Members, whether for teaching or protection, be left free to concentrate on the work allotted to them.... The following extract from the Guardian's letter, written through his secretary, could be shared with the delegates for their guidance when casting their votes:

"'Teachers of the Cause can surely become members of any Assembly or Committee. There should be no incapacity attached to them. But, Shoghi Effendi would just prefer to see them devote all their time to teaching and leave the administrative functions for those who cannot serve as teachers.' (Baha'i News, October 1932)"

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, November 25, 1963)

78. Hands of the Cause and Counsellors' Participation in Conventions

"We ask you to extend a cordial invitation to the Continental Board of Counsellors of your area to attend each of your Annual Conventions. All Counsellors present at a Convention should be accorded the same freedom of the Convention as is given to the Hands of the Cause. If no Counsellors can attend a Convention, they may appoint for that Convention one or two Auxiliary Board Members to act as their special deputies, who should be warmly welcomed and given the courtesy of taking part in the Convention as representatives of the Board of Counsellors."

(Ibid., March 25, 1969)

79. Counsellors Ineligible for Membership on Administrative Bodies

"The members of these Boards of Counsellors will serve for a term, or terms,

the length of which will be determined and announced at a later date, and while serving in this capacity will not be eligible for membership on national or local administrative bodies...."
(The Universal House of Justice: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 141-142)

F. Instruction of Tellers, Priority of Minorities Approval of Outgoing Assembly*

80. Tellers Should Be Given Guidelines—Recording of Identical Names
"It is for your National Assembly to determine how to properly instruct the delegates beforehand in the recording of identical names on ballots and to give the tellers guidelines for handling these questions when they arise in the counting of the ballots. Thereafter, it is for the tellers to make the decision and give the results to the Convention or Assembly....

Q. [24] In the case of a tie between five persons for three vacancies should the names of the five be read for the delegates vote?

A. Yes.

Q. In voting for officers is it permissible to read the names of those persons who have tied?

A. When voting for officers of an Assembly a result is only reached when one member receives five or more votes. Until that result is reached all members are eligible for the office in question and the results of all inconclusive ballots should be made known to the meeting."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Jamaica, July 29, 1971)

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*(See also: Nos. 31-41)

81. Convention Procedure in Connection with Tellers' Report
"Normal Convention procedure would call for a tellers' report announcing the names of the nine believers elected to the National Spiritual Assembly plus statistical information as to the balance of the votes cast. However, if the Convention votes to have the complete report of the tellers, or any part of it, the Convention is entitled to have the information which will thereupon be presented by the tellers in accordance with the vote of the Convention."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, December 16, 1965)

82. Under Certain Conditions One or More Names May Be Invalidated*
"Under certain conditions an entire ballot may be declared invalid. These are: (1) More than nine names on ballot paper; (2) Less than nine names on ballot paper; (3) Duplication of names. Under other conditions, because of specified irregularities, one or more of the names may be invalidated but the rest of the ballot would be considered valid. These irregularities are: (1) A name not identifiable, or illegible; (2) The name of an ineligible person, such as a youth or person not resident in the jurisdiction of the voting area, provided of course that each ballot contains no more or less than nine names and no name

has been duplicated."
(From a letter dated July 29, 1971 from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Jamaica)

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*Ballot should not be invalidated because it contains name of Auxiliary Board Member (See Nos. 28-29)

83. Minority Accorded Priority Without Question
"Since the Guardian's instruction on this point is unequivocal where it is obvious that one of the persons involved represents a minority, that person should be accorded the priority without question. Where there is doubt further balloting will allow every voter present to participate.
"With reference to the provision in Article V of the National By-laws governing the situation where two or more members have received the same highest number of votes, if one of those members represents a minority that individual should be given priority as if selected by lot."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 25, 1967)

[25] 84. Definition of Minority and Majority at Discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly
"...the definition of a minority in any locality is in the discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly. It is clear that pioneers from other lands should not be regarded as belonging to a minority, neither do the categories quoted by the Guardian in 'The Advent of Divine Justice', namely, 'faith, race, class or nation', include sex. The overriding principle is always that if there is any doubt as to whether the minority principle should be invoked, then a further ballot should be taken."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, March 5, 1986)

85. Results Reported to National Assembly for Acceptance and Instruction to Tellers About Re-Voting
"In answer to your question about who should decide this matter, the House of Justice states that it is the duty of the tellers to report the entire result of the voting to the National Spiritual Assembly which has a duty of accepting the tellers' report before it is presented to the Convention. If the National Assembly sees that the ninth place is tied and that one of the persons tied is a member of a minority, it would instruct the tellers to report the results on this basis without calling for a re-vote. If, however, there is any doubt at all as to whether a minority is involved, the Assembly should resolve the matter by instructing that a re-vote for the ninth place should be held."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland, April 13, 1975)

86. Only Names of Those Tied Appear on Subsequent Ballots
"Following the voting in an election of an Assembly, Local or National, results of the balloting should be announced, including the names of those tied for ninth place. A new ballot must then be cast to decide between those who have

received the same number of votes for ninth place. Only those who are tied to be voted for on that ballot, and the tie may be broken by the delegates present at the Convention."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of The Bahamas, May 18, 1982)

87. How to Report a Tie
"It is not correct to show that Senorita ... received 13 votes. If she is to be listed among those receiving votes on the first ballot it should be shown that she was tied for ninth place with 6 votes and that on the second ballot she received 13 of the votes cast."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, June 16, 1964)

88. First, New Assembly Must Consider Whether to Accept Resignation
"...your Assembly should first have considered whether to accept Miss ... resignation, and then, if the Assembly had accepted her resignation, the vacancy should have been filled by a by-election in which all ... delegates should have been given an opportunity to vote. It is only a tie vote that may be broken [26] by a vote of those delegates present at Convention, not a by-election unless, of course, all delegates are present."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 6, 1981)

89. By-Election Can Be Held During Convention Only if All Delegates Are Present
"If a by-election is necessary, however, all delegates must be given an opportunity to vote. If all delegates are present at the Convention, the by-election can of course take place at one of the sessions. If there are absent delegates, the by-election can still be arranged so that the delegates present may cast their ballots before the Convention disbands, and ballots from absent delegates be received at a later date."
(Ibid., May 18, 1981)

90. Tie for Ninth Member of the National Spiritual Assembly
"In the case of a tie for the ninth member of a National Spiritual Assembly, a vote can be held immediately at the Convention among the delegates present, to break the tie. However, if a vacancy is declared at the Convention because a resignation of one of the members of the newly elected National Assembly is accepted, a by-election must be called, i.e., all delegates must be given an opportunity to vote for someone to fill the vacancy."
(Ibid., June 13, 1976)

91. Duty of Auxiliary Board Member to Advise Assembly, Not Delegates, that He Will Not Serve
"The Auxiliary Board member ... should have been listed as elected and given the opportunity to decide whether to continue to serve on the Board or to resign and accept the election to the administrative body. It is his duty to advise the National Assembly itself and not the delegates or the Convention. If he decides to remain on the Board, and the National Assembly declares a vacancy

while Convention is still in session, a by-election could be arranged before the Convention disbands."
(Ibid., June 26, 1978)

92. Board Members Should Not Resign Before a Tie-Breaking Vote is Cast
"A Board Member should not be given the opportunity to resign before a tie-breaking vote is cast since there are other factors involved and it is possible that he may not be elected. However, if he is elected, he should advise the National Assembly of his decision to accept the elected post or continue his role as an Auxiliary Board member. If he resigns from the Assembly, then that body declares a vacancy and arranges for a by-election."
(Ibid.)

93. Preservation of Ballots
"In the minutes of your meetings of ..., the Universal House of Justice noted the items about 'Ballots of the Third National Assembly Election' and your instruction to the Secretary to destroy the ballots. We are directed to convey the following to you for your guidance.
"While it is within the discretion of a National Spiritual Assembly to determine what to do about preservation of the ballots following the annual election, the [27] House of Justice points out that should any question concerning the balloting arise during the year following the election, it would be helpful if the ballots were available for National Spiritual Assembly scrutiny. Obviously, after the next following election, such need to preserve the ballots cast in the previous year's election would no longer exist."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 22, 1980)

94. Assembly Has Right to Examine Ballots
"He considers that the National Spiritual Assembly has every right to examine the ballots if there is some doubt as to the election having been properly conducted. By 'preservation' of the ballots is meant that they are preserved in the National files."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, March 14, 1947)

95. Delegates Should Be Given Opportunity to Report to the Community
"A Convention delegate should certainly be given an opportunity to report to the Community his or her experiences at Convention and impressions!"
(Ibid.)

G. Officers of Local and National Assemblies

96. If All Members Present, Permanent Officers Should Be Elected Immediately
"While it is certainly true that the permanent officers of an Assembly should be elected immediately following the election of that Assembly, it is equally important, as stated in Article IV of the By-laws of the National Assembly, that 'The officers shall be elected by a majority vote of the entire membership of the Assembly taken by secret ballot.' That is all members of the Assembly must be properly notified and given an opportunity to vote, and in cases of

unavoidable absence it does not contravene the spirit of the By-laws if the absent member should cast his ballot by mail or even by telephone.

"Temporary officers may be elected until all nine are properly notified of the election."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 27, 1981)

97. Assembly or Committee Members May Excuse Themselves from Being Elected as Officers
"We have also been asked to point out that although it is the obligation of a Baha'i to serve on an Assembly, either Local or National, when elected, on several occasions the beloved Guardian pointed out that before the election of officers, if any member had a good reason in his own opinion why he should not be elected to one of the offices of the Assembly, he was free to suggest that he should not be so elected. The House of Justice also feels that as the work of the Faith expands and the duties of officers, particularly on National Spiritual Assemblies, acquire more importance, it is permissible and at times advisable to discuss the duties incumbent upon and required of each officer before ballots are cast."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, February 9, 1987)

[28] 98. It is Preferable that a Person Hold No More Than One Office
"...we are asked to say it is preferable that a person hold no more than one office, but it is within the discretion of your Assembly to permit a member to hold two offices.

"Regarding the specific instance you have cited, you should consider carefully whether one person can effectively perform as both Chairman and Secretary, given the requirements of each office."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Togo, July 4, 1984)

99. Complete Results of Each Vote Must Be Known to All Members of the Assembly Present
"The complete results of each vote should be known to all members of the Assembly. Therefore, the names and tally should be given by the tellers, and if no member has received the required majority, the members should proceed to vote again. Voting should not be confined to those receiving the highest number of votes."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 4, 1981: cited in a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, September 2, 1981)

100. The Integrity of the Elector Must Be Relied Upon
"You will note in the above extract that the tellers should report both names and tally. The House of Justice suggests that we must rely on the integrity of the elector to consider dispassionately those names he lists on his ballot, irrespective of the results of the previous balloting."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, September 2, 1981)

101. Any Officer Elected Must Have Received at Least Five Votes
"Any officer elected must have received at least five votes, even if only five members are present. The ballots of any absentee members cannot be counted if re-voting is necessary. If for any reason no member receives five votes, then the Assembly must in consultation appoint one or more temporary officers to function until the next meeting, and must call another meeting as soon as possible to elect permanent officers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, September 26, 1983)

102. The Chairman of the Assembly
"Concerning the duties of the Chairman of the Local Spiritual Assembly or the National Spiritual Assembly: He is supposed to share, freely and fully, in the discussions of all subjects under the consideration of these bodies, and to register his vote regarding each one of them. The duty of a Baha'i Chairman is not only to guide the course of the discussion, but also to express his own viewpoint without any reservation whatever. He is entitled to exercise both of these functions."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 10, 1936)

[29] 103. The Vice-Chairman
"The Universal House of Justice has asked us to advise you that the appropriate procedure would be for the Vice-Chairman of the Assembly to chair the meetings in the absence of the Chairman. If the Vice-Chairman happens to be also absent, then the Assembly should decide who among the members present should chair the meeting."
(From a letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ciskei, February 10, 1987)

104. Duties of the National Secretary
"The proper growth of a community is possible only when the National Spiritual Assembly, through its office and secretary, is able to maintain a steady flow of communication to the believers in its jurisdiction, offering guidance and encouragement to them. Every effort should be made to enable the National Assembly secretary to discharge his or her duties without being hampered by too many administrative regulations. The manner in which this is done, of course, is left to the discretion of each National Spiritual Assembly.

"A key factor in determining how much responsibility is to be placed on the secretary is trust. When there is trust and love among the members of the Assembly, many problems will be avoided. The National Assembly secretary should be empowered to take the initiative in matters of a routine nature. It is not normally necessary for the secretary's letters to be scrutinized by other members of the Assembly although they may always have access to such correspondence."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bangladesh, September 21, 1983)

105. The Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly is Its Chief Executive Officer

"Whatever the personal circumstances of the believer employed, the National Assembly should realize that its Secretary is its chief executive officer, and as such acts not only as liaison with the national committees, the Local Spiritual Assemblies and all the friends, but generally represents the National Spiritual Assembly and the Faith itself to the non-Baha'i world, a duty becoming ever more important as the Cause becomes more widely known."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, January 23, 1981)

106. Full-Time Services of Secretary May Require Remuneration, about which the Agreement Should Be Duly Recorded

"A national Baha'i community which reaches that stage of development where the work of its National Spiritual Assembly requires the full-time services of its Secretary, faces many difficult, and sometimes delicate, considerations. It is generally a thought-provoking occasion to the community itself, which has become used to the work of the Cause being discharged by voluntary, dedicated, part-time and often amateur service; and the realization that the Cause has reached the point where its work and public image—so important to future progress—can no [30] longer be maintained in the old way, may be disturbing at first. The friends, however, quickly respond to the new capacity for leadership and guidance and the increased status which its National Assembly acquires by establishing a sounder foundation for its operations, and are encouraged by the advancement of the Cause.

"The specific remuneration and conditions of service of the national Secretary must obviously be the result of consultation, and when agreement has been reached the result should be recorded, not necessarily in a contract, but certainly in a Minute of the Assembly and/or an exchange of letters."
(Ibid.)

107. Secretary's Helper Can Be Non-Member of Assembly

"In reply to your letter of November 7th, 1973 there is no objection whatsoever to a non-member of the National Spiritual Assembly typing your Minutes or such other confidential reports. Many National Spiritual Assemblies employ typists in their national offices who are intimately connected with all the work of the National Spiritual Assembly. Of course, the person so employed should enjoy the confidence of the National Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, November 20, 1973)

108. Secretariat Should Be Situated in the Capital City

"He was sorry that he felt it necessary to insist that the secretary of your Assembly must be located in Buenos Aires so that the Secretariat can be located in the Headquarters of this region; this is a general principle which he has

insisted the friends adhere to everywhere...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia, July 29, 1957: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 43)

109. National Secretary Should Keep in Close Touch with Local Assemblies
"Shoghi Effendi firmly believes that consultation must be maintained between the N.S.A. and the entire body of the believers and that such a consultation, when the Convention is not in session, can best be maintained through the agency of the local assemblies, one of whose essential functions is to act as intermediaries between the local communities and their national representatives."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: Principles of Baha'i Administration, pp. 67-68)

110. Contents of Minutes
"The content of some of the minutes we receive could be improved, and we therefore offer the following suggestions: The purpose of the minutes is to record the action of the Assembly with sufficient background information so that one reading the minutes will understand the reason for the action. National Assemblies may find it helpful if the background and the action are separated and not typed together. On the other hand, minutes should not be a verbatim report of the National Assembly meeting, and it is not the purpose of the minutes to record the views of individual members. Names of individuals making motions need not be recorded. Names should be included, however, whenever required to [31] make clear the assignments of persons responsible for actions. Each set of minutes should reflect the time and place of the next meeting."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 27, 1970)

111. Secretary Should Be Careful to Convey Majority Decision
"Generally speaking the Secretary of an Assembly must be careful to convey exactly what the majority decision or advice of the body was. There can surely be no objection to his putting it in proper terms and clarifying the matter according to the decisions or instruction of the Assembly. But he should of course not introduce his personal views unless endorsed by the Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 19, 1947)

112. Treasurer of the Spiritual Assembly Receives All Donations and Contributions
"And as the progress and execution of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of local as well as National Spiritual Assemblies, a Baha'i Fund be established, to be placed under the exclusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. All donations and contributions should be offered to the Treasurer of the Assembly, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Cause, throughout that locality or country. It is the sacred obligation

of every conscientious and faithful servant of Baha'u'llah who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund...."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, dated March 12, 1923: Baha'i Administration, pp. 41-42)

113. Handling of Funds*
"As to your question: The friends can give their contributions to the treasurer, or, if they wish to remain anonymous and give small sums, a receptacle can be provided. The Local Assembly can decide this matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 29, 1951: Baha'i Funds and Contributions, a compilation of extracts from the Guardian's letters on the subject dated January 1970, from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the World)

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*(See also: XXI. C. 857-866)

114. Obligation of a Baha'i Who is Elected to an Office which Requires Full-Time Service
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter mailed 23rd January, 1987 concerning the obligation of a Baha'i who is elected to an office which requires full-time service. We are asked to share with you an excerpt of a letter dated 7th August 1980 written on behalf of the House of Justice addressed to an individual believer facing a problem similar to the one you pose.

'The delicate balance between the claims of the Cause of God and the claims of one's profession is an intensely personal matter which can only be resolved eventually in the heart and soul of each individual. Many Baha'is have become, and are, distinguished in their professions and at the same time have rendered and are rendering great services to the Cause and it is obviously possible to [32] achieve distinction in one's profession and calling and to serve the Cause of God at the same time. The House of Justice realizes, however, that circumstances can conspire, at critical times in the fortunes of the Faith, to require individuals to make the heart-searching decision of sacrificing one's own prospects for the apparent good of the Cause. Here again, the history of the Cause provides many examples of believers who have willingly foregone promotion in, or even the continued practice of, their professions in order to meet the needs of the Faith. As in all difficult decisions facing individual believers, the God-given process of consultation is available to them, and every individual may consult either one of the institutions of the Faith or an individual officer, such as a Counsellor or Board member, or even one or two friends of his own choosing. Even then, however, the eventual decisions rests with the individual himself.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, February 9, 1987)

115. Those Elected to an Assembly Should Consider It a Privilege and a Responsibility to Serve

"...those who have been elected to such membership should consider it a privilege and also a responsibility to serve in that body, and should therefore refrain from any resignation, even though they may disagree with the majority of the members. Obedience to the considered views and policies of the majority should be whole-hearted, for it implies obedience and loyalty to the Administrative Order itself."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 8, 1939)

116. Procedure for Assemblies When Dissatisfied with Officers
"As regards the question of what procedure the Baha'i Assemblies should adopt when dissatisfied with the services of any of their officers. Should such dissatisfaction involve the loyalty of an Assembly officer to the Faith, he should, following a majority vote, be dismissed. But in case the dissatisfaction is due to the incompetence of a member, or simply to a neglect on his part to discharge his duties, this does not constitute sufficient justification to force his resignation or dismissal from the Assembly. He should be kept in office until new elections are held."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, November 22, 1940: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 42)

H. Local and National Administrators

117. Functions and Duties of Elected Representatives
"...Their function is not to dictate, but to consult, and consult not only among themselves, but as much as possible with the friends whom they represent. They must regard themselves in no other light but that of chosen instruments for a more efficient and dignified presentation of the Cause of God. They should never be led to suppose that they are the central ornaments of the body of the Cause, intrinsically superior to others in capacity or merit, and sole promoters of its teachings and principles. They should approach their task with extreme humility, and endeavour by their open-mindedness, their high sense of justice and duty, [33] their candour, their modesty, their entire devotion to the welfare and interests of the friends, the Cause, and humanity, to win not only the confidence and the genuine support and respect of those whom they serve, but also their esteem and real affection. They must, at all times, avoid the spirit of exclusiveness, the atmosphere of secrecy, free themselves from a domineering attitude, and banish all forms of prejudice and passion from their deliberations."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the Baha'is of America, February 23, 1924: Baha'i Administration, p. 64)

118. They Must Uphold the Standard of Justice
"In all cases submitted for its consideration the Assembly must uphold the standard of justice in delivering its verdict, and in all its dealings with the community and the outside world it must strive to evince the qualities of leadership. The following quotation from a letter of the Guardian summarizes in simple terms the immediate goal every Assembly should set for itself in its

efforts to pursue the exalted standard of perfection inculcated in our writings:

'The first quality for leadership both among individuals and Assemblies is the capacity to use the energy and competence that exists in the rank and file of its followers. Otherwise the more competent members of the group will go at a tangent and try to find elsewhere a field of work and where they could use their energy. 'Shoghi Effendi hopes that the Assemblies will do their utmost in planning such teaching activities that every single soul will be kept busy'.

"(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, dated August 30, 1930)"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, July 30, 1972)

119. Administrators of Faith Like Shepherds
"The administrators of the Faith of God must be like unto shepherds. Their aim should be to dispel all the doubts, misunderstandings and harmful differences which may arise in the community of the believers. And this they can adequately achieve provided they are motivated by a true sense of love for their fellow-brethren coupled with firm determination to act with justice in all cases which are submitted to them for their consideration."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 9, 1934: The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 23)

120. The Ones in Real Authority Known by Humility and Self-Sacrifice
"The ones in real authority are known by their humility and self-sacrifice and show no attitude of superiority over the friends. Some time ago a tablet was written stating that none are appointed to any authority to do anything but to serve the Cause as true servants of the friends—and for this no tablet is necessary; such service when true and unselfish, requires no announcement, nor following, nor written document. Let the servant be known by his deeds, by his life! To be approved of God alone should be one's aim."
('Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land answers questions of Dr. Edward C. Getsinger and recorded by Dr. Getsinger at the time (1905): Star of the West, Vol. VI, No. 6, p. 43)

[34] 121. Keynote of Cause of God Not Dictatorial Authority
"Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true Baha'i can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion, and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other."
(Shoghi Effendi: Baha'i Administration, pp. 63-64)

122. Assemblies Should Influence Believers to Confidently Present Their Problems
"...You are no doubt aware of the exhortations of the beloved Guardian

concerning the attitude that National Assemblies must endeavour to maintain in their dealings with the friends under their jurisdiction. He indicated that a National Assembly should be like a loving parent, watching over and helping its children, and not like a stern judge, waiting for an opportunity to display his judicial powers.
"Shoghi Effendi has pointed out the National Assemblies must assume such a role as to influence the believers to confidently take their problems to the Assembly, and to respect and unhesitatingly obey its wishes and decrees. The Assemblies should evidence not even the least trace of dictatorial assertiveness, but should remember that most of the sins of the believers are the sins of immaturity. These friends should be nursed and assisted into a fuller understanding of their responsibilities as Baha'is and encouraged to conduct themselves in a Baha'i manner."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Venezuela, June 3, 1979)

123. Breach of Trust by Assembly Members Will Destroy Confidence of Believers
"...regarding the extent to which confidential information about believers may be shared with other believers for their protection, and we offer in reply the following considerations:
1. Any information which comes to the notice of an Assembly member, solely by reason of his membership on that Assembly must not be divulged by that member, even though the Assembly itself may later decide to share it.

2. The Assembly must itself carefully consider which information should rightly fall in the category of confidential information and which should not be shared with others, and which information may be divulged under special circumstances, and how such information may be divulged. Should confidential matters regarding personal problems be freely shared with others, upon application, the confidence of the believers in the Assembly and its members will obviously be destroyed.

3. It must be remembered that individuals can reform, and a reprehensible past does not necessarily disqualify a believer from building a better future.

"Within the general framework of these principles, we feel you should be able [35] to handle each case as it may come to your attention. No hard and fast rule should be laid down in such cases, as each case requires careful handling, sound judgement and utmost discretion."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 18, 1968)

124. Administrative Efficiency Should Be Accompanied by an Equal Amount of Love
"Administrative efficiency and order should always be accompanied by an equal degree of love, of devotion and of spiritual development. Both of them are essential and to attempt to dissociate one from the other is to deaden the body of the Cause. In these days, when the Faith is still in its infancy, great care must be taken lest mere administrative routine stifles the spirit which must feed the body of the Administration itself. That spirit is its propelling force

and the motivating power of its very life.

"But as already emphasized, both the spirit and the form, are essential to the safe and speedy development of the Administration. To maintain full balance between them is the main and unique responsibility of the administrators of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, December 10, 1933)

125. Administrators Should Consider Themselves as Mere Channels Whereby God Protects and Guides His Faith
"The Cause ... is a divine institution whose responsible administrators should consider themselves as mere channels whereby God protects and guides His Faith. The Administration should never be allowed to become a bone of contention between individuals and groups. It stands above human personalities and transcends the scope of their limited and inevitably selfish ideas. Its custodians should continually purge themselves of every trace of personal desire or interest and become wholly imbued with the spirit of love, of cooperation and of genuine self-sacrifice."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 8, 1933)

126. National Spiritual Assembly is Supreme Authority, Mainspring of Activities, Sole Link to the Universal House of Justice
"I wish to reaffirm, in clear and categorical language, the principle already enunciated upholding the supreme authority of the National Assembly in all matters that affect the interests of the Faith in that land. There can be no conflict of authority, no duality under any form or circumstances in any sphere of Baha'i jurisdiction whether local, national or international. The National Assembly, however, although the sole interpreter of its Declaration of Trust and by-laws, is directly and morally responsible if it allows any body or institution within its jurisdiction to abuse its privileges or to decline in the exercise of its rights and prerogatives. It is the trusted guardian and the mainspring of the manifold activities and interests of every national community in the Baha'i world. It [36] constitutes the sole link that binds these communities to the International House of Justice—the supreme administrative body in the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah."
(Postscript by Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, June 11, 1934)

127. Obedience to the National Spiritual Assembly is the Basis for Unity
"...the Guardian wishes me to again affirm his view that the authority of the National Spiritual Assembly is undivided and unchallengeable in all matters pertaining to the administration of the Faith ... and that, therefore, the obedience of individual Baha'is, delegates, groups, and assemblies to that authority is imperative, and should be whole-hearted and unqualified. He is convinced that the unreserved acceptance and complete application of this vital provision of the Administration is essential to the maintenance of the highest degree of unity among the believers, and is indispensable to the effective

working of the administrative machinery of the Faith in every country."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, June 11, 1934)

128. The National Spiritual Assembly is the Head and the Local Spiritual Assemblies Are the Various Organs
"...the best way to insure and consolidate the organic unity of the Faith is to strengthen the authority of the Local Assemblies and to bring them within the full orbit of the National Assembly's jurisdiction. The National Assembly is the head, and the Local Assemblies are the various organs of the body of the Cause. To insure full cooperation between these various parts is to safeguard the best interests of the Faith by enabling it to counteract those forces which threaten to create a breach within the ranks of the faithful. This is the delicate and highly significant mission with which the Guardian wishes to entrust you. Not only to teach the outsiders, through public lecturing, but in addition to that, and in view of making your efforts more varied and successful, to acquaint the friends with the essentials of the Administration, upon the full understanding of which the future progress of the Cause greatly depends."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 20, 1933)

129. Vital Function of National Spiritual Assembly
"...It is one of the vital functions of the National Spiritual Assembly to be always in touch with local conditions in every community and to endeavour through personal contacts and by means of regular correspondence, to guide the friends, individually and collectively, in all their activities."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 30, 1938: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 33)

130. Authority and Influence of Assemblies Must Be Strengthened
"...the steady progress and consolidation of the Cause of God on the one hand and progressive disintegration of a moribund world on the other—will undoubtedly impose upon us new tasks, the obligation of devising new approaches to teaching, of demonstrating more clearly to a disillusioned world the Baha'i way of life and making more effective the administrative institutions of the Faith. The authority [37] and influence of National and Local Spiritual Assemblies will have to be strengthened in order to deal with larger Baha'i communities...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan, 1971: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 72)

131. A "Best" Assembly
"...The best Assembly is the one that capitalizes the talents of all the members of the group and keeps them busy in some form of active participation in serving the Cause and spreading the Message."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 1932: Baha'i News, No. 68, November 1932, p. 3)

132. Centralization of Authority Made Manifest in Master's Will
"The need for the centralization of authority in the National Spiritual Assembly, and the concentration of power in the various local Assemblies, is made manifest when we reflect that the Cause of Baha'u'llah is still in its age of tender growth and in a stage of transition; when we remember that the full significance of the Master's world-wide instructions, as laid down in His Will, are as yet not fully grasped, and the whole Movement has not sufficiently crystallized in the eyes of the world."
(Shoghi Effendi: Baha'i Administration, p. 42)

133. Fundamentals of Baha'i Administration Must Be Adhered to
"The fundamentals laid down in the Baha'i Administration must, of course, be adhered to, but there is a tendency for Assemblies to constantly issue detailed procedures and rules to the friends, and he considers this hampers the work of the Cause, and is entirely premature. As far as is possible cases which come up should be dealt with and settled as they arise, and not a blanket ruling be laid down to cover all possible similar cases. This preserves the elasticity of the Administrative Order and prevents red tape from developing and hampering the work of the Cause... Uniformity in fundamentals is essential but not in every detail. On the contrary, diversity, the solving of the local situation in the right way, is important."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, November 4, 1948: Messages to Canada, pp. 8-9)

134. Tendency of All National Assemblies to Over-Administer
"Your Assembly must be very careful not to over-load the Baha'is with rules and regulations, circulars and directions. The purpose of the Administration at this time is to blow on the fire newly kindled in the hearts of these people who have accepted the Faith, to create in them the desire and capacity to teach, to facilitate the pioneer and teaching work, and help deepen the knowledge and understanding of the friends. The beloved Guardian issues this word of warning, as long experience has shown that it is a tendency on the part of all N.S.A.'s to over-administer. In their enthusiasm they forget that they only have a handful of inexperienced souls to guide, and attempt to deal with their work as if they had a large population to regulate! This then stifles the spirit of the friends and the teaching work suffers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of North East Asia, July 15, 1957: Japan Will Turn Ablaze!, p. 67)

[38] 135. It is Not Necessary to Anticipate Situations
"...It is not necessary for your Assembly to anticipate situations which have not arisen, and to lay down general rules and regulations to meet them. It would be wiser to consider every case individually as it arises, and then to resolve the problem connected with it in the most suitable and practical manner...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, November 27, 1937: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 49)

136. Over-Administration Worse than Under-Administration
"...Over-administration can be even worse for the Faith at this time than under-administration. The believers are, for the most part, young in the Cause, and if they make mistakes it is not half as important as if their spirit is crushed by being told all the time—do this and don't do that! The new National Body should be like a loving parent, watching over and helping its children, and not like a stern judge, waiting for an opportunity to display his judicial powers. The reason he points this out to you is that constantly, for the past twenty years and more, he has been pointing this out to the old and tried National Assemblies, and he does not want the younger bodies to make the same mistakes. Individual cases should be dealt with as they arise, according to the Teachings, of which the believers have quite sufficient available to handle all of their problems at this time, and no more additional rules and regulations need be introduced."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, June 30, 1957: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 52)

137. National Spiritual Assemblies Should Be Uncompromising in Principle But Flexible in Procedures
"In the Baha'i Faith there are matters of principle affecting the operation of Baha'i institutions, which are outlined in the writings of the Faith as well as in the Constitutions of National and Local Spiritual Assemblies. Obviously, National Assemblies will face situations and problems which have to be resolved but are not fully covered by these texts. In such matters the National Assembly should adopt its own procedures suited to the conditions and requirements of its own national community. It may be found useful to adopt a procedure followed by another National Spiritual Assembly; certainly there is no objection to such a course of action, provided it is clear that in the final analysis such issues are left to the discretion of the National Assembly itself.

"In matters of principle, therefore, there should be uniformity, while in matters of detail and procedure not only is diversity permitted, it is also encouraged. As conditions vary from country to country and, indeed, can vary from community to community within the country, Shoghi Effendi repeatedly advised the friends that they should be uncompromising in principle but flexible in subsidiary details."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Burundi, October 22, 1986)

138. National Assembly is Guardian of the Welfare of the Faith
"The National Assembly is the guardian of the welfare of the Faith, a most sacred and heavy responsibility and one which is inescapable. They must be ever vigilant, ever on the lookout, ever ready to take action, and, on all matters [39] of fundamental principle, refuse to compromise for an instant. Only in this way can the body of the Faith be free of disease."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, August 14, 1957: The National Spiritual

Assembly, p. 61)

139. Tendency of Late-Comers to Belittle Work Done
"...So often ... situations arise because there is a tendency, very human but not very kind, for late-comers to belittle the work done by the first believers and hurt their feelings. Those responsible therefore, for carrying on the work, must be extremely tactful and loving in their efforts to prevent a rift from occurring. It is very difficult for the administrators of the Cause to learn to be absolutely impartial, patient and wise, and very difficult for the believers to learn to give up personal will to the will of the majority! But this is Baha'u'llah's standard, and they must all constantly strive to attain it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Inter-America Committee, March 28, 1950)

140. Each Believer Should Have Access to Communications from World Centre of His Faith
"The importance of communicating the progress of the Faith to every individual believer can hardly be over-emphasized. Learning of the victories achieved by the valiant souls who have arisen to serve Baha'u'llah can inspire others and can create a sense of world perspective which raises one's sights above his own petty pre-occupations and makes being a Baha'i more meaningful and purposeful.

"Each believer should have access, for example, to the communications from the World Centre of his Faith—the Messages from the Universal House of Justice and the Hands of the Cause as well as news emanating from the World Centre."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies in Latin America, Africa and the South Pacific, August 28, 1965)

141. Legal Standing for Spiritual Assemblies*
"It is surely very important to give to the Local Assemblies some legal standing for as the Cause progresses and its adherents increase, they will be confronted with duties they cannot even imagine at present. Not only will they have to make contracts for acquiring halls for their meeting place, but also they will be obliged to create new institutions to care for their sick, poor and aged people. We hope that before long the Baha'is will even afford to have schools that would provide the children the intellectual and spiritual education as prescribed in the Writings of Baha'u'llah and the Master."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 25, 1931: Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 47)

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*(See also: I.G., Nos. 224-231)

142. Local Assemblies Should Give Teachers Every Encouragement
"Regarding the principle that the Cause must not be allowed to centre around any Baha'i personality, the Guardian wishes to make it clear that it was never intended that well qualified individual teachers should not receive from Local Assemblies every encouragement and facilities to address the public. What the [40] Guardian meant was that the personality and popularity of such a speaker

should never be allowed to eclipse the authority, or detract from the influence of the body of the elected representatives in every local community. Such an individual should not only seek the approval, advice, and assistance of the body that represents the Cause in his locality, but should strive to attribute any credit he may obtain to the collective wisdom and capacity of the Assembly under whose jurisdiction he performs his services. Assemblies and not individuals constitute the bedrock on which the Administration is built. Everything else must be subordinated to, and be made to serve and advance the best interests of these elected custodians and promoters of the Laws of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 12, 1933: Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 19)

143. Class Consciousness Contrary to Actual Teachings of Faith
"...although it is essential for the believers to maintain always a clear distinction between teaching and administrative duties and functions, yet they should be careful not to be led to think that these two types of Baha'i activity are mutually exclusive in their nature, and as such cannot be exercised by one and the same person. As a matter of fact, the friends should be encouraged to serve in both the teaching and administrative fields of Baha'i service. But as there are always some who are more specially gifted along one of these two lines of activity it would seem more desirable that they should concentrate their efforts in acquiring the full training for that type of work for which they are best suited by nature. Such a specialization has the advantage of saving time, and of leading to greater efficiency, particularly at this early stage of our development.

"The great danger, however, lies in that by doing so the friends may tend to develop a sort of class consciousness which is fundamentally contrary to both the spirit and actual teachings of the Faith.

"It is precisely in order to overcome such a danger that the Guardian thinks it advisable that the friends should be encouraged to serve from time to time in both the teaching and the administrative spheres of Baha'i work, but only whenever they feel fit to do so."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 29, 1935: Ibid., p. 3)

144. Extension Teaching Goals, Local Assemblies Should Assume Responsibility for
"The time has come, we believe, when increasing numbers of Local Spiritual Assemblies should assume responsibility for helping the teaching work of groups, isolated believers, and other Spiritual Assemblies in their neighbourhood. Such extension teaching goals should be assigned by the National Spiritual Assembly or one of its teaching committees, or can be spontaneously adopted by Local Spiritual Assemblies, and should be carried out within the framework of the overall teaching plans of the country. It should also be made clear that by being given such goals a Spiritual Assembly is not being given any jurisdiction over believers outside its area, still less over other Local

Spiritual Assemblies, but is being called upon to collaborate with them in their work."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, Naw-Ruz 1974)

[41] 145. Plans of the Assemblies Should Be Known to Counsellors and Auxiliary Board Members
"It is the Spiritual Assemblies who plan and direct the work, but these plans should be well known to the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members, because one of the ways in which they can assist the Assemblies is by urging the believers continually to support the plans of the Assemblies. If a National Spiritual Assembly has adopted one goal as preeminent in a year, the Auxiliary Board members should bear this in mind in all their contacts with the believers and should direct their attention to the plans of the National Assembly, and stimulate them to enthusiastically support them."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969: Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 32-33)

146. Local Spiritual Assemblies' Relations with Auxiliary Board
"It is at this local level of Baha'i community life, the very foundation of the administrative structure of the Faith, that we so often find lack of adequate strength and efficiency. It is at this same level that our beloved Guardian urged Auxiliary Board members to establish contact with Local Spiritual Assemblies, groups, isolated centres and the individual believers, and through periodic and systematic visits to localities as well as by correspondence help in promoting the interests of the Plan, assist in the efficient and prompt execution of the goals, watch over the security of the Faith, stimulate and strengthen the teaching and pioneer work, impress upon the friends the importance of individual effort, initiative and sacrifice, and encourage them to participate in Baha'i activities and be unified under all circumstances."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all Continental Boards of Counsellors, November 17, 1971)

147. All Local Spiritual Assemblies Should Collaborate with Auxiliary Board Members and Their Assistants
"When a Local Spiritual Assembly begins to function properly, it does not mean it can dispense with the service and work of Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, who can and should continue to provide stimulation and inspiration not only generally to the Assembly and local Baha'i activities, but to individual believers as well."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 9, 1980)

148. When Local Spiritual Assemblies Are Truly Effective
"Such a firmly-founded, busy and happy community life as is envisioned when Local Spiritual Assemblies are truly effective, will provide a firm home foundation from which the friends may derive courage and strength and loving support in bearing the Divine Message to their fellowmen and conforming their

lives to its benevolent rule."
(From the Naw-Ruz Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, 1974)

149. A Functioning Local Spiritual Assembly—Salient Objectives to be Attained
"In reply to your letter of July 14th asking guidance as to what is a functioning Local Spiritual Assembly, we offer you the following comments:

[42] "Local Spiritual Assemblies are at the present newly-born institutions, struggling for the most part to establish themselves both in the Baha'i community and in the world. They are as yet only embryos of the majestic institutions ordained by Baha'u'llah in His Writings. This is also true of National Spiritual Assemblies. In the following passage written by the Secretary of the Guardian on his behalf this point is elucidated:

'The Baha'i administration is only the first shaping of what in future will come to be the social life and laws of community living. As yet the believers are only first beginning to grasp and practice it properly. So we must have patience if at times it seems a little self-conscious and rigid in its workings. It is because we are learning something very difficult but very wonderful—how to live together as a community of Baha'is, according to the glorious teachings.'
(From a letter dated October 14, 1941 to an individual believer)

"What we find expounded in the writings of our Faith is the lofty station Local Spiritual Assemblies must attain in their gradual and at times painful development. In encouraging these assemblies to attain this aim, there is no harm in the National Spiritual Assembly mentioning certain minimum requirements from time to time, provided it is clear that non-attainment of such standards, which by their very nature must be continuously revised with changing conditions, do not justify the withdrawal of recognition from any weak Assemblies. It would not be profitable therefore for the Universal House of Justice to lay down universal minimum standards for properly-functioning Local Spiritual Assemblies, as these must necessarily differ from country to country, and even from district to district within the same country in the process of the evolution of these Assemblies into Houses of Justice, as envisaged by Baha'u'llah.

"Among the more salient objectives to be attained by the Local Spiritual Assembly in its process of development to full maturity are to act as a loving shepherd to the Baha'i flock, promote unity and concord among the friends, direct the teaching work, protect the Cause of God, arrange for Feasts, Anniversaries and regular meetings of the community, familiarize the Baha'is with its plans, invite the community to offer its recommendations, promote the welfare of youth and children, and participate, as circumstances permit, in humanitarian activities. In its relationship to the individual believer, the Assembly should continuously invite and encourage him to study the Faith, to deliver its glorious message, to live in accordance with its teachings, to contribute freely and regularly to the Fund, to participate in community

activities, and to seek refuge in the Assembly for advice and help, when needed."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, July 30, 1972)

150. Prominent People, Foster Cordial Relations with
"A very important activity which has been pursued effectively in all too few countries, is the undertaking by the National Spiritual Assembly of a sustained, planned effort to foster cordial relations with prominent people and responsible government officials and to familiarize them personally with the basic tenets and the teachings of the Faith. Such an activity must be carried out with wisdom and discretion, and requires the constant attention of a responsible committee as well as periodic review by the National Spiritual Assembly itself. Where successful it can effectively forestall opposition [43] to the Faith and smooth the way for many essential aspects of the development of the Baha'i community."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, Naw-Ruz, 1974)

151. Public Figures
"To approach such well-known and important persons is always an extremely delicate matter, since it requires a good deal of wisdom, courage and ability. But those friends who really feel the urge to do so, and possess the necessary qualifications, should cultivate such friendships which, if properly done, can be of an immense benefit to the Cause. In any case, however, the assistance and help of either the local or the National Assembly is not only useful but necessary if important contacts of this sort are to be fruitful and promising. The principle of consultation, which constitutes one of the basic laws of the Administration, should be applied to all Baha'i activities which affect the collective interests of the Faith, for it is through cooperation and continued exchange of thoughts and views that the Cause can best safeguard and foster its interests. Individual initiative, personal ability and resourcefulness, though indispensable, are, unless supported and enriched by the collective experiences and wisdom of the group, utterly incapable of achieving such a tremendous task."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 30, 1933: Baha'i News, No. 79, pp. 3-4, November 1933)

152. Individual Members of the Local Spiritual Assembly Should Deepen
"Only as individual members of Local Spiritual Assemblies deepen themselves in the fundamental verities of the Faith and in the proper application of the principles governing the operation of the Assembly will this Institution grow and develop toward its full potential."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, August 11, 1970)

153. Members of Spiritual Assembly Must Face Responsibilities
"All over the world the Guardian is constantly encouraging and enjoining the believers to learn to function according to Baha'i laws and principles; members

of Spiritual Assemblies must learn to face their responsibilities; individuals must learn to turn to them and abide by their decisions. When we realize that all marriages, divorces, disposal of inheritance, etc., are now handled in Egypt and Persia solely through the Assemblies and that the believers abide by their decisions, we see that in Western countries the friends still have a long way to go—the sooner they start the better for themselves and for the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 17, 1944)

I. Meetings of Baha'i Assemblies, Attendance, Resignations

154. Obligation of Assembly Members to Meet and Discharge Sacred Responsibilities
"After the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly, laxity and negligence in the holding of its meetings, in the coming together of its nine members, and in the [44] discharge of its sacred responsibilities, will have undesirable repercussions in the community, will weaken and disgrace the Cause, will create chaos and confusion, and will cause the Faith to decline and retrogress."
(From a letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the Central Spiritual Assembly of Persia, April 22, 1930: Meetings of the National Spiritual Assembly, A Compilation, p. 1, October 1980)

155. Membership in Baha'i Assembly or Committee is a Sacred Obligation—Should Endeavor to Attend All Meetings
"...The Guardian wishes you to make clear to all the believers that membership in a Baha'i Assembly or Committee is a sacred obligation which should be gladly and confidently accepted by every loyal and conscientious member of the Community, no matter how humble and inexperienced. Once elected to serve in a given Assembly a believer's duty is to do his utmost to attend all assembly meetings, and cooperate with his fellow-members, unless, however, he is prevented from doing so by some major reason such as illness, and even then he should notify the Assembly to this effect. The N.S.A.'s duty is to urge, and also facilitate attendance at assembly meetings. If a member has no valid reason to justify his repeated absence from assembly meetings, he should be advised, and even warned, and if such warning is deliberately ignored by him, the Assembly will then have the right to suspend his rights as a voting member of the Community. Such administrative sanction would seem to be absolutely imperative and necessary, and while not tantamount to a complete expulsion of such member from the Cause, deprives him of any real participation in its administrative functions and affairs, and is thus a most effective corrective measure which the Assembly can use against all such half-hearted and irresponsible individuals in the Community."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, July 2, 1939: Ibid., p. 2)

156. Teaching Must Be Accorded Precedence When in Session
"When in session it behooveth them to converse, on behalf of the servants of God, on matters dealing with the affairs and interests of the public. For instance, teaching the Cause of God must be accorded precedence, inasmuch as it

is a matter of paramount importance, so that thereby all men may enter the pavilion of unity and all the peoples of the earth be regarded even as a single body...

"Should these souls comply with the prescribed conditions, they shall, indeed, be aided through His invisible bestowals. This is truly a matter whose benefits will be conferred on all men...."
(Baha'u'llah: The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 11)

157. All Meetings Must Revolve Around One Focal Center—Teach
"If the meetings or Spiritual Assembly has any other occupation, the time is spent in futility. All the deliberations, all consultation, all the talks and addresses must revolve around one focal center and that is: Teach the Cause! Teach! Teach! Convey the Message! Awaken the souls!

"Nothing else will be useful, today... The interests of such a Glorious Cause will not advance without undivided attention. While we are carrying this load we cannot carry any other load!"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Meetings and the Nineteen Day Feast, p. 9)

[45] 158. Principle on which to Conduct the Work of an Assembly
"There is only one principle on which to conduct the work of an Assembly, and that is the supremacy of the will of the majority. The majority decisions must be courageously adopted and carried out by the Assembly, quite regardless of the opinionated adherence to their own views which any minority may cling to."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 20, 1941: The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 19)

159. Why Some Local Assemblies Do Not Meet
"Many Local Spiritual Assemblies do not meet, because they do not know or see what they should meet about. A compilation on the functions of a Local Spiritual Assembly, or the By-Laws of a Local Assembly will not usually provide the impetus to the members to meet. One of the stipulations of the Five Year Plan is the desirability for each Local Assembly to have local goals. Just as there are international and national goals, there should be local goals for each Local Assembly and throughout the Baha'i world. These goals, as indicated in our Naw-Ruz 1974 Message, can either be adopted spontaneously by the Local Assemblies, or assigned to them by the National Spiritual Assembly. The adoption of a local plan by the Local Assembly can exert a far-reaching influence on its work and on the life of the community."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly of Africa, December 24, 1975)

160. How Often to Meet—The Spiritual Assembly Must Decide
"The Spiritual Assembly must decide how often it should meet in order to properly handle the affairs of the Cause under its jurisdiction. Twice a week or twice a month is not the point, the point is that it should be alert and carry on the work adequately."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 23, 1949: Baha'i News, August 1951, p. 2)

161. Baha'u'llah's Promise
"Baha'u'llah has given the promise that in every Assembly where unity and harmony prevail, there His glorious spirit will not only be present, but will animate, sustain and guide all the friends in all their deliberations."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Evanston and Wilmette Spiritual Assemblies, November 17, 1933: The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 16)

162. Not Possible to Have Non-Assembly Member in National Spiritual Assembly Meeting
"...in the light of the Master's statement that the deliberations of Assemblies must be secret and confidential, it is not possible to have a non-Assembly member in the National Spiritual Assembly meeting. You must always remember that, in matters of principle, there can be no deviation;... Highly personal subjects, damaging to the honor and happiness of others, are often taken up by National Assemblies, and the danger that confidence will be betrayed is already great enough with the 9 chosen representatives of the whole community, let alone introducing non-Assembly members. You will just have to make your minutes a little more compact and [46] sacrifice, if necessary, a certain amount of efficiency in order to follow this very important principle."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 5, 1950: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 19)

163. Distribution of Minutes of Meetings
"We have your letter ..., regarding distribution of the minutes of your National Assembly meetings to members of the National Assembly.
"Two principles apply, namely:

1. Every member of the National Spiritual Assembly is entitled to have access to the minutes of the National Assembly meetings.

2. The National Assembly must take measures to safeguard the confidential nature of many matters referred to in the minutes.

"It is within the discretion of your National Spiritual Assembly to decide what should be done to give effect to these two principles."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of North East Asia, March 25, 1971)

164. Access to Records of the Spiritual Assembly
"In reply to your letter of May 13th, 1976, the Universal House of Justice instructs us to say that all members of the Spiritual Assembly are equal and should have access to the files and minutes of the Assembly of which they are members. It is, however, within the discretion of any Spiritual Assembly to so organize its files and records that certain items could be listed as 'confidential' and access to those so classified could only be had by a specific decision of the Assembly itself."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ireland, June 8, 1976)

165. Business Can Be Conducted with a Quorum
"...It is, as you say, highly desirable for all nine members of a Spiritual Assembly to be present but business can be conducted with a quorum of five, provided that all have been properly notified of the meeting."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, June 14, 1972)

166. Assembly Quorum
"We have your letter of July 20, 1967 asking for clarification of Article VIII, Section 1 of the By-Laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly which appears on Page 19 of the Declaration of Trust.

"A majority of the members present and constituting a quorum is sufficient to carry a motion. Thus, if only five members of the Assembly are present at a meeting, a majority vote of three is sufficient.

"However, Assemblies should take into account the last clause of the first sentence of Section 1 of Article VIII reading as follows:

'...and with due regard to the principle of unity and cordial fellowship involved in the institution of a Spiritual Assembly.'

"In other words, members of a Spiritual Assembly should not take advantage of a quorum as an expedient to pass a motion which would violate the spirit of the above quoted passage.

[47] "As your National Assembly has stated, it is desirable that all nine members of a Local Spiritual Assembly be present at every meeting, and we hope that you will be able to educate members of Assemblies to assume their responsibilities in this regard."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 6, 1967)

167. Duties of Assembly Members
"In its own meetings it must endeavour to develop skill in the difficult but highly rewarding art of Baha'i consultation, a process which will require great self-discipline on the part of all members and complete reliance on the power of Baha'u'llah. It should hold regular meetings and ensure that all its members are currently informed of the activities of the Assembly, that its Secretary carries out his duties, and its Treasurer holds and disburses the funds of the Faith to its satisfaction, keeping proper accounts and issuing receipts for all contributions. Many Assemblies find that some of their activities such as teaching, observance of Feasts and Anniversaries, solution of personal problems, and other duties are best dealt with by committees appointed by the Assembly and responsible to it...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, July 30, 1972)

168. Abstaining Does Not Arise in Baha'i Voting
"It is important to realize that the spirit of Baha'i consultation is very different from that current in the decision-making processes of non-Baha'i

bodies.

"The ideal of Baha'i consultation is to arrive at a unanimous decision. When this is not possible a vote must be taken. In the words of the beloved Guardian: '...when they are called upon to arrive at a certain decision, they should, after dispassionate, anxious and cordial consultation, turn to God in prayer, and with earnestness and conviction and courage record their vote and abide by the voice of the majority, which we are told by the Master to be the voice of truth, never to be challenged, and always to be whole-heartedly enforced.'

"As soon as a decision is reached it becomes the decision of the whole Assembly, not merely of those members who happened to be among the majority.

"When it is proposed to put a matter to the vote, a member of the Assembly may feel that there are additional facts or views which must be sought before he can make up his mind and intelligently vote on the proposition. He should express this feeling to the Assembly, and it is for the Assembly to decide whether or not further consultation is needed before voting.

"Whenever it is decided to vote on a proposition all that is required is to ascertain how many of the members are in favour of it; if this is a majority of those present, the motion is carried; if it is a minority, the motion is defeated. Thus the whole question of 'abstaining' does not arise in Baha'i voting. A member who does not vote in favour of a proposition is, in effect, voting against it, even if at that moment he himself feels that he has been unable to make up his mind on the matter."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, March 6, 1970: Consultation: A Compilation, p. 12, February 1978)

169. Baha'is Not Required to Vote Against Consciences
"Baha'is are not required to vote on an assembly against their consciences. It is [48] better if they submit to the majority view and make it unanimous. But they are not forced to. What they must do, however, is to abide by the majority decision, as this is what becomes effective. They must not go around undermining the assembly by saying they disagreed with the majority. In other words, they must put the Cause first and not their own opinions. He (a Spiritual Assembly member) can ask the assembly to reconsider a matter, but he has no right to force them or create inharmony because they won't change. Unanimous votes are preferable, but certainly cannot be forced upon assembly members by artificial methods such as are used by other societies."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 19, 1947)

170. Only Under Special Circumstances is It Permissible to Resign from the Spiritual Assembly
"With reference to your question whether it would be permissible for a believer to resign from the Local Assembly; under special circumstances, such as illness, one may do so, but only after, and never before one has been elected

to the membership of the Assembly. Personal differences and disagreements among Assembly members surely afford no sufficient ground for such resignation, and certainly can not justify absence from Assembly meetings. Through the clash of personal opinions, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated, the spark of truth is often ignited, and Divine guidance revealed. The friends should therefore not feel discouraged at the differences of opinion that may prevail among the members of an Assembly, for these, as experience has shown, and as the Master's words attest, fulfil a valuable function in all Assembly deliberations. But once the opinion of the majority has been ascertained, all the members should automatically and unreservedly obey it, and faithfully carry it out. Patience and restraint, however, should at all times characterize the discussions and deliberations of the elected representatives of the local community, and no fruitless and hair-splitting discussions indulged in, under any circumstances."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 18, 1939)

171. Differences of Opinion Should Not Deter One from Performing His Baha'i Activities

"Needless to say how much he was afflicted to learn that you both had offered your resignation from the ... Spiritual Assembly. For he is convinced that your action in this matter will have a bad effect on the rest of the believers, and in this way cause great injury to the Cause. Differences of opinion, specially when they arise in connection with personalities, should under no circumstances lead any believer to turn his attention from his major Baha'i activities. And what activity can be said to be more vital, and hence of a more weighty responsibility than to serve in an Assembly, and specially in the capacity of a Vice-Chairman. Your responsibilities, in this connection, are indeed manifold, and it would be a pity, therefore, if you fail in the least to carry them out to the fullest possible extent.

"Besides, you can easily realize that by resigning from the Assembly you would be encouraging, quite unintentionally but through the mere effect of example, your fellow-members to take a similar action in the future if necessary. This, of course, cannot but lead eventually to the disruption of your Assembly, and would in the meantime greatly detract from the authority and prestige of that body in the eyes of the public.

[49] "In view of all these, the Guardian would specially appeal to you, to exert your utmost in order to retain your membership in the ... Assembly, and thus put a good example before the friends. Should you act in this way, Baha'u'llah would undoubtedly assist and strengthen you in overcoming the obstacles which, at present, so sadly retard the effective working and progress of your Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 28, 1935)

172. There Should Be a Valid Reason for Resignation

"Although it is highly desirable that all members of the National Assembly attend every meeting of the Assembly, the fact that a member is prevented by

business or other circumstances from having a good attendance record is not a ground upon which a resignation can be accepted. It is not justified to accept a resignation or otherwise declare a vacancy on the National Assembly without a valid reason such as in the case of prolonged absence or serious illness which prevents one from discharging his duties as a member of the National Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, November 27, 1968)

173. Should National Assembly Members Be Relieved of Local Assembly Service?
"We have your letter of April 28, 1970 raising the question as to whether believers elected to both a Local Spiritual Assembly and the National Spiritual Assembly may resign their membership in the Local Assembly and dedicate their full efforts to the work of the National Assembly.

"Normally those elected to a Local Assembly and the National Assembly should make every effort to serve on both bodies, whatever the personal sacrifices may be. If it is too much of a burden and impractical for an individual member to assume the responsibilities of serving on both the National and Local Assembly, he should present his case to both bodies, and seek consultation. Each case should be considered separately, depending on the circumstances of each member. It may be found that if a National Assembly member is an officer of the Local Spiritual Assembly, his resignation as officer of the Assembly, instead of the membership of that Assembly, may solve the problem for that individual."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of North East Africa, May 7, 1970: Malaysian Baha'i News, Vol. 8, No. 4, December 1972 to February 1973, p. 28)

174. Not Appropriate to Elect a Temporary Assembly Member
"As regards electing a temporary member to replace one who is absent, the present practice of Baha'i Administration is not in favor of this but prefers to ascertain the duration of the absence of any member who has to be away. Should this period of time be excessive it is within the discretion of the Assembly to recognize a vacancy and call for a by-election. However this should not be lightly decided and the members declared elected at the Convention should remain in office unless there are insuperable difficulties which prevent it."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia, December 10, 1970: Meetings of the National Spiritual Assembly, p. 3, October 1980)

175. Non-Attendance of Assembly Members—No Time Limit Fixed
"...it is establishing a dangerous precedent to allow Assemblies to put a time limit [50] on non-attendance of their members at meetings of the Spiritual Assembly beyond which that person is automatically dropped from the Assembly and a vacancy declared... There should be no time limit fixed by Assemblies beyond which a person is dropped. Every case of prolonged absence from the sessions of the Assembly should be considered separately by that Assembly, and if the person is seen to not want to attend meetings, or to be held away from them indefinitely because of illness or travel, then a vacancy could

legitimately be declared and a new member be elected."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer: Baha'i News, No. 208, June 1948)

176. Repeated, Unjustified Absence Cause for Suspension of Voting Rights
"...The National Spiritual Assembly's duty is to urge, and also facilitate attendance at assembly meetings. If a member has no valid reason to justify his repeated absence from assembly meetings, he should be advised, and even warned, and if such warning is deliberately ignored by him the Assembly will then have the right to suspend his rights as a voting member of the Community. Such administrative sanction would seem to be absolutely imperative and necessary, and while not tantamount to a complete expulsion of such a member from the Cause, deprives him of any real participation in its administrative functions and affairs, and is thus a most effective corrective measure which the Assembly can use against all such half-hearted and irresponsible individuals in the Community."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, July 2, 1939: Dawn of a New Day, p. 79)

177. Criticism, Opposition, Confusion Do Not Provide Grounds for Resignation—Sanction May Be Necessary
"Concerning the question of refusal by certain believers to accept election to an administrative post: The Guardian strongly feels that criticism, opposition, or confusion, do not provide sufficient grounds for either refusal or resignation. Only cases of physical or mental incapacity, which, by their very nature, are extremely rare, constitute valid reasons for such an act. The difficulties and tests involved in the acceptance of administrative posts, far from inducing the believers to disassociate themselves from the work of the Cause, should spur them on to greater exertions and to a more active participation in the privileged task of resolving the problems that confront the Baha'i community. Only in cases where individual believers, without any valid reason, deliberately refuse the repeated exhortations, pleas, and warnings addressed to them by their Assemblies, should action be taken in removing them from the voting list. This is a measure designed to sustain the institutions of the Faith at the present time, and to insure that the abilities and talents of its, as yet, limited number of supporters are properly consecrated to its service...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 15, 1942: Baha'i News, No. 152, p. 2, April 1942)

J. Administrative Rights, Sanctions, Dissimulation

178. Basis for Deprivation of Voting Rights
"The general basis for the deprivation of voting rights is of course gross [51] immorality and open opposition to the administrative functions of the Faith, and disregard for the laws of personal status; and even then it is the duty of the National Assembly, before exercising this sanction, to confer with the individuals involved in a loving manner to help them overcome the problem;

second, to warn them that they must desist; third, to issue further warnings if the original warnings are not followed; and finally, if there seems no other way to handle the matter, then a person may be deprived of voting rights.

"The Guardian however, wishes the National Assemblies to be very cautious in using this sanction, because it might be abused, and then lose its efficacy. It should be used only when there seems no other way to solve the problem.

"Answering specifically the questions you raise, if a person is deprived of his voting rights, he may not contribute to the Local or National Funds; he may not attend Nineteen Day Feasts. Of course, not attending the Nineteen Day Feasts, he can take no part in consultation. While it is not forbidden for the friends to associate with the individual, yet their association should be on a formal basis.

"So far as the individual who has been deprived of his voting rights, teaching the Cause, he is of course free to do this, as every individual has been encouraged by Baha'u'llah to teach the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America, March 7, 1955)

179. Assembly Should Not Deprive Believer of Rights Unless the Matter is Very Grave

"As he already told you in a previous communication he feels that your Assembly should not deprive people of their voting rights unless the matter is really very grave; this is a very heavy sanction, and can embitter the heart if lightly imposed, and also make people think we unduly resort to pressure of a strong nature. The friends must be nursed and assisted, for they are still mostly immature spiritually, and their 'sins' are those of immaturity! Their hearts are loyal to the Cause, and this is the most important thing."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, August 2, 1946)

180. No Baha'i Can Swear to Bring Up His Children in Another Religion nor be Married in Church as a Christian

"...As the Guardian pointed out ..., no Baha'i can conscientiously swear to bring up his children in another religion; and of course he has no right to lie; therefore it becomes impossible for him to make such a promise on his marriage to a non-Baha'i. Any Baha'i doing this should be deprived of his voting rights; and, as he has already made plain before, Baha'is who go to the church and are married as Christians must also of necessity be deprived of their voting rights."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the European Teaching Committee, May 13, 1936)

181. Alcoholic Beverages—Those Who Continue to Drink

"In the case of a believer who continues to take alcoholic drinks, the Assembly should decide whether the offence is flagrant, and, if it is, should try to help him to understand the importance of obeying the Baha'i law. If he does not respond he must be repeatedly warned and, if this is unsuccessful, he is

subject to loss of his voting rights. In the [52] case of an alcoholic who is trying to overcome his weakness the Assembly must show especial patience, and may have to suggest professional counselling and assistance. If the offence is not flagrant, the Assembly need take no action at all."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 26, 1978)

182. Divorce
"...no sanctions should be imposed merely because the believer has commenced a civil action for divorce before the expiration of the year of patience. However, the believer will be subject to sanctions if he should marry a third party within the year of patience, not only because it is a violation of the year of patience itself, but also because even though a civil divorce has been granted, the Baha'i divorce cannot be granted until the end of the year of patience. For this reason no marriage is possible during the running of the year of patience unless the parties to the divorce re-marry each other again in a civil ceremony."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, March 29, 1966)

183. Ecclesiastical and Political Associations
"...The same sanction (deprivation of voting right) should apply to those who persistently refuse to dissociate themselves from political and ecclesiastical activities. This is a general principle which is being maintained throughout the Baha'i world, and the believers throughout the East are already aware of the absolute necessity of refusing any political or Moslem ecclesiastical office."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 15, 1942)

184. Politics, Participation in
"Your understanding and attitude regarding participation in politics is correct, namely, you immediately warn and quickly remove the voting rights, as such prompt action is necessary to protect the interests of the Faith."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa, November 12, 1965)

185. Homosexual Acts Condemned by Baha'u'llah*
"Regarding the question you asked him about one of the believers who seems to be flagrantly a homosexual—although to a certain extent we must be forbearing in the matter of people's moral conduct because of the terrible deterioration in society in general, this does not mean that we can put up indefinitely with conduct which is disgracing the Cause. This person should have it brought to his attention that such acts are condemned by Baha'u'llah, and that he must mend his ways, if necessary consult doctors, and make efforts to overcome this affliction, which is corruptive for him and bad for the Cause. If after a period of probation you do not see an improvement, he should have his voting rights taken away. The Guardian does not think, however, that a Baha'i body should take it upon itself to denounce him to the Authorities unless his

conduct borders on insanity."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada: Messages to Canada, p. 39)

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*(See also: Nos. 1221-1230)

[53] 186. Immorality, Blatant Acts of
"Any blatant acts of immorality on the part of the Baha'is should be strongly censured; the friends should be urged to abandon such relationships immediately, straighten out their affairs, and conduct themselves as Baha'is; if they refuse to do this, in spite of the warnings of the Assembly, they should be punished through being deprived of their voting rights. The N.S.A. is empowered to settle such cases of flagrant immorality without referring them to the Guardian."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 20, 1946: Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 85)

187. Criminal Offences, Believers Charged with
"We have carefully reviewed your letter of April 18, 1967 inquiring about the attitude to be adopted by your National Assembly regarding believers who have been charged with criminal offences, suspected to have committed such offences, or convicted by the court. The principle to bear in mind is that each case falling in any of the aforementioned categories should be considered separately and on its own merits. No hard and fast rule should be applied.

"If the believer's actions conspicuously disgrace the Faith and such actions seriously injure its reputation, the National Assembly may in its discretion apply the sanction of deprivation of voting rights.

"We feel that the Assembly should exercise its utmost wisdom when depriving believers of their administrative privileges, each case should be considered on its individual merits, and it should be realized that the application of Baha'i sanctions is not an automatic action in response to a verdict of the court."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa, May 3, 1967: Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies, p. 81)

188. Should Be Given Chance to Improve—A Lesser Sanction May Be Applied
"Regarding those whose conduct is immoral, the matter should first be referred to the Local Spiritual Assembly. Whether the believer is a member of the Local Assembly or not, he should be first lovingly exhorted, then warned and required to rectify his conduct. If the conduct of the believer does not improve and continues to be a disgrace to the Faith, the National Spiritual Assembly may decide merely to remove him from the membership of the Local Assembly, if he is a member of it, or to apply the full sanction of depriving him of his voting rights, depending upon the circumstances in each case. It is impossible and unwise to lay down a general ruling to cover all circumstances."
(From a letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National

Spiritual Assembly of Italy, January 14, 1966)

189. One Offence of Immorality Not Enough to Incur Heavy Penalty
"In case of immoral conduct one offence is generally not enough to incur this heavy penalty, but only after patient counselling and in the face of flagrantly immoral conduct or blatant misbehaviour should it be invoked."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Vietnam, January 11, 1967)

190. Civil Marriage Ceremony Only
"...if a Baha'i has a civil marriage ceremony only, he is subject to loss of his [54] voting rights. If the Assembly is satisfied that such a couple is repentant, their voting rights may be restored on condition that they have the Baha'i ceremony."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Peru, June 23, 1969)

191. Parents' Voting Rights Can Be Suspended if Consent is Given Contrary to Baha'i Law
"In connection with your question regarding the case of Mr. Mrs. ... and their daughter, the Guardian considers that your Assembly did quite right to deprive all three of their voting rights. Their conduct in carrying out a Moslem marriage in the circumstances set forth by you in your letter, and contrary to Baha'i law, are most reprehensible, to say the least, and if such actions are not strongly censured by the Baha'is, other friends may be encouraged in moments of weakness, to err."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan and Burma, March 10, 1951)

192. Baha'i Membership in Masonic, Theosophical, Rosicrucian, and Similar Societies*
"The following two principles should help to guide your Assembly in dealing with the problems of Baha'i membership in Masonic, Theosophical, Rosicrucian, and similar societies:

(1) Formal affiliation with and acceptance of membership in organizations whose programs or policies are not wholly reconcilable with the Teachings is not permissible to the friends.

(2) The friends should not become members of secret societies.

"Your Assembly is advised to carefully inform the friends of these principles and to deepen them in their understanding and appreciation of them. Having made certain that all friends, especially those directly concerned, have been so deepened, your Assembly should then set a time limit by which the friends must obey your directive to withdraw their membership in the organizations. Each case will have to be considered on its own merits. Some of the friends may have to fulfill certain commitments as officers before they can withdraw with honor. The time limit should make allowance in such cases.

"Whereas persistence in membership in these and in similar organizations is

ample ground for deprivation of voting rights, your Assembly is advised to give sufficient time for each of the friends to be thoroughly deepened, and to comply with the principles before any disciplinary action is taken."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, December 26, 1963)

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*(See also: XXXV, 1384-1400)

193. Mental Illness
"Regarding persons whose condition (i.e., mental condition) has not been defined by the civil authorities after medical diagnosis, the Assembly on the spot must investigate every case that arises and, after consultation with experts, deliver its verdict. Such a verdict however, should, in important cases, be preceded by consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly. No doubt, the power of prayer is very great, yet consultation with experts is enjoined by Baha'u'llah. [55] Should these experts believe that an abnormal case exists, the with-holding of voting rights is justified."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 30, 1936: Baha'i News, No. 153, June 1942, p. 12)

194. Mental Unfitness
"Regarding the interpretation of mental unfitness, this is not the same as being physically incapacitated. By the latter is meant a condition much more serious than any temperamental deficiency or disinclination to conform to the principle of majority rule. Only in rare cases when a person is actually unbalanced, and is admittedly proved to be so, should the right of membership be denied him. The greatest care and restraint should be exercised in this matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 15, 1940: Baha'i Procedure, p. 20)

195. Withdrawal of Administrative Rights from One Mentally Ill is Not a Sanction
"The withdrawal of administrative rights from a person who is suffering from a mental illness is not a sanction, but merely a recognition of the fact that the believer's condition renders him incapable of exercising those rights. From this you will see that the mental incapacity must be very serious for this step to be taken, and would normally be dependent upon a certification of insanity by medical authorities or confinement in a mental hospital. Again, depending upon the kind of mental illness, such suspension of voting rights may or may not involve non-receipt of Baha'i newsletters, inability to attend Nineteen Day Feasts, etc."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Austria, May 12, 1982)

196. National Assembly Can Debar an Individual from Serving on a Local Assembly Without Removing Voting Rights
"It is also quite permissible for a National Spiritual Assembly to debar an

individual believer from serving on a Local Spiritual Assembly without removing his or her voting rights and they may also debar a believer from attending the consultative part of a Nineteen Day Feast. You may also debar a believer from voting in elections without imposing all the other administrative sanctions involved in administrative expulsion."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, January 31, 1972)

197. Voting Rights, Only National Assembly Can Deprive Believers of
"In the Minutes of your meeting of March 13, 1971 we have noted an item on which we wish to comment.

"It concerns your decision to inform the Spiritual Assembly of ... that they can deprive a believer of his administrative rights if they feel that the believer's actions merit this. For the present only the National Assembly may deprive a believer of his administrative rights and this authority should not be given to Local Spiritual Assemblies."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Honduras, April 18, 1971)

[56] 198. Status of Those Who Lose Voting Rights
"Concerning your question as to the status of those individuals whom the Local Assembly or the National Spiritual Assembly have considered it necessary to deprive of the voting right and to suspend from local meetings and gatherings: Such action which Local and National Assemblies have been empowered to take against such recalcitrant members, however justified and no matter how severe, should under no circumstances be considered as implying the complete expulsion of the individuals affected from the Cause. The suspension of voting and other administrative rights of an individual believer, always conditional and therefore temporary, can never have such far-reaching implications, since it constitutes merely an administrative sanction; whereas his expulsion or ex-communication from the Faith, which can be effected by the Guardian* alone in his capacity as the supreme spiritual head of the Community, has far-reaching spiritual implications affecting the very soul of that believer.

"The former as already stated, is an administrative sanction, whereas the latter is essentially spiritual, involving not only the particular administrative relationship of a believer to his Local or National Assembly, but his very spiritual existence in the Cause. It follows, therefore, that a believer can continue calling himself a Baha'i even though he may cease to be a voting member of the community. But in case he is excluded from the body of the Cause by an act of the Guardian he ceases to become a believer and cannot possibly identify himself even nominally with the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 8, 1939)

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*The function of expulsion or ex-communication from the Faith is now effected by the Universal House of Justice "as supreme spiritual head of the Community."

199. No Baha'i Marriage if One is Deprived of Voting Rights—A Baha'i in Good Standing Cannot Marry One So Deprived

"A Baha'i deprived of his voting rights cannot be married in a Baha'i marriage ceremony; a Baha'i in good standing cannot marry a Baha'i who has lost his voting rights; the marriage of a Baha'i who has lost his voting rights does not fall within the jurisdiction of a Baha'i administrative institution.

"In other words, Baha'is who have lost their voting rights cannot be constrained to Baha'i administrative requirements although their consciences should lead them to act as closely to the standards and ordinances of Baha'i life as possible."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, February 25, 1976, cited by the International Teaching Center)

200. Heaviest Sanction We Possess—Deprivation of Voting Rights

"...he feels that all National Spiritual Assemblies should bear in mind that this is the heaviest sanction we possess at present in the Faith, short of ex-communication, which lies within the powers of the Guardian alone, and is consequently a very weighty weapon to wield.

"He considers that under no circumstances should any Baha'i ever be suspended from the voting list and deprived of his administrative privileges for a matter which is not of the utmost gravity. By that he means breaking of laws, [57] such as the consent of parents to marriage, etc., or acts of such an immoral character as to damage the good name of the Faith."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, March 3, 1955: Messages to Canada, p. 51)

201. Before Anyone Deprived of Voting Rights Must Be Given Repeated Warnings

"He has informed, some years ago, the American National Spiritual Assembly that, before anyone is deprived of their voting rights, they should be consulted with and lovingly admonished at first, given repeated warnings if they do not mend their immoral ways, or whatever other extremely serious misdemeanor they are committing, and finally, after these repeated warnings, be deprived of their voting rights."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, March 3, 1955: Messages to Canada, pp. 51-52)

202. No Justification Suspension of Voting Rights Pending Investigation

"There is no justification for the suspension of a believer's administrative rights pending investigation and review of the facts of the matter in which he is involved. As we have repeatedly stated, the application of sanctions is a very serious action and should be imposed only in extreme cases. Furthermore, any decision involving a believer's administrative rights is to be made by action of the Assembly itself.

"While the Assembly should always be concerned about matters which might affect the good name of the Faith, it should be remembered that a believer involved in such matters is entitled to the understanding of the Assembly and may need its guidance and assistance both before and after any decision regarding sanctions

is made."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 16, 1969)

203. Believer Cannot Escape Expulsion by Resignation in Order to Break Law with Impunity
"As you know, a believer cannot escape administrative expulsion by the ruse of resigning from the Faith in order to break its law with impunity. However, the Assembly should be satisfied that there was indeed such an ulterior motive behind the withdrawal. A believer's record of inactivity and his general attitude to the Faith may well lead the Assembly to conclude that his withdrawal was bona fide, even though immediately succeeded by marriage, and in such a case the withdrawal may be accepted."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 20, 1971)

204. Dissimulation is Not Withdrawal
"To deny that one is a Baha'i while one still believes in Baha'u'llah is not withdrawal, it is dissimulation of one's faith, and Baha'i law does not countenance the dissimulation of a believer's faith for the purpose of breaking the law.

"If a believer who did not like a particular law were to be permitted to leave the community to break the law, and then rejoin with impunity, this would make a mockery of the Law of God... It is abundantly clear from his letters that he has [58] continually believed in Baha'u'llah, that he knew the law that marriage is conditioned on the consent of parents, that he dissimulated his faith in order to be able to break this law with impunity. He must, therefore, be regarded as a Baha'i without administrative rights...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 15, 1967)

205. Ignorance of the Law
"In all matters concerning the deprivation of voting rights your Assembly should bear in mind that at the present time, when Baha'i laws are being progressively applied and when a large proportion of the community consists of newly declared believers, you may accept ignorance of the Baha'i law as a valid excuse if your Assembly is fully convinced that such ignorance existed."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 11, 1965)

206. Child Out of Wedlock
"Generally, administrative rights should not be suspended because of the birth of a child out of wedlock. The questions to be considered are whether the party is guilty of blatant and flagrant immorality, whether such conduct is harming the Faith, and whether the believer has refused or neglected to improve her conduct despite repeated warnings.

"As you no doubt know, deprivation of administrative rights is a very serious sanction, and the beloved Guardian repeatedly cautioned that it should be

exercised only in extreme situations. In a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to another National Spiritual Assembly which asked similar questions, it was pointed out that it was the task of the institutions to provide both counsel and education for the believers, and thereafter it is for the individual Baha'i to determine his course of conduct in relation to the situations of his daily life."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, March 23, 1983)

207. Loss of Voting Rights—Is to be Administratively Expelled
"A Baha'i who has lost his administrative rights is administratively expelled from the community and therefore is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Spiritual Assembly in the matter of laws of personal status, such as divorce, unless, of course, he is involved in such a matter through having a Baha'i spouse in good standing from whom the divorce is taking place. His observance of such laws is a matter of conscience and he would not be subject to further sanctions for non-observance of Baha'i laws during the period he is without voting rights."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, April 6, 1982)

208. Cases Involving Only Civil Ceremony
"We have your letter of October 9, 1971 informing us of your action to deprive ... of his voting rights for violation of Baha'i marriage law in that he married without having consent of all living parents. It is noted that he had a civil ceremony and a Catholic ceremony. The question you have asked deals with possible restoration of his voting rights.

"In cases involving only the civil ceremony, voting rights may be restored if [59] the Assembly feels that the believer is truly repentant and wishes to comply with the Baha'i law previously broken. The civil marriage ceremony itself is not contrary to Baha'i law, and therefore the dissolution of the civil marriage is not a prerequisite to restoration of voting rights. In such cases the Baha'i marriage ceremony may take place if the parents now give their consent to the marriage and the Assembly is satisfied that the consent has been genuinely and freely given and is not conditioned by the fact that the parties have already had a civil ceremony. In such cases the Assembly would restore voting rights immediately before the Baha'i ceremony on the condition that it be performed.

"Should ... apply for restoration of his voting rights, and should your Assembly feel that he is truly repentant, you should offer assistance in arranging the other details including helping him to obtain the consents of parents."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, November 18, 1971)

209. Voting Rights Removed Mistakenly or Justifiably
"When believers who have been deprived of their voting rights have moved into

the area of jurisdiction of another National Spiritual Assembly they are under the jurisdiction of that Assembly. When they apply for the restoration of their voting rights that Assembly should correspond with the National Assembly which applied the sanction in order to obtain the full particulars of the case and also any views the Assembly may have on the matter of restoration. It is then for the National Assembly in whose jurisdiction the believers are living to decide the matter and take action accordingly.

"In answer to the second question in your letter of 17th May 1976, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. It can happen, for example, that voting rights are removed mistakenly and the incorrect action of the Assembly is the basis for the believer's application for their restoration. If the voting rights have been removed justifiably it is generally sufficient for the believer to take the necessary actions to have them restored; his application for restoration and compliance with the requirements of Baha'i law are sufficient evidence of repentance. However, if the Assembly sees that the believer does not understand the reason for the deprivation and has a rebellious attitude it should endeavour to make the matter clear to him. If his attitude is one of contempt for the Baha'i law and his actions have been in serious violation of its requirements, the Assembly may even be justified in extending the period of deprivation beyond the time of the rectification of the situation—but such cases, by their nature, are very rare."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Peru, September 21, 1976)

210. Youth, Disciplinary Action Against
"With reference to the question in your second letter as to what disciplinary action can be taken against youth who are not of voting age, it must be remembered that the removal of his voting rights is administrative expulsion. In addition to being deprived of his right to vote, the believer cannot attend Feasts or other meetings for Baha'is only; cannot contribute to the Fund; or, cannot have a Baha'i marriage ceremony. The restrictions against voting would become operative when the young offender reaches voting age."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, April 14, 1965)

[60] 211. If Acts of Immorality Are Not Generally Known—Gossip
"We feel that each and every case should be reviewed on its own merits. In some cases it is clear that there is no alternative to the removal of voting rights as in the case of marriage without the consent of parents. In other cases, such as those involving flagrant immorality, the removal of voting rights should be resorted to only in rare cases. If the acts of immorality are not generally known and are discoverable only on investigation, a serious question is raised as to whether this immorality is 'flagrant'.

"We realize that a great problem is presented by gossip when it occurs in Baha'i communities, and the poison it can instill into the relationship between the friends. However, deprivation of voting rights is usually of little help in such circumstances and should be resorted to only after other remedies have

been tried and failed.

"We think it would be much better for the National Assembly to provide for the proper deepening of the friends and in a loving and patient manner attempt to instill in them a respect for Baha'i laws. Rash action can dampen the zeal of the community, and this must be avoided at all costs."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice written to the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa, August 20, 1969)

212. Community Attitude Toward Those Who Are Deprived of Voting Rights
"The degree to which a community should be active or passive towards a believer who is deprived of his voting rights depends upon the circumstances in each individual case. Obviously, it is desirable that such a person should come to see the error of his ways and rectify his condition. In some cases friendly approaches by the Baha'is may help to attain this; in other cases the individual may react more favourably if left to his own devices for a time."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 1, 1973)

213. The Assemblies Should Be Like the Master and the "Good Shepherd"
"As regards the admittance of new members into the different groups as declared Baha'is, and the expulsion of any from the Community: Shoghi Effendi believes that the Assemblies should not act hurriedly. They should be wise and most considerate, otherwise they can do much harm to the body of the Cause. They should see to it that the new-comer is truly conversant with the teachings, and when he expresses his beliefs in the revelation of Baha'u'llah, knows what he is saying and what are the duties he undertakes.

"On the other hand when any person is expelled, the Assembly should not act hurriedly. There is a great spiritual responsibility attached to the act. The Assemblies do not have only rights against the individuals, they have great duties also. They should act like the good Shepherd whom Christ mentions in His well-known parable. We also have the example of the Master before us. The individual Baha'is were organic parts of His spiritual being. What befell the least one of the friends brought deep affliction and sorrow to Him also. If by chance one of them erred He counselled him and increased His love and affection for him. Only after months of constant attention, if the Master saw that that friend was still stubbornly refusing to reform his ways, and that his being among the other Baha'is endangered the spiritual life of the rest, then He would expel him from the group. This should [61] be the attitude of the Assemblies towards the individuals. The best criterion whereby you can measure the spiritual attainment of an Assembly is the extent its members feel themselves responsible for the welfare of the group. And perchance they feel forced to deprive a person from his vote it should be only to safeguard the rest and not merely to inflict punishment."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 11, 1933)

214. The Believer So Deprived Who Makes an Effort to Mend His Ways Should Be

Helped
"The deprivation of a person's voting rights should only be restored to when absolutely necessary, and a National Spiritual Assembly should always feel reluctant to impose this very heavy sanction which is a severe punishment. Of course sometimes, to protect the Cause, it must be done, but he feels that if the believer so deprived makes an effort to mend his ways, rectifies his mistakes, or sincerely seeks forgiveness, every effort should be made to help him and enable him to reestablish himself in the Community as a member in good standing."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 18, 1948)

215. Baha'is Must Not Dissimulate Their Faith Under Any Circumstances
"The Beloved Guardian has directed me to write you concerning information which he has just received of your having indicated in your application for permanent residence in ..., that you were Protestants—and you did not indicate in any way that you were Baha'is.

"The Guardian has instructed me to inform you that he is shocked and surprised to receive this news, and this action meets with his disapproval. He said that if advance information had been given that such action must not be taken under any circumstances; then there would be only one thing he could do and that would be removal of voting rights.
"Certainly such action in the future would result in immediate removal of voting rights.

"In Persia, even during the period of persecution, when life was in danger, and complete freedom offered to those who indicated they were Muslims and not Baha'is, the Guardian not only deprived anyone who did not openly declare his Faith of his voting rights, but even indicated they were Covenant breakers.

"Thus you will see that it is completely inconsistent for a Baha'i under any circumstances whatsoever, to indicate they are anything but a Baha'i, regardless of what the result may be."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers, April 30, 1957)

216. Summary of the Extent of Deprivation of Voting Rights
"...One who has lost his voting rights is considered to be a Baha'i but not one in good standing. The following restrictions and limitations apply to such a believer:
He cannot attend Nineteen Day Feasts or other meetings for Baha'is only, including International Conferences, and therefore cannot take part in consultation on the affairs of the community.

He cannot contribute to the Baha'i Fund.

[62] He cannot receive newsletters and other bulletins whose circulation is restricted to Baha'is.

He cannot have a Baha'i marriage ceremony and therefore is not able to marry a

Baha'i.

He may not have a Baha'i pilgrimage.

Although he is free to teach the Faith on his own behalf, he should not be used as a teacher or speaker in programs sponsored by Baha'is.

He is debarred from participating in administrative matters, including the right to vote in Baha'i elections.

He cannot hold office or be appointed to a committee.

He should not be given credentials (which imply that he is a Baha'i in good standing)."
(From an attachment to a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Netherlands, December 9, 1985)

217. Summary of the Rights and Privileges Not Deprived
"...Although generally speaking a believer deprived of his voting rights is not restricted except as stated above, the following privileges have been expressly stipulated as not denied:
He may attend the observances of the nine Holy Days.

He may attend any Baha'i function open to non-Baha'is.

He may receive any publication available to non-Baha'is.

He is free to teach the Faith as every individual believer has been enjoined by Baha'u'llah to teach.

Association with other believers is not forbidden.

He may have the Baha'i burial service if he or his family requests it, and he may be buried in a Baha'i cemetery.

Baha'i charity should not be denied him on the ground that he has lost his voting rights.

Baha'i institutions may employ him, but should use discretion as to the type of work he is to perform.

He should have access to the Spiritual Assembly."
(Ibid.)

K. Appeals

218. Right to and Procedure for Appeal
"When the Local Assembly has given its decision in the matter, you then have the right to appeal, if you wish, to the National Spiritual Assembly for further consideration of your case. But before taking such an action it is your duty as a loyal and steadfast believer to whole-heartedly and unreservedly accept the National Spiritual Assembly's request to enter into joint conference with your Local Assembly. You should have confidence that in obeying the orders of your National Assembly you will not only succeed in solving your own

personal problems with the friends, but will in addition set a noble example before them."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 2, 1935: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 55)

219. Appeal from Local Assembly's Decision to the National Assembly
"Appeal can be made from the Local Assembly's decision to the National Assembly, [63] and from the National Assembly's decision to the Guardian.* But the principle of authority invested in our elected bodies must be upheld. This is not something which can be learned without trial and test."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, June 30, 1949)

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*(Now to the Universal House of Justice)

220. Infringement of Baha'i Rights
"...whenever there is any infringement of Baha'i rights, or lapse in the proper procedure, the friends should take the matter up with the Assembly concerned, and if not satisfied, then with the National Spiritual Assembly. This is both their privilege and their duty."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1942: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 55)

221. Every Baha'i May Write Directly to the Universal House of Justice, But Appeals Should Be Submitted Through the National Spiritual Assembly
"It would seem that your National Assembly has misunderstood the procedure for submitting appeals. Mr. and Mrs. ... were quite correct in sending the appeal to your Assembly and you should have then forwarded it to the Universal House of Justice together with your comments on the case.

"It is true, as you state in your letter of 26th May 1975, that every Baha'i may write direct to the Universal House of Justice but this does not apply in the case of appeals which should be submitted through the National Spiritual Assembly. Only if the Assembly fails to forward the appeal within a reasonable time should the appellant take the case directly to the Universal House of Justice. This process is explained in Article XVIII of the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, June 17, 1975)

222. The Appellant's Request for Referral of Appeal to the Universal House of Justice Cannot Be Refused
"The House of Justice understands and appreciates your motive in striving to contain matters at the national level, and agrees that every effort should be made to resolve them without recourse to the World Centre. At the same time, if an appeal is turned down by the National Spiritual Assembly, the appellant's request for referral to the Universal House of Justice cannot be refused, nor should the referral be unduly delayed."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the

National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 17, 1979)

223. Committees Should Take Up Their Problems with the National Spiritual Assembly
"Committees should first take up their problems with the National Spiritual Assembly and seek to solve them satisfactorily; if they are dissatisfied they have the right to appeal to the Guardian* himself. The Guardian will then decide whether it is a [64] matter for him to pronounce upon, or if he will refer it back to the National body."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 28, 1943)

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*(Now the Universal House of Justice)

"In the event of a committee member disagreeing with the rest of his fellow-members on a particular issue, he has no right to appeal to the Assembly, but must follow the majority."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 26, 1938)

L. By-Laws

224. Purpose of By-Laws
"The purpose of the By-Laws is to clarify and strengthen the administrative legal functions of a Baha'i community."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 5, 1950: Baha'i News, No. 236, October 1950, pp. 2-3)

225. A Baby Can Be Considered a Baha'i—Declaration Age 15 for Protection
"...As a believer of 15 cannot vote he (Shoghi Effendi) sees no reason for including a statement regarding the age of 15 in the By-Laws. A baby can be considered a Baha'i; 15 is merely the age of maturity for fasting, marriage, etc., and in the case of America, a declaration at that age is invited from the youth in order to protect them, at a future date, from being forced to do active military service."
(Ibid.)

226. New York Version of By-Laws More Correct
"...The original New York By-Laws are more correct, because they differentiate clearly between all members of the Community and voting members who are 21 years of age or more. In other words children under 15 are Baha'is according to the New York version, which is correct, but according to your version only people over 15 years are Baha'is which is not correct.... The declaration of faith by children when they reach the age of 15 in the United States is in order to enable the American Youth to apply for exemption, under the American laws, from active military service. It has no other purpose, but in that country is expedient. It is not necessary to add such a clause to your By-Laws.

"He wishes the essentials to be maintained as per the New York By-Laws, but not

amplified and added to, as this will gradually lead, all over the Baha'i world, to a steady addition of unessential rules and restrict the freedom and plasticity of the Cause. As he has repeatedly told the American and other National Assemblies, it is much better to deal with situations and new requirements as they arise, and not to have it all down in black and white and rigid before hand."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, August 22, 1949: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, p. 77)

227. Matter of Belief in Baha'u'llah Not of Availability for Participation
"...all declarants of the age of 15 years or older who qualify are accepted by your [65] Assembly under the provision of your By-Laws are Baha'is and should be so registered in local communities or in your National office. It is a matter of declaration of belief in Baha'u'llah and not necessarily of availability for participation with fellow believers in their community activities."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 18, 1967: National Baha'i Review, February 1968, No. 2, p. 3)

228. The National Spiritual Assembly Must Defend and Uphold Provisions of By-Laws and Declaration of Trust
"...The National Assembly ... must at all times vigilantly uphold, defend, justify and enforce the provisions of the Declaration of Trust and By-Laws which are binding on the Convention no less than on themselves. The National Spiritual Assembly has the right to lay down, enforce and interpret the National Constitution of the Baha'is in that land. It cannot, if it wishes to remain faithful to that Constitution, lay down any regulations, however secondary in character, that would in the least hamper the unrestricted liberty of the delegates to advise and elect those whom they feel best combine the necessary qualifications for membership of so exalted a body."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, August 18, 1933)

229. International Uniformity in the Essentials is to be Maintained—The Local By-Laws
"The Guardian is striving to build up uniformity in essentials all over the Baha'i World, and this frequently involves a small measure of delay in achieving our various goals set locally. But he considers it sufficiently important to warrant the sacrifices it sometimes involves.

"In this connection he would like to mention your Local By-Laws: He feels that they should conform much more closely to the original one of the New York Assembly. What is absolutely essential was incorporated in those, and all other Local Assemblies being incorporated should follow this pattern as closely as local legal technicalities permit. This again is in order to maintain international uniformity in essentials. It is not a question here of whether the By-Laws drawn up by your Legal Committee are not more up-to-date and do not

represent the last word, undoubtedly they are and do, but if every country, when drawing up its local By-Laws, continues this process of elaboration, in the end uniformity will be lost. The Eastern Assemblies have adhered to the original By-Laws so carefully that they have practically translated them word for word and adopted them."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, December 30, 1948)

230. Decisions of Local and National Assemblies Subject to Review by Higher Body—No Contradiction in By-Laws
"...Mr. ... explained that it was felt that there is a seeming contradiction between the right of appeal to the Universal House of Justice and the right of a National Spiritual Assembly to make 'final' decisions on certain matters as stated in the National Baha'i Constitution.

"The House of Justice instructs us to explain that wherever 'final' jurisdiction is given to the Local or National Spiritual Assembly in its constitution there is a balancing provision. For example:

[66] "Article IV of the Local Assembly By-Laws states: 'while retaining the sacred right of final decision in all matters pertaining to the Baha'i community, the Spiritual Assembly shall ever seek the advice and consultation of all members of the community, keep the community informed of all its affairs, and invite full and free discussion on the part of the community in all matters affecting the Faith.' Yet, Article III of those same Local By-Laws states: 'The Spiritual Assembly, however, shall recognize the authority and right of the National Spiritual Assembly to declare at any time what activities and affairs of the Baha'i community of ... are national in scope and hence subject to the jurisdiction of the National Assembly.' And in Article II is stated: '...the Spiritual Assembly shall act in conformity with the functions of a Local Spiritual Assembly as defined in the By-Laws adopted by the National Spiritual Assembly...'
"With respect to those articles that accord final jurisdiction to the National Spiritual Assembly, there is the overriding provision of Article IX of the National By-Laws: 'Where the National Spiritual Assembly has been given in these By-Laws exclusive and final jurisdiction, and paramount executive authority, in all matters pertaining to the activities and affairs of the Baha'i Cause in ..., it is understood that any decision made or action taken upon such matters shall be subject in every instance to ultimate review and approval by the Universal House of Justice.'

"It is clear, therefore, that the word 'final' is not used in an absolute sense. It is, rather, an indication of the principle enunciated by 'Abdu'l-Baha that the believers should whole-heartedly and loyally support their Assemblies and abide by their decisions, even if they see them to be in error. At the same time, the Assemblies have the duty to lovingly and frankly consult with those who are under their jurisdiction and, if a believer (or Local Assembly) feels that a serious injustice is being committed or the interests of the Faith are being adversely affected, he has the right of appeal. When an appeal is made,

the Assembly whose decision is being questioned should lovingly collaborate in the process and join with the appellant in submitting all relevant information to the higher body for decision.

"The whole matter of appeals is clearly summarized in Articles VII and VIII of the By-Laws of the Universal House of Justice."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain, March 24, 1982)

231. Incorporation is Not Necessarily Lost by the Temporary Dissolution of the Local Spiritual Assembly
"The problem posed by an Assembly's being incorporated varies from country to country with differences in the civil law. However, the House of Justice asks us to draw to your attention that in many countries it is only changes in the membership or officers of an incorporated body that have to be reported to the authorities, and therefore it is not always necessary to report the full membership each year. There have even been instances where an Assembly has had to be dissolved for a period but the corporation continued to exist as far as the civil law was concerned."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, July 22, 1981)

M. New Believers

[67] 232. The Cause of God Has Room for All
"The Cause of God has room for all. It would, indeed, not be the Cause of God if it did not take in and welcome everyone—poor and rich, educated and ignorant, the unknown and the prominent—God surely wants them all, as He created them all."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two individual believers, December 10, 1942: The Individual and Teaching, p. 25)

233. 'Abdu'l-Baha's Example—Nurse New Believer Patiently
"...Let him remember the example set by 'Abdu'l-Baha, and His constant admonition to shower such kindness upon the seeker, and exemplify to such a degree the spirit of the teachings he hopes to instill into him, that the recipient will be spontaneously impelled to identify himself with the Cause embodying such teachings. Let him refrain, at the outset from insisting on such laws and observances as might impose too severe a strain on the seeker's newly-awakened faith, and endeavour to nurse him, patiently, tactfully, and yet determinedly, into full maturity, and aid him to proclaim his unqualified acceptance of whatever has been ordained by Baha'u'llah. Let him, as soon as that stage has been attained, introduce him to the body of his fellow-believers, and seek, through constant fellowship and active participation in the local activities of his community... Let him not be content until he has infused into his spiritual child so deep a longing as to impel him to arise independently, in his turn, and devote his energies to the quickening of other souls, and the upholding of the laws and principles laid down by his newly-adopted Faith."

(Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 52)

234. The Two Extremes in Bringing in New Baha'is
"The believers must discriminate between the two extremes of bringing people into the Cause before they have fully grasped its fundamentals and making it too hard for them, expecting too much of them, before they accept them. This requires truly keen judgment, as it is unfair to people to allow them to embrace a movement the true meaning of which they have not fully grasped. It is equally unfair to expect them to be perfect Baha'is before they can enter the Faith. Many teaching problems arise out of these two extremes."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 22, 1941: Baha'i News, No. 241, p. 2, March 1951)

235. No Obstacles Should Be Placed Before Any Soul
"No obstacle should be placed before any soul which might prevent it from finding the truth. Baha'u'llah revealed His directions, teachings and laws, so that souls might know God, and not that any utterance might become an obstacle in their way."
('Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land answers questions of Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in 1915: Star of the West, Vol. 6, No. 6, p. 43)

236. Enrollments, New—Those Responsible for
"...Therefore, those responsible for accepting new enrollments must just be sure [68] of one thing—that the heart of the applicant has been touched with the spirit of the Faith. Everything else can be built on this foundation gradually."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central and East Africa, August 8, 1957: A Special Measure of Love, p. 21)

237. The Process of Becoming a Baha'i is an Evolutionary One
"The Guardian fully shares your view that it would be most unwise, and unfair to those who apply for membership in the Community to require that they should at first accept all the laws of the Faith. Such a requirement would be impossible to carry out as there are many laws in the 'Aqdas' with which even the well-confirmed and long-standing believers are not yet familiar. As you rightly point out the process of becoming a Baha'i is an evolutionary one, and requires considerable time, and sustained effort on the part of the new believer. Such questions as the withdrawal from Church membership and that of abstention from alcoholic liquors should not be thrust upon the newcomer, but explained to him gradually, so that he himself may be convinced of the truth underlying these ordinances of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 17, 1938)

238. Admittance Into the Faith—Essential Prerequisites
"Indeed, the essential prerequisites of admittance into the Baha'i fold of Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, and the followers of other ancient Faiths, as well as of agnostics and even atheists, is the whole-hearted and

unqualified acceptance by them all of the Divine origin of both Islam and Christianity, of the Prophetic functions of both Muhammad and Jesus Christ, of the legitimacy of the institution of the Imamate, and of the primacy of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles. Such are the central, the solid, the incontrovertible principles that constitute the bedrock of Baha'i belief which the Faith of Baha'u'llah is proud to acknowledge, which its teachers proclaim, which its apologists defend, which its literature disseminates, which its summer schools expound, and which the rank and file of its followers attest by both word and deed."
(Shoghi Effendi: The Promised Day is Come, p. 114)

239. On Becoming a Baha'i
"When a person becomes a Baha'i, he gives up the past only in the sense that he is a part of this new and living Faith of God, and must seek to pattern himself, in act and thought, along the lines laid down by Baha'u'llah. The fact that he is by origin a Jew or a Christian, a black man or a white man, is not important anymore, but, as you say, lends color and charm to the Baha'i community in that it demonstrates unity in diversity."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 12, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 251, p. 2, January 1952)

240. Warning to Every Beginner in the Faith
"I consider it my duty to warn every beginner in the Faith that the promised glories of the Sovereignty which the Baha'i teachings foreshadow, can be revealed only in the fulness of time, that the implications of the Aqdas and the Will of 'Abdu'l-Baha, as the twin repositories of the constituent elements of that Sovereignty, are too far-reaching for this generation to grasp and fully [69] appreciate. I cannot refrain from appealing to them who stand identified with the Faith to disregard the prevailing notions and the fleeting fashions of the day, and to realize as never before that the exploded theories and the tottering institutions of present-day civilization must needs appear in sharp contrast with those God-given institutions which are destined to arise upon their ruin."
(Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 16)

241. Not Sufficient to Accept Some Aspects of Teachings and Reject Others
"...The believers, and particularly those who have not had sufficient experience in teaching, should be very careful in the way they present the teachings of the Cause. Sincerity, devotion and faith are not the sole conditions of successful teaching. Tactfulness, extreme caution and wisdom are equally important. We should not be in a hurry when we announce the message to the public and we should be careful to present the teachings in their entirety and not to alter them for the sake of others. Allegiance to the Faith cannot be partial and half-hearted. Either we should accept the Cause without any qualification whatever, or cease calling ourselves Baha'is. The new believers should be made to realize that it is not sufficient for them to accept some aspects of the teachings and reject those which cannot suit their mentality in order to become fully recognized and active followers of the Faith. In this way

all sorts of misunderstandings will vanish and the organic unity of the Cause will be preserved."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 12, 1933: Baha'i News, No. 80, p. 5, January 1934)

242. When Enrolling New Believers, Must Be Wise and Gentle
"When enrolling new believers, we must be wise and gentle, and not place so many obstacles in their way that they feel it impossible to accept the Faith. On the other hand, once accorded membership in the Community of the followers of Baha'u'llah, it must be brought home to them that they are expected to live up to His Teachings, and to show forth the signs of a noble character in conformity with His Laws. This can often be done gradually, after the new believer is enrolled."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the British National Spiritual Assembly, June 25, 1953: Teaching the Masses, p. 6)

243. If Requirements to Enroll Made Too Rigorous, Will Cool Off Initial Enthusiasm
"...If we make the requirements too rigorous, we will cool off the initial enthusiasm, rebuff the hearts and cease to expand rapidly. The essential thing is that the candidate for enrollment should believe in his heart in the truth of Baha'u'llah. Whether he is literate or illiterate, informed of all the Teachings or not, is beside the point entirely. When the spark of faith exists the essential Message is there, and gradually everything else can be added unto it..."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa, July 9, 1957: Teaching the Masses, p. 12)

244. A Baha'i Must Be Wholly a Baha'i; Must Not Be Insular
"...the very essence of the reason a person has accepted Baha'u'llah is that he has decided this Way alone is the solution to the absolutely hopeless problems facing humanity. A Baha'i must be wholly a Baha'i, concentrate on the work of the Cause, [70] and put aside from his mind the distracting influences that scream at him from every newspaper these days. Naturally, this does not mean he must be insular, it means he must concentrate more consciously on doing the work of the Cause!"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, November 23, 1951: United States Supplement to Baha'i News, No. 82, p. 5, December 1964)

245. A True Baha'i Should Justify His Claim to be a Baha'i
"They should justify their claim to be Baha'is by deeds and not by name...
"He is a true Baha'i who strives by day and by night to progress along the path of human endeavor, whose cherished desire is so to live and act as to enrich and illumine the world; whose source of inspiration is the essence of Divine Perfection, whose aim in life is to conduct himself so as to be the cause of infinite progress. Only when he attains unto such perfect gifts can it be said of him that he is a Baha'i."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Revelation, p. 285)

246. The Primary Reason for Becoming a Baha'i
"The primary reason for anyone becoming a Baha'i must of course be because he has come to believe the doctrines, the teachings and the Order of Baha'u'llah are the correct thing for this stage in the world's evolution. The Baha'is themselves as a body have one great advantage: They are sincerely convinced Baha'u'llah is right; they have a plan; and they are trying to follow it. But to pretend they are perfect, that the Baha'is of the future will not be a hundred times more mature, better balanced, more exemplary in their conduct, would be foolish."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 5, 1947: Teaching Work Among the Masses, p. 2)

247. Ploughing Up the Soil of the Heart
"When a person becomes a Baha'i, actually what takes place is that the seed of the spirit starts to grow in the human soul. This seed must be watered by the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. These gifts of the spirit are received through prayer, meditation, study of the Holy Utterances and service to the Cause of God. The fact of the matter is that service in the Cause is like the plough which ploughs the physical soil when seeds are sown. It is necessary that the soil be ploughed up, so that it can be enriched, and thus cause a stronger growth of the seed. In exactly the same way the evolution of the spirit takes place through ploughing up the soil of the heart so that it is a constant reflection of the Holy Spirit. In this way the human spirit grows and develops by leaps and bounds.
"Naturally there will be periods of distress and difficulty, and even severe tests; but if that person turns firmly toward the divine Manifestation, studies carefully His spiritual teachings and receives the blessings of the Holy Spirit, he will find that in reality these tests and difficulties have been the gifts of God to enable him to grow and develop."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 6, 1954: Living the Life, pp. 18-19)

248. New Believers Must Not Be Left to Their Own Devices
"After declaration, the new believers must not be left to their own devices. [71] Through correspondence and dispatch of visitors, through conferences and training courses, these friends must be patiently strengthened and lovingly helped to develop into full Baha'i maturity. The beloved Guardian referring to the duties of Baha'i Assemblies in assisting the newly declared believer has written: '...the members of each and every Assembly should endeavour, by their patience, their love, their tact and wisdom, to nurse, subsequent to his admission, the newcomer into Baha'i maturity, and win him over gradually to the unreserved acceptance of whatever has been ordained in the Teachings.'"
(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 13, 1964: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 32-33)

249. Deepening the Spiritual Life of the Individual Believers
"Above all, the duty of deepening the spiritual life of your newly-enrolled co-workers is paramount, for the fate of the entire community depends upon the

individual believers. Without the whole-hearted support of each and every one of the friends, every measure adopted, no matter how well thought out, is fore-doomed to failure. It is the individual believers who must maintain the Local Assemblies, and the centres already won at the cost of such great sacrifice. It is they who must, afire with the love of Baha'u'llah, go forth to further broaden the base of administrative activity by forming new Assemblies and implanting the standard of Baha'u'llah in new localities; who must arise in response to the call to travel to the remote outposts of the Faith and push back the frontiers; and who must, through your wise and loving guidance, become your collaborators in carrying out your God-given mission."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 14, 1968: National Baha'i Review, No. 10, p. 1, 10/68: Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 16)

250. Assemblies and Committees Must Enable Believers to Carry Forth Message of God
"Now that they have erected the administrative machinery of the Cause they must put it to its real use—serving only as an instrument to facilitate the flow of the spirit of the Faith out into the world. Just as the muscles enable the body to carry out the will of the individual, all Assemblies and Committees must enable the believers to carry forth the message of God to the waiting public, the love of Baha'u'llah, and the healing laws and principles of the Faith to all men."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 6, 1942)

251. If One Desires to Become a Baha'i, His Past Should Not Be Held Against Him
"The Guardian does not feel that, if a person has approached this Cause and desires to become a Baha'i, and is determined to change his way of life, his past should be held against him. Where would forgiveness be if every prospective Baha'i was judged by his past? But once a Baha'i, a change of life is expected and hoped for, and the friends must help people to change."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 29, 1951)

"Also there is no reason why a prisoner should not be accepted as a declared believer on the same basis as anybody else. They are now expiating their crime [72] against society, and, if their hearts have changed, and they accept the Cause, there is no reason why they should be excluded from membership."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of Honolulu, April 23, 1955)

252. Convert Advised Not to Become Alienated from Parents
"It made him very happy to know of the recent confirmation of your young Jewish friend, and of her earnest desire to serve and promote the Faith. He will certainly pray on her behalf that she may, notwithstanding the opposition of her parents and relatives, increasingly gain in knowledge and in understanding of the Teachings, and become animated with such a zeal as to arise, and bring into the Cause a large number of her former co-religionists.

"Under no circumstances, however, should she allow her parents to become completely alienated from her, but it is her bounden duty to strive, through patient, continued and loving effort, to win their sympathy for the Faith, and even perhaps, to bring about their confirmation, however deep-rooted their attachment to the Jewish Faith may be."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 6, 1938)

253. Assembly Should Not Prevent Enrollment of Persons With Questionable Morals—When Accepted New Enrollees Should Henceforth Conduct Themselves As Baha'is

"The young lady in question should be advised by you or the believer with whom she has been studying that the decision as to whether or not she wishes to enroll in the Faith rests with her and her alone. Your Assembly should not prevent her from enrolling should she so decide, but if she does apply for membership in the community, she obviously should understand that she will be expected to conduct herself as a Baha'i by adjusting her relationship to the man with whom she is presently living. This means that either they must become legally married or she should sever the existing relationship between them.

"Your Local Spiritual Assembly is responsible to guide and assist this young lady, including helping her to obtain whatever welfare and legal assistance may be available from State or Federal sources."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Local Spiritual Assembly, April 4, 1977)

254. May Be Occasions When Enrollment Must Be Postponed

"There may be occasions when an enrollment must be postponed, as in the case of someone holding a political post, unless that person is able and can, in good conscience, resign from such a post immediately. Other cases may permit acceptance but indicate a need for fixing a time when the individual will be required to conform to certain laws, such as membership in the Masonic Order, church, or other ecclesiastical organizations. Still other times an individual may be encouraged to become better acquainted with the spirit, laws, and principles of the Faith before submitting his application. However, the Guardian has cautioned us not to be too rigid in our requirements for accepting new believers or to place hindrances in their way. The question of conforming one's character and the pattern of one's life to the standards of conduct upheld in the Baha'i way of life is a matter which should [73] be inculcated in the new believer in the course of his spiritual education and deepening."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 13, 1979)

255. Qualifications of a Believer

"Regarding the very delicate and complex question of ascertaining the qualifications of a true believer, I cannot in this connection emphasize too strongly the supreme necessity for the exercise of the utmost discretion, caution and tact, whether it be in deciding for ourselves as to who may be regarded a true believer or in disclosing to the outside world such

considerations as may serve as a basis for such a decision. I would only venture to state very briefly and as adequately as present circumstances permit the principal factors that must be taken into consideration before deciding whether a person may be regarded a true believer or not. Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Baha'i Cause, as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Baha'i administration throughout the world—these I conceive to be the fundamental and primary considerations that must be fairly, discreetly and thoughtfully ascertained before reaching such a vital decision...."
(Shoghi Effendi: Baha'i Administration, p. 90)

256. The Process of Acceptance Varies—Stage of Conviction Important
"The process by which a new believer reaches this stage of acceptance varies according to his individual capacity. In some societies, for example, most believers must go through all sorts of intellectual processes and a re-orientation of their thinking before coming to this acceptance. In a primitive society the new believer may reach this stage of conviction quite easily and directly. The stage of conviction is the important thing, and not the method by which he arrives at this conviction."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 9, 1963)

257. Declarants Need Not Know All the Proofs—Spark of Faith
"...Those who declare themselves as Baha'is should become enchanted with the beauty of the Teachings, and touched by the love of Baha'u'llah. The declarants need not know all the proofs, history, laws, and principles of the Faith, but in the process of declaring themselves they must, in addition to catching the spark of faith, become basically informed about the Central Figures of the Faith, as well as the existence of laws they must follow and an administration they must obey."
(From a message from the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 13, 1964: Teaching the Masses, p. 2)

258. Acceptance of New Believers Left to Discretion of Assembly
"As regards the accepting of new believers, it is for the National Spiritual Assembly to decide the appropriate procedure to be followed. Naturally, when there is a firmly established Local Spiritual Assembly, as in Bombay, the National Assembly will normally endorse the Local Assembly's decision unless there is a particular reason to query it in any specific case. However, in the case of declarations from an area [74] where there is no Local Assembly, or where the Assembly is having difficulty in functioning, the National Spiritual Assembly itself will have to decide whether to accept them, basing its decision on the views of such teaching committee, individuals or neighbouring Local Spiritual Assembly, as it may feel necessary.

"We have noted that you have advised the Local Spiritual Assemblies to meet new

believers at the time of their enrollment in the Faith. While it would be desirable for new believers to become acquainted with the elected members of their community, this should not be a requirement for acceptance of the new believer in the community.

"It is entirely within the discretion of your National Assembly to set up proper procedures for enrolling believers in accordance with the requirements of the areas under your jurisdiction, bearing in mind that where there are local Assemblies it would be preferable to enroll new believers in their area of jurisdiction through the Local Assembly."
(Extracts from letters written by the Universal House of Justice on this subject cited in a letter to an individual believer, dated February 28, 1973)

259. Mental Instability Has No Bearing Upon Acceptance of an Enrollment
"In response to your letter of 11 March 1981, conveying the question of one of your Local Spiritual Assemblies about the enrollment of individuals who are mentally incompetent, drug users, alcoholics, etc., the Universal House of Justice asks us to convey the following.

"The acceptance of a person into the Baha'i community should be based not on whether he is leading an exemplary life, but on whether the Assembly is reasonably certain that he is sincere in his declaration of faith in Baha'u'llah and that he knows of the laws which would affect his personal conduct, so that he does not enter the community under a misapprehension. The question of mental instability has no bearing upon the acceptance of an enrollment unless it is of such a nature that it affects the ability of the declarant to judge whether or not he believes in Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands, April 19, 1981)

260. In These Special Cases, Steps Should Be Taken to Deepen Their Understanding
"Concerning the acceptance into the Faith of individuals who have mental problems or are drug addicts, etc., the House of Justice instructs us to say that if the Assembly is satisfied that the person is sufficiently in command of his faculties to understand what his declaration of faith implies, he may be accepted as a believer. In other words you should apply the normal guidelines of acceptance of new believers. In such cases, however, you may have to ensure that special steps are taken to deepen the understanding of the new Baha'i. A drug addict or alcoholic should, of course, be told that the taking of drugs and alcohol is strictly forbidden in Baha'i law, and he will have to do whatever is necessary to break himself of the addiction. You may find it necessary and helpful to put him in touch with organizations which specialize in helping such cases. If a case is severe you may have to warn the person that if he does not overcome this problem within a reasonable time you may have to consider depriving him of his voting rights."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Austria, May 12, 1982)

[75] 261. Declaration of Faith Normally Accepted from Those Living in Immoral Situation or from Member of an Organization Not Permissible—To Be Given Time to Rectify Situation

"In the case of people who accept the Faith while living in a situation which is not morally acceptable, or while being a member of an organization to which it is not permissible for a Baha'i to belong, the normal procedure is for the Assembly to accept the declaration of faith so that the new believer may become a member of the Baha'i community and his newly-born belief in Baha'u'llah can be nurtured, and at the same time for the Assembly to explain that his situation is one that he must change within a reasonable time. If the believer does not rectify his situation as a result of the Assembly's exhortations and assistance, and following due warnings when the time limit expires, the Assembly would have to consider depriving him of his administrative rights. It may well be, however, that in a particular case, it is preferable to explain the matter to the individual concerned and advise the postponement of the registration of his acceptance of the Faith until such time as he has been able to rectify his situation. This has happened, for example, in some countries where a person who holds a prominent political post has accepted the Faith and needs to complete his term of office before being able to withdraw honourably from politics."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 18, 1985)

262. Children Are Accepted as Baha'is Regardless of Age

"...if the non-Baha'i parents of a youth under fifteen permit their child to be a Baha'i, we have no objection whatsoever from the point of view of our Teachings to permitting such a youth to declare as a Baha'i, regardless of age. When he declares his faith in Baha'u'llah, he will then be accepted in the community and be treated as other Baha'i children."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of El Salvador, December 14, 1970)

263. Prisoners, Declarations from

"We have your letter of 16th November, 1969 inquiring about the status of Baha'is who are imprisoned and whether it is permissible to enroll prisoners who wish to join the Faith.

"You are free to accept declarations of faith from inmates of a prison, but their participation as voting believers can take place only after they have been discharged from prison. The fact of having been in prison does not deprive a Baha'i from exercising his voting rights when he is released and there is no need for a probationary period. However, if there is some other factor which would indicate to the National Assembly that in a particular case the voting rights should be suspended, the National Assembly may then exercise its discretion."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the South Pacific Ocean, December 8, 1969)

264. Signature on Card is to Satisfy Administrative Requirements—There is a

Difference Between Character and Faith

"You have asked if the mere declaration of faith by a newcomer suffices to recognize him as a Baha'i, and whether living the Baha'i life should not be [76] regarded as the basis of admission into the Faith. You should bear in mind that the signature on a card, in the sense that it represents a record of the date of the declaration and data about the declarant, is to satisfy administrative requirements enabling the enrollment of the new believer in the community. The deeper implications of the act of declaration of faith are between the individual and God. Shoghi Effendi has made several statements on this important subject, and we have been asked to share with you the following two excerpts from letters written on his behalf to individual believers:

'There is a difference between character and faith; it is often very hard to accept this fact and put up with it, but the fact remains that a person may believe in and love the Cause—even to being ready to die for it—and yet not have a good personal character, or possess traits at variance with the teachings. We should try to change, to let the Power of God help recreate us and make us true Baha'is in deed as well as in belief. But sometimes the process is slow, sometimes it never happens because the individual does not try hard enough. But these things cause us suffering and are a test to us in our fellow-believers, most especially if we love them and have been their teacher!'

'The process of becoming a Baha'i is necessarily slow and gradual. The essential is not that the beginner should have a full and detailed knowledge of the Cause, a thing which is obviously impossible in the vast majority of cases, but that he should, by an act of his own will, be willing to uphold and follow the truth and guidance set forth in the Teachings, and thus open his heart and mind to the reality of the Manifestation.'"

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 7, 1974: Baha'i News of India, p. 2, July/August, 1974)

265. Enrolment Card—Not a Universal Requirement

"There is no requirement in Baha'i administration for a new believer to sign an enrolment card. It is for each National Spiritual Assembly to decide, in the light of conditions in the territory under its jurisdiction, how it wishes a declaration of faith to be made. For a number of reasons it has been found in most countries that an enrolment card is a simple and useful way of registering new believers, but this is not a universal requirement...."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, October 28, 1975)

266. Duty of Assembly to Newly Enrolled Believer

"Above all, the utmost endeavour should be exerted by your Assembly to familiarize the newly enrolled believers with the fundamental and spiritual verities of the Faith, and with the origins, the aims and purposes, as well as the processes of a divinely appointed Administrative Order, to acquaint them more fully with the history of the Faith, to instil in them a deeper understanding of the Covenants of both Baha'u'llah and of 'Abdu'l-Baha, to

enrich their spiritual life, to rouse them to a greater effort and a closer participation in both the teaching of the Faith and the administration of its activities, and to inspire them to make the necessary sacrifices for the furtherance of its vital interests. For as the body of the avowed supporters of the Faith is enlarged, and the basis of the structure of its Administrative Order is broadened, and the fame [77] of the rising community spreads far and wide, a parallel progress must be achieved, if the fruits already garnered are to endure in the spiritual quickening of its members and the deepening of their inner life."
(Postscript by the Guardian to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, June 26, 1956: Messages to Canada, pp. 61-62)

N. The Believers' Relationship with the Assemblies

267. Being a Baha'i Essentially an Inner Thing
"It is good for the Baha'is to learn that being a Baha'i is essentially an inner thing, or way of life, and not dependent on fixed patterns. Important as our organized institutions are, they are not the Faith itself. The strength of the Cause grows no matter how much disrupted its activities may temporarily be. This we see over and over again, in lands where the Faith has been temporarily banned; at times when the believers are persecuted and even killed; where they are serving all alone or scattered and isolated...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Program Committee of Geyserville, November 11, 1951: Baha'i News, No. 257, p. 4, July 1952)

268. Should Have Respect for National and Local Assemblies
"We should respect the National Spiritual Assembly and the Local Spiritual Assembly because they are institutions founded by Baha'u'llah. It has nothing to do with personality, but is far above it. It will be a great day when the friends, on and off the Assemblies, come to fully grasp the fact that it is not the individuals on an Assembly which is important, but the Assembly as an institution."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 7, 1949: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 19)

269. This Great Prize, This Gift of God—Local Spiritual Assembly
"...The friends are called upon to give their whole-hearted support and cooperation to the Local Spiritual Assembly, first by voting for the membership and then by energetically pursuing its plans and programmes, by turning to it in time of trouble or difficulty, by praying for its success and taking delight in its rise to influence and honour. This great prize, this gift of God within each community must be cherished, nurtured, loved, assisted, obeyed and prayed for."
(From the Naw-Ruz Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, 1974)

270. Assembly is a Nascent House of Justice—Individuals Toward Each Other Governed by Love, Unity, etc.
"...There is a tendency to mix up the functions of the Administration and try

to apply it in individual relationships, which is abortive, because the Assembly is a nascent House of Justice and is supposed to administer, according to the Teachings, the affairs of the community. But individuals toward each other are governed by love, unity, forgiveness and a sin-covering eye. Once the friends grasp this they will get along much better, but they keep playing Spiritual Assembly to each other and expect the Assembly to behave like an individual...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 5, 1950: Living the Life, p. 17)

[78] 271. Two Kinds of Baha'is
"There are two kinds of Baha'is, one might say: those whose religion is Baha'i and those who live for the Faith. Needless to say if one can belong to the latter category, if one can be in the vanguard of heroes, martyrs and saints, it is more praiseworthy in the sight of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 16, 1950: Living the Life, p. 16)

272. Spiritual Children Should Not Cling to Misconceptions of Their Teachers
"As to your question about the spiritual children of people who enter the Cause with some old ideas still clinging to them: Everyone should study the Faith for himself, and just because a person's Baha'i teacher has some concept not strictly Baha'i it does not stand to reason that the new believer must be saddled with it; old believers, as well as new, should constantly endeavour to grow more fully into the Baha'i pattern of thought and of life. Each soul receives the gift of faith for himself, and from then on is a Baha'i in his own right, independent of his teacher."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 17, 1945)

273. Assemblies Should Inspire Confidence in Individual Believers
"...the Local Assemblies should inspire confidence in the individual believers, and these in their turn should express their readiness to fully abide by the decisions and directions of the Local Assembly; the two must learn to co-operate, and to realize that only through such a co-operation can the institutions of the Cause effectively and permanently function. While obedience to the Local Assembly should be unqualified and whole-hearted, yet that body should enforce its directions in such a way as to avoid giving the impression that it is animated by dictatorial motives. The spirit of the Cause is one of mutual co-operation, and not that of a dictatorship."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 28, 1935: The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 23)

274. Buckets-Full of Administrative Information: Putting Out the First Sparks
"...The process of educating people of different customs and backgrounds must be done with the greatest patience and understanding, and rules and regulations not imposed upon them, except where a rock-bottom essential is in question. He feels sure that your Assembly is capable of carrying on its work in this spirit, and of fanning the hearts to flame through the fire of the love of God,

rather than putting out the first sparks with buckets-full of administrative information and regulations."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa, July 9, 1957: Ibid.)

275. Look to the Teachings
"...You should, under no circumstances, feel discouraged, and allow such difficulties, even though they may have resulted from the misconduct, or the lack of capacity and vision of certain members of the Community, to make you waver in your faith and basic loyalty to the Cause. Surely, the believers, no matter how [79] qualified they may be, whether as teachers or administrators, and however high their intellectual and spiritual merits, should never be looked upon as a standard whereby to evaluate and measure the divine authority and mission of the Faith. It is to the Teachings themselves, and to the lives of the Founders of the Cause that the believers should look for their guidance and inspiration, and only by keeping strictly to such true attitude can they hope to establish their loyalty to Baha'u'llah upon an enduring and unassailable basis. You should take heart, therefore, and with unrelaxing vigilance and unremitting effort endeavour to play your full share in the gradual unfoldment of this Divine World Order."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 23, 1939: Living the Life, p. 7)

276. Two Principles to Follow: Doctrinal and Administrative Unity
"There are two main principles which the Guardian wishes the friends to always bear in mind and to conscientiously and faithfully follow. First is the principle of unqualified and wholehearted loyalty to the revealed Word. The believers should be careful not to deviate, even a hair-breadth, from the Teachings. Their supreme consideration should be to safeguard the purity of the principles, tenets and laws of the Faith. It is only by this means that they can hope to maintain the organic unity of the Cause. There can and should be no liberal or conservatives, no moderates or extremes in the Cause. For they are all subject to the one and the same law which is the Law of God. This Law transcends all differences, all personal or local tendencies, moods and aspirations.

"Next is the principle of complete and immediate obedience to the Assemblies, both Local and National. It is the responsibility of these Baha'i administrative bodies to enable the community to acquire, and increasingly deepen in, the knowledge and understanding of the Cause. Doctrinal unity and administrative unity, these are the two chief pillars that sustain the edifice of the Cause, and protect it from the storms of opposition which so severely rage against it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, September 5, 1936: Dawn of a New Day, p. 61)

277. Baha'i Administration—Instrument of Spirit of the Faith
"The friends must never mistake the Baha'i administration for an end in itself. It is merely the instrument of the spirit of the Faith. This Cause is a Cause

which God has revealed to humanity as a whole. It is designed to benefit the entire human race, and the only way it can do this is to reform the community life of mankind, as well as seeking to regenerate the individual. The Baha'i administration is only the first shaping of what in future will come to be the social life and laws of community living. As yet the believers are only first beginning to grasp and practice it properly. So we must have patience if at times it seems a little self conscious and rigid in its workings. It is because we are learning something very difficult but very wonderful—how to live together as a community of Baha'is, according to the glorious teachings."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 14, 1941: The Local Spiritual Assembly, pp. 28-29)

278. Baha'i World Community Develops New Cells, New Organs
"In the human body, every cell, every organ, every nerve has its part to play. [80] When all do so the body is healthy, vigorous, radiant, ready for every call made upon it. No cell, however humble, lives apart from the body, whether in serving it or receiving from it. This is true of the body of mankind in which God 'has endowed each humble being with ability and talent', and is supremely true of the body of the Baha'i World Community, for this body is already an organism, united in its aspirations, unified in its methods, seeking assistance and confirmation from the same Source, and illumined with the conscious knowledge of its unity... The Baha'i World Community, growing like a healthy new body, develops new cells, new organs, new functions and powers as it presses on to its maturity, when every soul, living for the Cause of God, will receive from that Cause, health, assurance, and the overflowing bounties of Baha'u'llah which are diffused through His divinely ordained Order."
(Message from the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, September 1964: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 37-38)

279. Believers Should Turn to Assemblies for Advice and Help
"The believers should learn to turn more often to their Assemblies for advice and help and at an earlier date, and the Assemblies, on the other hand, should act with more vigilance and a greater sense of community responsibility towards every situation that may damage the prestige of the Faith in the eyes of the public. When decisions have been reached by the Assembly, they must be carried out loyally and willingly, by all concerned."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 13, 1944: The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 26)

280. Mission of Baha'u'llah, Friends Are Trustees of
"The friends have a great duty, first towards the Cause and then towards society at large. Baha'u'llah has come to the world with a divine Message and devoted all His life and withstood all forms of persecution in the hope of establishing it firmly. We are now the trustees of that Mission. It is for us to bring that task begun by Baha'u'llah to a final consummation. Should we fail, we have been untrue to our Lord and also remained deaf to the cry of humanity seeking salvation."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

November 15, 1931: Baha'i News, No. 71, p. 2, February 1933)

281. Believers Should Have Confidence in Assembly
"The believers should have confidence in the directions and orders of their Assembly, even though they may not be convinced of their justice or right. Once the Assembly, through a majority vote of its members, comes to a decision the friends should readily obey it. Specially those dissenting members within the Assembly whose opinion is contrary to that of the majority of their fellow-members should set a good example before the community by sacrificing their personal views for the sake of obeying the principle of majority vote that underlies the functioning of all Baha'i Assemblies."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 28, 1935: The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 26)

282. If Assembly Makes Ill-Advised Decision It Must Be Upheld
"One of the fundamentals involved in our Administrative Order, which we must [81] remember will become the pattern for our World Order, is that even if an Assembly makes an ill-advised decision it must be upheld in order to preserve the unity of the community. Appeal can be made from the Local Assembly's decision to the National Assembly... But the principle of authority invested in our elected bodies must be upheld. This is not something which can be learned without trial and test...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, June 30, 1949: Ibid.)

283. If Assembly Makes a Mistake—God Will Right the Wrongs Done
"The Assembly may make a mistake, but, as the Master pointed out, if the Community does not abide by its decisions, or the individual Baha'i, the result is worse, as it undermines the very institution which must be strengthened in order to uphold the principles and laws of the Faith. He tells us God will right the wrongs done. We must have confidence in this and obey our Assemblies. He therefore strongly urges you to work directly under your Baha'i Assembly, to accept your responsibilities as a voting member, and do your utmost to create harmony within the community."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer in 1949: Ibid., p. 27)

284. Obedience, Patience and Restraint
"The friends should therefore not feel discouraged at the differences of opinion that may prevail among the members of an Assembly for these, as experience has shown, and as the Master's words attest, fulfil a valuable function in all Assembly deliberations. But once the opinion of the majority has been ascertained, all the members should automatically and unreservedly obey it, and faithfully carry it out. Patience and restraint, however, should at all times characterize the discussions and deliberations of the elected representatives of the local community, and no fruitless and hair-splitting discussions indulged in, under any circumstances."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 18, 1939: Ibid., pp. 18-19)

285. Criticism to Assemblies—Baha'is Can Freely Air Their Views
"The Baha'is are fully entitled to address criticisms to their Assemblies; they can freely air their views about policies or individual members of elected bodies to the Assembly, Local or National, but then they must whole-heartedly accept the advice or decision of the Assembly, according to the principles already laid down for such matters in Baha'i administration."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, May 13, 1945: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, p. 55)

286. No Protection for Faith Unless Friends Submit to Administrative Bodies
"...There can be no protection for the Faith unless the friends are willing to submit to their administrative bodies, especially when these are acting in good faith; the individual believers are not in a position to judge their National Body. If any wrong has been done, we must leave it in the hands of God, knowing, as [82] 'Abdu'l-Baha said, that He will right it, and in the meantime not disrupt the Cause of God by constantly harping on these matters."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 3, 1957: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 37)

287. If Baha'is Undermine Leaders
"The Guardian believes that a great deal of the difficulties from which the believers ... feel themselves to be suffering are caused by their neither correctly understanding nor putting into practice the administration. They seem—many of them—to be prone to continually challenging and criticizing the decisions of their Assemblies. If the Baha'is undermine the very leaders which are, however immaturely, seeking to coordinate Baha'i activities and administer Baha'i affairs, if they continually criticize their acts and challenge or belittle their decisions, they not only prevent any real rapid progress in the Faith's development from taking place, but they repel outsiders who quite rightly may ask how we ever expect to unite the whole world when we are so disunited among ourselves!"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 26, 1943: Ibid., pp. 34-35)

288. Believers Have the Right to Express Their Criticism Action of Assembly, But Not in a Way to Undermine Its Authority
"...with reference to your ... letter in which you ... asked whether the believers have the right to openly express their criticism of any Assembly action or policy: It is not only the right, but the vital responsibility of every loyal and intelligent member of the Community to offer fully and frankly, but with due respect and consideration to the authority of the Assembly, any suggestion, recommendation or criticism he conscientiously feels he should in order to improve and remedy certain existing conditions or trends in his local community, and it is the duty of the Assembly also to give careful consideration to any such views submitted to them by any one of the believers. The best occasion chosen for this purpose is the Nineteen Day Feast which, besides its social and spiritual aspects, fulfils various administrative needs

and requirements of the Community, chief among them being the need for open and constructive criticism and deliberation regarding the state of affairs within the local Baha'i Community.

"But again it should be stressed that all criticism and discussions of a negative character which may result in undermining the authority of the Assembly as a body should be strictly avoided. For otherwise the order of the Cause itself will be endangered, and confusion and discord will reign in the Community."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 13, 1939)

289. Obedience to the Decisions of the Local Assembly Should Be Unqualified and Whole-Hearted
"The most vital matter on which the Guardian wishes you to fully concentrate is that of consolidating the foundations of the Administration. Not until your group learns to work efficiently through obedience to the Local Assembly and under its guidance can there be any hope for future expansion. The friends must all realize the necessity of internal discipline and order which only a properly elected and efficiently functioning body such as the Local Assembly can effectively maintain. Obedience to the decisions of the Local Assembly should be unqualified and [83] whole-hearted, as by this means alone can the community work as a united body and achieve something constructive and enduring."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of Vienna, April 5, 1936)

290. Local Assembly Should Not Criticize Policy of National Assembly
"As to the problem which has arisen in connection with the Newsletter published and circulated by the ... Assembly, the Guardian has already written about it to your National Spiritual Assembly, expressing the view that under no circumstances should any Local Assembly be given the right to criticize, and much less oppose, the policy duly adopted and approved by the National Spiritual Assembly. It is his hope that henceforth the problem of the relationship between the National Spiritual Assembly and the Local Spiritual Assemblies in matters of this nature will, in the light of his instructions, be carefully understood by individuals and Assemblies alike."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 19, 1934)

291. Only One Remedy—Study the Administration
"There is only one remedy for this: To study the administration, to obey the Assemblies, and each believer seek to perfect his own character as a Baha'i. We can never exert the influence over others which we can exert over ourselves. If we are better, if we show love, patience, and understanding of the weakness of others, if we seek to never criticize but rather encourage, others will do likewise, and we can really help the Cause through our example and spiritual strength. The Baha'is everywhere, when the administration is first established, find it very difficult to adjust themselves. They have to learn to obey, even

when the Assembly may be wrong, for the sake of unity. They have to sacrifice their personalities, to a certain extent, in order that the Community life may grow and develop as a whole. These things are difficult, but we must realize that they will lead us to a very much greater, more perfect way of life when the Faith is properly established according to the administration."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 26, 1943: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 35)

292. On Individual Believer Depends Fate of Community
"This challenge, so severe and insistent, and yet so glorious, faces no doubt primarily the individual believer on whom, in the last resort, depends the fate of the entire community. He it is who constitutes the warp and woof on which the quality and pattern of the whole fabric must depend. He it is who acts as one of the countless links in the mighty chain that now girdles the globe. He it is who serves as one of the multitude of bricks which support the structure and insure the stability of the administrative edifice now being raised in every part of the world. Without his support, at once whole-hearted, continuous and generous, every measure adopted, and every plan formulated, by the body which acts as the national representative of the community to which he belongs, is foredoomed to failure. The World Center of the Faith itself is paralyzed if such a support on the part of the rank and file of the community is denied it. The Author of the Divine Plan Himself is impeded in His purpose if the proper instruments for the execution of His design are lacking. The sustaining strength of Baha'u'llah [84] Himself, the Founder of the Faith, will be withheld from every and each individual, who fails in the long run to arise and play his part."
(Shoghi Effendi: Citadel of Faith, pp. 130-131)

O. Inactive Believers

293. Voting List, Names Should Not Be Removed from
"Your Assembly should not remove the names of Baha'is from the voting list just because they do not attend meetings or just because their addresses are unknown. It is hard to make Baha'is; and you must try and help them and reactivate them, and find those whose addresses are unknown if you can."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Assembly of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, September 26, 1957)

294. Removal of Names from Voting List
"People who for years have ceased to either attend meetings or show the slightest interest in the Cause can be dropped from the voting list; but any who are unable to attend meetings, but still consider themselves to be Baha'is and are desirous of keeping up their contact with the Faith, should naturally be kept on the voting list."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, May 29, 1946)

295. Inactive and Unresponsive Believers Often Need Encouragement
"He feels that people who are inactive should not automatically be removed from

the voting list; each individual, in such matters, must be considered as an individual case. He is constantly trying to avoid the needless multiplication of rules and procedures, and that is why he urges the friends, and responsible bodies, to use patience, good judgement, and tact in handling such cases, and not just start a new rule of thumb to solve the question en masse.

"When accepting new believers we must certainly not hold their past against them, but hope that the faith they have in Baha'u'llah will help them to change their characters and ways of living—as we know so often happens. We must not add any conditions for Baha'i membership beyond those already outlined by the Guardian himself as absolutely necessary.
"It is very discouraging to find inactive and unresponsive believers; on the other hand we must always realize that some souls are weak and immature and not capable of carrying on an active administrative burden. They need encouragement, the love of their fellow Baha'is, and assistance. To blame them for not doing more for the Cause is useless, and they may actually have a very firm belief in Baha'u'llah which with care could be fanned into flame.

"If some of these isolated and inactive people gradually turn to other work than the Cause we should not always blame them—they probably needed more help, more stimulating, more teaching and Baha'i comradeship than they received."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 25, 1947)

296. Inactive Believers—Names Removed Only When Clearly Stated No Longer Believe in Baha'u'llah
"Further guidance might be welcome and we share portions of a letter written by [85] the Universal House of Justice to another National Spiritual Assembly on 4 September 1966: '...Whilst it is embarrassing to leave names of inactive believers on a membership list, inactivity and lack of attendance at Baha'i meetings are not the bases for removing names of believers from the membership roster. A name should be removed only when the person clearly states that he no longer believes in Baha'u'llah and wishes his name to be removed from Baha'i membership. If the believer's whereabouts are unknown, his name should still not be removed from membership, but kept in a special list of believers whose addresses are unknown, and who obviously are not counted in determining the allocation of delegates.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia, September 25, 1973: Malaysian Baha'i News, Vol. 9, Nos. 2 3, June/November 1973)

297. Reasons for Inactivity Should Be Ascertained
"Concerning your question about inactive believers, the Universal House of Justice feels that it would be somewhat abrupt to drop them from the roster simply because they have been absent from meetings or otherwise inactive. They should be approached and the reasons for their absence or inactivity ascertained, and only when such investigation leads you to the conclusion that the believer concerned no longer believes in Baha'u'llah should this definitely

be recognized. Every case of inactivity should be investigated and the believers lovingly encouraged to become active. A distinction is to be made between those who are interested in the Faith but remain inactive and those whose inactivity indicates complete lack of interest in the Faith to the extent that they have in fact ceased to be Baha'is. In this latter instance removal from the list is simply recognition of this fact."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the North West Pacific Ocean, December 18, 1974)

298. Meetings Should Be Made So Interesting as to Attract the Old Believers
"You mentioned in one of your letters that some of the old believers who for many years had kept away are now coming back and attending the meetings. How wonderful it would be if all such persons together with all those who met the Master and whose life was changed through His influence would come along and help us in spreading these divine teachings! Perhaps the friends should take the initiative and make their meetings so inspiring and their activities so interesting and far reaching in importance that they would of their own accord come forward and lend us their help. Anyhow they would be a large army!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 9, 1932)

299. Must Aid Those with Unbecoming Conduct to Mend Their Ways
"As to certain of your voting members who have long been inactive, and whose conduct you disapprove of, he suggests you make an effort to find out if they still believe in the Faith, and if they do, and wish to be members of it, then they should be helped to mend their ways. If this patient and loving method does not [86] prove successful and they refuse to identify themselves with the Faith, they should be removed from the voting list."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, May 8, 1947)

300. If Person Does Not Wish to be Considered Member
"...If a person makes it quite clear that they do not wish to be considered an active member of the Baha'i Community and be affiliated with it and exert their voting right, then their name should be removed from the voting list; but if a person considers himself or herself a Baha'i, and for various reasons is not able to be active in the affairs of the Community, then they should certainly not be removed from our voting list...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, March 2, 1951: The Nineteen Day Feast, p. 8)

301. The Personal Situation of a Baha'i May Preclude Activity
"The House of Justice has asked us to point out that normally once a person has declared his belief in Baha'u'llah and this declaration has been accepted by the Assembly it should be assumed that he continues to be a Baha'i until he states the contrary. If believers become inactive it is naturally desirable that the Local Spiritual Assemblies attempt to maintain contact with them and encourage them to become active unless, of course, it is obvious that their personal situation precludes such activity. For example, a Baha'i who is

married to a non-Baha'i may well have to limit his activities to some degree in order to maintain the unity of his family. If during this process of encouragement it becomes apparent that the Baha'i in question has in fact ceased to believe in Baha'u'llah and wishes not to be a member of the Baha'i community, the Assembly would be fully justified in accepting his withdrawal."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain, May 7, 1975)

302. Those Who No Longer Believe in Baha'u'llah...
"Basically it is for your National Spiritual Assembly to decide who should be retained on the voting lists, but guidelines have been given by the beloved Guardian and by the Universal House of Justice. Obviously, people who do not believe in Baha'u'llah and those who have become inactive to the extent that they do not show the slightest interest in the Faith can be dropped from the voting list. On the other hand, people who are inactive should not automatically be removed from that list. Each case should be considered on its own merits. In some cases a spark of faith may be found which with care may be fanned into flame. Patience and good judgement are called for."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 10, 1975)

303. Believers Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown
"Where a believer has been sought and his whereabouts and address are not known, the believer's name can be held in a suspended file against possible reappearance in another community, and need not be counted in delegate [87] assignments. You are correct in acknowledging that such believers retain their full administrative rights. However, a category can be added to the voting list for those individuals whose addresses are unknown. While this category need not be included in allocation of delegates, it can be included in such lists as total number of believers, semi-annual reports, etc."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Paraguay, April 22, 1982)

II. BACKBITING, CRITICISM, FAULT-FINDING, GOSSIP, LIES, SLANDER, ETC.

[88] 304. The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah
"Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness."
(Baha'u'llah: The Hidden Words, Arabic No. 27)

305. Backbiting Defined
"As regards backbiting, i.e., discussing the faults of others in their absence, the teachings are very emphatic. In a Tablet to an American friend the Master wrote: 'The worst human quality and the most great sin is backbiting, more especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of backbiting were shut eternally and each one of the believers unsealed his lips in praise of others, then the teachings of His Holiness Baha'u'llah would spread, the hearts be illumined, the spirits

glorified, and the human world would attain to everlasting felicity.' (Quoted in Star of West, Vol. IV. p. 192) Baha'u'llah says in the Hidden Words: 'Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command ACCURSED ART THOU.' The condemnation of backbiting could hardly be couched in stronger language than in these passages, and it is obviously one of the foremost obligations for Baha'is to set their faces against this practice. Even if what is said against another person be true, the mentioning of his faults to others still comes under the category of backbiting, and is forbidden."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 11, 1925)

306. Abstain from Fault-Finding and Backbiting
"On no subject are the Baha'i teachings more emphatic than on the necessity to abstain from fault-finding and backbiting while being ever eager to discover and root out our own faults and overcome our own failings.

"If we profess loyalty to Baha'u'llah, to our Beloved Master and our dear Guardian, then we must show our love by obedience to these explicit teachings. Deeds not words are what they demand, and no amount of fervour in the use of expressions of loyalty and adulation will compensate for failure to live in the spirit of the teachings."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 12, 1925: Living the Life, p. 3)

307. Jealousy or Petty Attitudes Can Only Be Overcome by Love and Tact
"...he suggests you write the National Spiritual Assembly in a loving spirit, and [89] point out to them how it distresses you to think that, after so many years of service, statements about you which you consider unjustified should be preserved. But even if these are not taken from the records it still does not make them either true or false. Many things are preserved in records as matters of opinion; no one has given a verdict on this matter!

"The only way jealousy or petty attitudes can be overcome is by the love and tact of the teacher; these are not things that can be solved by a 'ruling'."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 30, 1946)

308. Dealing with Baha'is Who Act in Ways Detrimental to the Cause
"The question of dealing with those who call themselves Baha'is but who act in ways which we believe to be detrimental to the interests of the Cause is a very difficult one. If we think we can help matters by a frank and friendly talk with the individual concerned, refraining from judging or condemning, but pointing out in as kind a manner as possible the way in which, as it seems to us, the sort of conduct in question is harmful to the Cause or of a nature forbidden by the teachings, then it seems well to try that method before resorting to the more formidable method of bringing the matter before the Spiritual Assembly. But if that fails or if we feel that it is hopeless to try and deal with the matter in that way, while at the same time the case is so

serious that the interests of the Cause require that it should be firmly dealt with, then the proper course is to bring the matter before the Spiritual Assembly ... and have it frankly and fully discussed, calling such evidence as is necessary for the elucidation of the matter. After full consideration, the Spiritual Assembly should take such action as it deems advisable, and it is incumbent upon all members of the group to be loyal to whatever decision is arrived at by the Spiritual Assembly. There is, of course the right of appeal from the Local to the National Assembly, and from that to Shoghi Effendi,* but the matter ought to be dealt with, in the first instance, by the Local Spiritual Assembly.

"...When a difficulty is brought out into the daylight and freely discussed by a duly authorised and responsible group of people who are sincerely desirous of finding the best solution and are free from prejudice or personal motive, then there is a good chance of overcoming it, but discussion of the faults of others behind their backs by unauthorised people who have no authority to take action in the matter, is surely one of the most fertile causes—probably THE most fertile cause—of disunity, and the importance of putting an end to this practice should be impressed on all Baha'is."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, followed by an extract from the Guardian's postscript, February 11, 1925)

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*(Now the Universal House of Justice)

309. Learning Not to Concern Ourselves with the Faults of Others
"As to backbiting, the House of Justice points out that learning not to concern oneself with the faults of others seems to be one of the most difficult lessons for people to master, and that failing in this is a fertile cause of disputes among Baha'is as it is among men and women in general. In 'Star of the West', Volume 8, No. 10, on page 138, there is a record of a reply given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in a private interview in Paris in 1913. He was asked 'How shall I overcome seeing the faults of others—recognizing the wrong in others?', and He replied:

[90] 'I will tell you. Whenever you recognize the fault of another, think of yourself! What are my imperfections?—and try to remove them. Do this whenever you are tried through the words or deeds of others. Thus you will grow, become more perfect. You will overcome self, you will not even have time to think of the faults of others...'

"You are quite correct in your understanding of the importance of avoiding backbiting; such conduct strikes at the very unity of the Baha'i community. In a letter written to an individual believer on behalf of the Guardian it is stated:

'If we are better, if we show love, patience, and understanding of the weakness of others, if we seek to never criticize but rather encourage, others will do likewise, and we can really help the Cause through our example and spiritual

strength.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, August 13, 1980)

310. The Believers Need More Peace-Makers Circulating Among Them—A Function of the Older and the More Mature Baha'is

"What the believers need is not only, as you state, to really study the teachings, but also to have more peace-makers circulating among them. Unfortunately, not only average people, but average Baha'is, are very immature; gossip, trouble-making, criticism, seem easier than the putting into practice of love, constructive words and cooperation. It is one of the functions of the older and the more mature Baha'is to help the weaker ones to iron out their difficulties and learn to really function and live like true believers!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 11, 1950)

311. To Be Forbearing, Patient, Merciful, Rather Than Succumbing to Backbiting and Criticism

"You ask in your letter for guidance on the implications of the prohibition on backbiting and more specifically whether, in moments of anger or depression, the believer is permitted to turn to his friends to unburden his soul and discuss his problem in human relations. Normally, it is possible to describe the situation surrounding a problem and seek help and advice in resolving it, without necessarily mentioning names. The individual believer should seek to do this, whether he is consulting a friend, Baha'i or non-Baha'i, or whether the friend is consulting him.

"Abdu'l-Baha does not permit adverse criticism of individuals by name in discussion among the friends, even if the one criticizing believes that he is doing so to protect the interests of the Cause. If the situation is of such gravity as to endanger the interests of the Faith, the complaint, as your National Spiritual Assembly has indicated, should be submitted to the Local Spiritual Assembly, or as you state to a representative of the institution of the Counsellors, for consideration and action. In such cases, of course, the name of the person or persons involved will have to be mentioned.

"You also ask what one should do to 'handle depression and anger with someone' one feels 'very positively about'. The Universal House of Justice suggests that you call to mind the admonitions found in our Writings on the need to overlook the shortcomings of others, to forgive and conceal their misdeeds, not to expose their bad qualities, but to search for and affirm their praiseworthy [91] ones, and endeavour to be always forbearing, patient, and merciful. Such passages as the following extract from one of the letters written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary will also be helpful:

'Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being "perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect" and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy.... On no subject are the Baha'i teachings

more emphatic than on the necessity to abstain from fault-finding and backbiting, while being ever eager to discover and root out our own faults and overcome our own failings.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 23, 1975)

312. Backbiting—The Most Great Sin
"...Thou hast written regarding aims. How blessed are these aims, especially the prevention of backbiting! I hope that you may become confirmed therein, because the worst human quality and the most great sin is backbiting; more especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of backbiting could be shut eternally and each one of the believers of God unsealed his tongue in the praise of the other, then the teachings of His Holiness Baha'o'llah (Baha'u'llah) would be spread, the hearts illuminated, the spirits glorified and the human world would attain to everlasting felicity.

"I hope that the believers of God will shun completely backbiting, each one praising the other cordially and believe that backbiting is the cause of Divine wrath, to such an extent that if a person backbites to the extent of one word, he may become dishonored among all the people, because the most hateful characteristic of man is fault-finding. One must expose the praiseworthy qualities of the souls and not their evil attributes. The friends must overlook their shortcomings and faults and speak only of their virtues and not their defects.

"It is related that His Holiness Christ—May my life be a sacrifice to Him!—one day, accompanied by His apostles, passed by the corpse of a dead animal. One of them said: 'How putrid has this animal become!' The other exclaimed: 'How it is deformed!' A third cried out: 'What a stench! How cadaverous looking!' But His Holiness Christ said: 'Look at its teeth! How white they are!' Consider, that He did not look at all at the defects of that animal; nay, rather, He searched well until He found the beautiful white teeth. He observed only the whiteness of the teeth and overlooked entirely the deformity of the body, the dissolution of its organs and the bad odour.

"This is the attribute of the children of the Kingdom. This is the conduct and the manner of the real Bahais (Baha'is). I hope that all the believers will attain to this lofty station."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablet to Dr. M. G. Skinner, August 12, 1913: Star of the West, Vol. IV, No. 11, p. 192)

313. Backbiting "Quencheth the Light of the Heart"
"...Backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 193)

[92] 314. Criticism a Calamity
"...Vicious criticism is indeed a calamity. But its root is lack of faith in the system of Baha'u'llah, i.e., the Administrative Order—and lack of

obedience to Him—for He has forbidden it! If the Baha'is would follow the Baha'i laws in voting, in electing, in serving and in abiding by Assembly decisions, all this waste of strength through criticising others could be diverted into cooperation and achieving the Plan...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 18, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 233, p. 2, July 1950)

315. Suppress Every Critical Thought and Every Harsh Word
"When we see the condition the world is in today, we must surely forget these utterly insignificant internal disturbances, and rush, unitedly, to the rescue of humanity. You should urge your fellow-Baha'is to take this point of view, and to support you in a strong effort to suppress every critical thought and every harsh word, in order to let the spirit of Baha'u'llah flow into the entire community, and unite it in His love and in His service."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 16, 1951: Living the Life, p. 17)

316. An Unwise Act or Statement
"...an unwise act or statement by a Baha'i in one country could result in a grave set-back for the Faith there or elsewhere—and even loss of the lives of fellow believers."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 8, 1967: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 131)

317. Personal Differences and Petty Pre-Occupations
"He feels that you should do your utmost to call the attention of the friends to these large things, and real triumphs, and away from their personal differences and petty pre-occupations. Now is certainly not the time for any man to think of himself, or busy himself with the weaknesses of his brother; but, rather each and every Baha'i must concentrate on the tasks ahead and be reborn in the service of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Area National Teaching Committee (U.S.A.), July 17, 1950: Baha'i News, October 1970, p. 3)

318. Like Ploughmen Each Has His Team to Manage
"...Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being 'perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect' and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy. If we allow our attention and energy to be taken up in efforts to keep others right and remedy their faults, we are wasting precious time. We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticise their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 12, 1925: Living the Life, pp. 2-3)

[93] 319. Be a Friend to the Whole Human Race

"One must see in every human being only that which is worthy of praise. When this is done, one can be a friend to the whole human race. If, however, we look at people from the standpoint of their faults, then being a friend to them is a formidable task."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 169)

320. Baha'is Must Be Distinguished
"I desire distinction for you. The Baha'is must be distinguished from others of humanity. But this distinction must not depend upon wealth—that they should become more affluent than other people. I do not desire for you financial distinction. It is not an ordinary distinction I desire: not scientific, commercial, industrial distinction. For you I desire spiritual distinction; that is, you must become eminent and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must become distinguished from all else. You must become distinguished for loving humanity; for unity and accord; for love and justice. In brief, you must become distinguished in all the virtues of the human world; for faithfulness and steadfastness; for philanthropic deeds and service to the human world; for love toward every human being; for unity and accord with all people; for removing prejudices and promoting international peace. Finally, you must become distinguished for heavenly illumination and acquiring the bestowals of God. I desire this distinction for you. This must be the point of distinction among you."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 190)

321. Believers Should Draw on Each Other's Love
"Indeed the believers have not yet fully learned to draw on each other's love for strength and consolation in time of need. The Cause of God is endowed with tremendous powers, and the reason the believers do not gain more from it is because they have not learned to draw fully on these mighty forces of love and strength and harmony generated by the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 8, 1942: Living the Life, p. 8)

322. Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause
"The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause and mention the Name of God. We need not fear the enemies on the outside for such can be easily dealt with. But the enemies who call themselves friends and who persistently violate every fundamental law of love and unity, are difficult to be dealt with in this day, for the mercy of God is still great. But ere long this merciful door will be closed and such enemies will be attacked with a madness...."
('Abdu'l-Baha answers questions asked by Dr. E. C. Getsinger in the Holy Land: Star of the West, Vol. VI, No. 6, p. 45)

323. Backbiting is Divisive
"...If any soul speak ill of an absent one, the only result will clearly be this: he will dampen the zeal of the friends and tend to make them indifferent. For backbiting is divisive, it is the leading cause among the friends of a disposition to withdraw. If any individual should speak ill of one who is absent, it is incumbent on his hearers, in a spiritual and friendly manner, to

stop him, and say in effect: [94] would this detraction serve any useful purpose? Would it please the Blessed Beauty, contribute to the lasting honour of the friends, promote the holy Faith, support the Covenant, or be of any possible benefit to any soul? No, never! On the contrary, it would make the dust to settle so thickly on the heart that the ears would hear no more, and the eyes would no longer behold the light of truth."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 230-31)

324. When Criticism and Harsh Words Arise
"When criticism and harsh words arise within a Baha'i community, there is no remedy except to put the past behind one, and persuade all concerned to turn over a new leaf, and for the sake of God and His Faith refrain from mentioning the subjects which have led to misunderstanding and inharmony. The more the friends argue back and forth and maintain, each side, that their point of view is the right one, the worse the whole situation becomes."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 16, 1951: Living the Life, p. 12)

325. If We Listen, We Are Guilty of Complicity
"It is obvious that if we listen to those who complain to us about the faults of others we are guilty of complicity in their backbiting. We should therefore, as tactfully as possible, but yet firmly, do our utmost to prevent others from making accusations or complaints against others in our presence."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 11, 1925)

III. BAHA'I

A. Baha'i Archives

[95] 326. Baha'u'llah Admonishes Care in Preservation of the Tablets
"...The people of God should do all that lieth within their power to protect and preserve the Tablets. In the Land of Ta whatever there was in the homes of the friends was taken and fell into the hands of the heedless. We have commanded all to safeguard that which hath proceeded from the Pen of the Most High. We ask God to aid them to act in accordance with His wish and desire, and to draw them nigh to Him. He, verily, is the Almighty, the Powerful."

"We have commanded all to observe wisdom, but from the friends we see heedlessness and negligence. They should guard the Tablets as they guard their eyes, nay with greater vigilance, if they be of them that comprehend."

"Truly, none must be careless in the matter of safeguarding the divine Tablets. In former times, when plans were laid to seize some of the friends, before all else it was the writings that fell into the hands of the enemy. This is not permissible. The friends should designate a strong, secure place for storing the divine verses so that they may not be exposed to the touch of unworthy hands, even though these verses are, and shall always be, such as 'none shall touch but the purified'*."
(Baha'u'llah: From three previously unpublished Tablets, The Importance of

Collecting and Safeguarding the Baha'i Writings, p. 1, October 1986)

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*Quotation from the Qur'an, 79:56

327. Tablets and Verses to be Gathered into the Archives
"In one of the Tablets, the Pen of the Most High, referring to this foundation,* which provides the best and surest, the soundest and most perfect means of collecting, safeguarding and classifying the scattered, but growing body, of Sacred Writings and relics, states:

"It is the concern of the True One to reveal, and the concern of men to spread what hath been revealed. He will, verily, promulgate His Cause by the hands of His scattering and well-favoured angels. Spiritual souls will assuredly emerge from behind the veil of divine protection who will gather together the tokens and verses of God and put them into the most excellent order. This is His sure and irrevocable decree."
(Shoghi Effendi's 1954 Naw-Ruz Message to the Baha'is of the East, translated from the Persian: Ibid., p. 2)

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*The International Archives Building

328. Baha'i Archives, Institution of
"The importance of the institution of Baha'i Archives is not due only to the [96] many teaching facilities it procures, but is essentially to be found in the vast amount of historical data and information it offers both to the present day administrators of the Cause, and to the Baha'i historians of the future. The institution of Baha'i Archives is indeed a most valuable storehouse of information regarding all aspects of the Faith, historical, administrative as well as doctrinal."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, September 25, 1936)

329. Future Generations Will Appreciate Archives
"...Future generations of believers will be surely in a better position than we are to truly and adequately appreciate the many advantages and facilities which the institution of the Archives offers to individual believers and also to the community at large."
(Ibid.)

330. All Assembly Members Should Have Access to the Files—Certain Items Can Be Listed as "Confidential"
"In reply to your letter of May 13th, 1976 the Universal House of Justice instructs us to say that all members of the Spiritual Assembly are equal and should have access to the files and minutes of the Assembly of which they are members. It is, however, within the discretion of any Spiritual Assembly to so organize its files and records that certain items could be listed as 'confidential' and access to those so classified could only be had by a specific decision of the Assembly itself."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the

National Assembly of Ireland, June 8, 1976)

331. Every Believer Has Responsibility to Assist with Preservation of Sacred Relics
"...has suggested to the Guardian that he should ask your N.S.A. to address an appeal to the ... believers urging them to co-operate with the National and Local Baha'i Archives ... in their efforts for the collection of Baha'i sacred relics, and specially the Tablets, and their safe preservation.

"As this is undoubtedly one of the most urgent tasks facing the believers at present, he strongly feels it advisable that your N.S.A. should once more impress upon the friends the necessity of their giving full and continued support to the truly valuable work which the National as well as the Local Archives Committees are accomplishing for our beloved Faith...

"Now that the Cause is rapidly passing through so many different phases of its evolution is the time for the friends to exert their utmost in order to preserve as much as they can of the sacred relics and various other precious objects that are associated with the lives of the Founders of the Faith, and particularly the Tablets They have revealed.

"Every believer should realize that he has a definite responsibility to shoulder in this matter, and to help, to whatever extent he can, in rendering successful [97] the valuable work which National and Local Baha'i Archives Committees are so devotedly accomplishing for the Faith in...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 25 September 1936: The Importance of Collecting and Safeguarding the Baha'i Writings, A Compilation, p. 4)

332. Baha'i Archives to be Established in Each Baha'i Administrative Centre
"Another necessary and highly commendable undertaking is the founding of a Baha'i Archives in each of the Baha'i provincial administrative centres.
...Anyone who, spontaneously and of his own free will, donates material to the Archives of his National Spiritual Assembly—whether this be Tablets, books, pictures, objects or the like—and especially if his inheritors are not accounted of the people of Baha, or are not considered by him as trustworthy or reliable, will have performed a highly meritorious act in the sight of God, and his name will be perpetuated in the records of the Spiritual Assemblies and his memory enshrined in the Archives for ever."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the East, July 1925, translated from the Persian: Ibid., p. 2)

333. Documents of Historical Value Should Not Be Destroyed
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 13th November, 1975 asking about the policy to be followed for keeping correspondence and we have been asked to reply as follows:
"While it is within the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly to decide which papers in its files are not of long-term value and to have them destroyed you should always bear in mind the historical value of your files. Letters which at this time seem to be of little value could prove to be of

great interest to future historians of the development of the Cause of Baha'u'llah in the... We suggest that when your secretary has sorted out from among your files the papers which she feels could be destroyed, you should appoint a committee composed of members of your National Assembly to go over them with their historical value in mind and submit a recommendation to your National Assembly. Obviously, those records or letters needed for legal purposes should be retained."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, November 26, 1975)

B. Baha'i Arts and Drama*

334. Three Central Figures Cannot Be Portrayed
"...the Faith can certainly be dramatized, but two things must be remembered: no personal presentation of the Bab, Baha'u'llah or the Master, only Their words can be used, but no figure must represent Them; great dignity must be the keynote."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 19, 1951)

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*(See also: Nos. 1360-1371)

335. Dramatic Works
"With reference to your question whether the Figures of the Bab and Baha'u'llah should be made to appear as characters in dramatic works written by the believers, [98] Shoghi Effendi's opinion is that such an attempt to dramatize the Manifestations would be highly disrespectful, and hence should be avoided by the friends, even in the case of the Master. Besides it would be practically impossible to carry out such a plan faithfully, and in a dignified and befitting manner."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 27, 1935)

336. Dancers Must Be Decently Clad
"Dancers may appear, but great care should be used that they are not indecently clad or the dances vulgar in any way. Naturally, there should be no dancers at regular Baha'i meetings. Vocal soloists, of course, may appear."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 19, 1951)

337. The Artistic Presentation of the Faith Will Attract a Certain Type of Individual
"Lighting, sound, floral decorations, etc.; the House of Worship, too, may all be used, but the point to remember is that real beauty and dignity must be achieved, and all impression of our being in any remote sense a cult, or a group of 'artistes' be avoided.

"It is always good to remember that this more artistic presentation of the Cause will attract only a certain type—and, fortunately, a type hitherto

ignored in our approach to the public—of person; other methods must also be used to attract other types, such as the intellectual and more reserved type."
(Ibid.)

338. Art Can Better Awaken Noble Sentiments
"Shoghi Effendi was very much interested to learn of the success of the 'Pageant of Nations' you reproduced...

"It is through such presentations that we can arouse the interest of the greatest number of peoples in the spirit of the Cause. That day will the Cause spread like wild fire when its spirit and teachings will be presented on the stage or in art and literature as a whole. Art can better awaken such noble sentiments than cold rationalizing especially among the mass of the people.

"We have to wait only a few years to see how the spirit breathed by Baha'u'llah will find expression in the work of the artists. What you and some other Baha'is are attempting are only faint rays that precede the effulgent light of a glorious morn. We cannot yet value the part the Cause is destined to play in the life of society. We have to give it time. The material this spirit has to mould is too crude and unworthy, but it will at last give way and the Cause of Baha'u'llah will reveal itself in its full splendour."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 10, 1932)

339. Taking Part in Dramas—Dancing
"In the teachings there is nothing against dancing, but the friends should remember that the standard of Baha'u'llah is modesty and chastity. The atmosphere of modern dance halls, where so much smoking and drinking and promiscuity goes on, is very bad, but decent dances are not harmful in themselves. There is certainly no harm in classical dancing or learning dancing in school. There is also no harm in taking part in dramas. Likewise in cinema acting. The harmful thing, nowadays, is not [99] the art itself but the unfortunate corruption which often surrounds these arts. As Baha'is we need to avoid none of the arts, but acts and the atmosphere that sometimes go with these professions we should avoid."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, June 30, 1952: Dawn of a New Day, p. 153)

340. Film Companies
"With regard to your question relative to the advisability of having Baha'is join film companies. Although on principle there is no objection if any believer wishes to become a cinema actor, yet in view of the excessive corruption that now prevails along such a line of occupation, the Guardian would not advise any believer to choose this kind of profession, unless he finds this to be the only means of earning his livelihood."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 4, 1935)

341. Movies
"With reference to ... question whether it is permissible for the Baha'is to

see pictures: There is nothing in the Teachings that would forbid such a practice."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, December 14, 1940: Dawn of a New Day, p. 85)

342. Dramatizing Historic Episodes of the Faith
"As to your question concerning the advisability of dramatizing Baha'i historic episodes: The Guardian would certainly approve, and even encourage that the friends should engage in such literary pursuits which, no doubt, can be of an immense teaching value. What he wishes the believers to avoid is to dramatize the Personages of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, that is to say to treat Them as dramatic figures, as characters appearing on the stage. This, as already pointed out, he feels would be quite disrespectful. The mere fact that They appear on the scene constitutes an act of discourtesy which can in no way be reconciled with Their highly exalted station. Their message, or actual Words, should be preferably reported and conveyed by Their disciples appearing on the stage."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 25, 1936)

343. If Light Suggests Personification of the Manifestation, It Should Not Be Used
"The use of light, either of great intensity or in different colours, needs your careful consideration. If the use of light in any way at all suggests a personification of the Manifestation of God it should not be used, but if it can be done without in any way giving the impression that the Prophet is being represented or personified then there is no objection to its use."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 12, 1975)

344. Prohibition on Representing Manifestations of God in Paintings or Drawings Applies to All Manifestations
"The prohibition on representing the Manifestation of God in paintings and drawings or in dramatic presentations applies to all the Manifestations of God. There are, of course, great and wonderful works of art of past Dispensations, many of which portrayed the Manifestations of God in a spirit of reverence and love. In this [100] Dispensation however the greater maturity of mankind and the greater awareness of the relationship between the Supreme Manifestation and His servants enable us to realize the impossibility of representing, in any human form, whether pictorially, in sculpture or in dramatic representation, the Person of God's Manifestations. In stating the Baha'i prohibition, the beloved Guardian pointed out this impossibility."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 9, 1977)

345. Need for Skill to Produce an Effective Film about History of the Faith
"As you are no doubt aware, it is not permissible to portray the Manifestations of God in dramatic works and it can be understood that great skill will be needed to produce an effective film about the history of the Faith in which

neither the Bab nor Baha'u'llah could actually appear. Because of the overwhelming significance of the Baha'i message and the Baha'i Revelation, any such film produced under the aegis of the Baha'i community would have to be of the very highest quality in all respects."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 24, 1978)

C. Baha'i Authors/Writers

346. Baha'i Authors Should Write in Such Manner as to Attract the Souls
"...Whatever is written should not transgress the bounds of tact and wisdom, and in the words used there should lie hid the property of milk, so that the children of the world may be nurtured therewith, and attain maturity. We have said in the past that one word hath the influence of spring and causeth hearts to become fresh and verdant, while another is like unto blight which causeth the blossoms and flowers to wither. God grant that authors among the friends will write in such a way as would be acceptable to fair-minded souls, and not lead to cavilling by the people."
(Baha'u'llah: Extracts from the Baha'i Writings on the Subject of Writers and Writing, A Compilation, p. 3, July 1980)

347. Baha'i Writers Should Have Their Works Approved for Publication by National Assembly of Country Where Published
"It is not the practice of the World Centre to review the writings of individual Baha'is intended for publication. As you know, Baha'i authors, writing about the Faith, are requested to have their work approved for publication by the National Spiritual Assembly of the country where such work is published. There is no objection whatever, to your submitting your manuscript to a non-Baha'i firm, provided that the approval of the manuscript by the National Assembly is first obtained."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 10, 1981)

348. Baha'i Authors/Writers Should Welcome Review of Their Works
"Baha'i authors should welcome review of their works, and can greatly assist [101] promptness in review by supplying a sufficient number of copies of the manuscript for each member of the Reviewing Committee to have one.

"Baha'i authors may submit their works for review to any National Spiritual Assembly, and may send their works, once approved, to any publisher they like, Baha'i or non-Baha'i, at home or abroad. It should be remembered, however, that the approval should be given by the National Spiritual Assembly of the country where the work is to be first published. And in the case of a non-Baha'i publisher the author should insist on use of the system of transliteration at present used by the Faith for languages employing the Roman alphabet.

"It is hoped that Baha'i authors will provide a constant stream of new works. Introductory books, commentaries, dissertations on various aspects of the Revelation, text books, histories, reviews, audio-visual material are all needed to stimulate study of the Faith and to promote the vital teaching work."

(The Universal House of Justice: from Memorandum on Baha'i Publishing, Ridvan 1971)

349. Review of Magazine Articles Written by Individual Believers
"In the Feb. 'Baha'i News', page 3, it mentions that magazine articles about the Cause ... 'written by individual believers as their personal understanding of the teachings' ... need not be reviewed officially. He feels this is unwise, in view of the Master's own instructions that articles about the Cause should not be published by individuals without proper approval of some responsible body.

"The Guardian says the Local Assemblies can pass upon such articles; it is not necessary to refer them to a National Committee.

"So often persons can be carried away by their enthusiasm and express something detrimental to the Faith. Therefore they must either refer their articles to their Local Spiritual Assembly or the National Reviewing Committee."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 13, 1946)

350. The Reviewing Committee
"It is recommended that Reviewing Committees be small, composed of two or three believers with adequate education and knowledge of the Cause. It is essential that works submitted be dealt with promptly. The standards to be upheld by reviewers are the following: (a) conformity with the Teachings, (b) accuracy, (c) dignity in presentation. The Spiritual Assembly, on the basis of its Reviewing Committee's report, gives or withholds approval of the work.

"...In general the function of a reviewing committee is to say whether the work submitted gives an acceptable presentation of the Cause or not. Reviewers may win the gratitude and good will of authors by calling attention to such things as occasional grammatical or spelling errors, but approval should not be refused on such grounds; all such details are editorial matters for agreement between author and publisher."
(The Universal House of Justice: Memorandum on Baha'i Publishing, Ridvan 1971, March 28, 1971 to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Baha'i world, pp. 1-2)

351. Obligation of Baha'is to Present the Faith in Dignified Manner
"We approve your action in writing to the Public Information Department and in publishing a statement instructing Baha'is who are authors not to attempt or be persuaded to write articles on the Faith for unsavoury publications.

[102] "It is an obligation of all Baha'is to present the Faith in a dignified manner and therefore when writing articles about the Faith they should take into consideration the type of magazine or other publication in which the article is to appear. Should there be any question about its character they should consult with the National Spiritual Assembly. In addition, all authors should bear in mind that anything written about the Faith for publication is subject to review before submission to the publishers."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice written to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 15, 1968)

352. The Function and Purpose of Reviewing
"The function of reviewing is, essentially, to check the Author's exposition of the Baha'i Faith and its teachings, which may include verification of any quotations from Baha'i writings. This function should not be confused with evaluation of the literary merit of a work or of its value as a publication, which are normally the prerogative of the publisher...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, March 11, 1965)

353. Purpose of Review
"...The purpose of review is to protect the Faith against misrepresentation by its own followers at this early stage of its existence when comparatively few people have any knowledge of it. An erroneous presentation of the Teachings by a Baha'i who is accounted a scholar, in a scholarly journal, would by that very fact, do far more harm than an erroneous presentation made by an obscure Baha'i author with no pretensions to scholarship."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 8, 1980)

354. No Objection to Baha'is Writing Novels Portraying Historical Events
"There is no objection to Baha'is writing novels portraying historical events and figures of the Faith. However, in view of the impossibility of ever portraying adequately the Manifestation of God as a character in a novel, and of the disrespect implicit in such an attempt, the House of Justice feels that no such portrayal should be attempted. Of course, His sayings and the events of His life may be recounted, but in this case care should be taken to quote His exact words as we have them in authorized translations, and events in Baha'i history should not be distorted.

"Generally speaking, works of fiction which the writers hope will help to promote knowledge of the Cause of God will fulfill this purpose better if they are set against the background of particular events or developing processes in the Cause of God, and not used to portray the actual historical events themselves and the figures taking part in them. The reality of the actual events and the actual personages is so much more convincing than any fictional account. In this connection the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf:

'He would not recommend fiction as a means of teaching; the condition of the world is too acute to permit of delay in giving them the direct teachings associated with the name of Baha'u'llah. But any suitable [103] approach to the Faith, which appeals to this or that group, is certainly worthy of effort, as we wish to bring the Cause to all men, in all walks of life, of all mentalities.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 23, 1980)

355. Journalists

"There is no objection to your being a journalist as long as you try to keep off political issues; especially the big East-West issues. You have a talent for writing, and it might be of help to you financially and in making contacts for the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 30, 1950)

356. Sciences that Begin and End with Words—Baha'u'llah Never Meant to Include Story Writing Under this Category
"What Baha'u'llah meant primarily with 'sciences that begin and end in words' are those theological treatises and commentaries that encumber the human mind rather than help it to attain the truth. The students would devote their life to their study but still attain no where. Baha'u'llah surely never meant to include story writing under such a category; and shorthand and typewriting are both most useful talents very necessary in our present social and economic life.

"What you could do, and should do, is to use your stories to become a source of inspiration and guidance for those who read them. With such a means at your disposal you can spread the spirit and teachings of the Cause; you can show the evils that exist in society, as well as the way they can be remedied. If you possess a real talent in writing you should consider it as given by God and exert your efforts to use it for the betterment of society."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 30, 1932: Extracts from the Baha'i Writings on the Subject of Writers and Writing, A Compilation, July 1980, p. 6)

357. The Faith Needs Baha'i Authors
"Regarding the advice you asked him for, he feels that to devote all one's studies with the object of becoming a Baha'i author is rather risky. We need Baha'i authors badly, but you have to be assured that you have the talent to earn your living in that field, and also serve the Faith in it.
"He feels that the best thing for you to do is to devote your studies to acquiring a sound education, if you like along literary lines, and then see what develops."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 14, 1957)

358. Doctoral Theses and Similar Treatises
"It has been decided that doctoral theses and similar treatises submitted to institutions of learning for the obtaining of a degree are not subject to Baha'i review unless they are to be published more widely than is required for the degree in question."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 11, 1982)

[104] 359. No Publisher Has the Right to Alter Author's Manuscript
"A publishing trust has the right to refuse publication of any particular title, and a National Assembly has the right to review any proposed Baha'i

publication for accuracy and propriety. But no publisher has the right to alter or change an author's manuscript without his knowledge and consent."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice written to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 28, 1966)

D. Baha'i Publication, Translation, Review and Copyright

360. Baha'i Newsletters and Bulletins—Why Circulation is Restricted to "Baha'is Only"
"In reply to your inquiry of 18th November 1982 about Baha'i newsletters and bulletins being for Baha'is only, we are asked by the Universal House of Justice to quote below from letters written by the Universal House of Justice or at its instruction to other National Assemblies which have asked similar questions.

"With reference to your letter of October 31st asking why the circulation of Baha'i News should be restricted to Baha'is we wish to point out that the same reasons that make it necessary to restrict the attendance at a Nineteen Day Feast to Baha'is only apply also to the circulation of Baha'i Newsletters.

"A Baha'i news bulletin assumes that the reader is a Baha'i and it would therefore normally contain items which are purely of a domestic nature of no interest to the general public and which, in some cases, may give the wrong impression to those not familiar with the Baha'i teachings. However, there is no objection to the friends showing their newsletters to non-Baha'is if they so wish or find it useful at times. Furthermore, if the words 'For Baha'is Only' which appear on some newsletters are found to be offensive to the non-Baha'i, there is no requirement for these words to appear on every copy of the newsletter.

"In answer to your query concerning the policy of keeping 'Baha'i News' for Baha'is only, the House of Justice instructs us to explain that the circulation of Baha'i Newsletters is restricted to Baha'is because they are vehicles of news that is primarily of internal interest to the friends and the Assembly should be able to write freely to the believers without having to so word the information that it would be easily understandable to a non-Baha'i reader. In other words, a Baha'i newsletter is not secret but is an internal journal intended for an informed readership."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, December 19, 1982)

361. Usage in Spanish Texts of Accents on Persian and Arabic Words
"The question as to whether or not the accents on the word Baha'i (and indeed on other words transliterated from the Persian and Arabic) should be used when the word is printed entirely in capital letters is one that should be uniform in usage throughout the Spanish-speaking world unless usage varies significantly from country to country. It is suggested, therefore, that you refer this question to the two Baha'i Publishing Trusts in Spain and Argentina for their comments. The guiding [105] consideration should not be the usage in relation to accents on Spanish words, but the usage in Spanish texts of accents

on capital letters on foreign words appearing in Spanish texts, such as the German umlaut, etc. It should be borne in mind that, whereas the accent in Spanish indicates merely a presence of stress, in the transliteration of Persian words it indicates a difference in articulation of the vowel. For example, the words 'VAHID' and 'VAHID'* are two words with different meanings and different pronunciations."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, July 22, 1984)

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*This word has an accent mark over the "I". The first word "VAHID" does not.—ARCHIVE Editor

362. Publications from World Centre—No Restriction on Use of Quotations
"There is no restriction on Baha'i authors, institutions and publishing agencies using quotations from the publications of the World Centre, and permission to do so need not be sought. This freedom to quote likewise applies to compilations of the World Centre which have been published.
"Permission to quote from publications of Publishing Trusts should be sought from the Trust concerned except in cases where the Trust has merely printed a compilation issued by the World Centre.
"Of course, Baha'i authors should seek review of their works by the National Assembly of the country in which it will be printed."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, December 11, 1980)

363. Copyright Clearance on Sacred Writings Not Necessary for Assemblies and Baha'i Believers
"The Universal House of Justice has been concerned of late to note an apparently growing impression among Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers in many parts of the world, that they must obtain copyright clearance before they may quote from the Sacred Texts of the Faith in any publication. It has now instructed us to make it clear that the Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers are free to quote in their publications from any of the Writings of the three Central Figures of the Faith or from the writings of the beloved Guardian, whether in the original language or in translation, without obtaining clearance from the copyright holder, unless the copyright holder in the case of a translation is an individual or is a non-Baha'i institution. It is recognized that this ruling may endanger copyrights, but we feel that this is a risk that must be taken.

"The ruling is made to ensure that the Sacred Scriptures of our Faith and the writings of the beloved Guardian may be freely used by the believers; it does not change the existing requirements for individual believers to submit their works on the Faith for review before publication, neither does it relieve Spiritual Assemblies of their responsibility to protect the dignity of the Faith and uphold the proper standard of reverence in the use of its Sacred Scriptures. Thus, if any Assembly sees that one of the friends is making use of any of the Holy Texts in an unbefitting manner, it should remonstrate with him

and, if necessary, require him to stop doing so."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 4, 1981)

364. Capitalizing Pronouns in English
"The Guardian wishes your Committee to capitalize all pronouns when referring [106] to Baha'u'llah, the Bab and the Master, even though the newspapers do not use them."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i News Service Committee, February 5, 1938)

"In regard to your question about capitalizing the pronouns: The Guardian realizes this looks a little strange to non-Baha'is, 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."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 22, 1949)

365. Capitalizing Pronouns in Other Languages
"He is interested in accomplishing two things—he would like in the European languages to have as much uniformity with the English translations as possible; he does not wish the Baha'i translations to be in any way a flagrant violation of the rules of the language into which our literature is being translated.

"Your Committee must conscientiously study this question, and then do the best you can to have the Baha'i literature in French meet the high standards of the French language and grammar.

"If the possessive and demonstrative adjectives and pronouns in French are never capitalized where they stand for 'God', then this should not be done in the Baha'i literature. If there is a precedent for doing so in the French language, however, they should be. The same is true of the attributes of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Translation and Publication Committee of France, February 15, 1957)

366. Quotation Marks—Must Uphold Rigid Standard Inculcated by the Cause
"Also the Guardian feels it is absolutely essential that in all releases issued by your Committee quotation marks be used when passages from Baha'i Sacred Writings are quoted. The friends should be careful to uphold under all circumstances the rigid standard inculcated by the Cause, and not to compromise easily with the common and accepted standards of the time."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i News Service Committee, February 5, 1938)

367. National Spiritual Assembly Authorizes Translations Through a Committee of Baha'i Translators—The Guardian's Method of Transliteration Should Be Used
"The National Spiritual Assembly which undertakes the translation, usually through a committee of Baha'i translators, is the body which 'authorizes' the translation, if it is approved. In some instances, if there are no Baha'i translators available, there is no objection, in principle, to employing

non-Baha'is for this purpose. It is usual for the National Spiritual Assembly to appoint a Reviewing Committee, or establish some means of providing review of the completed translation. You will note from the enclosed memorandum that, with the exceptions enumerated therein, new translations of the Sacred Text into languages other than English must be made from the Guardian's English translation where it exists; and when no such translation exists, advice should be sought from the Universal House of Justice. In the case of Spanish, to avoid [107] duplication of effort and to achieve the highest standard of accuracy, the National Assembly concerned should feel free to consult EBILA and/or the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain, and indeed the House of Justice encourages the closest co-operation between all administrative bodies and publishing trusts responsible for the production of literature in Spanish.
"Regarding the transliteration of Persian and Arabic words the House of Justice requests that the method adopted by the beloved Guardian, and which is described in the various volumes of 'The Baha'i World', be followed, as it permits all languages which use the Roman alphabet to transliterate such terms in the same way throughout the Baha'i world."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, July 16, 1979)

368. Guidelines for the Translation of Baha'i Sacred Writings
"Translations into languages other than those akin to Persian and Arabic should normally be made from approved English translations rather than from the original Persian and Arabic. In such cases it is an advantage if it is also possible for the translator(s) to check with the original.
"All new translations into English, and all revisions of earlier translations in that language must be checked at the World Centre and officially approved before publication.

"Any believer is free to translate for his own use anything he wishes, but dissemination or publication of such translation is dependent upon their approval by the appropriate National Spiritual Assembly or, in the case of translations into English, by the World Centre.

a) If an individual Baha'i spontaneously makes his own translation of a passage he may willingly make it available to a Spiritual Assembly but he cannot be compelled to do so.

b) If a translation made spontaneously by an individual is approved and published, he retains the copyright of his translation unless, of course, he wishes to surrender it.

"When a Spiritual Assembly wishes to have a translation made it should, if possible have the task undertaken by a committee rather than by individuals, as is explained by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

a) The members of such a committee need not all be Baha'is.

b) Translations made by a committee are the property of the Assembly appointing the committee, and not of the members of the committee.

c) Except for translations into English, a translation made by a committee does not have to be checked unless the Assembly deems it advisable.

d) In accordance with the instructions of Shoghi Effendi the name of the committee should appear in the book as the translator, but the names of the members must not so appear."
(Guidelines for the Translation of Baha'i Sacred Writings attached to a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Assembly of Panama, July 16, 1979)

369. An Individual Can Be Commissioned to Make Translations—Translations Become Property of the Assembly
"If it is not feasible to form a translation committee, translations must, perforce, be made by individuals. [108]

a) When an individual is commissioned by an Assembly to make a translation for it the translation should become the property of the Assembly, not of the individual, even if the work is done without remuneration. It is advisable to have this and other matters agreed in writing before the work is undertaken so that there may be no ground for subsequent misunderstandings.

b) A translation made by an individual should be checked before being published, if possible, and such checking should be done by a committee rather than by an individual, if this is feasible.

c) When a translation made by an individual is published, his name may appear as translator if he so wishes.

"Normally credit for translation should appear on all complete works and compilations that are published, as well as on books that quote translated passages.

a) Credit for translation should not appear in the case of passages quoted in communications from Baha'i institutions, even when these are published.

b) Credit for translation need not appear on published leaflets and pamphlets unless there is a legal requirement that it do so."
(Ibid.)

370. Translation of Baha'i Literature into Everyday Language—Simplifications and Paraphrasing Not to be Published as Scripture
"The Universal House of Justice, in response to your letter of 20 April concerning translations into French or Creole using simpler words than the original text, has requested us to send the following three quotations. These make it clear that a quotation in English may be rendered into simple English in order to facilitate its translation into another language or dialect. However, it is not permissible to publish simplifications and paraphrased extracts of Baha'i Writings as Baha'i Scripture.

'We have noticed a tendency in a number of countries to attempt to translate Baha'i literature into the current, easy, everyday language of the country. This, however, should not be an overriding consideration. Many of the Tablets

of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha are in exalted and highly poetic language in the original Persian and Arabic and you will see, for example, that when translating Baha'u'llah's Writings into English the beloved Guardian did not use present-day colloquial English but evolved a highly poetic and beautiful style, using numbers of archaic expressions reminiscent of the translations of the Bible.'
(From a letter dated 7 October 1973 written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

'Obviously teaching literature and books about the Faith can be written in simple English. However, we feel that when the Sacred Writings are published the standard English translation should be used, but there would be no objection to printing alongside it the translation into simple English which should be described as a paraphrase of the Holy Word. Thus, for the people of ... who have difficulty in comprehending standard English, the simple English version would be in the nature of an explanation of the Writings which they could understand. In the case of teaching literature in which quotations from the Writings appear, [109] these could either be paraphrased or a simple English version could be used with the standard version printed as a footnote. This method would also provide a means whereby the people of ... could improve their knowledge and understanding of the English language.'
(From a letter dated 20 September 1973 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

'It is, of course, permissible to translate Baha'i Writings into other languages and dialects of languages. It is also possible to simplify or paraphrase the Baha'i Writings in order to facilitate their translation into languages and dialects having small vocabularies. However, it is not permissible to publish simplifications and paraphrases of Baha'i Writings as Baha'i Scripture.'"
(From a letter dated 13 March 1969 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Spiritual Assembly of Guadeloupe, May 13, 1986)

371. Translators Should Utilize Most Recent Editions of Books
"The Universal House of Justice has requested us to advise you to base your translations on current editions of all the books referred to, if translation is involved. In each instance you should consult the original publisher and obtain a copy of the latest printing or edition to ensure that all approved corrections are embodied in your translation."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Taiwan, May 22, 1984)

E. Miscellaneous Subjects

372. Friday is Day of Rest in Baha'i Calendar
"Abdu'l-Baha gives no reason whatever why Friday has been chosen as the day of rest in the Baha'i calendar. He just affirms it."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939: Baha'i News, No. 162, April 1943, p. 5)

373. Use of Baha'i Dates
"It is advisable to use both the Baha'i dates, according to the Baha'i Calendar, and the usual Gregorian dates as well. The friends at present are free to do as they please."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 24, 1943: Baha'i News, No. 173, February 1945, p. 11)

374. Baha'i Faith, Designation of
"In reply to your letter of January 26th, we realize that there are occasions on which the use of the term 'Baha'i World Faith' may be justified and useful. However, it is our hope that the friends will gradually lose the habit of using this term as widely as they do now. The designation 'The Baha'i Faith' is more dignified and preferable. Any adjective added to this name tends to a diminution of its stature and might be taken to mean that there are other 'Baha'i Faiths'."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 5, 1967: Copies to various National Spiritual Assemblies)

[110] 375. Symbol of Baha'i Faith—Five-Pointed Star
"...Strictly speaking the five-pointed star is the symbol of our Faith, as used by the Bab and explained by Him. But the Guardian does not feel it is wise or necessary to complicate our explanation of the Temple by adding this."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 28, 1949: U.S. Supplement to Baha'i News, No. 50, p. 4, April 1962)

IV. BAHA'I LIFE, EGO, SACRIFICE, SELF AND SERVICE

A. Baha'i Life

[111] 376. The Great Thing is to "Live the Life"
"The great thing is to 'Live the Life'—to have our lives so saturated with the Divine teachings and the Baha'i Spirit that people cannot fail to see a joy, a power, a love, a purity, a radiance, an efficiency in our character and work that will distinguish us from worldly-minded people and make people wonder what is the secret of this new life in us. We must become entirely selfless and devoted to God so that every day and every moment we seek to do only what God would have us do and in the way He would have us do it. If we do this sincerely then we shall have perfect unity and harmony with each other. Where there is want of harmony there is lack of the true Baha'i Spirit. Unless we can show this transformation in our lives, this new power, this mutual love and harmony, then the Baha'i teachings are but a name to us."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 2, 1925)

377. If Health is Spent in Sensual Desires, Death Preferable to Such a Life
"If the health and well-being of the body be expended in the path of the

Kingdom, this is very acceptable and praiseworthy; and if it be expended to the benefit of the human world in general—even though it be to their material (or bodily) benefit—and be a means of doing good, that is also acceptable. But if the health and welfare of man be spent in sensual desires, in a life on the animal plane, and in devilish pursuits—then disease were better than such health, nay, death itself were preferable to such a life. If thou art desirous of health, wish thou health for serving the Kingdom...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: From a Tablet to the Baha'is of Washington: Baha'u'llah and the New Era, pp. 114-115)

378. To Attract the Hearts of Others It is Necessary to Live Up to the Teachings
"Indeed if the friends could seek, and exert themselves, to become 100 percent Baha'is they would see how greatly their influence over others would be increased, and how rapidly the Cause would spread. The world is seeking not a compromise but the embodiment of a high and shining ideal. The more the friends live up to our teachings in every aspect of their lives, in their homes, in business, in their social relationships, the greater will be the attraction they exercise over the hearts of others.
"He is pleased to see you have naturally, with conviction and good will towards all, been mingling with and teaching the colored people. When the [112] Baha'is live up to their teachings as they should, although it may arouse the opposition of some it will arouse still more the admiration of fair-minded people."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 23, 1945)

379. Baha'is Must Cling to Their Faith and to Each Other
"In these days when the forces of inharmony and disunity are rampant throughout the world, the Baha'is must cling to their Faith and to each other and, in spite of every difficulty and suffering, protect the unity of the Cause. Often the first efforts at getting the administration of the Faith to work harmoniously are painful because the individual must learn to subject his will to the whole—but these are all minor details, and the friends must all concentrate on constructive work for the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a group of believers, May 7, 1941)

380. The Advertisements for the Faith Are Love, Hospitality, Understanding and the Will to Help
"He is very pleased to see with what love and devotion you have accepted our beloved Faith and long to serve it.

"Not all of us are capable of serving in the same way, but the one way every Baha'i can spread the Faith is by example. This moves the hearts of people far more deeply than words ever can.

"The love we show others, the hospitality and understanding, the willingness to help them, these are the very best advertisements of the Faith. They will want

to hear about it when they see these things in our lives.

"The Guardian will pray that Baha'u'llah will aid you and strengthen you to teach His Cause to many souls."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 14, 1943)

381. How to Acquire Peace of Mind
"...Peace of mind is gained by the centering of the spiritual consciousness on the Prophet of God; therefore you should study the spiritual Teachings, and receive the Water of Life from the Holy Utterances. Then by translating these high ideals into action, your entire character will be changed, and your mind will not only find peace, but your entire being will find joy and enthusiasm."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 15, 1952)

382. One Should Not Give the Impression of Being Fanatic—Seek to be Many-Sided, Normal and Well-Balanced
"You ask about 'spiritual indigestion': Baha'is should seek to be many-sided, normal and well-balanced, mentally and spiritually. We must not give the impression of being fanatics but at the same time we must live up to our principles."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 12, 1946: Living the Life)

[113] 383. The Inner Life of the Spirit is What Counts
"If people only realized it, the inner life of the spirit is that which counts, but they are so blinded by desires and so misled that they have brought upon themselves all the suffering we see at present in the world. The Baha'is seek to lead people back to a knowledge of their true selves and the purpose for which they were created, and thus to their greatest happiness and highest good."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 24, 1943)

384. Through Deep Study and Living the Life to Become Like Firm Rocks
"He hopes that these receptive souls you have succeeded to attract into the movement will through deep study and living the life become like firm rocks upon which the Cause can build its future spiritual temple—the temple of the hearts. In one of His very beautiful and stirring poems written in the early days of His Mission Baha'u'llah bids us stay away and not become an encumbrance if we desire to live and have our well-being. In case, however, we are ready to sacrifice our all in the path of God then we should hasten to Him and follow His way.

"What the Cause needs is such ardent and self-sacrificing servants and not lukewarm followers who are ready to reap the fruit but unwilling to take a part in winning that victory. Shoghi Effendi, therefore, hopes that you will endeavour to make of your spiritual children of the type Baha'u'llah sought to have and create not passive admirers but active servants of the new world

order."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 6, 1932)

385. Evolution of the Soul
"Regarding your questions concerning the condition of the soul during illness. The passages in the 'Gleanings' make it quite clear that physical ailments, no matter how severe, cannot bring any change in the inherent condition of the soul. As Baha'u'llah says: 'The spirit is permanent and steadfast in its station'. The veil or hindrance that interposes between soul and body during physical disease is sickness itself. Sickness reveals a lack of balance in human organism, an absence of equilibrium in the forces essential for the normal functioning of the human body."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 8, 1936)

B. Ego—Self

386. The Meaning of Self
"Regarding the questions you asked: Self has really two meanings, or is used in two senses, in the Baha'i writings: one is self, the identity of the individual created by God. This is the self mentioned in such passages as 'he hath known God who hath known himself etc.'. The other self is the ego, the dark, animalistic heritage each one of us has, the lower nature that can develop into a monster of selfishness, brutality, lust and so on. It is this self we must struggle against, or this side of our natures, in order to strengthen and free the spirit within us and help it to attain perfection.

[114] "Self-sacrifice means to subordinate this lower nature and its desires to the more godly and noble side of ourselves. Ultimately, in its highest sense, self-sacrifice means to give our will and our all to God to do with as He pleases. Then He purifies and glorifies our true self until it becomes a shining and wonderful reality."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 10, 1947)

387. The Ego is the Animal Within Us
"The ego is the animal in us, the heritage of the flesh which is full of selfish desires. By obeying the laws of God, seeking to live the life laid down in our teachings, and prayer and struggle, we can subdue our egos. We call people 'saints' who have achieved the highest degree of mastery over their ego.

"There is no contradiction between Gleanings P 66 and P 262. In one place He says the mirror will never be free from dross, in the other He says it will be 'so cleansed as to be able' etc. It is a relative thing; perfection will never be reached, but great, and ever greater, progress can be made."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 8, 1949)

388. Life is a Constant Struggle Against Forces Around Us and Our Own "Egos"

"Life is a constant struggle, not only against forces around us, but above all against our own 'ego'. We can never afford to rest on our oars, for if we do, we soon see ourselves carried down stream again. Many of those who drift away from the Cause do so for the reason that they had ceased to go on developing. They became complacent, or indifferent, and consequently ceased to draw the spiritual strength and vitality from the Cause which they should have. Sometimes, of course, people fail because of a test they just do not meet, and often our severest tests come from each other. Certainly the believers should try to avert such things, and if they happen, remedy them through love. Generally speaking nine-tenths of the friends' troubles are because they don't do the Baha'i thing, in relation to each other, to the administrative bodies or in their personal lives."
(Ibid.)

389. The Prophets Are the Only Ones Free of the "Dross of Self"
"Regarding the questions you asked in your letter: The only people who are truly free of the 'dross of self' are the Prophets, for to be free of one's ego is a hall-mark of perfection. We humans are never going to become perfect, for perfection belongs to a realm we are not destined to enter. However, we must constantly mount higher, seek to be more perfect."
(Ibid.)

390. Self Mastery, Key to
"Today the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abha are with those who renounce themselves, forget their own opinions, cast aside personalities and are thinking of the welfare of others... Whosoever is occupied with himself is wandering in [115] the desert of heedlessness and regret. The 'Master Key' to self-mastery is self-forgetting. The road to the palace of life is through the path of renunciation."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. XVII, p. 348)

391. Through the Search for God, We Become Acquainted with Ourselves
"The more we search for ourselves, the less likely we are to find ourselves; and the more we search for God, and to serve our fellow-men, the more profoundly will we become acquainted with ourselves, and the more inwardly assured. This is one of the great spiritual laws of life."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 18, 1954)

392. Becoming Conscious of Self is a Gradual Process
"You have asked as to what point in man's evolution he becomes conscious of self. This consciousness of self in man is a gradual process, and does not start at a definite point. It grows in him in this world and continues to do so in the future spiritual world.
"Man can certainly recall past experiences in his evolution, and even when his soul leaves this world it will still remember its past."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 20, 1937)

393. Man's Evolution is Both Individual and Collective
"Man's evolution is both individual and collective, because of his twofold relationship to himself and to the society in which he lives. Individual evolution starts with the early stages of one's existence. Consciousness too grows with this evolution."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 14, 1938)

394. The Cause Has the Spiritual Power to Re-Create Us
"The believers, as we all know, should endeavour to set such an example in their personal lives and conduct that others will feel impelled to embrace a Faith which reforms human character. However, unfortunately, not everyone achieves easily and rapidly the victory over self. What every believer, new or old, should realize is that the Cause has the spiritual power to re-create us if we make the effort to let that power influence us, and the greatest help in this respect is prayer. We must supplicate Baha'u'llah to assist us to overcome the failings in our own characters, and also exert our own will power in mastering ourselves.

"He will certainly pray for the work of the beloved Cause there and especially that new souls may be attracted and embrace the Faith. He will also pray that the believers may, for the sake of God, draw close to each other and not permit each other's short-comings to be a source of disunity and consequently a means of depriving thirsty souls of this life-giving Message! The world is full of evil and dark forces and the friends must not permit these forces to get hold of them by thinking and feeling negatively towards each other."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 27, 1945)

[116] 395. Our Thoughts Should Be Turned Determinedly, Intelligently and Unemotionally to God
"He was very sorry to hear of the condition of your dear sister. He would advise her to turn her thoughts determinedly and intelligently—by that I mean unemotionally—to God, realising that He is forgiving, that in one moment He can, through His blessed mercy, take away our sense of failure and help us to do better in the future—if we sincerely wish to; to turn to Him in prayer and seek to draw closer to Him; and to accept His Will and submit her own desires and opinions to His wish and plan for her.
"There is a tremendous darkness in the world today, the darkness caused by mankind's going against the Laws of God and giving way to the animal side of human nature. People must recognize this fact, and consciously struggle against pessimism and depression."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 14, 1945)

396. We Should Focus on the Glory of the Cause and Not on Our Failures
"Regarding your own condition: He strongly urges you not to dwell on yourself. Each one of us, if we look into our failures, is sure to feel unworthy and despondent, and this feeling only frustrates our constructive efforts and

wastes time. The thing for us to focus on is the glory of the Cause and the Power of Baha'u'llah which can make of a mere drop a surging sea! You certainly have no right to feel negative; you have embraced this glorious Faith and arisen with devotion to serve it, and your labours are greatly appreciated by both the Guardian and your fellow-Baha'is. With something as positive as the Faith and all it teaches behind you, you should be a veritable lion of confidence, and he will pray that you may become so.

"There is, unfortunately, no way that one can force his own good upon a man. The elements of free will is there, and all we believers—and even the Manifestation of God Himself—can do is to offer the truth to mankind. If the people of the world persist, as they seem to be doing, in their blind materialism, they must bear the consequences in a prolongation of their present condition, and even a worsening of it. Our duty as Baha'is is to build up such a love and unity within our own ranks that the people will be attracted by this example to the Cause. We also must teach all we can and strengthen the Baha'i Community in the administration. But more we cannot do to avert the great sufferings which seemingly still lie ahead of the world in its present evil state."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 13, 1947)

397. Do Not Dwell on Others' Thoughts and Attitudes
"We must never dwell too much on the attitudes and feelings of our fellow-believers towards us. What is most important is to foster love and harmony and ignore any rebuffs we may receive; in this way the weakness of human nature and the peculiarity or attitude of any particular person is not magnified, but pales into insignificance in comparison with our joint service to the Faith we all love."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 19, 1948)

C. Self-Defense

[117] 398. Baha'i Justified in Defending His Life in Emergency
"Regarding the question you raised: In an emergency, when there is no legal source at hand to appeal to, a Baha'i is perfectly justified in defending his life."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 24, 1943)

399. Self-Defense
"From the texts you already have available it is clear that Baha'u'llah has stated that it is preferable to be killed in the path of God's good-pleasure than to kill, and that organized religious attack against Baha'is should never turn into any kind of warfare, as this is strictly prohibited in our Writings.

"The House of Justice does not wish at the present time to go beyond the guidelines given in the above-mentioned statements. The question is basically a matter of conscience, and in each case the Baha'i involved must use his

judgment in determining when to stop in self-defense lest his action deteriorate into retaliation.

"Of course the above principles apply also in cases when a Baha'i finds himself involved in situations of civil disorder. We have, however, advised the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States that under the present circumstances in that country it is preferable that Baha'is do not buy nor own arms for their protection or the protection of their families."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, May 26, 1969: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 26)

400. Pioneer Living in a Remote Area Lacking Protection: Circumstances Under which a Baha'i is Justified in Defending Self
"We have your letter of March 2, 1972 asking if ... a pioneer couple living in a remote area lacking police protection may have a weapon in their possession for defending themselves as thieves have broken into their house twice and robbed them.

"A hitherto untranslated Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Baha points out that in the case of attack by robbers and highwaymen, a Baha'i should not surrender himself, but should try, as far as circumstances permit, to defend himself, and later on lodge a complaint with the government authorities. A statement in a letter written on behalf of the Guardian indicates that in an emergency when there is no legal force at hand to appeal to a Baha'i is justified in defending his life. Although we have advised certain National Assemblies in countries facing increasing civil disorder that it is preferable that Baha'is do not buy or own arms for their protection or the protection of their families, we feel that in the circumstances you have outlined in your letter it would be permissible for the pioneer family to keep a weapon in the house, provided the law permits."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Honduras, March 20, 1972)

D. Self-Sacrifice and Service

401. The Mystery of Sacrifice
"O maid-servant of God! The mystery of sacrifice is that man should sacrifice all [118] his conditions for the divine station of God. The station of God is mercy, kindness, forgiveness, sacrifice, favour, grace and giving-life to the spirits and lighting the fire of His love in the hearts and arteries. I asked God to make thee a sign of mercy, the banner of kindness among His maid-servants."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. I, p. 65)

402. Self-Sacrifice, Meaning of
"Self-sacrifice means to subordinate this lower nature and its desires to the more godly and noble side of ourselves. Ultimately, in its highest sense, self-sacrifice means to give our will and our all to God to do with as He pleases. Then He purifies and glorifies our true self until it becomes a shining and wonderful reality."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 10, 1947: Living the Life, p. 14)

403. To What Extent Should We Sacrifice Our Lives for the Interest of the Cause?
"The problem of to what extent we should sacrifice our time for the interest of the Cause depends for its solution upon individual means and circumstances. It is a personal problem that we ought to settle individually. One person may give all his time to teaching and rely upon small personal income and another may find himself more fitted to business and give his share of service in the form of financial assistance."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 18, 1930)

404. Accepting to Suffer for Each Other's Sake
"With reference to your question as to whether individuals can help each other by accepting to suffer for each other's sake. Surely such sacrifice for our fellow-humans can have helpful results. This law of sacrifice operates in our own lives, as well as in the lives of the Divine Manifestations."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 31, 1938)

405. Service as Magnet for Divine Confirmation
"...There is nothing that brings success in the Faith like service. Service is the magnet which draws the divine confirmations. Thus, when a person is active, they are blessed by the Holy Spirit. When they are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being, and thus they are deprived of its healing and quickening rays."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 12, 1952: Living the Life, p. 18)

406. Assistance of Hosts of Divine Concourse
"...An individual must center his whole heart and mind on service to the Cause, in accordance with the high standards set by Baha'u'llah. When this is done, the hosts of the Supreme Concourse will come to the assistance of the individual, and every difficulty and trial will gradually be overcome."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 6, 1954: Ibid., p. 19)

[119] 407. An Irresistible Urge to Serve—Do Not Look at Your Shortcomings
"...This irresistible urge to serve which you feel and which has prompted you to offer yourself for work in the teaching field is itself a clear indication that you are being guided by the Almighty to attain your highest and noblest goal in this life. For what a greater destiny can you hope to seek except that which Baha'u'llah has traced for every one of His loyal believers, namely to consecrate one's all to the service and glorification of His Faith! This assurance should indeed fortify your hopes, and enable you to banish every sense of dissatisfaction, and of unworthiness which may linger in your heart, and which may deter you from participating joyously and actively in serving the

Cause. You should not look at your limitations, but derive full confidence at the thought that, however limited your resources and capacities may be, your efforts will be reinforced by Divine confirmations, provided you do your share and discharge your obligations as a believer, fully and conscientiously. Your perseverance will, even as a magnet, draw upon you the favours and blessings of Baha'u'llah. Do feel happy and confident, therefore, and fortified by such an assurance arise to contribute all that is in your power towards the furtherance and promulgation of our beloved Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 30, 1939)

408. There is No Rule or Standard Requiring a Believer to Serve in One Field at the Exclusion of Others
"Whatever the particular field of service you may choose, whether teaching or administrative, the essential is for you to persevere, and not to allow any consciousness of your limitations to dampen your zeal, much less to deter you from serving joyously and actively.

"There is no general rule, or any particular standard requiring a believer to serve in one field at the exclusion of others. Every believer is to choose for himself any avenue of work in which he conscientiously feels he can render the greatest amount of service to the Cause. He can seek the advice of his Assembly, and of his fellow-believers before taking such a step, but there is no obligation requiring him to do so."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 6, 1939)

V. BEGGING, CHARITIES AND THE POOR

A. Begging

[120] 409. Begging is Forbidden—House of Justice to Provide for Disabled
"We have been asked to share with you the following extract from one of the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha on the subject of begging:
'By the sacred verse: "Begging is forbidden, and it is also prohibited to dispense alms to a beggar" is meant that mendicancy is forbidden and that giving charity to people who take up begging as their profession is also prohibited. The object is to wipe out mendicancy altogether. However, if a person is disabled, striken by dire poverty or becomes helpless, then it is incumbent upon the rich or the trustees to provide him with a monthly allowance for his subsistence. When the House of Justice comes into being it will set up homes for the incapacitated. Thus no one will be obliged to beg, even as the supplementary part of the blessed verse denotes: "It is enjoined upon everyone to earn his livelihood"; then He says: "As to those who are disabled, it devolveth upon the trustees and the rich to make adequate provision for them." By "trustees" is meant the representatives of the people, that is to say the members of the House of Justice.'

"The Universal House of Justice does not wish to go beyond the elucidation given by the Master in the above passage and wishes, for the time being, to

leave any matter not entirely covered by this text to the conscience of individual believers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 13, 1974)

410. Beggars—Most Despised of Men in the Sight of God
"The most despised of men in the sight of God are those who sit idly and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of material means, placing your whole trust in God, the Provider of all means. When anyone occupieth himself in a craft or trade, such occupation itself is regarded in the estimation of God as an act of worship; and this is naught but a token of His infinite and all-pervasive bounty."
(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 26)

B. Charity

411. Charity is the Very Essence of the Teachings
"This Baha'i teaching of human fellowship and kindness implies that we must be always ready to extend every assistance and help we can to those who are in distress and suffering. Baha'i charity is of the very essence of the Teachings, and should [121] therefore be developed in every Baha'i community. Charitable institutions such as orphanages, free schools and hospitals for the poor, constitute an indispensable part of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar. It is the responsibility of every local Baha'i community to insure the welfare of its poor and needy members, through whatever means possible.

"But, of course, this extension of assistance to the poor, in whatever form should under no circumstances be allowed to seriously interfere with the major collective interests of the Baha'i Community, as distinguished from the purely personal interests of its members. The demands of the Cause transcend those of the individual, and should therefore be given precedence. But these two phases of Baha'i social life, though not of equal importance, are by no means contradictory. Both of them are essential, and should be fostered, but each according to its own degree of importance. It is the responsibility of Baha'i Assemblies to decide when individual interests should be subordinated to those affecting the collective welfare of the community. But, as already stated, the interest of the individual should always be safeguarded within certain limits, and provided they do not seriously affect the welfare of the group as a whole."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 26, 1936)

412. Contributions to Charity by Assemblies and Individuals
"First there is the principle that any believer may sell personal services or property to anyone and do with the proceeds as he wishes, including giving any or all of them to Baha'i purposes. Thus if a Baha'i concert artist gives a concert to which admission is charged, he is free, if he so wishes, to give the money so earned to the Fund or to any charity of his choice. In giving the concert, however, he should not represent to non-Baha'is that the concert is for the benefit of the Baha'i Fund or is given on behalf of Baha'is for a

charity, which brings us to the second principle: That it is improper for Baha'is to solicit funds from non-Baha'is in the name of the Faith for any purpose. If a non-Baha'i insists on making a monetary contribution it may be accepted with the express understanding that it will be used only for charitable or philanthropic purposes, but such contributions should be discouraged, not encouraged.

"The third principle concerns contributions made to charity by Baha'is themselves. Spiritual Assemblies are, of course, permitted to make contributions to charity—indeed care of the poor and needy is one of the duties assigned to them in the Baha'i Writings—but they must weigh their responsibilities very carefully and remember that in a highly organised country like the United Kingdom the poor are helped by a multitude of agencies, both governmental and private, whereas only the Baha'is can contribute towards the building of the Kingdom of God on earth. This, clearly, is a matter for wise moderation. Assemblies, moreover, should perform their charitable works with a pure motive, and not with the thought of propagandizing for the Faith.

"An individual Baha'i is, of course, free to contribute to charity from his own resources if he wishes, but as a Baha'i he should bear in mind the needs of the Baha'i Fund, which only believers can support."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a Local Spiritual Assembly, March 19, 1973)

413. Surest Way of Lifting Once and for All Burden of Hunger and Misery
"...in the first place every believer is free to follow the dictates of his own [122] conscience as regards the manner in which to spend his own money. Secondly, we must always bear in mind that there are so few Baha'is in the world, relative to the world's population, and so many people in need, that even if all of us gave all we had, it would not alleviate more than an infinitesimal amount of suffering. This does not mean we must not help the needy, we should; but our contributions to the Faith are the surest way of lifting once and for all time the burden of hunger and misery from mankind, for it is only through the system of Baha'u'llah—Divine in origin—that the world can be gotten on its feet and want, fear, hunger, war, etc., be eliminated. Non-Baha'is cannot contribute to our work or do it for us; so really our first obligation is to support our own teaching work, as this will lead to the healing of the nations."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 8, 1947: Lifeblood of the Cause, 1970, London, pp. 12-13)

414. There Are Many Ways that Help Can Be Rendered to Suffering Fellow-Men
"It is understandable that Baha'is who witness the miserable conditions under which so many human beings have to live, or who hear of a sudden disaster that has struck a certain area of the world, are moved to do something practical to ameliorate those conditions and to help their suffering fellow-mortals.

"There are many ways in which help can be rendered. Every Baha'i has the duty to acquire a trade or profession through which he will earn that wherewith he

can support himself and his family; in the choice of such work he can seek those activities which are of benefit to his fellow-men and not merely those which promote his personal interests, still less those whose effects are actually harmful.

"There are also the situations in which an individual Baha'i or a Spiritual Assembly is confronted with an urgent need which neither justice nor compassion could allow to go unheeded and unhelped. How many are the stories told of 'Abdu'l-Baha in such situations, when He would even take off a garment He was wearing and give it to a shivering man in rags.

"But in our concern for such immediate obvious calls upon our succour we must not allow ourselves to forget the continuing, appalling burden of suffering under which millions of human beings are always groaning—a burden which they have bourne for century upon century and which it is the mission of Baha'u'llah to lift at last. The principal cause of this suffering, which one can witness wherever one turns, is the corrupton of human morals and the prevalence of prejudice, suspicion, hatred, untrustworthiness, selfishness and tyranny among men. It is not merely material well-being that people need. What they desperately need is to know how to live their lives—they need to know who they are, to what purpose they exist, and how they should act towards one another; and, once they know the answers to these questions they need to be helped to gradually apply these answers to every-day behaviour. It is to the solution of this basic problem of mankind that the greater part of all our energy and resources should be directed...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, November 19, 1974)

415. Baha'is Have the Divinely-Given Remedy for the Ills of Mankind
"...There are mighty agencies in this world, governments, foundations, institutions of many kinds with tremendous financial resources which are working to [123] improve the material lot of human beings. Anything we Baha'is could add to such resources in the way of special funds or contributions would be a negligible drop in the ocean. However, alone among men we have the divinely-given remedy for the real ills of mankind; no one else is doing or can do this most important work, and if we divert our energy and our funds into fields in which others are already doing more than we can hope to do, we shall be delaying the diffusion of the Divine Message which is the most important task of all.

"Because of such an attitude, as also because of our refusal to become involved in politics, Baha'is are often accused of holding aloof from the 'real problems' of their fellow-men. But when we hear this accusation let us not forget that those who make it are usually idealistic materialists to whom material good is the only 'real' good, whereas we know that the working of the material world is merely a reflection of spiritual conditions and until the spiritual conditions can be changed there can be no lasting change for the better in material affairs.

"We should also remember that most people have no clear concept of the sort of world they wish to build, nor how to go about building it. Even those who are concerned to improve conditions are therefore reduced to combatting every apparent evil that takes their attention. Willingness to fight against evils, whether in the form of conditions or embodied in evil men, has thus become for most people the touchstone by which they judge a person's moral worth. Baha'is, on the other hand, know the goal they are working towards and know what they must do, step by step, to attain it. Their whole energy is directed towards the building of the good, a good which has such a positive strength that in the face of it the multitude of evils—which are in essence negative—will fade away and be no more. To enter into the quixotic tournament of demolishing one by one the evils in the world is, to a Baha'i, a vain waste of time and effort. His whole life is directed towards proclaiming the Message of Baha'u'llah, reviving the spiritual life of his fellow-men, uniting them in a divinely-created World Order, and then, as that Order grows in strength and influence, he will see the power of that Message transforming the whole of human society and progressively solving the problems and removing the injustices which have so long bedevilled the world."
(Ibid.)

416. When a Baha'i Finds It Essential to Seek the Help of Others
"When a Baha'i finds it essential to seek the help of others, and after his own efforts and those of his family and close friends have proved inadequate, he may certainly turn to his Local Spiritual Assembly, which will consult on his problem, extend a helping hand to him, if the conditions of the Local Fund permit, and even more importantly, will counsel and advise him on what opportunities are open to him, and what steps he might take to seek a solution to his problem. If the Local Assembly feels that the help or guidance of the National Assembly should be sought, it will no doubt refer the matter to the National Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 1, 1980: Giving to the Poor, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

417. Local Spiritual Assembly Should Extend Helping Hand to the Poor
"They (Local Spiritual Assemblies) must do their utmost to extend at all times the helping hand to the poor, the sick, the disabled, the orphan, the widow, irrespective of colour, caste and creed.

[124] "They must promote by every means in their power the material as well as the spiritual enlightenment of youth, the means for the education of children, institute, whenever possible, Baha'i educational institutions, organize and supervise their work and provide the best means for their progress and development."
(Shoghi Effendi: Baha'i Administration, p. 38)

418. How a Baha'i May Help His Fellow-Believer Through the Institutions
"In our dealings with the believers, however, apart from the need to give priority to the needs of the Faith, one has to bear in mind, as you point out

in your letter, such considerations as wisdom as well as the importance of avoiding actions that may jeopardize our cordial relationships with the believers. If the individual believer is unable personally and prayerfully to resolve such a problem, he should, as each case may indicate, either himself refer to the Spiritual Assembly for guidance, or refer the believers to that institution. A Baha'i who wishes to help his needy fellow-believer may do so by extending his assistance either personally, or impersonally through the Spiritual Assembly if he feels that this method will provide the means to objectively assess the real needs involved, or will maintain and preserve better relations between him and the believer concerned.

"This is just one more reason why we should endeavour to support, strengthen the foundations, and foster the development of Local Spiritual Assemblies so that they may become rallying points of the friends and the true shepherds of the divine flock."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 9, 1973)

C. The Poor

419. Those Possessed of Riches Must Have the Utmost Regard for the Poor
"They who are possessed of riches, however, must have the utmost regard for the poor, for great is the honor destined by God for those poor who are steadfast in patience. By My Life! There is no honor, except what God may please to bestow, that can compare to this honor. Great is the blessedness awaiting the poor that endure patiently and conceal their sufferings, and well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves.

"Please God, the poor may exert themselves and strive to earn the means of livelihood. This is a duty which, in this most great Revelation, hath been prescribed unto every one, and is accounted in the sight of God as a goodly deed. Whoso observeth this duty, the help of the invisible One shall most certainly aid him. He can enrich, through His grace, whomsoever He pleaseth. He, verily, hath power over all things...."
(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, pp. 202-203)

420. The Greatest Gift We Can Give to the Poor
"Regarding your question concerning helping the poor: The Baha'is should not go so far as to refrain from extending charity to the needy, if they are able and willing to do so. However, in this, as in many other things, they should exert moderation. The greatest gift that we can give to the poor and the down-trodden [125] is to aid to build up the divine institutions inaugurated in this day by Baha'u'llah as these institutions, and this World Order when established, will eliminate the causes of poverty and the injustices which afflict the poor. We should, therefore, do both, support our Baha'i Fund, and also be kind and generous to the needy."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 11, 1942)

421. Do Not Grieve for Being Poor—Some Great Souls Were of the Poorest in the World

"Do not grieve, dear brother, for being poor, for you are rich instead in faith and in spirit. This is a divine wealth for which the richest of the world will crave for in vain. True we must work hard, earn money and keep our family in happiness and prosperity, but we must always realize that our lives must be devoted to things higher and more sublime. We must remember what great souls, whose lives still inspire hundreds and thousands, were of the poorest in the world."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 18, 1927)

VI. CALAMITIES AND CRISES

[126] 422. The World is in Travail

"The world is in travail and its agitation waxeth day by day. Its face is turned toward waywardness and unbelief. Such shall be its plight that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly. Its perversity will long continue. And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake. Then, and only then, will the Divine Standard be unfurled, and the Nightingale of Paradise warble its melody."

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, Wilmette, 1983, p. 118)

423. Powerful Forces Are Operating to Bring to a Climax this Portentous Century

"...Both within and without the Cause of God, powerful forces are operating to bring to a climax the twin tendencies of this portentous century. Among the many evidences which reveal this process may be cited, on the one hand, the continual increase of lawlessness, terrorism, economic confusion, immorality and the growing danger from the proliferation of weapons of destruction, and on the other, the world-wide, divinely propelled expansion, consolidation and rapid emergence into the limelight of world affairs of the Cause itself, a process crowned by the wonderful efflorescence of Mount Carmel, the mountain of God, whose Divine springtime is now so magnificently burgeoning."

(From a message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the world, Ridvan 1983)

424. The People of Baha Are Assured of Divine Guidance

"...the Pen of the Centre of the Covenant has repeatedly prophesied the intolerable calamities which must beset this wayward humanity ere it heeds the life-giving Teachings of Baha'u'llah.

'Chaos and confusion are daily increasing in the world. They will attain such intensity as to render the frame of mankind unable to bear them. Then will men be awakened and become aware that religion is the impregnable stronghold and the manifest light of the world, and its laws, exhortations and teachings the source of life on earth.'

"Every discerning eye clearly sees that the early stages of this chaos have

daily manifestations affecting the structure of human society; its destructive forces are uprooting time-honoured institutions which were a haven and refuge for the inhabitants of the earth in bygone days and centuries, and around which revolved all human affairs. The same destructive forces are also deranging the political, economic, scientific, literary, and moral equilibrium of the world and are destroying the fairest fruits of the present civilization. Political machinations of those in authority have placed the seal of obsolescence upon the root-principles of the world's order. Greed and passion, deceit, hypocrisy, tyranny, and pride are dominating features afflicting human relations. Discoveries and inventions, which are the fruit of scientific and [127] technological advancements, have become the means and tools of mass extermination and destruction and are in the hands of the ungodly. Even music, art, and literature, which are to represent and inspire the noblest sentiments and highest aspirations and should be a source of comfort and tranquility for troubled souls, have strayed from the straight path and are now the mirrors of the soiled hearts of this confused, unprincipled and disordered age. Perversions such as these shall result in the ordeals which have been prophesied by the Blessed Beauty in the following words: 'Every day a new calamity will seize the earth and a fresh tormenting trial will appear'. 'The day is approaching when its (civilization's) flame will devour the cities.'

"In such an afflicted time, when mankind is bewildered and the wisest of men are perplexed as to the remedy, the people of Baha, who have confidence in His unfailing grace and divine guidance, are assured that each of these tormenting trials has a cause, a purpose, and a definite result, and all are essential instruments for the establishment of the immutable Will of God on earth. In other words, on the one hand humanity is struck by the scourge of His chastisement which will inevitably bring together the scattered and vanquished tribes of the earth; and on the other, the weak few whom He has nurtured under the protection of His loving guidance are, in this formative age and period of transition, continuing to build amidst these tumultuous waves an impregnable stronghold which will be the sole remaining refuge for those lost multitudes. Therefore, the dear friends of God who have such a broad and clear vision before them are not perturbed by such events, nor are they panic-stricken by such thundering sounds, nor will they face such convulsions with fear and trepidation, nor will they be deterred, even for a moment, from fulfilling their sacred responsibilities.

"One of their sacred responsibilities is to exemplify in their lives those attributes which are acceptable at His Sacred Threshold."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Iranian believers resident in various countries throughout the world, February 10, 1980)

425. If Baha'is Fail They Are Partly Responsible for Agony of Mankind
"There is so much suffering, such a great and desperate need for a true remedy and the Baha'is should realize their sacred obligation is to deliver the Message to their fellowmen at once, and on as large a scale as possible. If

they fail to do so, they are really partly responsible for prolonging the agony of humanity."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 18, 1943)

426. The World Will Experience Travails and Testing as Never Before
"We are instructed to say that although there is every reason to expect that the world will experience travails and testing as never before, we do not know what form these upheavals will take, when exactly they will come, how severe they will be, nor how long they will last. The Faith itself as it emerges from obscurity will suffer severe trials. Sensitive souls such as yourself are particularly aware of these impending developments. However, Baha'u'llah has given us the Administrative Order which is the channel through which the spirit and guidance flow to the Baha'is and to mankind. The beloved Guardian spent his entire lifetime unfolding and explaining the pattern, and it is this administrative machinery that we should seek to support [128] and strengthen. As weak and fragile as it is in these formative years of the Faith, it is still the haven and protection of the Baha'is and of the world. You are therefore encouraged to expend your energies and your many-faceted talents in teaching and consolidating the Baha'i communities under the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly and its agencies."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 19, 1981)

427. Calamities Will Continue Until Mankind is Chastened Sufficiently...
"You make reference to calamities and request specific answers if there are any as to when they may occur and with what magnitude. The House of Justice noted your comments that you have read what Baha'u'llah had to say about the collapse of the old world order and the coming of the new, and that in recent times friends returning from their pilgrimages spoke of meetings with Hands of the Cause and members of the House of Justice in which the coming of great world upheavals was related to a time 'around the end of the Five Year Plan and afterwards'. The House of Justice points out that calamities have been and are occurring and will continue to happen until mankind has been chastened sufficiently to accept the Manifestation for this day. 'Abdu'l-Baha anticipated that the Lesser Peace could be established before the end of the twentieth century. However, Baha'is should not be diverted from the work of the Cause by the fear of catastrophes but should try to understand why they occur. The beloved Guardian, in innumerable places, has explained the reasons for these occurrences, and since they happen from time to time as explained above we should not be concerned as to when they occur."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 15, 1976)

428. Baha'is Should Not Waste Time Speculating on the Coming Calamity
"The House of Justice points out that Baha'u'llah in no uncertain terms has said: 'O ye peoples of the world! Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity followeth you, and grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not that which ye

have committed hath been effaced in My sight.' Therefore it considers that it would be fruitless to attempt to foresee the time or the nature of a calamity which Baha'u'llah Himself said was 'unforeseen'. No doubt the remarkable progress being made in scientific endeavour holds true in the study by experts of geological upheavals. But we cannot be certain that predictions of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or tidal waves caused by such phenomena can be identified as the cataclysmic events to which Baha'u'llah refers.

"In letters to other believers who have asked questions similar to yours, the House of Justice has emphasized that the friends should not waste their time and energies in fruitless speculations on this question. Rather, they should concentrate every ounce of energy on the winning of the goals of the Five Year Plan, which they have clearly before them, confident in the knowledge that whatever may happen in the world, however calamitous it may outwardly appear, will promote God's unalterable purpose for the unification of mankind."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 20, 1976)

[129] 429. It is Important that Baha'is Have Correct Attitude Regarding Pending Catastrophe
"The important aspect for the Baha'is is that their attitude and actions and response to the pending catastrophe be correct. We all know that the Cause of Baha'u'llah is the world's only salvation, and that our duty is to actively teach receptive souls, and to do our utmost to help in the consolidation of the institutions of the Faith. Only in this way can we contribute our share of servitude at His Threshold, and we should then leave the rest to Him."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, November 18, 1980)

430. Should Baha'is Be Cut Off from World Centre or from One Another, They Will Be Guided by Spiritual Assemblies, Led by Counsellors, Auxiliary Board Members
"Every institution of this divinely created Order is one more refuge for a distraught populace; every soul illumined by the light of the sacred Message is one more link in the oneness of mankind, one more servant ministering to the needs of an ailing world. Even should the Baha'i communities, in the years immediately ahead, be cut off from the World Centre or from one another—as some already have been—the Baha'is will neither halt nor hesitate; they will continue to pursue their objectives, guided by their Spiritual Assemblies and led by the Counsellors, the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the world, November 3, 1980)

431. Baha'is Can Help to Mitigate Suffering of Mankind
"No doubt to the degree we Baha'is the world over—strive to spread the Cause and live up to its teachings, there will be some mitigation to the suffering of the peoples of the world. But it seems apparent that the great failure to respond to Baha'u'llah's instructions, appeals and warnings issued in the 19th Century, has now sent the world along a path, and released forces, which must

culminate in a still more violent upheaval and agony. The thing is out of hand, so to speak, and it is too late to avert catastrophic trials."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 8, 1949)

432. The People of Today Are Suffering for Their Own Sins of Omission and Commission
"You should not consider yourself unfeeling because you see in this world agony the birth of a new and better world. This is just what the Baha'is should believe and should teach to others. However much pity and sympathy we may have for humanity, we nevertheless realize that people today are suffering for their own sins of omission and commission. We must help them to see this and to turn their thoughts and acts into the channels divinely prescribed by Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 14, 1943)

433. We Must Put the Faith First for Our Eternal Security and Happiness
"We do not know what form the immediate future will take, anywhere. Because the passions of mankind are so unregenerate, and it is so deaf to the voice of Baha'u'llah, no doubt great suffering will be experienced. What we do know, however, is that [130] we are Baha'is and that our salvation lies in this God-sent Faith. As we give to God, as we serve Him and love Him, so will He vouchsafe to us His mercy, guidance and protection. We must, at all times, put the Faith first and our personal desires and comfort second. Having this Faith we have eternal security and happiness which nothing can take away from us ever, no matter what afflictions may befall a faithless world. The Cause of God is our security, and confidence in Baha'u'llah our protection."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 5, 1949)

434. We Do Not Know How Far-Reaching the Catastrophe Will Be
"Shoghi Effendi has never stated how far-reaching the effects of a future war will be, or what other catastrophes may accompany it or follow it. From our teachings we know humanity can and must be welded into some form of political unity—such as a World Federal State—through suffering as it seems only intense suffering is capable of rousing men to the spiritual efforts required. It seems clear to any thinking person that war will be the main cause of this degree of suffering."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 5, 1954)

435. The Unification of Mankind
"...Whatever our shortcomings may be, and however formidable the forces of darkness which besiege us to-day, the unification of mankind as outlined and insured by the World Order of Baha'u'llah will in the fullness of time be firmly and permanently established. This is Baha'u'llah's promise, and no power on earth can in the long run prevent or even retard its adequate realization. The friends should, therefore, not lose hope, but fully conscious of their power and their role they should persevere in their mighty efforts for the

extension and the consolidation of Baha'u'llah's universal dominion on earth."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 6, 1933)

436. The Crisis is Serving a Great Purpose
"The crisis that exists in the world is not confined to the farmers. Its effects have reached every means of livelihood. The farmers are in a sense better off because they at least have food to eat. But on the whole the crisis is serving a great purpose. It is broadening the outlook of man, teaching him to think internationally, forcing him to take into consideration the welfare of his neighbours if he wishes to improve his own condition. In short it is forcing humanity to appreciate the significance and follow the precepts laid by Baha'u'llah. The present and perhaps the near future is dark, but we have the wonderful promises of the Master before us and they shall all become true...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 3, 1932)

437. The Guardian Does Not Think that God Will Permit Man to Annihilate Himself...
"In regard to your questions: The degree of rapidity with which human beings are to advance certainly depends on their own efforts; but he does not think God will permit man to annihilate himself. Too much evolution is behind him and too much before him for that! We should certainly not procrastinate for a moment. For almost a hundred years now the warnings of Baha'u'llah have been ringing in men's ears, and we have every reason to believe terrible things may still befall mankind, if they [131] do not listen to the divine solution proposed by God's Manifestation for this day. In this connection he is constantly pointing out to the Baha'is that their direct Baha'i work—teaching, perfecting the administration, propagating the Cause of God is their job and of immediate importance because, it is, so to speak, spiritually organic. What they are doing will release forces which will combat the terrible disintegration of society which we witness today in every field, political, economic or otherwise...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 5, 1947)

438. Hardship and Privation, Frustration and Despair Shall Encompass the People...
"Know thou that hardship and privation shall increase day by day, and the people shall thereby be afflicted. The doors of joy and happiness shall be closed on all sides, and terrible wars shall occur. Frustration and despair shall encompass the people until they are forced to turn to the One True God. Then will the light of most joyful tidings so illumine the horizons that the cry of 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha' will be raised from every direction. This shall come to pass."
('Abdu'l-Baha: from a Tablet to Isabella D. Brittingham, Baha'u'llah and the New Era, p. 248, Wilmette 1980, corrected in a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, January 16,

1984)

439. Apocalyptic Upheaval
"He advises you to go ahead and plan your college education. We have no indication of exactly what nature the apocalyptic upheaval will be: it might be another war ... but as students of our Baha'i writings it is clear that the longer the 'Divine Physician' (i.e., Baha'u'llah) is withheld from healing the ills of the world, the more severe will be the crises, and the more terrible the sufferings of the patient."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 21, 1949)

440. World Condition Bringing Many Issues to a Head
"...the condition that the world is in is bringing many issues to a head. It would be perhaps impossible to find a nation or people not in a state of crisis today. The materialism, the lack of true religion and the consequent baser forces in human nature which are being released, have brought the whole world to the brink of probably the greatest crisis it has ever faced or will have to face. The Baha'is are a part of the world. They too feel the great pressures which are brought to bear upon all people today, whoever and wherever they may be. On the other hand, the Divine Plan, which is the direct method of working toward the establishment of peace and World Order, has perforce reached an important and challenging point in its unfoldment; because of the desperate needs of the world, the Baha'is find themselves, even though so limited in numbers, in financial strength and in prestige, called upon to fulfill a great responsibility."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 19, 1956: Baha'i News, No. 307, September 1956, pp. 1-2)

441. Calamities and Crises
"As humanity plunges deeper into that condition of which Baha'u'llah wrote, 'to [132] disclose it now would not be meet and seemly', so must the believers increasingly stand out as assured, oriented, and fundamentally happy beings, conforming to a standard which, in direct contrast to the ignoble and amoral attitudes of modern society, is the source of their honour, strength, and maturity. It is this marked contrast between the vigour, unity, and discipline of the Baha'i community on the one hand, and the increasing confusion, despair, and feverish tempo of a doomed society on the other, which, during the turbulent years ahead, will draw the eyes of humanity to the sanctuary of Baha'u'llah's world-redeeming Faith."
(From a message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1966: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 79-80)

442. Internal Disintegration and External Chaos Being Accelerated
"...Pregnant indeed are the years looming ahead of us all. The twin processes of internal disintegration and external chaos are being accelerated and every day are inexorably moving towards a climax. The rumblings that must precede the eruption of those forces that must cause 'the limbs of humanity to quake' can

already be heard. 'The time of the end', 'the latter years', as foretold in the Scriptures, are at long last upon us. The Pen of Baha'u'llah, the voice of 'Abdu'l-Baha, have time and again, insistently and in terms unmistakable, warned an unheeding humanity of impending disaster. The Community of the Most Great Name, the leaven that must leaven the lump, the chosen remnant that must survive the rolling up of the old, discredited, tottering order, and assist in the unfoldment of a new one in its stead, is standing ready, alert, clear-visioned, and resolute..."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 5, 1938: Messages to America, 1932-1946, pp. 13-14)

443. Worsening World Situation—Many Stand Aside and Wring Their Hands
"In the worsening world situation, fraught with pain of war, violence and the sudden uprooting of long-established institutions, can be seen the fulfillment of the prophecies of Baha'u'llah and the oft-repeated warnings of the Master and the beloved Guardian about the inevitable fate of a lamentably defective social system, an unenlightened leadership and a rebellious and unbelieving humanity. Governments and peoples of both the developed and developing nations, and other human institutions, secular and religious, finding themselves helpless to reverse the trend of the catastrophic events of the day, stand bewildered and overpowered by the magnitude and complexity of the problems facing them. At this fateful hour in human history many, unfortunately, seem content to stand aside and wring their hands in despair or else join in the babel of shouting and protestation which loudly objects, but offers no solution to the woes and afflictions plaguing our age.

"Nevertheless a greater and greater number of thoughtful and fair-minded men and women are recognizing in the clamour of contention, grief and destruction, now reaching such horrendous proportions, the evidences of Divine chastisement, and, turning their faces towards God, are becoming increasingly receptive to His Word. Doubtless the present circumstances, though tragic and awful in their [133] immediate consequences, are serving to sharpen the focus on the indispensability of the Teachings of Baha'u'llah to the needs of the present age, and will provide many opportunities to reach countless waiting souls, hungry and thirsty for Divine guidance."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, November 16, 1969: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, pp. 33-34)

444. A Yawning Gulf Threatens
"...Every system, short of the unification of the human race, has been tried, repeatedly tried, and been found wanting. Wars again and again have been fought, and conferences without number have met and deliberated. Treaties, pacts and covenants have been painstakingly negotiated, concluded and revised. Systems of government have been patiently tested, have been continually recast and superseded. Economic plans of reconstruction have been carefully devised, and meticulously executed. And yet crisis has succeeded crisis, and the rapidity with which a perilously unstable world is declining has been

correspondingly accelerated. A yawning gulf threatens to involve in one common disaster both the satisfied and dissatisfied nations, democracies and dictatorships, capitalists and wage-earners, Europeans and Asiatics, Jew and Gentile, white and coloured. An angry Providence, the cynic might well observe, has abandoned a hapless planet to its fate, and fixed irrevocably its doom. Sore-tried and disillusioned, humanity has no doubt lost its orientation, and would seem to have lost as well its faith and hope. It is hovering, unshepherded and visionless, on the brink of disaster. A sense of fatality seems to pervade it. An ever-deepening gloom is settling on its fortunes as she recedes further and further from the outer fringes of the darkest zone of its agitated life and penetrates its very heart."
(Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 190)

445. Forces of a World Catastrophe—The Fire of Ordeal
"...That the forces of a world catastrophe can alone precipitate such a new phase of human thought is, alas, becoming increasingly apparent. That nothing short of the fire of a severe ordeal, unparalleled in its intensity, can fuse and weld the discordant entities that constitute the elements of present-day civilization, into the integral components of the world commonwealth of the future, is a truth which future events will increasingly demonstrate.

"...Nothing but a fiery ordeal, out of which humanity will emerge, chastened and prepared, can succeed in implanting that sense of responsibility which the leaders of a newborn age must arise to shoulder."
(Ibid., p. 46)

446. When Crisis Sweeps Over the World, Baha'is Should Not Let Hardships Weaken Their Hope in the Future
"...When such a crisis sweeps over the world no person should hope to remain intact. We belong to an organic unit and when one part of the organism suffers all the rest of the body will feel its consequence. This is in fact the reason why Baha'u'llah calls our attention to the unity of mankind. But as Baha'is we should not let such hardship weaken our hope in the future...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a Baha'i family, April 14, 1932)

[134] 447. Stage of Purgation is Indispensable—Baha'is Should Not Hope to Remain Unaffected
"...You seem to complain about the calamities that have befallen humanity. In the spiritual development of man a stage of purgation is indispensable, for it is while passing through it that the over-rated material needs are made to appear in their proper light. Unless society learns to attribute more importance to spiritual matters, it would never be fit to enter the golden era foretold by Baha'u'llah. The present calamities are parts of this process of purgation, through them alone will man learn his lesson. They are to teach the nations, that they have to view things internationally, they are to make the individual attribute more importance to his moral than his material welfare.

"In such a process of purgation, when all humanity is in the throes of dire

suffering, the Baha'is should not hope to remain unaffected. Should we consider the beam that is in our own eye, we would immediately find that these sufferings are also meant for ourselves, who claimed to have attained. Such world crisis is necessary to awaken us to the importance of our duty and the carrying on of our task. Suffering will increase our energy in setting before humanity the road to salvation, it will move us from our repose for we are far from doing our best in teaching the Cause and conveying the Message with which we have been entrusted...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer in reply to a letter dated October 14, 1931: Baha'i News, No. 58, January 1932, p. 1)

448. Dangers Facing America
"He has been told that some of the friends are disturbed over reports brought back by the pilgrims concerning the dangers facing America in the future whenever another world conflagration breaks out.

"He does not feel that the Baha'is should waste time dwelling on the dark side of things. Any intelligent person can understand from the experiences of the last world war, and keeping abreast of what modern science has developed in the way of weapons for any future war, that big cities all over the world are going to be in tremendous danger. This is what the Guardian has said to the pilgrims.

"Entirely aside from this, he has urged the Baha'is, for the sake of serving the Faith, to go out from these centers of intense materialism, where life nowadays is so hurried and grinding and, dispersing to towns and villages, carry the Message far and wide throughout the cities of the American Union. He strongly believes that the field outside the big cities is more fertile, that the Baha'is in the end will be happier for having made this move, and that, in case of an outbreak of war, it stands to reason they will be safer, just the way any other person living in the country, or away from the big industrial areas, is safer.

"It is remarks such as these that the pilgrims have carried back in their notes. He sees no cause for alarm, but he certainly believes that the Baha'is should weigh these thoughts, and take action for the sake of spreading the Faith of Baha'u'llah, and for their own ultimate happiness as well. Indeed the two things go together."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 20, 1954: Baha'i News, No. 283, September 1954, p. 2)

449. Man's Outlook on Life Too Crude and Materialistic
"Indeed, the chief reason for the evils now rampant in society is the lack of [135] spirituality. The materialistic civilization of our age has so much absorbed the energy and interest of mankind that people in general do no longer feel the necessity of raising themselves above the forces and conditions of their daily material existence. There is not sufficient demand for things that we should call spiritual to differentiate them from the needs and requirements

of our physical existence.

"The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual in its causes. The spirit of the age, taken on the whole, is irreligious. Man's outlook on life is too crude and materialistic to enable him to elevate himself into the higher realms of the spirit.

"It is this condition, so sadly morbid, into which society has fallen, that religion seeks to improve and transform...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 8, 1935)

450. Mental Tests to be Suffered by Believers in the West
"And yet, how often we seem to forget the clear and repeated warnings of our beloved Master, who in particular during the concluding years of His mission on earth, laid stress on the severe mental tests that would inevitably sweep over His loved ones of the West ... tests that would purge, purify and prepare them for their noble mission in life.

"Ours then is the duty and privilege to labour, by day, by night, amidst the storm and stress of these troublous days, that we may quicken the zeal of our fellow-man, rekindle their hopes, stimulate their interests, open their eyes to the true Faith of God and enlist their active support in the carrying out of our common task for the peace and regeneration of the world."
(From a letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the believers in Australia and New Zealand, December 2, 1923: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957, pp. 1-2)

451. A Civilization Torn by Strife
"In the midst of a civilization torn by strifes and enfeebled by materialism, the people of Baha are building a new world. We face at this time opportunities and responsibilities of vast magnitude and great urgency. Let each believer in his inmost heart resolve not to be seduced by the ephemeral allurements of the society around him, nor to be drawn into its feuds and short-lived enthusiasms, but instead to transfer all he can from the old world to that new one which is the vision of his longing and will be the fruit of his labours."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the East and West, December 18, 1963)

452. Fierce and Manifold Will Be Assaults Faith to Suffer
"...The generality of mankind, blind and enslaved, is wholly unaware of the healing power with which this community has been endowed, nor can it as yet suspect the role which this same community is destined to play in its redemption. Fierce and manifold will be the assaults with which governments, races, classes and religions, jealous of its rising prestige and fearful of its consolidating strength, will seek to silence its voice and sap its foundations. Unmoved by the relative obscurity that surrounds it at the present time, and undaunted by the forces that will be arrayed against it in the future, this community, I cannot but feel confident, will, no matter how afflictive the agonies of a travailing age, pursue its destiny, undeflected in [136] its

course, undimmed in its serenity, unyielding in its resolve, unshaken in its convictions."
(Shoghi Effendi: Messages to America, p. 14)

453. Our Duty to Redeem Fellow Men
"...It is our duty to redeem as many of our fellow men as we possibly can, whose hearts are enlightened, before some great catastrophe overtakes them, in which they will either be hopelessly swallowed up or come out purified and strengthened, and ready to serve. The more believers there are to stand forth as beacons in the darkness whenever that time does come, the better; hence the supreme importance of the teaching work at this time...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa, July 9, 1957: Teaching the Masses, p. 11)

454. Baha'is Are the Leaven of God, the Chosen People of God
"...The Baha'is are the leaven of God, which must leaven the lump of their nation. In direct ratio to their success will be the protection vouchsafed, not only to them but to their country. These are the immutable laws of God, from which there is no escape: 'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.'

"They cannot be the chosen people of God,—the ones who have received the bounty of accepting Him in His Day, the recipients of the Master's Divine Plan—and do nothing about it. The obligation to teach is the obligation of every Baha'i, and particularly, the obligations of the American Baha'is towards humanity are great and inescapable. To the degree to which they discharge them will they be blessed and protected, happy and satisfied."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 21, 1957: Baha'i News, November 1957)

455. Eyes of the World Focussed on Us
"...The eyes of the people of the world are beginning to be focussed on us, and as humanity's plight goes from bad to worse, we will be watched ever more intently by non-Baha'is, to see whether we do uphold our own institutions wholeheartedly; whether we are the people of the new creation or not; whether we live up to our beliefs, principles and laws in deed as well as word. We cannot be too careful. We cannot be too exemplary."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, August 5, 1955: Canadian Baha'i News, Special Section, March 1973, p. 6)

456. Baha'is Have Task of Cleansing Humanity by Precept and Example
"In many letters and on many occasions the beloved Guardian warned that the disintegrating process will penetrate deeper and deeper into the very core of human society and that much suffering is in store ere mankind is fused by the fires of universal affliction into one organic commonwealth. Even when universal suffrage and all other rights presently sought by civil rights movements are fully attained, there still remains for the Baha'is the unaccomplished task of cleansing humanity, by precept and example, of every

trace of racial prejudice. Nothing but the Faith of God can accomplish this."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 30, 1965: United States Supplement to Baha'i News, No. 90, August 1965, p. 2)

[137] 457. Chosen Ones of God Should Not Be Content with Relative Distinction and Excellence
"The chosen ones of God ... should not look at the depraved conditions of the society in which they live, nor at the evidences of moral degradation and frivolous conduct which the people around them display. They should not content themselves merely with relative distinction and excellence. Rather they should fix their gaze upon nobler heights by setting the counsels and exhortations of the Pen of Glory as their supreme goal. Then it will be readily realized how numerous are the stages that still remain to be traversed and how far off the desired goal lies—a goal which is none other than exemplifying heavenly morals and virtues."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tihran, October 30, 1924: Living the Life, p. 2)

458. Obstacles that Stand in the Path
"The gross materialism that engulfs the entire nation at the present hour; the attachment to worldly things that enshrouds the souls of men; the fear and anxieties that distract their minds; the pleasure and dissipations that fill their time, the prejudices and animosities that darken their outlook, the apathy and lethargy that paralyze their spiritual faculties—these are among the formidable obstacles that stand in the path of every would-be warrior in the service of Baha'u'llah, obstacles which he must battle against and surmount in his crusade for the redemption of his own countrymen."
(Shoghi Effendi: Citadel of Faith, p. 149)

459. Civilization Undergoing Severe and Unparalleled Tests
"Let us pray to God that in these days of world-encircling gloom, when the dark forces of nature, of hate, rebellion, anarchy and reaction are threatening the very stability of human society, when the most precious fruits of civilization are undergoing severe and unparalleled tests, we may all realize, more profoundly than ever, that though but a mere handful amidst the seething masses of the world, we are in this day the chosen instruments of God's grace, that our mission is most urgent and vital to the fate of humanity, and, fortified by these sentiments, arise to achieve God's holy purpose for mankind."
(Shoghi Effendi: Baha'i Administration, p. 35)

VII. CEREMONIES

[138] 460. Not Accurate to State that Baha'i Faith Has No Ceremonies
"It is not accurate to state that the Baha'i Faith has no ceremonies. The marriage ceremony and the funeral service are examples of such observances in our teachings.

"It would be correct, however, to state that the Faith has certain basic laws and simple rites prescribed by Baha'u'llah and that its teachings warn against

developing these into a system of uniform and rigid rituals by introducing into them man-made forms and practices. Rituals in other religions usually consist of elaborate ceremonial practices, such as those of the Catholic Church in the celebration of the Mass and the administration of the sacraments, which are performed by a member of the clergy.

"In carrying out the basic laws of our Faith the friends should always maintain a standard of utmost simplicity and observe flexibility in all matters of detail."
(From a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia from the Universal House of Justice, August 31, 1967)

461. Naming Ceremonies
"We have your letter of August 22, 1966 inquiring whether 'naming ceremonies' for children should be encouraged as a community activity. In a letter to an individual believer, dated December 20, 1938, the beloved Guardian said:

'Regarding your question whether there is any special ceremony which the believers should perform when they wish to 'name' a baby: The Teachings do not provide for any ceremony whatever on such occasions. We have no 'baptismal service' in the Cause, such as the Christians have. There could be no objection, however, for the friends to come together on such happy occasions, provided they do not hold an official public ceremony, and provided also they strictly avoid any uniformity and rigidity in all such practices...'

"We feel that this activity should be left to the discretion of the parents."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 7, 1966: American Baha'i, December 1970, p. 10)

462. Spiritual Baptism of Children
"Thou hast asked regarding the naming of children: When thou wishest to name a babe, prepare a meeting therefore; chant the verses and communes, and supplicate and implore the Threshold of Oneness and beg the attainment of guidance for the babe and wish confirmated firmness and constancy; then give the name and enjoy beverage and sweet-meat. This is spiritual baptism."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. I, pp. 149-150)

463. Baptism of Child
"We have your letter of September 14th inquiring about the baptism of a child where [139] one of the partners to the marriage is a Christian and the other is a Baha'i.

"Obviously, if both parties are Baha'is they cannot baptize their child, however, in the case of a non-Baha'i spouse insisting upon the baptism of the children, we said in a letter to the National Assembly of Spain on 18 February 1965:

'The Baha'i parent may attend the ceremony with the understanding that he will not undertake any commitment or vow which is contrary to the principles of his Faith.'"

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 21, 1966)

464. Baha'is May and Should Participate in Harmless Cultural, Traditional Observances

"In deciding whether or not to participate in such traditional activities, the Baha'is must guard against two extremes. The one is to disassociate themselves needlessly from harmless cultural observances and thus alienate themselves from their non-Baha'i families and friends; the other is to continue the practice of abrogated observances of previous dispensations and thus undermine the independence of the Baha'i Faith and create undesirable distinctions between themselves and their fellow-Baha'is...."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia, May 26, 1982)

465. There Are Some Religious Ceremonies in which Baha'is Should Not Participate

"There are some exclusive religious ceremonies in which Baha'is should not participate, in order to safeguard the independence of the Faith. In this regard, the beloved Guardian has given the following advice to another National Assembly: 'In these days the friends should, as much as possible, demonstrate through their deeds the independence of the Holy Faith of God, and its freedom from the customs, rituals and practices of a discredited and abrogated past.'

In observing this principle, the House of Justice advises the Baha'is to maintain a balance between their adherence to the Cause and obedience to its laws on the one hand, and their role in society on the other. When an individual becomes a Baha'i he acquires, as you are aware, a wider loyalty to the Manifestations of God. Having found this new way of life, he should be careful not to isolate himself from his family and his people, and he should show respect for his former religion. The Baha'is should, of course, avoid performing any acts which could be considered as implying their membership in another religion or which are contrary to Baha'i principles. There is a clear distinction between participating in festive and cultural events, as opposed to performing religious ceremonies and rituals.

"It should also be remembered that the weaning away of the Baha'is from customs and traditions, which have been established among communities for centuries, takes time and is a gradual process. Therefore, while the National Assembly should avoid rigidity in these matters, it should also not compromise when the interests of the Faith and its integrity and independence are at stake."

(Ibid.)

[140] 466. Baha'i Parent May Attend Baptismal Ceremony, but Cannot Make Any Commitment or Vow

"In reply to your letter of 5 September 1984 saying that a ... believer will soon marry a member of the Roman Catholic Church and asking whether it is permissible for their children to be baptized, the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to convey its guidance.

"Children of such a union may be baptized if the Christian parent so wishes; from the Baha'i point of view the baptism has no effect. It must be emphasized, however, that the Baha'i parent, while perfectly free to attend the baptismal ceremony, should not undertake any commitment or vow contrary to Baha'i law and should not surrender her parental right to impart the Baha'i teachings to her child."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland, September 20, 1984)

VIII. CHILDREN

A. Adopted Children and Orphans

[141] 467. "He that Bringeth Up His Son or the Son of Another..."
"...He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My Glory, My loving-kindness, My Mercy, that have compassed the world."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K. 48, p. 37)

468. Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha Laud Those Who Adopt Children
"It was a pleasure to Shoghi Effendi to receive your letter of May 26th and to hear about your adopted children. This is a truly Baha'i act especially as it was often lauded both by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, and the Guardian trusts that they will grow to become Baha'i workers, and thus repay your kind generosity."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 20, 1931)

469. Adopted Child and Its Natural Parents*
"It is clear that the separation of a child from its natural parents is a tragedy that society must do its best to prevent or mitigate. It is also clear that in certain cases the actual separation may be better for the child than to continue living with a parent whose conduct and character make him unworthy of this sacred function, for the Guardian has explicitly stated that the severing of family ties and renunciation of responsibilities between parents and the children is, in certain cases, permissible under the law of God, but that the Universal House of Justice has to make the law governing such matters.

"Whenever the law of the land or the agreement of adoption prohibits future contact between an adopted child and its natural parents, the Baha'i law does not require the child to seek the consent of those parents to its marriage.

"In the situation, however, where contact with the natural parent is permitted, it should be a matter of wise discretion at what stage contact, in cases where it has been broken, should be re-established. Just as love for one person need not reduce the love one bears to another, so unity with the adoptive parents need not destroy or reduce the unity a child has with its natural parents, or vice versa. The characters and attitudes of the individuals concerned will have an effect upon this...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer,

February 17, 1971)

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*(See also: VIII. J. 1. Laws of Marriage, Parental Consent, 1231-1254)

470. A Baha'i Cannot Take Vow to Educate Adopted Child in Another Religion
"A Baha'i may not undertake a vow which commits him to any action contrary to the principles of the Faith. In other words, Mrs. ... cannot agree to rear a child in the Catholic Faith.

[142] "Furthermore, if it is necessary to go through the Catholic marriage ceremony for the sake of the adoption, Mrs. ... must make it clear to the church authorities that she is a Baha'i, intends to remain a Baha'i, and that she cannot undertake any vow which is contrary to the laws and principles of her Faith."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, November 26, 1964)

471. A Baha'i Who Swears to Rear His Children in Another Faith is Subject to Administrative Sanction
"...no Baha'i can conscientiously swear to bring up his children in another religion; and of course he has no right to lie; therefore it becomes impossible for him to make such a promise on his marriage to a non-Baha'i. Any Baha'i doing this should be deprived of his voting rights; and, as he has already made plain before, Baha'is who go to the church and are married as Christians must also of necessity be deprived of their voting rights."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the European Teaching Committee, May 13, 1956)

472. Duty Towards Orphans
"In this holy Cause the question of orphans hath the utmost importance. The greatest consideration must be shown towards orphans; they must be taught, trained and educated. The Teachings of Baha'u'llah, especially, must by all means be given to them as far as possible.

"I supplicate God that thou mayest become a kind parent to orphaned children, quickening them with the fragrances of the Holy Spirit, so that they will attain the age of maturity as true servants of the world of humanity and as bright candles in the assemblage of mankind."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, p. 46)

B. Godparents or Co-Parenthood

473. Baha'is Serving as Godparents
"In answer to your letter of 28 September 1984 on the above subject, the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to send you the following guidelines.

"The position of 'godparent' varies considerably from country to country, and from one Christian denomination to another.

"In many cases it involves the godparent in participation in a religious

service as a member of the church in question, and in assumption of the obligation to bring the child up in the teachings of that church. It is clearly impossible for a Baha'i to become a godparent in such circumstances. However, where individuals have undertaken vows as godparents prior to becoming Baha'is, the Faith does not require them to disavow their promise, but the new Baha'i should inform the parents of his change in religion so that they may make a change in godparents if they so desire.

"In some countries a godfather or godmother is regarded by most people simply as a good friend of the family who sends gifts to the child annually. If that were all, there would, of course, be no objection to a Baha'i's accepting [143] to be a godfather or godmother. However, even in such countries it is likely that, beyond assuming this responsibility, the godparent would have to take part in the baptismal ceremony of the infant and, although many nominal Christians may treat such matters very lightly, a Baha'i should be aware of the solemnity with which the church regards the rite and should not assume an undertaking which he cannot fulfil or do anything which would imply a denial of his faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland, November 4, 1984)

474. Baha'i Couple Should Not Have Their Child Baptized
"The House of Justice has noted your strong emphasis upon the social and economic aspects of co-parenthood in your country, and your mention of the religious basis for the custom. While the diminution of Christian fervor among the rank and file of Dominicans may be great, nevertheless the baptismal origin and other religious aspects of godparenthood cannot be minimized, particularly for rural people who may well be under pressure from parish priests. Your Assembly understands that a conscientious Baha'i couple must not have their children baptized, nor should Baha'is ordinarily participate as godparents in a baptismal ceremony for this also may seem to imply their affiliation with the church...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Dominican Republic, February 17, 1980)

475. A Baha'i May Become Godparent of a Non-Baha'i Child if Conditions Are Clear
"You ask whether a Baha'i may 'become the godparent of the child of a non-Baha'i if he made it clear that he is a Baha'i, cannot promise to bring up the child in the Catholic religion, is not affiliated with the Church...'. He may do so, for in such a case all concerned are informed of his beliefs. If called for, an agreement may be drawn up, through the Local Assembly or a lawyer, which would define the social elements of the co-parental relationship while omitting the religious ones."
(Ibid.)

476. Those Who Took Vows as Godparents Prior to Becoming Baha'is
"You ask about those who have undertaken vows as godparents prior to becoming Baha'is. Trustworthiness is one of the great qualities which must characterize

Baha'is, and the new believer therefore, far from repudiating any commitments entered into before becoming a Baha'i, must be ever more conscientious in discharging them. However there are certain actions which would violate Baha'i principles and from which the believer must abstain. Others would be incompatible with his allegiance to the Faith, such as the promise made by a godparent to bring up the godchild in the teachings of the Catholic church. In such a case the new believer could suggest to the parents that because of his new understanding of Christianity they would probably prefer to cancel that part of the agreement, at the same time explaining his willingness to continue to discharge the social and economic functions of the godparenthood. The whole matter should be dealt with in a gentle and conciliatory manner, in the hope of retaining the friendship and trust of all concerned."
(Ibid.)

[144] 477. Non-Baha'i Godparents of Baha'i Children
"In the case of non-Baha'is who are godparents of Baha'i children, the changed obligations of their roles may be quietly discussed with them by the Baha'i parents, who would point out that they may now wish to be freed of their commitments, and that in any case the religious aspects of the relationship are no longer in effect."
(Ibid.)

478. Two Baha'is May Enter into a Co-Parental Agreement
"You have asked about the possibility of two Baha'is entering into a co-parental agreement within the Faith, there is no objection to this."
(Ibid.)

C. Education and Training of Children

479. Must First Train Children in Principles of Religion
"...Schools must first train the children in the principles of religion, so that the Promise and the Threat recorded in the Books of God may prevent them from the things forbidden and adorn them with the mantle of the commandments; but this in such a measure that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry."
(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 68)

480. Encourage the Children from Early Childhood
"Encourage the children from their earliest years to master every kind of learning, and make them eager to become skilled in every art—the aim being that through the favouring grace of God, the heart of each one may become even as a mirror disclosing the secrets of the universe, penetrating the innermost reality of all things; and that each may earn worldwide fame in all branches of knowledge, science and the arts.
"Certainly, certainly neglect not the education of the children. Rear them to be possessed of spiritual qualities, and be assured of the gifts and favours of the Lord."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, pp. 27-28)

481. Incumbent Upon Baha'i Children to Surpass Other Children

"It is incumbent upon Baha'i children to surpass other children in the acquisition of sciences and arts, for they have been cradled in the grace of God.

"Whatever other children learn in a year, let Baha'i children learn in a month. The heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha longeth, in its love, to find that Baha'i young people, each and all, are known throughout the world for their intellectual attainments. There is no question but that they will exert all their efforts, their energies, their sense of pride, to acquire the sciences and arts."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 141)

482. Parents Held Responsible to God for Education of Children
"It is for this reason that, in this new cycle, education and training are recorded [145] in the Book of God as obligatory and not voluntary. That is, it is enjoined upon the father and mother, as a duty, to strive with all effort to train the daughter and the son, to nurse them from the breast of knowledge and to rear them in the bosom of sciences and arts. Should they neglect this matter, they shall be held responsible and worthy of reproach in the presence of the stern Lord."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, 1982, pp. 126-127)

483. Teachers of Children Serving Baha'u'llah
"...this teaching of the children is a service to the Blessed Perfection. Whosoever serves the world of humanity in this or any other way is serving His Holiness Baha'u'llah. Your heavenly reward is with Him. The education of children is one of the most great services. All these children are mine. If they are educated and illumined, it is as though my own children were so characterized..."
(Talk of 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land: Star of the West, Vol. XIII, No. 6, p. 172)

484. Failure to Educate Child is an Unpardonable Sin
"This is a sin unpardonable, for they have made that poor babe a wanderer in the Sahara of ignorance, unfortunate and tormented: to remain during a lifetime a captive of ignorance and pride, negligent and without discernment. Verily, if that babe depart from this world at the age of infancy, it is sweeter and better. In this sense, death is better than life; deprivation than salvation; non-existence lovelier than existence; the grave better than the palace; the narrow, dingy tomb better than the spacious, regal home; for in the sight of mankind that child is abased and degraded and in the sight of God weak and defective. In gatherings it is ashamed and humiliated and in the arena of examination subdued and defeated by young and old. What a mistake is this! What an everlasting humiliation!"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 579)

485. Child Left in Natural State Grows Up in Ignorance...
"If a child is left in its natural state and deprived of education, there is no doubt that it will grow up in ignorance and illiteracy, its mental faculties dulled and dimmed; in fact it will become like an animal..."

('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 311, 1982 ed.)

486. If Babe Did Not Live at All, Better Than to Grow Ignorant
"Therefore the beloved of God and maid-servant of the Merciful must train their children with life and heart and teach them in the school of virtue and perfection. They must not be lax in this matter; they must not be inefficient. Truly, if a babe did not live at all it were better than to let it grow ignorant, for that innocent babe, in later life, would become afflicted with innumerable defects, responsible to and questioned by God, reproached and rejected by the people. What a sin this would be and what an omission!
"Beware! Beware! that ye fail not in this matter. Endeavour with heart, with life, to train your children, especially the daughters. No excuse is acceptable in this matter."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 579)

[146] 487. Training in Morals and Good Conduct is Far More Important Than Book Learning
"Training in morals and good conduct is far more important than book learning. A child that is cleanly, agreeable, of good character, well-behaved—even though he be ignorant—is preferable to a child that is rude, unwashed, ill-natured, and yet becoming deeply versed in all the sciences and arts. The reason for this is that the child who conducts himself well, even though he be ignorant, is of benefit to others, while an ill-natured, ill-behaved child is corrupted and harmful to others, even though he be learned. If, however, the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 135-136)

488. Pupil Must Be Encouraged*
"If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow-pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance, by the statement, 'You are most capable and if you endeavour you will attain the highest degree.'"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 77)

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*(See also: VIII. C. Education and Training of Children)

489. Station of Those Who Serve and Teach Children
"O thou teacher of the children of the Kingdom!

"Thou hast arisen to perform a service which would justly entitle thee to vaunt thyself over all the teachers on earth. For the teachers of this world make use of human education to develop the powers, whether spiritual or material, of humankind, whilst thou art training these young plants in the gardens of God according to the education of Heaven, and art giving them the lessons of the Kingdom.

"The result of this kind of teaching will be that it will attract the blessings of God, and make manifest the perfections of man.

"Hold thou fast to this kind of teaching, for the fruits of it will be very

great. The children must, from their infancy, be raised to be spiritual and godly Baha'is. If such be their training, they will remain safe from every test."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, p. 34)

490. Methods of Teaching Children
"Among these children many blessed souls will arise, if they be trained according to the Baha'i Teachings. If a plant is carefully nurtured by a gardener, it will become good, and produce better fruit. These children must be given a good training from their earliest childhood. They must be given a systematic training which will further their development from day to day, in order that they may receive greater insight, so that their spiritual receptivity be broadened. Beginning in childhood they must receive instruction. They cannot be taught through books. Many elementary sciences must be made clear to them in the nursery; they must learn them in play, in amusement. Most ideas must be taught them through speech, not by book learning. One child must question the other concerning these things, and the other child must give the answer. In this way, they will make great progress. For example, mathematical problems must also be taught in the form [147] of questions and answers. One of the children asks a question and the other must give the answer. Later on, the children will of their own accord speak with each other concerning these same subjects. The children who are at the head of the class must receive premiums. They must be encouraged and when any one of them shows good advancement, for the further development they must be praised and encouraged therein. Even so in godlike affairs. Oral questions must be asked and the answers must be given orally. They must discuss with each other in this manner."
(Talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha: The Baha'i World, Vol. IX, p. 543; Baha'i Education, p. 73)

491. A Wise Schoolmaster
"A wise schoolmaster should send his scholars out to play or to practice gymnastics for an hour, so that their minds and bodies may be refreshed, and during the hour of the lesson they may learn it better. If the teacher proves that his scholars are advancing, no on-looker has a right to object to his system, or to question his wisdom and say he wastes the boys' time. If a wise father plays with his children, who has a right to say it is not good for them? He calls them to come to him as the hen calls her chicks; he knows that they are little and must be coaxed along—coaxed along because they are young and tiny."
(Words of 'Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. IX, No. 8, p. 91)

492. Curriculum of Study: Must Follow Same Curriculum for Daughters and Sons
"He promulgated the adoption of the same course of education for man and woman. Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes. When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. Equality

between men and women is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the reason that women will never be willing to sanction it. Mothers will not give their sons as sacrifices upon the battle-field after twenty years of anxiety and loving devotion in rearing them from infancy, no matter what cause they are called upon to defend. There is no doubt that when women obtain equality of rights war will entirely cease among mankind."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 174-175)

493. Beginning of Formal Education
"...From the age of five their formal education must begin. That is, during the daytime they should be looked after in a place where there are teachers, and should learn good conduct.

"Here they should be taught, in play, some letters and words and a little reading—as is done in certain countries where they fashion letters and words out of sweets and give them to the child. For example, they make an 'a' out of candy and say its name is 'a', or make a candy 'b' and call it 'b', and so on with the rest of the alphabet, giving these to the young child. In this way children will soon learn their letters...

"When the children are ready for bed, let the mother read or sing them the Odes of the Blessed Beauty, so that from their earliest years they will be educated by these verses of guidance."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, pp. 39-40)

[148] 494. Subjects to be Taught in Children's Classes
"The subjects to be taught in children's schools are many, and for lack of time We can touch on only a few: First and most important is training in behaviour and good character; the rectification of qualities; arousing the desire to become accomplished and acquire perfections, and to cleave unto the religion of God and stand firm in His Laws; to accord total obedience to every just government, to show forth loyalty and trustworthiness to the ruler of the time, to be well wishers of mankind, to be kind to all.

"And further, as well as in the ideals of character, instruction in such arts and sciences as are of benefit, and in foreign tongues. Also, the repeating of prayers for the well-being of ruler and ruled; and the avoidance of materialistic works that are current among those who see only natural causation, and tales of love, and books that arouse the passions.

"To sum up, let all the lessons be entirely devoted to the acquisition of human perfections."
('Abdu'l-Baha: from a Tablet published in The Baha'i World, Vol. XVI, p. 37)

495. Formal Education Must Begin at the Age of Five
"The Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha concerning the education of children refers particularly to their formal education which He says must begin at the age of five. The Master makes it clear that during the daytime children of that age and older should be looked after in a place where there are teachers. They should learn good conduct and be taught how to spell and to read and He

indicates that spelling and reading can be learned by the use of simple games. Children of all ages can benefit from the guidance given to mothers by 'Abdu'l-Baha in which He advises that when the children are ready for bed their mothers should read or sing to them verses of Baha'u'llah so that from their earliest years the children will be educated by these words of the Blessed Beauty. The House of Justice adds that you should feel free to hold classes for children under the age of five provided you keep in mind that their attention span is relatively short and so the duration of their class periods should be measured accordingly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Spiritual Assembly of Newton, Kansas, March 24, 1976)

496. Nothing in Teachings States Child Must Not Be Separated from Parents for First Five Years
"There is nothing in the teachings specifically to state that a child must not be separated from its parents and its home for the first five years of its life. In a Tablet, however, 'Abdu'l-Baha points out that formal education at school begins when the child is five years old. Shoghi Effendi has indicated in one of his letters that the formulation of a system of education based on the teachings can only be gradually undertaken, and has to be accomplished by Baha'i scholars and educationalists of the future...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 10, 1975)

497. Mother Has Chief Responsibility for Bringing Up Child
"The task of bringing up a Baha'i child, as emphasized time and again in Baha'i writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be most conducive to both his material [149] and spiritual welfare and advancement. The training which the child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer in India, November 16, 1939: Dawn of a New Day, p. 202)

498. Mothers Ordained Primary Trainers of Children and Infants
"...It is incumbent upon you to train the children from their earliest babyhood!... It is incumbent upon you to attend to them under all aspects and circumstances, inasmuch as God—glorified and exalted is He!—hath ordained mothers to be the primary trainers of children and infants. This is a great and important affair and a high and exalted position, and it is not allowable to slacken therein at all!"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 606)

499. Training of Children in Case One of Parents is Non-Baha'i
"The question of the training and education of children in case one of the parents is a non-Baha'i is one which solely concerns the parents themselves, who should decide about it the way they find best and most conducive to the maintenance of the unity of their family, and to the future welfare of their children. Once the child comes of age, however, he should be given full freedom

to choose his religion, irrespective of the wishes and desires of his parents."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, December 14, 1940: Dawn of a New Day, p. 86)

500. Greatest of All Services Rendered by Man to Almighty God—Teach Children to Deliver Speeches of High Quality
"Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children...

"It is, however, very difficult to undertake this service, even harder to succeed in it. I hope that thou wilt acquit thyself well in this most important of tasks, and successfully carry the day, and become an ensign of God's abounding grace; that these children, reared one and all in the holy Teachings, will develop natures like unto the sweet airs that blow across the gardens of the All-Glorious, and will waft their fragrance around the world.

"Ye should consider the question of goodly character as of the first importance. It is incumbent upon every father and mother to counsel their children over a long period, and guide them unto those things which lead to everlasting honour.

"Encourage ye the school children, from their earliest years, to deliver speeches of high quality, so that in their leisure time they will engage in giving cogent and effective talks, expressing themselves with clarity and eloquence."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 133-134)

501. Preferable that Child Should Receive First Training at Home Under Mother Instead of in the Nursery
"With reference to the question of the training of children: Given the emphasis placed by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha on the necessity for the parents to train their children while still in their tender age, it would seem preferable that they should receive their first training at home at the hand of their mother, rather than be sent to a nursery. [150] Should circumstances, however, compel a Baha'i mother to adopt the latter course, there can be no objection."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 13, 1940)

502. Spiritual Assemblies Should Provide Mothers with Well-Planned Programme
"So long as the mother faileth to train her children, and start them on a proper way of life, the training which they receive later on will not take its full effect. It is incumbent upon the Spiritual Assemblies to provide the mothers with a well-planned programme for the education of children, showing how, from infancy, the child must be watched over and taught. These instructions must be given to every mother to serve her as a guide, so that each will train and nurture her children in accordance with the Teachings."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 138)

503. Difficult to Teach and Refine Character Once Puberty is Passed
"It is extremely difficult to teach the individual and refine his character

once puberty is passed. By then, as experience hath shown, even if every effort be exerted to modify some tendency of his, it all availeth nothing. He may, perhaps, improve somewhat today; but let a few days pass and he forgetteth, and turneth backward to his habitual condition and accustomed ways. Therefore it is in early childhood that a firm foundation must be laid. While the branch is green and tender it can easily be made straight.

"Our meaning is that qualities of the spirit are the basic and divine foundation, and adorn the true essence of man; and knowledge is the cause of human progress. The beloved of God must attach great importance to this matter, and carry it forward with enthusiasm and zeal."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, pp. 24-25)

504. Should Train Children to Memorize Prayers and Tablets*
"He is very glad to know that you attach importance to the training of the children, for whatever they learn in that early stage of their development will leave its traces upon their whole life. It becomes part of their nature.

"The Master used to attach much importance to the learning by heart of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah and the Bab. During His days it was a usual work of the children of the household to learn Tablets by heart; now, however, those children are grown up and do not have time for such a thing. But the practice is most useful to implant the ideas and spirit those words contain into the mind of the children.

"With 'the Dawn-Breakers' in your possession you could also arrange interesting stories about the early days of the Movement which the children would like to hear. There are also stories about the life of Christ, Muhammad and the other Prophets which if told to the children will break down any religious prejudice they may have learned from older people of little understanding."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of West Englewood, October 19, 1932)

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*(See also: No. 1516)

[151] 505. Sacred Duty of Children Towards Their Parents
"...The fruits that best befit the tree of human life are trustworthiness and godliness, truthfulness and sincerity; but greater than all, after recognition of the unity of God, praised and glorified be He, is regard for the rights that are due one's parents. This teaching hath been mentioned in all the Books of God, and reaffirmed by the Most Exalted Pen...."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, Questions and Answers, Q. 106, p. 139)

"There are also certain sacred duties of children toward parents, which duties are written in the Book of God, as belonging to God. The (children's) prosperity in this world and the Kingdom depends upon the good pleasure of parents, and without this they will be in manifest loss."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, p. 50)

506. Children Should Be Trained to Understand Spiritual Significance of Baha'i

Meetings

"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 14th September 1982 concerning the role of Local Spiritual Assemblies in guiding parents and children in standards of behaviour for children at community gatherings, such as Nineteen Day Feasts and Baha'i Holy Day observances.

"Further to the letter we wrote on its behalf on 28th June 1977, the House of Justice has instructed us to say that children should be trained to understand the spiritual significance of the gatherings of the followers of the Blessed Beauty, and to appreciate the honour and bounty of being able to take part in them, whatever their outward form may be. It is realized that some Baha'i observances are lengthy and it is difficult for very small children to remain quiet for so long. In such cases one or other of the parents may have to miss part of the meeting in order to care for the child. The Spiritual Assembly can also perhaps help the parents by providing for a children's observance, suited to their capacities, in a separate room during part of the community's observance. Attendance at the whole of the adult celebration thus becomes a sign of growing maturity and a distinction to be earned by good behaviour.

"In any case, the House of Justice points out that parents are responsible for their children and should make them behave when they attend Baha'i meetings. If children persist in creating a disturbance they should be taken out of the meeting. This is not merely necessary to ensure the properly dignified conduct of Baha'i meetings but is an aspect of the training of children in courtesy, consideration for others, reverence, and obedience to their parents."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, October 14, 1982)

507. Few Children Are Really Bad

"He is sorry to hear your little boy is not developing satisfactorily; very few children are really bad. They do, however, sometimes have complicated personalities and need very wise handling to enable them to grow into normal, moral, happy adults. If you feel convinced your son will really benefit from going to ...'s school you could send him there. But in general we should certainly always avoid sending Baha'i children to orthodox religious schools, especially Catholic, as the children receive the imprint of religious beliefs we as believers know are out-dated and no longer for this age. He will especially pray for the solution of this problem."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 30, 1947)

[152] 508. Children Fighting

"Regarding your question about children fighting: The statement of the Master, not to strike back, should not be taken so extremely literally that Baha'i children must accept to be bullied and thrashed. If they can manage to show a better way of settling disputes than by active self-defence, they should naturally do so."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 11, 1945)

509. Physical Punishment
"As to your question about the use of physical punishment in child training, although there is a Tablet of the Master which considers beating as not permissible, this does not necessarily include every form of corporal punishment. In order to have a full grasp of the Master's attitude towards punishment, one has to study all His Tablets in this respect. For the time being no hard and fast rule can be laid down, and parents must use their own wise discretion in these matters until the time is ripe for the principles of Baha'i education of children to be more clearly elucidated and applied."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 12, 1975)

510. Problem Child: Discipline of Some Sort Indispensable
"With regard to the statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Baha and which you have quoted in your letter regarding a 'problem child': These statements of the Master, however true in their substance, should never be given a literal interpretation. 'Abdu'l-Baha could have never meant that a child should be left to himself, entirely free. In fact Baha'i education, just like any other system of education is based on the assumption that there are certain natural deficiencies in every child, no matter how gifted, which his educators, whether his parents, school masters, or his spiritual guides and preceptors should endeavour to remedy. Discipline of some sort, whether physical, moral or intellectual, is indeed indispensable, and no training can be said to be complete and fruitful if it disregards this element. The child when born is far from being perfect. It is not only helpless, but actually is imperfect, and even is naturally inclined towards evil. He should be trained, his natural inclinations harmonized, adjusted and controlled, and if necessary suppressed or regulated, so as to insure his healthy physical and moral development. Baha'i parents cannot simply adopt an attitude of non-resistance towards their children, particularly those who are unruly and violent by nature. It is not even sufficient that they should pray on their behalf. Rather they should endeavour to inculcate, gently and patiently, into their youthful minds such principles of moral conduct and initiate them into the principles and teachings of the Cause with such tactful and loving care as would enable them to become 'true sons of God' and develop into loyal and intelligent citizens of His Kingdom. This is the high purpose which Baha'u'llah Himself has clearly defined as the chief goal of every education."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1939: Baha'i Education, pp. 65-66)

511. It is Not Permissible to Strike a Child
"Let the mothers consider that whatever concerneth the education of children [153] is of the first importance. Let them put forth every effort in this regard, for when the bough is green and tender it will grow in whatever way ye train it. Therefore is it incumbent upon the mothers to rear their little ones even as a gardener tendeth his young plants. Let them strive by day and by night to establish within their children faith and certitude, the fear of God, the love of the Beloved of the worlds, and all good qualities and traits.

Whensoever a mother seeth that her child hath done well, let her praise and applaud him and cheer his heart; and if the slightest undesirable trait should manifest itself, let her counsel the child and punish him, and use means based on reason, even a slight verbal chastisement should this be necessary. It is not, however, permissible to strike a child, or vilify him, for the child's character will be totally perverted if he be subjected to blows or verbal abuse."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, pp. 49-50)

E. Registration of Children

512. Baha'i Children Do Not Automatically Inherit Faith of Parents
"In letters replying to questions on the registration of children and youth the Universal House of Justice has attempted to avoid laying down rulings that are universally applicable. However, for the assistance of National Spiritual Assemblies it is now providing the following summary of guidelines and elucidations that have been given. We are to emphasize that no hard and fast lines should be drawn, and procedural matters must never be allowed to eclipse the spiritual reality of belief, which is an intensely personal relationship between the soul and its Creator.

"Unlike the children of some other religions, Baha'i children do not automatically inherit the Faith of their parents. However, the parents are responsible for the upbringing and spiritual welfare of their children, and Spiritual Assemblies have the duty to assist parents, if necessary, in fulfilling these obligations, so that the children will be reared in the light of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and from their earliest years will learn to love God and His Manifestations and to walk in the way of God's Law. It is natural, therefore, to regard the children of Baha'is as Baha'is unless there is a reason to conclude the contrary. It is quite wrong to think of Baha'i children as existing in some sort of spiritual limbo until the age of fifteen at which point they can 'become' Baha'is. In the light of this one can conclude the following:
"Children born to a Baha'i couple are regarded as Baha'is from the beginning of their lives, and their births should be registered by the Spiritual Assembly.

"The birth of a child to a couple, one of whom is a Baha'i, should also be registered unless the non-Baha'i parent objects.

"A Spiritual Assembly may accept the declaration of faith of a child of non-Baha'i parents, and register him as Baha'i child, provided the parents give their consent."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, July 19, 1982)

513. Children Whose Parents Become Baha'is
"In the cases of children whose parents become Baha'is, much depends upon the ages and reactions of the children concerned. They will require great love and [154] understanding, and each case must be judged on its own merits. This applies to an added degree, of course, if only one of the parents has accepted

the Faith, in which case the attitude of the other parent is an important factor; the aim of the Baha'is should be to foster family unity. The important thing is that the children, whether registered as Baha'is or not, should be made to feel welcome at Baha'i children's classes and other community gatherings."
(Ibid.)

514. Status of Children Under the Age of 15*
"We have your letter of 18th August 1971 concerning the status of children under the age of 15 years who wish to become Baha'is. We share with you an extract of a letter on the subject written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary:
'Up to the age of 15 years, children are under the direction of their parents. At the age of 15, they may declare their Faith as a conviction, and be registered as Baha'i youth, whether the parents are Baha'is or not. Children under the age of 15 of Baha'i parents who wish to attend meetings and associate with the friends as Baha'is may do so. If non-Baha'i parents permit a child of less than 15 to attend Baha'i meetings, and in fact, to be a Baha'i, this is likewise permissible.' (To the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, dated July 23, 1954)"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, August 29, 1971: Australian Baha'i Bulletin, No. 205, September 1971, p. 14))

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*(See also: No. 262)

515. Age 15 Relates to Spiritual Functions and Obligations
"Regarding the age of fifteen fixed by Baha'u'llah: This relates only to purely spiritual functions and obligations and is not related to the degree of administrative capacity which is a totally different thing, and is, for the present, fixed at twenty-one."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 15, 1940: Baha'i News, No. 138, p. 1, September 1940)

516. Children Under 15 Cannot Marry
"QUESTION: In a treatise in Persian on various questions, the age of maturity hath been set at fifteen; is marriage likewise conditional upon reaching maturity, or is it permissible before that time?

"ANSWER: Since the consent of both parties is required in the Book of God, and since, before maturity, their consent or lack of it cannot be ascertained, marriage is therefore conditional upon reaching maturity, and is not permissible before that time.
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, Questions and Answers, Q. 92, pp. 133-134)

517. Children Are of Age at 15 as Far as Keeping Laws of Aqdas
"Regarding children: At fifteen a Baha'i is of age as far as keeping the laws of the Aqdas is concerned—prayer, fasting, etc. But children under fifteen

should certainly observe the Baha'i Holy Days, and not go to school, if this can be arranged on these nine days."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 25, 1947)

[155] 518. Children of Baha'i Parents Considered as Baha'is
"Although the children of Baha'i parents are considered to be Baha'is, there is no objection at the present time, for purposes of keeping a correct census, and also ascertaining whether the young people are, sincerely, believers, and willing to do their share in service to the Faith, to asking them to make a declaration of their intention, at the age of fifteen or so. Originally the Guardian understands this was adopted in America to enable young Baha'i men to make certain arrangements in connection with their application for non-combatant status, upon their attaining the age of military service. There is really nothing about it in the Teachings or in the Administration. Your Assembly is free to do as it pleases in this matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, June 17, 1954: From a compilation of the Universal House of Justice, Extracts from letters written on behalf of the Guardian on various aspects of age and obligations)

519. Registering Children Upon Attaining Age 15
"...the way in which Baha'i children should be registered upon reaching the age 15 is within the discretion of each National Spiritual Assembly; there is no objection to using for this purpose the general enrolment card, if such a card is adopted, or a new and separate one specially for Baha'i children attaining the age of fifteen. It is important, however, that whatever method of enrolment is used or card adopted, it is clear to such children that they had been Baha'is up to that time, and that on attaining the age of spiritual maturity they are reaffirming their belief in Baha'u'llah.

"The form and wording of an enrolment or registration card is also within the discretion of a National Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, October 28, 1975: From a compilation of letters written on behalf of the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice regarding enrolment of children. Included in a letter from the House of Justice to the National Assembly of Ecuador, August 9, 1979)

520. Upon Attainment of Age 15 Child Must Reaffirm His Faith
"...Both children of Baha'i parents, and children who, with their non-Baha'i parents' consent, declare their faith in Baha'u'llah before they are fifteen years old, are regarded as Baha'is and it is within a Spiritual Assembly's discretion to request such children to undertake work of which they are capable in the service of the Faith, such as service on suitable committees. However, upon attaining the age of fifteen a child becomes spiritually mature and is responsible for stating on his own behalf whether or not he wishes to remain a member of the Baha'i community. If he does not then reaffirm his faith, he must be treated, administratively, as a non-Baha'i."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, December 12, 1975: Ibid.)

521. Registration of Children of Baha'i Parents

"In answer to your letter ... concerning the registration of children of Baha'i parents the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to say that at the present time it prefers to leave the details of such matters to the discretion of each National Spiritual Assembly. One National Assembly, for example, sends a very nice letter [156] to each Baha'i child in its community on the occasion of its fifteenth birthday (unless, of course, it has reason to doubt that the child in question is a Baha'i), explaining the meaning of attaining the age of maturity, and extending the good wishes of the Assembly for his or her future services to the Cause. This does not require an active response from every child but does provide each with an opportunity to make his or her position clear if desired.

"The House of Justice points out that the Assembly must wisely steer a course between seeming to doubt the faith of a child who has been brought up as a devout Baha'i on the one hand, and seeming to compel a child to be a member of the Baha'i community against his will, on the other."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, October 5, 1978: Ibid.)

522. May Be Circumstances in which Children Should Not Be Registered

"It is within the discretion of your National Spiritual Assembly to determine whether children should be registered as Baha'is in cases where one parent is not a Baha'i, although children of Baha'i parents under age 15, are generally considered Baha'is, there may be circumstances in which they should not be registered as such, and this is also left to your discretion. Local Spiritual Assemblies should help by advising the parents to consider it one of their primary obligations to raise their children in a spirit of love and dedication towards the Faith."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, October 13, 1976)

F. Miscellaneous Topics in Reference to Children

523. Children Should Be Free to Choose Their Own Religion

"Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter ... which you wrote concerning Catholic marriage and the promise that any resulting children should be Catholic.

"The basic principle of the Cause is independent investigation of truth. This applies to us as much as to our children. They should be free to choose for themselves any religion they wish. To promise that they will belong to a certain Faith and not to another is therefore not only contrary to our precepts, but is also a futile promise to give. How can we make the future generation think as we do or follow our dictates. God has made them free. All that we can do is to open their eyes and tell them of what we think to be the truth."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 3, 1931)

524. Teach Child to Say Greatest Name in Moments of Crisis
"He thinks you are wise in not separating yourself from your child; and he will pray that he may grow out of this condition, and gain in physical and spiritual strength. It would be a great advantage to him if you could teach him to say the Greatest Name, when he is himself going through a moment of crisis and suffering."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a Baha'i couple, December 4, 1954)

525. Criticizing the Faith in Front of Children
"Regarding the question you asked about the attitude of criticizing the Faith in [157] front of children in a Baha'i family: The Guardian feels that this is not something that one can lay down a general rule for. A great deal would depend on the age of the children, and whether they are able to think for themselves, and whether one of the parents has sufficient influence over them to offset the effect of the criticism of the other parent. It would seem that if the children are very young, and torn between the influences of both parents, it would be wiser to avoid discussing the Faith in front of them; but only encourage them when the staunch Baha'i is alone with them, to revere and uphold the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 16, 1951)

526. The Real Object of Life—The Guardian Prays for Children
"The Guardian will pray that each of you may become a brilliant light in this dark world, and in due time, lead many seeking souls to the Splendor of the Cause of God. This is the real object of life, and he hopes all your training, will be a means of training your characters, and enriching your spirits, so you may teach the Faith, and become strong supporters of its institutions."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i children of Kenosha, Wisconsin, December 28, 1956)

527. Teach Children to be Kind to Animals
"Train your children from their earliest days to be infinitely tender and loving to animals. If an animal be sick, let the children try to heal it, if it be hungry, let them feed it, if thirsty, let them quench its thirst, if weary, let them see that it rests.

"Most human beings are sinners, but the beasts are innocent. Surely those without sin should receive the most kindness and love—all except animals which are harmful, such as bloodthirsty wolves, such as poisonous snakes, and similar pernicious creatures, the reason being that kindness to these is an injustice to human beings and to other animals as well... Tenderness and loving-kindness are basic principles of God's heavenly Kingdom. Ye should most carefully bear this matter in mind."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 159-60)

528. Baha'i Children Can Give to the Fund—Non-Baha'i Children, No Ruling Made; Teacher to Solve Problem

"Any Baha'i can give to the Cause's Funds, adult or child. No statement is required on this subject. Baha'i children have always given to the Cause, everywhere. Whatever situation may arise in a class which non-Baha'i children attend is for the teacher of the class to solve. No ruling should be made to cover such things."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, February 12, 1949: Lifeblood of the Cause, p. 18)

529. The Universal House of Justice Responds to Children's Questions Regarding the Catastrophe

"The heart-warming messages from the children attending the Indiana District Convention forwarded with your recent letter brought much joy to the Universal [158] House of Justice, and the House of Justice asks if you will kindly relay to these dear ones its comments on the several questions posed by the children.

"When telling about the Faith to people who disagree with what you are saying, don't argue with them. Try to find a point of agreement and if you can't, then leave them alone. You have done what you can by speaking of the Faith. Now leave them to Baha'u'llah.

"Regarding the sad plight of the Baha'is in Iran and what children can do about it, the House of Justice suggests that you remember these dear friends in your daily prayers, and encourage your parents to support the efforts of their Local Spiritual Assemblies and National Spiritual Assembly to bring this terrible situation to the attention of the media and the authorities.

"One of the children asks, 'Why did they call it the Universal House of Justice?' In the Most Holy Book the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah has written, 'The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice shall be established...'; we know them by the name Local Spiritual Assemblies. 'Abdu'l-Baha, in His Will and Testament, has stated 'and now concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers... By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries, a secondary House of Justice (National Spiritual Assembly) must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one.' When you study the wonderful Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, and the explanations of Shoghi Effendi, you will find many references to this supreme administrative institution which will help you to understand why it is called the Universal House of Justice.

"Two of the questions are, in a way, interrelated: 'Will the sun die on us pretty soon?' and 'Will the world end if there is a nuclear war?' No doubt both are prompted by the current wave of rumors about impending calamities that are circulating amongst adults and which are overheard by the children.

"Without minimizing the serious situation facing a world heedless of

Baha'u'llah's admonitions, it must be remembered that He also refers to the Golden Age of civilization to come. The House of Justice hopes that Baha'i teachers and parents will do their utmost to encourage the children to study the explanations of the beloved Guardian about the twin processes at work in the world—the steady growth of the Faith, and the devastating forces of disintegration assailing the outworn institutions of present-day society.

"We are asked to assure you that the House of Justice will remember you and the children of your class at the Holy Threshold."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 29, 1981)

IX. CHURCHES

[159] 530. Baha'is Must Have No Affiliation with Churches
"...we, as Baha'is, must not have any affiliations with churches or political parties. But he feels certain that when you meditate on this matter you yourselves will see the wisdom of it. We, as Baha'is, can never be known as hypocrites or as people insincere in their protestations and because of this we cannot subscribe to both the Faith of Baha'u'llah and ordinary church dogma. The churches are waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ; we believe He has come again in the Glory of the Father. The churches teach doctrines—various ones in various creeds—which we as Baha'is do not accept; such as the bodily Resurrection, confession, or, in some creeds, the denial of the Immaculate Conception. In other words, there is no Christian church today whose dogmas we, as Baha'is, can truthfully say we accept in their entirety—therefore to remain a member of the Church is not proper for us, for we do so under false pretences. We should, therefore, withdraw from our churches but continue to associate, if we wish to, with the church members and ministers.

"Our belief in Christ, as Baha'is, is so firm, so unshakeable and so exalted in nature that very few Christians are to be found now-a-days who love Him and reverence Him and have the faith in Him that we have. It is only from the dogmas and creeds of the churches that we dissociate ourselves; not from the spirit of Christianity."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of Vienna, June 24, 1947)

531. We Must Have the Courage of Our Convictions
"...No Baha'i can any longer dissimulate his faith and practise the laws and ordinances of a previous dispensation and call himself at the same time a believer. No compromise, no vacillation can any longer be tolerated. We must have the courage of our convictions and preserve the integrity of our glorious Cause...."
(Postscript by the Guardian to a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer, May 21, 1933)

532. On Becoming a Baha'i Should Withdraw from Church
"If a person is registered as a member of a church or similar religious organization he should withdraw from it on becoming a Baha'i.

"In the case of new believers, it should be made clear to them in the course of teaching them the Faith that one cannot be a Baha'i and also a member of another religious organization. This is simply a matter of straight-forwardness and honesty. A great part of the teaching of Jesus Christ concerned His Second Coming and the preparation of His followers to be ready for it. The Baha'is believe He has come. No Christian Church believes this; on the contrary, they either look for Him still, or have ceased to believe that He will come. For a [160] Baha'i to be a member of a community which holds such beliefs is disloyalty to Christ and hypocrisy towards the Christians.

"You should not formalize the method by which the withdrawal from the church is to be made, and certainly nothing should be added to a declaration form, if you use one. It should be left to the Local Spiritual Assembly which is accepting the declaration to satisfy itself, as it deems best in each case, that the new believer has already resigned from the church, or does so within a reasonable time of his declaration.

"In regard to the old believers, your Assembly should tactfully, and in a kindly way, make the Baha'i position clear to them and gently persuade them to resign from their former churches. This is a matter for great tact and discretion. If such a believer remains adamant you will have to consider depriving him of his voting rights."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland, November 21, 1968: Canadian Baha'i News, Special Section, March 1973, p. 6)

533. Baha'is Are Ardent Believers in Christ
"The friends should by all means be encouraged to withdraw from church membership and be made to realize that, though we as Baha'is are ardent believers in Christ, we do not and cannot support, church institutions and doctrines when Christ has come again and brought new laws for the world today and its present needs; to adhere to forms, mostly man-made, and now out-moded and no longer needed, is meaningless. This does not mean they should no longer associate with the church members; they should cease to be registered members of it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 5, 1943)

534. Ministers Who Consider Themselves Baha'is Should Withdraw from Church Membership
"As he has already informed you, the Guardian feels that the time has now come to ask any ministers still affiliated with churches, but who consider themselves practising Baha'is, to withdraw from the church openly. This is following the example of the Hand of the Cause, former Archdeacon Townshend, who courageously defied the opinion of his fellow-clergymen, his relatives and the public, and stepped forth from his high office as a Baha'i. When the friends realize that many of the first to accept the Bab were priests and suffered martyrdom for their act, it does not seem to be asking much that they should rally openly to the Kingdom of the Father which they believe in and for

whose advent they cannot very well go on encouraging people in their churches to pray."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 19, 1956)

535. Membership in Jewish Synagogue
"Concerning the membership of Mr. ... in the synagogue: As this concerns his non-Baha'i Jewish wife and means a great deal to her—even involving the place of her burial—the Guardian does not feel it is right to request him to take a step which would deprive her of her own religious rights. On the other [161] hand, he sees no reason why Mr. ... should not write a letter to the appropriate authority in this synagogue, explaining that he is a practising Baha'i, but is keeping his synagogue membership for the benefit of his wife and children..."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, May 8, 1947)

536. Withdrawal of Baha'i Youth from Church Membership
"Your letter of 25th October has been received and we fully appreciate the problem posed in the case of youth who accept Baha'u'llah but whose parents strongly oppose their withdrawal from the Church. In such cases where the parents oppose their withdrawal and insistence upon it by the youth would undermine the unity of the family it is permissible for the withdrawal to be postponed until the youth attain the age of 21. This would not, of course, in any way affect his acceptance into the Baha'i community. As you mention, this is the very time at which such a newly-declared believer needs all the deepening and confirmation he can receive."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, November 6, 1972)

537. For Sake of Family Unity Concession Made for Youth
"In reply to your letter of January 26th, we feel that while it is important to be flexible in requesting new believers, particularly youth who may encounter parental opposition, to withdraw from membership of other religious organizations, such flexibility cannot be allowed to extend to compromising Baha'i law. Two Baha'is, when getting married, cannot have the religious ceremony of another Faith.

"As to the age of maturity, voting rights in the Baha'i Administrative Order are acquired when a believer becomes 21 and you might well make that point the period for severance of those religious ties which members of the Baha'i community cannot maintain. The main point is that while, for the sake of family unity, the concession has been made to youth on the matter of withdrawal from church membership, every effort should be made to encourage all believers, as well as Baha'i youth, to observe requirements of Baha'i membership even at the cost of some hardship or inconvenience."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, February 11, 1973)

538. Baha'i Attitude Toward the Church
"Regarding church matters: The article of Dr. Townshend should be widely circulated and used. No matter what the attitude of people towards the churches in general may be, it has nothing to do with our Baha'i attitude, and Townshend has courageously stated this, and it has weight, in view of his former position in the church."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 18, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 226, December 1949, p. 2) (This letter is in reference to Dr. Townshend's article, The Old Churches and the New World Faith, which is published as a pamphlet)

[162] 539. On Being Expelled from Church
"...Thou has written that they have expelled thee from the church and thy friends are manifesting aversion towards thee. This is the beginning of thy trials. There are greater trials than these. Therefore, be not sad, nay rather, be thou happy and full of glad-tidings. There is no harm done if they have expelled thee from the church.... Thou hast entered into the Heavenly Jerusalem and discovered the Way to the Holy of Holies of the Kingdom. That church is of stone and cement, whereas this Holy of Holies is of overwhelming Light.

"But the more the tormenting friends shun thee, go thou the nearer to them. The more they deride and blame thee, show thou forth the greater love and affection. Do not look upon their shortcomings. Look thou upon all of them as the people of God and endeavour thou in right-doing and well-meaning. Ignorant are they; understand they do not. Therefore they are avoiding, criticizing and scorning thee."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 504)

540. Paying Church Tax
"...as regards paying the church tax. If there is a law in ... requiring citizens to pay such a tax, the believers should obey the law and do so. If there is no law covering this matter, but it is a question of a voluntary act and left to the individual they should not pay it.

"In case there is no law, and the Baha'is consequently stop paying this contribution to church upkeep, new contacts and believers should not be tactlessly told they must stop doing this, but first confirmed, and strengthened in their faith and then the wisdom and necessity of this step be brought home to them. Certainly no publicity should be given to such a delicate question. In other words, we as Baha'is must first clearly define the issue involved, set our goal before us, and work wisely, persistently and patiently towards its accomplishment.

"If, in connection with this church tax matter delicate situations arise, such a school teacher's position, it is for the Assembly to go into the matter and try and find the right solution, bearing in mind the goal towards which the friends are working: the right to be citizens in good standing, but not church members."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the European Teaching

Committee, October 26, 1949)

541. Contributions to a Church
"The first case is that of the elderly Catholic woman who is suffering from severe heart disease and is thus liable to die at any time. In this case, as also in that of suffering believers, the Assemblies, whether Local or National, should act tactfully, patiently, and in a friendly and kindly spirit. Knowing how painful and dangerous it is for such believers to repudiate their former allegiances and friendships they should try to gradually persuade them of the wisdom and necessity of such an action, and instead of thrusting upon them a new principle to make them accept it inwardly, and out of pure conviction and desire. Too severe and immediate action in such cases is not only fruitless, but actually harmful. It alienates people instead of winning them to the Cause.

[163] "The other point concerns the advisability of contributing to a church. In this case also the friends must realise that contributions to a church, specially when not regular, do not necessarily entail affiliation. The believers can make such offerings occasionally provided they are certain that while doing so they are not counted as members of any church. There should be no confusion between the terms affiliation and association. While affiliation with ecclesiastical organizations is not permissible, association with them should not only be tolerated but even encouraged. There is no better way to demonstrate the universality of the Cause than this. Baha'u'llah indeed, urges His followers to consort with all religions and nations with utmost friendliness and love. This constitutes the very spirit of His message to mankind."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 11, 1935)

542. History of the Early Church
"...There is certainly an element of truth at the basis of the organization of the Christian Church. For instance, the primacy of Peter and his right to succession after Jesus have been established by the latter, though only orally and not in an explicit and definite language. The real reason why Christ did not make some explicit statement regarding His succession is not known, and cannot be known. For how can we, poor humans, claim to unravel the mysteries of God's mind and purpose, and to grasp the inscrutable dispensations of His providence. The utmost we can do is to give some explanations, but these must necessarily fail to give the fundamental reason to the problem we seek to solve."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 28, 1936)

X. COMMITTEES

A. Appointing Committees

[164] 543. Freedom to Appoint Any Baha'i Qualified for the Work
"In going over the minutes of your recent N.S.A. meeting he noticed that you had decided to try as far as possible to eliminate National Spiritual Assembly

members from the National Committees. Although he fully realizes your reasons for taking this decision, he feels it infringes on one of the fundamental principles of our administrative order which is freedom of choice—freedom of electors to elect anyone they please to Local or National bodies, and freedom of the members of these bodies to appoint any Baha'i, who seems best qualified for the work, to function on Committees.

"The first consideration must always be the person best qualified for a job, and National Assembly members should in such matters not be either discriminated against, or in favour of, because of the position they occupy on the National body."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, June 16, 1947: Baha'i News, No. 198, August 1947, p. 3)

544. Continuity of Committee Personnel
"Although National Assemblies and Local Assemblies may provide for continuity of Committee personnel by re-appointment of members each year, Assemblies should not appoint members of Committees for a term of more than one year."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, December 20, 1966)

545. Preferable Some Qualified Native Believers Serve on Committee
"There is no objection to a National Spiritual Assembly member serving on the National Teaching Committee, but if National Spiritual Assembly members were to predominate on the Committee the purpose of appointing it, which is to relieve the National Assembly of the details of the work, would be defeated. It is also preferable for some qualified native believers to serve on the National Teaching Committee so that they may thus be trained to carry on with the work.

"...the beloved Guardian paid great attention to the administrative arrangements for teaching and was highly in favour of one central National Teaching Committee with Regional Committees responsible to it. He once pointed out that absorption of the petty details of Baha'i administration by the personnel of the National Spiritual Assembly is manifestly injurious to efficiency and an expert discharge of Baha'i duties."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, June 23, 1971)

[165] 546. Desirability of Easy Meeting of National Teaching Committee—If Possible, Not to be Burdened with Other Duties
"...we ... suggest that for future consideration you should bear in mind the desirability of easy meetings of this important committee which would, of course, be facilitated by members being in the same vicinity. It is also desirable that the members of this vital right arm of the National Spiritual Assembly should, as far as possible, not be burdened with other duties. It has been found that the most effective arrangement is to have a strong, centrally located Teaching Committee—although not necessarily at the National Headquarters—with its members free to devote all their efforts and energies

to the work of that committee. The Regional Teaching Committees are in a sense the executive agents of the National Teaching Committee and while there is no harm in members of the Regional Committees being also on the National Teaching Committee it is generally better for them to concentrate on the work in their own particular areas."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, June 23, 1971)

547. Committees Can Be Constituted with Eye for Improvement and Change
"...He feels that it would be good to infuse more new life—by using different believers of capacity—into National Committees. ...more young people and more people who are capable professional or business people in their private lives are now in the Faith than ever before, and such material should be tapped and exploited so that all Committees possess a certain amount of new blood and get an infusion of fresh ideas. As elections are by secret ballot only the education of the electorate can bring about changes on Assemblies which often stagnate from lack of fresh blood—but Committees appointed as they are by Spiritual Assemblies—can be constituted with an eye for improvement and change."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 31, 1945)

548. Assembly Should Use Discretion When Appointing Committee Members—Incompatible Personalities on Committees
"We are asked by the Universal House of Justice to acknowledge your letter ... in which you ask for guidelines on the following questions:

"a. What attitude should a National Spiritual Assembly take when believers accept appointment to a committee but do not attend its meetings because of what you term incompatible personalities or lack of unity with other members of the committee, and yet they do not resign from the committee?

"As you are already aware, in your choice of members for committees, you must use careful judgement and discretion, with the aim of appointing a membership, which, from the outset, has good prospects of operating with full force. If, despite your efforts to do this, there is disharmony among the committee members, the following extract from a letter of 13 May 1945 written on behalf of the beloved Guardian may be helpful to you.

'Regarding the matter of ... and the inharmony that seems to exist among certain of the friends...: When Baha'is permit the dark forces of the world to enter into their own relationships within the Faith they gravely jeopardize its progress; it is the paramount duty of the believers, the Local Assemblies, [166] and particularly the N.S.A. to foster harmony, understanding and love amongst the friends. All should be ready and willing to set aside every personal sense of grievance—justified or unjustified—for the good of the Cause, because the people will never embrace it until they see in its community life mirrored what is so conspicuously lacking in the world: love and unity.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the

National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, August 19, 1985)

549. National Committees Ordinarily Appointed by and Responsible to the National Spiritual Assembly
"National Committees are ordinarily appointed by and responsible to the National Spiritual Assembly, but within the limits of wise discretion the National Spiritual Assembly may authorize a particular Committee to appoint a sub-committee or to ask individuals to assist it in carrying out its assigned functions.

"In calling these principles to the attention of the believers, however, care must be exercised not to dampen the enthusiasm or initiative of the friends."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the North West Pacific Ocean, September 5, 1974)

550. Non-Members of Assemblies Should Be Given the Opportunity to Develop Administrative Skills
"In the list of national committees for 1983-84, it was noted that eight members of the National Assembly had been appointed to serve. Indeed, your treasurer will be on three committees, and your secretary on two. While it is understandable that those elected to a National Spiritual Assembly generally have great capacity to assume manifold duties, the House of Justice points out that the opportunity for non-members of Assemblies to develop administrative skills is lost when members of a National Assembly serve on a large number of national committees."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 28, 1983)

551. Not Necessary that Committee Appointments Expire at Ridvan
"As regards the appointment of committees on a yearly basis, we refer to the Guardian's instructions on page 141 of Baha'i Administration that '...the renewal, the membership, and functions ... should be reconsidered separately each year by the incoming National Assembly....' Individuals appointed to committees should identify themselves with functions and objectives which normally extend beyond the term of their appointment. Just as members of the National Assembly relate themselves to goals of the Nine Year Plan, members of Local Assemblies and committees should do likewise, so that a single dynamic spirit may animate the important work for which each Assembly or committee is responsible.

"It is not necessary, however, that the term of committee appointments expire at Ridvan. It may be advisable, in order to provide continuity, to begin the committee year in June or July. Furthermore, the fact that, generally speaking, there are few radical changes in committee personnel should also make for continuity of thought and action."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, January 23, 1967)

B. Election of Committee Officers

[167] 552. All Committee Members Must Be Given Opportunity to Cast Ballot—Election of Officers by Majority, Not Plurality*

"Concerning the question of the election of committee officers, the House of Justice has instructed us to explain that provided all members of the committee have been given the opportunity to be present at the meeting or to send their ballots by mail, the election of the committee's officers is valid, even if a member does not avail himself of the opportunity to vote. Of course, as you are no doubt aware, election of officers must be by majority vote, not plurality. The House of Justice also points out that it is preferable to have an odd number of members appointed to a committee. This would lessen the chance of a tie vote result."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, September 2, 1981)

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*(See also: No. 101. Any Officer Elected Must Have Received at least Five Votes)

553. If Member Has a Good Reason, He is Free to Suggest He Should Not Be Elected to Office

"...With regard to your question whether members of an Assembly and/or a committee may excuse themselves from being elected to serve as an officer:

"On several occasions the beloved Guardian pointed out that before the election of officers, if any member had a good reason in his own opinion why he should not be elected to one of the offices of the Assembly, he was free to suggest that he should not be so elected. The House of Justice also feels that as the work of the Faith expands and the duties of officers, particularly on National Spiritual Assemblies, acquire more importance, it is permissible and at times advisable to discuss the duties incumbent upon and required of each officer before ballots are cast."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, August 18, 1985)

C. Structure and Function of National Committees

554. An Efficient Teaching Structure Must Be Adopted by the National Spiritual Assembly

"The teaching committee structure that each National Assembly may adopt to ensure best results in the extension of its teaching work is a matter left entirely to its discretion, but an efficient teaching structure there must be, so that the tasks are carried out with dispatch and in accordance with the administrative principles of our Faith. From among the believers native to each country, competent travelling teachers must be selected and teaching projects worked out. In the words of our beloved Guardian, commenting upon the teaching work in Latin America: 'strong and sustained support should be given to the vitally needed and meritorious activities started by the native ... travelling teachers, ... who, as the mighty task progresses, must increasingly bear the brunt of responsibility for the propagation of the Faith in their homelands.'"

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual

Assemblies engaged in Mass Teaching Work, February 2, 1966)

[168] 555. Function of the National Teaching Committee
"The function of a National Teaching Committee is to take charge, under the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly, of the entire teaching program of the country. It should be given its terms of reference which will specifically define the general objectives and methods of the teaching on the homefront; it should be provided with a budget and be required to submit to the National Spiritual Assembly an overall plan for the accomplishment of its tasks. Once this plan has been approved, the Committee should be allowed to carry out its work, although of course you should receive regular reports of its progress and of its financial position.

"One of the great benefits deriving from such an arrangement is that the National Spiritual Assembly is freed from the day-to-day details of the teaching work and while retaining supervision of this most important method in its own hand, has an executive arm in its National Teaching Committee, which should be given the full confidence and support of the National Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Trinidad and Tobago, November 12, 1971)

556. National Committees Constituted to Serve Needs of Local Assemblies
"He feels that the Local Assemblies should be encouraged to realize that National Committees are constituted to serve their needs, not to dictate arbitrarily to them and to unify the work of the Cause... The Committees in question should be very tactful in dealing with a young Assembly which is beginning to 'feel its oats' as this spirit of independence, if properly handled, can lead it to be strong and independent rather than weak and always relying on other bodies to carry it forward. Assemblies, however, should certainly cooperate with National Committees and not refuse their assistance."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, November 5, 1948: The National Spiritual Assembly, p. 48)

557. National Assembly Should Issue Instructions to National Teaching Committee to Avoid Confusion
"To avoid confusion and follow the proper procedure the National Spiritual Assembly should issue its instructions to the National Teaching Committee who would then transmit them to the Regional Committee. Regional Committees, though appointed by the N.S.A., are the auxiliaries of the National Teaching Committee. The Guardian does not feel he should go into the details of this matter, as they should be arranged by the National Spiritual Assembly itself. He merely lays down the principle to be adhered to."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 28, 1943)

558. Some Committees Need Larger Membership
"The Universal House of Justice has noted in the minutes of your meeting of 1st

May 1985 that ... you have adopted a pattern of restricting the membership of each committee to three.
"While the House of Justice appreciates that some committees dealing with technical matters, such as the National Haziratu'l-Quds Committee, could very well have only three members, nevertheless there are some very important [169] committees, such as the National Teaching and Deepening Committee, the Youth Committee and the Committee for Women and Education of Children, and so on, to which are assigned responsibility for significant aspects of Baha'i community life, which should have a larger membership to enable consultation to take place more effectively."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Senegal, August 26, 1985)

D. Special Committees
(Administrative, Ad Hoc, Emergency—National and Regional Teaching Committees)

559. Administrative Committees Have Authority Only as Given Them by National Spiritual Assembly
"Your letter of 24 May, 1985 to the Universal House of Justice has been received and we are asked to convey its response to your question concerning the role of administrative committees in dealing with personal problems.

"Your caution in clarifying the functions of appointed administrative committees is commendable, for such committees have authority and responsibilities only through the authority and duties given them by the National Assembly appointment. Personal problems arising in communities under activation by such committees should be referred, as you have suggested, to your Assembly for consultation and advice. Should you, knowing its membership, see fit to request a committee to assist in resolving a specific problem, it may do so with your authority; similarly you are free to authorize consultation on a personal problem by an individual having the expertise needed."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Leeward Islands, July 7, 1985)

560. Ad Hoc Committees Can Be Appointed to Deal with Personal Problems
"Regarding your letter of 19 September, 1984 addressed to the Universal House of Justice, we have been directed to convey the following with reference to the three points that you make.

"The first concerns cases of a personal nature which apparently have been on the increase and are consuming a great deal of the time of your Assembly during its meetings. In a letter addressed to your Assembly, dated 30th August 1971, advice was given by the House of Justice to you on this same point. However, for ease of reference, that portion is quoted:

'Personal problems are often best dealt with by the Local Spiritual Assembly or Assemblies concerned. There is no objection to the National Assembly's appointing a committee or committees to deal with such problems as come before it, provided that the final decision remains in the hands of the Assembly itself.'

"In addition to the foregoing, we have been instructed to quote the following passage from a letter addressed to another National Assembly:

'In reply to your letter of February 4th asking whether you may assign personal problems which a Local Spiritual Assembly is unable to deal with [170] to a nearby Local Spiritual Assembly, we feel that in such cases it would be better for your National Spiritual Assembly to appoint an ad hoc committee for each case, the membership of which could be drawn from one or two nearby communities as well as the community where the particular problem exists.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of El Salvador, October 22, 1984)

561. When an Assembly Lapses, Administrative Committee Can Be Named from Adult Believers of Community

"Your Assembly is empowered to name an administrative committee for the ... community. Such a committee should be viewed as being a temporary expedient for maintaining the life and vigour of the community until such time as the Local Assembly can be re-formed; it is not a replacement for the divine institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly.

"With reference to your specific questions, the Administrative Committee for ... can be named from among the adult believers of the community, without regard for their election or non-election to the now-lapsed Local Assembly. The single active youth can be called upon by the Committee for whatever duties he may be able to undertake. The Committee can continue the Local Baha'i Fund and also will maintain the incorporation of the Local Assembly.

"The National Spiritual Assembly has the authority to call for a by-election for a Local Assembly in the absence of a quorum of local believers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 8, 1983)

562. Scope of the Functions of the Emergency Committee

"It is entirely appropriate to appoint an emergency committee and to authorize it to take action between National Spiritual Assembly meetings. Your Assembly can also authorize such a committee to deal with routine matters in the interim between your Assembly meetings. In both cases full reports of such committee meetings should be made to all members of the Assembly and all decisions arrived at should be confirmed, or otherwise, at the next meeting of the National Assembly.

"You may decide on the number of the members of the National Assembly to compose such a committee. However, valid meetings of this committee can take place only when all its appointed members are duly notified. The House of Justice feels that giving notice by public service announcements on radio is not a satisfactory means of ensuring that all members have been notified. Finally, you are advised to have regular meetings of your National Assembly and not to allow the arrangement for routine and/or emergency actions to take the place of such meetings."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the

National Spiritual Assembly of Liberia and Guinea, June 15, 1977)

563. Latitude of Actions that May Be Taken by an Emergency Committee
"The latitude of actions that may be taken by an emergency committee of your National Assembly in any matter it deals with must be within the framework of guidance and authority given to it by your body.

[171] "This same principle would apply to the actions in which two members of an emergency committee of three feel they have the right to take upon any matter before it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, December 2, 1982)

564. National Assembly Defines Limits Placed on Emergency Committee—Decisions of Committee Are Subject to Subsequent Approval of Assembly as a Whole
"...it is for your Assembly to define the limits placed upon an emergency committee appointed by you from among your own membership to take action when absolutely necessary on emergencies which arise between meetings. Decisions of the committee of course always are subject to the subsequent approval of the National Assembly as a whole and you should assure yourselves that you are adequately informed of all its actions taken in your name."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Barbados and Windward Islands, July 2, 1971)

565. Quorum of Emergency Committee Members
"With regard to the question as to whether a quorum of the Emergency Committee members may act, there are no standard rulings and conditions for Emergency Committees. Every National Spiritual Assembly must work out its own procedures in these matters. It may also provide procedures governing the attendance of members of the National Spiritual Assembly who are not also members of the Emergency Committee."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Jamaica, October 24, 1971)

566. Special Committee Can Be Named to Assume Responsibility for Consolidation
"If a National Spiritual Assembly finds that its National Teaching Committee cannot devote sufficient attention to the work of consolidation, it should not hesitate to appoint, in addition, special committees whose tasks would be the conduct of the various activities which are essential for consolidation. Activities falling within this category include the organization of circuits of travelling teachers skilled in consolidation work; the holding of summer and winter schools, weekend institutes and conferences; the initiation and operation of tutorial schools; the dissemination of Baha'i literature and the encouragement of its study by the friends; and the organization of special courses and institutes for Local Spiritual Assembly members."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, April 17, 1981)

567. Not Necessary for National Committees to be Centred at National Headquarters*

"It is not necessary, of course, that the National Teaching Committee be centred at National Headquarters and it need not be a large committee. It is essential, however, that the members appointed be so situated that they can meet frequently during the year and that they be dedicated, active, knowledgeable, creative and reliable. As the National Teaching Committee has high priority in your [172] administrative responsibilities, you should consider, if necessary, the possibility of relieving its members of other committee responsibilities, in order that they may devote their fullest possible time and energy to the work of the Teaching Committee. Preferably at least one of the members should have secretarial skills and be capable of carrying the heavy burden of correspondence which results when plans are being implemented."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Trinidad and Tobago, November 12, 1971)

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*(See also: No. 546 Desirability of Easy Meetings of National Teaching Committee)

568. Regional Committees—Sub-Committees of National Teaching Committee
"...the Guardian has ... re-emphasized the necessity of avoiding overcentralization in the conduct of the affairs of the Cause, thereby relieving your Assembly of an unmanageable amount of detail and routine work, which would interfere with its clear and paramount duty of maintaining a thorough and vigilant supervision over the work of the Cause as a whole. Excessive de-centralization, on the other hand, would tend to nullify the principle which places ultimate authority and responsibility in the hands of the National Spiritual Assembly. His recent instruction regarding the relationship of the Regional Teaching Committees to the National Teaching Committee safeguards this principle which lies at the very basis of the Administrative Order. The Regional Committees, although appointed by the N.S.A., should, unlike all other Committees, be viewed as special adjuncts created specifically for the purpose of helping directly the National Teaching Committee in its all-important task of stimulating the teaching activities of the Faith.... In a sense they are sub-Committees of the National Teaching Committee, to whom their reports and all details of National Teaching activity should be constantly and directly referred."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 25, 1941)

569. Too Many Committees Confuse Rather Than Clarify the Work
"A National Teaching Committee, with the regional ones under it, will, he believes, run the work much better. Too many committees, like too many circulars, confuse rather than clarify the work."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 30, 1952)

570. Relationship of National Teaching Committee to Regional Teaching Committees

"Regarding the question of the relationship of the National Teaching Committee to the Regional Teaching Committees which you had raised in your last two letters: The Guardian has carefully noted your views on the subject, and while he feels that, as a matter of principle, the appointment of the Regional Committees should be entrusted to the N.S.A., their immediate supervision and control, he believes, directly concern the National Teaching Committee, which body is solely responsible for the organization and conduct of the teaching [173] campaign throughout the U.S.A. and Canada. The N.S.A. has certainly ultimate jurisdiction over all these Committees, whether national or regional, but should, in view of the ever-expanding teaching activities of the Cause ..., leave to the N.T.C. the task of supervising and coordinating the teaching work of the Regional Committees. The immediate responsibility of these Committees is thus to the N.T.C., which in turn is directly and solely responsible to the N.S.A."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 28, 1941)

571. Auxiliary Board Member Can Serve on Certain Special Committees
"The House of Justice feels that committees such as the administrative committee of the Baha'i International Health Agency, or committees responsible for aspects of social and economic development, which require professional expertise in their members, fall in a different category from other Baha'i committees. Believers who have the necessary professional skills are often in short supply, and therefore the House of Justice has no objection to Auxiliary Board members' serving on such committees at the present time—indeed it is often highly desirable that they do so—provided, of course, that such service does not so occupy their time and energies that they are unable to carry out their highly important services for the Auxiliary Board."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, September 9, 1984)

572. Collaboration Between Auxiliary Board Members and National and Regional Teaching Committees
"It has become apparent that in some areas the progress of the teaching work requires closer collaboration between Auxiliary Board members and National or Regional Teaching Committees than heretofore. Following consultation with the International Teaching Centre on the matter, we have concluded that the possibilities provided by the present policy are adequate and that where a lack of collaboration has been felt it has arisen from an insufficiently full and frequent exchange of information between the institutions.

"While the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants should never attempt to direct the work of committees or become involved in the administrative work associated with the committees' functions, it is absolutely vital that they be kept fully informed of the committees' activities and plans and their hopes for the work in the area. Only then can the members of the Auxiliary Boards be confident that the services to which they are exhorting the believers and the projects in which they are encouraging them are in harmony

with the overall plans and objectives of the National Spiritual Assembly and its committees.

"The existing policy and the reasons for it were conveyed to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and all National Spiritual Assemblies in our letter of 1 October 1969, a copy of which is attached. It should be noted that under this policy it is permissible and highly desirable to have a direct and regular exchange of information between the committees and the Auxiliary Board members. Moreover, at the outset of the work of the year or at times during the year when new plans are being evolved, it is often helpful to arrange for consultations to be held between the Auxiliary Board members and the National or Regional Teaching Committees before such plans are finalized.

[174] "We are confident that a greater awareness of the importance of close collaboration between the two arms of the Administrative Order and of the ways available to achieve this will lead to a much-needed intensification of the teaching work in every land."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 6, 1977)

573. National Youth Committee
"...if we say that no older person should take part in the organization of the youth it will be depriving them of the necessary experience needed to have a permanent and working institution.

"Shoghi Effendi believes that the best solution is to have some reasonable age limit for the actual membership of the body of the organization so that only the young people may take part in the different activities and have no older person usurp the floor or deprive them from their chances to train themselves, and express their ideas. At the same time the National Assembly could appoint on the National Committee that is to supervise their work some older and experienced persons who could co-operate with them and guide them in their activities. The National Committee should be composed of both people within the age limit and also older people."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 27, 1932)

574. Young Baha'is Under 21 May Serve on Committees
"The question of young Baha'is being permitted to serve on Committees other than the Youth Committee has been raised in a number of letters recently, and in considering the matter he felt that Baha'i young people under 21 should not be denied the privilege of Committee work. Though they cannot be voting members of Baha'i Communities (or exercise the electoral vote at all until they reach that age), and though they cannot, likewise, be elected to Assemblies, there is no reason why they should not serve the Cause on various Committees, as all Committees, National or Local, are subordinate to Assemblies, and their members are not elected but appointed, and appointed by Assemblies. We have many devoted and talented young believers who can be of great assistance to the Cause even though not yet legally of age."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, February 28, 1945)

575. Local Committees
"...regarding local Baha'i committees: These, though different in their functions enjoy equal rights, and are subject to responsibilities and obligations which, although varying in degree, are equally binding on them all.

"These local committees, being appointed by the Local Spiritual Assembly itself, are responsible to that body alone, and they can be dissolved, and their membership altered by it at any time. The local committees are the hands of the Spiritual Assembly that has appointed them ..., and as such are subject to its rulings."The Local Spiritual Assembly cannot delegate to any one of the local [175] committees the authority to exercise any control or supervision over any other committee or body which it has itself appointed. All local committees are directly and solely responsible to the Local Assembly which alone can exercise the power of supervision over them."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 16, 1939)

576. Structure of National and Regional Teaching Committees
"...Whether it be the body of their elected national representatives, or its chief auxiliary institution, the National Teaching Committee, or its subsidiary organs, the regional teaching committees, or the local Spiritual Assemblies and their respective teaching committees, they who labor for the spread of the Cause of Baha'u'llah should, through constant interchange of ideas, through letters, circulars, reports, bulletins and other means of communication with these established instruments designed for the propagation of the Faith, insure the smooth and speedy functioning of the teaching machinery of their Administrative Order. Confusion, delay, duplication of efforts, dissipation of energy will, thereby, be completely avoided, and the mighty flood of the grace of Baha'u'llah, flowing abundantly and without the least obstruction through these essential channels will so inundate the hearts and souls of men as to enable them to bring forth the harvest repeatedly predicted by 'Abdu'l-Baha."
(Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 52-53, 1984 ed.)

XI. CONSULTATION

[176] 577. No Welfare, Well-Being Can Be Attained Except Through Consultation
"...Say: No man can attain his true station except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation."
(Baha'u'llah: Consultation: A Compilation, p. 3, from a previously untranslated Tablet)

578. Consultation and Compassion
"...The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion...."
(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 126)

579. Consultation, Frank and Unfettered
"...Consultation, frank and unfettered, is the bedrock of this unique order. Authority is concentrated in the hands of the elected members of the National Assembly. Power and initiative are primarily vested in the entire body of the believers acting through their local representatives."
(From a postscript by the Guardian to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, November 18, 1933)

580. The Purpose of Consultation—Should the People of a Village Consult One Another...
"The purpose of consultation is to show that the views of several individuals are assuredly preferable to one man, even as the power of a number of men is of course greater than the power of one man. Thus consultation is acceptable in the presence of the Almighty, and hath been enjoined upon the believers, so that they may confer upon ordinary and personal matters, as well as on affairs which are general in nature and universal.

"For instance, when a man hath a project to accomplish, should he consult with some of his brethren, that which is agreeable will of course be investigated and unveiled to his eyes, and the truth will be disclosed. Likewise on a higher level, should the people of a village consult one another about their affairs, the right solution will certainly be revealed. In like manner, the members of each profession, such as in industry, should consult, and those in commerce should similarly consult on business affairs. In short, consultation is desirable and acceptable in all things and on all issues."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Consultation: A Compilation, quoted in the Guardian's letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia, February 15, 1922, p. 8, Wilmette 1980 ed.)

581. Each Bosom Must Be a Telegraph Station
"Each bosom must be a telegraph station—one terminus of the wire attached to the soul, the other, fixed in the Supreme Concourse—so that inspiration may [177] descend from the Kingdom of Abha and questions of reality be discussed. Then opinions will coincide with truth; day by day there will be progression and the meetings become more radiant and spiritual. The attainment is conditioned upon unity and agreement. The more perfect the love and agreement, the more the divine confirmations and assistance of the Blessed Perfection will descend... In discussions look toward the reality without being self-opinionated. Let no one assert and insist upon his own mere opinion; nay, rather, let each investigate the reality with the greatest love and fellowship. Consult upon every matter and when one presents the point of view of the reality itself, that shall be acceptable to all. Then will spiritual unity increase among you, individual illumination will be greater, happiness more abundant and you will draw nearer and nearer to the Kingdom of God."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 183)

582. Any Person Can Refer a Matter to the Assembly
"Regarding consultation: Any person can refer a matter to the Assembly for consultation whether the other party wishes to or not. In matters which affect

the Cause the Assembly should, if it deems it necessary, intervene even if both sides don't want it to, because the whole purpose of the Assemblies is to protect the Faith, the Communities and the individual Baha'is as well."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 17, 1944)

583. Every Member to Express Freely and Openly His Views
"But before the majority of the Assembly comes to a decision, it is not only the right but the sacred obligation of every member to express freely and openly his views, without being afraid of displeasing or alienating any of his fellow-members. In view of this important administrative principle of frank and open consultation, the Guardian would advise you to give up the method of asking other members to voice your opinion and suggestions. This indirect way of expressing your views to the Assembly not only creates an atmosphere of secrecy which is most alien to the spirit of the Cause, but would also lead to many misunderstandings and complications. The Assembly members must have the courage of their convictions, but must also express whole-hearted and unqualified obedience to the well-considered judgment and directions of the majority of their fellow-members."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 28, 1935)

584. Abstaining Does Not Arise in Baha'i Voting
"It is important to realize that the spirit of Baha'i consultation is very different from that current in the decision-making processes of non-Baha'i bodies.

"The ideal of Baha'i consultation is to arrive at a unanimous decision. When this is not possible a vote must be taken. In the words of the beloved Guardian: '...when they are called upon to arrive at a certain decision, they should, after dispassionate, anxious and cordial consultation, turn to God in prayer, and with earnestness and conviction and courage record their vote and abide by the voice of majority, which we are told by the Master to be the voice of truth, never to be challenged, and always to be whole-heartedly enforced.'

[178] "As soon as a decision is reached it becomes the decision of the whole Assembly, not merely of those members who happened to be among the majority.

"When it is proposed to put a matter to the vote, a member of the Assembly may feel that there are additional facts or views which must be sought before he can make up his mind and intelligently vote on the proposition. He should express this feeling to the Assembly, and it is for the Assembly to decide whether or not further consultation is needed before voting.

"Whenever it is decided to vote on a proposition all that is required is to ascertain how many of the members are in favour of it; if this is a majority of those present, the motion is carried; if it is a minority, the motion is defeated. Thus the whole question of 'abstaining' does not arise in Baha'i voting. A member who does not vote in favour of a proposition is, in effect, voting against it, even if at the moment he himself feels that he has been

unable to make up his mind on the matter."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, March 6, 1970: Consultation: A Compilation, p. 12, February 1978)

585. Majority Decisions—Instances When Assembly May Decide that All Nine Members Must Be Present
"Concerning a majority decision, ordinarily, the majority referred to is the majority of those present at a particular Assembly meeting. In any event, the Assembly can take no action unless at least a quorum of the members is present. There may be instances, however, in which the Assembly may specify that before voting on particularly important questions all nine members of the Assembly should be present and participate in the consultation and voting. This is within the discretion of the Assembly to decide."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, July 22, 1984)

586. No Dissenting Votes in the Cause
"There are no dissenting votes in the Cause. When the majority of an Assembly decides a matter the minority, we are told by the Master, should accept this. To insist on having one's dissenting vote recorded is not good, and achieves no constructive end. We must learn to look upon the laws of the Cause and administrative principles and not the shortcomings of the individual members of an Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 19, 1950)

587. Suspend Consultation when Enmity and Threats Occur
"The honoured members of the Spiritual Assembly should exert their efforts so that no differences may occur, and if such differences do occur, they should not reach the point of causing conflict, hatred and antagonism, which lead to threats. When you notice that a stage has been reached when enmity and threats are about to occur, you should immediately postpone discussion of the subject, until wranglings, disputations, and loud talk vanish, and a propitious time is at hand."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Consultation: A Compilation, from a previously untranslated Tablet)

[179] 588. Take No Important Step in Personal Affairs Without Consultation
"Settle all things, both great and small, by consultation. Without prior consultation, take no important step in your own personal affairs. Concern yourselves with one another. Help along one another's projects and plans. Grieve over one another. Let none in the whole country go in need. Befriend one another until ye become as a single body, one and all...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid.)

589. When a Believer Has a Problem Several Courses Open to Him
"Your letter of 14th February 1973 enquiring about the uses of Baha'i consultation has been received.

"This is, of course, a matter in which rigidity should be avoided.

"When a believer has a problem concerning which he must make a decision, he has several courses open to him. If it is a matter that affects the interests of the Faith he should consult with the appropriate Assembly or committee, but individuals have many problems which are purely personal and there is no obligation upon them to take such problems to the institutions of the Faith; indeed, when the needs of the teaching work are of such urgency it is better if the friends will not burden their Assemblies with personal problems that they can solve by themselves.

"A Baha'i who has a problem may wish to make his own decision upon it after prayer and after weighing all the aspects of it in his own mind; he may prefer to seek the counsel of individual friends or of professional counsellors such as his doctor or lawyer so that he can consider such advice when making his decision; or in a case where several people are involved, such as a family situation, he may want to gather together those who are affected so that they may arrive at a collective decision. There is also no objection whatever to a Baha'i asking a group of people to consult together on a problem facing him.

"It should be borne in mind that all consultation is aimed at arriving at a solution to a problem and is quite different from the sort of group baring of the soul that is popular in some circles these days and which borders on the kind of confession that is forbidden in the Faith. On the subject of confession the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer: 'We are forbidden to confess to any person, as do the Catholics to their priests, our sins and shortcomings, or to do so in public, as some religious sects do. However, if we spontaneously desire to acknowledge we have been wrong in something, or that we have some fault of character, and ask another person's forgiveness or pardon, we are quite free to do so. The Guardian wants to point out, however, that we are not obliged to do so. It rests entirely with the individual.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, March 19, 1973: Consultation: A Compilation, pp. 12-13)

590. Assembly Cannot Require a Member to Absent Himself from Consultation
"In your letter of 4 April you enquire further about the principles governing the presence of a member of the National Assembly when a matter concerning him or her personally is being discussed.

"The first principle to bear in mind is that every member of an Assembly has an absolute and incontrovertible right to be present at every meeting of that [180] body and to be fully informed of every matter coming before it.

"The second principle is that of detachment in consultation. The members of an Assembly must learn to express their views frankly, calmly, without passion or rancour. They must also learn to listen to the opinions of their fellow members without taking offence or belittling the views of another. Baha'i consultation is not an easy process. It requires love, kindliness, moral courage and humility. Thus no member should ever allow himself to be prevented from

expressing frankly his view because it may offend a fellow member; and, realizing this, no member should take offence at another member's statements.

"The third principle is that if a believer feels that he has been done an injustice by the Assembly, he should appeal the decision in the normal way."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, August 26, 1965)

591. A Member May Wish to Absent Himself While Own Situation Being Discussed
"We note that ... left the room while the National Assembly discussed ways and means of helping her. Naturally, if one wishes to absent himself while his own situation is being discussed by the National Assembly, there is no objection. The National Assembly cannot require a member to remove himself from the consultation, and he is fully entitled to remain."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, February 23, 1965)

"It should also be understood that a member may wish to absent himself from a meeting at which subjects in which he is personally involved are to be discussed. In such cases he may do so unless the Assembly requires him to be present."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, January 22, 1975)

592. Frank, Full, Unprejudiced Consultation Must Govern Work
"There cannot be in our Faith any room for the political maneuverings so common to the outside world. Frankness, full unprejudiced consultation, must govern all Assembly and committee work, and anything less than this is not only unworthy of a Baha'i, but a direct disobedience to the Master's instructions and a sign of lack of faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 29, 1948)

XII. THE COVENANT

A. Baha'i Covenant

[181] 593. The Baha'i Covenant
"As regards the meaning of the Baha'i Covenant: The Guardian considers the existence of two forms of Covenant both of which are explicitly mentioned in the literature of the Cause. First is the covenant that every Prophet makes with humanity or, more definitely, with His people that they will accept and follow the coming Manifestation Who will be the reappearance of His reality. The second form of covenant is such as the one Baha'u'llah made with His people that they should accept the Master. This is merely to establish and strengthen the succession of the series of Lights that appear after every Manifestation. Under the same category falls the covenant the Master made with the Baha'is that they should accept His administration after Him..."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual, October 21, 1921)

"The Most Great Covenant is different from the Everlasting Covenant."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 210, August 1948 p. 3)

594. Firmness in the Covenant—"Be He an Insignificant Ant..."
"...Rest ye assured that if a soul ariseth in the utmost perseverance and raiseth the Call of the Kingdom and resolutely promulgateth the Covenant, be he an insignificant ant he shall be enabled to drive away the formidable elephant from the arena, and if he be a feeble moth he shall cut to pieces the plumage of the rapacious vulture."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 209)

595. The Crimson Book
"...what Baha'u'llah did not elaborate but what He meant by the 'word' recorded in the Crimson Book was the power of the Covenant.
"The Crimson Book refers to the Book of His Covenant, and the reference above means the power for unity which the Covenant possesses and radiates. On page 238 of God Passes By you will find the cross-reference to the Crimson Book and the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 5, 1948: Baha'i News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

596. Regarding Covenant Entered into on Mount Paran
"As for the reference in The Hidden Words regarding the Covenant entered into on Mount Paran, this signifieth that in the sight of God the past, the present and the future are all one and the same—whereas, relative to man, the past is gone and forgotten, the present is fleeting, and the future is within the realm [182] of hope. And it is a basic principle of the Law of God that in every Prophetic Mission, He entereth into a Covenant with all believers—a Covenant that endureth until the end of that Mission, until the promised day when the Personage stipulated at the outset of the Mission is made manifest. Consider Moses, He Who conversed with God. Verily, upon Mount Sinai, Moses entered into a Covenant regarding the Messiah, with all those souls who would live in the day of the Messiah. And those souls, although they appeared many centuries after Moses, were nevertheless—so far as the Covenant, which is outside time, was concerned—present there with Moses. The Jews, however, were heedless of this and remembered it not, and thus they suffered a great and clear loss."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 207)

597. To Withstand Tests Believers Need to be Deepened in the Covenant
"...the believers need to be deepened in their knowledge and appreciation of the Covenants of both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. This is the stronghold of the faith of every Baha'i, and that which enables him to withstand every test and the attacks of the enemies outside the Faith, and the far more dangerous, insidious, lukewarm people inside the Faith who have no real attachment to the Covenant, and consequently uphold the intellectual aspect of the teachings while at the same time undermining the spiritual foundation upon which the whole Cause of God rests.
"He feels you and your dear family should do all you can to teach the believers

the Will and Testament and to strengthen their understanding of its important provisions; for all the authority of the administrative bodies, as well as of the Guardian himself, is mainly derived from this tremendous document."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 15, 1949)

598. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha—Needs a Century to Comprehend
"The contents of the Will of the Master is far too much for the present generation to comprehend. It needs at least a century of actual working before the treasures of wisdom hidden in it can be revealed. How can we at this stage and with our limited understanding denounce its spirit and purport."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 25, 1930)

599. The Will and Testament Safeguards the Unity of the Cause
"What he considers, however, to be now of the utmost importance is for the believers, each and all, to cling firmly to the provisions of our beloved Master's Will and Testament, as by this means alone the unity of the Cause, and its safe and speedy growth can be maintained, safeguarded and insured. Such an absolute and unwavering fidelity to 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will, and firm adherence to the principles of the Administrative Order is indeed incumbent upon every one of the friends, without any distinction whatever. Upon this basis alone the Faith can be safeguarded and flourish."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 18, 1938)

[183] 600. Speaking Against the Covenant
"My purpose is to explain to you that it is your duty to guard the religion of God so that none shall be able to assail it outwardly or inwardly. If you find harmful teachings are being set forth by some individual no matter who that individual be, even though he should be my own son, know verily that I am completely severed from him. If anyone speaks against the Covenant, even though he be my own son, know that I am opposed to him. Those who speak falsehoods, who covet worldly things and seek to accumulate the riches of this earth are not of me. But when you find a person living up to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, following the precepts of the Hidden Words, know that he belongs to Baha'u'llah and verily I proclaim that he is of me..."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 456-457)

B. Covenant-Breakers—Expulsion

601. Covenant-Breakers, Defined
"People who have withdrawn from the Cause because they no longer feel that they can support its Teachings and Institutions sincerely, are not Covenant-breakers—they are non-Baha'is and should just be treated as such. Only those who ally themselves actively with known enemies of the Faith who are Covenant-breakers, and who attack the Faith in the same spirit as these people, can be considered, themselves, to be Covenant-breakers. As you know, up to the present time, no one has been permitted to pronounce anybody a Covenant-breaker

but the Guardian* himself."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, March 30, 1957)

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*(Now the Universal House of Justice)

602. Covenant-Breaking is a Spiritual Disease
"...Covenant-breaking is truly a spiritual disease, and the whole view-point and attitude of a Covenant-breaker is so poisonous that the Master likened it to leprosy, and warned the friends to breathe the same air was dangerous. This should not be taken literally; He meant when you are close enough to breathe the same air you are close enough to contact their corrupting influence. Your sister should never imagine she, loyal and devoted, has become a 'carrier'."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 29, 1946)

603. Covenant-Breaking Like Contagious Consumption and Cancer
"...Thou hadst asked some questions; that why the blessed and spiritual souls, who are firm and steadfast, shun the company of degenerate persons. This is because, that just as the bodily diseases like consumption and cancer are contagious, likewise the spiritual diseases are also infectious. If a consumptive should associate with a thousand safe and healthy persons, the safety and health of these thousand persons would not affect the consumptive and would not cure him of his consumption. But when this consumptive associates with those [184] thousand souls, in a short time the disease of consumption will infect a number of those healthy persons. This is a clear and self-evident question."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablet to an individual believer, October 1921: Star of the West, Vol. XII, No. 14, p. 233)

604. Afflicted with Contagious Spiritual Disease
"Regarding Mr. ... question about the Covenant-breakers, Baha'u'llah and the Master in many places and very emphatically have told us to shun entirely all Covenant-breakers as they are afflicted with what we might try and define as a contagious spiritual disease; they have also told us, however, to pray for them. These souls are not lost forever. In the Aqdas, Baha'u'llah says that God will forgive Mirza Yahya if he repents. It follows, therefore, that God will forgive any soul if he repents. Most of them don't want to repent, unfortunately. If the leaders can be forgiven it goes without saying that their followers can also be forgiven.

"Also, it has nothing to do with unity in the Cause; if a man cuts a cancer out of his body to preserve his health and very life, no one would suggest that for the sake of unity it should be reintroduced into the otherwise healthy organism. On the contrary, what was once a part of him has so radically changed as to have become a poison."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 30, 1944: Principles of Baha'i Administration, pp. 22-23)

605. Association with Non-Baha'is Who Are in Association with Covenant-Breakers
"We have your letter of 14th March 1970 asking whether it is forbidden for the friends to associate with non-Baha'is who are in close association with Covenant-Breakers.

"There are no hard and fast rules about such things. Under some conditions the involvement of the non-Baha'i party may be superficial and harmless, in which case no action should be taken. For example, Baha'is have at times used non-Baha'is, such as lawyers, to contact Covenant-breakers in certain matters of business.

"If, however, the Covenant-breaker is using the non-Baha'i party to spread his ideas among the friends, the matter should be reported to the Continental Board of Counsellors, and whatever they decide in such cases in consultation with the National Spiritual Assemblies concerned should be unreservedly accepted by the friends."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, April 2, 1970)

606. Enemies of the Faith
"Now some of the mischief-makers, with many stratagems, are seeking leadership, and in order to reach this position they instill doubts among the friends that they may cause differences, and that these differences may result in their drawing a party to themselves. But the friends of God must be awake and must know that the scattering of these doubts hath as its motive personal desires and the achievement of leadership."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 214)

C. Believers Forbidden to Associate with Covenant-Breakers

[185] 607. Ex-Communication
"Ex-communication is a spiritual thing.... Only actual enemies of the Cause are ex-communicated. On the other hand, those who conspicuously disgrace the Faith or refuse to abide by its laws can be deprived, as a punishment, of their voting rights; this in itself is a severe action, and he therefore always urges all National Assemblies (who can take such action) to first warn and repeatedly warn the evil-doer before taking the step of depriving him of his voting rights. He feels your Assembly must act with the greatest wisdom in such matters, and only impose this sanction if a believer is seriously injuring the Faith in the eyes of the public through his conduct or flagrantly breaking the laws of God. If such a sanction were lightly used the friends would come to attach no importance to it, or to feel the N.S.A. used it every time they got angry with some individual's disobedience to them. We must always remember that, sad and often childish as it seems, some of those who make the worst nuisances of themselves to their National Bodies are often very loyal believers, who think they are protecting the true interests of their Faith by attacking N.S.A. decisions!"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, May 8, 1948)

608. No One Has the Right to See Covenant-Breakers Without Permission
"No one has any right to see the Covenant-Breakers without the permission of the N.S.A., and Mrs. ... in doing so should realize she is putting herself in contact with a dangerous, contagious, spiritual disease, as the Master pointed out over and over again! She is also disobeying express instructions of the Master and the Guardian by contacting Covenant-Breakers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to two individual believers, May 5, 1947)

609. Baha'is Cannot Associate with Those Who Have Left the Cause and Are Associating with Covenant-Breakers
"There is no excuse for believers continuing to associate with ... and those who, knowing everything, still insist on doing so, should be shunned by their fellow-Baha'is. The same applies to people who have left the Cause and associate with.... The point is that if the believers know and meet with people who are acquainted with Covenant-breakers there is no harm in this, for such individuals are not Baha'is and have nothing to do with the issues concerned. But those who have left the Cause, knowing all about such matters, and deliberately associate with Covenant-breakers, are well aware of what they do, and we must not associate with them at all. It is for the Local Assembly, guided by the N.S.A., to enforce such decisions and protect the Cause in its area of jurisdiction.

"The friends should, without too much dwelling on these negative things, be made to understand that some people are spiritually sick and that their disease is, alas, contagious. Some recover from it, as did Mr. ... whose heart could not rest till he returned to the fold; others do not. The Master and Baha'u'llah have taught us that associating with these souls is not likely to heal them at [186] all, but on the contrary exposes one to grave danger of contagion. The history of the Faith has proved this over and over again. The only way we can prove to such people that they are wrong is to censure their conduct; if we sympathise with them we only fortify their perversity and waywardness."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 23, 1945)

610. Baha'i May Remain at Non-Baha'i Meeting if Covenant-Breaker Appears
"With regard to avoiding association with declared Covenant-breakers. Shoghi Effendi says that this does not mean that if one or more of these attends a non-Baha'i meeting any Baha'is present should feel compelled to leave the meeting or to refuse to take part in the meeting, especially if that part has been prearranged. Also if in the course of some business transaction it should become necessary to negotiate with one of these people, in order to clear up the business, that is permissible, provided the association is confined to the matter of the business in hand. It is different if one of these people should come to Baha'i meeting. Then it would become necessary to ask him in a most tactful and dignified way to leave the meeting as Baha'is are forbidden to associate with him."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 16, 1925)

611. Personal Relations with Covenant-Breakers
"To read the writings of Covenant-breakers is not forbidden to the believers and does not constitute in itself an act of Covenant-breaking. Indeed, some of the Baha'is have the unpleasant duty to read such literature as part of their responsibilities for protecting the Cause of Baha'u'llah. However, the friends are warned in the strongest terms against reading such literature because Covenant-breaking is a spiritual poison and the calumnies and distortions of the truth which the Covenant-breakers give out are such that they can undermine the faith of the believer and plant the seeds of doubt unless he is forearmed with an unshakable belief in Baha'u'llah and His Covenant and a knowledge of the true facts.

"Personal relations with Covenant-breakers, however, such as personal contact or entering into correspondence with one is strictly forbidden. In this connection, however, it is important to remember two qualifications:

"First, the civil rights of Covenant-breakers must be scrupulously upheld. For example, if a Baha'i owes a debt to a person who breaks the Covenant he must be sure that it is repaid and that his obligations are met.

"Secondly, although the believers are required to avoid, if possible, all contact with Covenant-breakers it sometimes happens that contact on business matters cannot be avoided. For example, in one city the head of the rate collection department was a Covenant-breaker. In such situations the believers should restrict their contact with the Covenant-breaker to a purely formal business level and to an absolute minimum."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 29, 1974)

[187] 612. All Covenant-Breakers Regardless of Nature of Disobedience Must Be Treated in Exactly the Same Manner
"Reference is made to your letter of April 8th in which you ask: 'Does a disciplinary action for disobedience to the Guardian carry the same implications as Covenant-breaking of an ideological order?' There is no distinction between the two concepts. All Covenant-breakers, regardless of the nature of their disobedience to the Covenant should be treated in exactly the same manner."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 19, 1964)

613. Opposition Due to Ignorance or Lack of Proper Training is Not Covenant-Breaking
"Whenever we find a person who opposes some fundamental of our Faith, such as the Institution of the Guardianship, we must first be sure this is not due to ignorance or lack of proper training, before we take action. We must not suppose immediately that that person is necessarily tainted by the spirit of the Covenant-Breakers. If, however, this should prove to be the case, then

strong action must be taken by the Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 24, 1948)

614. Role of Auxiliary Board Member for Protection*
"The need to protect the Faith from the attacks of its enemies, both within and outside the Faith, is not generally appreciated by the friends, particularly in the West where such attacks have so far been intermittent. One of the vital functions of the Protection Boards is the deepening of the friends' knowledge of the Covenant and increasing their love and loyalty to it, and fostering the spirit of love and unity within the Baha'i community."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Venezuela, October 1, 1979)

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*(See also: No. 1112)

615. God's Mercy Exceeds His Justice
"...we believe that God's Mercy exceeds His Justice, and that through the repentance of a soul, the prayers and supplications of other souls, and the goodness of God, even a person who has passed away in great spiritual darkness can be forgiven, educated spiritually in the next world and progress.

"Owing to ...'s deliberate choice in leaving the Guardian to join the Covenant-breakers, and in his continuous association with them, it is evident he certainly has a spiritual disease."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 7, 1947)

616. To Be the Enemy of the Enemies of God is Good Characteristic
"To be the enemy of the enemies of God is a good characteristic. We are not against them personally, just as any intelligent man is not personally against a man who has a dangerous contagious disease. But he carefully isolates the sick individual so that the contagion will not spread. So we shun the spiritually sick, wishing for their cure, but keeping clear of them. You are right to take a firm stand regarding Orientals. One would think that world events would be opening the eyes of the Americans [188] to certain unreliable and mischievous characteristics of nationals of the Middle East."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 22, 1951)

617. It is Better to be Too Vigilant Than to be Too Lax
"The Guardian feels that your attitude of vigilance and intense loyalty is quite right. In such matters as the Covenant it is far better to be too vigilant than too lax. However, he does not feel Mr. ... is lacking in firmness and Faith. Many of the Baha'is, ... while loyal to the Cause and the Guardian, do not fully grasp the implications of the Master's Will and the full station of the Guardians of the Cause. They need to study more deeply the spiritual side of the Teachings and the Will itself. And this he has advised the ... to do."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 5, 1949)

618. Possibly No Group Have Softer Tongues Than the Covenant-Breakers
"...It is a pity that some of the Western friends, with remarkable naivete, do not grasp the fact that there is absolutely nothing keeping those who have broken the Covenant, whether Baha'u'llah's or the Master's, out of the Cause of God except their own inner spiritually sick condition. If they were sound, instead of diseased, and wanted to enter the service of our Faith, they would apply direct to the Guardian, and he would be able to adjudge of their sincerity and, if sincere, would welcome them into the ranks of the faithful as he did with Sydney Sprague. Unfortunately a man who is ill is not made well just by asserting there is nothing wrong with him! Facts, actual states, are what count. Probably no group of people in the world have softer tongues, or proclaim more loudly their innocence, than those who in their heart of hearts, and by their every act, are enemies of the Center of the Covenant. The Master well knew this, and that is why He said we must shun their company, but pray for them. If you put a leper in a room with healthy people, he cannot catch their health; on the contrary they are very likely to catch his horrible ailment."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 11, 1949)

619. National Assembly Should Consider Itself as Committee of Vigilance
"He feels that your Assembly should redouble its vigilance, in fact he feels that the National Assembly should consider itself, aside from its other duties, as a Committee of Vigilance to watch over the Faith and protect it from its internal enemies, and from the constantly carried on and insidious activities...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 21, 1957)

620. Baha'is Need More Than Anything Else in the World Deeper Understanding Covenants of Baha'u'llah and Master
"The Guardian has been considerably disturbed by the inharmony that has arisen in... He feels that what the ... Baha'is need—and must have—more than anything else in the world is a far deeper understanding of the Covenants of both Baha'u'llah and the Master. This is the rock-foundation without which no [189] sound super-structure can be built. Neither the administration, nor the general teaching work of the Cause ..., will progress, or be able to accomplish anything, unless the believers are truly firm, deep, spiritually convinced Baha'is. An intellectual grasp of the Teachings is purely superficial; with the first real test such believers are shaken from the bough! But once a Baha'i has the profound conviction of the authority from God, vested in the Prophet, passed on to the Master, and by Him, to the Guardians, and which flows out through the Assemblies and creates order based on obedience—once a Baha'i has this, nothing can shake him. He, therefore, urges you, and the other members of the ..., to devote as much time as you possibly can, to educating the believers

in the Covenant."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 11, 1949)

D. Expulsion and Reinstatement; Protection Responsibilities; Books Written by Enemies of the Faith

621. Expulsion of Covenant-Breakers
"The authority of expulsion and reinstatement will be exercised by the Hands of the Cause of God, subject in each instance to the approval of the Universal House of Justice."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Board of Counsellors, June 24, 1968)

622. Protection Specific Function of the Hands of the Cause
"...although the Hands of the Cause of God have the specific functions of protection and propagation, and are specialized for these functions, it is also the duty of the Universal House of Justice and the Spiritual Assemblies to protect and teach the Cause—indeed teaching is a sacred obligation placed upon every believer by Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 86)

623. Expulsion and Reinstatement
"Authority for the expulsion and reinstatement of Covenant-breakers remains with the Hands of the Cause of God. All such matters will be investigated locally by the relative Continental Board of Counsellors in consultation with any Hand or Hands who may be in the area. The Continental Board of Counsellors and the Hands concerned will then make their reports to the International Teaching Center where they will be considered. The decision whether or not to expel or reinstate will be made by the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land who will, as at present, submit their decision to the Universal House of Justice for approval."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, June 8, 1973)

624. Accomplishments to be Attained with the Covenant of the Everlasting Father
"The progress of the Cause of God gathers increasing momentum and we may [190] with confidence look forward to the day when this Community, in God's good time, shall have traversed the stages predicated for it by its Guardian, and shall have raised on this tormented planet the fair mansions of God's Own Kingdom wherein humanity may find surcease from its self-induced confusion and chaos and ruin, and the hatreds and violence of this time shall be transmuted into an abiding sense of world brotherhood and peace. All this shall be accomplished within the Covenant of the everlasting Father, the Covenant of Baha'u'llah."
(From the message of the Universal House of Justice to Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1973)

625. Course on Covenant-Breaking Should Be Included in Summer School Curriculum

"...and your Assembly cannot be too careful or vigilant in watching over the Community seeking out the sources of corruption and protecting the friends. He feels that a course on Covenant-breaking should be included in the Summer School curriculum, so that the friends may understand the nature of this evil, and how it has affected our Faith for one hundred years, and other Faiths in the past. The American Baha'is, aside from the older ones, do not seem to have any concept whatsoever of what a Covenant-breaker is, and the place to educate them in these matters is in the Summer Schools and on other occasions when they meet in large numbers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 21, 1957)

626. Should Not Accept Contributions from Those Who Lose Voting Rights: They Can Be Buried in Baha'i Cemetery, Receive Charity
"...As contributions to Baha'i funds are used to support the administration of the Faith, they should not be accepted from those who are deprived of their voting rights; but such believers, should not be prevented from being buried in a Baha'i cemetery or receiving charity—which we even give to non-Baha'is—if in dire need."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 8, 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India: Dawn of a New Day, p. 123)

627. Literature Written by Enemies of the Faith
"In reply to your letter of September 20, 1975, the Universal House of Justice instructs us to say that the friends should be advised to ignore these books and any similar ones which might be written by enemies of the Faith. There should certainly be no attempt made to destroy or remove such books from libraries. On the other hand there is no need at all for the friends to acquire them and, indeed, the best plan is to ignore them entirely."
(Referring to books by Hermann Zimmer and William Miller. Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, October 2, 1975)

628. Books by Unenlightened Enemies of the Cause
"It is better not to read books by Covenant-breakers because they are haters of the Light, sufferers from a spiritual leprosy, so to speak. But books by well [191] meaning yet unenlightened enemies of the Cause can be read so as to refute their charges."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 19, 1945: Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies, pp. 107-108)

629. Obedience to the Center of the Covenant
"...whosoever obeys the Center of the Covenant appointed by Baha'u'llah has obeyed Baha'u'llah, and whosoever disobeys Him has disobeyed Baha'u'llah...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 323)

XIII. DEATH

A. Wills

[192] 630. Every Baha'i is Encouraged to Make a Will and Testament
"In the 'Kitab-i-Aqdas' Baha'u'llah has stated: 'It is incumbent upon everyone to write his testament. It behooveth him to adorn its heading with the Most Great Name, to testify therein to the oneness of God as manifested in the Day-Spring of His revelation and to set forth such good deeds as he may wish to be realized, that these may stand as his testimony in the worlds of Revelation and of Creation and be as a treasure stored up with his Lord, the Protector, the Trusted One.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 4, 1982)

631. By Preparing a Legal Will, the Believer Can Dispose of His Estate as He Chooses, Within Limits of Law
"According to the Teachings of Baha'u'llah, the making of a will is essentially an obligation of the individual Baha'i. Each believer is free to dispose of his estate in whatever manner he chooses, within the limits imposed by civil law and after payment of burial expenses and other debts and obligations. There are several ways a believer can leave instructions regarding his burial; there is no objection for such instructions to be included in the will, if the law permits, and the believer so wishes."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, October 1, 1980)

632. Neither National nor Local Assembly Should Be Named Executor, if the Institution So Prefers
"Should a believer express a desire to make a bequest to a National or Local Spiritual Assembly, you may furnish information as to the correct name and address of such institution, and you are free to inform those who ask that neither the National or Local Spiritual Assemblies should be named as executor of a will."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands, January 14, 1971)

633. Baha'is Should Make Their Will Specifying the Desire for a Baha'i Funeral—Should Inform the Assembly and the Non-Baha'i Relatives
"The friends should be strongly advised to make wills specifying that they want their funerals to be conducted under the auspices of the Baha'i Faith or at least in conformity with its requirements and they should make this known both to the Local Spiritual Assembly and to their own relatives, while they are still alive. [193] In this way it is quite possible that agreements may be reached with non-Baha'i relatives before death takes place."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of France, August 18, 1972)

634. The Spiritual Assembly Must Carefully Consider Bequest of the Testator—Unreasonable Demands May Be Refused
"In the eyes of Baha'i law a will is sacred and thus, when a testator makes a bequest to a Spiritual Assembly and attaches thereto certain duties and conditions, the Assembly has the responsibility to fulfil them. However, if the

will imposes an unreasonable financial burden or a condition which could become an unreasonable financial burden, or if fulfilment of the conditions would be prejudicial to the best interests of the Faith, the Assembly may have no alternative to refusing the bequest, for if it accepts the bequest it is in honour bound to fulfil the conditions."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, January 10, 1978)

635. A Provision in the Will Contrary to Baha'i Law Should Be Declared Null and Void by the Assembly
"On the other hand, if the testator, being a Baha'i, makes a provision in his will that is contrary to Baha'i law (e.g., to bury his remains in a place more than one hour's journey from the place of death), that provision is null and void in Baha'i law and the Assembly must not fulfil it even if failure to do so would cause the bequest to be revoked in civil law. If failure to fulfil such a condition does not cancel the bequest in civil law, the Assembly is not required to refuse the bequest as it would have to do in the case of failure to fulfil a valid condition."
(Ibid.)

636. Baha'is Are Free to Formulate Provisions of Their Wills—We Are Not Permitted to Challenge Provisions of Another's Will
"Shoghi Effendi urged Local Spiritual Assemblies to admonish the friends not to overlook the importance of wills. In letters written on his behalf we find the following important points.

1. The friends are free to formulate the provisions of their wills as they please, and the Spiritual Assembly has the obligation to support and enforce these provisions unless, of course, they are in conflict with the principles of the Faith.

2. While it is appropriate and advisable for the friends to deposit a copy of their wills with the Spiritual Assembly, they should not be required to do so, but should be left free in this matter.

3. It is not necessary for the Spiritual Assembly to publish the text of a 'model' will. Each believer should compose his will according to his own wish.

"Other points to remember are that an individual is entirely free to leave his or her possessions as he wishes, provided all his debts are paid, and provided there are no legal limits on the freedom of individuals to bequeath their property. A person's will is sacred and therefore a Baha'i is not permitted to challenge the provisions of another's will. The civil law in relation to the making of wills is sometimes quite [194] complex. It is, therefore, highly advisable for an individual to consult a lawyer when he makes his will to ensure that his intention is not nullified by some possible breach of the requirements of the law in the drawing up or execution of the will. It is also highly desirable for a Baha'i to take steps during his lifetime to ensure that he will be given a funeral in accordance with Baha'i law and that his remains be not cremated. It may be possible to include such a provision in the will, or

some other procedure may need to be followed, depending upon the civil law."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a
National Spiritual Assembly, September 4, 1986)

B. Burial Laws

637. Forbidden to Carry Body More Than an Hour's Distance
"...It is forbidden you to transport the body of the deceased a greater
distance than one hour's journey from the city; rather should it be interred,
with radiance and serenity, in a nearby place."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K. 130, p. 66)

"QUESTION: Is the ordinance that the body of the deceased should be carried no
greater distance than one hour's journey applicable to transport by both land
and sea?

"ANSWER: This command applieth to distances by sea as well as by land, whether
it is an hour by steamship or by rail; the intention is the hour's time,
whatever the means of transport. The sooner the burial taketh place, however,
the more fitting and acceptable will it be."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, Questions and Answers, Q. 16, pp. 111-112)

638. Burial Law Binding on Believers in the West
"As to the law of burial, the Universal House of Justice suggests that you
confine your statement to the following parts of this law which are now binding
on the believers in the West:

(1) That the body must be buried, not cremated.

(2) That the Prayer for the Dead is to be recited for a believer of the age of
15 years or over. This, as you know, is the prayer which appears as number
CLXVII in Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah.

(3) That the body not be transported more than an hour's journey from the place
of death. The method of transport is not specified, but the journey must not
take longer than one hour."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the
National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, December 3, 1975)

639. Preparation for Burial—Embalming Not Permitted
"Regarding the questions which you ask, concerning Baha'i burials ..., etc. At
the present time, the Guardian is not stressing these matters, as their
establishment might divert attention to the supreme tasks we have before us.
However, the answers are as follows: Under the Baha'i teachings it seems clear
that the body is not to be embalmed. The burial should take place within an
hour's travel time from the place of death. The preparation for the body for
[195] burial is a careful washing, and placing in a shroud of white cloth, silk
preferably. There is nothing in the teachings with regard to turning the body
over to scientific institutions for scientific research, and therefore the
individual may do as he wishes, until such a time as the Universal House of
Justice may legislate on this matter, if they ever do. The practice in the

Orient, is to bury the person within 24 hours of the time of death; sometimes even sooner; although there is no provision in the teachings as to the time limit."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 2, 1955)

640. Baha'i Burial Law—Coffin Should Be of Crystal, Stone or Wood
"In brief, the Baha'i law for the burial of the dead states that it is forbidden to carry the body for more than one hour's journey from the place of death; that the body should be wrapped in a shroud of silk or cotton, and on its finger should be placed a ring bearing the inscription 'I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate'; and that the coffin should be of crystal, stone or hard fine wood. A specific Prayer for the Dead (see note 10) is ordained, to be said before interment. As affirmed by 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian, this law precludes cremation of the dead. The formal prayer and the ring are meant to be used for those who have attained the age of maturity, i.e., 15 years of age...."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, Notes, N. 149, p. 229)

641. Foetus to be Treated With Respect, No Matter How Young
"From a Baha'i point of view, the soul is present from conception and therefore the foetus, no matter how young, should not be treated with disrespect and carelessly discarded into an incinerator, if this can be prevented. The House of Justice knows of nothing in the Writings specifically referring to the burial of embryos, and, in previous instances, has left such details to the discretion of the parents. In one case it was reported to the World Centre that the parents had buried the foetus in a corner of their own garden and had said a few prayers for the progress of their child's soul."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 6, 1987)

642. Cremation is Contrary to Baha'i Law—Baha'i Relatives and the Spiritual Assembly Are Responsible
"As was explained to your Assembly in a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice on 10 January 1978, if a Baha'i makes a provision in his will that is contrary to Baha'i law, that provision is null and void in Baha'i law, and neither the Baha'i relatives nor the Spiritual Assembly are permitted to fulfil it. Thus, if a Baha'i states in his will that his remains are to be cremated he should, nevertheless, be buried in accordance with Baha'i law unless there is some element of the civil law would prevent such an occurrence—in which case the civil law would have to be followed, but the Assembly, as indicated above, could take no part in it...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, December 9, 1984)

[196] 643. In Case of Death at Sea, Maritime Law is Applicable—Burial on Land is Preferable
"The laws of burial as revealed by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas do not

refer to the occurrence of death at sea. Until such time as the Universal House of Justice legislates on these matters, the friends when faced with such incidents should be guided by whatever civil or maritime law is applicable under the circumstances. Should land be reached, however, obviously the body must be buried on land in the nearest suitable place."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual, quoted in a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, October 20, 1974)

"Baha'i laws of burial do not refer to burial at sea and the House of Justice has not yet legislated on the matter. However, it is preferable that Baha'i burial should take place on land whenever this is possible."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, December 23, 1985)

644. Believer Should Ensure that He Will Be Buried According to Baha'i Law
"The friends should certainly be informed of the Baha'i laws relating to burial and encouraged to do all they can to ensure that after their passing they are buried according to Baha'i law. It is not always possible to ensure this by stating it in a Will and Assemblies should consult upon the matter, taking legal advice if necessary, and make the best arrangements possible to enable the Baha'is in their care to be buried in the Baha'i way."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 31, 1972)

645. Enfolding the Body of the Deceased
"In the Bayan, the Bab specified that the body of the deceased should be wrapped in five sheets of silk or cotton. Baha'u'llah confirmed this provision and added the stipulation that for 'those whose means are limited a single sheet of either fabric will suffice'.
"When asked whether the 'five sheets' mentioned in the law referred to 'five full-length shrouds' or 'five cloths which were hitherto customarily used', Baha'u'llah responded that the intention is the 'use of five cloths.'
"Concerning the way in which the body should be wrapped, there is nothing in the Baha'i Writings to define how the wrapping of the body is to be done, either when 'five cloths' are used or only 'a single sheet'. At present, the Baha'is are free to use their judgement in the matter."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, Notes, N. 151, pp. 229-230)

646. Face of the Dead Should Be Turned Toward the Qiblih
"The dead should be buried with their face turned towards the Qiblih. There is also a congregational prayer to be recited. Besides this there is no other ceremony to be performed."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 6, 1935)

[197] 647. Hour's Journey May Be Calculated from City Limits
"We have been instructed by the Universal House of Justice to convey its reply to your enquiry of 20th June 1978 about the Baha'i burial law concerning the

one hour's travel from the place of death.

"The House of Justice advises that the place of death may be taken to be the city or town in which the believer passes away, and therefore the hour's journey may be calculated from the city limits to the place of burial. However, it should be borne in mind that the spirit of Baha'u'llah's law is to be buried near where one dies."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, July 9, 1978)

648. Graveyard More Than an Hour on Foot from a Village
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 10th August 1981 in which you ask for guidance in observing the law for the burial of the dead in cases where the graveyard is more than an hour's journey on foot from a village.

"If alternative means of transport are not available or practicable in cases such as you mention, another possibility is for the Baha'is of such a village to acquire a graveyard nearer to the village so that it can be reached within one hour from the village limits. If no such solution is feasible the believers will just have to do their best for the present to keep the journey as short as possible. In any case the House of Justice presumes that the journey is not likely to greatly exceed the one hour limit."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, September 21, 1981)

649. The Burial Stone
"The placing of the burial stone on the dead has no other significance than to emphasize our profound conviction that our souls come from our Creator and to Him they return, and in Him we believe and trust."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, July 29, 1942)

650. Bury the Dead in Silk
"The Bab has told us to bury the dead in silk (if possible) in coffins of crystal. Why? Because the body, though now dust, was once exalted by the immortal soul of man!"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 13, 1944)

651. Should Advise Baha'is in Military Service of Burial Laws
"You should also advise all individual Baha'is who are in service that they should take whatever measures are necessary to see that Baha'i laws regarding burial are observed. Such individuals should also notify their families or next of kin about these laws and of their wish to be buried according to Baha'i law."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 11, 1968)

C. Baha'i Cemeteries

[198] 652. Baha'is Are Permitted to Accept Land from the Government for Cemetery

"In response to your question about acquiring land from the Government for the specific purpose of establishing a Baha'i cemetery, the House of Justice advises that it is permissible for Baha'is to be granted by government authorities the ownership or use of land for this purpose."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, February 20, 1978)

653. Disinterment

"You have stated in your letter that it is a custom there for the body to be disinterred after three years and put in a smaller casket for reburial. Since this is apparently not required by law, it would be best for you to advise the friends to make the necessary arrangements with the cemetery authorities so that disinterment of the body does not take place."

(Ibid.)

654. At Present No Definite Regulations for Baha'i Cemeteries

"At the present time there are no definite regulations for preparing Baha'i cemeteries. However, in a Tablet of the Master's, He emphasizes the need for the cemetery to have a beautiful outward appearance and states that the graves should not be joined together but that each one should have a flower bed around its four sides. He also indicates that it would be pleasing if a pool were located in the center of the cemetery and beautiful trees were planted around it as well as around the cemetery itself."

(Ibid.)

655. Should Not Refuse to Bury Baha'i Who Lost Voting Rights—Assembly May Permit Burial of Non-Baha'is

"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 15th June 1984 asking whether it is permissible to bury non-Baha'is in a Baha'i cemetery, and has asked us to convey the following to you.

"It would not be right to refuse to bury in a Baha'i cemetery one who has lost his voting rights. Furthermore, it is quite possible that non-Baha'i relatives of believers or others may be permitted to be buried in a Baha'i cemetery. However, a deciding factor could be whether the area of land chosen for use as a Baha'i cemetery would be large enough to permit burial of non-Baha'is. It is suggested that no hard and fast rules be adopted, but that each case be considered on its own merits."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, July 12, 1984)

656. The Most Great Name or Ringstone Symbol Not Appropriate on Gravestones

"Normally the building of structures or headstones on graves should be left to the family of the deceased, and all expenses should be covered by them.

[199] "The use of the Most Great Name or the ringstone symbol on gravestones is not appropriate. In a letter dated September 17, 1971 to an individual believer we wrote the following:

'Concerning the questions you ask in your postscript, there is no specific ruling regarding the type of headstone that may be used at a grave site. However, regarding the inscription on a headstone, the beloved Guardian asked the believers not to use any form of the Greatest Name but a nine-pointed star may be used. Or, you may wish to have an appropriate text from the Sacred Writings inscribed on the headstone. The position of the body in the grave should be with the feet pointing toward the Qiblih, which is Bahji in Akka'."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda, May 4, 1972)

D. Funeral Services

657. Official Baha'i Funeral Service for Believers Only
"An official Baha'i funeral service should only be given for a believer, but there is no objection to the reading of Baha'i prayers, or indeed to a Baha'i conducting the funeral service of a non-Baha'i, if this has been requested."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 20, 1946)

658. Utmost Simplicity and Flexibility Should Be Observed...
"Regarding the Baha'i funeral service: It is extremely simple, as it consists only of a congregational prayer to be read before burial.... Your National Spiritual Assembly should take great care lest any uniform procedure or ritual in this matter be adopted or imposed upon the friends. The danger in this, as in some other cases regarding Baha'i worship, is that a definite system or rigid rituals and practices be developed among the believers. The utmost simplicity and flexibility should be observed...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 10, 1936)

659. No Objection to Baha'is Attending Non-Baha'i Funeral of Baha'is
"There is no objection to Baha'is attending the non-Baha'i funeral service of a Baha'i whose non-Baha'i relatives have prevented the Baha'i funeral from taking place. The Baha'is should, however, endeavour to offer Baha'i prayers for the progress of the soul of their departed friend, if circumstances permit. If they cannot be offered on the occasion of the funeral they should be offered at another time."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, May 4, 1966)

660. Obligatory Prayer for the Dead—Permissible to Change Gender
"We have your letter of 23 December 1966 asking whether it is permissible to change the gender of the pronoun in Baha'i prayers for the dead when the deceased person is a woman.
"The prayer for the dead which is obligatory appears on page 260 of 'Prayers and Meditations'. This prayer allows for a change in gender.

[200] "Other prayers for the dead are optional, but if used they are to be used as revealed."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the United States, January 17, 1967)

661. Prayer for the Dead to be Recited by One Believer
"The Prayer for the Dead is the only Baha'i obligatory prayer which is to be recited in congregation; it is to be recited by one believer while all present stand in silence. Baha'u'llah has clarified that the Prayer for the Dead is required only when the deceased is an adult, that the recital should precede the interment of the deceased, and that there is no requirement to face the Qiblih when saying this prayer."
(Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, Notes, N. 10)

662. Non-Baha'is Can Be Present When Long Prayer for the Dead is Read
"There is no objection whatsoever to non-Baha'is being present when the long prayer for the dead is read, as long as they respect our manner of reading it by rising and standing as the Baha'is do on this occasion. Nor, indeed, is there any objection to non-Baha'is being present during the reading of any Baha'i prayer for the departed."
(From letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 20, 1946)

663. Prayer for the Dead—Special Conditions
"The Prayer for the Dead should be recited at the funeral if the deceased is 15 years old or more. If there is no one at the funeral able to read, it is sufficient to say only that part of the Prayer which requires the repetition nineteen times of each of six short verses.

"The body must be placed in the grave in such a position that the feet point towards Akka (the Qiblih)."
(From a statement prepared by a National Spiritual Assembly in Africa and approved by the Universal House of Justice on June 14, 1982)

664. Any Prayer May Be Said for a Woman—Text Must Not Change
"In connection with the question you asked about the prayer for the dead: any of the prayers which were originally revealed for a man or a woman can be said for the opposite sex, but the text must not be changed."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 10, 1946)

665. Memorial Gatherings
"As you know, the offering of prayers on behalf of the departed, whether Baha'i or non-Baha'i, is encouraged in our teachings, as such prayers are conducive to the progress of their souls in the world beyond. As to the holding of memorial gatherings at regular intervals, there is nothing in the teachings specifically prohibiting such gatherings, but we find general guidelines in the letters of the beloved Guardian, in which he warns the believers against adhering to the rites and customs of past systems and of former religions, and instead urges them to show forth the Baha'i way of life and demonstrate the independent character of the teachings of the Faith.

"Advertising memorial gatherings by the family is entirely a personal matter

for the family to decide. It is left to the discretion of your National Spiritual Assembly [201] whether Local Spiritual Assemblies may permit the use of their Baha'i Centres for such gatherings."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ghana, May 24, 1974)

E. Cremation

666. Cremation
"He feels that, in view of what 'Abdu'l-Baha has said against cremation, the believers should be strongly urged, as an act of faith, to make provisions against their remains being cremated. Baha'u'llah has laid down as a law, in the Aqdas, the manner of Baha'i burial, and it is so beautiful, befitting and dignified, that no believer should deprive himself of it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 7, 1947)

667. Body Can Be Left to Medical Science, Remains Not to be Cremated
"There is nothing in the teachings against leaving our bodies to medical science. The only thing we should stipulate is that we do not wish to be cremated, as it is against our Baha'i laws.

"As many people make arrangements to leave their bodies to medical science for investigation, he suggests that you inquire, either through some lawyer friend or through some hospital, how you could do this, and then make the necessary provision in your Will, stipulating that you wish your body to be of service to mankind in death, and that, being a Baha'i, you request that your remains not be cremated and not be taken more than an hour's journey from the place of your death.
"The spirit has no more connection with the body after it departs, but as the body was once the temple of the spirit, we Baha'is are taught that it must be treated with respect."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 22, 1957)

668. The Inner Temple Beholdeth Its Physical Frame
"As this physical frame is the throne of the inner temple, whatever occurs to the former is felt by the latter. In reality that which takes delight in joy or is saddened by pain is the inner temple of the body, not the body itself. Since this physical body is the throne whereon the inner temple is established, God hath ordained that the body be preserved to the extent possible, so that nothing that causeth repugnance may be experienced. The inner temple beholdeth its physical frame, which is its throne. Thus, if the latter is accorded respect, it is as if the former is the recipient. The converse is likewise true.

"Therefore, it hath been ordained that the dead body should be treated with the utmost honour and respect."
(The Bab: Selections from the Writings of the Bab, p. 95)

669. Body Formed Gradually, Must Decompose Gradually
"Be assured that your letter was not a bother to us. Indeed, we were happy to learn that in the autumn years of your physical life your soul was illumined by the eternal light shed upon the world by Baha'u'llah.

[202] "Concerning your question about cremation, the Baha'i law stipulates burial. The instructions of Baha'u'llah contained in His Most Holy Book make this law clear. Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer in 1955, comments that 'Abdu'l-Baha '...also explained that burial is natural and should be followed.' The explanation of the Master referred to by Shoghi Effendi is found in Tablets revealed by Him. One of those was published in Star of the West, Volume XI, No. 19, page 317, from which we quote:

'Thy letter has been received. Due to scarcity of time, I write the answer briefly: The body of man, which has been formed gradually, must similarly be decomposed gradually. This is according to the real and natural order and Divine Law. If it had been better for it to be burned after death, in its very creation it would have been so planned that the body would automatically become ignited after death, be consumed and turned into ashes. But the divine order formulated by the heavenly ordinance is that after death, this body shall be transferred from one stage to another different from the preceding one, so that according to the relations which exist in the world, it may gradually combine and mix other elements, thus going through stages until it arrives in the vegetable kingdom, there turning into plants and flowers, developing into trees of the highest paradise, becoming perfumed and attaining the beauty of color.'

'Cremation suppresses it speedily from attainment to these transformations, the elements becoming so quickly decomposed that transformation to these various stages is checked.'

"When we realize that our physical bodies are composed of elements placed in the earth by their Creator, and which through the orderly processes of His Law are continually being used in the formation of beings, we can better understand the necessity for our physical bodies to be subjected to the gradual process of decomposition. As at the time of death, the real and eternal self of man, his soul, abandons its physical garment to soar in the realms of God, we may compare the body to a vehicle which has been used for the journey through earthly life and no longer needed once the destination has been reached."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 6, 1971)

670. Spiritual Assembly Cannot Arrange for the Cremation of the Remains of a Baha'i
"Obviously a Spiritual Assembly cannot itself arrange for the cremation of the remains of a Baha'i even if it was that person's wish that his body be disposed of in this way. Baha'i relatives, likewise, are under the obligation of obeying the Baha'i law and must not agree to the cremation of a Baha'i. Where non-Baha'i relatives of the deceased Baha'i have charge of the body and are

proposing to cremate the remains, the responsible Spiritual Assembly should do all it can to explain the Baha'i attitude to the relatives in an effort to prevent the cremation. If these efforts fail, the Assembly can have nothing officially to do with the cremation of the body; the believers, however, are free to do as they wish about attending the funeral and the cremation and they may certainly offer a prayer for the progress of the soul of the deceased. The Assembly could, if it seemed appropriate, arrange a meeting at a time other than the funeral, at which the Prayer for the Dead could be said on behalf of the deceased."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, December 9, 1984)

[203] 671. Word "Baha'i" in Centre of Nine-Pointed Star Can Be Used
"As regards your question: There is no reason why the word 'Baha'i' should not appear in the centre of a nine-pointed star on the tombstone of dear Elsa Vento, but the ring-stone emblem should not be used, nor the Greatest Name."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 30, 1955)

672. Can Use Quotations from the Teachings on Tombstones
"In regard to your question regarding the use of the Greatest Name on tombstones of Baha'is or non-Baha'is, the Guardian considers this too sacred to be placed in such a position in general use, and the friends should not use it on their tombstones. They can use quotations from the Teachings, if they wish to, but not the Greatest Name. Naturally, if anyone has already used it, it does not matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 20, 1954)

673. Possible that Non-Baha'i Relatives Can Be Buried in Baha'i Cemetery
"...it is quite possible that non-Baha'i relatives of believers or others may be permitted to be buried in a Baha'i cemetery."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, December 3, 1975)

F. Suicide*

674. Suicide Strongly Condemned in the Teachings
"Regarding the 'In Memoriam' section of 'Baha'i News': Although suicide is so strongly condemned in the teachings, it does not mean that a person has ceased to be a Baha'i because he killed himself; he should, therefore, be mentioned, the same as other believers, in this section."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 29, 1945)

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*(See also: No. 1200)

675. The Light Manifested by Baha'u'llah Can Ease Despair of Young People
"It is too bad that young and promising men, who if they remain living can render great services to humanity, should take away their life at a moment of

despair.

"The world, especially in these days, is full of woes and sufferings. We should be brave and have a stout heart. Trials and tribulations should arouse in us added vigour and greater determination and not dampen our zeal and kill our spirit."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 12, 1933)

676. Baha'is Are Free to Pray for the Dead
"A Baha'i is certainly free to pray for those who have passed on regardless of the cause of their death, using the words of any of the prayers of his choice which have been revealed through the bounty of God. The manner in which the Supreme Being, in His justice as well as in His mercy, will deal with every individual soul is a mystery unknown to us on this earthly plane."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 21, 1978)

[204] 677. One Should Put All Thought of Suicide and Death Out of Mind
"In reply to your letter of 1st May 1979, the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to share with you the following excerpt from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary to a believer who asked about suicide.

"'Suicide is forbidden in the Cause. God Who is the Author of all life can alone take it away, and dispose of it in the way He deems best. Whoever commits suicide endangers his soul, and will suffer spiritually as a result in the other Worlds Beyond.'

"The House of Justice admonishes you to put all thought of suicide and death out of your mind and concentrate on prayer and effort to serve the Cause of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 7, 1979)

678. Consolation for the Bereaved Parent
"...He was very sad to hear of your sadness and difficulties. Should that be only due to the passing of your son, it is not fully justified, at least in the light of the teachings of Baha'u'llah. He explicitly states that, had we the vision to see the other world, and the mind to conceive its glory, we would not desire to remain here even for a moment. Man is destined by God to undergo a spiritual development that extends throughout eternity. His life upon this earth is only the first stage of that development. When we outgrow our physical form, and are considered by God ready to reap the fruit of our spiritual development, we proceed to the other world. We term it death only because of our shortsightedness. A more proper term would be 'a more abundant life'. It is a forward step we have taken. In the light of the teachings, therefore, the proper attitude for you, is to pray that God may encompass your son with His infinite blessings, that He may enhance his development and give him that felicity which awaits every ... soul.

"...the world is full of suffering. Baha'u'llah tells us that the deeper are the furrows it digs into our very being, the greater will be the fruit of our life and the more enhanced our spiritual development. All the Saints that shine in the history of society had to pass through tribulations. Their form was various but their effect has always been the same, namely, the purification of our heart and soul for receiving the light of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 9, 1931)

G. Life after Death; the Soul

679. Gifts and Good Deeds in Memory of Those Passed On
"The Master has told us that gifts and good deeds done in memory of those who have passed on, are most helpful to the development of their souls in the realms beyond...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 10, 1952)

680. Man is Destined by God to Develop Spiritually Through Eternity
"With regard to the soul of man. According to the Baha'i Teachings the human soul starts with the formation of the human embryo, and continues to develop and pass through endless stages of existence after its separation from the body. Its progress is thus infinite."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 31, 1937)

[205] 681. Regarding Non-Baha'i Traditions
"In regard to your question concerning the truth of the statement that it takes a soul three days to make complete severance from the body, the Guardian wishes me to inform you that there is no specific reference to this point in the Sacred Writings of the Cause. But as to the advisability of praying for the departed for forty days after their passing this is entirely an originally Moslem practice, and constitutes in no way an obligation on any believer. To pray for the dead is very beneficial and helpful and is always a source of comfort and satisfaction. But there is no reason why it should be confined to a definite period of forty days."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 9, 1934)

682. The Soul Will Continue to Ascend Through Many Worlds
"Concerning the future life, what Baha'u'llah says is that the soul will continue to ascend through many worlds. What those worlds are and what their nature is we cannot know. The same way that the child in the matrix cannot know this world so we cannot know what the other world is going to be."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 18, 1932)

683. We Can Help Every Soul Attain High Station
"Concerning your question whether a soul can receive knowledge of the Truth in the world beyond. Such a knowledge is surely possible, and is but a sign of the

loving mercy of the Almighty. We can, through our prayers, help every soul to gradually attain this high station, even if it has failed to reach it in this world. The progress of the soul does not come to an end with death. It rather starts along a new line. Baha'u'llah teaches that great and far-reaching possibilities await the soul in the other world. Spiritual progress in that realm is infinite, and no man, while on this earth, can visualize its full power and extent."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 22, 1935)

684. Intercession in the Other World
"The wealth of the other world is nearness to God. Consequently, it is certain that those who are near the Divine Court are allowed to intercede, and this intercession is approved by God. But intercession in the other world is not like intercession in this world. It is another thing, another reality, which cannot be expressed in words."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, 1984 ed., p. 231)

685. Bequests to the Poor
"If a wealthy man at the time of his death bequeaths a gift to the poor and miserable, and gives a part of his wealth to be spent for them, perhaps this action may be the cause of his pardon and forgiveness, and of his progress in the divine Kingdom.

"Also a father and mother endure the greatest troubles and hardships for their children; and often when the children have reached the age of maturity, the parents pass on to the other world. Rarely does it happen that a father and mother in this world see the reward of the care and trouble they have undergone for their children. Therefore, children, in return for this care and trouble, must show forth charity and beneficence, and must implore pardon and forgiveness for their parents. So you ought, in return for the love and kindness shown you by your father, to give to the poor [206] for his sake, with greatest submission and humility implore pardon and remission of sins, and ask for the supreme mercy."
(Ibid., pp. 231-232)

686. The Nature of the Soul After Death Can Never Be Described
"...The honor with which the Hand of Mercy will invest the soul is such as no tongue can adequately reveal, nor any other earthly agency describe. Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise. The Maids of Heaven, inmates of the loftiest mansions, will circle around it, and the Prophets of God and His chosen ones will seek its companionship. With them that soul will freely converse, and will recount unto them that which it hath been made to endure in the path of God, the Lord of all worlds. If any man be told that which hath been ordained for such a soul in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, his whole being will instantly blaze out in his great longing to attain that most

exalted, that sanctified and resplendent station.... The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of men...."
(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, 1983 ed., p. 156)

687. There Are No Earth-Bound Souls
"There are no earth-bound souls. When the souls that are not good die they go entirely away from this earth and so cannot influence anyone. They are spiritually dead. Their thoughts can have influence only when they are alive on the earth... But the good souls are given eternal life and sometimes God permits their thoughts to reach the earth to help the people."
(Questions answered by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Akka: Daily Lessons, Received at Akka, 1979 ed., pp. 35-36)

688. There is No Power Exercised Over People by Evil Souls that Have Passed Away
"There is no power exercised over the people by those evil souls that have passed away. Good is stronger than evil and even when alive they had very little power. How much less have they after they are dead, and besides they are nowhere near this planet."
(Ibid., pp. 43-44)

689. Soul Mates
"There is no teaching in the Baha'i Faith that 'soul mates' exist. What is meant is that marriage should lead to a profound friendship of spirit, which will endure in the next world, where there is no sex, and no giving and taking in marriage; just the way we should establish with our parents, our children, our brothers and sisters and friends a deep spiritual bond which will be ever-lasting, and not merely physical bonds of human relationship."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 4, 1954)

[207] 690. Influence of Holy and Spiritual Souls
"As to the question that the holy and spiritual souls influence, help and guide the creatures after they have cast off this elemental mould—this is an established truth of the Baha'is..."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 543)

691. The Soul Acts
"The soul acts in the physical world with the help of the body. When it is detached from the body, it acts without an intermediary...

"...The body is the horse, the soul is the rider, and sometimes the rider moves without a mount. But people who do not reflect say that when the soul has left the body it can no longer act. Spirit has no body. Reflect on this subject."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Divine Philosophy, 1928 ed., p. 127)

692. The Other World is Within This World
"...The answer to the first question: The souls of the children of the Kingdom, after their separation from the body, ascend unto the realm of everlasting

life. But if ye ask as to the place, know ye that the world of existence is a single world, although its stations are various and distinct. For example, the mineral life occupieth its own plane, but a mineral entity is without any awareness at all of the vegetable kingdom,...

"As to the second question: The tests and trials of God take place in this world, not in the world of the Kingdom.
"The answer to the third question is this, that in the other world the human reality doth not assume a physical form, rather doth it take on a heavenly form, made up of elements of that heavenly realm.

"And the answer to the fourth question: The centre of the Sun of Truth is in the supernal world—the Kingdom of God. Those souls who are pure and unsullied, upon the dissolution of their elemental frames, hasten away to the world of God, and that world is within this world. The people of this world, however, are unaware of that world, and are even as the mineral and the vegetable that know nothing of the world of the animal and the world of man."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 194-95)

693. The Soul of a Murderer
"As to the question regarding the soul of a murderer, and what his punishment would be. The answer given was that the murderer must expiate his crime; that is, if they put the murderer to death, his death is his atonement for his crime, and following the death, God in His justice will impose no second penalty upon him, for Divine Justice would not allow this."
(Ibid., p. 179)

694. Union in the Next World
"...the possibility of securing union with his beloved in the next world is one which the Baha'i Teachings are quite clear about. According to Baha'u'llah the soul retains its individuality and consciousness after death, and is able to commune with other souls. This communion, however, is purely spiritual in character, and is conditioned upon the disinterested and selfless love of the individuals for each other."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, March 10, 1936: Dawn of a New Day, p. 58)

208] 695. Death Can Lose Its Sting
"In His Tablets Baha'u'llah says that were we able to comprehend the facilities that await us in the world to come, death would lose its sting; nay rather we would welcome it as a gate-way to a realm immeasurably higher and nobler than this home of suffering we call our earth. You should therefore think of their blessings and comfort yourself for your momentary separation. In time all of us will join our departed ones and share their joys."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 13, 1932)

696. With Vision to See Blessings of Other World, No One Would Care to Remain in This World
"Baha'u'llah says that were we to have the proper vision to see the blessings

of the other world we would not bear to endure one more hour of existence upon the earth. The reason why we are deprived of that vision is because otherwise no one would care to remain and the whole fabric of society will be destroyed.

"Shoghi Effendi wishes you therefore to think of her blessings and rejoice in her happiness. Should we have true faith in the words of the prophets we would not fear death nor feel despondent over the passing of our loved ones."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 22, 1932)

697. Good Souls Enter a State of Being Far Nobler and More Beautiful...
"...Such earnest souls, when they pass out of this life, enter a state of being far nobler and more beautiful than this one. We fear it only because it is unknown to us and we have little faith in the words of the Prophets who bring a true message of certainty from that realm of the spirit. We should face death with joy especially if our life upon this plane of existence has been full of good deeds."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 31, 1932)

698. The Nature of the Soul
"...First concerning the human soul and its true nature. According to the Baha'i conception, the soul of man, or in other words his inner spiritual self or reality, is not dualistic. There is no such thing, as the Zoroastrians believe, as a double reality in man, a definite higher self and a lower self. These two tendencies for good or evil are but manifestations of a single reality or self. The latter is capable of development in either way. All depends fundamentally on the training or education which man receives. Human nature is made up of possibilities both for good and evil. True religion can enable it to soar in the highest realm of the spirit, while its absence can, as we already witness around us, cause it to fall to the lowest depths of degradation and misery."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Alfred Lunt, May 25, 1936)

699. All Souls Progress Spiritually in the Next World—Relatives of the Believers Will at Least Partially Attain Kingdom
"With reference to Baha'u'llah's Tablet in which He says that all the relatives of believers will reach the Kingdom in the other world: By this is meant only a partial attainment. They can, however, progress indefinitely, as spiritual progress in the other world is limitless, and is not confined to those who have attained unto the knowledge and recognition of the Cause while still in this world."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 30, 1940)

[209] 700. Certain Things Remain a Mystery to Us in Our Present Stage of Development
"Regarding your question concerning a deep and profound study of the teachings:

Of course the Baha'is can and should meditate upon the significances of the writings, and endeavour to grasp their meaning to the uttermost. There can be no possible objection to this. However certain things are, by their very nature, a mystery to us, at least in our present stage of development. One of these is what the next world, the purely spiritual world, is like."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 19, 1942)

701. The Prophets Never Revealed What Happens to Us After Death—Belief in God and His Prophet Elicits Spiritual Growth
"You ask an explanation of what happens to us after we leave this world: This is a question which none of the Prophets have ever answered in detail, for the very simple reason that you cannot convey to a person's mind something entirely different from everything they have ever experienced. 'Abdu'l-Baha gave the wonderful example of the relation of this life to the next life being like the child in the womb; it develops eyes, ears, hands, feet, a tongue, and yet it has nothing to see or hear, it cannot walk or grasp things or speak; all these faculties it is developing for this world. If you tried to explain to an embryo what this world is like it could never understand—but it understands when it is born, and its faculties can be used. So we cannot picture our state in the next world. All we know is that our consciousness, our personality, endures in some new state, and that that world is as much better than this one as this one is better than the dark womb of our mother was....

"Our past is not the thing that matters so much in this world as what we intend to do with our future. The inestimable value of religion is that when a man is vitally connected with it, through a real and living belief in it and in the Prophet Who brought it, he receives a strength greater than his own which helps him to develop his good characteristics and overcome his bad ones. The whole purpose of religion is to change not only our thoughts but our acts; when we believe in God and His Prophet and His Teachings, we find we are growing, even though we perhaps thought ourselves incapable of growth and change!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 3, 1943)

702. Our Speculations on the Nature of Life After Death Have Little Validity
"The Guardian feels that, while there is no harm in speculation on these abstract matters, one should not attach too much importance to them. Science itself is far from having resolved the question of the nature of matter, and we cannot, in this physical world, grasp the spiritual one more than in a very fragmentary and inadequate manner."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 19, 1942)

703. God Can Be Known Only Through His Prophets—Heaven and Hell Are Conditions Within Our Own Beings
"We will have experience of God's spirit through His Prophets in the next world, but God is too great for us to know without this Intermediary. The Prophets know God, but how is more than our human minds can grasp. We believe

we may attain [210] in the next world to seeing the Prophets. There is certainly a future life. Heaven and hell are conditions within our own beings."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 14, 1947)

704. The Journey of Spiritual Progress is Endless
"As we almost never attain any spiritual goal without seeing the next goal we must attain still beyond our reach, he urges you, who have come so far already on the path of spirituality, not to fret about the distance you still have to cover! It is an indefinite journey, and, no doubt in the next world the soul is privileged to draw closer to God than is possible when bound on this physical plane."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 3, 1955)

705. How to "Get to Heaven"—Is Dependent on Two Things
"To 'get to heaven' as you say is dependent on two things—faith in the Manifestation of God in His Day, in other words in this age in Baha'u'llah; and good deeds, in other words living to the best of our ability a noble life and doing unto others as we would be done by. But we must always remember that our existence and everything we have or ever will have is dependent upon the mercy of God and His bounty, and therefore He can accept into His heaven, which is really nearness to Him, even the lowliest if He pleases. We always have the hope of receiving His mercy if we reach out for it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 12, 1957)

XIV. EDUCATION*

A. Academic and Spiritual

[211] 706. Education of Man
"Man is even as steel, the essence of which is hidden: through admonition and explanation, good counsel and education, that essence will be brought to light. If, however, he be allowed to remain in his original condition, the corrosion of lusts and appetites will effectively destroy him."
(Baha'u'llah: Baha'i Education, A Compilation, p. 5)

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*(See also: XLVI. Social and Economic Development, LII. Youth)

707. Education of the Physical and Intellectual, Spiritual and Ethical Aspects of Man
"...Baha'u'llah considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the program of the Baha'i youth all over the world."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1931)

708. Man Said to be Greatest Representative of God
"Man is said to be the greatest representative of God, and he is the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of beings exist in him. If he comes under the shadow of the True Educator and is rightly trained, he becomes the essence of essences, the light of lights, the spirit of spirits; he becomes the centre of the divine appearances, the source of spiritual qualities, the rising-place of heavenly lights, and the receptacle of divine inspirations. If he is deprived of this education he becomes the manifestation of satanic qualities, the sum of animal vices, and the source of all dark conditions."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i World Faith, 1971 ed., p. 332)

709. Modern Education Lacking in Ability to Produce a Mature Mind
"People today indeed do tend to be very superficial in their thinking, and it would seem as if the educational systems in use are sorely lacking in ability to produce a mature mind in a person who has reached supposedly adult life! All the outside influences that surround the individual seem to have an intensely distracting effect, and it is a hard job to get the average person to do any deep thinking or even a little meditation on the problems facing him and the world at large. Over and over again Baha'u'llah cried out against the heedlessness of humanity, and warns of the fate such an attitude must lead to. Did we not know what God plans [212] to do, and will do, with the world in the future, we should certainly be as hopeless as many of the best thinkers of our generation have become."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 22, 1948)

710. Each Should Be Educated According to His Needs and Deserts
"Among other teachings and principles Baha'u'llah counsels the education of all members of society. No individual should be denied or deprived of intellectual training although each should receive according to capacity. None must be left in the grades of ignorance, for ignorance is a defect in the human world. All mankind must be given a knowledge of science and philosophy; that is, as much as may be deemed necessary. All cannot be scientists or philosophers but each should be educated according to his needs and deserts."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 ed., p. 108)

711. Education Extended to Prisoners
"...Kindness, training and education extended to prisoners is exceedingly important. Therefore as thou has exerted an effort in this, has awakened some of them, and hast been the cause of the turning of their faces to the divine Kingdom, this praiseworthy deed is highly acceptable. Assuredly persevere. Convey on my behalf to the two prisoners in San Quentin the utmost kindness, and tell them: 'That prison in the sight of wise souls is a school of training and development. Ye must strive with heart and soul that ye may become renowned in character and knowledge.'"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 116-117)

712. Humankind Are as Children in School, and Prophets Are Their Teachers
"O true companions! All humankind are as children in a school, and the

Dawning-Points of Light, the Sources of divine revelation are the teachers, wondrous and without peer. In the school of realities they educate these sons and daughters, according to teachings from God, and foster them in the bosom of grace, so that they may develop along every line, show forth the excellent gifts and blessing of the Lord, and combine human perfections; that they may advance in all aspects of human endeavour, whether outward or inward, hidden or visible, material or spiritual, until they make of this mortal world a widespread mirror, to reflect that other world which dieth not."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid., p. 128)

713. Learning is the Greatest Bestowal of God
"It is clear that learning is the greatest bestowal of God; that knowledge and the acquirement thereof is a blessing from Heaven. Thus it is incumbent upon the friends of God to exert such an effort and strive with such eagerness to promote divine knowledge, culture and the sciences, that ere long those who are school children today will become the most erudite of all the fraternity of the wise. This is a service rendered unto God Himself, and it is one of His inescapable commandments."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, A Compilation, Wilmette, 1977 ed., p. 38)

B. Universities and Colleges

[213] 714. The Academic Life
"...The academic life also has its fashions and fads, even though they are of a different nature from the fads of the man on the street.
"These fashions are not permanent; they are bound to change. Today the fad is a materialistic view of life and of the world. A day will soon come when it will become deeply religious and spiritual. In fact, we can discern the beginning of such a change in the writings of some of the most eminent souls and liberal minds. When the pendulum will start its full swing then we shall see all such eminent men turn again to God."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 18, 1932)

715. There is No Baha'i Curriculum as Yet
"...there is as yet no such thing as a Baha'i curriculum, and there are no Baha'i publications exclusively devoted to this subject, since the teachings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha do not present a definite and detailed educational system, but simply offer certain basic principles and set forth a number of teaching ideals that should guide future Baha'i educationalists in their efforts to formulate an adequate teaching curriculum which would be in full harmony with the spirit of the Baha'i Teachings, and would thus meet the requirements and needs of the modern age.

"These basic principles are available in the sacred writings of the Cause, and should be carefully studied, and gradually incorporated in various college and University programmes. But the task of formulating a system of education which would be officially recognized by the Cause, and enforced as such throughout the Baha'i world, is one which the present-day generation of believers cannot

obviously undertake, and which has to be gradually accomplished by Baha'i scholars and educationalists of the future."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 7, 1939)

716. Three Cardinal Principles
"First: Whole-hearted service to the cause of education, the unfolding of the mysteries of nature, the extension of the boundaries of pure science, the elimination of the causes of ignorance and social evils, a standard universal system of instruction, and the diffusion of the lights of knowledge and reality.

"Second: Service to the cause of morality, raising the moral tone of the students, inspiring them with the sublimest ideals of ethical refinement, teaching them altruism, inculcating in their lives the beauty of holiness and the excellency of virtue and animating them with the excellences and perfections of the religion of God.

"Third: Service to the oneness of the world of humanity; so that each student may consciously realize that he is a brother to all mankind, irrespective of religion or race. The thoughts of universal peace must be instilled into the minds of all the scholars, in order that they may become the armies of peace, the real servants of the body politic—the world. God is the Father of all. Mankind are His children. This globe is one home. Nations are the members of one [214] family. The mothers in their homes, the teachers in the schools, the professors in the college, the presidents in the universities, must teach these ideals to the young from the cradle up to the age of manhood."
(From notes taken of talks given by 'Abdu'l-Baha, as quoted in: Star of the West, Vol. IX, No. 9, p. 98)

717. Characteristics of Baha'i College Students
"You must become the shining candles of moral precepts and spiritual ideals and be the means of the illumination of others. Clothe your bodies with the robes of virtues. Characterize yourselves with the characteristics of the people of divine morality. Shun all manner of vices as you shun a poisonous snake or a leper. Let the corps of professors and the students be impressed with the purity and holiness of your lives so that they may take you as paragons of worthiness, examples of nobility of nature, observers of the moral laws, holding in subordination the lower element by the higher spirit, the conquerors of self and the masters of wholesome, vital forces in all the avenues of life. Strive always to be at the head of your classes through hard study and true merit. Be always in a prayerful state and appreciate the value of everything. Entertain high ideals and stimulate your intellectual and constructive forces."
(Ibid.)

718. 'Abdu'l-Baha Enjoins Baha'is to Excel All Other Students—Emphasis on Truthfulness
"I hope that while you are studying in this college you may so excel all other students in the various branches of knowledge taught therein that all of them

may testify that the Bahai (Baha'i) students have another power, are inspired with another effort, are imbued with a nobler ambition, are stimulated by higher motives and make wider and deeper exertions than others. If you do not surpass the others, then what distinction will there remain for you? Therefore, you must strive to be superior to them, so that everyone may bear testimony to this fact. You are now like the tender plants that are trained according to the knowledge and wisdom of the gardener. From now on, you must strive to beautify the moral aspect of your lives. Advise one another with utmost consideration, watch daily your words and deeds; thus from the very beginning you may characterize yourselves with divine ideals.

"The divine ideals are humility, submissiveness, annihilation of self, perfect evanescence, charity and loving-kindness. You must die to self and live in God. You must be exceedingly compassionate to one another and to all the people of the world. Love and serve mankind just for the sake of God and not for anything else. The foundation of your love toward humanity must be spiritual faith and divine assurance.

"Again: be ye most careful that, God forbid, not one single word contrary to truth issue from your mouths. One falsehood throws man from the highest station of honour to the lowest abyss of disgrace. Always guard yourselves against this enemy so that all you state may correspond with reality. Forever supplicate and entreat at the Court of Majesty and beg confirmation and assistance...."
(Ibid., pp. 98-99)

[215] 719. Challenge to Persian Students
"I hope that through the favor and bounty of the Blessed Beauty, His Holiness the Bab, and the ineffable blessings which hallow this holy Shrine,* the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abha may encircle you, and that you may be characterized with the shining qualities and brilliant attributes of the Baha'i life. May your morality become more defined day by day! May your faith and assurance be increased day by day! May your attraction to the Kingdom of Abha be intensified day by day! May your attainment in sciences and arts become more universal day by day! Perchance, God willing, you may become perfect and accomplished from every standpoint and be the means of the enlightenment of Persia."
(Ibid., pp. 99-100)

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*The students were visiting the Tomb of the Bab)

720. Teaching in Universities and Colleges
"As to teaching work in colleges and universities, this is very important, for students as a whole are open-minded and little influenced by tradition. They would easily enter the Cause if the subject is properly presented and their intellect and sentiments properly satisfied. This, however, should be attempted only by persons who have had university training and are, therefore, acquainted with the mind of the intelligent and educated youth..."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 3, 1932)

721. When Studying at School or University
"For any person, whether Baha'i or not, his youthful years are those in which he will make many decisions which will set the course of his life. In these years he is most likely to choose his life's work, complete his education, begin to earn his own living, marry and start to raise his own family. Most important of all, it is during this period that the mind is most questing and that the spiritual values that will guide the person's future behaviour are adopted. These factors present Baha'i youth with their greatest opportunities, their greatest challenges, and their greatest tests—opportunities to truly apprehend the Teachings of their Faith and to give them to their contemporaries, challenges to overcome the pressures of the world and to provide leadership for their and succeeding generations, and tests enabling them to exemplify in their lives the high moral standards set forth in the Baha'i Writings. Indeed the Guardian wrote of the Baha'i youth that it is they 'who can contribute so decisively to the virility, the purity, and the driving force of the life of the Baha'i community, and upon whom must depend the future orientation of its destiny, and the complete unfoldment of the potentialities with which God has endowed it.'

"When studying at school or university Baha'i youth will often find themselves in the unusual and slightly embarrassing position of having a more profound insight into a subject than their instructors. The Teachings of Baha'u'llah throw light on so many aspects of human life and knowledge that a Baha'i must learn, earlier than most, to weigh the information that is given to him rather than to accept it blindly. A Baha'i has the advantage of the divine Revelation for this Age, which shines like a searchlight on so many problems that baffle modern thinkers; he must therefore develop the ability to learn everything from those around him, showing proper humility before his teachers, but always relating what he hears to the Baha'i teachings, for they will enable him to sort out the gold from the dross of human error."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to Baha'i Youth in every land, June 10, 1966)

XV. ENDOWMENTS, LOCAL AND NATIONAL

[216] 722. Endowment Land Used for Site of Haziratu'l-Quds Ceases to be Endowment in the Baha'i Sense*
"The Universal House of Justice acknowledges your letter of July 15 about the use of a local endowment for the site of the local Haziratu'l-Quds, and instructs us to send you the following reply.

"Endowments, whether local or national, are normally pieces of property held in the name of the National or Local Spiritual Assembly as an investment and asset. The Haziratu'l-Quds and the land on which it is built cannot be considered an endowment as this is a separate institution. If, therefore, endowment land is used for the site of a Haziratu'l-Quds, it ceases to be an endowment in the Baha'i sense. Where a parcel of land owned as an endowment is sufficiently large to be subdivided, one part to remain as the endowment and the other to be the site of the Haziratu'l-Quds, it is permissible to do this

but a clear demarcation must be made to distinguish clearly what is the endowment and what is the Haziratu'l-Quds. This demarcation, which must be made in the Assembly's records as well as on the site itself, is an internal domestic matter and need not be recorded in the Land Registry."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, August 11, 1974)

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*(See also: XXIII, Nos. 912-922, Haziratu'l-Quds)

723. National Endowments
"A national endowment should be regarded as an investment in real estate owned by the National Spiritual Assembly. It may be anywhere in the country and can be a small, inexpensive piece of land donated by one of the friends, or else acquired out of the resources of the National Fund."
(From the Naw-Ruz message of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 1974)

724. Local Endowments
"...A local endowment can be quite a small piece of land; it can be purchased by the Local Spiritual Assembly or more usually the gift of one or more of the believers. If the Local Assembly is incorporated, the endowment should be registered in its name, but if it is not, the endowment can be held by one or more of the believers on behalf of the community. For example, if one of the believers gives a small piece of land he can continue to hold it in his name, but it will be known that he does so on behalf of the Local Spiritual Assembly and that the land will in time be transferred legally to the Assembly when that is possible...."
(Ibid.)

[217] 725. Endowment Land—There is No Objection to Raising a Temporary Structure
"Endowment land cannot, at the same time, be used as another Baha'i institution such as Haziratu'l-Quds or a Teaching Institute. There is no objection to erecting a temporary structure on endowment land for the convenience of the friends who may visit it or have gatherings there provided that if its use becomes of a permanent nature it would be necessary to acquire a new Endowment."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 30, 1971)

726. Endowment Land to be Regarded as an Investment for Local Assemblies
"...The principle involved is that the endowment land should not be used for any other Baha'i purpose, and is to be regarded as an investment for the future advantage and benefit to the Local Spiritual Assembly. If the endowment plot is sufficiently large that not all of it is needed to serve as an endowment, it is permissible to designate a part of it as endowment property and the balance may be transferred to the use of the summer school. In such a case a line of demarcation should be made between the portion to be regarded as endowment and the portion to be used for summer or winter school purposes. This demarcation,

which must be made in the Assembly's records, as well as on the site itself, is an internal domestic matter and need not be recorded in the Land Registry."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, April 15, 1979)

727. Endowment Property May Be Used for Sports Facilities or to Produce Income for the Work of the Faith

"In reply to your letter of 29 August 1985 in which you inquire about endowment property, we are instructed to say that while such property is regarded as an investment for the future benefit of the Baha'i community, and as such should not be used for purposes of summer schools, conferences and other Baha'i events except on a temporary basis, the Universal House of Justice sees no reason why it should not be used for sports facilities. It also might be farmed or otherwise developed to produce income, and such income or proceeds from a capital gain may be used for the general work of the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala, September 30, 1985)

728. Summary of Principles which Should Govern Acceptance of Free Land for Baha'i Use

"We are asked by the Universal House of Justice to acknowledge your letter of 20 August 1985 regarding the possibility of obtaining free land from the government in order to build a Haziratu'l-Quds, and to share the following principles which should govern any decision you will make in this regard.

1. The principle of not accepting gifts from non-Baha'is for strictly Baha'i purposes applies to receiving free grants of land from non-Baha'is, whether individuals, institutions or governments.

2. [218] There is no objection, however, to accepting free plots of land from the government or civic authorities if such plots are used for Baha'i cemeteries or for such institutions as are charitable or humanitarian in nature, such as schools.

3. In countries where the only method to acquire property is to be granted by the authorities' free use of land, there is no objection to receiving such allocation of land (which excludes ownership) for the building of institutions of a strictly Baha'i nature, such as a Haziratu'l-Quds, a Summer School, or a Teaching Institute.

4. If the government offers gifts of land to all religious communities in recognition of their status as a religious entity in the country, Baha'is may accept such properties under the provisions of points 1 and 2 above. They should make it clear to the government that they can embark upon the establishment of institutions of a humanitarian or charitable nature, only when conditions favourable to the establishment of such institutions are present."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 19, 1985)

XVI. THE FAMILY

A. Family Relationships*

[219] 729. Family Ties
"Deep as are family ties, we must always remember that the spiritual ties are far deeper; they are everlasting and survive death, whereas physical ties, unless supported by spiritual bonds, are confined to this life. You should do all in your power, through prayer and example, to open the eyes of your family to the Baha'i Faith, but do not grieve too much over their actions. Turn to your Baha'i brothers and sisters who are living with you in the light of the Kingdom."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 8, 1942)

"Do not be satisfied until each one with whom you are concerned is to you as a member of your family ... if you can attain to this, your difficulties will vanish; you will know what to do."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Pattern of Baha'i Life, p. 24)

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*(See also: XVI. D. 762-774. The Relationships Between Parents and Children)

730. The Family: A Special Kind of Community—Each Member Has Rights and Responsibilities
"A family, however, is a very special kind of 'community'. The Research Department has not come across any statements which specifically name the father as responsible for the 'security, progress and unity of the family' as is stated in Bahiyyih Nakhjavani's book, but it can be inferred from a number of the responsibilities placed upon him, that the father can be regarded as the 'head' of the family. The members of a family all have duties and responsibilities towards one another and to the family as a whole, and these duties and responsibilities vary from member to member because of their natural relationships. The parents have the inescapable duty to educate their children—but not vice versa; the children have the duty to obey their parents—the parents do not obey the children; the mother—not the father—bears the children, nurses them in babyhood, and is thus their first educator, hence daughters have a prior right to education over sons and, as the Guardian's secretary has written on his behalf: 'The task of bringing up a Baha'i child, as emphasized time and again in Baha'i Writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare and advancement. The training which a child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development.' A corollary of this responsibility of the mother is her right to be supported by her husband—a husband has no explicit right to be supported by his wife. This principle of the husband's responsibility [220] to provide for and protect the family can be seen applied also in the law of intestacy which provides that the family's dwelling place passes, on the father's death, not to his widow, but to his eldest son; the son at the same time has the responsibility to care for his mother."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, December 28, 1980)

731. The Family Progresses When There is Unity
"Note ye how easily, where unity existeth in a given family, the affairs of that family are conducted; what progress the members of that family make, how they prosper in the world. Their concerns are in order, they enjoy comfort and tranquillity, they are secure, their position is assured, they come to be envied by all. Such a family but added to its stature and its lasting honour, as day succeedeth day...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 279)

"If love and agreement are manifest in a single family, that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual; but if enmity and hatred exist within it destruction and dispersion are inevitable."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 144-145, 1982 ed.)

732. Baha'u'llah Provides Way to Remove Hostility and Dissension from the World
"Consider the harmful effect of discord and dissension in a family; then reflect upon the favours and blessings which descend upon that family when unity exists among its various members. What incalculable benefits and blessings would descend upon the great human family if unity and brotherhood were established! In this century when the beneficent results of unity and the ill effects of discord are so clearly apparent, the means for the attainment and accomplishment of human fellowship have appeared in the world. His Holiness Baha'u'llah has proclaimed and provided the way by which hostility and dissension may be removed from the human world. He has left no ground or possibility for strife and disagreement. First he has proclaimed the oneness of mankind and specialized religious teachings for existing human conditions."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. 17, No. 7, p. 232)

733. It is Important for Man to Raise a Family
"It is highly important for man to raise a family. So long as he is young, because of youthful self-complacency, he does not realize its significance, but this will be a source of regret when he grows old... In this glorious Cause the life of a married couple should resemble the life of the angels in heaven—a life full of joy and spiritual delight, a life of unity and concord, a friendship both mental and physical. The home should be orderly and well-organized. Their ideas and thoughts should be like the rays of the sun of truth and the radiance of the brilliant stars in the heavens. Even as two birds they should warble melodies upon the branches of the tree of fellowship and harmony. They should always be elated with joy and gladness and be a source of happiness to the hearts of others. They should set an example to their fellow-men, manifest true and sincere love [221] towards each other and educate their children in such a manner as to blazon the fame and glory of their family."
(From a talk of 'Abdu'l-Baha: Family Life, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, p. 13)

734. Keys to Strengthening of Family
"The relationship between husband and wife must be viewed in the context of the Baha'i ideal of family life. Baha'u'llah came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, one must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it, and one of the keys to the strengthening of unity is loving consultation. The atmosphere within a Baha'i family as within the community as a whole should express 'the keynote of the Cause of God' which, the beloved Guardian has stated, 'is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, December 28, 1980 to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand)

735. Mother-in-Law Problem
"Regarding your other question concerning the strained relationship between you and your mother-in-law and what you can do to alleviate the situation, we feel you should, with the help and consultation of your husband, persevere in your efforts to achieve unity in the family. From your description of the unfriendly attitude your mother-in-law displays toward you it is clear that you will not have an easy task. However, the important thing is that you, as a Baha'i, are aware of 'Abdu'l-Baha's admonition to concentrate on an individual's good qualities and that this approach to your mother-in-law can strengthen you in your resolve to achieve unity. And furthermore, perseverance in prayer will give you the strength to continue your efforts."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 6, 1970: Family Life, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, p. 29)

736. A Truly Baha'i Home—A Fortress Upon which the Cause Can Rely
"A truly Baha'i home is a true fortress upon which the Cause can rely while planning its campaigns. If ... and ... love each other and would like to marry, Shoghi Effendi does not wish them to think that by doing so they are depriving themselves of the privilege of service; in fact such a union will enhance their ability to serve. There is nothing more beautiful than to have young Baha'is marry and found truly Baha'i homes, the type Baha'u'llah wishes them to be...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 6, 1932: Ibid.)

737. The Home is an Institution Baha'u'llah Has Come to Strengthen and Not to Weaken
"Surely Shoghi Effendi would like to see you and the other friends give their whole time and energy to the Cause, for we are in great need for competent workers, but the home is an institution that Baha'u'llah has come to strengthen and not to weaken. Many unfortunate things have happened in Baha'i homes just for neglecting this point. Serve the Cause but also remember your duties towards your home. It is for you to find the balance and see that neither makes [222] you neglect the other. We would have many more husbands in the Cause were the wives more thoughtful and moderate in their Baha'i activities."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 14, 1929: Ibid.)

738. Preserve Baha'i Families: Harmony, Unity and Love Highest Ideals in Human Relationships

"Whenever there is a Baha'i family, those concerned should by all means do all they can to preserve it, because divorce is strongly condemned in the Teachings, whereas harmony, unity and love are held up as the highest ideals in human relationships. This must always apply to the Baha'is, whether they are serving in the pioneering field or not."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America, November 9, 1956: Ibid., p. 20)

739. Rights and Prerogatives of Each Member of the Family

"According to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the family being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother—none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father likewise has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all."

('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 168, 1982 ed.)

740. Violence in the Home

"No statements dealing directly with violence in the family have come to light from the Writings; however, the House of Justice feels that the absence of specific references to the subject should not be construed as implying that we do not have the necessary guidance in the Faith to treat the problems cited in your letter. Acts of violence might properly be regarded as a negation of the persistent emphasis on concord, understanding and unity which are at the heart of the Baha'i Teachings, and the sacred Writings are replete with advice as to how these positive objectives may be attained. In His 'Tablet of the World' Baha'u'llah states,

"'...The distinguishing feature that marketh the pre-eminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.'

"Elsewhere in the same Tablet the 'people of God' are forbidden 'to engage in contention and conflict.' In view of such statements and the stress laid by both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha on love and harmony as the hallmark of marriage, the law for which Baha'u'llah describes as a 'fortress for well-being

and salvation;' and in view of 'Abdu'l-Baha's exhortation that each member of the family must uphold the rights of the others, it becomes obvious that violence in the family is antithetical to the spirit of the Faith and a practice to be condemned.

[223] "If the broad structure of society is to remain intact, resolute efforts, including medical ones, as necessary, should be made to curb acts of aggression within families, particularly their extreme forms of wife beating and child abuse by parents. This is a matter of fundamental importance, for if the friends are not able to maintain harmony within their families, on what other basis do they hope to demonstrate to a skeptical world the efficacy of the preeminent character of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah? What possible influence could they hope to exert on the development of nations and the establishment of world peace? The following statement by the beloved Master sheds illumination on these points:

'"...Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household, and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, all fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families...."'
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 22, 1983)

741. Love Can Change Vile, Mean Person into Heavenly Soul
"The Guardian ... is very much grieved indeed to learn of the severe opposition which you are encountering from your husband because of your affiliation with the Cause. He can very well realize the terrible condition facing you, but feels confident that Baha'u'llah is guiding you to follow the right way, and is continually assisting and strengthening you in your efforts to solve this most serious and challenging problem of your life. The staunch and unwavering loyalty and devotion which you have thus far so splendidly demonstrated in your attitude to the Faith is truly remarkable and worthy of the highest praise and admiration. The persecutions from which you are now suffering have this one great advantage, namely to deepen your faith in the Cause, and to revive and refresh your energies for its service. You should, therefore, rejoice and welcome those sufferings in so far as they serve to further awaken your consciousness of being a member of the New World Order of Baha'u'llah.

"The Guardian wishes me specially to urge you to remain patient and confident, and above all to show your husband the utmost kindness and love, in return for all the opposition and hatred you receive from him. A conciliatory and friendly attitude in such cases is not only the duty of every Baha'i but is also the most effective way of winning for the Cause the sympathy and admiration of its

former foes and enemies. Love is, indeed, a most potent elixir that can transform the vilest and meanest of people into heavenly souls. May your example serve to further confirm the truth of this beautiful teaching of our Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 6, 1935)

[224] 742. Believer Must Be Patient with Non-Baha'i Spouse, Attract with Loving Kindness, Wisdom, Tact
"As to your husband who, he is most sorry to hear, seems to be so antagonistic to the Cause, having fallen under the evil influence of Mr. ...: The Guardian wishes you to be patient with him, and to endeavour through loving kindness, wisdom and tact to enlist his consideration and sympathy for the Faith. However unfriendly his present attitude to the Cause may be, and no matter how seriously he may interfere in your activities as a believer, you should never lose hope of winning him to the Faith, nay even of guiding him to openly and actively assist you in your Baha'i activities. With the unfailing help of Baha'u'llah and the example of your own conduct your task will assuredly be made easy and will be crowned with success."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 15, 1939)

743. Teaching Relatives
"He would not advise you to in any way force the teachings on your husband, but rather through prayer, love and example attract his heart to what he will be forced to see has not only made you a happier person but a better wife and mother than ever before. It is often most difficult to teach those nearest to us, but the Guardian will earnestly pray that your husband and children will join you in serving this wonderful Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer: High Endeavours, Messages to Alaska, pp. 72-73)

744. Earn Right to Plead on Behalf of Family
"He was sorry to hear that Mrs. ... is in an unhappy state of mind. She should certainly not grieve if she finds that her family are not receptive to the teachings—for not every soul is spiritually enlightened. Indeed, many members of the families of the Prophets themselves have remained unconverted even in face of the example and persuasion of the Manifestation of God; therefore, the friends should not be distressed by such things but rather leave the future of those they love in the hand of God, and by their services and devotion to the Faith, win the right to plead for their ultimate spiritual re-birth."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 9, 1942)

745. One Should Not Be Deceptive with Non-Baha'i Spouse or Parents
"It seems to him that just as you leave your husband free to believe or not to believe in whatever pleases him, he should accord you the same rudimentary privilege. Surely the right to worship God in the way one believes to be right is the greatest fundamental freedom in the world? On the other hand no one

should force one's own convictions on another and if Mr. ... objects to your Baha'i affiliation you should carry on your activities not secretly, but not in such a way as to force him to be constantly conscious of them. In other words, you should, for his sake, sometimes forgo the pleasure of attending a Feast or meeting if there is something he wants you to do with him.

"The Guardian does not feel your daughter should deceive her father and not let him know she is a Baha'i. She, like you, for his sake should be willing to [225] sacrifice her attendance at meetings sometimes, but he cannot very well force her to not believe and accept what she holds to be the Truth for this Age!

"Every sincere believer in God must inevitably make some sacrifices, and, however heavy these may be, they are insignificant compared to the blessing of accepting Baha'u'llah. This is certainly true of dear Mr. ... who has suffered because of the firmness of his faith. We cannot bow to the blindness of the world; all we can do is to be tactful."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 22, 1948)

746. Duty of Believer to Endeavour to Lead Family to the Faith
"...If the believer is the only one of his family who has embraced the Faith, it is his duty to endeavour to lead as many other family members as possible to the light of divine guidance. As soon as a Baha'i family unit emerges, the members should feel responsible for making the collective life of the family a spiritual reality, animated by divine love and inspired by the ennobling principles of the Faith. To achieve this purpose, the reading of the Sacred Writings and prayers should ideally become a daily family activity. As far as the teaching work is concerned, just as individuals are called upon to adopt teaching goals, the family itself could adopt its own goals. In this way the friends could make of their families strong healthy units, bright candles for the diffusion of the light of the Kingdom, and powerful centres to attract the heavenly confirmations."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, April 17, 1981)

747. If Family Members Are Hostile, Avoid Antagonizing Them, Leave Them to Themselves
"Not every one is ready to receive the Cause, but in every walk of life there are souls longing for this new Divine Outpouring, and sufficiently mature spiritually to accept it. The Baha'is, each according to his own opportunities, must seek out such people.

"The Guardian deeply regrets the hostile attitude of some members of your family towards the Cause you have arisen to serve, and he feels that you should do everything in your power to avoid antagonizing them—short, of course, of giving up your Faith and becoming inactive in it.

"As you cannot induce them to be interested in it, the best thing to do is what the Master always advised in such cases: leave them to themselves, and pray for

them. The Guardian, you may be sure, will also pray for their illumination. Many people have, after bitterly opposing the Faith, been eventually won over by the patience, love, tact and prayers of their Baha'i relative or friend."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 14, 1943)

B. The Relationship Between Husband and Wife

748. Keys to Strengthening of Family
"The relationship between husband and wife must be viewed in the context of [226] the Baha'i ideal of family life. Baha'u'llah came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, one must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it, and one of the keys to the strengthening of unity is loving consultation. The atmosphere within a Baha'i family as within the community as a whole should express 'the keynote of the Cause of God' which, the beloved Guardian has stated, 'is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, December 28, 1980)

749. Honour and Privilege Ordained for Women: Obedience to Husbands
"It is in this context of mutual and complementary duties and responsibilities that one should read the Tablet in which 'Abdu'l-Baha gives the following exhortation:

'O Handmaids of the Self-Sustaining Lord! Exert your efforts so that you may attain the honour and privilege ordained for women. Undoubtedly the greatest glory of women is servitude at His Threshold and submissiveness at His door; it is the possession of a vigilant heart, and praise of the incomparable God; it is heartfelt love towards other handmaids and spotless chastity; it is obedience to and consideration for their husbands and the education and care of their children; and it is tranquillity, and dignity, perseverance in the remembrance of the Lord, and the utmost enkindlement and attraction.'"
(Ibid.)

750. Domination by Husband or Wife Not Right
"This exhortation to the utmost degree of spirituality and self-abnegation should not be read as a legal definition giving the husband absolute authority over his wife, for, in a letter written to an individual believer on 22th July 1943, the beloved Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf:
'The Guardian, in his remarks ... about parents and children, wives and husbands' relations in America meant that there is a tendency in that country for children to be too independent of the wishes of their parents and lacking in the respect due to them. Also wives, in some cases, have a tendency to exert an unjust degree of domination over their husbands which, of course, is not right, anymore than that the husband should unjustly dominate his wife.'"
(Ibid.)

751. Time When Wife Should Defer to Husband and Time When Husband Should Defer

to Wife
"In any group, however loving the consultation, there are nevertheless points on which, from time to time, agreement cannot be reached. In a Spiritual Assembly this dilemma is resolved by a majority vote. There can, however, be no majority where only two parties are involved, as in the case of a husband and wife. There are, therefore, times when a wife should defer to her husband, and times when a husband should defer to his wife, but neither should ever unjustly dominate the other. In short, the relationship between husband and wife [227] should be as held forth in the prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha which is often read at Baha'i weddings: 'Verily they are married in obedience to Thy command. Cause them to become the signs of harmony and unity until the end of time.*'"
(Ibid.)

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*(Baha'i Prayers, p. 107, 1982 ed.)

752. In Tablet of the World Women and Men Envisaged as Breadwinners
"In the Tablet of the World, Baha'u'llah Himself has envisaged that women as well as men would be breadwinners in stating:

'Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for the training and education of children, to be spent for this purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the House of Justice.'
(Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 90)

"A very important element in the attainment of such equality is Baha'u'llah's provision that boys and girls must follow essentially the same curriculum in schools."
(Ibid.)

753. Love Between Husband and Wife
"The friends of God must so live and conduct themselves and evince such excellence of character and conduct, as to make others astonished. The love between husband and wife should not be purely physical, nay rather it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it would be to divide a single soul! Nay, great would be the difficulty!

"In short, the foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony and love, oneness, relationship and union, not upon differences, especially between husband and wife."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Family Life, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

754. The Institution of Marriage
"The institution of marriage, as established by Baha'u'llah, while giving due importance to the physical aspect of marital union considers it as subordinate to the moral and spiritual purposes and functions with which it has been invested by an all-wise and loving Providence. Only when these different values are given each their due importance, and only on the basis of the subordination of the physical to the moral, and the carnal to the spiritual can such excesses

and laxity in marital relations as our decadent age is so sadly witnessing be avoided, and family life be restored to its original purity, and fulfill the true function for which it has been instituted by God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 8, 1939: Ibid.)

755. Husband and Wife as a Single Soul
"...The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other.

[228] "If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favour in the Kingdom of heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm.

"Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 122)

756. Wife Should Treat Husband with Kindness
"As to thy respected husband: It is incumbent upon thee to treat him with great kindness, to consider his wishes and be conciliatory with him at all times, till he seeth that because thou hast directed thyself toward the Kingdom of God, thy tenderness for him and thy love for God have but increased, as well as thy concern for his wishes under all conditions."
(Ibid., p. 122)

757. Tolerate Cruel Actions, Ill Treatment, Demonstrate Loving Kindness
"Hold thy husband dear and always show forth an amiable temper towards him, no matter how ill-tempered he may be. Even if thy loving kindness maketh him more bitter, manifest thou more kindliness, more tenderness, be more loving and tolerate his cruel actions and ill-treatment."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Family Life, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

758. Pray to Baha'u'llah for Help, Think of 'Abdu'l-Baha as Perfect Example
"He feels you should by all means show your husband the greatest love and sympathy; if we are ever in any doubt as to how we should conduct ourselves as Baha'is we should think of 'Abdu'l-Baha and study His life and ask ourselves what would He have done, for He is our perfect example in every way. And you know how tender He was, and how His affection and kindness shone like sunlight on everyone.

"Your husband and your child have a right to your love, and give you a wonderful opportunity of demonstrating your faith in the Cause.

"Also you should pray to Baha'u'llah to help unite you with your husband and make your home a true and happy home."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

March 9, 1946: Ibid.)

759. Baha'is Should Make Almost a Superhuman Effort to Avoid Divorce*
"He feels that you should by all means make every effort to hold your marriage together, especially for the sake of your children, who, like all children of divorced parents, cannot but suffer from conflicting loyalties, for they are deprived of the blessing of a father and mother in one home, to look after their interests and love them jointly.

"Now that you realize that your husband is ill, you should be able to reconcile yourself to the difficulties you have faced with him emotionally, and not take an unforgiving attitude, however much you may suffer.

"We know that Baha'u'llah has very strongly frowned upon divorce; and it is really incumbent upon the Baha'is to make almost a superhuman effort not to allow a Baha'i marriage to be dissolved."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 6, 1953)

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*(See also: XXIX. K. 1302-1338, Divorce.)

C. Ancestors and Descendants

[229] 760. Faith of Believer Attracts God's Mercy to Souls of Parents
"In reference to your questions about ancestors and descendants, we have been directed to say that while there are Tablets from Baha'u'llah stating that faith in the Manifestation of God on the part of a believer attracts God's mercy to the souls of departed parents the House of Justice knows of no text in Baha'i Writings to support the statement that a believer's seven past generations and seven generations to descend from him are blessed when that person becomes a Baha'i. You may also be familiar with the statement of 'Abdu'l-Baha that 'it is permitted to ask for advancement, forgiveness, mercy, beneficence, and blessings for a man after his death.... Therefore children ... must implore pardon and forgiveness for their parents.' (From "Some Answered Questions" pages 268-269)."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, February 23, 1978)

761. True Believer in Better Position to Intercede for Ancestors*
"We cannot take the teaching that if a believer remains steadfast till the end of his life he will be the means of the spiritual awakening of all his ancestors too literally, especially as it is only reported, and not in an authenticated form. However, we can be assured that the true and faithful believer will be in a much better position to intercede for his ancestors, and aid in their development than if he were not spiritually enlightened."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 12, 1942)

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*(See also: No. 699)

D. The Relationships Between Parents and Children

762. The Most Important of All Duties After the Recognition of God—Due Regard for Rights of Parents

"The fruits of the tree of existence are trustworthiness, loyalty, truthfulness and purity. After the recognition of the oneness of the Lord, exalted be He, the most important of all duties is to have due regard for the rights of one's parents. This matter hath been mentioned in all the Books of God."
(Baha'u'llah: Family Life, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

763. If Children Do Not Obey Parents—They Will Not Obey God

"The parents must exert every effort to rear their offspring to be religious, for should the children not attain this greatest of adornments, they will not obey their parents, which in a certain sense means that they will not obey God. Indeed, such children will show no consideration to anyone, and will do exactly as they please."
(Ibid.)

[230] 764. The Son Must Serve His Father

"We have enjoined upon every son to serve his father. Thus have We decreed this command in the Book."
(Ibid.)

765. Consultation Between Father and Son

"Regarding thy question about consultation of a father with his son, or a son with his father, in matters of trade and commerce, consultation is one of the fundamental elements of the foundation of the Law of God. Such consultation is assuredly acceptable, whether between father and son, or with others. There is nothing better than this. Man must consult in all things for this will lead him to the depths of each problem and enable him to find the right solution."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid.)

766. Father Must Give Son Advice—Son Must Obey Father

"The father must always endeavour to educate his son and to acquaint him with the heavenly teachings. He must give him advice and exhort him at all times, teach him praiseworthy conduct and character, enable him to receive training at school and to be instructed in such arts and sciences as are deemed useful and necessary. In brief, let him instill into his mind the virtues and perfections of the world of humanity. Above all he should continually call to his mind the remembrance of God so that his throbbing veins and arteries may pulsate with the love of God.

"The son, on the other hand, must show forth the utmost obedience towards his father, and should conduct himself as a humble and a lowly servant. Day and night he should seek diligently to ensure the comfort and welfare of his loving father and to secure his good-pleasure. He must forgo his own rest and enjoyment and constantly strive to bring gladness to the hearts of his father and mother, that thereby he may attain the good-pleasure of the Almighty and be graciously aided by the hosts of the unseen."
(Ibid.)

767. Parents Must Be Respected—Should Not Keep Child Back from Serving the Cause

"If thou wouldst show kindness and consideration to thy parents so that they may feel generally pleased, this would also please Me, for parents must be highly respected and it is essential that they should feel contented, provided they deter thee not from gaining access to the Threshold of the Almighty, nor keep thee back from walking in the way of the Kingdom. Indeed it behoveth them to encourage and spur thee on in this direction."

(Ibid.)

768. If One Must Make Choice Between Service to Baha'u'llah or Service to Parents

"We have caused thee to return to thy home as a token of Our Mercy unto thy mother, inasmuch as We have found her overwhelmed with sorrow. We have enjoined you in the Book 'to worship no one but God and to show kindness to your parents'.* Thus hath the one true God spoken and the decree hath been [231] fulfilled by the Almighty, the All-Wise. Therefore We have caused thee to return unto her and unto thy sister, that your mother's eyes may thereby be cheered, and she may be of the thankful.

"Say, O My people! Show honour to your parents and pay homage to them. This will cause blessings to descend upon you from the clouds of the bounty of your Lord, the Exalted, the Great.

"When We learned of her sadness, We directed thee to return unto her, as a token of mercy unto thee from Our presence, and as an admonishment for others.

"Beware lest ye commit that which would sadden the hearts of your fathers and mothers. Follow ye the path of Truth which indeed is a straight path. Should anyone give you a choice between the opportunity to render a service to Me and a service to them, choose ye to serve them, and let such service be a path leading you to Me. This is My exhortation and command unto thee. Observe therefore that which thy Lord, the Mighty, the Gracious, hath prescribed unto thee."

(Baha'u'llah: Ibid.)

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*(Qur'an 46:15)

769. It is a Privilege to Look After Parents

"In regard to the questions you asked him: He feels sure that, although in some ways you may be a financial burden to your children, it is to them a privilege to look after you; you are their mother and have given them life, and through the bounty of Baha'u'llah they are now attracted to His Faith. Anything they do for you is small recompense for all you have done for them."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 20, 1948: Ibid.)

770. Pray for Parents

"It is seemly that the servant should, after each prayer, supplicate God to bestow mercy and forgiveness upon his parents. Thereupon God's call will be

raised: 'Thousand upon thousand of what thou hast asked for thy parents shall be thy recompense!' Blessed is he who remembereth his parents when communing with God. There is, verily, no God but Him, the Mighty, the Well-Beloved."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid.))

"O Lord! In this Most Great Dispensation Thou dost accept the intercession of children in behalf of their parents. This is one of the special infinite bestowals of this Dispensation. Therefore, O Thou kind Lord, accept the request of this Thy servant at the threshold of Thy singleness and submerge his father in the ocean of Thy grace, because this son hath arisen to render Thee service and is exerting effort at all times in the pathway of Thy love. Verily, Thou art the Giver, the Forgiver and the Kind!"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid.)

771. Father Who Fails to Educate His Children Forfeits Rights of Fatherhood
"These are all relationships within the family, but there is a much wider sphere of relationships between men and women than in the home, and this too we should consider in the context of Baha'i society, not in that of past or present [232] social norms. For example, although the mother is the first educator of the child, and the most important formative influence in his development, the father also has the responsibility of educating his children, and this responsibility is so weighty that Baha'u'llah has stated that a father who fails to exercise it forfeits his rights of fatherhood...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, December 28, 1980)

772. Mothers Are Not Necessarily Confined to the Home
"...Similarly, although the primary responsibility for supporting the family financially is placed upon the husband, this does not by any means imply that the place of women is confined to the home. On the contrary, 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated:

'In this Revelation of Baha'u'llah, the women go neck and neck with the men. In no movement will they be left behind. Their rights with men are equal in degree. They will enter all the administrative branches of politics. They will attain in all such a degree as will be considered the very highest station of the world of humanity and will take part in all affairs.' (Paris Talks, p. 182)

"and again:

'So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease;...'" (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 135)
(Ibid.)

773. Underage Child Needs Parental Consent to Pioneer
"Regarding the Guardian's statement that pioneering is conditioned upon the consent of parents and that it would be necessary for them to concur, you have asked whether this ruling applies equally to children who are of age and those

who are not. The Guardian's reply is that the ruling applies only to those who have not yet come of age."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, January 18, 1943)

774. Parents and Children in the Pioneering Field
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 23 June, 1977 in which you express the ardent desire of yourself and your husband to see your children grow as active supporters of the Faith, and you ask whether, in view of the responsibilities of Baha'i parents in the pioneering field, the seeming sufferings the children bear as the result of their parents' commitments in service to the Cause will somehow be compensated. We have been asked by the Universal House of Justice to convey to you the following points:

"In considering this problem it is important to bear in mind the reality of the unity of the family, and the children's part in its activities. In a talk which 'Abdu'l-Baha gave in America in 1912, He made this significant statement: [233] 'According to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the family being a human unit must be educated according to the rules of sanctity.... The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed, the rights of the son, the father, the mother, none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary.... All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained.' (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 168, 1982 ed.)

"It should also be realized that a child, from early life, is a conscious and thinking soul, a member of his family with his own duties towards it, and is able to make his own sacrifices for the Faith in many ways. It is suggested that the children should be made to feel that they are given the privilege and opportunity of participating in the decisions as to the services their parents are able to offer, thus making their own conscious decision to accept those services with consequence for their own lives. Indeed, the children can be led to realize that it is the earnest wish of their parents to undertake such services with their children's whole-hearted support.

"There are many texts included in 'A Compilation on Baha'i Education', from the writings of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian, which indicate that 'children must, from their infancy, be raised to be spiritual and godly Baha'is. If such be their training, they will remain safe from every test.' ('Abdu'l-Baha, p. 36). Baha'u'llah Himself has written: 'As to the children: We have directed that in the beginning they should be trained in the observances and laws of religion; ... and in deeds that will further the victory of God's Cause...' (p. 8). They should even be trained from an early age to make their own sacrifices for the Faith, as indicated in these words: 'Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import...' ('Abdu'l-Baha, p. 31)."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 23, 1977)

XVII. THE FAST

[234] 775. Fasting—Spiritual in Character
"The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of the same month, involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 10, 1936)

776. Observance of the Fast is a Universal Obligation—Baha'u'llah Permits Certain Exceptions to Fasting
"Regarding the nineteen-day fast: Its observance has been enjoined by Baha'u'llah upon all the believers, once they attain the age of fifteen and until they reach seventy. Children of all countries, nationalities and classes who are fifteen years old are under this obligation. It matters not whether they mature later in one country than in another. The command of Baha'u'llah is universal, irrespective of any variance in the age of maturity in different countries and among different peoples.

"In the 'Aqdas' Baha'u'llah permits certain exceptions to this general obligation of fasting, among them are included those who do hard work, such as workers in heavy industries.

"But while a universal obligation, the observance of the nineteen day fast has been made by Baha'u'llah the sole responsibility of the individual believer. No Assembly has the right to enforce it on the friends, or to hold anybody responsible for not observing it. The believer is free, however, to ask the advice of his Assembly as to the circumstances that would justify him to conscientiously break such a fast. But he is by no means required to do so."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 9, 1937)

777. Fasting has a Salutary Effect Both Physically and Spiritually
"Keeping the Fast is enjoined upon all Baha'is, regardless of nationality; it has a very salutary effect both physically and spiritually, and the friends should realize Baha'u'llah never would have instituted it if it were detrimental to the health."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 21, 1946)

778. The Doctor's Advice Should Be Sought if There is a Health Problem
"As to your question regarding the Fast: If there is any doubt in the mind of a person as to whether it will really be bad for that person's health to keep it, the best doctor's advice should be obtained. But generally speaking most people

can [235] keep it, anywhere in the world, with no detriment to their health. It is very good for the health and, once one forms the habit, each year it becomes easier to keep, unless one is rundown. No one is obliged to keep it if it really harms them."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 14, 1947)

779. The Divine Wisdom in Fasting
"The Divine wisdom in fasting is manifold. Among them is this: As during those days (i.e., the period of fasting which the followers afterward observe) the Manifestation of the Sun of Reality, through Divine inspiration, is engaged in the descent (revealing) of Verses, the instituting of Divine Law and the arrangement of teachings, through excessive occupation and intensive attraction there remains no condition or time for eating and drinking. For example, when His Holiness Moses went to Mount Tur (Sinai) and there engaged in instituting the Law of God, He fasted forty days. For the purpose of awakening and admonishing the people of Israel, fasting was enjoined upon them.

"Likewise, His Holiness Christ, in the beginning of instituting the Spiritual Law, the systematizing of the teachings and the arrangement of counsels, for forty days abstained from eating and drinking. In the beginning the disciples and Christians fasted. Later the assemblages of the chief Christians changed fasting into lenten observances.

"Likewise the Koran having descended in the month of Ramazan, fasting during that month became a duty.

"In like manner His Holiness the Supreme (the Bab), in the beginning of the Manifestation through the excessive effect of descending verses, passed days in which His nourishment was reduced to tea only.

"Likewise, the Blessed Beauty (Baha'o'llah), when busy with instituting the Divine Teachings and during the days when the Verses (The Word of God) descended continuously, through the great effect of the Verses and the throbbing of the heart, took no food except the least amount.

"The purpose is this: In order to follow the Divine Manifestations and for the purpose of admonition and the commemoration of their state, it became incumbent upon the people to fast during those days. For every sincere soul who has a beloved longs to experience that state in which his beloved is. If his beloved is in a state of sorrow, he desires sorrow; if in a state of joy, he desires joy; if in a state of rest, he desires rest; if in a state of trouble, he desires trouble.

"Now, since in this Millennial Day, His Holiness the Supreme (the Bab) fasted many days, and the Blessed Beauty (Baha'o'llah) took but little food or drink, it becomes necessary that the friends should follow that example...."
(From Table Talks by 'Abdu'l-Baha, by Mrs. Corinne True: Star of the West, Vol. IV, No. 18, p. 305)

780. Travellers Are Exempt from Fasting—If One Eats Unconsciously, Fast is

Not Broken
"Regarding your question concerning the Fast: Travellers are exempt from fasting, but if they want to fast while they are travelling, they are free to do so. You are exempt the whole period of your travel, not just the hours you [236] are in a train or car, etc. If one eats unconsciously during the fasting hours, this is not breaking the Fast as it is an accident. The age limit is seventy years, but if one desires to fast after the age limit is passed, and is strong enough to, one is free to do so. If during the Fast period a person falls ill and is unable to fast, but recovers before the Fast period is over, he can start to Fast again and continue until the end. Of course the Fast, as you know, can only be kept during the month set aside for that purpose."
(Shoghi Effendi: Principles of Baha'i Administration, pp. 9-10)

781. Fasting in High Latitudes
"It is true that Baha'u'llah has ordained in the Kitab-i-Aqdas that in the high latitudes where the duration of days and nights varies considerably clocks should be relied upon rather than the rising and setting of the sun. However, we feel that Dublin is too far south for the application of this law. You should thus judge the end of each day by the actual sunset."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, August 8, 1969)

782. Smoking is a Form of Drinking
"In one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha, after stating that fasting consists of abstinence from food and drink, categorically says that smoking is a form of 'drink'. (In Arabic the verb 'drink' applies equally to smoking.)
"In the East, therefore, the friends abstain from smoking during the hours of fasting, and friends from the East living in the West do likewise. But, as stated in our letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, this application of the Divine Law has not been extended to the friends in the West for the present, and therefore it should not be made an issue."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 15, 1972)

783. Observance of Fast When Attending Military School
"With reference to your son's request for advice regarding the observance of the Baha'i fast: Much as the Guardian realizes the difficulty which a believer of his position, attending a military school, will have to encounter if he wishes to strictly conform to the regulations of the fast, he nevertheless would advise him to make every effort to obtain from the school authorities the necessary permission. In case his request is refused the only alternative for him would be to obey his superiors."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 27, 1938)

784. Prayer for the Fast
"O God! as I am fasting from the appetites of the body and not occupied with eating and drinking, even so purify and make holy my heart and my life from aught else save Thy Love, and protect and preserve my soul from self-passions

and animal traits. Thus may the spirit associate with the Fragrances of Holiness and fast from everything else save Thy mention."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. IV, No. 18, p. 305)

XVIII. FEAR

[237] 785. Fear of God and Sense of Shame Protect Man from Unseemly Conduct
"...Verily I say: The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation. Indeed, there existeth in man a faculty which deterreth him from, and guardeth him against, whatever is unworthy and unseemly, and which is known as his sense of shame. This, however, is confined to but a few; all have not possessed and do not possess it."
(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, 1978 ed., p. 63)

786. Teach Children the Fear of God Through Concept of Oneness and the Laws
"That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the Laws of God. For lacking this the fear of God cannot be inculcated, and lacking the fear of God an infinity of odious and abominable actions will spring up, and sentiments will be uttered that transgress all bounds...."
(Baha'u'llah: Baha'i Education: A Compilation, p. 6, compiled by the Universal House of Justice)

787. The Knowledge which Will Largely Eliminate Fear
"In the treasuries of the knowledge of God there lieth concealed a knowledge which, when applied, will largely, though not wholly, eliminate fear. This knowledge, however, should be taught from childhood, as it will greatly aid in its elimination. Whatever decreaseth fear increaseth courage...."
(Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 32)

788. Lack of Faith in Immortality is a Cause of Fear, Weakened Will Power and Human Degradation
"The conception of annihilation is a factor in human degradation, fear and abjection. It has been conducive to the dispersion and weakening of human thought whereas the realization of existence and continuity has upraised man to sublimity of ideals, established the foundations of human progress and stimulated the development of heavenly virtues; therefore it behoves man to abandon thoughts of non-existence and death, which are absolutely imaginary and see himself ever living, everlasting in the divine purpose of his creation. He must turn away from ideas which degrade the human soul, so that day by day and hour by hour he may advance upward and higher to spiritual perception of the continuity of the human reality. If he dwells on the thought of non-existence he will become utterly incompetent; with weakened will-power his ambition for progress will be lessened and the acquisition of human virtues will cease."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i World Faith, 1971 ed., p. 265)

[238] 789. Meaning of the Term "Fear of God"

"You have asked the exact meaning of the term 'Fear of God' mentioned in Baha'i Sacred Writings: It often means awe, but has also other connotations such as reverence, terror and fear."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 13, 1940)

"We have no way of knowing what science Baha'u'llah meant when He said it would largely eliminate fear; as no further mention of it was ever made in the teachings, the Guardian cannot identify anything with this statement. To do so would depart from his function as interpreter of the teachings; he cannot reveal anything apart from the given teachings."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 30, 1952)

790. Explaining Fear of God to Children
"In explaining the fear of God to children, there is no objection to teaching it as 'Abdu'l-Baha so often taught everything, in the form of parables. Also the child should be made to understand that we don't fear God because He is cruel, but we fear Him because He is just, and, if we do wrong and deserve to be punished, then in His justice He may see fit to punish us. We must both love God and fear Him."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 15, 1957)

791. Fear Does Not Solve Problems
"He does not feel that fear—for ourselves or for others—solves any problem, or enables us to better meet it if it ever does arise. We do not know what the future holds exactly, or how soon we may all pass through another ordeal worse than the last one.

"But what we do know is that all we can do as Baha'is is to teach and to exemplify the Faith. We cannot bear the burden of suffering of others, and we should not try to. All men are in God's hands, and even if they do get killed we know there is another life beyond this than can hold great hope and happiness for the soul.

"No matter what happens, nothing is as important as our feeling of trust in God, our inner peacefulness and faith that all, in the end, in spite of the severity of the ordeals we may pass through, will come out as Baha'u'llah has promised.

"He urges you to put these dark thoughts from your mind, and remember that if God, the Creator of all men, can bear to see them suffer so, it is not for us to question His wisdom. He can compensate the innocent, in His own way, for the afflictions they bear."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 30, 1950)

792. Overcoming Fear
"He will certainly pray that you may entirely overcome your fear-complex. When

you concentrate your thoughts on realizing that you now belong to Baha'u'llah, [239] are His servant whom He loves and will always help, if you ask Him to, and that the great spiritual strength of the Cause of God is behind you for you to draw upon, you will soon see your fears melting away."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer: High Endeavors, Messages to Alaska, p. 70)

793. Forget Fears, Teach and Serve the Faith
"The Guardian urges you to forget all your fears, and with a tranquil heart and radiant spirit, to teach and serve the Faith all you can in Yonkers and its vicinity, while depending on God for your guidance and help. The teaching work is of the utmost importance in these days, and whoever engages in it will be reinforced by the Hosts on High."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 31, 1953)

794. Fear of God—Human Beings Need Element of Fear
"You ask him about the fear of God: perhaps the friends do not realize that the majority of human beings need the element of fear in order to discipline their conduct? Only a relatively very highly evolved soul would always be disciplined by love alone. Fear of punishment, fear of the anger of God if we do evil, are needed to keep people's feet on the right path. Of course we should love God—but we must fear Him in the sense of a child fearing the righteous anger and chastisement of a parent; not cringe before Him as before a tyrant, but know His mercy exceeds His Justice!"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 26, 1946: Baha'i Education, A Compilation, compiled by the Universal House of Justice)

XIX. THE NINETEEN DAY FEAST

A. Nature and Function

[240] 795. Purpose of the Nineteen Day Feast
"...The main purpose of the Nineteen Day Feasts is to enable individual believers to offer any suggestion to the Local Assembly which in its turn will pass it to the National Spiritual Assembly. The Local Assembly is, therefore, the proper medium through which local Baha'i communities can communicate with the body of the national representatives...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, November 18, 1933: The Nineteen Day Feast, p. 24, A Compilation from the Universal House of Justice)

796. The Lord's Supper—The Nineteen Day Feast
"You must continue to keep the Nineteen Day Feast. It is very important; it is very good. But when you present yourselves in the meetings, before entering them, free yourselves from all that you have in your heart, free your thoughts and your minds from all else save God, and speak to your heart. That all may make this a gathering of love, make it the cause of illumination, make it a gathering of attraction of the hearts, surround this gathering with the Lights

of the Supreme Concourse, so that you may be gathered together with the utmost love.

"Each one of you must think how to make happy and pleased the other members of your Assembly, and each one must consider all those who are present as better and greater than himself, and each one must consider himself less than the rest. Know their station as high, and think of your own station as low."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. IV, No. 7, p. 120)

797. 'Abdu'l-Baha is Present in Heart and Soul
"Make ye an effort in every meeting that the Lord's Supper may become realised and the heavenly food descend. This heavenly food is knowledge, understanding, faith, assurance, love, affinity, kindness, purity of purpose, attraction of hearts and the union of souls.... When the meeting is conducted after this manner, then 'Abdu'l-Baha also is present in heart and soul, though His body may not be with you."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i World Faith, pp. 407-408)

798. Attendance at Nineteen Day Feasts Not Obligatory
"Attendance at Nineteen Day Feasts is not obligatory but very important, and every believer should consider it a duty and a privilege to be present on such occasions."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 15, 1947: Baha'i News, No. 210, p. 3, August 1948)

[241] 799. If Feasts Be Held in Proper Fashion...
"As to the Nineteen Day Feast, it rejoiceth mind and heart. If this feast be held in the proper fashion, the friends will, once in nineteen days, find themselves spiritually restored, and endued with a power that is not of this world."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 91)

800. Prophecies About Feasts
"...This is that 'divine table' (or food) of which mention is made in the prophecies: 'On that day they shall gather together at the divine table', and 'people shall come from the East and the West and arrive in His Kingdom'."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. II, p. 422, 1940 ed.)

801. Visitors Can Take Part in Consultation, They Cannot Vote
"As to visitors to a Nineteen Day Feast, Baha'is from anywhere in the world should of course be warmly welcomed, and may take part in consultation. However, only members of the local community can vote on recommendations to the Local Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, December 1, 1968)

802. Omit Consultative Part of Feast if Non-Baha'i Appears
"The rule that only Baha'is may take part in Nineteen Day Feasts is not a new one, indeed it was often reiterated by the beloved Guardian. However, when a non-Baha'i does appear at a Feast he should not be asked to leave; rather the

Assembly should omit the consultative part of the Feast, and the non-Baha'i should be made welcome. Of course, if the non-Baha'i is well known to the Baha'is and no hurt feelings would be caused, he might be asked to retire during the consultative part. In general, however, it is much better to avoid such problems where possible, and you seem to have taken the wisest course during your friends' last visit by taking them out for the evening, so avoiding the problem.

"During the period of consultation the Baha'is should be able to enjoy perfect freedom to express their views on the work of the Cause, unembarrassed by the feeling that all they are saying is being heard by someone who has not accepted Baha'u'llah and who might, thereby, gain a very distorted picture of the Faith. It would also be very embarrassing for any sensitive non-Baha'i to find himself plunged into the midst of a discussion of the detailed affairs of a Baha'i Community of which he is not a part."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 24, 1970)

803. Voting Rights Cannot Be Removed for Failure to Attend Feast
"The Guardian has never heard of any ruling by which a believer who does not attend three consecutive 19 Day Feasts can be deprived of his voting rights. He does not consider that such action is justifiable at all. The whole question is whether a person considers himself a Baha'i or not, and is willing to adhere [242] to the principles of the Faith and accept the authority of the Guardian and the Administration—whether that individual is able, or always in a condition psychologically to attend Feasts and Baha'i meetings is an entirely different subject...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, March 2, 1951)

804. Non-Baha'i Attendance at Nineteen Day Feast
"With regard to the attendance of non-Baha'is at a Nineteen Day Feast, you can explain to ... the essentially domestic, administrative nature of the Nineteen Day Feast.... The Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf on 21 September, 1946:

'As regards your question concerning Nineteen Day Feasts ... as to non-Baha'is attending, this should by all means be avoided, but if non-believers come to a Nineteen Day Feast, they should not be put out, as this might hurt their feelings.'

"This is why, if a non-Baha'i does appear at a Nineteen Day Feast he should be made to feel welcome, but a Baha'i should certainly not invite a non-Baha'i to attend.

"A non-Baha'i who asks to be invited to a Feast will usually understand if this matter is explained to him."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, March 13, 1967)

805. The Nineteen Day Feast for Baha'is Exclusively—No Variation from this Principle Permitted

"The beloved Guardian has instructed me to write you concerning an action recently taken by your National Assembly, as published in your January-February Baha'i News, that non-Baha'is may attend 19 Day Feasts if 'the earnestness of their interest in the Faith' is vouched for by a declared believer.

"The Guardian wishes me to direct your attention to the fact that none of the institutions of the Faith nor its cardinal principles may be changed under any circumstances.

"The 19 Day Feast is an institution of the Cause, first established by the Bab, later confirmed by Baha'u'llah, and now made a prominent part of the administrative order of the Faith. These 19 Day Feasts are for the Baha'is, and the Baha'is exclusively, and no variation from this principle is permitted.

"Thus the Guardian feels you should rescind the action taken by your Assembly in opening the Feasts to 'near Baha'is', as it is not consistent with the spirit of the administrative order for non-Baha'is or near Baha'is to attend the 19 Day Feasts, particularly the administrative portion of the Feast."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, May 28, 1954: The Nineteen Day Feast, November 1975)

806. Baha'i Groups, Isolated Believers and Friends Should Observe the Nineteen Day Feast

"In reply to your letter of November 8th we feel that all friends, whatever their circumstances, should be encouraged to observe the Nineteen Day Feast. [243] Obviously it can only be an official administrative occasion where there is a Local Spiritual Assembly to take charge of it, present reports to the friends, and receive their recommendations. But groups, spontaneous gatherings of friends, and even isolated believers should certainly remember the day and say prayers together. In the case of a group it may well hold the Feast in the manner in which a Local Spiritual Assembly would do so, recognizing of course that it has no official administrative standing."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, December 1, 1968, Baha'i Journal of the British Isles, No. 190, March-April 1969)

807. Where Nineteen Day Feast Should Be Held

"The matter of where the Nineteen Day Feasts should be held is certainly one for the Spiritual Assembly to decide; but the Haziratu'l-Quds seems the logical place on most occasions. Until the friends have a place of worship ... this building will also be used for devotional meetings, as well as for administrative purposes.

"If under some circumstances, some special Feast is offered in the home of one of the believers, with the approval of the Spiritual Assembly, there can be no objection; but, generally speaking, he feels it is better to use the Haziratu'l-Quds."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 18, 1954: The Nineteen Day Feast, p. 31)

808. The Owner of the House Must Personally Serve
"...The owner of the house must personally serve the beloved ones. He must seek after the comfort of all and with the utmost humility he must show forth kindness to every one. If the Feast is arranged in this manner and in the way mentioned, that supper is the 'Lord's Supper', for the result is the same result and the effect is the same effect."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. II, pp. 468-469)

809. Children Up to Age Fifteen Permitted to Attend Feasts
"Up to the age of fifteen, children of Baha'i parents are considered to be Baha'is and are permitted to attend such functions as Feasts. Upon reaching the age of fifteen, however, the child must make his own declaration of faith if he wishes to continue as a Baha'i. Again, the mechanics of enrollment are left to the discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, March 27, 1968)

810. District Nineteen Day Feasts
"Each city will have its own Spiritual Assembly, not a number of district ones. Naturally, district 19 Day Feasts can be held where there are very many Baha'is in one city."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 31, 1949: The Nineteen Day Feast, p. 29)

B. Time for Holding Nineteen Day Feast

[244] 811. Time for Holding the Nineteen Day Feast
"We have your letter of October 12, 1971 concerning the date for the holding of the Nineteen Day Feast. It is preferable that Nineteen Day Feasts be held on the first day of the Baha'i month, but if it should be difficult to do so, it is permissible to hold it on a succeeding day of the Baha'i month. The matter is left to the discretion of the Local Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Teaching Committee of Iceland, October 28, 1971, Australian Baha'i Bulletin, No. 213, May 1972, p. 7)

812. If Feast Clashes with Regular Day for Public Meeting
"The Nineteen Day Feast should be held, preferably, on the first day of the Baha'i month, that is to say the Baha'i day, beginning at sunset. If this is not possible for some good reason, for example that it clashes with the regular day for a public meeting, then it may be held later, but it must fall within that same Baha'i month and should be on the nearest possible date."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, August 8, 1969)

813. Feast Should Be Held on Prescribed Day Before Sunset
"Regarding the time for holding of the Nineteen Day Feasts and elections: The

Guardian would advise your Assembly to urge the friends to hold such gatherings on the prescribed day before sunset. If impossible, then it is permissible to hold them on the preceding day...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 24, 1939: Baha'i Meetings, The Nineteen Day Feast, p. 28)

814. Feast Can Be Celebrated During Intercalary Days, Also Month of Fasting
"...relative to the last Nineteen Day Feast, Shoghi Effendi sees no objection if the friends choose to celebrate it on one of the intercalary days. They may also celebrate it during the month of fasting, provided they abstain from food."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 2, 1929)

815. In High Latitudes Permissible to Go by the Clock
"As to whether the celebrating of the Feasts, Holy Days and the Fast should follow the rising and the setting of sun, in the high latitudes it is permissible to go by the clock."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Teaching Committee of Iceland October 28, 1971: Australian Baha'i Bulletin, No. 213, May 1972, p. 7)

816. "Most Suitable" Day for Celebrations of the Nineteen Day Feast
"...You ask if it is within the discretion of a Local Spiritual Assembly, to schedule the Feasts at times other than the first day of a Baha'i month, and point out that attendance was very low when the Feasts were held in the middle of a week, but that when held on a Saturday many more of the friends were [245] able to attend. It seems obvious, therefore, that the intent of the Local Assembly, in loving consideration of the members of its community, was to make the participation in a Nineteen Day Feast available to as many of the believers as possible. Perhaps the Assembly was basing its decision on 'Abdu'l-Baha's statement, taken from the compilation on the Nineteen Day Feast, that the 'object' of the Feast is 'concord, that through this fellowship hearts may become perfectly united...'

"Other passages from that same compilation are:

'This Feast is a bringer of joy. It is the groundwork of agreement and unity.

It is the key to affection and fellowship...

'The believers of God must assemble and associate with each other in the utmost love, joy and fragrance.'

"On the other hand, since the beloved Guardian expressed a preference, and considered it 'most suitable', for the Feast to be held on the first day of each month, the House of Justice hopes that the friends everywhere will aim at scheduling their Nineteen Day Feasts in this way, and that the friends themselves will arrange their personal affairs to be able to attend.

"As in so many aspects of our beloved Faith, this is a matter of the gradual maturing of the Baha'is and of the institutions. The House of Justice feels that you should lovingly guide the Local Assemblies in this matter, but leave it to their discretion for the time being."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, October 10, 1985)

C. Programme for the Nineteen Day Feast

817. Devotional Part of Feast
"The question regarding the devotional part of the Feast has been obscured because once he used the term 'devotional' in its strict sense, which of course means prayer, and once loosely, in the sense in which the Baha'is usually understand it, and that is the meeting together and reading from the teachings which precedes the administrative—or consultative—aspect of the 19 Day Feast. The two statements in no way change the method of holding this part of the Feast which, in the East at any rate, is always opened with prayers and afterwards Tablets and excerpts from Baha'u'llah's, or the Master's or the Guardian's writings may be read or, for that matter, the Bible or the Qur'an quoted."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 11, 1949: Baha'i Meetings, The Nineteen Day Feast, p. 30)

818. Programme for Devotions Outlined
"Concerning the matter of the devotions at Nineteen Day Feasts. We see no contradiction in the three statements of the beloved Guardian. In essence they all describe exactly the same procedure, namely, that the Feast is opened with devotional readings, that is to say prayers and meditations, from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and the Master. Following these passages may be read from other Tablets, from the Holy Scriptures of previous Dispensations, and from the writings of the Guardian. It is clear, however, that the beloved Guardian would not wish his own words to be read as part of an arranged devotional programme in which they would [246] be interspersed among words of Holy Scripture. In other words, at the Nineteen Day Feast, where words of the Guardian are to be read they should follow any selections from the Scriptures and not be mixed with them. This does not mean, however, that subsequently in the Feast, any of these types of writings may not be read as suitable during the consultation."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause of God, August 25, 1965: cited in a letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 15, 1972)

819. Writings which Can Be Read in Spiritual Part of Feast
"The Writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah can certainly be read any time at any place; likewise the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha are read freely during the spiritual part of the Feast. The Guardian has instructed that during the spiritual part of the Feast, his own writings should not be read. In other words, during the spiritual part of the Feast, readings should be confined to

the Writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and to a lesser extent, of the Master; but during that part of the Feast the Guardian's writings should not be read. During the period of administrative discussion of the Feast, then the Guardian's writings may be read. Of course, during the administrative part of the Feast there can be no objection to the reading of the Writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 27, 1956: Ibid., p. 9)

820. Reading from Writings of the Guardian at Feast in Persia
"Concerning the permissibility of reading selections from the writings of the beloved Guardian at Nineteen Day Feasts in Persia: It is true, as you rightly point out, that the beloved Guardian in a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States stated that only the Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha should be read during the devotional part of the Nineteen Day Feast....

"...it should be borne in mind that the Persian writings of Shoghi Effendi are unique in nature, and many of them, unlike his English letters and messages addressed to the western believers, are interspersed with supplications, prayers and homilies of a devotional character which are suitable for the spiritual part of Baha'i Feasts."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 15, 1972)

821. Advisable to Read from Our Own Holy Writings
"First, he feels that although in principle there is certainly no reason why excerpts from other Sacred Scriptures should not be read in the spiritual part of our Feasts, that as this is particularly an occasion when Baha'is get together to deepen their own spiritual life, it is, generally speaking, advisable for them to read from their own holy Writings in the spiritual part of the Feast."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 18, 1954: Baha'i Meetings and the Nineteen Day Feast, p. 31, Wilmette, 1976)

822. Music at Baha'i Feasts
"Music is permitted during the spiritual part—or any part—of the 19 Day Feast."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 30, 1952: Ibid.)

[247] 823. Advisable Believers Make Use of Hymns, Poems and Chants
"With regard to your question concerning the use of music in the Nineteen Day Feasts, he wishes you to assure all the friends that not only he approves of such a practice, but thinks it even advisable that the believers should make use, in their meetings, of hymns composed by Baha'is themselves, and also of such hymns, poems and chants as are based on the Holy Words."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer,

April 7, 1935: Ibid., p. 5)

824. Instrumental Music May Be Used at Feasts
"Instrumental music may be used at the Baha'i Feasts.

"There is no objection to showing appreciation by the clapping of hands.

"If an individual has a teaching appointment on the same evening as a 19 Day Feast, it is left to the individual to judge which is the most important."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 20, 1956: Ibid., p. 33)

825. Shoghi Effendi Provided for the Period of Consultation
"...In the Arabic Bayan the Bab called upon His followers to gather together once every nineteen days to show hospitality and fellowship. Baha'u'llah here confirms this and notes the unifying role of such occasions.

"Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi after Him have gradually unfolded the institutional significance of this injunction. 'Abdu'l-Baha emphasized the importance of the spiritual and devotional character of these gatherings. Shoghi Effendi, besides further elaborating the devotional and social aspects of the Feast, has developed the administrative element of such gatherings and, in systematically instituting the Feast, has provided for a period of consultation on the affairs of the Baha'i community, including the sharing of news and messages.
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas: N. 82, p. 202)

826. Consultation in the Nineteen Day Feast*
"The Baha'is must learn to forget personalities and to overcome the desire—so natural in people—to take sides and fight about it. They must also learn to really make use of the great principle of consultation. There is a time set aside at the 19 Day Feasts for the community to express its views and make suggestions to its Assembly; the Assembly and the believers should look forward to this happy period of discussion, and neither fear it nor suppress it. Likewise, the Assembly members should fully consult, and in their decisions put the interest of the Cause first and not personalities, the will of the majority prevailing."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, June 30, 1949: Baha'i Meetings; The Nineteen Day Feast, p. 30)

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*(See also: No. 288)

827. Selling of Items at the Nineteen Day Feast
"As to the sale of items during the Nineteen Day Feast, we leave this to your discretion, bearing in mind that the principal purpose of holding the Feast should not be diverted and that pressure should not be placed upon the friends to participate in the purchase of articles offered for sale. Neither should it become an habitual thing. It would be better if the sale was not conducted during the Feast itself, but held at a separate time before or after the Feast

proper."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, April 1, 1968)

XX. FIRESIDES

[248] 828. Firesides More Effective Than Publicity
"...I would like to comment that it has been found over the entire world that the most effective method of teaching the Faith is the fireside meeting in the home. Every Baha'i as a part of his spiritual birthright, must teach, and the one avenue where he can do this most effectively is by inviting friends into his home once in 19 days, and gradually attracting them to the Cause. After the individuals have confidence in the pioneer, and the pioneer in the individuals, then they can be taught and confirmed in the Faith. This method is far more effective than advertising in newspapers, public lectures etc. The Guardian is encouraging the believers over the world, including those on the home fronts, to engage in this method of teaching."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Baha'i Group of Key West, Florida, March 31, 1955: Baha'i News, No. 292, pp. 9-10)

829. Must Hold Fireside in Home Once in 19 Days
"The friends must realize their individual responsibility. Each must hold a Fireside in his or her home, once in 19 days, where new people are invited, and where some phase of the Faith is mentioned and discussed. If this is done with the intent of showing Baha'i hospitality and love, then there will be results. People will become interested in 'what' you are interested in, and then be interested in studying. Individual firesides will bring the knowledge of the Faith to more people, under favourable circumstances, and thus constantly enrich its circle of friends, and finally its members. There is no substitute for the teaching work of the individual."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 6, 1957: Baha'i News, No. 317, July 1957, p. 4)

830. Service Once Rendered by Priest is the Service a Baha'i is Expected to Render Individually to His Religion
"The believers must be encouraged to teach individually in their own homes. Baha'u'llah has enjoined upon the Baha'is the sacred obligation of teaching. We have no priests, therefore the service once rendered by priests to their religions is the service every single Baha'i is expected to render individually to his religion. He must be the one who enlightens new souls, confirms them, heals the wounded and the weary upon the road of life, gives them to quaff from the chalice of everlasting life—the knowledge of the Manifestation of God in His Day."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries, July 5, 1957)

831. That Home is a Garden of God
"Blessed art thou for having opened the door of thy home unto the people to come and hear of the Kingdom...

[249] "Know that in every home where God is praised and prayed to, and His Kingdom proclaimed, that home is a garden of God and a paradise of His happiness."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. I, p. 68)

832. Fireside in Home is Example of Individual Goal
"...It is now imperative for every Baha'i to set for himself individual teaching goals. The admonition of 'Abdu'l-Baha to lead at least one new soul to the Faith each year and the exhortation of Shoghi Effendi to hold a Baha'i fireside in one's home every Baha'i month are examples of individual goals. Many have capacities to do even more, but this alone will assure final and complete victory for the Plan."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, November 16, 1969: Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 35)

833. Must Aid New Believers to Become "True Baha'is"—Then Introduce Them to the Community
"...One of the best ways to teach is what the Americans call a 'fireside', in other words a little group of your friends in your own home, to whom you can introduce a few believers whom you feel would be congenial and help confirm them. When you have made them true Baha'is, then take them to the community and let them be accepted. In this way they are protected from tests until their faith is really strong."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 18, 1950)

834. The Holy Spirit Quickens Friends—Must Become Channels for Its Diffusion
"...The fireside method of teaching seems to produce the greatest results; when each one invites friends into their homes once in 19 days, and introduces them to the Faith. Close association and loving service affects the hearts; and when the heart is affected, then the spirit can enter. It is the Holy Spirit that quickens, and the Friends must become channels for its diffusion."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 27, 1957)

XXI. THE BAHA'I FUND

A. Contributions—Responsibility of Baha'is

[250] 835. To Give and to be Generous
"...To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues."
(Baha'u'llah: The Hidden Words, Persian No. 49)

836. God Does Not Ask from Any Soul Except According to His Ability
"...God does not ask from any soul except according to his ability. This contribution must come from all cities and villages from all the believers of God...

"...whosoever comes with one good act, God will give him tenfold. There is no

doubt that the living Lord shall assist and confirm the generous soul."
('Abdu'l-Baha to the friends in the East and the West: Star of the West, Vol. VI, No. 17, p. 139)

837. Responsibility of Every Baha'i
"...Every Baha'i, no matter how poor, must realize what a grave responsibility he has to shoulder in this connection, and should have confidence that his spiritual progress as a believer in the World Order of Baha'u'llah will largely depend upon the measure in which he proves, in deeds, his readiness to support materially the Divine institutions of his Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, July 17, 1937: Extracts from a compilation of the Guardian's letters on Baha'i Funds and Contributions published in Baha'i Funds: Contributions and Administration, Canada)

838. There Can Be No Limit to One's Contributions
"...There can be no limit to one's contributions to the national fund. The more one can give the better it is, specially when such offerings necessitate the sacrifice of other wants and desires on the part of the donor. The harder the sacrifice the more meritorious will it be, of course, in the sight of God. For after all it is not so much the quantity of one's offerings that matters, but rather the measure of deprivation that such offerings entail...."
(From a letter of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 31, 1935: Life-blood of the Cause, p. 10)

839. Service Every Believer Can Render
"...Contributing to the Fund is a service that every believer can render, be he poor or wealthy; for this is a spiritual responsibility in which the amount given is not important. It is the degree of the sacrifice of the giver, the love with which he makes his gift, and the unity of all the friends in this service which bring spiritual confirmations....

[251] "Much of the present rapid expansion of the Faith is taking place in areas of great poverty where the believers, however much they sacrifice, cannot produce sufficient funds to sustain the work. It is these very areas which are the most fruitful in teaching, and a sum of money spent here will produce ten times—even a hundred times—the results obtainable in other parts of the world. Yet in the past months the Universal House of Justice has had to refuse a number of appeals for assistance from such areas because there just was not enough money in the International Fund.

"It should therefore be the aim of every local and national community to become not only self-supporting, but to expend its funds with such wisdom and economy as to be able to contribute substantially to the Baha'i International Fund, thus enabling the House of Justice to aid the work in fruitful but impoverished areas, to assist new National Assemblies to start their work, to contribute to major international undertakings...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to Baha'is of the East and West, December 18, 1963: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 19-20)

840. Commerce, Agriculture and Industries Blessed Many Times
"In brief, O ye friends of God, rest assured that in place of this contribution, your commerce, your agriculture and industries shall be blessed many times...."
('Abdu'l-Baha to the friends in the East and the West: Star of the West, Vol. VI, No. 17, p. 139)

841. Believers Alone Have Bounty of Contributing
"The overwhelming majority of the Baha'is in the world are poor people, but it is to the believers, and to the believers alone, that Baha'u'llah has given the bounty of contributing the material things of this world for the progress of His Faith. It is not the amount of the contribution which is important, but the degree of self-sacrifice that it entails—for it is this that attracts the confirmations of God."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies receiving assistance from the Baha'i International Fund, April 13, 1975)

842. Should Not Incur Debts for Purpose of Contributing to Fund
"Even though Shoghi Effendi would urge every believer to sacrifice as much as possible for the sake of contributing towards the fund of the National Assembly, yet he would discourage the friends to incur debts for that purpose. We are asked to give what we have, not what we do not possess, especially if such an act causes suffering to others. In such matters we should use judgement and wisdom and take into our confidence other devoted Baha'is."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, dated May 4, 1932, to an individual believer: Baha'i Funds: Contributions and Administration, Canada, p. 7)

B. Those Eligible to Contribute

843. Distinguishing Features of the Cause of God
"One of the distinguishing features of the Cause of God is its principle of non-acceptance of financial contributions for its own purposes from non-Baha'is: support of the Baha'i Fund is a bounty reserved by Baha'u'llah to His declared followers. This bounty imposes full responsibility for financial support of the Faith [252] on the believers alone, every one of whom is called upon to do his utmost to ensure that the constant and liberal outpouring of means is maintained and increased to meet the growing needs of the Cause. Many Baha'i communities are at present dependent on outside help, and for them the aim must be to become self-supporting, confident that the Generous Lord will, as their efforts increase, eventually enable them to offer for the progress of His Faith material wealth as well as their devotion, their energy and love."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Naw-Ruz 1974)

844. Giving to the Fund is a Spiritual Privilege
"Giving to the Fund, therefore, is a spiritual privilege, not open to those who have not accepted Baha'u'llah, of which no believer should deny himself. It is

both a responsibility and a source of bounty. This is an aspect of the Cause which, we feel, is an essential part of the basic teaching and deepening of new believers. The importance of contributing resides in the degree of sacrifice of the giver, the spirit of devotion with which the contribution is made and the unity of the friends in this service; these attract the confirmations of God and enhance the dignity and self-respect of the individuals and the community."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, August 7, 1985)

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

846. Those Who Openly Proclaim Recognition of Baha'u'llah Permitted to Contribute
"...Since only those who have openly proclaimed their recognition of Baha'u'llah are permitted to contribute financially to the establishment of His world order, it is apparent that more, much more, is required from the few now so privileged. Our responsibilities in this field are very great, commensurate indeed with the bounty of being the bearers of the Name of God in this Day."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1966)

847. They Must Create a Sense of Belonging
"As it has already been pointed out, in various communications to you, it is important for the National Spiritual Assemblies to work out ways and means of creating a sense of belonging in the hearts of the believers. One of the ways this can be done is to bring to their attention the needs of the Fund."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to various National Spiritual Assemblies, February 9, 1967)

[253] 848. Contributions from Children of Non-Baha'is or in Case One Parent is Baha'i
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter asking whether children of non-Baha'is or children one of whose parents is a Baha'i are allowed to contribute to Baha'i funds, and we have been asked to say that in both cases, if the child wishes to be a Baha'i and his parents do not object, he may be treated as any other Baha'i child. However, if the parents object to their child's being a Baha'i, his contribution may be accepted for charitable purposes, including use for Baha'i schools where both Baha'is and non-Baha'is are accepted as pupils."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, August 31, 1975)

849. Selling Items for the Benefit of the Baha'i Fund
"As to the sale of personal items for the benefit of Baha'i funds, we begin with the principle that any believer may sell personal services or goods to anyone and do with the proceeds as he wishes, including giving any or all of them to Baha'i purposes. In doing so, however, he should not represent to non-Baha'is that such a sale is for the benefit of a Baha'i fund as it is also a principle that it is improper to solicit funds from non-Baha'is in the name of the Faith for any purpose. This includes the sale of food and admission to entertainment."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, April 1, 1968)

850. It is Not Proper for a Baha'i Institution to Sponsor a Fund-Raising Sale Open to Public
"...Neither do we think it is proper for a Baha'i institution to sponsor a 'garage sale' of personal items contributed by believers for the benefit of a Baha'i fund. This is not to say that an Assembly may not sell items of property to non-Baha'is for fair market value, but rather that non-Baha'is should not be led to purchase items at a fund-raising sale on the representation that the proceeds are to be used for Baha'i purposes."
(Ibid.)

851. Auctions Among Baha'is—Contributing to the Fund is a Spiritual Responsibility
"There is no objection to the friends' holding an auction among Baha'is for the purpose of contributing the proceeds to the fund, nor is there any objection to Baha'is selling their own property to non-Baha'is for its fair market value and later contributing the proceeds to the fund, although no representation should be made at the sale about the proceeds going to the Baha'i fund. The House of Justice feels, however, that it is important for the friends never to lose sight of the fact that contributing to the funds of the Faith is a spiritual responsibility and privilege of profound significance in the spiritual life of the individual believer, and care must be taken not to trivialize this aspect of Baha'i life or to treat it with a lack of dignity. At the same time, the Assemblies should not dampen the enthusiasm of those friends who, having only slender financial resources, devise imaginative ways of earning money for the work of the Faith.

"As your Assembly is considering sponsoring an auction under its direct auspices, the House of Justice suggests that you should ascertain whether the [254] holding of auctions is legally permissible, since we are informed that in some countries it is legal only if conducted by a licensed auctioneer."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Chile, July 8, 1984)

852. Holding of Raffles
"The holding of raffles has not been specifically mentioned in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, and the Universal House of Justice has not legislated on the matter. However, the House of Justice does not at present consider it desirable

for Baha'i institutions to raise funds by this method."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, January 15, 1984)

853. Guidelines Towards Establishing a Business Venture Owned by Baha'is
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 15 February concerning the proposal by a number of Baha'is to establish a private company whose shares would be owned by Baha'is and which would be managed for the financial profit of the friends and of the Faith. We are instructed to transmit its advice.

"Your objective to generate funds for the Faith is, of course, praiseworthy. In the past, as you may assume, similar proposals have been made to the House of Justice, and the following guidelines may be helpful from a letter to an individual:

'Concerning the formation of a company which you and other friends have suggested, the Universal House of Justice ... has decided that the time has not yet come to have the Baha'i institutions involved in a business transaction in the way which was suggested.

'If the friends, however, are willing, spontaneously, to establish a profitable business in order to benefit themselves as well as the other friends it is meritorious and there is no objection.'

"Should such a business venture as you propose be undertaken—and there is nothing wrong with it in principle—it would be well to advise the Baha'is who participate to approach it on the basis of its viability as a business project and they should not underestimate the possibilities of financial loss.

"The House of Justice feels that the institutions of the Faith should neither themselves become involved in nor promote such a private business. The use of national endowments as collateral for such a business is not permissible."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Jamaica, April 5, 1982)

854. Reasons for Not Accepting Donations from Non-Baha'is for Administration of the Faith
"...He wishes me to stress again that under no circumstances the believers should accept any financial help from non-Baha'is for use in connection with specific administrative activities of the Faith such as the Temple construction fund, and other local or national Baha'i administrative funds. The reason for this is twofold: First because the institutions which the Baha'is are gradually building are in the nature of gifts from Baha'u'llah to the world; and secondly the acceptance of funds from non-believers for specific Baha'i use would, sooner [255] or later, involve the Baha'is into unforeseen complications and difficulties with others, and thus cause incalculable harm to the body of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 12, 1938)

855. Guidelines for Accepting Funds from Governmental and Other Non-Baha'i Sources

"The crucial point in deciding whether or not funds may be accepted from non-Baha'i sources is the purpose for which the funds are to be used. As you know, it is absolutely forbidden in the Faith to accept from non-Baha'is contributions towards the work of the Cause itself. However, in addition to the work of spreading the Faith and establishing its institutions, Spiritual Assemblies also engage in humanitarian activities, and contributions from non-Baha'i sources may be accepted towards such activities. Indeed, although we never ask individual non-Baha'is for funds, it sometimes happens that a person who has a great admiration for the Faith insists on contributing. In such a case the contribution may be accepted, with the express provision that it will be used only for charitable and humanitarian purposes.

"Governments and their agencies occupy a special position because, of course, they are often very willing to assist those who are engaged in humanitarian service. Thus, where a Spiritual Assembly is undertaking a specifically humanitarian activity for which the government normally would supply financial assistance, the Assembly may accept such assistance. The activity that you instance, a meeting being held on behalf of Human Rights Day to advance one of the aims of the United Nations, is a case in point; there would be no objection to your accepting from 'INAC' its offer to pay for the invitation cards on that occasion.

"In relation to schools and other institutions of community service, government assistance is also acceptable, but here the Assembly needs to be aware that the acceptance of government funding often brings with it an obligation to accept a degree of governmental control, and these points must be carefully considered."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, March 6, 1983)

856. Should Recipient of Public Charity Contribute to the Baha'i Fund?

"Concerning your question whether a person is to contribute to the Baha'i Fund when he obtains his means of livelihood through public charity. Practically this is impossible, for a person who is so dependent upon the community cannot be of much help to others. Generally he does not have sufficient even for himself alone. In principle however, this is a secondary issue. Donations to the Cause are free. It is for every person to judge for himself whether he is in a position to contribute and whether he desires to do it; how he has obtained that sum is immaterial. A poor person may be readier than a rich man in sharing with others, and if he does, his sacrifice would be greater. A rich man's gift may not be a sacrifice, but a poor man's is sure to be."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 9, 1932)

C. The Treasurer and the Spiritual Assembly

[256] 857. Trustworthiness—A Prime Requisite for Those Responsible for the Funds

"A primary requisite for all who have responsibility for the care of the funds of the Faith is trustworthiness. This, as Baha'u'llah has stressed, is one of the most basic and vital of all human virtues, and its exercise has a direct and profound influence on the willingness of the believers to contribute to the Fund."
(From a Memorandum of Comments and Suggestions attached to a letter from the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, August 7, 1985)

858. Great Responsibility of Members of the National Spiritual Assembly—Should Require Two Signatures for Withdrawal of Funds
"In view of the great responsibility placed upon the shoulders of the members of National Assemblies by those who elect them, we have urged National Assemblies to exercise the greatest care in the handling of their National Funds particularly as these funds represent in great part acts of sacrifice on the part of the friends. It is, of course, within your discretion how you delegate the manifold tasks involved in the day-to-day operation of your National Assembly but we earnestly urge you to reconsider the resolutions to which we referred and provide that two signatures be required for the withdrawal of funds, one of which would be that of an office-holder who is a member of your National Assembly."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 26, 1973: The Need for Care in Handling Baha'i Funds, A Compilation of extracts published in Baha'i Funds: Contributions and Administration, Canada)

859. The Treasurer of an Assembly Should Never Commingle His Own Funds and Those of the Faith
"...The Treasurer of a Baha'i Spiritual Assembly, even if momentarily holding Baha'i funds in his own name, must take the greatest care never to commingle his own funds with those of the Faith or to leave the funds of the Faith subject to the vagaries of fortune which can afflict any one of us."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 8, 1971: Ibid.)

860. Local Assembly of a Large Community Might Appoint a Committee to Assist Treasurer
"Regarding the local funds, it is suggested that until such time as the friends have developed the habit of contributing regularly and freely, any Local Spiritual Assembly which has a large community might appoint a small committee to assist the local Treasurer in the discharge of his responsibilities. Such committees could be appointed after consultation with the Auxiliary Board member or assistant for the area. Great care must be taken in the appointment of the members of the committees; they must be both trustworthy and conscientious and must be imbued with awareness of the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of contributions to the funds."
(The Universal House of Justice: Development of the Local and National Funds of the Faith: Some Comments and Observations, published in Baha'i Funds:

Contributions and Administration, p. 31, Canada)

861. Treasury Committees, Functions of
"...It is envisaged that these Treasury Committees would serve a number of functions:

—[257] To render general assistance to the Treasurer, as needed; for example members of the committee could assist with issuing receipts or keeping accounts.

—To arrange for inspirational talks and discussions at Nineteen Day Feasts or at specially called meetings for the education of the friends in the spiritual and practical importance of contributing to the funds.

—To receive donations of money on behalf of the local Treasurer and transmit these to him.

—To receive gifts of produce and handicrafts. The committee would be responsible for arranging for their sale and for handing over the proceeds to the local Treasurer.

—To receive from the friends written pledges of their hope or intention of making a contribution to the local or national funds, whether in cash or in kind, and to assist in collecting them."
(Ibid.)

862. National Treasury Committee
"As to the national fund, in those areas where there are problems as a result of lack of banking facilities, unreliable mail systems and general difficulties of communication, it would be desirable for the National Spiritual Assembly to appoint a national committee to assist the national Treasurer in a manner similar to that outlined above for Local Spiritual Assemblies. Further, it may even be necessary to subsidize, from the national fund, one or more trusted individuals, depending on the size of the national community, who would travel to rural areas to meet with local Treasury Committees, assist them in the execution of their functions, explain the needs of the national fund, collect the donations to the national fund from the local areas and transmit them to the national Treasurer."
(Ibid.)

863. The Treasurer is Officer in Charge, but All National Spiritual Assembly Members Are Responsible
"The National Spiritual Assembly has the responsibility to ensure that contributions received are properly receipted, and satisfactory accounts kept of all receipts and disbursements. While the Treasurer normally is the officer in charge of such a sacred obligation, this does not mean that other members are thereby relieved of all responsibility, or are deprived of their right of access to details related to the current operation of the Assembly, in all its aspects.

"Such right and responsibility vested in the individual members of the Assembly

do not vitiate the confidentiality of Baha'i contributions, since the information made available to the Treasurer or other members of the Assembly is to be treated in strict confidence."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 11, 1977: Compilation of Extracts..., op. cit. No. 858)

864. Teach Trustworthiness Through Writings—Explain to Individuals that They Will Be Held Responsible for Money They Handle
"The distressing problems of the misuse of funds described in your letter can be resolved in the long run only through a process of loving education of the friends. It is through the dissemination among the believers of appropriate texts from the Writings of the Faith, through carefully prepared articles on this subject based on [258] the Holy Texts and published in your newsletter, and through talks at conferences, summer schools and other Baha'i gatherings, as well as discussion of these fundamental issues with the friends at such meetings, that you will be able to gradually attain your objective.

"It is important for your Assembly, in future, to explain to persons who are entrusted with the money of the Faith that in view of the National Assembly's obligation to protect Baha'i funds, the Assembly will hold them responsible for all monies they receive, and they should therefore render proper accounts to the National Spiritual Assembly, be faithful custodians of God's trust, and be assured that such honesty and faithfulness will be richly rewarded from on high."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, May 18, 1980: Ibid.)

865. The National Spiritual Assembly Should Require Annual Audit of Treasuer's Accounts
"The House of Justice has not established any uniform procedure for Baha'i treasurers, since methods of accounting and the laws governing such matters vary considerably from country to country and from one situation to another. It advises that on such technical questions the National Assembly's Treasurer can seek the advice of a professional accountant. The National Spiritual Assembly should, of course, ensure that its books of account are audited annually and for this there is no objection to utilizing the services of a non-Baha'i firm."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 13, 1981: Ibid.)

866. Some Guidelines for Treasurers
"In general terms, however, the House of Justice feels that there are certain matters to which National Treasurers should give particular attention.

1. There is the relationship between the National Assembly and the individual believers and local communities. Through whatever correspondence he conducts with contributors to the National Fund and with committees which are drawing on the Fund for their work, the National Treasurer can be a powerful influence in establishing links of loving unity within the community.

2. The Treasurer must be sure to render regular and accurate financial statements to the National Spiritual Assembly so that it can properly plan its work within the means available to it.

3. It is the Treasurer's responsibility to prepare the annual financial report in time for the National Spiritual Assembly to consider it before presenting it at Convention. He also has to prepare the annual budget for the consideration and approval of the National Assembly.

4. The Treasurer should carefully monitor the use of the Fund so that he can warn the Assembly in good time if there is danger of over-spending.

5. In book-keeping, a system must be adopted to ensure that earmarked funds are kept absolutely distinct from those that are at the free disposition of the Assembly, and there should be safeguards to prevent the inadvertent spending of earmarked funds on matters other than those for which they are intended.

6. In addition to keeping accurate records of income and expenditure, the Treasurer should see that the assets of the Assembly are protected and that both assets and liabilities are carefully recorded.

7. [259] The Treasurer should advise the Assembly to set aside sufficient sums on a regular basis to provide for the repair and maintenance of properties owned by the Faith, so that these can be kept in good condition and so that the normal work of the Cause is not interrupted by sudden requirements of large sums for repairs. Usually the task of maintaining the properties is assigned to a special committee or committees, which should be consulted by the Assembly and can suggest a suitable amount to be set aside annually.

8. While it is within the discretion of a National Spiritual Assembly to require only one signature on cheques drawn on the National Fund, experience has shown that it is better practice to require at least two signatures. This is a protection not only to the Fund itself but also to the Treasurer. The funds of the Faith are a sacred trust, and Assemblies should be meticulous in handling and accounting for them."
(Ibid.)

867. Desirable for Assembly to Maintain Financial Reserve
"Since, in the nature of things, the levels of contributions and expenditures fluctuate, it is most desirable for an Assembly to hold a reserve adequate to bridge periods of relatively high expenditure and low income. This will help it to avoid making too frequent appeals for the friends to meet financial emergencies. Frequently issued appeals—as distinct from the regular giving of information—may tend to lose their effect. At a time of emergency, the Assembly may have to dip deeply into its reserves—an action that your Assembly has just taken—but they will need to be built up again in due course."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of France, February 12, 1987)

868. Duty of the National Assembly Not to Allow National Interests to be

Jeopardized by Individual Considerations

"...it should be emphasized and clearly understood by the friends that the national interests and requirements of the Cause take absolute precedence over individual and private needs. It is the duty of the National Spiritual Assembly to so dispose of the national fund as not to allow the national interests of the Faith to be jeopardized by individual considerations that are obviously transient when compared to the lasting interests of the Cause of God. In rare and exceptional cases, when a believer has absolutely no other means of material sustenance, the National Spiritual Assembly may either contribute towards his expenses from the national fund, or make a special appeal to the body of the believers to that effect. It is for the family, the civil community and the Local Assembly to administer to such local and private needs of the individual. But in case none of these sources has the means to do so, the National Spiritual Assembly may, if it is convinced of the gravity, urgency and justice of the case, appropriate a part of its fund for that purpose."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 17, 1937)

869. Assembly Should Neither Feel Embarrassed nor Ashamed in Turning to the Friends

"The National Assembly should neither feel embarrassed nor ashamed in turning to the friends, continuously appealing to them to exemplify their faith and devotion to the Cause by sacrificing for it, and pointing out to them that they will grow [260] spiritually through their acts of self-abnegation, that the fear of poverty should not deter them from sacrificing for the Fund, and that the assistance and bounty of the Source of all good and of all wealth are unfailing and assured...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to selected National Spiritual Assemblies, February 9, 1967)

"A corollary to the sacred obligation of the friends to contribute to the Funds of the Faith, is the direct and unavoidable responsibility of each Local and National Assembly to educate them in the spiritual principles related to Baha'i contributions. Failure to educate the friends in this aspect of the Faith is tantamount to consciously depriving them of the spiritual benefits accruing from giving in the path of God."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies receiving assistance from the Baha'i International Fund, April 13, 1975)

870. The General and National Interests of the Cause Take Precedence Over the Local Ones—But It May Be Expedient to Develop Local Fund First

"The beloved Guardian has explained that the general and national interests of the Cause take precedence over local ones; thus contributions to local funds are secondary to those to national funds. However, the stability of the National Assembly rests on the firmness of the Local Spiritual Assemblies, and in the matter of educating the friends in the importance of the fund, it is often most practical and efficacious to concentrate at first on the development

of the local funds and the efficient operation of the Local Spiritual Assemblies. Then, once the friends understand the principle, and learn from experience at a local level, they will then more easily understand the importance of the national fund and the work of the National Spiritual Assembly."
(From the memorandum of comments and suggestions of the Universal House of Justice, op. cit., No. 858, p. 30)

871. Assembly Obligated to Advise Believers of All Funds*—International, Continental, National and Local
"In educating the friends to be conscious of contributing to the fund as a fundamental element of Baha'i life, the Assembly should make them aware of the individual believer's prerogative of contributing directly to all the funds of the Faith: international, continental and national as well as local."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, February 12, 1987)

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*(See also XXVI. The Institution of the Huququ'llah, Nos. 1031-1044)

872. Contributions Can Be Sent Direct to Haifa
"Would you please remind the believers in your respective communities that in addition to contributing to the International Fund by means of earmarked donations to the National Fund, they can send contributions direct to Haifa. Cheques should be made payable to BAHA'I INTERNATIONAL FUND.

"This continues the policy established by the beloved Guardian who wrote that participation of individuals through 'contributions directly transmitted to the Holy [261] Land' was 'imperative and beyond the scope of the jurisdiction of National and Local Assemblies.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, December 18, 1963)

873. Continental Fund
"Nor should the believers, individually or in their Assemblies, forget the vitally important Continental Funds which provide for the work of the Hands of the Cause of God and their Auxiliary Boards. This divine institution, so assiduously fostered by the Guardian, and which has already played a unique role in the history of the Faith, is destined to render increasingly important services in the years to come."
(From a message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of East and West, December 18, 1963)

874. Pledges Can Be a Useful Means of Encouraging Contributions
"Pledges can be useful as a means of encouraging contributions and of bringing the financial needs of the Cause to the attention of the friends. This method can be particularly helpful in a situation where a Spiritual Assembly has a major task to perform, such as the building of a Haziratu'l-Quds or the establishment of a tutorial school, and needs to have some idea in advance of whether the funds for the project will be available. However, it would be

entirely contrary to Baha'i principles to bring any pressure to bear when calling for pledges or when endeavouring to collect them. Once a pledge has been given it is permissible to remind the donor, privately, of his expressed intention to contribute and to enquire courteously if it would be possible for him to honour his pledge, but Assemblies must be aware that such pledges are not an obligation in any legal sense; their redemption is entirely a matter of conscience. Lists of those making pledges must not be publicized."
(From the memorandum of comments and suggestions of the Universal House of Justice, op. cit., No. 858, p. 30)

875. Friends in Mass Teaching Areas Should Know Their Blessings and Responsibilities
"...The Assemblies should not hesitate, nor be diffident, in speaking of the Fund to the believers. The friends in the mass teaching areas, however poor or illiterate they may be, are full and equal members of the Baha'i community; they should know their blessings and responsibilities. The mighty ones of this world rejected the call of Baha'u'llah, and it is now upon us ordinary men and women that He has conferred the inestimable bounty of raising up the Kingdom of God on earth. Service to God and His Cause is the heart of the life of every true believer and contributing to the Fund is a vital aspect of such service."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, December 29, 1970)

876. "Bring and Buy" Meetings
"...In parts of Africa where the poverty of the friends may be similar to the conditions existing in some parts of your country, the Assemblies organized [262] 'Bring and Buy' meetings to which the friends may bring any material gift, such as eggs, fruit, vegetables, other foodstuffs, or local handicraft. These are placed before the friends, who may buy them at very reasonable prices for the benefit of the Funds. The friends must understand that whilst no Assembly or individual may force the friends to give to the Faith, such giving has been considered in our Teachings as a spiritual obligation and an act of sacrifice, which is closely related to the spiritual development of the individual believer."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, November 27, 1966)

877. Assembly May Sell Contributions in Kind Through a Professional Auctioneer
"There is clearly no objection to an Assembly's giving contributions in kind to a professional auctioneer to sell and then to use the proceeds for the fund. Whether it would be proper to hold such an 'ordinary auction' among Baha'is would depend upon the Assembly's judgement as to whether a properly dignified atmosphere could be observed and also whether it could be construed as bringing pressure to bear upon the friends to contribute which would, of course, be undesirable. In general the House of Justice prefers not to encourage such auctions for the fund."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly cited in a letter to the National Spiritual

Assembly of Malaysia, May 26, 1982)

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

"The House of Justice appreciates the difficult task of educating the Local Assemblies and the believers in the importance of contributing regularly and sacrificially to the Fund and it feels sure that you frequently remind them of the principles of universal participation in this, as well as all other aspects of the Faith, possibly drawing on information contained in your file of circular letters sent from time to time by the House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies on the subject of the Fund."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 30, 1977)

879. Local Spiritual Assembly Decides for Itself How to Use Funds—National Spiritual Assembly Can Only Make a Suggestion
"When a donation is given to a Local Assembly, the Assembly itself should decide how the funds are to be used. The National Assembly may wish to suggest to the Local Spiritual Assembly ways in which the money could be more practically spent, but the final decision regarding the use of such funds rests with the local body.

[263] "National Assemblies should avoid instructing their Local Spiritual Assemblies to allocate a certain percentage or portion of their local funds towards specific purposes. They may, however, suggest that the Local Assemblies contribute funds for priority projects at the national level and may also call to their attention national budget and suggest that the communities try to underwrite a part of the national budget. Any National Assembly is, of course, empowered to prevent an institution under its jurisdiction from taking any action regarding the use of funds which would not be to the best interests of the Cause. Such cases, however, are rare...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 17, 1985)

880. Soliciting Funds from Other Countries
"We are asked to tell you that the present policy of the House of Justice discourages National Assemblies from appealing to one another for financial assistance unless such assistance is related to a project which has been defined as a goal of collaboration between the specific Assemblies concerned. If a National Assembly has adopted plans for specific teaching projects and is

in genuine need of financial support from an outside source, instead of appealing to other National Assemblies it is encouraged to turn to the Continental Board of Counsellors who will consider the plans and request, and provide assistance to the extent feasible from funds made available to them from the World Centre."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 5, 1982)

881. Individual Baha'is Free to Contribute to Projects in Any Country They Wish
"As regards collection of funds in other countries, the House of Justice does not wish Baha'i institutions of any country to appeal for funds to the Baha'is of another country, unless the National Spiritual Assembly of that country permits it. This does not mean that individuals are not free to contribute to a Baha'i project in any country that they wish. For example, if a Baha'i from another country comes to a conference in ... and he wishes to contribute to your school, there would be no objection. However, an organized and indiscriminate appeal for funds to individuals in other countries should not be made without the consent of the National Assembly of that country."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 6, 1985)

D. Earmarked Funds

882. Purpose of Earmarking Funds Should Not Be Defeated
"Care must be taken that the purpose of earmarking is not defeated. Thus the use of earmarked funds to defray the expense of particular items in your budget has the effect of reducing, pro tanto, the amount of general contributions needed to be applied to the budget. In effect, this practice may result in there being no difference between an earmarked contribution and one not earmarked. For example: A friend may earmark a contribution for the Baha'i International Fund. To apply this to the contributions to the Baha'i International funds from your National [264] Fund would be wrong unless the earmarking so specifies. Funds earmarked merely to the Baha'i International Fund should be sent to the World Centre in addition to whatever contribution is made from the National Fund."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 29, 1971: Ibid.)

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

pertaining to the Fund."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 21, 1979)

884. When Earmarked Contribution is Impractical or Unwise...
"1. Although any donor, Assembly or individual, has the right to specify the purpose intended for any contribution of funds or property, if, in the judgement of your National Assembly, such contribution would be impractical or unwise for you to accept, you would be under no obligation to do so.

"2. If after consultation with the donor an agreement is not reached that you deem necessary, or you are unable to have the specified donation assigned to a more practicable purpose, the contribution should be returned to the donor."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 22, 1980: Ibid.)

885. Proceeds from Sale of Property Purchased with Earmarked Funds Retain Same Earmarking
"As to the proceeds from the sale of Baha'i property, if it was acquired by the use of the general funds of the Faith and no earmarking of contributions is involved, the only principle to be applied is that first stated above, namely, that the national community should not be without a Haziratu'l-Quds, endowment or Temple site, as the case may be. If the property was donated or purchased with funds earmarked for that specific purpose, the proceeds of the sale of the property retain the earmarking unless the donor has specifically provided otherwise. If the donor or donors are living, they may, of course, release the earmarking. If the donor or donors are not living, or refuse to release the earmarking, the proceeds should be used for the same purpose. If that purpose has already been fulfilled (i.e., an alternate property has already been acquired), the surplus should be used to the extent possible in a manner having regard for the original intention of the donor or donors, e.g., to maintain or improve the property. In case of doubt, the matter should be referred to the Universal House of Justice."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 21, 1980: Ibid.)

[265] 886. The Proper Accounting for Earmarked Funds is Very Important
"This question of the proper accounting for earmarked funds is very important. The account books of any Assembly should be designed in a way that will always clearly distinguish between earmarked funds and funds freely at the disposition of the Assembly, so that there will be no danger of the Assembly's inadvertently commingling them and spending earmarked funds for the wrong purpose."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 6, 1984: Ibid.)

887. Donor Has No Right to Change Earmarked Purpose Unless the Assembly Accepts the Request to Do So
"The beloved Guardian was very emphatic that contributions to Baha'i funds,

given for specified purposes, may be used only for those purposes, unless the donor consents to a change. If the Assembly cannot use the contribution for the purpose specified, it may refuse to accept it. Alternatively it could consult the donor and suggest that he release the contribution for general purposes or transfer it to another specified one, but no pressure should be exerted to force his acquiescence. On the other hand, once money has been contributed to an Assembly, it is the property of that Assembly, even though earmarked for a specific purpose, and the donor has no right to change its purpose unilaterally. The Assembly, however, may, at its own discretion, accept his request to do so."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 30, 1984: Ibid.)

888. The Assembly Should Try to Preserve Real Value of Funds in Its Care—Especially True of Earmarked Funds
"The Assembly is the trustee of the funds in its care, and its primary concern in investing such funds should be to try to preserve their real value. Obtaining a good income from such investments is also desirable, but is a secondary consideration and should not be sought if this would endanger the value of the principal. This is especially true in the case of earmarked funds, where the Assembly has a duty to the donor or donors to preserve the value of the fund until such time as it can be used for the designated purpose. In such a case, when the value of the currency is itself depreciating, one method of upholding the real value of the earmarked fund is to add back to the principal all income earned on it, even if the donor has not specifically earmarked the income to be earned on his contribution."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, March 19, 1985: Ibid.)

889. Often It is Better that the Friends Do Not Restrict Funds
"In general, although it is permitted for the friends to earmark contributions, it is apparent that it is often better that the friends allow the Assembly to use their contributions without restricting them. Furthermore, an Assembly is by no means obligated to accept an earmarked contribution; if it does, however, it is bound to respect the earmarking."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 21, 1980: Ibid.)

[266] 890. Care to be Taken Not to Violate Right of Earmarking—Earmarked Contribution Should Be Over and Above Assembly's Allocation to a Fund
"...care must be taken not to violate for any reason the right of the individual to earmark his contribution.

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

contrary, an earmarked contribution is intended to be over and above the allocation made out of the National Fund."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 18, 1968)

891. Confidentiality of Believers' Contributions, Earmarked or Otherwise, Must Be Respected
"As a general rule the friends should realize that it is more consistent with the exalted standards expounded in our teachings for them at all times to offer their contributions freely, nobly and generously with the high sense of furthering the Cause of God in whatever form this may be achieved. However, if for some reason they wish to restrict the use of their contributions, or even make such donations known to others, they should not be prevented from carrying out their wish.

"In the light of the above, it would be useful to explain these guidelines to Mr. ... and if he confirms his wish, there is no objection to your placing a plaque in the name of the ... family in the Baha'i Information Centre building in ... which he has donated to you.

"The guidance given in the second paragraph should be conveyed to the Local Spiritual Assembly of ... and they should be told that if they still wish to announce the contribution for their Haziratu'l-Quds at the Nineteen Day Feast they should know that they are not permitted to do so without the permission of the donor, as he is entitled to the confidentiality of his contributions."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 30, 1979)

XXII. THE GREATEST NAME OF GOD

A. The Greatest Name

[267] 892. The Greatest Name is the Name of Comfort, Protection, etc.
"The Greatest Name should be found upon the lips in the first awakening moment of early dawn. It should be fed upon by constant use in daily invocation, in trouble, under opposition, and should be the last word breathed when the head rests upon the pillow at night. It is the name of comfort, protection, happiness, illumination, love and unity.

"I hope that thou mayest become informed of the concealed mystery and recondite symbol of the stone of the Most Great Name... The use of the Greatest Name and dependence upon it, cause the soul to strip itself of the husks of mortality and to step forth freed, reborn, a new creature...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: United States Supplement to Baha'i News, No. 80, p. 2, October 1964)

893. Baha'is May Greet Each Other with "Allah-u-Abha"
"The Baha'is are free to greet each other with Allah-u-Abha when they meet, if they want to, but they should avoid anything which to outsiders, in a western country, might seem like some strange oriental password. We must be very firm on principles and laws, but very normal and natural in our ways, so as to

attract strangers!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 17, 1951)

894. The Greatest Name is the Name of Baha'u'llah
"The Greatest Name is the Name of Baha'u'llah. 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha' is an invocation meaning: 'O Thou Glory of Glories!' 'Allah-u-Abha' is a greeting which means: 'God the All-Glorious'. Both refer to Baha'u'llah. By 'Greatest Name' is meant that Baha'u'llah has appeared in God's Greatest Name, in other words, that He is the supreme Manifestation of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, December 26, 1941)

895. The Greatest Name is an Invocation and a Symbol of Our Faith
"Concerning your question regarding the 'Greatest Name': The Greatest Name is an invocation which means 'O Thou Glory of Glories!' The word 'Baha', or 'Glory', is a reference to Baha'u'llah. The Greatest Name is a distinctive mark of the Cause and a symbol of our Faith. The term of 'Allah-u-Abha,' on the other hand, is a form of Baha'i greeting, and means 'God the All-Glorious.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 8, 1941)

896. Use of Greatest Name Symbol—Not Appropriate on Articles Put to Common Use
"The overriding consideration must always be the proper dignity with which the [268] Greatest Name should be used. Thus it would not be befitting to use it on drinking vessels or ash trays, plates for eating, and the like. There would, however, be no objection to its use on plaques or ornaments, jewellery or similar items which are not normally put to common use. The House of Justice instructs us to say that great care should be given to the accurate representation of the Persian calligraphy, since any deviation from an accepted representation can be distressing to Iranian believers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Belgium, March 12, 1980)

897. Guidelines on the Use of the Symbols of the Greatest Name on Stationery and in Paintings
"...We are requested by the Universal House of Justice to share with you the following guidelines on the use of the symbols of the Greatest Name.

"The Guardian, in a letter written on his behalf to an individual on 5 August 1949, stated:

'It is better not to encourage the use of this symbol on stationery and in paintings.'

"Likewise, the Universal House of Justice, in its letter to a National Assembly stated:

'We wish to call to your attention the impressions of the Greatest Name on the back of the envelope in which your letter was enclosed. The use of the Greatest

Name is not befitting and we ask you to discontinue it.' (16 May 1971)

"In another communication regarding this subject, the following was written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Assembly:

'...we are instructed to say that it would not be appropriate to use the symbol of the Greatest Name on the official stationery of a Local Spiritual Assembly.' (6 November 1984)

"While the House of Justice is reluctant to issue a list of the specific uses of the Greatest Name which should be avoided, the principal thing is for the friends to realize the great sacredness of this symbol, and to use it in ways which are dignified and appropriate...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands, June 3, 1987)

898. Stickers, Use of Not Encouraged
"Regarding the sticker with 'World Fellowship' and the ring-stone symbol on it: He does not encourage the use of this type of thing."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 12, 1946: From a compilation of Extracts Concerning Guidance on the Use of the Greatest Name, attached to the above letter to the National Assembly of Hawaiian Islands)

899. Tombstones
Please Refer to No. 672.

900. Emblems
"We have your letter of June 22, 1967 enclosing sketches of emblems which are intended to be used by Baha'is who wish to place them inside their automobiles.

"The use of such emblems is entirely within the discretion of your National [269] Assembly, but you should not use the Greatest Name on the emblem."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 16, 1967: Ibid.)

901. Believer Can Manufacture and Sell Items Using the Greatest Name
"Although there exists an instruction that the symbol of the Greatest Name should not be used on gravestones, no instruction has been found prohibiting the use of the symbol of the Greatest Name on any other particular item, such as jewellery, books or pamphlets. However, the Greatest Name should not be used in an undignified manner.

"Nothing has been found which would prohibit a believer from manufacturing and selling items using the Greatest Name provided that the manner in which the Greatest Name is used is dignified."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, March 25, 1975: Ibid.)

902. No Prohibition Against Use of Greatest Name, Names of the Manifestations or Names of Central Figures in Songs
"We have found nothing in the texts forbidding the use of the Greatest Name,

the Names of the Manifestations of God or the names of the Central Figures of our Faith in the lyrics of music. However, we feel that when they are used they should be used with reverence and respect, both in the manner in which they are incorporated in the lyrics and in the manner of presentation."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 14, 1968)

903. Reproducing Greatest Names on Jewellery Commercially
"When individual Baha'is reproduce on a limited scale the Greatest Name on items such as jewellery, and find ways of selling these items to others, they should normally be left free to engage in such an activity, without interference from Baha'i institutions, except in cases when in the opinion of these institutions the interests of the Faith are being adversely affected.

"However, when the friends intend to produce and sell such items on a large scale they should first seek the permission of the National Assembly, which should generally be well disposed to permit the production and sale of these objects if in their judgement the interests of the Faith are not being prejudiced and the necessary standards of dignity and propriety are being upheld.

"In all cases where the friends wish to use the venue of a Baha'i function or event, conducted under the auspices of a Baha'i institution, in order to display and sell their products, they may engage in this activity only if the institution concerned gives them the permission to do so."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 15, 1978)

904. Picture of the Greatest Name May Be Destroyed, if Necessary
"If it becomes necessary to destroy a picture of the Greatest Name, there is no objection to whatever method is used. It is quite proper to wear the ring stone as a pin."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 5, 1957)

[270] 905. Reciting the Greatest Name 95 Times Daily*
"The use of the Greatest Name 95 times a day is not absolutely binding. This and other similar matters will be clearly and fully explained when the 'Aqdas' is published. At present, however, the friends should be careful not to lay an undue emphasis upon them.

"When using the Greatest Name the words 'Allah-u-Abha' should be used and not 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha'."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 10, 1936)

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*(See also: Nos. 1538-1539)

906. The Greatest Name or Picture of 'Abdu'l-Baha Should Be Placed in a Dignified Position

"It is quite important that the Greatest Name or the picture of 'Abdu'l-Baha be placed in a dignified position. They should not be placed on the floor, nor, on the other hand, should they be held above the heads of the people in the photograph. It would seem the proper position would be for them to be held about chest height."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 10, 1952)

B. Ringstone Emblem and Jewellery*

907. Ringstone Emblem is Form of the Greatest Name—Use of on Jewelry
"In reply to your letter of November 2nd about the use of the Greatest Name on brooches and other decorations, we quote below the text of a letter which we wrote on this subject in 1964 to another National Spiritual Assembly:

'The ring-stone emblem is one form of the Greatest Name. While the beloved Guardian has called attention to the sacredness of the Greatest Name, and has asked that it should always be placed in a dignified position, we do not find any instruction absolutely prohibiting the use of symbols of the Greatest Name on any particular item such as jewelry, books or pamphlets.

'We feel that the friends should exercise the greatest discrimination and good taste in its use'."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, November 15, 1967)

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*(See also: Nos. 901 and 903)

908. Baha'is Not Required to Wear Ringstone
"It was kind of you to think of making pins for the Baha'is; but he feels that this is too much like clubs and other organizations. Indeed the Baha'is do not even have to wear a Baha'i ring-stone unless they care to do so. He thinks it is better not to add any other means of identification."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 22, 1956)

909. Ringstone Inscription Explained
"The inscription upon the Baha'i ringstone is the symbol of the Greatest Name, Baha, who is the Manifestation of the essence of God. It is also symbolic of the three planes representing the World of God, the World of Revelation and the World of Creation."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 28, 1938)

[271] 910. The Significance of the Stars
"Upon the horizon of Eternal Glory two luminous stars have arisen in brilliance: one to the right and one to the left ... this is the mystery of the appearance of the Beauty of Abha and of the Supreme Highness (the Bab). And though these two diagrams at the right and the left have the form of stars, they also represent the body of man, with the head, the two arms and the two

legs, since this diagram has five points."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Scriptures, p. 479, 1923 ed.)

911. Greatest Name—An Invocation
"He also wishes me to inform you that the symbol of the Greatest Name represents an invocation which can be translated either as 'O Glory of Glories' or 'O Glory of the All-Glorious'. The word glory used in this connection is a translation of the Arabic term 'Baha', the name of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 28, 1935: Baha'i News, No. 93, p. 1, July 1935)

XXIII. HAZIRATU'L-QUDS

[272] 912. Haziratu'l-Quds—Its Main Function
"With reference to the use of your Haziratu'l-Quds we wish to point out that its main function is to serve as the National Administrative Headquarters of the Faith in your country, and anything else is secondary to that. If possible and convenient, believers may be accomodated from time to time, but it should not be regarded as a hotel facility. The work of the Cause is the prime matter and nothing should be allowed to interfere with that."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, October 23, 1963)

913. Dancing Not Appropriate in Haziratu'l-Quds
"The beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer the questions raised in your recent letter regarding the proper use of the Haziratu'l-Quds.
"As in most cases the Baha'is have no other meeting-place in the city which has a Haziratu'l-Quds, and the Haziratu'l-Quds is a building that has a number of rooms, he sees no objection in allowing the youth to have their meetings there with their non-Baha'i friends, but dancing he does not feel is appropriate. Baha'i weddings and funerals can likewise be conducted in the Haziratu'l-Quds.

"The Haziratu'l-Quds, although Feasts and Holy Days are celebrated in it, must not be confounded with a Temple; it is an administrative headquarters. No doubt in the future it will be used for purely administrative purposes, but for the time being it must fill the role of being a true Centre and rallying-point for the Baha'i Community."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America, February 15, 1947)

914. Local and National Haziratu'l-Quds
"The Haziratu'l-Quds is an Institution of the Faith and no distinction should be made between a National or Local Haziratu'l-Quds concerning its use. Other than the Haziratu'l-Quds dances may certainly be allowed at summer schools, etc., and it should be left to the discretion of the committee or Assembly in charge to make whatever arrangements are necessary."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, June 27, 1970)

915. Principles that Govern Acceptance of Gifts of Land
Please refer to No. 728.

916. National Spiritual Assembly Should Budget Annually for Maintenance of Properties
"Many properties have already been acquired in the course of previous plans. It is important that these properties be properly maintained in good repair. National [273] Spiritual Assemblies should set aside sums annually in their budgets for the maintenance of national properties so that when a repair becomes necessary the funds will be available without creating a sudden crisis for the national fund. As far as possible, local Haziratu'l-Quds and other local properties should be kept up by the local friends themselves.

"It is also important to make full use of the properties of the Faith for the purposes for which they were acquired. Well maintained and regularly used properties will not only be a means of fostering Baha'i community life, but will add to the prestige and dignity of the Faith in the eyes of the non-Baha'i public."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, Naw-Ruz 1979)

917. Responsibility of National Spiritual Assembly to Maintain and Improve Properties—Individual Baha'is Can Help in Many Ways
"National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world are required to assume, on a continuing basis, the responsibility of providing for the maintenance and improvement of their own Baha'i properties, and they should instill into the consciousness of the believers the importance of their role in keeping the national headquarters in a representative and attractive condition. There are many ways in which the Baha'is can help to beautify and maintain their National Haziratu'l-Quds, not only by contributing by material means, but also by offering their time and labour to clean, paint, take care of minor repairs, work in the gardens, etc."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uruguay, June 20, 1979)

918. Purchase and Sale of Haziratu'l-Quds
"The Universal House of Justice has requested us to acknowledge your letter of May 6, 1981 concerning the proposed sale of your National Haziratu'l-Quds and to convey the following.

"The matter is entirely within the discretion of your National Assembly bearing in mind the principle that you should not be without a National Haziratu'l-Quds; that is, you must obtain a new one, or at least have the transactions for obtaining it well advanced and secure, before disposing of the old one.

"In reply to your question about the location of the Secretariat of the National Assembly, we have been asked to say that your Assembly must operate from the National Haziratu'l-Quds, and it is important and desirable that your Secretary reside as near as possible to the National Headquarters in order that

the duties of the office may be attended to with dispatch. Enclosed for your consideration are excerpts from recent letters dealing with this subject."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Nicaragua, June 7, 1981)

919. National Haziratu'l-Quds Need Not Serve Needs of Local Spiritual Assembly—Preferable that National Secretary Live in Haziratu'l-Quds
"There is no requirement for the National Haziratu'l-Quds to include within its accommodations a public meeting hall, neither is there a requirement that it be a meeting place for the Local Spiritual Assembly in the city in which it [274] may be located. Its essential function is that it is the seat of the National Spiritual Assembly, and should have adequate facilities for its secretariat. Should there be adequate space and the National Assembly feels it convenient, there would be no objection to its leasing one or two rooms to the Local Spiritual Assembly, but this certainly is not an essential part of the National Haziratu'l-Quds. The facilities you choose to specify as criteria in the search for new quarters are a matter for your own decision.

"While it is not imperative for the National Secretary to live in the National Haziratu'l-Quds, it is the generally preferred arrangement. Should it be impossible for the Secretary to live actually in the Haziratu'l-Quds itself, there would be no objection to his living nearby. The vital thing is that the seat of the National Spiritual Assembly should be the National Haziratu'l-Quds, and that the National Assembly should operate from there."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands, July 22, 1982)

920. The National Spiritual Assembly Must Operate from the National Haziratu'l-Quds—Eventually, Full Time Service Will Be Required of the National Secretary
"The first principle which has been established is that a National Spiritual Assembly must operate from its National Haziratu'l-Quds, which is the official Seat of the National Spiritual Assembly. During the early formative years of the Faith and the building up of the Administrative Order it has been permitted in certain instances for the National Secretary to reside away from the city in which the National Haziratu'l-Quds is located, but in these cases the principle has always been enforced that the National Spiritual Assembly itself operates from its proper address at the National Haziratu'l-Quds.... The aim should be to overcome this anomaly and for the National Secretary to reside close to, if not in, the National Haziratu'l-Quds itself. Inevitably the day will come when it will be necessary for your National Secretary to devote his entire time to the service of the National Spiritual Assembly and it will then be imperative for the Secretary to operate from the Haziratu'l-Quds."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Dominican Republic, February 9, 1976)

921. Preferable Arrangement and Baha'i Norm that the National Secretary Live in the Haziratu'l-Quds—Not to be Considered a "Right of Office"
"While it is not imperative for the National Secretary to live in the National

Haziratu'l-Quds, and certainly the believer elected to the important post cannot claim such residence as a right of office, it is the generally preferred arrangement and is, in fact, the norm of Baha'i practice. The vital thing is that the seat of the National Spiritual Assembly should be the National Haziratu'l-Quds and that the National Assembly should operate from there. This obviously requires the constant attendance of the Secretary since all mail for the Assembly should be received at and despatched from the Haziratu'l-Quds, and there are many other considerations of which you are all informed. However, the final decision must rest with your National Spiritual Assembly and should it be impossible for the National Secretary to live actually in the Haziratu'l-Quds itself there [275] would be no objection to the officer living near or within easy reach, particularly if it were on a temporary basis."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, September 22, 1974)

922. A District Haziratu'l-Quds Serves the Local Community as a Gathering Place for Baha'is of Wider Area
"A district Haziratu'l-Quds should be considered as the local Haziratu'l-Quds of the community in which it is situated, but as it is intended also to serve as a central gathering place for friends from a wider area it should be a more substantial structure than normally required for a local Haziratu'l-Quds. In keeping with this concept, such a building can be used for the holding of conferences, teaching institutes, deepening classes, etc., for the larger area.

"Whether someone should live in the district Haziratu'l-Quds is a matter for your Assembly to determine. However, it is usually desirable to have living accommodation available for someone to reside there to act as a caretaker for the property."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Surinam and French Guiana, August 15, 1982)

XXIV. HEALTH, HEALING AND NUTRITION

A. Spiritual and Physical Healing

[276] 923. Consult Competent Physicians When Ill
"Resort ye, in times of sickness, to competent physicians; We have not set aside the use of material means, rather have We confirmed it through this Pen, which God hath made to be the Dawning-place of His shining and glorious Cause."
(Baha'u'llah: Kitab-i-Aqdas, K. 113, p. 60)

924. Prayers for Spiritual and Material Healing
"...The prayers which were written for the purpose of healing are both for the spiritual and material healing. Therefore chant them for the spiritual and material healing. If healing is best for the patient surely it will be granted. For some who are sick, healing for them shall be the cause of other ills. Thus it is that wisdom does not decree the answer to some prayers.

"O maid-servant of God. The Power of the Holy Spirit heals both material and spiritual ills."

('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablet to Ella Goodall Cooper: Daily Lessons Received at Akka, 1976 ed., p. 86)

925. The Greatest Name Influences Both Spiritual and Physical Matters
"That the Most Great Name exerciseth influence over both physical and spiritual matters is sure and certain."
(From a Tablet to an individual believer, by 'Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, April 1984, p. 2)

"O maid-servant of God! Continue in healing hearts and bodies and seek healing for sick persons by turning unto the Supreme Kingdom and by setting the heart upon obtaining healing through the power of the Greatest Name and by the spirit of the love of God."
(Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 629)

926. Two Ways of Healing Sickness
"There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first is by the treatment of physicians; the second consisteth in prayers offered by the spiritual ones to God and in turning to Him. Both means should be used and practiced.

"Illnesses which occur by reason of physical causes should be treated by doctors with medical remedies; those which are due to spiritual causes disappear through spiritual means. Thus an illness caused by affliction, fear, nervous impressions, [277] will be healed more effectively by spiritual rather than by physical treatment. Hence, both kinds of treatment should be followed; they are not contradictory. Therefore thou shouldst accept physical remedies inasmuch as these too have come from the mercy and favour of God, Who hath revealed and made manifest medical science so that His servants may profit from this kind of treatment also. Thou shouldst give equal attention to spiritual treatments, for they produce marvellous effects.

"Now, if thou wishest to know the true remedy which will heal man from all sickness and will give him the health of the divine kingdom, know that it is the precepts and teachings of God. Focus thine attention upon them."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 151-152)

927. Two Processes of Healing—Prayer Alone Not Sufficient
"As you know Baha'u'llah has ordained that in case of illness we should always consult the most competent physicians. And this is exactly what the Guardian strongly advises you to do. For prayer alone is not sufficient. To render it more effective we have to make use of all the physical and material advantages which God has given us. Healing through purely spiritual forces is undoubtedly as inadequate as that which materialist physicians and thinkers vainly seek to obtain by resorting entirely to mechanical devices and methods. The best result can be obtained by combining the two processes, spiritual and physical."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 12, 1934: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 9)

928. Spiritual and Material Healing Essential and Complementary
"With regard to your question concerning spiritual healing. Such a healing constitutes, indeed, one of the most effective methods of relieving a person from either his mental or physical pains and sufferings. 'Abdu'l-Baha has in His 'Paris Talks' emphasized its importance by stating that it should be used as an essential means for effecting a complete physical cure. Spiritual healing, however, is not and cannot be a substitute for material healing, but it is a most valuable adjunct to it. Both are, indeed, essential and complementary."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 16, 1935: Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, April 1984, p. 10)

929. Physical Healing Must Be Reinforced by Spiritual Healing
"With reference to your question concerning spiritual healing. Its importance, as you surely know, has been greatly emphasized by 'Abdu'l-Baha Who considered it, indeed, as an essential part of physical processes of healing. Physical healing cannot be complete and lasting unless it is reinforced by spiritual healing. And this last one can be best obtained through obedience to the laws and commandments of God as revealed to us through His Manifestations. Individual believers, however, can also help by imparting healing to others. But the success of their efforts depends entirely on their strict adherence to the Teachings, and also on the manner in which they impart them to others. According to Baha'u'llah man cannot obtain full guidance directly from God. He must rather seek it through His Prophets. Provided this principle is clearly understood and explained, the Guardian sees no harm that the friends should try to effect spiritual healing on others. Any such cure effected, however, should [278] be done in the name of Baha'u'llah and in accordance with His teachings. For God, and God alone, is the Supreme and Almighty Physician and all else are but instruments in His hands."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 23, 1935: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 8)

930. Healing of Illness—There is No Such Thing as "Baha'i Healers"
"The Guardian knows nothing about your kind of healing, nor would he care to go into the question in detail, as he has no time for such matters. But he can lay down for your guidance certain broad principles: there is no such thing as Baha'i healers or a Baha'i type of healing. In His Most Holy Book (the Aqdas) Baha'u'llah says to consult the best physicians, in other words, doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine: He never gave us to believe He Himself would heal us through 'healers', but rather through prayer and the assistance of medicine and approved treatments.

"Now, as long as your healing is in no opposition to these principles, as long as you do not try and take the place of a regular doctor in trying to heal others, but only give them your kind of help through constructive suggestion—or whatever it may be—and do not associate this help with being

a channel of the direct grace of Baha'u'llah, the Guardian sees no harm in your continuing your assistance to others. But you must conscientiously decide whether in view of the above you are really justified in continuing. He will pray for your guidance and happiness...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 6, 1948: Ibid., p. 8)

931. To Associate Such Things with the Cause Ultimately Injures It
"He feels the attitude taken by you and the Assembly of Caracas towards the remarkable healing powers exhibited by ... has been the right one. To associate such things with the Cause directly would be only to ultimately injure its reputation and misrepresent it, as her powers—which are certainly very hard to find any logical explanation for—are not common to Baha'is, but rather a phenomenon seen among individuals, (rarely) of religious backgrounds.

"As to its being direct inspiration of Baha'u'llah, we certainly cannot say this. We can only be grateful that she has actually been able to help people who direly needed it. She herself being a devoted Baha'i, there is no reason why she should not be known as one. But certainly it should in no way be connected with her healing powers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, September 30, 1949, to an individual believer: Ibid., p. 8)

932. Not a Unique Phenomenon
"The Guardian has already heard about ...'s seemingly remarkable powers of healing and he wrote the friends who communicated with him that he feels that she is naturally free to use this power, so far beyond our understanding, but not a unique phenomenon in history by any means, for the good of others, but that it is better not to directly associate it with the Faith.

"In other words this dear soul is a Baha'i, and we are all proud that she is one. But she should not give the impression she is a Baha'i healer, for we have no such [279] thing, but rather that she is a Baha'i by faith, whom God seems to have blessed with this precious bounty individually of being able to often heal others."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 26, 1949: Ibid., pp. 8-9)

933. To Be Able to Help Another Soul Who is Suffering
"The Guardian sees no reason why you should not continue to help sick people. As he wrote to some of the believers regarding this matter previously, as long as you do not say you are healing them as a Baha'i, or because you are a Baha'i (because we have no 'healers' in the Cause as such) there can be certainly no objection to your doing it. On the contrary to be able to help another soul who is in suffering is a great bounty from God."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 5, 1950: Ibid., p. 9)

934. Try Not to Have the Faith Identified with Such Things
"He thinks your Assembly's decision regarding spiritual healing being

demonstrated at a Baha'i meeting was quite sound. We should try not to have the Faith identified with such things in the eyes of the public officially. What the believers do privately, which in no way contravenes the Teachings, is their own affair."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, June 25, 1953: Ibid., p. 9)

935. Should Not Become Healer
"He does not feel that you should try to do anything special about the capacity you feel to help people when they are ill. This does not mean you should not use it, when the occasion arises, such as it did recently. But he means you should not become a 'healer' such as the Christian Scientists have, and we Baha'is do not have."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 25, 1949: Ibid., p. 9)

936. Healing by the Holy Spirit
"We have no reason to believe that the healing of the Holy Spirit cannot be attracted by ordinary human beings. But this is rare, a mystery, and a gift of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 26, 1950: Ibid., p. 9)

937. Visiting the Sick
"We should all visit the sick. When they are in sorrow and suffering, it is a real help and benefit to have a friend come. Happiness is a great healer to those who are ill. In the East it is the custom to call upon the patient often and meet him individually. The people in the East show the utmost kindness and compassion to the sick and suffering. This has greater effect than the remedy itself. You must always have this thought of love and affection when you visit the ailing and afflicted."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 ed., p. 204)

[280] 938. However Critical and Hopeless Consult and Follow Treatment of Competent Physician
"As regards Miss ... Shoghi Effendi feels unspeakably grateful for all the kind assistance you have been continually extending to her father in this assuredly heart-rending, nay indeed calamitous situation facing him. You did certainly well, however critical and hopeless his daughter's case may have been considered by the doctors, to advise him to take her to a hospital, and give her the best treatment medical science could possibly offer. In doing so you have acted in full conformity with the counsel so tenderly and repeatedly given by Baha'u'llah that in case of illness one should invariably consult and follow the treatment of competent and conscientious physicians."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 18, 1939: Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health and Healing, June 1974, p. 7)

939. Both Spiritual and Physical Forces Needed to Secure Speedy Recovery

"In the Book of Aqdas Baha'u'llah urges us, that when we obtain any physical ailment we should refer to the doctor and abide by his decision. Physical and spiritual forces have both to be used to secure the speedy recovery of the patients; no partial treatment is sufficient. So you should pray for your son and also be faithful in your obedience to the directions of the physicians who are trying to restore him to health."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 1, 1933)

940. Physical Ailments Have No Effect on the Soul
"Regarding your questions concerning the condition of the soul during illness. The passages in the 'Gleanings' make it quite clear that physical ailments, no matter how severe, cannot bring any change in the inherent condition of the soul. As Baha'u'llah says: 'The spirit is permanent and steadfast in its station'. The veil or hindrance that interposes between soul and body during physical disease is sickness itself. Sickness reveals a lack of balance in human organism, an absence of equilibrium in the forces essential for the normal functioning of the human body."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 8, 1936)

941. Baha'is Must Avoid Depleting Their Forces and Suffering Breakdowns
"...The Baha'is, in spite of their self-sacrificing desire to give the last drop of their strength to serving the Cause, must guard against utterly depleting their forces and having breakdowns. For this can sometimes do more harm than good, because they are so bound up in the lives of others....

"There is no doubt that there is vicarious atonement for others, and our sufferings sometimes can be in the nature of a sacrifice accepted for others. But where to draw the line is a mystery. If you take better care of your own health, and build up your reserves, it would certainly be better for you and for your work. Then your sensitive, yearning heart, although you may still often suffer for and with others, will be better able to withstand its trials, and you will not get so exhausted, which is certainly no asset to your work for the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 25, 1949)

[281] 942. The Supreme Need of the World Today is for Spiritual Healing—Baha'is Are the Leaven that Must Leaven the Lump
"However much the need may be for physical healing, the supreme need of the world today is for spiritual healing. Life in this world is so relatively short—and at present it is fraught with a thousand difficulties and dangers; whereas life in the true sense is eternal, and for this eternal life people need some preparation in these turbulent times.

"Your work to improve the health of people is a meritorious way of serving mankind, but it can never be compared with the work of illumining the souls and minds of men with the Light of Baha'u'llah. The people of the world are teeming

millions, the Baha'is only a handful, yet they are the precious leaven that must leaven the lump."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 8, 1942)

943. Some Illnesses Have to Do with the Spiritual Development of the One Affected or of the Loved Ones
"The Beloved Guardian has asked me to assure you and the parents of the dear baby of his prayers for his healing, both material and spiritual.

"It is difficult for us to understand these calamities when they come to us. Those who are firm in the Faith, know that the Hand of God protects them, and if something of this nature comes upon them, it is for some reason, which may have to do with the spiritual development of the one affected, or the spiritual development and welfare of the loved ones; or even for the melting of the hearts of non-Baha'is, who will be affected by the Divine Spirit, through the manner in which the Baha'i meets such an ordeal."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 23, 1953)

944. Physical Pain is Necessary to Existence and is Unavoidable—In Every Suffering One Can Find a Meaning and a Wisdom
"As to your question concerning the meaning of physical suffering and its relation to mental and spiritual healing. Physical pain is a necessary accompaniment of all human existence, and as such is unavoidable. As long as there will be life on earth, there will be also suffering, in various forms and degrees. But suffering, although an inescapable reality, can nevertheless be utilised as a means for the attainment of happiness. This is the interpretation given to it by all the prophets and saints who, in the midst of severe tests and trials, felt happy and joyous and experienced what is best and holiest in life. Suffering is both a reminder and a guide. It stimulates us to better adapt ourselves to our environmental conditions, and thus leads the way to self-improvement. In every suffering one can find a meaning and a wisdom. But it is not always easy to find the secret of that wisdom. It is sometimes only when all our suffering has passed that we become aware of its usefulness. What man considers to be evil turns often to be a cause of infinite blessings. And this is due to his desire to know more than he can. God's wisdom is, indeed, inscrutable to us all, and it is no use pushing too far trying to discover that which shall always remain a mystery to our mind."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 29, 1935)

[282] 945. Decree of Baha'u'llah Consult Competent Doctor
"According to the explicit decree of Baha'u'llah one must not turn aside from the advice of a competent doctor. It is imperative to consult one even if the patient himself be a well-known and eminent physician. In short, the point is that you should maintain your health by consulting a highly-skilled physician."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 156, No. 135)

946. It is the Responsibility of the Believers to Look After the Sick
"O thou servant of God! To look after the sick is one of the greatest duties. For every soul who becomes sick, the other friends should certainly offer their lives (in service) with the utmost kindness."
(Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Volume I, p. 149: cited in Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health and Healing, p. 1)

B. Mental Illness

947. Little is Known About the Mind and Its Workings
"Very little is as yet known about the mind and its workings. But one thing is certain: Baha'is can and do receive a very remarkable help and protection in this world, one which often surprises their doctors very much!"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 9, 1948: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 4)

948. Mental Illness Does Not Affect Our Spirit or Our Inner Relation to God
"It is very hard to be subject to any illness, particularly a mental one. However, we must always remember these illnesses have nothing to do with our spirit or our inner relation to God. It is a great pity that as yet so little is really known of the mind, its workings and illnesses that afflict it; no doubt, as the world becomes more spiritually minded and scientists understand the true nature of man, more humane and permanent cures for mental diseases will be found.

"The Guardian, much as his heart goes out to you in your fear and suffering, cannot tell you whether electric shock treatments should or should not be used, as this is a purely medical question, and there is no reference to such details in our Scriptures. The best scientists must pass upon such methods, not laymen.

"You must always remember, no matter how much you or others may be afflicted with mental troubles and the crushing environment of these State Institutions, that your spirit is healthy, near to our Beloved, and will in the next world enjoy a happy and normal state of soul. Let us hope in the meantime scientists will find better and permanent cures for the mentally afflicted. But in this world such illness is truly a heavy burden to bear!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 12, 1948: Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health and Healing, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, June 1974)

[283] 949. Disease of Two Kinds—Madness Can Be Cured Through Prayer
"Disease is of two kinds: material and spiritual. Take for instance, a cut hand; if you pray for the cut to be healed and do not stop its bleeding, you will not do much good; a material remedy is needed.

"Sometimes if the nervous system is paralysed through fear, a spiritual remedy is necessary. Madness, incurable otherwise, can be cured through prayer. It often happens that sorrow makes one ill; this can be cured by spiritual means."
('Abdu'l-Baha in London, Addresses and Notes of Conversations, 1982 ed., p. 65)

950. Some Serious Deficiencies, Physical or Mental, Can Incapacitate One to Contract Marriage
"The Baha'i Teachings do not only encourage marital life, considering it the natural and normal way of existence for every sane, healthy and socially-conscious and responsible person, but raise marriage to the status of a divine institution, its chief and sacred purpose being the perpetuation of the human race—which is the very flower of the entire creation—and its elevation to the true station destined for it by God.

"That there should be, however, certain individuals, who, by reason of some serious deficiency, physical or mental, would be incapacitated to contract marriage and enjoy the blessings of an enduring and successful marital life, is only too evident, but these constitute only a very small section of humanity, and are therefore merely an exception, and their condition cannot possibly invalidate what an all-wise and loving Providence has decreed to be the normal way to a fruitful and constructive social existence.

"The exact conditions and circumstances under which such incapacitated individuals should be advised or even prevented perhaps from entering into any sort of marital existence have not been specified in the Baha'i Writings, but will have to be defined later on by the Universal House of Justice. In the meantime, those believers who consider themselves as falling into the above category would do well, before taking any final decision themselves, to consult medical experts, who are both conscientious and competent, and to abide by their recommendation."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 15, 1939: Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters)

951. No Objection to One Seeing a Psychiatrist
"As regards your seeing a psychiatrist: There is no objection to your trying this form of treatment if your physician recommends it, and any intelligent doctor would never be prejudiced against the Faith through the difficulties incurred by a patient due to illness.

"There is no object in over-taxing your will power and strength by forcing yourself to do things for the Cause. You should let your mind rest in the thought of the infinite love, mercy and forgiveness of Baha'u'llah, and cease to fret about whether you are or are not doing your share until you fully recover your health—and evidently you already are on the road to recovery!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 26, 1945)

[284] 952. Baha'is Should Not Become Healers*
"He does not feel that you should try to do anything special about the capacity you feel to help people when they are ill. This does not mean you should not use it, when the occasion arises, such as it did recently. But he means you should not become a 'healer' such as the Christian Scientists have, and we Baha'is do not have."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer,

December 25, 1949: Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, A Compilation, p. 13)

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*(See also: Nos. 930-934)

953. The Mind Can Be Helped by Professionals, but the Soul is Not Aided by Psychotherapy

"With reference to the broad aspects of your problem of psychological difficulty, the House of Justice has asked us to quote the following passages from the Writings of Baha'u'llah: 'Know thou that the soul of man is exalted above, and is independent of all infirmities of body or mind.... When it (the soul) leaveth the body, however, it will evince such ascendancy, and reveal such influence as no force on earth can equal'. In a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian we also find the following passage: 'You must always remember, no matter how much you and others are afflicted with mental troubles ..., that your spirit is healthy, near to your Beloved, and will in the next world enjoy a happy and normal state of soul.' Thus it is that the soul is not aided by psychotherapy. On the other hand, in your understanding of the mental phenomena which distress you, and in your efforts to overcome your problem it is perfectly proper to consult professional experts, as your National Assembly ... advised. In another letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary, we read the following: 'As Baha'u'llah has urged us to avail ourselves of the help of good physicians, Baha'is certainly are not only free to turn to psychiatry for assistance but should, when available, do so.' The mind, then, with all its aberrancies, may often favourably be influenced by scientifically trained persons.

"The Universal House of Justice suggests that through daily prayer, and specially by observing the daily obligatory prayers, through study of the Writings, through active participation in teaching efforts and in the activities of the community, and through constant effort to sacrifice for the Faith you love so well, you will provide a spiritual counterpart to the professional help you will receive from the experts. You should also endeavour to engage in some useful occupation, or by training yourself to have such an occupation, as work is itself another means at our disposal, in accordance with our Teachings, to draw nearer to God, and to better grasp His purpose for us in this world."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 6, 1976)

954. The Science of the Mind is in Its Relative Infancy—Therapy of Mental Disorders is Advancing

"It is not easy to be burdened with long years of mental illness such as you describe. And plainly you have sought aid from many persons of scientific and non-scientific training backgrounds, apparently to little avail over the years of your prolonged illness. [285] Possibly you should consider, if it is feasible, consulting the best specialists in a medical centre in one of the major cities, where the most advanced diagnosis and treatment can be obtained.

The science of the mind, of normality and of the disabilities from which it may suffer, is in its relative infancy, but much may be possible to aid you to minimize your suffering and make possible an active life. The last ten years in the therapy of mental disorders has seen important advances from which you may well benefit.

"Your discovery of the Faith, of its healing Writings and its great purposes for the individual and for all mankind, have indeed brought to you a powerful force toward a healthy life which will sustain you on a higher level, whatever your ailment may be. The best results for the healing process are to combine the spiritual with the physical, for it should be possible for you to overcome your illness through the combined and sustained power of prayer and of determined effort."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 23, 1984)

955. Mental Illness is Not Spiritual
"...mental illness is not spiritual, although its effects may indeed hinder and be a burden in one's striving toward spiritual progress. In a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to a believer there is this further passage:

'Such hindrances (i.e., illness and outer difficulties), no matter how severe and insuperable they may at first seem, can and should be effectively overcome through the combined and sustained power of prayer and of determined and continued effort.'

"That effort can include the counsel of wise and experienced physicians, including psychiatrists. Working for the Faith, serving others who may need you, and giving of yourself can aid you in your struggle to overcome your sufferings. One helpful activity is, of course, striving to teach the Cause in spite of personal feelings of shortcomings, thus allowing the healing words of the Cause to flood your mind with their grace and positive power."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 15, 1982)

956. Baha'is Should Not Take a Defeatist Attitude Toward Mental Illnesses
"In the Baha'i Teachings it is made quite clear that when one is ill, one should seek the best available medical advice. This naturally leaves a person free to choose what they consider good in medical opinion. If you and ...'s mother feel that she is improving under the care of your own doctor, and ... is willing to wait and be patient and see if she goes on making progress, there can surely be no objection to her doing this. There are a great many as you know mental diseases and troubles at present, and the one thing Baha'is must not do is take a defeatist attitude toward them. The power in the Faith is such that it can sustain us on a much higher level in spite of whatever our ailments might be, than other people who are denied it. This however does not mean that we should ignore medical opinion and treatment. On the contrary, we should do our best to procure the opinion of specialists and competent doctors."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

January 12, 1957)

957. Psychiatry
"There is nothing in our teachings about Freud and his method. Psychiatric treatment [286] in general is no doubt an important contribution to medicine, but we must believe it is still a growing rather than a perfected science. As Baha'u'llah has urged us to avail ourselves of the help of good physicians Baha'is are certainly not only free to turn to psychiatry for assistance but should, when advisable, do so. This does not mean psychiatrists are always wise or always right, it means we are free to avail ourselves of the best medicine has to offer us."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, June 15, 1950)

C. Doctors

958. Physician is Blessed Who Heals in the Name of God
"Well is it with the physician who cureth ailments in My hallowed and dearly cherished Name."
(From a Tablet of Baha'u'llah: Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

959. To Seek Medical Treatment and Obey the Doctor is a Divine Ordinance
"It is incumbent upon everyone to seek medical treatment and to follow the doctor's instructions, for this is in compliance with the divine ordinance, but, in reality, He Who giveth healing is God."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 156)

960. One Must Obey Command of God and Submit to Medical Opinion
"One must obey the command of God and submit to medical opinion. Thou hast undertaken this journey to comply with His command and not for the sake of healing, since healing is in the hand of God, not in the hand of doctors."
(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to an individual believer: Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

961. The Science of Medicine is Extremely Useful
"Thou shouldst endeavour to study the science of medicine. It is extremely useful and serveth as the greatest instrument for the dissemination of the Cause. It is absolutely imperative that thou acquire this bounty. Strive day and night that thou mayest become highly qualified in this science. And when thou wishest to dispense treatment, set thy heart toward the Abha Kingdom, entreating divine confirmations."
(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to an individual believer: Ibid.)

962. The Sick Must Refer to a Skilled Doctor
"...thou hast written about thy poor sight. According to the explicit divine text the sick must refer to the doctor. This decree is decisive and everyone is bound to observe it. While thou art there thou shouldst consult the most skilled and the most famed eye specialist."

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to an individual believer: Ibid.)

963. The Physician Has Two Powers
"O thou distinguished physician!... Praise be to God that thou hast two powers: one to undertake physical healing and the other spiritual healing. Matters related [287] to man's spirit have a great effect on his bodily condition. For instance, thou shouldst impart gladness to thy patient, give him comfort and joy, and bring him to ecstasy and exultation. How often hath it occurred that this hath caused early recovery. Therefore, treat thou the sick with both powers. Spiritual feelings have a surprising effect on healing nervous ailments."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 150-151)

964. When Giving Treatment, Turn to the Blessed Beauty, Baha'u'llah
"When giving medical treatment turn to the Blessed Beauty, then follow the dictates of thy heart. Remedy the sick by means of heavenly joy and spiritual exultation, cure the sorely afflicted by imparting to them blissful glad tidings and heal the wounded through His resplendent bestowals. When at the bedside of a patient, cheer and gladden his heart and enrapture his spirit through celestial power. Indeed, such a heavenly breath quickeneth every mouldering bone and reviveth the spirit of every sick and ailing one."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid., p. 151)

965. It is Imperative to Consult a Doctor Even if One is an Eminent Physician
"According to the explicit decree of Baha'u'llah one must not turn aside from the advice of a competent doctor. It is imperative to consult one even if the patient himself be a well-known and eminent physician. In short, the point is that you should maintain your health by consulting a highly-skilled physician."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid., p. 156)

966. God Alone Has the Power to Give True Healing—Many Men Have Died of the Very Disease of Their Specialty
"All true healing comes from God! There are two causes for sickness, one is material, the other spiritual. If the sickness is of the body, a material remedy is needed, if of the soul, a spiritual remedy.

"If the heavenly benediction be upon us while we are being healed then only can we be made whole, for medicine is but the outward and visible means through which we obtain the heavenly healing. Unless the spirit be healed, the cure of the body is worth nothing. All is in the hands of God, and without Him there can be no health in us!

"There have been many men who have died at last of the very disease of which they have made a special study. Aristotle, for instance, who made a special study of the digestion, died of a gastronomic malady. Avicenna was a specialist of the heart, but he died of heart disease. God is the great compassionate Physician who alone has the power to give true healing."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, 1972 ed., p. 19)

967. Service is Prayer

"This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer. A physician ministering to the sick, gently, tenderly, free from prejudice and believing in the solidarity of the human race, he is giving praise."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid., p. 177)

968. Doctors Versed in Medical Science Can Treat Case Better Than Loving Mothers
"...He fully sympathizes with you in this great sorrow that has afflicted you. At [288] such occasions, the true servants of God should be resigned and try to act wisely, using at the same time all available means to help their loved one who is in distress and is suffering from illness.

"Baha'u'llah tells us that in case of disease we should pray but at the same time refer to competent physicians, and abide by their considered decisions. Shoghi Effendi wishes you therefore to find whether your son has really become ill, and if he is, then follow the directions of the doctor. Being versed in the medical sciences they can treat better than even a loving mother can. You can render your assistance by praying for him and at the same time helping the physicians to treat him."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 9, 1933: Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health and Healing, pp. 5-6)

969. Powers Released by Baha'u'llah Destined to Reveal Themselves Through Instrumentality of His Followers
"These investigations you have so painstakingly pursued in the field of medical science, and on a subject which is still puzzling the minds of all the leading scientists in the world, cannot but be of a captivating interest and of a great value to all medical research workers.

"It is significant that you as a believer should have undertaken a work of this nature, as we all know that the powers released by the Manifestation of Baha'u'llah in this day are destined, in the course of time, to reveal themselves through the instrumentality of His followers, and in every conceivable field of human endeavour.

"That you should increasingly prove, through your confirmed researches in the domain of medicine, to be one of those instruments, is the fervent hope of our beloved Guardian."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 29, 1938)

970. Doctors Should Not Work on 9 Holy Days
"He thinks it is better for Baha'i doctors not to work on our 9 Holy Days—but, of course, that does not mean they should not attend to very sick people and emergencies on these days."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, August 2, 1946: Dawn of a New Day, p. 116)

971. Corrupt Practices
"The Guardian feels that your attitude towards the corrupt practice of accepting commissions from fellow physicians and pharmacists is most admirable. The more upright and noble the Baha'is are in their conduct, the more they will impress the public with the spiritual vitality of the Faith they believe in."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 20, 1953: Living the Life, p. 18)

D. Illnesses and Medical Practices

972. Medical Science Will Greatly Improve with the Spiritual Awakening of Man
"Abdu'l-Baha does often state that the medical science will much improve. With [289] the appearance of every Revelation a new insight is created in man and this in turn expresses itself in the growth of science. This has happened in past dispensations and we find its earliest fruits in our present day. What we see however is only the beginning. With the spiritual awakening of man this force will develop and marvelous results will become manifest."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 14, 1932: Selections from Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, April 1984, p. 10)

973. Surrogate Mothers and Artificial Insemination
"Regarding surrogate mothers and artificial insemination, you will find the following extracts from statements made by the Universal House of Justice relevant to your questions:

'The beloved Guardian, in a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer who enquired on the same subject, said "...there is nothing in our teachings about this, therefore there is no objection to having a baby by means of artificial insemination as long as your husband is the father of it.'

'Artificial insemination is, therefore, permissible to a Baha'i wife provided her husband is the donor.'"
(From a letter dated 11 July 1978 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

"Also, after quoting the above statement of the Guardian, the following comment was made in another letter:

'In view of this, the House of Justice has stated that it would not be proper for a Baha'i to donate semen to a hospital for the artificial insemination of a woman other than his wife.'"
(From a letter dated 25 May 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia)
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the compiler of this compilation, October 27, 1981)

974. Artificial Production of Life
"As to your question regarding the possibility of an artificial production of life by means of an incubator: This is essentially a matter that concerns science, and as such should be investigated and studied by scientists."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 31, 1937: Selections From Baha'i Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

975. Conception Without Male Sperm
"...As to the possibility of conception without the presence of a male sperm in the future: This is a question which lies entirely within the province of science, and which future scientists will have to investigate."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 27, 1938)

976. Hypnotism
"Hypnotism hath a weak influence over bodies, but hath no result. But the [290] power of the kingdom of God is great. If thou canst, endeavor to obtain a share of that power."
(Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. I, p. 169)

977. Auto-Suggestion or Hypnotism
"What comes under the healing of psychic practices 'Abdu'l-Baha has warned us against; but any form of auto-suggestion or hypnotism which is used by medical science and by properly qualified physicians we are free to take advantage of, if we feel that the doctor using such practices is qualified and will not abuse his rights."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 15, 1957: Spiritualism and Psychic Phenomena, February 14, 1974, p. 2)

978. Cancer
"Cancer is such a terrible scourge in the world today! But when the believers are called upon to go through such bitter ordeals they have the Faith to sustain them, the love of their Baha'i friends to comfort them, and the glorious words of Baha'u'llah regarding immortality to give them confidence and courage. Blessed are we, indeed, even, in the midst of our greatest trials."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 5, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 231, p. 1, May 1950)

979. Cancer—Not Stated It is a Spiritual Disease
"There is no authority for the statement which is alleged to have been said by 'Abdu'l-Baha to the effect that cancer is a spiritual disease. The saying is quite unauthoritative, and should not be circulated."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

980. Chiropractic
"There is nothing in the Teachings about chiropractic as a method of healing. People are free to turn to it if they please and find help through it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 10, 1951: Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and related Matters, April 1984, p. 14)

981. Circumcision

"The beloved Guardian says that the question of circumcision has nothing to do with the Baha'i Teachings; and the believers are free to do as they please in the matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 27, 1954: Ibid.)

982. Reference to Certain Aspects of Medical Profession Not Found in Sacred Writings
"We were impressed by the spirit of your letter of 15 Sultan seeking guidance concerning certain aspects of the medical profession. Your desire to avoid doing anything in your study of medicine which would be contrary to the Baha'i Teachings is most commendable.

"As you have keenly observed, the Universal House of Justice may consider it untimely to make definitive rulings on certain matters to which no direct [291] reference can be found in the Sacred Text. Among these are euthanasia and certain aspects of birth control and abortion, and until such time as rulings are made, these matters are left to the consciences of those concerned who must weigh the medical advice on the case in the light of general guidance given in the Teachings. Your National Spiritual Assembly has specific references regarding birth control and abortion which might be useful to you."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 18, 1975)

983. Heart/Kidney Transplant
"We have your letter of September 13, 1968, making inquiry about instructions which may apply to organ transplants such as the heart or kidney.

"On 18 September, 1968, we wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of Argentina as follows:

'We have not come across anything specific in the writings on transplants of hearts and other organs or regarding the time of death, and the Universal House of Justice does not wish to make any statements on these points at this time.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 23, 1968)

984. Organ Donor for Parts of the Body Including the Eyes
"In reply to your letter of October 1st inquiring about organ transplants and Baha'is acting as donors for parts of the body, we refer you first of all to our letter of March 3rd 1967 in which we quoted to you a passage from one of the beloved Guardian's letters on this subject.

"We are also able to give you the following from a letter of the beloved Guardian by his secretary: 'There is nothing in the teachings which would forbid a Baha'i to bequeath his eyes to another person or for a hospital; on the contrary it seems a noble thing to do.' This passage is from a letter dated September 6th 1946.

"The House of Justice does not wish at the present time to go beyond the elucidation contained in the above statements."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, October 16, 1969)

985. Euthanasia (Mercy Killing)
"As to the questions relating to euthanasia ... the House of Justice has asked us to share with you these two statements...

'As to the Baha'i viewpoint on the removal or withholding of life support in medical cases where intervention prolongs life in disabling illnesses, nothing has been found in the Sacred Text specifically on this matter. In such cases decisions must be left to those responsible, including the patient.'
(From a letter dated 31st May 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

'We have received your letter of March 18, 1974 in which you ask for the Baha'i viewpoint on euthanasia and on the removal of life support in medical cases where physiological interventions prolong life in disabling illnesses. In general our teachings indicate that God, the Giver of life, can alone dispose of it as He deems best, and we have found nothing in the Sacred Text on these [292] matters specifically but in a letter to an individual written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary regarding mercy killings, or legalized euthanasia, it is stated:

"...this is also a matter which the Universal House of Justice will have to legislate."

'Until such time as the Universal House of Justice considers legislation on euthanasia, decisions in the matters to which you refer must be left to the consciences of those responsible.'"
(From a letter dated 17 May 1974 from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska)
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the compiler, October 27, 1981)

986. When Dissecting Human Body, It Must Be Treated with Respect
"To your fourth question, a Baha'i, when dissecting a human body for the purposes of medical study, should keep in mind that since the body was once the temple of the spirit it must be treated with respect even though there is no further connection between the two."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 18, 1975)

987. Life Support
"With reference to your letter of 1 July 1985, we are asked to say that, in general, our Teachings indicate that God, the Giver of life, can alone dispose of it as He deems best. The Universal House of Justice has found nothing in the Sacred Text about the matter of withholding or removing life support in disabling or terminal illnesses where intervention prolongs life. Therefore, until such time as the House of Justice considers legislation on these matters, it is left to the conscience of the individual concerned whether or not to

subscribe to a 'living will'."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Local Spiritual Assembly, July 23, 1985)

988. Telepathy
"The Teachings bear no reference to the question of telepathy. It is a matter that concerns psychology."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 28, 1938: Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 10)

989. Before Serious Operation Consult More Than One Physician
"He is pleased to see that you are feeling better, and will certainly pray for your full recovery. Before having any serious operation, you should consult more than one qualified physician."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 8, 1954)

990. Protect Your Health by Sleeping Enough
"Regarding your question: There are very few people who can get along without eight hours sleep. If you are not one of those, you should protect your health by sleeping enough. The Guardian himself finds that it impairs his working capacity if he does not try and get a minimum of seven or eight hours."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers, September 15, 1952)

[293] 991. Take Care of Health as a Necessary Means of Serving the Cause
"You should always bear in mind Baha'u'llah's counsel that we should take the utmost care of our health, surely not because it is an end in itself, but as a necessary means of serving His Cause. In case of illness, He emphatically tells us, we should refer to the most competent physicians.
"Now your father has taken you to the best nerve specialists in ..., and they all recommend that you should suspend all your activities until you are fully recovered. It is now your duty as a Baha'i, and specially as a young believer who has still great services to render the Faith, to make every effort to recover your health, and to be confident that by making such an effort you will be attracting the confirmations of Baha'u'llah, without which no true and lasting healing is possible."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 17, 1937)

992. Vaccination
"Regarding your question about vaccination: These are technical matters which have not been specifically mentioned in the teachings, and consequently the Guardian cannot make any statement about them. No doubt medical science will progress tremendously as time goes by, and the treatment of disease become more perfect."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 24, 1943: Baha'i News, No. 173, p. 3, February 1945)

993. Vivisection

"As regards the question the Auckland Assembly has asked about vivisection, there is nothing on this subject in the Baha'i teachings. At a future date such matters will no doubt be taken up by the International House of Justice."
(Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957, p. 130)

994. Torture of Animals—When the Hearts of Men Change Medical Research Will Eliminate as Much Suffering of Animals as Possible
"The Guardian fully sympathizes with your repulsion against any torture to animals. However, he feels that as there are human beings being tortured much worse than animals all over the world, often physically, and more often mentally, that it is more important for the Baha'is to concentrate on what will free man from the cruelty and injustice which oppress him, rather than animals. Once we change human hearts, there will be no more cruelty to animals, and medical research will be carried out in a way which will eliminate as much suffering in experiments as possible."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 27, 1952)

995. During Vivisection Animal Must Be Well Anaesthetized
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 19th January 1978 enquiring the Baha'i point of view on the vivisection of animals. The beloved Guardian was asked a similar question to which his secretary replied on his behalf, on 29 November 1955: 'As there is no definite and conclusive statement on Vivisection in the Baha'i Teachings, this is a matter which the International House of Justice will have to pass upon in the future.'

"The House of Justice does not wish to legislate upon this matter at the present [294] time. It is left to the consciences of the individual friends, who should make their decisions in light of the teachings concerning animals and their treatment.

"In this connection the House of Justice instructs us to say that in a Tablet in which He stresses the need for kindness to animals, 'Abdu'l-Baha states that it would be permissible to perform an operation on a living animal for the purposes of research even if the animal were killed thereby, but that the animal must be well anaesthetized and that the utmost care must be exercised that it does not suffer."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, March 9, 1978: Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, April 1984, p. 16)

996. Sins Are Potent Cause of Physical Ailments
"...It is certainly the case that sins are a potent cause of physical ailments. If humankind were free from the defilements of sin and waywardness, and lived according to a natural, inborn equilibrium, without following wherever their passions led, it is undeniable that diseases would no longer take the ascendant, nor diversify with such intensity.

"But man hath perversely continued to serve his lustful appetites, and he would not content himself with simple foods. Rather, he prepared for himself food

that was compounded of many ingredients, of substances differing one from the other. With this, and with the perpetrating of vile and ignoble acts, his attention was engrossed, and he abandoned the temperance and moderation of a natural way of life. The result was the engendering of diseases both violent and diverse."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 152-153)

E. Physical Education

997. Material Education
"...education is of three kinds: material, human and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, 1981 ed., p. 8; cited in A Compilation of Extracts on Physical Education, p. 1, World Centre)

998. The Essentiality of Taking Proper Care of Child from the Early Days of His Life
"Unless the child, in his earliest years, be carefully tended, whether in a material or a spiritual sense, whether as to his physical health or his education, it will prove extremely difficult to effect any changes later on. For example, if a child is not properly cared for at the beginning of life, so that he doth not develop a sound body and his constitution doth not flourish as it ought, his body will remain feeble, and whatever is done afterward will take little effect. This matter of protecting the health of the child is essential, for sound health leadeth to insights and sense perceptions, and then the child, as he learneth sciences, arts, skills, and the civilities of life, will duly develop his powers...."
(From a previously untranslated Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Baha, Ibid., p. 1)

999. Give Them Advantage of Every Useful Kind of Knowledge
"While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly [295] grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, 1982 ed., p. 129: Ibid., p. 1)

1000. Training and Development of Physical Body Ensures Strength and Growth
"...education is of various kinds. There is a training and development of the physical body which ensures strength and growth."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 330: Ibid., p. 2)

1001. There Should Be a Program for the Development of Youth All Over the World
"...Baha'u'llah considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the program of the Baha'i youth all over

the world."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1931: Ibid., p. 2)

1002. Playing Games
"Playing games is not in the least forbidden. It should in fact be encouraged if they are of an athletic nature."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 27, 1932: Ibid., p. 2)

F. Diet and Nutrition

1003. Treat Disease Through Diet, but Do Not Neglect Medical Care
"Do not neglect medical treatment when it is necessary, but leave it off when health has been restored. Treat disease through diet, by preference, refraining from the use of drugs; and if you find what is required in a single herb, do not resort to a compounded medicament... Abstain from drugs when the health is good, but administer them when necessary."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'u'llah and the New Era, 1980 ed., p. 106, cited in ... Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

1004. One Course Meal More Pleasing in the Sight of God
"In all circumstances they should conduct themselves with moderation; if the meal be only one course this is more pleasing in the sight of God; however, according to their means, they should seek to have this single dish be of good quality."
(Baha'u'llah: Kitab-i-Badi, Ibid.)

1005. Mother's Milk Normally is Best for the Child
"The child must, from the day of his birth, be provided with whatever is conducive to his health; and know ye this: so far as possible, the mother's milk is best for, more [296] agreeable and better suited to, the child, unless she should fall ill or her milk should run entirely dry."
(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to an individual believer: Ibid.)

1006. Abstinence from Eating Animal Flesh
"Regarding the eating of animal flesh and abstinence therefrom, know thou of a certainty that, in the beginning of creation, God determined the food of every living being, and to eat contrary to that determination is not approved. For instance, beasts of prey, such as the wolf, lion and leopard, are endowed with ferocious, tearing instruments, such as hooked talons and claws. From this it is evident that the food of such beasts is meat. If they were to attempt to graze, their teeth would not cut the grass, neither could they chew the cud, for they do not have molars. Likewise, God hath given to the four-footed grazing animals such teeth as reap the grass like a sickle, and from this we understand that the food of these species of animal is vegetable. They cannot chase and hunt down other animals. The falcon hath a hooked beak and sharp talons; the hooked beak preventeth him from grazing, therefore his food is also meat.

"But now coming to man, we see he hath neither hooked teeth nor sharp nails or claws, nor teeth like iron sickles. From this it becometh evident and manifest that the food of man is cereals and fruit. Some of the teeth of man are like millstones to grind the grain, and some are sharp to cut the fruit. Therefore he is not in need of meat, nor is he obliged to eat it. Even without eating meat he would live with the utmost vigour and energy. For example, the community of the Brahmins in India do not eat meat; notwithstanding this they are not inferior to other nations in strength, power, vigour, outward senses or intellectual virtues. Truly, the killing of animals and the eating of their meat is somewhat contrary to pity and compassion, and if one can content oneself with cereals, fruit, oil and nuts, such as pistachios, almonds and so on, it would undoubtedly be better and more pleasing."
(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha written to an individual believer: Ibid.)

1007. The Four Canine Teeth in Man
"Thou hast written regarding the four canine teeth in man, saying that these teeth, two in the upper jaw and two in the lower, are for the purpose of eating meat. Know thou that these four teeth are not created for meat-eating, although one can eat meat with them. All the teeth of man are made for eating fruit, cereals and vegetables. These four teeth, however, are designed for breaking hard shells, such as those of almonds. But eating meat is not forbidden or unlawful, nay, the point is this, that it is possible for man to live without eating meat and still be strong. Meat is nourishing and containeth the elements of herbs, seeds and fruits; therefore sometimes it is essential for the sick and for the rehabilitation of health. There is no objection in the Law of God to the eating of meat if it is required. So if thy constitution is rather weak and thou findest meat useful, thou mayest eat it."
(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to an individual believer: Ibid.)

1008. The Bab Has Said that Baha'is Must Develop Medical Science So that Illness May Be Healed by Foods
"...The Bab hath said that the people of Baha must develop the science of medicine to such a high degree that they will heal illnesses by means of foods. The basic reason [297] for this is that if, in some component substance of the human body, an imbalance should occur, altering its correct, relative proportion to the whole, this fact will inevitably result in the onset of disease. If, for example, the starch component should be unduly augmented, or the sugar component decreased, an illness will take control. It is the function of a skilled physician to determine which constituent of his patient's body hath suffered diminution, which hath been augmented. Once he hath discovered this, he must prescribe a food containing the diminished element in considerable amounts, to re-establish the body's essential equilibrium. The patient, once his constitution is again in balance, will be rid of his disease.

"At whatever time highly-skilled physicians shall have developed the healing of illnesses by means of foods, and shall make provision for simple foods, and shall prohibit humankind from living as slaves to their lustful appetites, it is certain that the incidence of chronic and diversified illnesses will abate,

and the general health of all mankind will be much improved. This is destined to come about. In the same way, in the character, the conduct and the manners of men, universal modifications will be made."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 152-155)

1009. Medical Science is Only in Its Infancy
"'What will be the food of the future?' 'Fruit and grains. The time will come when meat will no longer be eaten. Medical science is only in its infancy, yet it has shown that our natural diet is that which grows out of the ground. The people will gradually develop up to the condition of this natural food.'"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ten Days in the Light of Akka, 1979 ed., pp. 8-9)

1010. Should One Kill Animals for Food?
"In regard to the question as to whether people ought to kill animals for food or not, there is no explicit statement in the Baha'i Sacred Scriptures (as far as I know) in favour or against it. It is certain, however, that if man can live on a purely vegetarian diet and thus avoid killing animals, it would be much preferable. This is, however, a very controversial question and the Baha'is are free to express their views on it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1931)

1011. Many Ailments that Affect Man Also Afflict Animals—Animals Heal Themselves with Food and Aliments
"The majority of the diseases which overtake man also overtake the animal, but the animal is not cured by drugs. In the mountains, as in the wilderness, the animal's physician is the power of taste and smell. The sick animal smells the plants that grow in the wilderness; he eats those that are sweet and fragrant to his smell and taste, and is cured. The cause of his healing is this. When the sugar ingredient has become diminished in his constitution, he begins to long for sweet things; therefore, he eats an herb with a sweet taste, for nature urges and guides him; its smell and taste please him, and he eats it. The sugar ingredient in his nature will be increased, and health will be restored.

"It is, therefore, evident that it is possible to cure by foods, aliments and fruits; but as today the science of medicine is imperfect, this fact is not yet fully grasped. When the science of medicine reaches perfection, treatment will be given by foods, aliments, fragrant fruits and vegetables, and by various waters, hot and cold in temperature."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, 1982 ed., pp. 257-259, Ibid.)

[298] 1012. Eating of Pork is Not Forbidden
"The eating of pork is not forbidden in the Baha'i Teachings."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 27, 1938: Ibid.)

1013. The Body is Like a Horse that Carries the Personality and Spirit
"...you should not neglect your health, but consider it the means which enables you to serve. It—the body—is like a horse which carries the personality and

spirit, and as such should be well cared for so it can do its work! You should certainly safeguard your nerves, and force yourself to take time, and not only for prayer and meditation, but for real rest and relaxation."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 23, 1947)

1014. The Prophets of God Are Not Immune from Things which Men Suffer
"...as we suffer these misfortunes we must remember that the Prophets of God Themselves were not immune from these things which men suffer. They knew sorrow, illness and pain too. They rose above these things through Their spirits, and that is what we must try and do too, when afflicted. The troubles of this world pass, and what we have left is what we have made of our souls, so it is to this we must look to becoming more spiritual, drawing nearer to God, no matter what our human minds and bodies go through."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 5, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 231, May 1950, p. 1)

1015. No Specific School of Nutrition or Medicine Has Been Associated with the Baha'i Teachings
"No specific school of nutrition or medicine has been associated with the Baha'i teachings. What we have are certain guidelines, indications and principles which will be carefully studied by experts and will, in the years ahead, undoubtedly prove to be invaluable sources of guidance and inspiration in the development of these medical sciences. Moreover, in this connection the Guardian's secretary has stated on his behalf that 'It is premature to try and elaborate on the few general references to health and medicine made in our Holy Scriptures.' The believers must guard against seizing upon any particular text which may appeal to them and which they may only partially or even incorrectly understand....

"In the Kitab-i-Aqdas Baha'u'llah has stated: 'Whenever ye fall ill, refer to competent physicians. Verily, We have not abolished recourse to material means, rather have We affirmed it through this Pen which God hath made the Dawning Place of His luminous and resplendent Cause.' The secretaries of the Guardian have conveyed his guidance on this point in many letters to individual believers in passages such as these: '...refer to competent physicians, and abide by their considered decisions'; '...invariably consult and follow the treatment of competent and conscientious physicians...' and '...consult the best physicians ... doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine.' Thus the obligation to consult physicians and to distinguish between doctors who are well trained in medical sciences and those who are not is clear, but the Faith should not be associated with any particular school of medical theory or practice. It is left to each believer to decide for himself which doctors he should consult, bearing in mind the principles enunciated above.

[299] "In matters of diet, as in medicine, the Universal House of Justice feels that the believers should be aware that a huge body of scientific knowledge has been accumulated as a guide to our habits and practices. Here too, as in all other things, the believers should be conscious of the two principles of

moderation and courtesy in the way they express their opinions and in deciding whether they should refuse food offered to them or request special foods.

"There are, of course, instances where a believer would be fully justified in abstaining from or eating only certain foods for some medical reason, but this is a different matter and would be understood by any reasonable person."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 24, 1977)

1016. We Have Guidelines, Indications and Principles which Experts Will Carefully Study in the Future
"In matters of diet, as in medicine, the Universal House of Justice feels that the believers should be aware that a huge body of scientific knowledge has been accumulated as a guide to our habits and practices. But it must be clearly understood that no specific school of nutrition or medicine has been associated with the Baha'i teachings. What we have are certain guidelines, indications and principles which will be carefully studied by experts and will, in the years ahead, undoubtedly prove to be invaluable sources of guidance and inspiration in the development of these medical sciences. Moreover, in this connection the Guardian's secretary has stated on his behalf that 'It is premature to try and elaborate on the few general references to health and medicine made in our Holy Scriptures.' The believers must guard against seizing upon any particular text which may appeal to them and which they may only partially or even incorrectly understand."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 11, 1978)

1017. Believers Should Seek Help and Advice of Experts—The Teachings Say Nothing About Eating Meat or Fish
"In matters of health, particularly regarding diet and nutrition, the House of Justice advises the friends to seek the help and advice of experts and doctors. This is what Baha'u'llah has recommended and He does not indicate which school of thought or practice they should belong to. However, as you particularly ask about references in the Old Testament as they relate to meat and fish, the House of Justice has asked us to quote for you the following excerpt taken from a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary to an individual believer:

'...there is nothing in the teachings about whether people should eat their food cooked or raw; exercise or not exercise; resort to specific therapies or not; nor is it forbidden to eat meat.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 19, 1977)

XXV. HOLY DAYS

[300] 1018. Two Holy Days When Work is Not Prohibited—The Significance of the Day of the Covenant Explained
"In response to your letter of 2 December 1984 asking a question about the event commemorated on the Day of the Covenant, the Universal House of Justice

has directed us to send you the following extract from a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian on this subject:

'The Day of the Covenant Nov. 26th and the Day of the Ascension Nov. 28th, anniversaries of the birth and the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha must be observed by the friends coming together, but work is not prohibited. In other words the friends must regard observance of these two anniversaries as obligatory—but suspension of work not to be regarded as obligatory.'

"The explanation of how 26 November came to be substituted, in relation to the Birthday of 'Abdu'l-Baha, for 23 May is related by the late Hand of the Cause Hasan M. Balyuzi in his book, 'Abdu'l-Baha', on page 523:

'Abdu'l-Baha told the Baha'is that this day was not, under any circumstances, to be celebrated as His day of birth. It was the day of the Declaration of the Bab, exclusively associated with Him. But as the Baha'is begged for a day to be celebrated as His, He gave them November 26th, to be observed as the day of the appointment of the Centre of the Covenant...'

"The House of Justice hopes that this will assist your understanding of the significance of this important date in the Baha'i calendar."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Administrative Committee for South Zaire, January 23, 1984)

1019. Suspension of Baha'i Administrative Activities on Baha'i Holy Days
"Concerning your question about holding meetings of consultation on Baha'i Holy Days, we have been requested to share with you an excerpt from the translation of a Persian letter from the beloved Guardian dated 3 January 1929 to an individual believer:

'On the Baha'i festivals and solemn commemorations it is preferable for Assemblies, Committees and Baha'i Institutions to suspend their activities. However, final decision in these matters rests with the Universal House of Justice.'

"The Universal House of Justice feels that the above directive of the Guardian is adequate for the time being. It should be clear, however, that should emergencies occur which require the holding of meetings of Baha'i institutions on the nine Holy Days of the Faith, this would be permissible."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, July 21, 1982)

[301] 1020. Baha'i Radio Should Refrain from Work on Nine Holy Days—Volunteers May Present Special Programs
"The Universal House of Justice has considered your inquiry of 18 April concerning Baha'i Holy Days and the operation of the Radio Baha'i facility in Labranza, and we have been asked to convey its reply.

"As you are well aware, not only should Baha'is refrain from work on the nine Holy Days, but the shops and establishments owned by Baha'is should also be closed on these Days. If government regulations do not require the station to

be on the air on a mandatory daily basis, Radio Baha'i should not engage in regular broadcasts on the nine Holy Days. However, to aid the Baha'i Community in its observance of any one of these Days, the station may offer at a particular time a special program suited to such observance. Those wishing to be involved in the production and airing of the program would be rendering a special service.

"You have no doubt noted that since the Baha'i day begins at sunset and ends at the following sunset, no Gregorian day would be fully taken up by the observance of any one of the nine Baha'i Holy Days; thus there is time to broadcast regular programs every day of the Gregorian year. The station naturally will inform its listeners of the meaning of each Holy Day well in advance so that they can appreciate the reason for the station's silence on such a Day.

"The House of Justice feels that this confirmation of the religious character of the station would be a means of teaching, a source of encouragement to the believers and model for their emulation."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Chile, July 6, 1986)

1021. Business Places Owned by Baha'is Must Close During the Nine Holy Days—In the Baha'i Temple Minimal Essential Services May Be Provided
"The beloved Guardian made it absolutely clear that the command to cease work during the nine Holy Days is a matter for conscientious obedience by every individual believer. In the case of businesses and other undertakings entirely under Baha'i control they must also close down during the Baha'i Holy Days, even though non-Baha'is may be members of their staffs.

"It is fully appreciated that the Baha'i Temple must be open for worship on the Holy Days and therefore it is permitted to provide, to the minimum extent possible, essential services. Those necessary tasks, such as cleaning and other preparation of the building, which can be carried out on the previous day should be so done and only those duties which must be performed should be undertaken on the Holy Day. In the case of the Temple it is immaterial whether the workers are Baha'is or non-Baha'is since it is the duty of the Faith to observe, especially in respect of its own institutions, the command to cease work on the Holy Days."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, August 12, 1977)

1022. Exceptions Can Be Made When Contract Demands Service
"Regarding the sale of tea and other refreshments in a cinema under non-Baha'i ownership: Those friends who have hired from the owner of the cinema a stall for the sale of such refreshments should make every effort to obtain permission to close on Baha'i holidays. In case, however, the non-Baha'i owner or partner refuses to grant their request their only alternative is to obey.

[302] "The case is different with a bread bakery owned by a believer. In this case there can be no excuse whatever why the shop should not be closed during

Baha'i holidays, as there are always non-Baha'i bakers from whom the public can buy."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 28, 1937)

1023. Gift Giving is Not an Integral Part of Any of the Baha'i Holy Days—nor is There a Prohibition
"The exchanging of presents among believers or the giving of gifts to children is not an integral part of any of our nine Baha'i Holy Days. There is no prohibition against it, and it is, as you say, a custom among Persian believers such as the Baha'i to whom you spoke, to exchange gifts at Naw-Ruz.

"The desire of you and your husband to associate the time of gift giving with your children's involvement in the Faith of Baha'u'llah is praiseworthy and it is felt that the following extract from a letter written by the secretary of the beloved Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand on December 26, 1941 will be of value to you:

'The intercalary days are specifically set aside for hospitality, the giving of gifts, etc. Baha'u'llah Himself specified that they be used this way, but gave no explanation for it.'

"In 'The Baha'i World', Vol. XV, p. 691 we read: 'Baha'u'llah designated those days as the 'Ayyam-i-Ha' and ordained that they should immediately precede the month of Ala, which is the month of fasting. He enjoined upon His followers to devote these days to feasting, rejoicing, and charity.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 18, 1982)

1024. Proper Time to Hold Meetings of Commemoration
"...Regarding your question of the proper time to celebrate or hold our meetings of commemoration: The time should be fixed by counting after sunset; the Master passed away one hour after midnight, which falls a certain number of hours after sunset; so His passing should be commemorated according to the sun and regardless of daylight saving time. The same applies to the ascension of Baha'u'llah Who passed away about 8 hours after sunset."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, August 12, 1944)

1025. Naw-Ruz
"...This sacred day, when the sun illumines equally the whole earth, is called the equinox, and the equinox is the symbol of the Manifestation of God. The Sun of Truth rises on the horizon of Divine Mercy and sends forth its rays. This day is consecrated to commemorate it...."
(Talk by 'Abdu'l-Baha, March 21, 1913: Star of the West, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 4)

1026. Naw-Ruz Has Nothing to Do with the Nineteen Day Feast
"He would like to point out that if the believers gather before sundown on a certain date it does not matter if the meeting continues after sunset; it may still be considered as being held on the day they gathered. The Naw-Ruz Feast

should be held on March 21 before sunset and has nothing to do with the 19-Day Feast. The 19-Day Feast [303] is administrative in function whereas the Naw-Ruz is our New Year, a Feast of hospitality and rejoicing."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 5, 1950)

1027. Naw-Ruz Should Be Celebrated According to the Vernal Equinox
"Regarding Naw-Ruz: If the vernal equinox falls on the 21st of March before sunset it is celebrated on that day. If at any time after sunset, Naw-Ruz will then, as stated by Baha'u'llah, fall on the 22nd. As to which spot should be regarded as the standard, this is a matter which the Universal House of Justice will have to decide...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 15, 1940: Baha'i News, No. 138, p. 1, September 1940)

1028. Naw-Ruz Cards
"There is no objection to individual Baha'is sending Naw-Ruz cards if they want to; also the National Spiritual Assembly can send them out occasionally, but it should not become a fixed custom."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, March 14, 1947: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957, p. 65)

1029. Celebration of the Christian Holidays Among the Baha'is Should Be Discontinued
"As regards the celebration of the Christian Holidays by the believers: It is surely preferable and even highly advisable that the friends should in their relation to each other discontinue observing such holidays as Christmas and New Years, and to have their festal gatherings of this nature instead during the intercalary days and Naw-Ruz."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 19, 1938)

1030. Holy Days Are Appropriate Occasions to Found Institutions and Projects for Social and Economic Development
"Briefly, every nation has a day known as a holiday which they celebrate with joy. In the sacred Laws of God, in every cycle and dispensation, there are blessed feasts, holidays and workless days. On such days all kinds of occupations, commerce, industry, agriculture etc., are not allowed. Every work is unlawful. All must enjoy a good time, gather together, hold general meetings, become as one assembly, so that the national oneness, unity and harmony may become personified in all eyes. As it is a blessed day it should not be neglected or without results by making it a day limited to the fruits of mere pleasure. During such blessed days institutions should be founded that may be of permanent benefit and value to the people so that in current conversation and in history it may become widely known that such a good work was inaugurated on such a feast day. Therefore, the intelligent must search and investigate reality to find out what important affair, what philanthropic institutions are

most needed and what foundations should be laid for the community on that particular day, so that they may be established. For example, if they find that the community needs [304] morality, then they may lay down the foundation of good morals on that day. If the community be in need of spreading sciences and widening the circle of knowledge, on that day they should proceed in that direction, that is to say, direct the thoughts of all the people to that philanthropic cause. If, however, the community is in need of widening the circle of commerce or industry or agriculture they should start the means so that the desired aim may be attained. If the community needs protection, proper support and care of orphans, they should act upon the welfare of the orphans, etc. Such undertakings that are beneficial to the poor, the weak and the helpless should be pursued in order that, on that day, through the unity of all and through great meetings, results may be obtained, the glory and blessings of that day may be declared and manifest....

"In all the cycles of the prophets the philanthropic affairs were confined to their respective peoples only—with the exception of small matters, such as charity, which was permissible to extend to others. But in this wonderful dispensation, philanthropic affairs are for all humanity, without any exception, because it is the manifestation of the mercifulness of God. Therefore, every universal matter—that is, one that belongs to all the world of humanity—is divine; and every matter that is sectarian and special is not universal in character—that is, it is limited. Therefore, my hope is that the friends of God, every one of them, may become as the mercy of God to all mankind."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. IX, No. 1, pp. 8-9, and cited in a compilation, prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development, entitled Social and Economic Development)

XXVI. THE INSTITUTION OF THE HUQUQU'LLAH

[305] 1031. Payment of Huququ'llah Purifies One's Property, Attracts Prosperity and Blessings
"It is clear and evident that the payment of the Right of God is conducive to prosperity, to blessing, and to honour and divine protection. Well is it with them that comprehend and recognize this truth and woe betide them that believe not. And this is on condition that the individual should observe the injunctions prescribed in the Book with the utmost radiance, gladness and willing acquiescence. It behoveth you to counsel the friends to do that which is right and praiseworthy. Whoso hearkeneth to this call, it is to his own behoof, and whoso faileth bringeth loss upon himself. Verily our Lord of Mercy is the All-Sufficing, the All-Praised."
(Baha'u'llah: Huququ'llah, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, June 1985, Extract No. 6, from a previously untranslated Tablet)

1032. A Bounty which Shall Remain with Every Soul in Every World of God
"Huququ'llah is indeed a great law. It is incumbent upon all to make this offering, because it is the source of grace, abundance, and of all good. It is a bounty which shall remain with every soul in every world of the worlds of

God, the All-Possessing, the All-Bountiful."
(Baha'u'llah: Ibid., Extract No. 7)

1033. Moderation Versus Extravagance
"Say: Pride not yourselves on earthly riches ye possess. Reflect upon your end and upon the recompense for your works that hath been ordained in the Book of God, the Exalted, the Mighty. Blessed is the rich man whom earthly possessions have been powerless to hinder from turning unto God, the Lord of all names. Verily he is accounted among the most distinguished of men before God, the Gracious, the All-Knowing."
(Baha'u'llah: Ibid., Extract No. 25)

1034. Solicitation of the Huqúqu'llah is Not Permitted
"...To demand the Huqúq is in no wise permissible. This command was revealed in the Book of God for various necessary matters ordained by God to be dependent upon material means. Therefore, if someone, with utmost pleasure and gladness, nay with insistence, wisheth to partake of this blessing, thou mayest accept. Otherwise, acceptance is not permissible."
(Baha'u'llah: Ibid., Extract No. 9)

[306] 1035. Trustworthiness in Huqúqu'llah—On Acquiring 100 Mithqals of Gold, 19 Belong Unto God
"Should a person acquire one hundred mithqals of gold, nineteen mithqals thereof belong unto God, the Creator of earth and heaven. Take heed, O people, lest ye deprive yourselves of this great bounty. We have prescribed this law unto you while We are wholly independent of you and of all that are in the heavens and on the earth. Indeed there lie concealed in this command, mysteries and benefits which are beyond the comprehension of anyone save God, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say, through this injunction God desireth to purify your possessions and enable you to draw nigh unto such stations as none can attain, except those whom God may please. Verily, He is the Generous, the Gracious, the Bountiful.

"O people! Act not treacherously in the matter of Huqúqu'llah and dispose not of it, except by His leave. Thus hath it been ordained in His Epistles as well as in this glorious Tablet.

"Whoso dealeth dishonestly with God will in justice be exposed, and whoso fulfilleth the things he hath been commanded, divine blessings will descend upon him from the heaven of the bounty of his Lord, the Bestower, the Bountiful, the Most Generous, the Ancient of Days. Verily He desireth for you the things that are inscrutable to you at present, though the people themselves will readily discover them when their souls take their flight and the trappings of their earthly gaieties are rolled up. Thus warneth you the Author of the Preserved Tablet."
(Baha'u'llah: Ibid., Extract No. 10)

1036. Huqúqu'llah Designated as an Institution of the Cause—Calculation of Equivalent of One Mithqal of Gold
"...many details in the computation of Huqúqu'llah have been left by

Baha'u'llah to the judgement and conscience of the individual believer. For example, He exempts such household equipment and furnishings as are needful, but He leaves it to the individual to decide which items are necessary and which are not. Contributions to the funds of the Faith cannot be considered as part of one's payment of Huqúqu'llah; moreover, if one owes Huqúqu'llah and cannot afford both to pay it and to make contributions to the Fund, the payment of Huqúqu'llah should take priority over making contributions. But as to whether contributions to the Fund may be treated as expenses in calculating the amount of one's assets on which Huqúqu'llah is payable: this is left to the judgement of each individual in the light of his own circumstances.

"The Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf that 'one mithqal consists of nineteen nakhuds. The weight of twenty-four nakhuds equals four and three-fifths grammes. Calculations may be made on this basis.' Nineteen mithqals therefore equal 69.191667 grammes. One troy ounce equals 31.103486 grammes, thus 19 mithqals equal 2.224563 oz...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer: Ibid., Extract No. 105)

1037. Promulgation of the Huqúqu'llah a Responsibility of the Spiritual Assemblies—The Universal House of Justice Determines How Huqúqu'llah Can Be Used

"Since the Huqúqu'llah has, according to the injunction in the Book, been designated as one of the institutions of the Cause, and inasmuch as the fulfilment of [307] this obligation is binding on the people of Baha, therefore it is deemed appropriate that your Spiritual Assembly should fully familiarize the dear friends in Persia with the significance of this momentous responsibility and to promulgate gradually in the entire community such ordinances related to Huqúqu'llah as are laid down in His perspicuous Book. Obviously in pursuance of the explicit Texts solicitation of the Huqúqu'llah is not permissible, but it is the responsibility of those Trustees of the Cause to address appeals of a general character to the dear friends, so that they may become more informed about this essential obligation. God willing, through the occasional reminders issued by your Assembly, they may gain the privilege and honour of achieving this benevolent deed—a deed that draws forth heavenly blessings, serves as a means of purifying the earthly possessions of the devoted friends, and promotes the international activities of the people of Baha.

"It is evident to those Trustees of the Merciful that this Body, by virtue of the explicit Text of the sacred Writings, is the Body to which all things must be referred, and the Huqúqu'llah can be used to promote the interests of the Cause throughout the Baha'i world only with the permission of the Authority in the Cause to which all must turn."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, October 27, 1963, translated from the Persian: Ibid., Extract No. 96)

1038. Personal Accounting Should Separate Huqúqu'llah from

Contributions—Huququ'llah Comes First
"The payment of the Huququ'llah is one of the essential spiritual obligations that the wondrous Pen of Baha'u'llah has laid down in the Most Holy Book.

"It would be preferable and more fitting if these two accounts, namely contributions to the Funds and payments of the Huququ'llah were to be kept separate. This means that in the first instance you should pay your Huququ'llah, and then you may offer your devoted contributions at your own discretion to the International Fund which is now being used for achieving the goals of the Nine Year Plan."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 18, 1965, translated from the Persian: Ibid., Extract No. 97)

1039. As a Token of Mercy, Cost of Burial and Debts Take Precedence Over Huququ'llah
"Thou hast asked which is to take precedence: the Huququ'llah, the debts of the deceased, or the cost of burial. It is God's command that the cost of burial take precedence, then the payment of debts, then the Right of God. Verily He is the One Who will pay due recompense, the All-Rewarding, the All-Generous. If the property is not equal to the debts, the estate must be distributed in direct proportion to each debt. The settlement of debts is a most important command set forth in the Book. Well is it with him who ascendeth unto God, without any obligations to Huququ'llah and to His servants. It is evident that the Huququ'llah hath priority over all other liabilities; however, as a token of mercy, He Who is the Dawning-Place of Revelation hath commanded that which hath been revealed by His life-giving and omniscient Pen in this Tablet."
(Baha'u'llah: Ibid., Extract No. 22)

[308] 1040. The Trusteeship of the Huququ'llah—Cannot Be Turned Over to Every Person
"Payments for the Huququ'llah cannot be handed over to every person. These words have been uttered by Him Who is the sovereign Truth. The Huququ'llah should be kept in the custody of trusted individuals and forwarded to His holy court through the Trustees of God."
(Baha'u'llah: Ibid., Extract No. 58)

1041. The Huquq is Not Payable on Entire Possessions Each Year
"The Huquq is not levied on one's entire possessions each year. A person's wealth may be worth 100,000. How can he be expected to pay Huquq on this property every year? For instance, whatever income thou has earned in a particular year, you should deduct from it your expenses during that year. The Huquq will then be payable on the remainder. Possessions on which Huquq was paid the previous year will be exempt from further payment."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid., Extract No. 65)

1042. Huquq is Not Payable on Agricultural Tools and Equipment
"Huquq is applied on everything one possesseth. However, if a person hath paid the Huquq on a certain property, and the income from that property is equal to his needs, no Huquq is payable by that person.

"Huquq is not payable on agricultural tools and equipment, and on animals used in ploughing the land, to the extent that these are necessary."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Ibid., Extract No. 68)

1043. Value of Residence, Furniture and Tools of Trade Exempt from Huququ'llah of Heir
"Concerning your question whether the heirs to whom the principal residence, furniture and clothing of the deceased are transferred by way of inheritance will be exempt from the payment of Huquq or not, he said: Since the residence, furniture and the tools of trade have, in accordance with the explicit Text, been granted exemption from the Huquq, therefore, when the transfer of ownership takes place such possessions continue to be exempt."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, September 29, 1942: Ibid., Extract No. 88)

1044. Payment of the Huququ'llah is a Binding Spiritual Obligation—Conduces to Prosperity and Honour, Ensures Attainment of True Happiness
"Payment of Huququ'llah is a spiritual obligation binding on the people of Baha. The injunction is laid down in the Most Holy Book, and clear and conclusive explanations are embodied in various Tablets.

"Every devoted believer who is able to meet the specified conditions, must pay the Huququ'llah, without any exception. Indeed according to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, failure to comply with this injunction is regarded as a betrayal of trust, and the divine call: 'Whoso dealeth dishonestly with God will in justice be exposed,' is a clear reference to such people.

"The Centre of the Covenant has affirmed the obligation of Huquq in these words: 'The Lord as a sign of His infinite bounties hath graciously favoured His servants [309] by providing for a fixed money offering (Huquq), to be dutifully presented unto Him, though He, the True One and His servants have been at all times independent of all created things'.

"This weighty ordinance, as testified by the Pen of Glory is invested with incalculable benefit and wisdom. It purifies one's possessions, averts loss and disaster, conduces to prosperity and honour and imparts divine increase and blessing. It is a sacrifice offered for and related to God, and an act of servitude leading to the promotion of His Cause. As affirmed by the Centre of the Covenant, Huquq offerings constitute a test for the believers and enable the friends to become firm and steadfast in faith and certitude.

"In brief, payment of Huququ'llah is one of the binding spiritual responsibilities of the followers of Baha'u'llah and the proceeds thereof revert to the Authority in the Cause to whom all must turn. Moreover, the Ancient Beauty—magnified be His praise—has affirmed that after the establishment of the Universal House of Justice necessary rulings would be enacted in this connection in conformity with that which God has purposed, and that no one, except the Authority to which all must turn, has the right to dispose of this Fund. In other words, whatever portion of one's wealth is due to the Huququ'llah belongs to the World Centre of the Cause of God, not to the

individuals concerned.

"Thus the friends should not follow their own volition and judgement in using any of the funds set aside for Huququ'llah for any other purpose, even for charitable contributions of the Faith.

"We earnestly hope that everyone may be privileged to observe this sacred and blessed obligation which would ensure the attainment of true happiness and would serve to promote the execution of Baha'i enterprises throughout the world.

"Verily God is Self-Sufficient above the need of His creatures."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, October 25, 1970, translated from the Persian: Ibid., Extract No. 100)

XXVII. SPECIAL INSTITUTIONS

A. Institutions Defined

[310] 1045. Definition of Institution
"While the friends may be concerned at the range of agencies of the Cause which are called institutions, attempts at classification are not useful, for of course an institution is anything which has been instituted. One group of Baha'i institutions is of the administration of the Faith on international, national and local levels, another represents functions based upon laws given by the Manifestation. It is sufficient to accept what is officially named an institution, while observing the range of appropriate applications of that title."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 20, 1980)

1046. Clarification of the Institutions Attendant to the Guardianship
"According to the 'Will and Testament' the institutions attendant to the Guardianship are the body of the Hands of the Cause, and the nine Hands of the Cause occupied in important services in the work of the Guardian. As you know, in his own lifetime, the Guardian also authorised the Hands to appoint Auxiliary Board members for protection and for propagation.

"However, this does not mean that the institution of the Counsellors, as presently organized, is, strictly speaking, an institution attendant to the Guardianship. To understand this subject in its several aspects you are advised to study carefully the letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated 24 April 1972. You will find the relevant passage from this letter on pages 11-13 of the compilation entitled 'The Institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors' published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 1, 1982)

B. The Guardianship

1047. The Guardianship—Acceptance of—Day that Will Not Be Followed by Night
"He feels that if ... ponders more deeply about the fundamentals of Divine Revelation, she will also come to understand the Guardianship. Once the mind and heart have grasped the fact that God guides men through a Mouthpiece, a human being, a Prophet, infallible and unerring, it is only a logical projection of this acceptance to also accept the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardians. The Guardians are the evidence of the maturity of mankind in the sense that at long last men have progressed to the point of having one world, and of needing one world [311] management for human affairs. In the spiritual realm they have also reached the point where God could leave, in human hands (i.e., the Guardians'), guided directly by the Bab and Baha'u'llah, as the Master states in His Will, the affairs of His Faith for this Dispensation. This is what is meant by 'this is the day which will not be followed by the night'. In this Dispensation, divine guidance flows on to us in this world after the Prophet's ascension, through first the Master, and then the Guardians. If a person can accept Baha'u'llah's function, it should not present any difficulty to them to also accept what He has ordained a divinely-guided individual in matters pertaining to His Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 25, 1948: Baha'i News, No. 232, p. 8, June 1950)

1048. The Word "Guardianship" Used with Various Meanings
"Regarding your first question, it is important that when considering the references to the Guardianship in the writings of the Faith, and especially when striving to understand how these references apply at the present time, you should realize that the word 'guardianship' is used with various meanings in different contexts. In certain contexts it indicates the office and function of the Guardian himself, in others it refers to the line of Guardians, in still others it bears a more extended meaning embracing the Guardian and his attendant institutions. Nevertheless, it would be quite incorrect to state, at the present time when there is no Guardian, that the Hands of the Cause are members of the Institution of Guardianship. Nor would it be correct to so designate the International Teaching Centre, the Counsellors, the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 5, 1977)

1049. Prerogatives and Duties Invested in the Guardian Are of Three Kinds
"In the specific sense of referring to the office and function of the Guardian himself, the House of Justice finds that the prerogatives and duties vested in him are of three kinds. First, as was explained in a letter to an individual believer, which was published in 'Wellspring of Guidance', there are a number of functions and objects which the Guardianship shares with the Universal House of Justice and which the House of Justice must continue to pursue. Secondly, there are other functions of the Guardianship which, in the absence of a Guardian, devolve upon the Universal House of Justice, for example, the

Headship of the Faith, the responsibility for directing the work of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God and of ensuring the continuing discharge of the functions of protection and propagation vested in that Institution, and the right to administer the Huququ'llah. Thirdly, there are those prerogatives and duties which lie exclusively within the sphere of the Guardian himself and, therefore, in the absence of a Guardian, are inoperative except insofar as the monumental work already performed by Shoghi Effendi continues to be of enduring benefit to the Faith. Such a function is that of authoritative interpretation of the Teachings."
(Ibid.)

[312] 1050. Infallibility of the Guardian is Not for Individual Believers to Limit or to Judge
"Shoghi Effendi was asked several times during his ministry to define the sphere of his operation and his infallibility. The replies he gave and which were written on his behalf are most illuminating. He explains that he is not an infallible authority on subjects such as economics and science, nor does he go into technical matters since his infallibility is confined to 'matters which are related strictly to the Cause'. He further points out that 'he is not, like the Prophet, omniscient at will', that his 'infallibility covers interpretation of the revealed word and its application', and that he is also 'infallible in the protection of the Faith'. Furthermore, in one of the letters, the following guideline is set forth:

'...It is not for individual believers to limit the sphere of the Guardian's authority, or to judge when they have to obey the Guardian and when they are free to reject his judgement. Such an attitude would evidently lead to confusion and to schism. The Guardian being the appointed interpreter of the Teachings, it is his responsibility to state what matters which, affecting the interests of the Faith, demand on the part of the believers complete and unqualified obedience to his instructions.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 22, 1977)

1051. Authoritative Interpretation of the Teachings is the Exclusive Right of the Guardian After 'Abdu'l-Baha
"It must always be remembered that authoritative interpretation of the Teachings was, after 'Abdu'l-Baha, the exclusive right of the Guardian, and fell within the 'sacred and prescribed domain' of the Guardianship, and therefore the Universal House of Justice cannot and will not infringe upon that domain. The exclusive sphere of the Universal House of Justice is to 'pronounce upon and deliver the final judgment on such laws and ordinances as Baha'u'llah has not expressly revealed'. Apart from this fundamental difference in the functions of the twin pillars of the Order of Baha'u'llah, insofar as the other duties of the Head of the Faith are concerned, the Universal House of Justice shares with the Guardian the responsibility for the application of the revealed Word, the protection of the Faith, as well as the duty 'to insure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of

our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its Teachings.' However, the Universal House of Justice is not omniscient; like the Guardian, it wants to be provided with facts when called upon to render a decision, and like him it may well change its decision when new facts emerge."
(Ibid.)

1052. The Distinction Between Authoritative Interpretation and Individual Understanding

"A clear distinction is made in our Faith between authoritative interpretation and the interpretation or understanding that each individual arrives at for himself from his study of its teachings. While the former is confined to the Guardian, the latter, according to the guidance given to us by the Guardian himself, should by no means be suppressed. In fact such individual interpretation is considered the fruit of man's [313] rational power and conducive to a better understanding of the teachings, provided that no disputes or arguments arise among the friends and the individual himself understands and makes it clear that his views are merely his own. Individual interpretations continually change as one grows in comprehension of the teachings. In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi it is stated, 'To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Baha'u'llah and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form. There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for. They, therefore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their own. As the Cause is still in its early days we must be most careful lest we fall into this error and injure the Movement we so much adore. There is no limit to the study of the Cause. The more we read the Writings, the more truths we can find in Them, the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous.' So, although individual insights can be enlightening and helpful, they can also be misleading. The friends must therefore learn to listen to the views of others without being over-awed or allowing their faith to be shaken, and to express their own views without pressing them on their fellow Baha'is.

"The Cause of God is organic, growing and developing like a living being. Time and again it has faced crises which have perplexed the believers, but each time the Cause, impelled by the immutable purpose of God, overcame the crisis and went on to greater heights."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

1053. God Ordained, in This Day, that Guidance Has Been Vouchsafed to Man Through Institutions

"...In view of the fact that guidance in this day, through the bounty of God, and because of the very nature of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, has been vouchsafed to man through institutions in this world; namely the Guardianship at present; and also in the future, the International House of Justice; individuals are not in a position to interpret the Teachings, and have no justification for claiming special stations."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, December 13, 1955)

1054. Future Guardians

"Future Guardians are clearly envisaged and referred to in the Writings, but there is nowhere any promise or guarantee that the line of Guardians would endure forever; on the contrary there are clear indications that the line could be broken. Yet, in spite of this, there is repeated insistence in the Writings on the indestructability of the Covenant and the immutability of God's Purpose for this Day.

"One of the most striking passages which envisage the possibility of such a break in the line of the Guardians is in the Kitab-i-Aqdas itself:

'The endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. No one has the right to lay hold on them without leave from the Dawning-Place of Revelation. After Him the decision rests with the Aghsan (Branches), and after them with the House of Justice—should it be established in the world by then—so that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Sites exalted in this Cause, and for [314] that which they have been commanded by God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful. Otherwise the endowments should be referred to the people of Baha, who speak not without His leave and who pass no judgement but in accordance with that which God has ordained in this Tablet, they who are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth, so that they may spend them on that which has been decreed in the Holy Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful.'"

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to Hands of the Cause of God, Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, December 7, 1969)

1055. The Guardian is Assured the Guidance of Both Baha'u'llah and the Bab

"Instructions sent on behalf of the Guardian are binding, as are the words of the Guardian; although of course, they are not the Guardian's words.

"The Guardian's infallibility covers interpretation of the revealed word and its application. Likewise any instructions he may issue having to do with the protection of the Faith, or its well-being must be closely obeyed, as he is infallible in the protection of the Faith. He is assured the guidance of both Baha'u'llah and the Bab, as the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha clearly reveals."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 20, 1956)

1056. He is the Interpreter of the Word: Divine Truth is Relative

"The Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah and the Will and Testament of the Master clearly and explicitly indicate that the Interpreter of the Word was the Centre of the Covenant and now is the Guardian. There are no other Interpreters whatsoever and no individual may interpret. This is strictly forbidden.

"Divine Truth is relative and that is why we are enjoined to constantly refer the seeker to the Word itself—and why any explanations we make to ease the

journey of the soul of any individual must be based on the Word—and the Word alone."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, June 4, 1957)

1057. Guardianship Does Not Lose Significance nor Position Because There is No Living Guardian
"During the whole thirty-six years of his Guardianship Shoghi Effendi functioned without the Universal House of Justice. Now the Universal House of Justice must function without the Guardian, but the principle of inseparability remains. The Guardianship does not lose its significance nor position in the Order of Baha'u'llah merely because there is no living Guardian. We must guard against two extremes: one is to argue that because there is no Guardian all that was written about the Guardianship and its position in the Baha'i World Order is a dead letter and was unimportant; the other is to be so overwhelmed by the significance of the Guardianship as to underestimate the strength of the Covenant, or to be tempted to compromise with the clear texts in order to find somehow, in some way, a 'Guardian'."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 86-87)

1058. Station of Guardianship Cannot Be Claimed Ere the Expiration of 1000 Years
"My purpose is this, that ere the expiration of a thousand years, no one has the right to utter a single word, even to claim the station of Guardianship.

[315] "The Most Holy Book is the Book to which all peoples shall refer, and in it the Laws of God have been revealed. Laws not mentioned in the Book should be referred to the decision of the Universal House of Justice..."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Persian and Arabic Tablets, Vol. III, pp. 499-501: cited by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Netherlands, March 9, 1965: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 47)

C. The Universal House of Justice

1059. The Universal House of Justice Called into Being by the Author of the Faith
"...In it (Kitab-i-Aqdas) He formally ordains the institution of the 'House of Justice,' ... and designates its members as the 'Men of Justice,' the 'Deputies of God,' the 'Trustees of the All-Merciful,'..."
(Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, 1987 ed., Wilmette, p. 214)

1060. Apex of Baha'u'llah's World Order
"...There are statements from the Master and the Guardian indicating that the Universal House of Justice, in addition to being the Highest Legislative Body of the Faith, is also the body to which all must turn, and is the 'apex' of the Baha'i Administrative Order, as well as the 'supreme organ of the Baha'i Commonwealth.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

1061. Legislative Functions
"The centre of the executive power is the government, and the legislative power lies in the hands of thoughtful and wise men. On the other hand, if these strong pillars and firm foundations are not complete and comprehensive, how can it be supposed that there will be safety and salvation for the nation? But as, in these latter days, such excellency is rare, the government and the whole body of the nation are in sore need of just and discerning directions. Thus it is of the utmost importance to establish an assembly of learned men, who, being proficient in the different sciences and capable of dealing with all the present and future requirements, will settle the questions in accordance with forbearance and firmness.

"All the civic affairs and the legislation of material laws for the increasing needs of the enlightened humanity belong to the House of Justice. This, the House of Justice, will be not only a body for the legislation of laws according to the spirit and requirement of the time, but a board of arbitration for the settlement of all disputes arising between peoples. When the Universal House of Justice is organized the members will do their utmost for the realization of greater cordiality and comity amongst the nations. The Laws of Baha'u'llah are the unchangeable, organic laws of the Universal House of Justice. They are the very foundation upon which the structure of additional legislation is built... Again, I repeat, the House of Justice, whether National or Universal, has only legislative power and not executive power...."
(From words of 'Abdu'l-Baha in: Star of the West, Vol. VII, No. 15, pp. 138-139)

1062. Process of Legislating
"It should be understood by the friends that before legislating upon any matter [316] the Universal House of Justice studies carefully and exhaustively both the Sacred Texts and the writings of Shoghi Effendi on the subject. The interpretations written by the beloved Guardian cover a vast range of subjects and are equally as binding as the Text itself.

"...Unity of doctrine is maintained by the existence of the authentic texts of Scripture and the voluminous interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, together with the absolute prohibition against anyone propounding 'authoritative' or 'inspired' interpretations or usurping the function of the Guardian. Unity of administration is assured by the authority of the Universal House of Justice."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Netherlands, March 9, 1965: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 52-53)

"...As already announced to the friends, a careful study of the Writings and interpretations on any subject on which the House of Justice proposes to legislate always preceded its act of legislation. Second, the Universal House of Justice, itself assured of divine guidance, is well aware of the absence of the Guardian and will approach all matters of legislation only when certain of its sphere of jurisdiction, a sphere which the Guardian has confidently described as 'clearly defined'..."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966: Ibid., p. 84)

"It may help the friends to understand this relationship if they are aware of some of the processes that the Universal House of Justice follows when legislating. First, of course, it observes the greatest care in studying the Sacred Texts and the interpretations of the Guardian as well as considering the views of all the members. After long consultation the process of drafting a pronouncement is put into effect. During this process the whole matter may well be reconsidered. As a result of such reconsideration the final judgement may be significantly different from the conclusion earlier favoured, or possibly it may be decided not to legislate at all on that subject at that time...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 7, 1969: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 40)

1063. Has General Functions of Protecting and Administering the Cause
"The Universal House of Justice, beyond its function as the enactor of legislation, has been invested with the more general functions of protecting and administering the Cause, solving obscure questions and deciding upon matters that have caused difference...."
(Ibid., pp. 38-39)

1064. Infallibility of the Universal House of Justice is Not Dependent on the Presence of the Guardian
"The infallibility of the Universal House of Justice, operating within its ordained sphere, has not been made dependent upon the presence in its membership of the Guardian of the Cause. Although in the realm of interpretation the Guardian's pronouncements are always binding, in the area of the Guardian's participation in legislation it is always the decision of the House itself which must prevail. This is [317] supported by the words of the Guardian: 'The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgement on such laws and ordinances as Baha'u'llah has not expressly revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

1065. The Universal House of Justice Has Conferred Infallibility
"To epitomize: essential infallibility belongs especially to the supreme Manifestations, and acquired infallibility is granted to every holy soul. For instance, the Universal House of Justice, if it be established under the necessary conditions—with members elected from all the people—that House of Justice will be under the protection and the unerring guidance of God. If that House of Justice shall decide unanimously, or by a majority, upon any question not mentioned in the Book, that decision and command will be guarded from

mistake. Now the members of the House of Justice have not, individually, essential infallibility; but the body of the House of Justice is under the protection and the unerring guidance of God: this is called conferred infallibility."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, 1984 ed., Wilmette, pp. 172-173)

1066. The Process of Deducing Subsidiary Laws from the Original Text is the Right of the House of Justice
"As regards the need to have deductions made from the Writings to help in the formulation of the enactments of the House of Justice, there is the following text from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

'Those matters of major importance which constitute the foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice. The wisdom of this is that the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place. Therefore the House of Justice will take action accordingly.

'Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions. God forbid! The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

1067. In the World Order of Baha'u'llah Certain Functions Are Reserved to Certain Institutions
"In the Order of Baha'u'llah there are certain functions which are reserved to certain institutions, and others which are shared in common, even though they may be more in the special province of one or the other. For example, although the Hands of the Cause of God have the specific functions of protection and propagation, and are specialized for these functions, it is also the duty of the [318] Universal House of Justice and the Spiritual Assemblies to protect and teach the Cause—indeed teaching is a sacred obligation placed upon every believer by Baha'u'llah. Similarly, although after the Master authoritative interpretation was exclusively vested in the Guardian, and although legislation is exclusively the function of the Universal House of Justice, these two Institutions are, in Shoghi Effendi's words, 'complementary in their aim and purpose.' 'Their common, their fundamental object is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings.' Whereas the Universal House of Justice cannot undertake any function which exclusively appertained to the Guardian, it must continue to pursue the object which it shares in common with the Guardianship."
(Ibid.)

1068. The Decisions and Laws Made by the Universal House of Justice Are Inspired and Confirmed by the Holy Spirit—This Exclusive Authority Will Preclude Errors of Past Dispensations

"Say, O people: Verily the Supreme House of Justice is under the wings of your Lord, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful, that is under His protection, His care, and His shelter; for He has commanded the firm believers to obey that blessed, sanctified and all-subduing body, whose sovereignty is divinely-ordained and of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whose laws are inspired and spiritual.

"Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice. In the religion of Islam, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text; although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified. These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence, and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances. All these were enforced. Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice. The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Baha'i community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division and dispersion. The oneness of the world would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God would be shaken."
(From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in a letter to an individual believer, May 27, 1966 by the Universal House of Justice)

1069. The Strong Cord to which All Must Cling is the Covenant

"However great may be our inability to understand the mystery and the implications of the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the strong cord to which all must cling with assurance is the Covenant. The emphatic and vigorous language of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament is at this time, as at the time of His own passing, the safeguard of the Cause: 'Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not [319] expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant.' And again: 'All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.'"
(Ibid.)

1070. The Universal House of Justice is the "Last Refuge of a Tottering Civilization"

"The Universal House of Justice, which the Guardian said would be regarded by posterity as 'the last refuge of a tottering civilization' is now, in the absence of the Guardian, the sole infallibly guided institution in the world to which all must turn, and on it rests the responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God in accordance with the revealed Word. There are statements from the Master and the Guardian indicating that the Universal House of Justice, in addition to being the Highest Legislative Body of the Faith, is also the body to which all must turn, and is the 'apex' of the Baha'i Administrative Order, as well as the 'supreme organ of the Baha'i Commonwealth'. The Guardian has in his writings specified for the House of Justice such fundamental functions as the formulation of future world-wide teaching plans, the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, and the guidance, organisation and unification of the affairs of the Cause throughout the world. Furthermore in 'God Passes By' the Guardian makes the following statement: 'The Kitab-i-Aqdas ... not only preserves for posterity the basic laws and ordinances on which the fabric of His future World Order must rest, but ordains, in addition to the function of interpretation which it confers upon His Successor, the necessary institutions through which the integrity and unity of His Faith can alone be safeguarded.' He has also, in 'The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah' written, that the members of the Universal House of Justice 'and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation.'"
(Ibid.)

1071. The Chosen Successors of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha
"...They have ... in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world."
(Shoghi Effendi: World Order of Baha'u'llah, 1982 ed., Wilmette, pp. 19-20)

1072. The Universal House of Justice Bears Responsibility for Executive and Judicial Functions as Well as Legislative
"While ultimately the major function of the Universal House of Justice will be that [320] of legislation, it has continuing responsibility for executive and judicial functions of the institution. Therefore it is not accurate to refer to members of the House of Justice as 'legislators,' understandable as is the wish to give simple titles rather than complex ones."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Grenada, May 19, 1985)

1073. Appointment of a Successor to Shoghi Effendi or More Hands of the Cause Not Possible
"As the Universal House of Justice has already announced, it cannot legislate to make possible the appointment of a successor to Shoghi Effendi, nor can it

legislate to make possible the appointment of any more Hands of the Cause, but it must do everything within its power to ensure the performance of all those functions which it shares with these two mighty Institutions. It must make provision for the proper discharge in future of the functions of protection and propagation, which the administrative bodies share with the Guardianship and the Hands of the Cause; it must, in the absence of the Guardian, receive and disburse the Huququ'llah, in accordance with the following statement of 'Abdu'l-Baha: 'Disposition of the Huquq, wholly or partly, is permissible, but this should be done by permission of the authority in the Cause to whom all must turn'; it must make provision in its Constitution for the removal of any of its members who commits a sin 'injurious to the common weal'. Above all, it must, with perfect faith in Baha'u'llah, proclaim His Cause and enforce His Law so that the Most Great Peace shall be firmly established in this world and the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth shall be accomplished."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 27, 1966)

D. Supreme Tribunal

1074. Factor in Establishing the Lesser Peace
"The Supreme Tribunal is an aspect of a World Superstate; the exact nature of its relationship to that State we cannot at present foresee.

"Supreme Tribunal is the correct translation; it will be a contributing factor in establishing the Lesser Peace."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

1075. The Supreme Tribunal Will Fulfil Task of Establishing Universal Peace
"...the question of universal peace, about which Baha'u'llah says that the Supreme Tribunal must be established: ...the Supreme Tribunal which Baha'u'llah has described will fulfil this sacred task with the utmost might and power. And His plan is this: that the national assemblies of each country and nation—that is to say parliaments—should elect two or three persons who are the choicest men of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, [321] the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government. From among these people the members of the Supreme Tribunal will be elected, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation. When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority rule, there will no longer be any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant. In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise

up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal. Consider what a firm foundation this is!..."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 306-307)

1076. The Mission of the Supreme Tribunal is to Prevent War
"A Supreme Tribunal shall be elected by the peoples and Governments of every nation, where members from each country and Government shall assemble in unity. All disputes shall be brought before this Court, its mission being to prevent war.

"A Supreme Tribunal shall be established by the peoples and Governments of every nation, composed of members elected from each country and Government. The members of this Great Council shall assemble in unity. All disputes of an international character shall be submitted to this Court, its work being to arrange by arbitration everything which otherwise would be a cause of war. The mission of this Tribunal would be to prevent war."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, London, 1961 ed., pp. 132 and 155)

1077. International Executive—A Step Leading to Baha'i World Government
"As regards the International Executive referred to by the Guardian in his 'Goal of a New World Order', it should be noted that this statement refers by no means to the Baha'i Commonwealth of the future, but simply to that world government which will herald the advent and lead to the final establishment of the World Order of Baha'u'llah. The formation of this International Executive, which corresponds to the executive head or board in present-day national governments, is but a step leading to the Baha'i world government of the future, and hence should not be identified with either the institution of the Guardianship or that of the International House of Justice."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 17, 1934)

E. Hands of the Cause of God

1078. The Institution of "The Learned"
"...the beloved Guardian wrote on 4 November 1931: 'In this holy cycle the "learned" are, on the one hand, the Hands of the Cause of God, and, on the other, the teachers and diffusers of His teachings who do not rank as Hands, but who have attained an eminent position in the teaching work. As to the "rulers" they refer to the members of the Local, National and International Houses of Justice. The duties of each of these souls will be determined in the future.' (Translated from the Persian).

[322] "The Hands of the Cause of God, the Counsellors and the members of the Auxiliary Boards fall within the definition of the 'learned' given by the beloved Guardian. Thus they are all intimately interrelated and it is not incorrect to refer to the three ranks collectively as one institution.

"However, each is also a separate institution in itself...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of

Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, April 24, 1972: Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 92)

1079. The Hands of the Cause Not Heirs of Any Name or Title
"...The Hands of the Cause in this dispensation are not heirs of any name or title. Nay, they are holy personages, the rays of whose holiness and spirituality throw light on the minds of people. Hearts are attracted by the beauty of their morals, the sincerity of their intentions and the sense of equity and justice. Souls are involuntarily enamoured of their praiseworthy morals and laudable qualities; faces turn spontaneously to their manifest signs and traces. It is not a title that may be awarded to whomsoever it pleases, nor is it a chair of honour in which whosoever pleases sits. The Hands of the Cause are the Hands of God. Hence whosoever is the servant and the promoter of the Word of God, he is the Hand of God. The object is the spirit and not the letters or words. The more self-effacing one is, the more he is assisted in the Cause of God; and the more meek and humble, the nearer is he to God."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Mahmoud's Diary, pp. 29-30)

1080. Tablet Revealed for the Hands of the Cause
"May My praise, salutations, and greetings rest upon the stars of the heaven of Thy knowledge—the Hands of Thy Cause—they who circled round Thy Will, spoke not save after Thy leave, and clung not save unto Thy hem. They are servants whose mention and praise are recorded in the Holy Writ, Thy Books and Tablets wherein are extolled their services, victories, and high resolve. Through them the standards of Thy oneness were raised in Thy cities and realms, and the banners of Thy sanctity were uplifted in Thy Kingdom. They utter not a word on any subject ere Thou hast spoken, for their ears are attuned to hear Thy Command, and their eyes are expectant to witness the effulgence of Thy Countenance. They are servants who have been well-favoured, have attained Thy good-pleasure, and have arisen in Thy Cause. The people of the world, the denizens of the Kingdom, and the dwellers of Paradise and the Realm on High, and beyond them, the Tongue of Grandeur send salutation upon them. Praise be to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast aided me to make mention of them and to praise them and their stations in Thy Cause and in Thy days.

"No God is there save Thee, the Reckoner, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."
(Tablet of Baha'u'llah, translated in the Holy Land: Baha'i News, No. 420, p. 2, March 1966)

1081. Auxiliary Institution of Guardianship
"...The institution of the Hands of the Cause of God was brought into existence in the time of Baha'u'llah and when the Administrative Order was proclaimed and formally established by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will, it became an auxiliary institution of the Guardianship. The Auxiliary Boards, in their turn, were brought [323] into being by Shoghi Effendi as an auxiliary institution of the Hands of the Cause."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, April 24, 1972: Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 92)

1082. Functions of the Hands of the Cause
"...The institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, charged in the Sacred Texts with the specific duties of protecting and propagating the Faith, has a particularly vital responsibility to discharge. In their capacity as protectors of the Faith, the Hands will continue to take action to expel Covenant-breakers and to reinstate those who sincerely repent, subject in each instance to the approval of the Universal House of Justice."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Followers of Baha'u'llah throughout the World, October 1963: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 13-14)

1083. The Authority of Expulsion and Reinstatement Exercised by the Hands of the Cause
"The authority of expulsion and reinstatement will be exercised by the Hands of the Cause of God, subject in each instance to the approval of the Universal House of Justice. When a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors learns of any incipient Covenant-breaking, the matter should be reported without delay to a Hand of the Cause available in the area, who will deal with the matter. A copy of the report should be sent to the Hands in the Holy Land and to the other members of the Board. Should no Hand of the Cause be available in the area, the report should be sent to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, with copy to the other members of the Board, in which case the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land will deal with the matter. Such reports should contain full details of actions already taken.

"Reinstatement of Covenant-breakers will follow similar procedures."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors, June 24, 1968)

1084. Prerogative and Obligation of the Hands of the Cause to Consult with Boards of Counsellors and National Assemblies
"The Hands of the Cause of God have the prerogative and obligation to consult with the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies on any subject which, in their view, affects the interests of the Cause....

"...The House of Justice will call upon them to undertake special missions on its behalf, to represent it on both Baha'i and other occasions and to keep it informed of the welfare of the Cause ... they will operate increasingly on an intercontinental level, a factor which will lend tremendous impetus to the diffusion throughout the Baha'i world of the spiritual inspiration channelled through them—the Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, June 24, 1968: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 7-8)

1085. Inappropriate for Them to Serve on Administrative Institutions
"The exalted rank and specific functions of the Hands of the Cause of God make [324] it inappropriate for them to be elected or appointed to administrative

institutions, or to be elected as delegates to national conventions. Furthermore, it is their desire and the desire of the House of Justice that they be free to devote their entire energies to the vitally important duties conferred upon them in the Holy Writings...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, November 1964: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 42)

1086. The Rank and Position of the Hands of the Cause of God
"The rank and position of the Hands of the Cause are superior to the position of the National Assemblies. In writing concerning the Hands, therefore, when there is reference to the Institutions of the Faith, after the Guardian*, should be mentioned the Hands, and then the National bodies. Because the Guardian has restrained the Hands at this time, and given as one of their functions, aiding the National bodies in winning the goals of the Ten Year Crusade, the National bodies should not misunderstand the true position of the Hands. They should report to the Hands, where teaching assistance is needed, etc., so the Hands, and their Auxiliary Boards, may be of the greatest assistance."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 30, 1957)

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*(and the Universal House of Justice)

F. International Teaching Centre

1087. The International Teaching Centre Establishment and Duties
"...The time is indeed propitious for the establishment of the International Teaching Centre, a development which, at one and the same time, brings to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land and provides for its extension into the future, links the institution of the Boards of Counsellors even more intimately with that of the Hands of the Cause of God, and powerfully reinforces the discharge of the rapidly growing responsibilities of the Universal House of Justice.

"The duties now assigned to this nascent institution are:

—To coordinate, stimulate and direct the activities of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and to act as liaison between them and the Universal House of Justice.

—To be fully informed of the situation of the Cause in all parts of the world and to be able, from the background of this knowledge, to make reports and recommendations to the Universal House of Justice and give advice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors.

—To be alert to possibilities, both within and without the Baha'i community, for the extension of the teaching work into receptive or needy areas, and to draw the attention of the Universal House of Justice and the Continental Boards of Counsellors to such possibilities, making recommendations for action.

—To determine and anticipate needs for literature, pioneers and travelling

teachers and to work out teaching plans, both regional and global, for the approval of the Universal House of Justice.

"All the Hands of the Cause of God will be members of the International [325] Teaching Centre. Each Hand will be kept regularly informed of the activities of the Centre through reports or copies of its minutes, and will be able, wherever he may be residing or travelling, to convey suggestions, recommendations and information to the Centre and, whenever he is in the Holy Land, to take part in the consultations and other activities of the Centre."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, June 8, 1973)

G. Continental Boards of Counsellors

1088. Duties of Continental Boards of Counsellors
"...Their duties will include directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, consulting and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Cause in their areas.

"The Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation will henceforth report to the Continental Boards of Counsellors who will appoint or replace members of the Auxiliary Boards as circumstances may require...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, June 24, 1968: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 141-142)

"...The Counsellors are responsible for stimulating, counselling and assisting National Spiritual Assemblies, and also work with individuals, groups and Local Assemblies.

"...if the Counsellors find that a National Spiritual Assembly is not functioning properly, they should not hesitate to consult with the National Spiritual Assembly about this in a frank and loving way."
(From a message of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 30, 32)

1089. Terms of Office of the Continental Counsellors
"In June 1979 we were moved to announce that the duration of the terms of office of Continental Counsellors would be five years, to start on the Day of the Covenant of this year...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, November 3, 1980)

1090. Relationship of Counsellors to National Spiritual Assemblies
"The relationship of Continental Boards of Counsellors to National Spiritual Assemblies will follow the pattern of the relationship between the Hands of the Cause and National Spiritual Assemblies, outlined by the beloved Guardian in various communications. Within the framework of these, and of general instructions given to them by the Universal House of Justice, the Boards of Counsellors will decide the manner in which they will collaborate and consult

with National Spiritual Assemblies in their areas...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, June 24, 1968)

[326] 1091. Relationship Between Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies
"The statement that the Boards of Counsellors outrank the National Institutions of the Faith has a number of implications. A Board of Counsellors has the particular responsibility of caring for the protection and propagation of the Faith throughout a continental zone which contains a number of national Baha'i communities. In performing these tasks it neither directs nor instructs the Spiritual Assemblies or individual believers, but it has the necessary rank to enable it to ensure that it is kept properly informed and that the Spiritual Assemblies give due consideration to its advice and recommendations. However, the essence of the relationships between Baha'i institutions is loving consultation and a common desire to serve the Cause of God rather than a matter of rank or station."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, March 27, 1978)

1092. The Counsellors and Auxiliary Board Members Are Free from Administrative Responsibilities
"The National Spiritual Assembly has the responsibility to formulate its plans and prosecute them. The Boards of Counsellors outrank the National Institutions of the Faith and are not engaged in the conduct and administering of these plans. This aloofness in itself provides them with the opportunity to concentrate on the general and vital issues of the Cause, and enables them to provide guidance to the National Spiritual Assemblies, which are usually weighed down with the numberless current tasks and issues of the day-to-day work of the community. Furthermore, such freedom from administrative responsibilities makes it possible for the Counsellors and their Auxiliary Board members to be removed from the entanglements and involvements that engagement in administrative duties sometimes entails, and heightens their capacity to be a source of inspiration and stimulation to the friends."
(From a summary of points prepared by the Universal House of Justice, based on a letter from that Body to a National Spiritual Assembly, May 20, 1970)

1093. The Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assemblies Have One Common Objective
"The Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assemblies have one common objective which is service to the Cause and the promotion and protection of its interests. The closer the collaboration between these two institutions the richer will be the blessings showered upon them and the community."
(Ibid.)

1094. The Counsellors Follow in the Footsteps of the Hands of the Cause
"The Hands of the Cause have the essential duties of propagation and protection of the Faith. Although the Counsellors occupy a rank lower than that of the Hands of the Cause, they are nevertheless charged with the same two

responsibilities and follow in the footsteps of the Hands of the Cause."
(Ibid.)

[327] 1095. The Functions of the Counsellors and the Spiritual Assemblies Are Complementary
"Since the functions of the propagation and the protection of the Faith are among the duties of Spiritual Assemblies, wholehearted collaboration and regular, continuous and full consultation between these Assemblies and the institution of the Counsellors are necessary. It should not be assumed that these two arms act independently of each other and are not in need of the essential support which each must give to the other. The functions are indeed complementary."
(Ibid.)

1096. The Proper Functioning of Society Requires Preservation of Ranks and Classes
"It is clear from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, as well as from those of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the interpretations of the Guardian, that the proper functioning of human society requires the preservation of ranks and classes within its membership. The friends should recognize this without envy or jealousy, and those who occupy ranks should never exploit their position or regard themselves as being superior to others...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, March 27, 1978)

1097. Pride and Self-Aggrandisement Are Among the Most Deadly of Sins
"Courtesy, reverence, dignity, respect for the rank and achievements of others are virtues which contribute to the harmony and well-being of every community, but pride and self-aggrandisement are among the most deadly of sins.

"The House of Justice hopes that all the friends will remember that the ultimate aim in life of every soul should be to attain spiritual excellence—to win the good pleasure of God. The true spiritual station of any soul is known only to God. It is quite a different thing from the ranks and stations that men and women occupy in the various sectors of society. Whoever has his eyes fixed on the goal of attaining the good pleasure of God will accept with joy and radiant acquiescence whatever work or station is assigned to him in the Cause of God, and will rejoice to serve Him under all conditions.

"There are many passages on this theme in the Holy Writings, and the Universal House of Justice hopes that these remarks will help the friends to turn to them and understand their purport."
(Ibid.)

1098. Differentials of Rank Meant to Canalize, Not Obstruct the Work of the Cause
"...the transcendent spirit of loving cooperation which must motivate and infuse the conduct of any institution or any believer, whether he labours in the capacity of a member of an institution or as an individual who desires to advance the interests of the Faith. The differentials of rank, functions or

procedures between agencies of the Baha'i administration are meant to canalize, not obstruct, the work of the Cause; and it is the fervent hope of the House of Justice that these aspects of the administration will properly be viewed in the context of humble service to the Blessed Perfection, which is the loftiest objective of all who gather under the banner of the Most Great Name."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 10, 1983)

[328] 1099. Counsellors Should Give Wide Latitude to Auxiliary Board Members in Carrying Out Their Work
"The Counsellors in each continental zone have wide latitude in the carrying out of their work. Likewise they should give to each Auxiliary Board member considerable freedom of action within his own allocated area. Although the Counsellors should regularly direct the work of the Auxiliary Board members, the latter should realise that they need not wait for direction; the nature of their work is such that they should be continually engaged in it according to their own best judgement, even if they are given no specific tasks to perform. Above all the Auxiliary Board members should build up a warm and loving relationship between themselves and the believers in their area so that the Local Spiritual Assemblies will spontaneously turn to them for advice and assistance."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969)

1100. Assemblies Plan and Direct the Work—The Plans Should Be Well Known to Counsellors and Auxiliary Board Members
"It is the Spiritual Assemblies who plan and direct the work, but these plans should be well known to the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members, because one of the ways in which they can assist the Assemblies is by urging the believers continually to support the plans of the Assemblies. If a National Spiritual Assembly has adopted one goal as preeminent in a year, the Auxiliary Board members should bear this in mind in all their contacts with the believers and should direct their attention to the plans of the National Assembly, and stimulate them to enthusiastically support them."
(Ibid.)

1101. The Counsellors May Report Misconduct of Individuals to the National Spiritual Assembly Through Board Member
"Information about the conduct of individuals which adversely affects the interests of the Faith may be conveyed by the Counsellors to the National Spiritual Assembly either directly or, if the Counsellors so choose, through one or more of their Auxiliary Board members. The method of conveyance of such information is left to the discretion of the Counsellors.

"Any matter which is related to the protection of the Faith is obviously a primary concern of the National Assembly, as it is of the Counsellors."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands, June 16, 1982)

1102. Every Institution of This Divinely Created Order is One More Refuge for a Tottering Society
"Every institution of this divinely created Order is one more refuge for a distraught populace; every soul illumined by the light of the sacred Message is one more link in the oneness of mankind, one more servant ministering to the needs of an ailing world. Even should the Baha'i communities, in the years immediately ahead, be cut off from the World Centre or from one another—as some have already been—the Baha'is will neither halt nor hesitate; they will continue to pursue their objectives, [329] guided by their Spiritual Assemblies, and led by the Counsellors, the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants..."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 25, 1975)

H. Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation

1103. Two Auxiliary Boards with Distinct But Complementary Functions Established by the Guardian
"The beloved Guardian's message of October 1957 clearly indicates that the two Auxiliary Boards must have distinct but complementary functions. In that message he charges the Protection Board with 'the specific duty of watching over the security of the Faith' and says that the duty of the Propagation Board would 'henceforth be exclusively concerned with assisting the prosecution of the Ten-Year Plan.'

"It must also be borne in mind that these twin agencies derive their complementary functions from one and the same source, are interrelated, and their members act as 'deputies', 'assistants' and 'advisers' of the Hands of the Cause of God, and, now, the Continental Boards of Counsellors. It is further clear that Shoghi Effendi was reluctant to specify in too great detail matters related to the functioning of the Auxiliary Boards, preferring to leave such things to be worked out in the light of experience."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, October 10, 1976)

1104. Areas for the Protection Board and Propagation Board Are Not Necessarily the Same
"Provision for the work of the Auxiliary Boards is set forth in the By-Laws of the Universal House of Justice. See page 16, Article X of the printed copy of 'The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice'. However, the areas for the Protection Boards and the Propagation Boards need not be the same. They can overlap."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, August 3, 1973)

1105. In Exceptional Circumstances One Board Member Might Cover an Area
"It is desirable that every part of each zone have both a Protection Board member and a Propagation Board member responsible for it, nevertheless it is within the discretion of each Board of Counsellors to assign a member of only

one of the Boards to an area if, in the light of the conditions in that area, it believes this would be preferable."
(From a memorandum of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, October 7, 1973)

1106. Advisable that Auxiliary Board Member Reside in Area which He Serves
"As you know, the beloved Guardian repeatedly emphasized the importance of Auxiliary Board members' visiting Assemblies and groups in the respective areas served by them. While details concerning the appointment and functioning of the members of Auxiliary Boards are left to the Counsellors, in light of the Guardian's instructions cited above, they should take into consideration, in making a new appointment, the [330] advisability of that appointee residing in the area which he serves."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, February 4, 1976)

1107. Many of the Functions of Members of the Two Boards and Assemblies Are Held in Common
"In implementing their functions the members of the two Auxiliary Boards will often be promoting the same thing; moreover, many of their functions are held in common especially in the areas of consolidation and deepening, and it is left to each Board of Counsellors to determine the range of responsibility assigned to each Auxiliary Board member so that in the circumstances of each area maximum collaboration is achieved. Experience has shown that good results can usually be obtained when the Counsellors consult upon these matters with their Auxiliary Board members.

"It should, furthermore, be remembered that these self-same functions are being carried out by the Assemblies, National and Local, and their committees, which have at this time the great responsibility for actually executing the teaching plans and for administering, consolidating and protecting the Baha'i communities. The Auxiliary Board members should thus watch carefully that their work reinforces and complements that of the administrative institutions."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, October 10, 1976)

1108. The Members of the Boards Should Encourage the Friends and Assemblies to be Unified
"The members of the Boards in turn should encourage the friends—individuals and Assemblies alike—through correspondence and through visits, and impress upon them that the foundation of all of our activities is unity; they should encourage the friends to be unified under all circumstances, so that the work may go ahead with the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. The members of the Boards should likewise encourage the friends to contribute freely to the various Funds which have been established, as the Funds are the life-blood of the Community, and the work cannot be carried forward unless the life-blood is constantly circulating."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Hands of the Cause of God, June 7, 1954)

1109. Auxiliary Boards Will Stimulate and Help Teaching Work
"The Guardian feels sure that the Auxiliary Boards ... will stimulate and help the teaching work, which of course includes pioneer work, and be a prop and mainstay to the often over-worked and over-burdened National Spiritual Assemblies...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the American National Spiritual Assembly, June 20, 1954: Auxiliary Board Members, A Compilation dated March 25, 1969)

1110. Auxiliary Board Members Free to Have Direct Contact with Individuals and Local Assemblies
"...Auxiliary Board Members are not only free, but are urged, in accordance with the writings of the beloved Guardian, to have direct contact with the individual friends, [331] as well as the Local Spiritual Assemblies. It is at this very foundation of the administrative structure of the Faith where so often we find, alas, weakness and inefficiency."
(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda and Central Africa, December 15, 1965: Ibid.)

1111. The Friends Should Feel Free to Refer to Either Auxiliary Board Member
"The question has been raised as to how Local Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers are to know which matters they should refer to which Auxiliary Board member. We feel that this will be worked out at the local level in the light of experience, and that meanwhile the Assemblies and believers should not concern themselves unduly about it. They should feel free to refer to either Board, and if the Auxiliary Board member feels that the matter would better have been referred to his colleague, he can either himself pass the question on, or suggest the different approach to the Assembly or believer. This is similar to the situation, already familiar to Board members, when they have referred to them a matter which should properly be dealt with by a National Spiritual Assembly or one of its committees."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, October 10, 1976)

1112. Protection Board Members' Responsibilities
"The need to protect the Faith from the attacks of its enemies is not generally appreciated by the friends because such attacks, particularly in the West, have so far been intermittent. However, we know that these attacks will increase and will become concerted and universal. The writings of our Faith clearly foreshadow not only an intensification of the machinations of internal enemies, whether religious or secular, as our beloved Faith pursues its onward march towards ultimate victory. Therefore, in the light of the warnings of Shoghi Effendi, the Auxiliary Boards for Protection should keep 'constantly' a 'watchful eye' on those 'who are known to be enemies or to have been put out of the Faith', discreetly 'investigate' their activities, warn intelligently the friends of the opposition inevitably to come, explain how each crisis in God's Faith has always proved to be a blessing in disguise, prepare them for the 'dire contests' which are 'destined to range the Army of Light against the

forces of darkness', and, when the influence of the enemies spreads and reaches their fold, the members of these Auxiliary Boards should be alert to their schemes to 'dampen the zeal and sap the loyalty' of the believers and, by adopting 'wise and effective measures', counteract these schemes and arrest the spread of their influence. Above all, the members of the Protection Boards should concentrate on deepening the friends' knowledge of the Covenant and increasing their love and loyalty to it, on clearly and frankly answering, in conformity with the teachings, whatever questions may trouble any of the believers, on fostering the spiritual profundity and strength of their Faith and certitude, and on promoting whatever will increase the spirit of loving unity in Baha'i communities."
(Ibid.)

1113. Moral Problems Should Be Dealt with Only When They Arise
"...We feel that instead of having Board Members investigate the private lives of [332] believers, the Board Members should be called upon to educate the believers regarding the principles of the Faith and that problems involving alleged immorality or irregularities in marital status should be dealt with only when they arise. These problems should not be sought out."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, August 14, 1974)

1114. Propagation Board Members' Responsibilities
"The primary tasks of the Propagation Boards, however, are to direct the believers' attention to the goals of whatever plans have been placed before them, to stimulate and assist them to promote the teaching work in the fields of proclamation, expansion, consolidation and pioneering, to encourage contributions to the funds, and to act as standard-bearers of the teachers of the Faith, leading them to new achievements in the diffusion of God's Message to their fellow human beings."
(Ibid.)

1115. Members of Auxiliary Boards Should Be Freed from Administrative Responsibilities
"Members of the Auxiliary Boards should be freed from administrative responsibilities including serving on Committees and as delegates to conventions. In the event of any member of a National Assembly accepting appointment to a Board, the National Assembly should accept this as valid reason for that member's resignation from the Assembly; should a Board Member be elected to a National Assembly, he must choose on which body he will serve."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Baha'i World, November 1964)

1116. Auxiliary Board Member Must Decide What to Report to the Local Spiritual Assembly—Generally, the More Freely Information is Shared Between Institutions, the Better
"In answer to your fourth question, the House of Justice instructs us to say that an element of judgement is required in deciding what are and what are not 'administrative' matters. Immoral actions of believers, for example, generally

become subjects for administrative action only when they are blatant or flagrant, and reflect on the good name of the Faith. If a believer turns to an assistant or Auxiliary Board member for advice on a personal matter it is for the assistant or Auxiliary Board member to decide whether he should advise the believer to turn to his Spiritual Assembly, whether he should himself give advice and, in either case, whether he should report the matter to the Counsellors, or to the Local Assembly, which, of course, would depend upon the degree of confidentiality he had undertaken to observe. Likewise, it is for the Counsellor to decide whether it is a matter of which the National Assembly should be informed. All this is, of course, within the general context that, apart from matters which ought to remain confidential, the more freely information is shared between the institutions of the Faith the better."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands, August 2, 1982)

[333] 1117. Board Member Should Feel Responsible Before God in the Discharge of His Responsibilities
"Each Auxiliary Board Member who is allotted a specific area in which to serve, should establish contact with the Local Spiritual Assemblies and other localities of his area, encourage and guide all such centres in the implementation of the goals of the Plan, become informed of the relative strength and weakness of each locality, and feel responsible before God in the discharge of his responsibilities. Should he lose contact with a particular Local Spiritual Assembly or locality, he should use his initiative in finding a satisfactory solution to the problem. He should also send his reports and recommendations to the Counsellors on a regular basis."
(From a summary of points prepared by the Universal House of Justice, based on a letter from that Body to a National Spiritual Assembly, dated May 20, 1970)

I. Auxiliary Board Member Assistants

1118. Appointment of Auxiliary Board Members' Assistants
"...we have decided to take a further step in the development of the institution by giving to each Continental Board of Counsellors the discretion to authorize individual Auxiliary Board members to appoint assistants...

"The exact nature of the duties and the duration of the appointment of the assistants is also left to each Continental Board to decide for itself. Their aims should be to activate and encourage Local Spiritual Assemblies, to call the attention of Local Spiritual Assembly members to the importance of holding regular meetings, to encourage local communities to meet for the Nineteen Day Feasts and Holy Days, to help deepen their fellow-believers' understanding of the Teachings, and generally to assist the Auxiliary Board members in the discharge of their duties....

"...Believers can serve at the same time both as assistants to Auxiliary Board members and on administrative institutions."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, October 7, 1973)

1119. Primary Aim of Assistants is to Stimulate and Assist the Believers
"The establishment and strong growth of Local Spiritual Assemblies is one of the most fundamental requirements for the spread of the Message of Baha'u'llah, the development of Baha'i community life and the emergence of a transformed society...

"Already a number of specific steps have been taken by the Universal House of Justice to assist National Spiritual Assemblies towards the attainment of these objectives. The most far-reaching of these steps is the authority given to members of the Auxiliary Boards to appoint assistants whose primary aim is to stimulate and assist the believers to bring into being and to consolidate Local Spiritual Assemblies in all localities where nine or more Baha'is reside, and to advise and assist these Assemblies in the performance of their God-given duties. The effects of the appointment of assistants by Auxiliary Board members are beginning to appear and will undoubtedly bear more and more fruit as the months pass."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies, March 6, 1977)

1120. An Assistant May Serve Two Board Members
"As to the Assistants, it is evident that the Propagation Board members are in greater need of assistants. However, this should not inhibit the appointment and use of [334] assistants by Protection Board members. It may be found that in many areas the appointment of only one Assistant to attend to both functions will prove sufficient for the time being, but we foresee a time when this situation may well change. Here again, the way in which relationships are worked out and coordinated must remain flexible and dependent on local conditions."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, October 10, 1967)

1121. The House of Justice Prefers that Assistants Not Retire from Administrative Work
"As you know, when informing the Baha'is of the world in October 1973 of its decision to authorize the appointment of believers to assist Auxiliary Board members in the discharge of their duties, the House of Justice said that such appointees can serve at the same time both as assistants to Auxiliary Board members and on administrative institutions. As is often the case, a believer whose knowledge of the Teachings and devotion to the Faith make him or her a logical choice to serve on an Assembly becomes a suitable candidate for appointment as an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member. The House of Justice leans towards assistants not retiring from administrative work, although in consultation with their Spiritual Assembly it may be quite in order; it would be preferable, however, for the suggestion to come from the appointee and not from the Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 31, 1982)

1122. Assistant Functions Individually, Does Not Function in Relation to

National Assembly, Should Foster Warm Relationship Between Local Assembly and Board Member

"In the relationship between assistants and the National Spiritual Assembly no problems should arise, because the functions are entirely separate. An assistant is appointed by an Auxiliary Board member to help him in a specified area of the territory and he functions as an assistant only in relation to that area. Assistants, like Auxiliary Board members, function individually, not as a consultative body. Assistants who are members of a National Assembly or a national committee do not function as assistants in relation to that body, and they have the same duty to observe the confidentiality of its consultations, and of matters considered by the Assembly to be confidential, as does any other member. An assistant can, of course, be a member of a Local Spiritual Assembly, but his task here as an Assistant is to help the Spiritual Assembly to function harmoniously and efficiently in the discharge of its duties and this will hardly succeed if he gives the Assembly the feeling that he is reporting privately everything it does to the Auxiliary Board member. He should, on the contrary, do all he can to foster an atmosphere of warm and loving collaboration between the Local Assembly and the Board member."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands, August 2, 1982)

[335] 1123. Principle of Confidentiality Applies to Assistant Who is Assembly Member —Most Subjects Dealt with Are Not Confidential

"Every institution in the Faith has certain matters which it considers should be kept confidential, and any member who is privy to such confidential information is obliged to preserve the confidentiality within the institution where he learned it. Such matters, however, are but a small portion of the business of any Baha'i institution. Most subjects dealt with are of common interest and can be discussed openly with anyone. Where no confidentiality is involved the institutions must strive to avoid the stifling atmosphere of secrecy; on the other hand, every believer must know that he can confide a personal problem to an institution of the Faith with the assurance that knowledge of the matter will remain confidential.

"Members of Assemblies, whether they are assistants or not, are obviously in a position to receive confidential information as individuals from several sources. It is an important principle of the Faith that one must not promise what one is not going to fulfil. Therefore, if a Baha'i accepts confidential information either by virtue of his profession (e.g., as a doctor, a lawyer, etc.), or by permitting another person to confide in him, he is duty bound to preserve that confidentiality."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 2, 1982)

J. Relationships Between Counsellors, Auxiliary Board Members and Assistants, and National and Local Assemblies and Committees

1124. Authority and Direction Flow from the Assemblies—Counsellors, Auxiliary Board Members and Assistants Advise, Stimulate and Assist

"Authority and direction flow from the Assemblies, whereas the power to accomplish the tasks resides primarily in the entire body of the believers. It is the principal task of the Auxiliary Boards to assist in arousing and releasing this power. This is a vital activity, and if they are to be able to perform it adequately they must avoid becoming involved in the work of administration. For example, when Auxiliary Board members arouse believers to pioneer, any believer who expresses his desire to do so should be referred to the appropriate committee which will then organise the project. Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members should not, themselves, organise pioneering or travel teaching projects. Thus it is seen that the Auxiliary Boards should work closely with the grass roots of the community: the individual believers, groups and Local Spiritual Assemblies, advising, stimulating and assisting them. The Counsellors are responsible for stimulating, counselling and assisting National Spiritual Assemblies, and also work with individuals, groups and Local Assemblies."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969: The Continental Boards of Counsellors, Wilmette, 1981, pp. 37-38)

1125. Auxiliary Board Member May Meet with Local Spiritual Assembly Occasionally
"The National Spiritual Assembly should by all means encourage close co-operation and collaboration between the Auxiliary Board members and the Local Spiritual [336] Assemblies, but it is not required that an Auxiliary Board member be present at all Local Assembly meetings. At occasional meetings, when the Local Spiritual Assembly wishes to discuss matters regarding the progress of the Cause in certain areas, for instance, attendance by a member of the Auxiliary Board would be of assistance, but such matters should be left to the discretion of the Local Spiritual Assemblies concerned. Of course whenever an Auxiliary Board member feels it necessary to consult with the Local Spiritual Assembly, he or she may request the Assembly to hold a meeting in his presence for the particular subject."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Burma, July 13, 1986)

1126. Relationship Between Auxiliary Board Members and Local Assemblies Should Not Be Hampered by Regulations
"...we feel it important to stress that the relationship between Auxiliary Board members and Local Spiritual Assemblies should not be hampered by regulations; the methods of submitting information—either by minutes or otherwise—are optional... The relationship between Auxiliary Board members and Local Spiritual Assemblies should not be a matter of rights and prerogatives; it should be one of loving and wholehearted collaboration, in the spirit of the beloved Guardian's statement that 'the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation'."
(From a memorandum of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land, October 7, 1970)

1127. Problems with Board Members to be Reported to Counsellors
"In general the House of Justice feels that where a National Spiritual Assembly has reason to believe that the actions of an Auxiliary Board member are giving rise to problems in a community, it is preferable for it to report the matter to the Counsellors rather than approach the Board member directly. But where the matter is purely personal it may be preferable for the Assembly to take it up with the Board member himself initially in the hope that the problem can be solved confidentially although, of course, any serious problem with a Board member should be reported to the Counsellors in any case. Likewise, if the issue is a small and unimportant one it may be simply solved by direct action and not justify invoking the action of the Counsellors."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the South West Pacific, October 25, 1977)

1128. Counsellors Need Not Consult with National Spiritual Assembly About Appointments
"We have your letter of 28th November 1968, informing us of the appointment of ... as a member of the Auxiliary Board, and raising the question as to whether the Continental Board of Counsellors should consult with National Spiritual Assemblies before appointing Auxiliary Board members from the membership of a National Spiritual Assembly.
"Inasmuch as the appointee himself must decide whether or not he can accept the appointment we see no necessity for a Continental Board of Counsellors to consult [337] with National Spiritual Assemblies, except in very exceptional circumstances, and in such instances it is within the discretion of the Continental Board of Counsellors as to whether they will do so.

"However, the appointee is free to consult with his National Spiritual Assembly as to whether or not he should accept the appointment to the Auxiliary Board."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, December 17, 1968: The Continental Board of Counsellors, op. cit., p. 36)

1129. Gatherings of Counsellors, Board Members, National Assembly Members and Committee Members Encouraged
"...in the implementation of that plan, there should be the closest collaboration between the National Spiritual Assembly and its committees and the Local Spiritual Assemblies on the one hand, and the Counsellors, Auxiliary Board members and their assistants on the other. An aspect of this collaboration could well be the gathering, if circumstances permit, of Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members with the National Assembly and its committees in a meeting where, because of their inevitable involvement in the operations of the plan, all together can become acquainted with the details of it and, at the same time, engender the esprit de corps necessary to its successful execution."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 10, 1983)

1130. Auxiliary Board Members and Committees Should Exchange Information

"...it is permissible and highly desirable to have a direct and regular exchange of information between the committees and the Auxiliary Board members."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 1977)

1131. Board Member Reports and Recommendations Are Sent to Counsellors, Not to National Assembly or Committees
"Reports and recommendations for action, however, are quite different. Auxiliary Board members should send theirs to the Counsellors and not to the National Assemblies or national committees directly. It is possible that the Counsellors may reject or modify the recommendation; or, if they accept it and pass it on to the National Spiritual Assembly, the National Assembly may decide to refuse it. For an Auxiliary Board Member to make recommendations directly to a national committee would lose the benefit of the knowledge and experience in a wider field than that of which the Auxiliary Board member is aware, and would short-circuit and undermine the authority of both the Counsellors and the National Assembly.

"Similarly, although an Auxiliary Board member can and should receive information from the National Assemblies and national committees, his primary source of information about the community should be his own direct contacts with Local Spiritual Assemblies, groups and individual believers. In this way the Counsellors as well as the National Spiritual Assemblies have the benefit of two independent sources of information about the community: through the Auxiliary Board members on the one hand, and through the national committees on the other."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969)

[338] 1132. National Spiritual Assemblies Should Refer to Protection Board Member for Protection Matters
"It is the duty of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies to refer to the Auxiliary Board members for protection matters which may involve not only possible Covenant-breaking, but also problems of disunity within the community, the removal of voting rights or any other matters in which you feel the guidance and advice of the Protection Boards may be helpful to the institutions of the Faith. The Auxiliary Board members of course keep the Continental Board of Counsellors informed and the Counsellors then take whatever steps they feel are called for.

"You are free at any time to refer to the Continental Board of Counsellors and the Auxiliary Board members for protection any matters about which you are not clear involving the security of the Faith in your area and you will always find them willing to assist you in dealing with such problems."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Venezuela, October 1, 1979)

1133. Administrative Institutions May Request Auxiliary Board Member to Perform

Certain Tasks
"A National Spiritual Assembly, National Committee or Local Spiritual Assembly may directly request an Auxiliary Board member to perform such tasks as speaking at summer schools, appearing on television, etc. It should, of course, be left to the discretion of the Auxiliary Board member to determine whether such a request would clash with his other commitments."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 10, 1983)

1134. Auxiliary Board Members Teach, Advise on, Observe and Report on Administration
"Assemblies sometimes misunderstand what is meant by the statement that Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members are concerned with the teaching work and not with administration. It is taken to mean that they may not give advice on administrative matters. This is quite wrong. One of the things that Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members should watch and report on is the proper working of administrative institutions. The statement that they do not have anything to do with administration means, simply, that they do not administer. They do not direct or organise the teaching work nor do they adjudicate in matters of personal conflict or personal problems. All these activities fall within the sphere of responsibility of the Spiritual Assemblies. But if an Auxiliary Board member finds a Local Spiritual Assembly functioning incorrectly he should call its attention to the appropriate Texts; likewise if, in his work with the community, an Auxiliary Board member finds that the teaching work is being held up by inefficiency of national committees, he should report this in detail to the Counsellors who will then decide whether to refer it to the National Spiritual Assembly concerned. Similarly, if the Counsellors find that a National Spiritual Assembly is not functioning properly, they should not hesitate to consult with the National Spiritual Assembly about this in a frank and loving way."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies, October 1, 1969: The Continental Boards of Counsellors, op. cit., pp. 39-40)

[339] 1135. It is Not Necessary to Inform National Assembly When Board Members Are Working with a Local Spiritual Assembly
"It is not necessary for the Continental Board of Counsellors to inform the National Spiritual Assembly whenever an Auxiliary Board member is working with a Local Spiritual Assembly in their area. However, it is anticipated that a cordial relationship will be maintained between the Continental Board of Counsellors and the National Assembly and that the Continental Board of Counsellors will share with the National Spiritual Assembly such information as they feel will assist the National Assembly in their work.

"...it is not necessary that a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors or an Auxiliary Board member obtain the consent of the National Spiritual Assembly before contacting a Local Spiritual Assembly. However, an attitude of courtesy, respect and understanding on the part of both the administrative

institutions and the Counsellors and their Auxiliary Board members should characterize their relationships to each other. Thus when a member of the Auxiliary Board wishes to meet with the Local Spiritual Assembly, both the Board member and the Local Spiritual Assembly should try to arrange a mutually satisfactory time as far in advance as possible."
(From a communication of the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, May 10, 1970)

1136. National Assemblies Should Avail Themselves of Services of Auxiliary Board Members and Their Assistants
"The National Spiritual Assemblies in consultation with the Counsellors should avail themselves of the services of the Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, who, together 'with the travelling teachers selected by the Assembly or its Teaching Committees, should be continuously encouraged to conduct deepening courses ... and to make regular visits to Local Spiritual Assemblies'.

"The visitors, whether Auxiliary Board members, their assistants or travelling teachers 'should meet on such occasions not only with the Local Assembly but, of course, with the local community members, collectively at general meetings and even, if necessary, individually in their homes'."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies, Naw-Ruz 1979, citing a letter dated February 2, 1966 to all National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in mass teaching work)

XXVIII. LANGUAGES

[340] 1137. Leave Granted to be Instructed in Divers Tongues
"The Lord hath granted leave to whosoever desireth it that he be instructed in the divers tongues of the world that he may deliver the Message of the Cause of God throughout the East and throughout the West, that he make mention of Him amidst the kindreds and peoples of the world in such wise that hearts may revive and the mouldering bone be quickened."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 118, p. 62)

1138. The Utmost Importance of an Auxiliary Language
"Today the greatest need of the world of humanity is discontinuance of the existing misunderstandings among nations. This can be accomplished through the unity of language. Unless the unity of languages is realized, the Most Great Peace and the oneness of the human world cannot be effectively organized and established because the function of language is to portray the mysteries and secrets of human hearts. The heart is like a box, and language is the key. Only by using the key can we open the box and observe the gems it contains. Therefore, the question of an auxiliary international tongue has the utmost importance. Through this means international education and training become possible; the evidence and history of the past can be acquired. The spread of the known facts of the human world depends upon language. The explanation of divine teachings can only be through this medium. As long as diversity of tongues and lack of comprehension of other languages continue, these glorious

aims cannot be realized. Therefore, the very first service to the world of man is to establish this auxiliary international means of communication. It will become the cause of the tranquility of the human commonwealth. Through it sciences and arts will be spread among the nations, and it will prove to be the means of the progress and development of all races."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace. Wilmette, 1982, pp. 60-61)

1139. Man's Speech is the Revealer of His Heart
"Profitless discussions fatigue and weary a person...

"Man's speech is the revealer of his heart. In whatever world the heart travels, man's conversation will revolve around that center. From his words you can understand in what world he is traveling, whether he is looking upward toward the realm of light or downward to the nether world, whether he is mindful or unaware, whether he is awake or asleep, whether he is alive or dead. For this reason His Holiness Ali says: 'Man is hidden behind his tongue. Out of the abundance of his heart does man speak.'"
(Words of 'Abdu'l-Baha, July 25, 1914: Star of the West, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 24-25)

[341] 1140. Esperanto
"Regarding the subject of Esperanto: It should be made clear to the believers that while the teaching of that language has been repeatedly encouraged by 'Abdu'l-Baha, there is no reference either from Him or from Baha'u'llah that can make us believe that it will necessarily develop into the international auxiliary language of the future. Baha'u'llah has specified in His writings that such a language will have either to be chosen from one of the existing languages, or an entirely new one should be created to serve as a medium of exchange between nations and peoples of the world. Pending this final choice, the Baha'is are advised to study Esperanto only in consideration of the fact that the learning of this language can considerably facilitate inter-communication between individuals, groups and Assemblies throughout the Baha'i world in the present stage of the evolution of the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, June 4, 1937: Baha'i News, No. 109, July 1937, p. 1)

1141. The Present Need of an Auxiliary Language
"What Baha'u'llah is referring to in the Eighth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise is a far distant time, when the world is really one country, and one language would be a sensible possibility. It does not contradict His instructions as to the need immediately for an auxiliary language."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 16, 1946)

1142. Esperanto Will Spread to a Certain Degree
"Thou has written regarding the language of Esperanto. This language will be spread and universalized to a certain degree, but later on a language more complete than this, or the same language will undergo some changes and

alterations and will be adopted and become universal...."
('Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 692)

1143. The Persian Tongue
"Acquire the Persian tongue, so as to learn of the meanings of the divine words and to know the divine mysteries, to develop an eloquent speech and to translate the blessed Tablets of Baha'u'llah. The Persian language shall become noteworthy in this cycle; nay, rather, the people shall study it in all the world."
(Ibid., Vol. II, p. 306)

XXIX. LAWS AND ORDINANCES

A. Introduction

[342] 1144. Obedience to the Laws of Baha'u'llah Will Impose Hardships and Tests in Individual Cases
"Obedience to the Laws of Baha'u'llah will necessarily impose hardships in individual cases. No one should expect, upon becoming a Baha'i, that his faith will not be tested, and to our finite understanding of such matters these tests may occasionally seem unbearable. But we are aware of the assurance which Baha'u'llah Himself has given the believers that they will never be called upon to meet a test greater than their capacity to endure."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 7, 1965)

1145. Certain Laws Are Universally and Vitally Applicable at the Present Time
"...he feels it is his duty to explain that the Laws revealed by Baha'u'llah in the Aqdas are, whenever practicable and not in direct conflict with the Civil Law of the land, absolutely binding on every believer or Baha'i institution whether in the East or in the West. Certain laws, such as fasting, obligatory prayers, the consent of parents before marriage, avoidance of alcoholic drinks, monogamy, should be regarded by all believers as universally and vitally applicable at the present time. Others have been formulated in anticipation of a state of society destined to emerge from the chaotic conditions that prevail to-day. When the Aqdas is published this matter will be further explained and elucidated. What has not been formulated in the Aqdas, in addition to matters of detail and of secondary importance arising out of the applications of the Laws already formulated by Baha'u'llah, will have to be enacted by the Universal House of Justice. This body can supplement but never invalidate or modify in the least degree what has already been formulated by Baha'u'llah. Nor has the Guardian any right whatsoever to lessen the binding effect much less to abrogate the provisions of so fundamental and sacred a Book."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, August 11, 1935)

1146. Laws Governing Physical and Spiritual Lives
"Just as there are laws governing our physical lives, requiring that we must supply our bodies with certain foods, maintain them within a certain range of temperatures, and so forth, if we wish to avoid physical disabilities, so also

there are laws governing our spiritual lives. These laws are revealed to mankind in each age by the Manifestation of God, and obedience to them is of vital importance if each human being, and mankind in general, is to develop properly and harmoniously. Moreover, these various aspects are interdependent. If an individual violates the spiritual laws for his [343] own development, he will cause injury not only to himself but to the society in which he lives. Similarly, the condition of society has a direct effect on the individuals who must live within it."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer; excerpts to all National Spiritual Assemblies, February 6, 1973: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 105-106)

1147. It is Difficult to Follow the Laws of Baha'u'llah
"As you point out, it is particularly difficult to follow the laws of Baha'u'llah in present-day society whose accepted practice is so at variance with the standards of the Faith. However, there are certain laws that are so fundamental to the healthy functioning of human society that they must be upheld whatever the circumstances. Realising the degree of human frailty, Baha'u'llah has provided that other laws are to be applied only gradually, but these too, once they are applied, must be followed, or else society will not be reformed but will sink into an ever worsening condition. It is the challenging task of the Baha'is to obey the law of God in their own lives, and gradually to win the rest of mankind to its acceptance."
(Ibid., p. 106)

1148. Punishments Decided by the House of Justice
"You express surprise at the Guardian's reference to 'the necessary punishment from society'. In the Kitab-i-Aqdas Baha'u'llah prohibits sexual immorality and in the Annex to that Book states that the various degrees of sexual offences and the punishments for them are to be decided by the Universal House of Justice. In this connection it should be realised that there is distinction drawn in the Faith between the attitudes which should characterize individuals in their relationship to other people, namely, loving forgiveness, forbearance, and concern with one's own sins not the sins of others, and those attitudes which should be shown by the Spiritual Assemblies, whose duty is to administer the law of God with justice."
(Ibid., p. 110)

1149. Laws Should Be Obeyed But Not Through Fear of Punishment
"It is a vital and urgent duty of the Assemblies, both National and Local, not only to apply the Laws of Baha'u'llah with justice and firmness, but to increase the believers' understanding of and devotion to these Laws. In this way they will obey them not through fear of punishment but out of love for Baha'u'llah and because their whole lives have been transformed and re-oriented in the Way of God."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 11, 1965: United States Supplement to Baha'i News, No. 97, March 1966, p. 3)

1150. We Must Obey Ordinances, Even Though at First We See No Need for Them
"It is often difficult for us to do things because they are so very different from what we are used to, not because the thing itself is particularly difficult. With you, and indeed most Baha'is, who are now, as adults, accepting this glorious Faith, no doubt some of the ordinances, like fasting and daily prayer, are hard to understand and obey at first. But we must always think that these things are given to all men for a thousand years to come. For Baha'i children who see these things practiced in [344] the home, they will be as natural and necessary a thing as going to church on Sunday was to the more pious generation of Christians. Baha'u'llah would not have given us these things if they would not greatly benefit us, and, like children who are sensible enough to realize their father is wise and does what is good for them, we must accept to obey these ordinances even though at first we may not see any need for them. As we obey them we will gradually come to see in ourselves the benefits they confer."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 16, 1949)

1151. One Cannot Continue Drinking As a Baha'i—Should Be Made Aware Gradually
"People should not be encouraged to enter the Cause on false pretenses. They cannot continue drinking as Baha'is and they should be made to realize this gradually after they become believers, or rather registered members of the community. We cannot expect people to be fully aware and instructed believers before they are enrolled, but certain essentials they must have accepted sooner or later and be willing to make the effort to live up to."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 16, 1948)

1152. Unfair to Require New Applicants for Membership to First Accept All Laws of the Faith
"The Guardian fully shares your view that it would be most unwise, and unfair to those who apply for membership in the Community to require that they should at first accept all the laws of the Faith. Such a requirement would be impossible to carry out as there are many laws in the 'Aqdas' with which even the well-confirmed and long-standing believers are not yet familiar. As you rightly point out the process of becoming a Baha'i is an evolutionary one, and requires considerable time, and sustained effort on the part of the new believer. Such questions as the withdrawal from Church membership and that of abstention from alcoholic liquors should not be thrust upon the newcomer, but explained to him gradually, so that he himself may be convinced of the truth underlying these ordinances of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 17, 1938)

1153. Difference Between Advice (Exhortation, Counsel) and a Binding Command
"Now, as regards your questions as to in what way can one determine whether a particular passage from the Master's Writings is in the nature of an exhortation, or is a positively binding statement. Just as in the Writings of

Baha'u'llah, the text of the Tablet itself shows whether it is an exhortation, a counsel or advice, or whether it constitutes a positive and binding command. Obviously, there might be found certain passages that are doubtful, and these should be referred to the Guardian* for interpretation and clarification."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 14, 1939)

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*(Now the Universal House of Justice)

B. Abortion

[345] 1154. Abortion Merely to Prevent the Birth of an Unwanted Child is Strictly Forbidden in the Cause
"Abortion merely to prevent the birth of an unwanted child is strictly forbidden in the Cause. There may, however, be instances in which an abortion would be justified by medical reasons, and legislation on this matter has been left to the Universal House of Justice. At the present time, however, the House of Justice does not intend to legislate on this very delicate issue, and therefore it is left to the consciences of those concerned who must carefully weigh the medical advice in the light of the general guidance given in the teachings."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ireland, March 16, 1983)

1155. Surgical Operation and Abortion—The Soul Appears at Conception
"Abortion and surgical operations for the purpose of preventing the birth of unwanted children are forbidden in the Cause unless there are circumstances which justify such actions on medical grounds, in which case the decision, at present, is left to the consciences of those concerned who must carefully weigh the medical advice in the light of the general guidance given in the Teachings. Beyond this nothing has been found in the Writings concerning specific methods or procedures to be used in family planning. It should be pointed out, however, that the Teachings state that the soul appears at conception, and that therefore it would be improper to use such a method, the effect of which would be to produce an abortion after conception has taken place."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 23, 1975)

C. Adultery

1156. Faith Recognizes Sex Impulse But Condemns Its Illegitimate Expression
"The Baha'i Faith recognizes the value of the sex impulse, but condemns its illegitimate and improper expressions such as free love, companionate marriage and others, all of which it considers positively harmful to man and to the society in which he lives. The proper use of the sex instinct is the natural right of every individual, and it is precisely for this purpose that the institution of marriage has been established. The Baha'is do not believe in the suppression of the sex impulse but in its regulation and control."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

September 5, 1938: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 108)

1157. Sex Relationships Outside of Marriage Not Permissible
"With reference to the question you have asked concerning the Baha'i attitude towards the problem of sex and its relation to marriage.

"The Baha'i Teachings on this matter, which is of such vital concern and about which there is such a wide divergency of views, are very clear and emphatic. Briefly stated the Baha'i conception of sex is based on the belief that chastity should be strictly practised by both sexes, not only because it is in itself highly commendable [346] ethically, but also due to its being the only way to a happy and successful marital life. Sex relationships of any form outside marriage are not permissible therefore, and whoso violates this rule will not only be responsible to God, but will incur the necessary punishment from society."
(Ibid., p. 107)

1158. Sexual Intercourse Permissible Only Between Man and Wife
"The Baha'i teaching on sexual intercourse is very clear. It is permissible only between a man and the woman who is his wife...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, February 6, 1973; excerpt from a letter in response to questions from an individual believer: Ibid.)

1159. Adultery Retards Progress of the Soul
"...Every other word of Baha'u'llah's and 'Abdu'l-Baha's Writings is a preachment on moral and ethical conduct; all else is the form, the chalice, into which the pure spirit must be poured; without the spirit and the action which must demonstrate it, it is a lifeless form.

"When we realize that Baha'u'llah says adultery retards the progress of the soul in the afterlife—so grievous is it—and that drinking destroys the mind, and not to so much as approach it, we see how clear are our teachings on these subjects."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 30, 1949: Living the Life, pp. 15-16, World Centre, November 1972)

D. Birth Control

1160. Question of Birth Control Not Specifically Answered in Writings
"As to the problem of birth control, neither Baha'u'llah nor 'Abdu'l-Baha has revealed anything direct or explicit regarding this question. But the Baha'i Teachings, when carefully studied imply that such current conceptions like birth control, if not necessarily wrong and immoral in principle, have nevertheless to be discarded as constituting a real danger to the very foundations of our social life. For Baha'u'llah explicitly reveals in His Book of Laws that the very purpose of marriage is the procreation of children who, when grown up, will be able to know God and to recognize and observe His Commandments and Laws as revealed through His Messengers. Marriage is thus,

according to the Baha'i Teachings, primarily a social and moral act. It has a purpose which transcends the immediate personal needs and interests of the parties...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 14, 1935)

1161. Population Explosion, No Reference in Writings: Time of Appearance of Human Soul, etc.
"In a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual he has further pointed out that the 'chief and sacred purpose' of marriage is 'the perpetuation of the human race ... and its elevation to the true station destined for it by God.' In another letter written on his behalf it is stated: '...the fundamental purpose of marriage is to bring other souls into this world, to serve God and love Him.'

"We have not discovered any specific reference in the texts to the problem of [347] population explosion in its relation to birth control. This question, of course, is a matter which is currently a subject of concern and speculation by many. A study of our teachings, however, indicates that in the future there will no doubt be a general improvement of standards of life and of health, but there will also be the full exploitation of unused and as yet unsuspected resources of the planet along with the control and tapping of its sources of raw material, with a great increase in productivity.

"You have raised the point about the time of the appearance of the human soul. You are quite right in your deduction in this regard, as our teachings clearly confirm that the soul of man comes into being at conception.
"As to your desire and that of your husband to avoid any action which would permanently prevent you from bearing children, the only text we have so far found on that subject is in a letter to an individual believer from the beloved Guardian. The question asked was whether after a few children it would be permissible to have a surgical operation on the wife to prevent further conception. His reply was that such an act was unacceptable and unworthy, and those who commit the act were responsible before God.

"When the Guardian was asked whether the exercise of birth control constitutes a sin in a case where the number of children would prevent the father from fulfilling his obligation to educate his children, he stated that it is the duty of Baha'is to uphold moderation in all things, and avoid illegal methods."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 31, 1970)

1162. When Exercised to Prevent Procreation of Any Children
"Another believer, having read this letter, asked the beloved Guardian whether all birth control methods for any purpose were absolutely prohibited by Baha'i Teachings. The secretary to the beloved Guardian wrote on his behalf on 4th February, 1937, as follows:

'The Guardian has ... given his careful consideration to your question regarding the Baha'i view of birth control.

'...there is no reference whatsoever in the Writings on this subject. The utmost we can say is by way of reference from what Baha'u'llah has revealed regarding the nature, purpose and character of marriage.

'We, as Baha'is, are not therefore in a position either to condemn the practice of birth control or to confirm it.

'Birth control, however, when exercised in order to deliberately prevent the procreation of any children is against the spirit of the Law of Baha'u'llah, which defines the primary purpose of marriage to be the rearing of children and their spiritual training in the Cause. The Universal House of Justice will have to consider this issue and give its verdict upon it.'

"The Universal House of Justice feels that the time has not yet arrived for legislation on this matter, and that these instructions provide sufficient guidance for the friends for the time being."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, July 13, 1967)

1163. Husband and Wife to Decide How Many Children to Have
"There is nothing in the Sacred Writings specifically on the subjects of birth control, abortion or sterilization, but Baha'u'llah did state that the primary purpose [348] of marriage was the procreation of children, and it is to this primary purpose that the beloved Guardian alludes in many of the letters which are quoted in the compilation. This does not imply that a couple are obliged to have as many children as they can; the Guardian's secretary clearly stated on his behalf, in answer to an enquiry, that it was for the husband and wife to decide how many children they would have. A decision to have no children at all would vitiate the primary purpose of marriage unless, of course, there were some medical reason why such a decision would be required.

"You and your husband, therefore, should have no feeling that you are obliged to add to your already large family. This is a matter entirely for you to decide, and there are many methods of preventing conception, including self-discipline and restraint, to which you can have recourse. Sterilization, however, would be a more far-reaching action than any of these, with implications and results beyond those necessary for the immediate purpose of limiting the size of your family, and is not permissible in Baha'i law except in rare instances where it is necessary for a medical reason."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 28, 1977)

1164. Vasectomy to Avoid Having Unwanted Children Not Permitted if It Results in Permanent Sterility
"Directly to your question about having a vasectomy, in general it is not permissible to have a surgical operation for the purpose of avoiding having unwanted children if such an operation could result in permanent sterility. While circumstances might exist in which sterilization would be justified, this does not appear to be the case with you."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May

30, 1974)

1165. Tubal Ligation
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of April 29 asking about tubal ligation and has noted that you are familiar with general Baha'i principles on the subject. However, it has directed us to say that under normal circumstances it is not permissible to have a surgical operation for the purpose of not having more children if such an operation could result in permanent sterility."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 28, 1978)

1166. Should Take into Consideration Availability, Reliability and Reversibility of Operation
"It is clear that to have a surgical operation merely to avoid unwanted children is not acceptable. However, as in the case of abortion, circumstances might exist in which such an operation would be justified. Individual believers called upon to make such a decision must be guided by the Baha'i principles involved, the best professional advice available to them, and their own consciences. In arriving at a decision the parties must also take into consideration the availability, reliability and reversibility of all contraceptive methods."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 25, 1971)

[349] 1167. No Reference in Writings Regarding Contraception to Prevent Transmission of Undesirable Traits
"With regard to your question whether it would be permissible for a believer to limit the number of his children by the use of contraceptive methods, in order to prevent the transmission through inheritance of undesirable family traits and tendencies; this, the Guardian wishes me to inform you, is a question to which there is no specific reference in the Teachings, and should therefore be explained and decided upon by the future International House of Justice."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 2, 1938)

1168. In-Vitro Fertilization and Surrogate Mothers*
"The queries you raise about donors of eggs or sperm in cases of infertility and the state of the souls of frozen embryos relate to the broader question of the Baha'i attitude toward recent advances in medical science which increase the probability of conception in cases of infertility.

"The Baha'i view is very balanced. While appreciating the value of the new medical techniques which enable previously childless couples to enjoy the blessings of a family, the teachings define such limits as are necessary to preserve the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of marriage.

"...While artificial insemination is a very different process from in-vitro fertilization, the principle enunciated by the Guardian is the same, namely, that to be acceptable to Baha'is the egg cell of the wife should be fertilized

by the sperm of the husband in the procedure.

"The spiritual and social implications involved in the use of surrogate mothers to provide for the gestation of the embryo, even when the embryo results from the fertilization of the husband's sperm and the wife's egg cell which is later implanted into the womb of the third party, are too far-reaching for such a procedure to be permissible to Baha'is."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 25, 1984)

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*(See also: No. 973)

1169. Individuals Must Decide Hazards of Contraceptive Agents at Present: Permanent Sterilization
"As to birth control methods, the House of Justice does not wish to comment on the effectiveness or possible hazards of present-day contraceptive agents, and leaves it to individuals to decide what course of action they will take in light of the teachings and the best medical advice available...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 4, 1981: From a compilation entitled, Birth Control and Related Subjects, p. 3)

1170. Letter to a Physician Specializing in Obstetrics and Gynecology
"Since you are a physician specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, your professional decisions in this field are frequent and difficult ones. In each individual case your physician's judgement and your Baha'i conscience should guide you to the correct decision whenever permanent sterilization of a patient is contemplated. Of the four [350] categories you have listed, only the first, grave sickness of the mother, clearly falls within Baha'i permissibility. In the second category, only grave genetic defects, but obviously not all genetic defects could be considered to be valid cause for intervention. As for lack of social and financial means, and anticipation of supernumerary children where individual maternal request is decisive, neither can be acceptable as reasons for permanent sterilization.
"What can now be considered to be a form of family fertility control for some patients are those methods of intervention which are reversible and therefore do not necessarily bring about permanent sterility. Where such methods have been employed, the wish by patients to have additional children, for whatever reason, can be realized through a corrective operation."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 18, 1982: Ibid.)

E. Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco

1. Alcohol

1171. Both Light and Strong Drinks Prohibited Unless Prescribed by a Doctor
"Regarding the use of liquor: According to the text of the Book of Aqdas, both light and strong drinks are prohibited. The reason for this prohibition is that alcohol leadeth the mind astray and causeth the weakening of the body. If

alcohol were beneficial, it would have been brought into the world by the divine creation and not by the effort of man. Whatever is beneficial for man existeth in creation. Now it hath been proved and is established medically and scientifically that liquor is harmful.

"As to the meaning of that which is written in the Tablets: 'I have chosen for thee whatsoever is in the heaven and the earth', this signifieth those things which are in accordance with the divine purpose and not the things which are harmful. For instance, one of the existing things is poison. Can we say that poison must be used as it hath been created by God? Nevertheless, intoxicating liquor, if prescribed by a physician for the patient and if its use is absolutely necessary, then it is permissible.

"In brief, I hope that thou mayest become inebriated with the wine of the love of God, find eternal bliss and receive inexhaustible joy and happiness. All wine hath depression as an after effect, except the wine of the Love of God."
(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to an individual believer, translated from the Persian: Prohibition of Intoxicating Drinks, A Compilation, April 1979)

1172. In the Kitab-i-Aqdas It is Forbidden to Take Anything that Deranges the Mind
"With regard to your first question on alcohol and drinking, Baha'u'llah, fully aware of the great misery that it brings about, prohibits it as He expressly states that everything that takes away the mind, or in other words makes one drunk, is forbidden."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 15, 1926: Ibid.)

[351] 1173. Drinking Forbidden, No Excuse to Touch It Even in Plum Pudding
"Under no circumstances should Baha'is drink. It is so unambiguously forbidden in the Tablets of Baha'u'llah that there is no excuse for them even touching it in the form of a toast, or in a burning plum pudding; in fact, in any way."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 3, 1957: Cited in a letter from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, December 21, 1972)

1174. Cake Flavours and Extracts
"You ask whether it is permissible for the friends to use cake flavours, such as vanilla, lemon and rum flavoured extracts, as such flavours have a certain percentage of alcohol in them, and whether Baha'is may work in factories manufacturing such extracts.

"We have found no texts prohibiting the friends from using flavoured extracts in their food. This may be a matter for later legislation by the Universal House of Justice but for the time being the friends should be left free to do as they choose. The same principle applies to those who are employed in factories manufacturing such extracts."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 7, 1974)

1175. Strictly Prohibited Foods Flavoured with Alcoholic Liquors
"With reference to your question whether those foods which have been flavoured with alcoholic liquors such as brandy, rum, etc., should be classified under the same category as the intoxicating drinks, and consequently be avoided by believers, the Guardian wishes all the friends to know that such foods, or beverages, are strictly prohibited."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 9, 1939)

1176. Alcohol for Home Remedies, No Instruction Allowing Its Use
"Although it is clear from the teachings that the use of alcohol is permitted if it is prescribed by a physician for treatment purposes, we have not been able to find any instructions which permit its use in the preparation of home remedies for common illnesses."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, December 21, 1973)

1177. The Serving of Alcoholic Drinks by Baha'is and Baha'i Institutions
"In response to questions raised on the permissibility of serving alcoholic drinks in a number of different circumstances, the Universal House of Justice has formulated the following guidelines.

"The fact that Baha'is themselves must not drink alcohol is abundantly clear and needs no comment here. With regard to the serving of alcohol to non-Baha'is:

1. No Baha'i institution should serve alcohol to non-Baha'is under any circumstances.

2. If an individual Baha'i is entertaining an individual guest or a small group of guests as an official representative of the Baha'i community, he should not serve alcohol in his own home, but must use his discretion whether or not to do so if the entertaining is taking place in a restaurant.

[352] 3. No Baha'i should serve alcohol at any function or reception given by him, such as a wedding reception or a party to which a number of people are invited.

4. When a Baha'i is privately entertaining an individual non-Baha'i or a small group of guests in his own home, he must himself judge whether or not to serve alcohol. This will depend to a great degree on the customs of the country in which he is living, the individuals concerned, and the host's relationship to his guests. Obviously it is better for the Baha'i not to serve alcohol if possible, but against this he must weigh the probable reaction of the guest in the circumstances which prevail and in the particular situation. In some countries there would be no problem in failing to provide alcohol to a guest; in others it would be regarded as extremely peculiar and anti-social and would immediately raise a barrier to further contact. It is not desirable to make a major issue of the matter.

5. When such private entertaining of an individual or small group of

non-Baha'is is taking place in a restaurant the same general principles as in point 4 above apply, except that in such a public place a failure to provide alcoholic drinks would be less easily understood than in a private home, and the Baha'i must use his discretion accordingly.

6. Alcohol must not be served in a restaurant or other business which is wholly owned by Baha'is.

7. If a Baha'i is employed by others in a job which involves the serving of alcohol, he is not obliged to change that employment. This is a matter left to each individual to decide in the light of his own conscience. Obviously such kinds of employment vary widely from bartending to serving in a grocery in which wine is retailed. If the job requires a great deal of involvement with the serving of alcohol it is better for the Baha'i to obtain other employment if he can."
(Guidelines prepared by the Universal House of Justice, The Serving of Alcoholic Drinks by Baha'is and Baha'i Institutions, attached to a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 31, 1982)

1178. A Business Partnership Between a Baha'i and Non-Baha'is
"Since no explicit text or instruction of the beloved Guardian has been found on such a situation, i.e., the sale of alcoholic beverages by a business in which a Baha'i is a partner with non-Baha'is, the House of Justice feels that no hard and fast rules should be drawn at the present time. This is a matter which needs to be decided in each case in the light of the spirit of the teachings and the circumstances of the case and, unless the situation is endangering the good name of the Faith, it should be left to the conscience of the believer concerned who should, of course, make every effort to dissociate himself from such an activity."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, October 10, 1983)

1179. Assembly's Role Toward Those Who Continue to Drink
"As to those believers who continue to drink, they should be lovingly exhorted, then firmly warned and eventually deprived of their voting rights. The number of times a person is exhorted and warned is a matter left to the discretion of each Local Spiritual Assembly, in consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly. The policy you adopt should not be one of removing the administrative rights of the believers in a bureaucratic and automatic way, as this would be unwise and unjust. Your Assembly [353] as well as all Local Spiritual Assemblies should courageously and continuously remind the friends of their obligation in this respect, handle firmly all flagrant cases, and use such cases in a way that, by force of example, they exert their influence upon the other believers. It must be made clear to the Local Assemblies that they should be willing to cooperate with the believers affected by such drinking habits, when any such believer promises gradually and systematically to reduce his drinking with the objective in mind of entirely abandoning this habit."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual

Assembly of South and West Africa, November 12, 1965)

1180. Alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous
"With regard to the problem of alcoholism, which is indeed a terrible scourge to mankind, it must never become a source of disunity among believers. Baha'u'llah's principle, in case of sickness, is to consult the best physician you can, follow his advice, and pray. If, therefore, you have consulted Alcoholics Anonymous, this should be your procedure. If, however, you are not satisfied with them, you are entirely free to consult someone else. But the same principle would apply. Do what the doctor (or expert) says, and pray."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, July 14, 1963)

1181. Baha'i Advertising Agent Should Use Wisdom in Avoiding the Promotion of Intoxicating Drinks
"The House of Justice ... points out that, as far as advertising is concerned, the Baha'i must use wisdom in deciding what is allowable and what is not. For example, while the issuing of an advertisement specifically for wines would seem to be inadmissible, there would be no objection to a Baha'i advertising agent's issuing an advertisement listing the prices of goods on sale at a supermarket even if wines and spirits are included on it. It is, thus, a matter of emphasis and wisdom. Primarily the House of Justice wishes the decision in such matters to be left to the judgement of the individual concerned, but where there is any doubt, or where the National Spiritual Assembly feels that the good name of the Faith is being injured, the Assembly should, of course, be consulted and could decide in specific instances.

"In view of the requirements of his conscience in light of Baha'i law, a Baha'i advertising agent might be well advised to include a clause in any contract he signs in which difficulties of this nature might arise, protecting his right to demur."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 20, 1977: Prohibition of Intoxicating Drinks)

1182. The Right of the Non-Baha'i Parent—The Serving of Champagne
"The future christening of the child should present no problem, for the Baha'i parent should have no objection to the baptism of his child if the Catholic mother wishes it. Similarly, the use of champagne upon that occasion is a matter which she is free to undertake, but of course the Baha'is would not partake of alcoholic beverages."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 7, 1977: Ibid.)

2. Drugs

[354] 1183. Hallucinogens, a Form of Intoxication
"Concerning the so-called 'spiritual' virtues of the hallucinogens ... spiritual stimulation should come from turning one's heart to Baha'u'llah, and not through physical means such as drugs and agents.

"From the description given in your letter it appears that hallucinogenic

agents are a form of intoxicant. As the friends, including the youth, are required strictly to abstain from all forms of intoxicants, and are further expected conscientiously to obey the civil law of their country, it is obvious that they should refrain from using these drugs.

"A very great responsibility for the future peace and well-being of the world is borne by the youth of today. Let the Baha'i youth by the power of the Cause they espouse be the shining example for their companions."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 15, 1965: National Baha'i Review, No. 3, March 1968)

1184. The Use of Marijuana, LSD and Other Psychedelic Products
"In reply to your request of October 24, 1967 that we issue a statement concerning 'the use of marijuana, LSD and other psychedelic products', we have already informed the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States that Baha'is should not use hallucinogenic agents, including LSD, peyote and similar substances, except when prescribed for medical treatment. Neither should they become involved in experiments with such substances.

"Although we have found no direct reference to marijuana in the Baha'i writings, since this substance is derived from what is considered to be a milder form of cannabis, the species used to produce hashish, we can share with you a translation from the Persian of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha on hashish:

'Regarding hashish, you had pointed out that some Persians have become habituated to its use. Gracious God! This is the worst of all intoxicants, and its prohibition is explicitly revealed. Its use causeth the disintegration of thought and the complete torpor of the soul. How could anyone seek this fruit of the infernal tree, and by partaking of it, be led to exemplify the qualities of a monster? How could one use this forbidden drug, and thus deprive himself of the blessings of the All-Merciful?...

'Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit acts of absurdity, but ... this wicked hashish extinguisheth the mind, freezeth the spirit, petrifieth the soul, wasteth the body and leaveth man frustrated and lost.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands, November 11, 1967)

1185. Peyote
"Anyone involved in the use of peyote should be told that in the Baha'i Faith spiritual stimulation comes from turning one's heart to Baha'u'llah and not through any physical means. They should therefore be encouraged to give up the use of peyote."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, November 9, 1963: Alaska Baha'i News, May 1972, p. 4)

[355] 1186. Opium Destroys the Conscience, the Mind and the Perceptions
"As to opium, it is foul and accursed. God protect us from the punishment He

inflicteth on the user. According to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, it is forbidden, and its use is utterly condemned. Reason showeth that smoking opium is a kind of insanity, and experience attesteth that the user is completely cut off from the human kingdom. May God protect all against the perpetration of an act so hideous as this, an act which layeth in ruins the very foundation of what it is to be human, and which causeth the user to be dispossessed for ever and ever. For opium fasteneth on the soul, so that the user's conscience dieth, his mind is blotted away, his perceptions are eroded. It turneth the living into the dead. It quencheth the natural heat. No greater harm can be conceived than that which opium inflicteth. Fortunate are they who never even speak the name of it; then think how wretched is the user."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Wilmette, 1982, pp. 148-149)

1187. Dealing in Heroin and Other Narcotics Forbidden
"Dealing in heroin or other similar drugs which are forbidden in the Faith should certainly not be undertaken by Baha'is except in the context of the legitimate handling of such drugs that doctors and similar professionals may be called upon to undertake in the course of their duties. Furthermore, dealing in narcotics is in many countries a crime and on this basis also would be forbidden to Baha'is."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice cited in a compilation on alcohol and drugs sent to an individual believer by the International Teaching Centre, October 17, 1978)

1188. The Renouncing of Tobacco, Alcohol and Opium—Purity and Sanctity Should Distinguish the People of Baha
"O ye, God's loved ones! Experience hath shown how greatly the renouncing of smoking, of intoxicating drink, and of opium, conduceth to health and vigour, to the expansion and keenness of the mind and to bodily strength. There is today a people* who strictly avoid tobacco, intoxicating liquor and opium. This people is far and away superior to the others, for strength and physical courage, for health, beauty and comeliness. A single one of their men can stand up to ten men of another tribe. This hath proved true of the entire people: that is, member for member, each individual of this community is in every respect superior to the individuals of other communities.

"Make ye then a mighty effort, that the purity and sanctity which, above all else, are cherished by 'Abdu'l-Baha, shall distinguish the people of Baha; that in every kind of excellence the people of God shall surpass all other human beings; that both outwardly and inwardly they shall prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy, refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be leaders in the vanguard of those who know. And that by their freedom from enslavement, their knowledge, their self-control, they shall be first among the pure, the free and the wise."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 150)

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*(Possibly 'Abdu'l-Baha was referring to the Sikhs)

3. Tobacco

1189. Smoking is Discouraged, But Not Forbidden
"Regarding your questions: Concerning smoking: It is not forbidden in the Baha'i [356] teachings and no one can enforce its prohibition. It is strongly discouraged as a habit which is not very clean or very healthy. But it is a matter left entirely to the conscience of the individual and not of major importance, whereas the use of alcohol is definitely forbidden and thus not left optional to the conscience of the believer."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 19, 1941)

1190. Smoking Has Nothing to Do with Firmness in the Covenant
"Smoking has nothing to do with firmness in the Covenant. Baha'is are advised not to smoke for reasons of health and hygiene, not because of any spiritual reasons. We naturally cherish every hint and advice from 'Abdu'l-Baha regarding our conduct, but as He has not forbidden this, we must leave each person free to decide for himself."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 9, 1944)

1191. To New Baha'is, We Should Not Stress Giving Up Smoking
"He feels that we should not lay stress to new Baha'is on the necessity of giving up smoking, especially as this is purely optional, and many of the Baha'is still do smoke. There are many things in the Teachings that require a stiff effort on the part of a new believer, and we should not add to the hurdles at the very beginning, so to speak."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 4, 1954)

1192. Smoking by Degrees Injurious
"...I wish to say that, in the sight of God, the smoking of tobacco is a thing which is blamed and condemned, very unclean, and of which the result is by degrees injurious. Besides it is a cause of expense and of loss of time and it is a harmful habit...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i World Faith, p. 335)

1193. Guidelines for Individuals and Assemblies About Tobacco Smoking
"Many believers feeling the same concern expressed by Dr. ... wrote to the beloved Guardian about it. In answer to such letters the Guardian's secretary replied on his behalf that Baha'is had no right to prevent anyone from smoking; that Baha'is were free to smoke but it was preferable for them not to do so; and that an issue should not be made of this matter. The use of tobacco, in common with other personal practices, should be subject to considerations of courtesy. The Baha'i in his daily life, whether smoker or non-smoker, should always be conscious of the rights of those about him and avoid doing anything which would give offense.

"Believers have also raised the question about smoking during Baha'i meetings. It is entirely within the authority of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies

to prohibit smoking in meetings held under their auspices. An Assembly may well feel that it does not wish to raise an additional barrier to seekers by prohibiting smoking at public meetings in a society where it is the accepted practice to smoke. On the other hand, it might be wise for the Assembly to caution the Baha'is to restrain their smoking at teaching meetings and firesides in case it is offensive to some seekers. In the case of Nineteen Day Feasts or meetings of Assemblies or committees, it is not right [357] that friends who find smoking offensive should be made to endure it in Baha'i meetings which they are required or expected to attend. If certain individuals feel that they must smoke, then arrangements, such as a break in the meeting, could be made for their convenience. It would, of course, be entirely inappropriate to smoke during the devotional part of a Feast, or at any other devotional gathering.

"It is to be hoped that the widespread publicity being given to the evil effects of smoking, both on smokers and on those who have to breathe smoke-laden air, will help to convince everyone of the wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Baha in strongly discouraging Baha'is from smoking. However, Baha'is must be careful not to go beyond the Teachings in this matter and try to enforce as a law a matter in which Baha'u'llah has deemed it wise to allow freedom of decision."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 4, 1974)

F. Crime, Criminals and Prisoners

1194. Believers Charged with Criminal Offences*
"...regarding believers who have been charged with criminal offences, suspected to have committed such offences, or convicted by the court. The principle to bear in mind is that each case falling in any of the aforementioned categories should be considered separately on its own merits. No hard and fast rule should be applied.

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*(See also: No. 187)

"...it should be realized that the application of Baha'i sanctions is not an automatic action in response to a verdict of the court."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, May 3, 1967: Extracts Concerning Crime, Criminals, Prisoners and Related Subjects, A Compilation)

1195. Baha'i Institutions Cannot Enforce Criminal Laws at Present—Such Cases Are Handled in Civil Court
"...you cite violations of the criminal laws of the state. These cases are handled in the civil courts, and may or may not be subject to Baha'i administrative action depending upon the nature of the offence and its effect on the Faith. Generally speaking the development of the Administrative Order has not progressed to the point where Baha'i institutions enforce criminal laws."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual

Assembly, May 7, 1974: Ibid.)

1196. Rehabilitation of Criminals Left to Experts in that Field
"...Baha'u'llah has given us the general moral and social principles to guide our lives, but their application to the rehabilitation of criminals is left to the experts in that field to develop in the same way that economics is left to economists."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, September 3, 1974: Ibid.)

1197. Administrative Action in Cases Involving Disobedience to Civil Law
"We have your letter ... asking about administrative action in cases involving disobedience to civil law.

[358] "...We think it is not possible to make a categorical statement applying to all cases. Each case should be decided on its own merits."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 7, 1969: Ibid.)

1198. Penalty for Arson—Laws for a More Evolved Society
"As regards the question you raised about the penalty for arson in the Aqdas, the penalty for arson is burning or life imprisonment; in other words the same penalty as for first degree murder.
"We must not question this, but studying the Baha'i Faith and its Teachings in their entirety, realize that the law of God for this Day is a healing for the nations, and that, at a future period when a purely Baha'i society exists and these laws can be enforced, humanity may have reached a much higher point of evolution than at present, and the mere threat of them may be sufficient in most cases to protect the Community and protect the law from being broken."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 15, 1957)

1199. Capital Punishment and the Criminally Insane
"The question of whether capital punishment should be inflicted on the criminally insane is one for the Universal House of Justice to decide. Such people, however, not being responsible for their actions, will not suffer any spiritual effect from acts committed while mentally deranged."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 25, 1939)

1200. Suicide is Forbidden in the Cause*
"Suicide is forbidden in the Cause. God Who is the Author of all life can alone take it away, and dispose of it in the way He deems best. Whoever commits suicide endangers his soul, and will suffer spiritually as a result in the other Worlds Beyond."
(Ibid.)

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*(See also: Nos. 674-678)

G. Gambling

1201. The Sale or Purchasing of Lottery Tickets
"In reviewing your Minutes for 15 March 1967, we note Item 25-8 in which the Treasurer suggests a lottery as a means of disposing of a Persian carpet which has been given to you by one of the believers. We do not feel this is an appropriate way in which to raise funds....

"As far as individuals are concerned, we have carefully studied the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi on this point and it is apparent that such subsidiary matters are not recorded in the Holy Texts. The Universal House of Justice is not prepared to decide at this time whether the purchase of lottery tickets should be permitted or prohibited."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 4, 1967: Extracts Concerning Gambling, Lotteries and Raffles, a compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

1202. Horse Racing, Betting and Raffles
"Although we have not found any text which forbids the owning of race horses, [359] horse racing as a means of winning the prize money and betting at race courses, we quote the translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha on horse racing:

'Betting on horse racing is a pernicious disease. It hath been seen in Europe what distress this hath caused. Thousands have become afflicted and distraught. The friends of God must engage in work which is lawful and attracteth blessings, so that God's aid and bounty may always surround them.'
(Translated from the Persian)

"We do not feel ... that it is appropriate for funds for the Faith to be raised through raffles."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 20, 1972: Ibid.)

1203. Betting on Football Games, Bingo and the Like
"Although we may have written to you previously commenting on the question as to whether lotteries and betting, such as betting on football games, bingo, etc., are included under the prohibition of gambling, we repeat that this is a matter that is to be considered in detail by the Universal House of Justice. In the meantime, your National Assembly should not make an issue of these matters and should leave it to the consciences of the individual friends who are to decide for themselves in each case."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 27, 1972: Ibid.)

1204. Bingo and Other Games of Chance for the Fund
"As to participation in Bingo games by a Local Spiritual Assembly with the intention of contributing to the Fund, we do not feel it is appropriate for funds for the Faith to be raised through games of chance or raffles."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 29, 1973: Ibid.)

H. Chastity and Sex Education

1205. Sex Education Requires Wisdom and Good Judgment on the Part of Parents
"The House of Justice points out that sex education, especially education concerning the physiological aspects of sex, is a delicate matter, requiring wisdom and good judgment on the part of parents who can impart information to their children and answer their questions in accordance with the stage of development of each child and the degree of his or her understanding. It is, moreover, a subject that needs to be placed in its proper context of the spiritual and emotional development of individuals, the nature of the family and the purpose of human life...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 25, 1981)

1206. Baha'i Youth Should Stand Out Against the Laxity and Depravity of a Permissive Society
"...the Cause of God will derive immense benefit when it is observed that the Baha'is, and particularly Baha'i youth, stand out against the laxity and depravity [360] of the permissive society, that the exalted standards of conduct which they strive to uphold are firmly rooted in spiritual principles, giving them confidence, self-respect and true happiness. On the other hand only the greatest harm can be done to the Cause if its followers are simply engulfed by the current tide."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, November 23, 1983)

1207. The Individual Believer in Accordance with His Prayerful Understanding of the Writings Should Determine His Course of Conduct
"It is neither possible nor desirable for the Universal House of Justice to set forth a set of rules covering every situation. Rather it is the task of the individual believer to determine, according to his own prayerful understanding of the Writings, precisely what his course of conduct should be in relation to situations which he encounters in his daily life. If he is to fulfill his true mission in life as a follower of the Blessed Perfection, he will pattern his life according to the Teachings. The believer cannot attain this objective merely by living according to a set of rigid regulations. When his life is oriented towards service to Baha'u'llah, and when every conscious act is performed within this frame of reference, he will not fail to achieve the true purpose of his life.

"Therefore, every believer must continually study the sacred Writings and the instructions of the beloved Guardian, striving always to attain a new and better understanding of their import to him and to his society. He should pray fervently for Divine Guidance, wisdom and strength to do what is pleasing to God, and to serve Him at all times and to the best of his ability."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 17, 1968: National Baha'i Review, No. 47, November 1971, p. 3)

1208. Baha'is Should Not Hesitate to Seek Advice from Assemblies When They Feel

the Need and Must Learn Through Study and Prayer to Obtain a Clearer Vision of Their Mission

"There is no need to dwell at length on the implications of spotless chastity and the integrity of the sacred marital bond set forth in our teachings, as these have been clearly outlined and amply elaborated in our scriptures and in the writings of our beloved Guardian. Such matters as the age of marriage or the manner of meeting economic commitments are left to the individual to decide for himself. The friends, however, should not hesitate to seek the advice of their Local Spiritual Assemblies in all such matters if they feel the need.

"As the suffering and unrest afflicting humanity increase, and moral restraints are one by one abolished, the Baha'is must learn to obtain, through study and prayer, a clearer vision of their mission, earnestly seek to purge their lives of the influences of laxity and promiscuity characterizing modern society, and insure that the fair name and integrity of the Faith they serve and love so dearly remain unstained and unsullied."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to two believers, May 22, 1966)

1209. One Must Learn to Control Animal Impulses, Not Be a Slave to Them

"In considering the effect of obedience to the laws on individual lives, one must remember that the purpose of this life is to prepare the soul for the next. Here one [361] must learn to control and direct one's animal impulses, not to be a slave to them. Life in this world is a succession of tests and achievements, of falling short and of making new spiritual advances. Sometimes the course may seem very hard, but one can witness, again and again, that the soul who steadfastly obeys the law of Baha'u'llah, however hard it may seem, grows spiritually, while the one who compromises with the law for the sake of his own apparent happiness is seen to have been following a chimera: he does not attain the happiness he sought, he retards his spiritual advance and often brings new problems upon himself."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, excerpts from a letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies, February 6, 1973)

1210. Kissing in Modern Society is Detrimental to Morals*

"What Baha'u'llah means by chastity certainly does not include the kissing that goes on in modern society. It is detrimental to the morals of young people, and often leads them to go too far, or arouses appetites which they cannot perhaps at the time satisfy legitimately through marriage, and the suppression of which is a strain on them.

"The Baha'i standard is very high, more particularly when compared with the thoroughly rotten morals of the present world. But this standard of ours will produce healthier, happier, nobler people, and induce stabler marriages."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 19, 1947)

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*(See also: No. 1438)

1211. Baha'is Must Set the Example and Lead the Way to a True Human Standard of Life

"The world today is submerged, amongst other things, in an over-exaggeration of the importance of physical love, and a dearth of spiritual values. In as far as possible the believers should try to realize this and rise above the level of their fellow-men who are, typical of all decadent periods in history, placing so much over-emphasis on the purely physical side of mating. Outside of their normal, legitimate married life they should seek to establish bonds of comradeship and love which are eternal and founded on the spiritual life of man, not on his physical life. This is one of the many fields in which it is incumbent on the Baha'is to set the example and lead the way to a true human standard of life, when the soul of man is exalted and his body but the tool for his enlightened spirit. Needless to say this does not preclude the living of a perfectly normal sex life in its legitimate channel of marriage."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 28, 1941: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 108-109)

1212. Chastity Implies Before Marriage Absolutely Chaste, After Marriage Absolutely Faithful to One's Chosen Companion

"The question you raise as to the place in one's life that a deep bond of love with someone we meet other than our husband or wife can have is easily defined in view of the teachings. Chastity implies both before and after marriage an unsullied, chaste sex life. Before marriage absolutely chaste, after marriage absolutely faithful to one's chosen companion. Faithful in all sexual acts, faithful in word and in deed."

(Ibid.)

[362] 1213. Baha'i Youth Should Study the Teachings on Chastity for Guidance in Deciding which Intimacies Are Permissible and which Are Not

"We have received your letter of 19th June 1973 and can sympathize with the problems that Baha'i youth face when trying to live up to the Baha'i standards of behaviour. It is, perhaps, natural that in the bewildering amoral environment in which Baha'i youth are growing up they feel the need for specific instructions on which intimacies are permissible and which are not. However, we feel it would be most unwise for any Baha'i institution to issue detailed instructions about this.

"The Baha'i youth should study the teachings on chastity and, with these in mind, should avoid any behaviour which would arouse passions which would tempt them to violate them. In deciding what acts are permissible to them in the light of these considerations the youth must use their own judgement, following the guidance of their consciences and the advice of their parents.

"If Baha'i youth combine such personal purity with an attitude of uncensorious forbearance towards others they will find that those who may have criticized or even mocked them will come, in time, to respect them. They will, moreover, be laying a firm foundation for future married happiness."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a Local Spiritual Assembly,

July 9, 1973)

1214. Youth Should Be Taught Self-Control
"...The Baha'i youth should, on the one hand, be taught the lesson of self-control which, when exercised, undoubtedly has a salutary effect on the development of character and of personality in general, and on the other should be advised, nay even encouraged, to contract marriage while still young and in full possession of their physical vigour. Economic factors, no doubt, are often a serious hindrance to early marriage but in most cases are only an excuse, and as such should not be over stressed."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 13, 1940: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 109)

1215. Chastity Should Be Strictly Practiced by Both Sexes
"The Baha'i teaching on sexual intercourse is very clear. It is permissible only between a man and the woman who is his wife. In this connection we share with you extracts from four letters* written on behalf of the Guardian which throw light on various aspects of the matter...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, February 6, 1973)

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*(Please refer to Nos. 1156 and 1157 for two of these extracts.)

1216. Chastity is One of the Most Challenging Concepts in This Permissive Age
"As to chastity, this is one of the most challenging concepts to get across in this very permissive age, but Baha'is must make the utmost effort to uphold Baha'i standards, no matter how difficult they may seem at first. Such efforts will be made easier if the youth will understand that the laws and standards of the Faith are meant to free them from untold spiritual and moral difficulties in the same way that a proper appreciation of the laws of nature enables one to live in harmony with [363] the forces of the planet. You may wish also to seek the advice of the Education Committee on teaching chastity to young Baha'is."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 14, 1985)

1217. Children Out of Wedlock
"...in reply to your letter of 8 April 1981 requesting guidance on how to deal with problems involving Baha'i women who have had children out of wedlock.

"Normally administrative rights should not be suspended because of the birth of a child out of wedlock. The questions to be considered are whether the party is guilty of blatant and flagrant immorality, whether such conduct is harming the Faith, and whether the believer has refused or neglected to improve her conduct despite repeated warnings.

"If you find that the girls in question are responding to the exhortations of the Assembly and have corrected their behaviour, you should consider the matter closed and restore their administrative rights. Your Assembly should, of course, provide for the proper deepening of the friends, and in a loving and

patient manner attempt to instill in them a respect for Baha'i Laws."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, May 6, 1981)

1218. In Sexual Morality People Often Stumble and Fall Short of the Ideal—The Spiritual Assembly Should Act as a Loving Father Rather Than a Judge
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 15 May 1986 asking whether administrative sanctions should be imposed on unmarried couples in which one or both are Baha'is and who have had children out of wedlock. We have been asked to convey the following guidance.

"As you readily understand, Baha'is are exhorted to lead a chaste and holy life, and, according to Baha'i Law, sexual intercourse is permissible only between a man and the woman who is his wife. In sexual morality, as in other realms of behaviour, people often stumble and fall short of the ideal. It is the task of Spiritual Assemblies to ensure that the friends are deepened in their understanding of the teachings, and are exhorted to apply them in their lives. In caring for its community, a Spiritual Assembly should act as a loving father rather than as a stern judge in such matters. Nevertheless, if a believer's behaviour is blatantly and flagrantly immoral and, therefore, is harmful to the good name of the Faith, the Assembly must counsel him (or her), urge him to reform his conduct, warn him of the consequences if he does not mend his ways and, ultimately, if the believer persists in misbehaviour, the Assembly must deprive him of his administrative rights. This deprivation remains in force until such time as the believer repents of his actions and is able to satisfy the Spiritual Assembly that he has rectified his behaviour."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 5, 1986)

1219. The Institutions Should Adopt Such Programs as Will Deepen the Believers in Their Understanding as to How to Attain to the High Standards of Spotless Chastity Inculcated by Baha'u'llah
"...Baha'is in their deep love for Baha'u'llah should be eager to apply every [364] spiritual precept in their own lives while at the same time exercisingpatience, forbearance and forgiveness in respect to the shortcomings of others. It is for the Institutions of the Faith to adopt such programmes as will deepen the believers in their understanding of the teachings so that they will unhesitatingly and eagerly follow Him.

"There is no doubt that the standard of spotless chastity inculcated by Baha'u'llah in His teachings can be attained by the friends only when they stand forth firmly and courageously as uncompromising adherents of the Baha'i way of life, fully conscious that they represent teachings which are the very antithesis of the corrosive forces which are so tragically destroying the fabric of man's moral values. The present trend in modern society and its conflict with our challenging principles of moral conduct, far from influencing the believers to compromise their resolve to adhere undeviatingly to the standards of purity and chastity set forth for them by their Faith, must stimulate them to discharge their sacred obligations with determination and

thus combat the evil forces undermining the foundations of individual morality."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to two individual believers, May 22, 1966)

1220. Masturbation
"We have found in the Holy Writings no explicit references to masturbation, but there are a number of principles and teachings which can guide a Baha'i to the correct attitude towards it. In a letter to an individual believer, written by the Guardian's secretary on his behalf, it is pointed out that:

'The Baha'i Faith recognizes the value of the sex impulse, but condemns its illegitimate and improper expressions such as free love, companionate marriage and others, all of which it considers positively harmful to man and to the society in which he lives. The proper use of the sex instinct is the natural right of every individual, and it is precisely for this very purpose that the institution of marriage has been established. The Baha'is do not believe in the suppression of the sex impulse but in its regulation and control.'

"In response to another letter enquiring if there were any legitimate way in which a person could express the sex instinct if, for some reason, he were unable to marry or if outer circumstances such as economic factors were to cause him to delay marriage, the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf:

'Concerning your question whether there are any legitimate forms of expression of the sex instinct outside of marriage: According to the Baha'i Teachings no sexual act can be considered lawful unless performed between lawfully married persons. Outside of marital life there can be no lawful or healthy use of the sex impulse. The Baha'i youth should, on the one hand, be taught the lesson of self-control which, when exercised, undoubtedly has a salutary effect on the development of character and of personality in general, and on the other should be advised, nay even encouraged, to contract marriage while still young and in full possession of their physical vigour. Economic factors, no doubt, are often a serious hindrance to early marriage but in most cases are only an excuse, and as such should not be over stressed.'

"In another letter on the Guardian's behalf, also to an individual believer, the secretary writes:

'Amongst the many other evils afflicting society in this spiritual low water mark in history is the question of immorality, and over-emphasis of sex...'

[365] "This indicates how the whole matter of sex and the problems related to it have assumed far too great an importance in the thinking of present-day society.

"Masturbation is clearly not a proper use of the sex instinct, as this is understood in the Faith. Moreover it involves, as you have pointed out, mental fantasies, while Baha'u'llah, in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, has exhorted us not to indulge our passions and in one of His well-known Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha encourages us to keep our 'secret thoughts pure'. Of course many wayward

thoughts come involuntarily to the mind and these are merely a result of weakness and are not blameworthy unless they become fixed or even worse, are expressed in improper acts. In 'The Advent of Divine Justice', when describing the moral standards that Baha'is must uphold both individually and in their community life, the Guardian wrote:

'Such a chaste and holy life, with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations. It demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations.'

"Your problem, therefore, is one against which you should continue to struggle, with determination and with the aid of prayer. You should remember, however, that it is only one of the many temptations and faults that a human being must strive to overcome during his lifetime, and you should not increase the difficulty you have by over-emphasising its importance. We suggest you try to see it within the whole spectrum of the qualities that a Baha'i must develop in his character. Be vigilant against temptation, but do not allow it to claim too great a share of your attention. You should concentrate, rather, on the virtues that you should develop, the services you should strive to render, and, above all, on God and His attributes, and devote your energies to living a full Baha'i life in all its many aspects."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, a copy of which was sent to the compiler with a letter dated March 8, 1981)

I. Homosexuality*

1221. Acts of Immorality
"Amongst the many other evils afflicting society in this spiritual low water mark in history, is the question of immorality, and over-emphasis of sex. Homosexuality, according to the Writings of Baha'u'llah, is spiritually condemned. This does not mean that people so afflicted must not be helped and advised and sympathized with. It does mean that we do not believe that it is a permissible way of life; which, alas, is all too often the accepted attitude nowadays.

"We must struggle against the evils in society by spiritual means, and medical and social ones as well. We must be tolerant but uncompromising, understanding but immovable in our point of view.

"The thing people need to meet this type of trouble, as well as every other type, is greater spiritual understanding and stability; and of course we Baha'is believe that ultimately this can only be given to mankind through the Teachings of the Manifestation of God for this Day."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 21, 1954)

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*(See also: Nos. 185, 1221-1230)

[366] 1222. Homosexuality and Transsexuality
"A number of sexual problems such as homosexuality and transsexuality can well have medical aspects, and in such cases recourse should certainly be had to the best medical assistance. But it is clear from the teaching of Baha'u'llah that homosexuality is not a condition to which a person should be reconciled, but is a distortion of his or her nature which should be controlled and overcome. This may require a hard struggle, but so also can be the struggle of a heterosexual person to control his or her desires. The exercise of self-control in this, as in so very many other aspects of life, has a beneficial effect on the progress of the soul. It should, moreover, be borne in mind that although to be married is highly desirable, and Baha'u'llah has strongly recommended it, it is not the central purpose of life. If a person has to wait a considerable period before finding a spouse, or if ultimately, he or she must remain single, it does not mean that he or she is thereby unable to fulfil his or her life's purpose."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 12, 1973: cited in Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 110-111)

1223. Through Advice, Help of Doctors, and Prayer, Can Overcome This Handicap
"No matter how devoted and fine the love may be between people of the same sex, to let it find expression in sexual acts is wrong. To say that it is ideal is no excuse. Immorality of every sort is really forbidden by Baha'u'llah, and homosexual relationships he looks upon as such, besides being against nature.

"To be afflicted this way is a great burden to a conscientious soul. But through the advice and help of doctors, through a strong and determined effort, and through prayer, a soul can overcome this handicap.

"God judges each soul on its own merits. The Guardian cannot tell you what the attitude of God would be towards a person who lives a good life in most ways, but not in this way. All he can tell you is that it is forbidden by Baha'u'llah, and that one so afflicted should struggle and struggle again to overcome it. We must be hopeful of God's Mercy but not impose upon it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 26, 1950)

1224. Baha'i Law Protects and Strengthens Marriage
"...We shrink, for very shame, from treating of the subject of boys. Fear ye the Merciful, O peoples of the world! Commit not that which is forbidden you in Our Holy Tablet, and be not of those who rove distractedly in the wilderness of their desires."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 107, p. 58)

"The word translated here as 'boys' has, in this context, in the Arabic original, the implication of paederasty. Shoghi Effendi has interpreted this reference as a prohibition on all homosexual relations.

"The Baha'i teachings on sexual morality centre on marriage and the family as the bedrock of the whole structure of human society and are designed to protect and strengthen that divine institution. Baha'i law thus restricts permissible

sexual intercourse to that between a man and the woman to whom he is married." (The Universal House of Justice: The Kitab-i-Aqdas: N 134, p. 223)

[367] 1225. The Question Should Not Be if a Practicing Homosexual Can Be a Baha'i, But as Such Can He Overcome His Problem Through the Teachings
"Baha'i teachings on sexual morality centre on marriage and the family as the bedrock of the whole structure of human society and are designed to protect and strengthen that divine institution. Thus Baha'i law restricts permissible sexual intercourse to that between a man and the woman to whom he is married.

"Thus, it should not be so much a matter of whether a practicing homosexual can be a Baha'i as whether, having become a Baha'i, the homosexual can overcome his problem through knowledge of the teachings and reliance on Baha'u'llah." (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 14, 1973)

1226. Recognizing the Divine Origin of the Sex Impulse in Man, Religion Teaches It Must Be Controlled
"...Any act or activity by a believer which is contrary to our teachings will surely be harmful to the spiritual future of the individual concerned, and may give non-Baha'is a wrong impression of the principles of our Faith. Whereas consider how important it is for a believer to reflect in his actions the redeeming features of the Cause he has embraced. Shoghi Effendi has pointed out:

'Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching—no matter how worldwide and elaborate in its character—not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age the supreme claim of the Abha Revelation. 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 in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Baha'u'llah.'

"While recognizing the divine origin and force of the sex impulse in man, religion teaches that it must be controlled, and Baha'u'llah's law confines its expression to the marriage relationship. The unmarried homosexual is therefore in the same position as anyone else who does not marry. The Law of God requires them to practise chastity.

"Even though you feel that the conflict between sensuality and spirituality is more than you can bear, your affirmation—'I do know I am a Baha'i' is a positive factor in the battle you must wage. Every believer needs to remember that an essential characteristic of this physical world is that we are constantly faced with trials, tribulations, hardships and sufferings and that by overcoming them we achieve our moral and spiritual development; that we must seek to accomplish in the future what we may have failed to do in the past; that this is the way God tests His servants and we should look upon every failure or shortcoming as an opportunity to try again and to acquire a fuller

consciousness of the Divine Will and purpose."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 9, 1977)

1227. We Are Assured of the Guidance of God When We Make an Effort to Obey Him
"Certainly the problem confronting you is a difficult one. However, its solution lies within your power, for Baha'u'llah has assured us that God 'will never deal unjustly [368] with anyone, neither will He task a soul beyond its power'.* And again, 'Whensoever he hath fulfilled the conditions implied in the verse: "Whoso maketh efforts for Us," he shall enjoy the blessings conferred by the words: "In Our Way shall We assuredly guide him."' You can be confident that with the help of doctors, by prayer and meditation, by self-abnegation and by giving as much time as possible to serving the Cause in your community you can eventually succeed in overcoming your problem."
(Ibid.)

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*(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 106, 1982 U.S. edition)

1228. One Must Make an Effort to Resist Wayward Impulses When They Arise by Turning to the Sacred Writings to Divert One's Thoughts
"The House of Justice comments that while there is little in Baha'i literature that specifically points to the causes of homosexuality itself, there is much that concerns the nature of man, his inner life and growth, and the way to a true Baha'i life. If you are sincerely intent on overcoming your problem, you must yourself determine to resist wayward impulses each time they arise and the House of Justice feels that there is no better way than to turn to the Writings to divert our thoughts into spiritual channels, perhaps to concentrate on what we may do to help others along the way to discovering the Baha'i Faith. The more we occupy ourselves with teaching the Cause and serving our fellow-man in this way, the stronger we become in resisting that which is abhorrent to our spiritual selves.

"Man's physical existence on this earth is a period during which the moral exercise of his free will is tried and tested in order to prepare his soul for the other worlds of God, and we must welcome affliction and tribulations as opportunities for improvement in our eternal selves. The House of Justice points out that homosexuals are not the only segment of human society labouring at this daily task—every human being is beset by such inner promptings as pride, greed, selfishness, lustful heterosexual or homosexual desires, to name a few which must be overcome, and overcome them we must if we are to fulfil the purpose of our human existence."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 16, 1980)

1229. A Homosexual Relationship Subverts the Purpose of Human Life
"There should be real incentive for you to courageously face the problems inherent in the situation you describe in your letter, and to firmly resolve to change your way of life. But you must desire to do so. Both you and your Baha'i

friend must first recognize that a homosexual relationship subverts the purpose of human life and that determined effort to overcome the wayward tendencies which promote this practice which, like other sexual vices, is so abhorrent; the Creator of all mankind will help you both to return to a path that leads to true happiness."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 23, 1982)

1230. Homosexuality, Immorality and Adultery Are Forbidden in the Faith
"The question of how to deal with homosexuals is a very difficult one. Homosexuality is forbidden in the Baha'i Faith by Baha'u'llah; so, for that matter, are immorality and adultery. If one is going to start imposing heavy sanctions on people who are the victims of this abnormality, however repulsive it may be to [369] others, then it is only fair to impose equally heavy sanctions on any Baha'is who step beyond the moral limits defined by Baha'u'llah. Obviously at the present time this would create an impossible and ridiculous situation.

"He feels, therefore, that, through loving advice, through repeated warnings, any friends who are flagrantly immoral should be assisted, and, if possible, restrained. If their activities overstep all bounds and become a matter of public scandal, then the Assembly can consider depriving them of their voting rights. However, he does not advise this course of action, and feels it should only be resorted to in very flagrant cases."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 20, 1955)

J. Laws of Marriage

1. Parental Consent

1231. Knowledge of Character Responsibility of Two Parties and Parents
"Baha'i law places the responsibility for ascertaining knowledge of the character of those entering into the marriage contract on the two parties involved, and on the parents, who must give consent to the marriage.

"The obligation of the Spiritual Assembly is to ascertain that all requirements of civil and Baha'i law have been complied with, and, having done so, the Assembly may neither refuse to perform the marriage ceremony nor delay it."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 30, 1967)

1232. Must Become Thoroughly Acquainted with Characters of Each Other
"Baha'i marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to become loving companions and comrades and at one with each other for time and eternity....

"The true marriage of Baha'is is this, that husband and wife should be united

both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other, and may enjoy everlasting unity throughout all the worlds of God. This is Baha'i marriage."
(Ibid.)

1233. Law Requiring Parental Consent Should Encourage Young People to Consider Marriage Seriously
"Baha'u'llah definitely says that the consent of the parents should be obtained before the marriage is sanctioned and that undoubtedly has great wisdom. It will at least detain young people from marrying without considering the subject thoroughly. It is in conformity with this teaching of the Cause that Shoghi Effendi cabled that the consent of your parents should be obtained.

"I personally believe that if you retain your love as a pure and close friendship and continue your studies until you bring them to a close then you will be in a better position to judge and perhaps your parents would be given time to give the subject [370] better consideration. Time can always provide things and settle disputes that temporary endeavour and heated discussion cannot help."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 29, 1929)

1234. Consent Required of Parents for Adults, for Second Marriages, for Baha'is or Non-Baha'is
"About the consent of parents for marriage: This is required before and also after the man or woman is twenty-one years of age. It is also required in the event of a second marriage, after the dissolution of the first whether through death or through divorce.

"The parental consent is also a binding obligation irrespective of whether the parents are Baha'is or not, whether they are friendly or opposed to the Cause. In the event of the death of both parents, the consent of a guardian is not required."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 10, 1936)

1235. The Law of Parental Consent is to Strengthen Family Relationships
"Baha'u'llah has clearly stated the consent of all living parents is required for a Baha'i marriage. This applies whether the parents are Baha'is or non-Baha'is, divorced for years or not. This great law He has laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator. We Baha'is must realize that in present-day society the exact opposite process is taking place: young people care less and less for their parents' wishes, divorce is considered a natural right, and obtained on the flimsiest and most unwarrantable and shabby pretexts. People separated from each other, especially if one of them has had full custody of the children, are only too willing to belittle the importance of the partner in marriage also responsible

as a parent for bringing those children into this world. The Baha'is must, through rigid adherence to the Baha'i laws and teachings, combat these corrosive forces which are so rapidly destroying home life and the beauty of family relationships, and tearing down the moral structure of society."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 25, 1947)

1236. Consent of Parents Law of Great Importance Affecting the Foundation of Human Society

"In many cases of breach of marriage laws the believers apparently look upon the law requiring consent of parents before marriage as a mere administrative regulation, and do not seem to realize that this is a law of great importance affecting the very foundations of human society. Moreover they seem not to appreciate that in the Baha'i Faith the spiritual and administrative aspects are complementary and that the social laws of the Faith are as binding as the purely spiritual ones."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 29, 1965: Canadian Baha'i News, No. 265, February 1973, p. 11)

1237. Consent of All Living Parents Places a Grave Responsibility on Each Parent

"It is perfectly true that Baha'u'llah's statement that the consent of all living parents [371] is required for marriage places a grave responsibility on each parent. When the parents are Baha'is they should, of course, act objectively in withholding or granting their approval. They cannot evade this responsibility by merely acquiescing in their child's wish, nor should they be swayed by prejudice; but, whether they be Baha'i or non-Baha'i, the parents' decision is binding, whatever the reason that may have motivated it. Children must recognize and understand that this act of consenting is the duty of a parent. They must have respect in their hearts for those who have given them life, and whose good pleasure they must at all times strive to win."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, February 1, 1968)

1238. Parents May Seek Advice of Spiritual Assembly, But Decision Rests with the Parents

"In reply to your letter of 9 March, 1979 requesting comment on an item in the Minutes of a Local Spiritual Assembly concerning parental consent to marriage, the Universal House of Justice directs us to say that while parents may seek advice of an Assembly about whether they should consent to the marriage of their children and the Assembly may give such advice, the decision rests with the parents and the Assembly cannot assume that responsibility."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 5, 1979)

1239. The Opposition of Family Members Other Than Parents Does Not Affect Validity of the Marriage

"In this connection, the Guardian feels the necessity of bringing to your

attention the fact that the validity of a Baha'i marriage is conditioned upon the consent of the two parties and their parents only. So that in case the other members of your family show any dislike or opposition to your sister's union with Mr. ..., their objection does under no circumstances invalidate it. Your parents' approval would be sufficient even though all the rest of your family may violently oppose it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a Baha'i couple, March 31, 1937)

1240. Marriage to Non-Baha'i, Consent of Parents of Both Parties Required
"Regarding the question whether it is necessary to obtain the consent of the parents of a non-Baha'i participant in a marriage with a Baha'i: As Baha'u'llah has stated that the consent of the parents of both parties is required in order to promote unity and avoid friction, and as the Aqdas does not specify any exceptions to this rule, the Guardian feels that under all circumstances the consent of the parents of both parties is required."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, August 12, 1941)

1241. The Child May Ask Parents to Reconsider—May Request Assistance of Assembly
"It is clear from your letter that you understand the basic requirement that parental consent is necessary to having a Baha'i marriage and that parents may give or withhold consent for their own reasons. If in a given case the parents at first withhold consent, there is no harm in the child's asking his parents to reconsider, [372] bearing in mind that he has to abide by their decision. The child, on the other hand, may not wish to pursue the matter; it is left entirely to his own judgement of the circumstances whether to request reconsideration or not.

"There have been instances when parties have appealed to Baha'i institutions (local and national) to assist them in removing any misunderstanding that may have stood in the way of a positive decision on the part of their parents. But there are no hard and fast rules in these matters. Each case is dealt with according to the prevailing circumstances at the time."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 28, 1984)

1242. Consent of Parents Often Withheld for Reasons of Bigotry
"...the Baha'i law requiring consent of parents to marriage. All too often nowadays such consent is withheld by non-Baha'i parents for reasons of bigotry or racial prejudice; yet we have seen again and again the profound effect on those very parents of the firmness of the children in the Baha'i law, to the extent that not only is the consent ultimately given in many cases, but the character of the parents can be affected and their relationship with their child greatly strengthened.

"Thus, by upholding Baha'i law in the face of all difficulties we not only strengthen our own characters but influence those around us."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer; copies to all National Spiritual Assemblies, February 6, 1973: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 106-107)

1243. If Parents Are Alive, Consent Must Be Obtained
"Regarding your question of applying the sanction of suspension of voting rights to people who marry without the consent of parents, this should be done from now on. The law of the Aqdas is explicit and not open to any ambiguity at all. As long as the parents are alive, the consent must be obtained; it is not conditioned on their relationship to their children. If the whereabouts of the parents is not known legally, in other words, if they are legally dead, then it is not necessary for the children to obtain their consent, obviously. It is not a question of the child not knowing the present whereabouts of its parents, it is a question of a legal thing—if the parents are alive, they must be asked."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, June 26, 1956: Baha'i News, No. 335, January 1959, p. 2)

1244. Circumstances Under which Parental Consent for Baha'i Marriage Not Required
"In reply to your letter about the problem of ... who is unable to locate the natural father of her fiance we are glad to offer you the following guidance:

"The only circumstances under which parental consent for Baha'i marriage is not required are the following:

1. If the parent is dead.

2. If the parent has absented himself to the degree that he can be adjudged legally dead.

3. If the parent is certified insane and therefore legally incompetent to give consent.

4. [373] If the parent is a Covenant-breaker.

5. It is possible under Baha'i Law, in certain very rare cases, to recognize that a state of disownment exists. All such cases should be referred to the Universal House of Justice.

"The problem therefore is reduced to the simple question of whether your National Assembly accepts that Miss ...'s father-in-law elect cannot be traced and therefore may, to your satisfaction, be presumed to be legally dead. You should of course ascertain that Miss ... has made every effort possible to trace her fiance's father."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, May 30, 1971)

1245. Withdrawal from the Faith in Order to Evade Law of Baha'u'llah is Not Possible for True Believer
"The responsibilities laid upon parents as they give consideration to the question of consent to marriage of their children is directed to their conscience and therefore it is not possible to apply sanctions. On the other

hand, the Baha'i law requiring children to obtain the consent of their parents to marriage is subject to sanction, and as you know these are matters set forth in the Kitab-i-Aqdas and in the instructions of the beloved Guardian.

"At some time or other, every law of Baha'u'llah may impose a test upon the faith of a believer and the question is whether the believer will meet the test or not. As you are aware, withdrawal from the Faith in order to evade a law of Baha'u'llah is not possible to a true believer."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 22, 1968)

1246. Parents Give Consent to Marriage, Not to a Baha'i Religious Ceremony
"1. Your understanding about withdrawal of consent by one or more of the parents prior to a Baha'i marriage is correct; namely, if such withdrawal occurs, the marriage cannot take place.

"2. The principle of the Baha'i law requiring parental consent to marriage is that the parents consent to the marriage of the man to the woman concerned. It does not require that they consent to the performance of any particular ceremony. Obviously, where the parents are Baha'is, it is taken for granted that the marriage of a Baha'i couple will be by the performance of the Baha'i ceremony. In some cases, however, it would be difficult for non-Baha'i parents to give consent to the participation of their son or daughter in a Baha'i religious ceremony, and in these cases the distinction of principle is important. In other words, if the non-Baha'i parents consent to the marriage of the couple, the Baha'i ceremony can be held unless they expressly object to the holding of the Baha'i ceremony, in which case the marriage cannot take place."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 23, 1984)

1247. Every Reasonable Avenue of Search Must Be Exhausted to Find Parent—The Responsible Assembly Must Be Satisfied This Has Been Done
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 8 May 1986 presenting Miss ..., problem of consent to her marriage by her putative father. We are asked to convey its response.

[374] "It seems clear that Miss ... has a slender connection with her genetic father. Nevertheless, despite his long absence and his lack of any relationship with either mother or daughter, Miss ... is obligated to make every effort, however discreetly carried out, to ascertain his whereabouts, including such steps as contacting persons, firms or agencies, and even advertising in newspapers if necessary. The Local or National Assembly accepts that Miss ...'s father-in-law elect cannot be traced and the National Assembly may offer its assistance to the couple, if needed. When the Assembly is satisfied that every reasonable avenue of search has been exhausted without discovering the missing parent, the Assembly may permit the marriage to take place."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 2, 1986)

1248. One May Ask Others to Approach Parent on His or Her Behalf

"If the father has been certified mentally incompetent, then no consent is required. Otherwise his consent must be obtained.
"If the young lady is concerned about approaching her father directly she may ask others to do this on her behalf. We suggest also that the Local Assembly be asked to assist."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 18, 1968)

1249. Marriages Are Supposed to Promote Unity and Harmony—Alienated Parent and Child Might Be Brought Together
"He feels that marriage is primarily a thing that the two young people must decide upon. If the young Baha'i girl you mentioned desires to marry the son of the Hindu ... and her parents consent, and his parents consent, then there is nothing to prevent the union, as long as Baha'i laws are followed.

"The Guardian suggests that the young man himself seek out his father, and explain to him that he wishes to marry a Baha'i girl according to civil law, and then with a brief Baha'i ceremony following it for her sake, and ask his father's permission and blessing. Marriages are supposed, as Baha'u'llah says, Himself, to promote unity and harmony in the world, and not dissension and alienation.

"It would be a wonderful opportunity if this marriage could bring the father and son, alienated from each other, together, at least in a moment of friendly and filial contact. In order to live up to the Baha'i laws for the new age we are entering upon, we have to make sacrifices. If the Baha'is themselves will not sacrifice for their Faith, who will? It may often be difficult, but the results will be seen in a more rapid spread of the Cause and a greater unity amongst the Community itself."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 12, 1953)

1250. Summary of Requirements for Adopted Children in Respect to Consent
"Regarding the matter of adopted children, the consent of all natural parents must be obtained wherever this is legally possible but no effort should be made to trace the natural parents if this contravenes the provision of the adoption certificate or the laws of the country. If there is no such legal bar to approaching the natural parents and if it is legally established that the man in question is the father, the child must obtain his consent if he is alive. If the presumed father has disappeared to the [375] degree that he can be presumed legally dead then his consent is not required. Furthermore, if the assumed natural father denies that he is the father of the child the following principles apply: if his name appears on the birth certificate of the child and if the law of the country presumes that the name on the birth certificate is that of the father, then he should be considered as the father for the purpose of obtaining consent. If the name of the father given on the birth certificate is not a conclusive presumption of parenthood and if the man in question has always denied that he is the father of the child, the child is not required to seek the consent of this man unless it has been legally established that he is

the father notwithstanding his denial."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 24, 1965)

1251. Adopted Children and the Special Significance of Their Relationship with the Natural Parents
"We acknowledge receipt of your letter of November 13, 1973 expressing concern that the provision of the Baha'i marriage law requiring consent of living natural parents creates a double standard in your family because you have adopted children as well as your own.

"We appreciate your concern and are in sympathy with your worthy aspiration to attain unity in your family group. However, the unity of your family need not be imperilled because your adopted children when ready for marriage must obtain consent of their natural parents. Just as love for one person need not reduce the love one bears to another, so unity with the adoptive parents need not destroy nor reduce the unity a child may have with its natural parents, or vice versa. The characters and attitudes of the individuals concerned will have an effect upon this.

"You also state that unless there is a broader concept of the meaning of 'natural parent', you feel the law creates disharmony. Perhaps the following extract from a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary was quoted to you by your National Spiritual Assembly, but we draw your attention to that portion we have underlined because it refers to the special significance of the relationship between children and their natural parents.

'Baha'u'llah has clearly stated the consent of all living parents is required for a Baha'i marriage.... This great law He has laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator.'

"In short, love for the foster parents and unity with their home should not exclude love for a child's natural parents, although it is likely a child will become very much more a part of the home in which he lives and grows up.

"Of course, wherever the law of the land or the Agreement of Adoption prohibits future contact between an adopted child and its natural parents, the Baha'i law does not require the child to seek the consent of those parents to its marriage. However, children may very well wish to obtain the consent of their foster parents although not obliged to do so."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 11, 1973)

1252. Uniform Adoption Law
"We have your letter of 23 July informing us of the Uniform Adoption Law [376] which makes it the practice to withhold the names of natural parents from the adoptive parents and the child, and asking for advice as to what is required

under the laws of Baha'i marriage regarding consent of the natural parents.

"In cases where the Uniform Adoption Law prevents the disclosure of the names of the natural parents, the child is under no obligation to seek their consent to marriage, but in those cases where it is possible for the child to know his natural parents, consent must be obtained provided there is nothing in the law or in the adoption contract which prevents him from doing so."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, August 7, 1966: Baha'i Bulletin of Australia; No. 145, September 1966, p. 2)

1253. Duty of Assembly to Ascertain if Consent is Freely Given. It is Desirable to Have Signed Consent, is Not Requirement Under Law
"In the Baha'i Faith it is the right of each individual to choose without duress his future partner in marriage and the freedom of the parents in exercising their right to give or refuse consent is unconditional. While it is desirable to have a signed consent from each parent it is not a requirement under Baha'i Law. The responsible Spiritual Assembly must satisfy itself that consents are freely given but it should not insist upon a signed document. Reliable evidence of oral consents is quite sufficient; some parents freely give their consents orally while refusing to write their consents."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guyana, April 11, 1978)

1254. If Parents Do Not Name Future Spouse in Letter of Consent
"Basically, Baha'i Law pertaining to marriage requires that the parties intending to marry must obtain consent of all living natural parents. Further, the responsibility of the parents in giving their consent is unrestricted and unconditioned, but in discharging this duty they are responsible for their decision to God. Should the parents in their letter of consent, as you indicated, not name a specific future spouse, the House of Justice states that it could be accepted and it would be permissible to perform a Baha'i marriage ceremony on the basis of such a letter."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 9, 1975)

2. Baha'i Engagement

1255. First You Must Select One
"As for the question regarding marriage under the Law of God: First thou must choose one who is pleasing to thee, and then the matter is subject to the consent of father and mother. Before thou makest thy choice, they have no right to interfere."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 118)

1256. Period of Engagement and Announcement of Engagement
"The Laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas regarding the period of engagement have not been made applicable to believers in the West, and therefore there is no requirement that the parties to a marriage obtain consent of the parents before announcing their engagement. However, there is no objection to informing the believers

that it would [377] be wise for them to do so in order to avoid later embarrassment if consents are withheld."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, January 17, 1971: Australian Baha'i Bulletin, February 1971, No. 198)

1257. If Both Parties Are Persian Engagement Should Not Exceed 95 Days
"...the Universal House of Justice instructs us to say that according to its ruling, the law of the Kitab-i-Aqdas that the lapse of time between engagement and marriage should not exceed ninety-five days, is binding on Persian believers wherever they reside, if both parties are Persian. This law is not applicable, however, if one of the parties is a western believer.
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, October 31, 1977)

1258. The Ninety-Five Days Should Commence When the Two Parties Have Been Betrothed
"In principle, according to the decisive text of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the period of ninety-five days should commence only when the two parties have been betrothed, and the marriage is agreed. Therefore, the breaking of an engagement, although possible, should rarely occur. The Assemblies should, when the reason for breaking or extending the fixed period of engagement is valid, render every assistance to the parties involved to remove their difficulties and facilitate their observance of the ordinance of the Book.

"However, if the revoking, extending, or renewing of engagement in the judgement of the Assembly is an intentional disregard of the law of the Book, then the National Spiritual Assembly should, in each case, carefully consult and carry out whatever action they may decide..."
(Translated from a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 29, 1971)

1259. The Breaking of an Engagement Does Not Violate Baha'i Law
"...the breaking of an engagement, though not always desirable, does not violate Baha'i marriage law."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 11, 1969)

1260. It is Unlawful to Announce a Marriage Earlier Than 95 Days Before Wedding
"...it is unlawful to announce a marriage earlier than ninety-five days before the wedding."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, Questions and Answers, Q 43, p. 120)

1261. It is Unlawful to Become Engaged to a Girl Before She Attains Maturity*
"It is unlawful to become engaged to a girl before she reaches the age of maturity."
(Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 150)

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*(See also: No. 516)

3. Baha'i Marriage

[378] 1262. The Baha'i Teachings Raise Marriage to the Status of a Divine Institution; However, There is a Small Section of Humanity Who Should Not Marry...

"The Baha'i Teachings do not only encourage marital life, considering it the natural and normal way of existence for every sane, healthy and socially-conscious and responsible person, but raise marriage to the status of a divine institution, its chief and sacred purpose being the perpetuation of the human race—which is the very flower of the entire creation—and its elevation to the true station destined for it by God.

"That there should be, however, certain individuals who by reason of some serious deficiency, physical or mental, would be incapacitated to contract marriage and enjoy the blessings of an enduring and successful marital life is only too evident, but these constitute only a very small section of humanity, and are therefore merely an exception, and their condition cannot possibly invalidate what an all-wise and loving Providence has decreed to be the normal way to a fruitful and constructive social existence.

"The exact conditions and circumstances under which such incapacitated individuals should be advised or even prevented perhaps from entering into any sort of marital existence have not been specified in the Baha'i Writings, but will have to be defined later on by the Universal House of Justice. In the meantime, those believers who consider themselves as falling into the above category would do well, before taking any final decision themselves, to consult medical experts, who are both conscientious and competent, and to abide by their recommendation.

"This is what the Guardian would advise you to do, and he will pray that you may be guided in reaching the right decision in this assuredly delicate and indeed most vital matter confronting you at present. Whether your illness is the result of any inherent constitutional weakness and inherited predisposition is a question which you should refer to experts in the medical field, though even expert physicians themselves may in very few cases find it exceedingly hard, if not altogether impossible, to give a final and decisive answer."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 15, 1939)

1263. The Institution of Marriage as Conceived and Established by Baha'u'llah Constitutes the Foundation of Social Life

"It must be first clearly emphasized that the institution of marriage as conceived and established by Baha'u'llah is extremely simple though of a vital social importance, constituting as it does the very foundation of social life. Compared to matrimonial conceptions and forms current amongst existing religions, the Baha'i conception of marriage is practically void of all ceremonies. There is no officiating priesthood. The two contracting parties simply appear before the Spiritual Assembly and express their desire to be united with the bonds of marriage. There is a short formula which they have to

pronounce before the members, and a marriage certificate which they both have to sign. In the Cause we do not have what is commonly called the 'Aqid'. The appearance of the two parties before the Assembly has only an administrative importance. It carries with it no spiritual or sacramental obligation of significance. I mean only the mere act of appearing before the Assembly, not marriage itself, which is of course essentially a spiritual and moral act of union."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, July 6, 1935)

[379] 1264. The Physical Aspect of Marital Union is Subordinate to the Moral and Spiritual Purposes and Functions
"The Institution of marriage as established by Baha'u'llah, while giving due importance to the physical aspect of marital union, considers it as subordinate to the moral and spiritual purposes and functions with which it has been invested by an all-wise and loving Providence. Only when these different values are given each their due importance, and only on the basis of the subordination of the physical to the moral, and the carnal to the spiritual, can such excesses and laxity in marital relations as our decadent age is so sadly witnessing be avoided, and family life be restored to its original purity, and fulfil the true function for which it has been instituted by God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 8, 1939: Family Life, pp. 18-19)

1265. Marriage Between Two Baha'is Can Be a Potent Force in the Lives of Others
"He hastens to wish you both every happiness in your forthcoming marriage, and he hopes that it will not only be a blessing to you both, but to the Faith as well.

"A marriage between two souls, alive to the Message of God in this day, dedicated to the service of His Cause, working for the good of humanity, can be a potent force in the lives of others and an example and inspiration to other Baha'is, as well as to non-believers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 4, 1943)

1266. Baha'i Union Must Be a True Relationship that Will Endure
"When, therefore, the people of Baha undertake to marry, the union must be a true relationship, a spiritual coming together as well as a physical one, so that throughout every phase of life, and in all the worlds of God, their union will endure; for this real oneness is a gleaming out of the love of God."
('Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 117)

1267. Moral Duty to Marry But Marriage is Not an Obligation
"...Of course, under normal circumstances, every person should consider it his moral duty to marry. And this is what Baha'u'llah has encouraged the believers to do. But marriage is by no means an obligation. In the last resort it is for the individual to decide whether he wishes to lead a family life or live in a state of celibacy."

(From a letter of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 3, 1936; cited by the Universal House of Justice in a letter to an individual believer, February 6, 1973: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, pp. 109-110)

1268. Baha'u'llah Has Urged Marriage as the Natural and Rightful Way of Life
"He realizes your desire to get married is quite a natural one, and he will pray that God will assist you to find a suitable companion with whom you can be truly happy and united in the service of the Faith. Baha'u'llah has urged marriage upon all people as the natural and rightful way of life. He has also, however, placed strong [380] emphasis on its spiritual nature, which, while in no way precluding a normal physical life, is the most essential aspect of marriage. That two people should live their lives in love and harmony is of far greater importance than that they should be consumed with passion for each other. The one is a great rock of strength on which to lean in time of need; the other a purely temporary thing which may at any time die out."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to Mr. John Stearns, January 20, 1943—the first pioneer to Ecuador)

1269. The Baha'i Faith Does Not Contemplate Any Form of "Trial Marriage"
"Concerning the three definitions of 'companionate marriage' which you give in your letter: the first, which is defined as living together without being married, on either a trial or immoral basis, is obviously unacceptable in Baha'i teachings and is, moreover, an offence which, if persisted in, could call for deprivation of voting rights. The second and third, namely (2) a marriage where the couple agree ahead of time that they will not have children, ever, and (3) a marriage in which the couple would not have children until they are sure that they wish to stay married, divorce by mutual consent being envisaged before children are born, are private situations which would be undetectable by anyone who has not been confided in by either the husband or the wife. Thus, unlike the first type of 'companionate marriage' they do not constitute blatant immorality and no question of the removal of voting rights would arise. Nevertheless they are also both contrary to the spirit of Baha'i law. The Baha'i Teachings do not contemplate any form of 'trial marriage'. A couple should study each other's character and spend time getting to know each other before they decide to marry, and when they do marry it should be with the intention of establishing an eternal bond. They should realize, moreover, that the primary purpose of marriage is the procreation of children. A couple who are physically incapable of having children may, of course, marry, since the procreation of children is not the only purpose of marriage. However, it would be contrary to the spirit of the Teachings for a couple to decide voluntarily never to have any children."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, November 3, 1982)

1270. Regarding Couples Living Together Without Being Married
"When considering cases of couples who are living together without being married it is important to distinguish those who started this association after becoming Baha'is from those who were in this condition already at the time of

accepting the Faith. The House of Justice is sure that your Assembly is aware that it is not permissible for Baha'is to enter into such an immoral relationship and that any believers who do so must be counselled by the Assembly and warned to correct their conduct, either by separating or by having a Baha'i marriage ceremony in accordance with the provisions of Baha'i law. If, after repeated warnings, the believers concerned do not conform to Baha'i law, the Assembly has no choice but to deprive them of their voting rights.

"The situation of those who were living in such a relationship when they accepted the Faith is less clear-cut, and the House of Justice has instructed us to send your Assembly the following summary of the applicable principles which was prepared [381] in response to a similar question by another National Spiritual Assembly.

1. In general, marriages entered into by parties prior to their enrolment in the Faith are recognized as valid under Baha'i law, and in such cases an additional Baha'i marriage ceremony is not permitted. This applies whether the marriage was established under civil or religious law or under tribal custom.

2. A couple living together merely as man and mistress when either or both become Baha'i are not married in the eyes of Baha'i law, and must either have a Baha'i marriage in accordance with the provisions of Baha'i law, or cease living together. In other words, the Assembly must deal with the situation as it would in any other case of immoral behaviour, explaining the requirements of the law, giving repeated warnings, and ultimately, if the offender does not comply, he must forfeit his voting rights.

3. Because of unusual conditions in certain countries and certain cases it sometimes happens that a person will become a Baha'i when he or she is living in a situation which does not clearly fit within either of the above definitions. Such a case occurs, for example, where a couple have established firm ties of union and are living together in such a way that they appear to be married and are accepted as such by those around them; the union has stood the test of time and there may even be children, and yet, in fact, the couple are not actually married in any of the ways defined above. The principle followed here is that we do not pry into people's lives and insist on their undoing those ties they have established before becoming believers, but the union is accepted as a marriage in the eyes of Baha'i law. The Guardian upheld this principle in situations which arise in some Catholic countries where, because of the relationship between church and state divorce is impossible, and one or both of the parties may still be legally married to someone else. Where it is possible for such a couple to regularize their position in civil law by having a civil marriage ceremony, they may certainly do so, but it is neither necessary nor permissible for them to have a Baha'i marriage ceremony, since, in the eyes of Baha'i law, they are already united in marriage."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, September 7, 1981)

1271. The Basic Difference Between the Two Categories of Relationships

"The basic difference between the two categories of relationships is that common law marriage is considered by the parties concerned as a solemn contract with the sole intention of establishing a family but which, because of legal complications, cannot be duly registered, whereas in companionate marriage and the like the parties concerned initiate and maintain their relationship either on a trial basis or on other immoral grounds, both of which are condemned in our Teachings.

"We feel that by applying these principles in each of the cases you cite in your letter, with wisdom, kindness and love you will be able gradually to educate the friends in the fundamentals of our Teachings and enable them to overcome their moral difficulties."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Paraguay, November 21, 1967)

1272. Faith Accepts in Certain Cases Unions which Are "Immoral But Accepted" by Society in which the People Live
"As you will see, the Baha'i Faith accepts as man and wife couples who, prior to [382] becoming Baha'is, have had a valid marriage ceremony, whether this be civil, religious or by tribal custom, even if this has resulted in a polygamous union. Furthermore, the Faith accepts in certain cases unions which are 'immoral but accepted' by the society in which the people live. In all these cases, because the union is accepted by the Faith, there is no question of a couple's having a Baha'i wedding ceremony subsequently because, as the Guardian says, 'Baha'i marriage is something you perform when you are going to be united for the first time, not long after the union takes place'. If, however, such a couple would like to have a meeting of their friends at which Baha'i prayers and readings are said on behalf of their marriage now that they are Baha'is, there is no objection to their doing so, although it must be understood that this does not constitute a Baha'i marriage ceremony."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Peru, June 23, 1969)

1273. Legalizing Existing Situation Does Not Require Baha'i Marriage
"The matter of regularising a situation in civil law is quite separate and largely depends upon the requirements of the law. If a couple whose union is recognized by the Faith but is not valid in civil law wish to have a civil marriage, they may most certainly do so. This is purely a rectification of the civil position and does not require the holding of a Baha'i marriage ceremony."
(Ibid.)

1274. Difference Between Companionate Marriage and Common Law Marriage
"We have reviewed your letter of October 25 asking questions concerning the application of Baha'i marriage laws in your community.
"The problem you describe in your letter is more or less common to the other territories in Latin America, and during the lifetime of the Guardian similar problems were presented to him by National Assemblies operating at the time in Latin America. The replies given by the Guardian indicate that distinction should be made between companionate marriage and flagrant immorality on the one

hand, and common law marriage contracted because of the present relationship of law and the church in those areas on the other. Whilst the first type of relationship is immoral and therefore cannot be tolerated, the second type of relationship, if contracted before a person has become a Baha'i, may be accepted by the institutions of the Faith without requiring the person to undo such ties."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Paraguay, November 21, 1967)

1275. Companionate Marriage and Flagrantly Immoral Relationships
"Regarding companionate marriage and flagrant immorality, we quote below two passages from letters written on behalf of the Guardian:

'The Guardian has instructed me to say that companionate marriage, where there is no legal or religious marriage, is an immoral relationship and we cannot accept as believers those who are openly behaving in this way.' (To the NSA of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, dated September 26, 1957)

'As regards flagrantly immoral relationships, such as a man living with a [383] mistress, this should be brought to his attention in a loving manner, and he should be urged to either marry the woman if he is free to do so, or to give up this conduct, so detrimental to the Faith and to his own spiritual progress.'"
(To the NSA of Central America, dated February 9, 1957)
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Paraguay, November 21, 1967)

1276. Violation of Marriage Law, Ascertain if Baha'i Informed of Requirements
"...For the present, your Assembly should follow the guidance already given by the beloved Guardian, keeping in mind that suspension of voting rights is not an automatic procedure.

"In all marriage cases, including those you list, your Assembly must first ascertain if the Baha'i in question was informed of the requirements for Baha'i marriage, and of his own responsibilities in connection therewith. In cases involving disregard of Baha'i laws other than that of marriage, you should be slow to impose this severe sanction."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, April 14, 1965)

1277. Incorrect Information Given by Assembly
"Similarly, you should take into account a believer's good intention if he acted in accordance with incorrect advice or instruction given to him by his Local Spiritual Assembly or another Baha'i institution."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 11, 1965)

1278. Baha'is Ignorant of Law in a Different Category Altogether
"At the present stage in the development of the Baha'i Community, Baha'is who failed to have a Baha'i marriage through ignorance of the law are in a different category altogether from those who wittingly broke the law. The

latter must have a Baha'i ceremony in order to regain their voting rights; but the former should be treated in the same manner as those Baha'is who married before they entered the Faith and those Baha'is who married without a Baha'i ceremony before the law was applied: they should be considered married and not be required to have a Baha'i ceremony."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 20, 1966)

1279. Be Patient and Forbearing in Application of Laws to Indigenous People: Must Not Pry into People's Personal Lives
"There are, however, as you will see from the 21 November letter to Paraguay, situations which are not accepted by the Baha'i Faith, and when people who are living in such immoral situations become Baha'is they must rectify their condition or be subject to loss of their voting rights. We wish to emphasize, however, that although all immorality is condemned in the Teachings, it is only flagrant immorality that is now sanctionable. You should not pry into people's affairs, and only in cases of flagrant immorality should you consider imposing sanctions, and then only after you have patiently explained to the believers concerned the Baha'i laws involved and given them ample time to comply. Particularly in the application [384] of these laws to indigenous people should you be patient and forbearing. The emphasis should be on education rather than on rigid enforcement of the law immediately.

"When someone who is already a Baha'i knowingly violates Baha'i marriage law he is subject to loss of his voting rights. Apart from the cases mentioned in paragraph four above, believers wishing to be married must have a Baha'i ceremony, and this is true even if only one of the parties is a Baha'i...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Peru, June 23, 1969)

1280. Bigamy Not Permitted
"The situation facing you is admittedly difficult and delicate, but no less grave and indeed vital are the responsibilities which it entails and which, as a faithful and loyal believer, you should conscientiously and thoroughly assume. The Guardian, therefore, while fully alive to the special circumstances of your case, and however profound his sympathy may be for you in this challenging issue with which you are so sadly faced, cannot, in view of the emphatic injunctions contained in the Teachings, either sanction your demand to contract a second marriage while your first wife is still alive and is united with you in the sacred bonds of matrimony, or even suggest or approve that you divorce her just in order to be permitted to marry a new one.

"For the Baha'i Teachings do not only preclude the possibility of bigamy, but also, while permitting divorce, consider it a reprehensible act, which should be resorted to only in exceptional circumstances, and when grave issues are involved, transcending such ... considerations as physical attraction or sexual compatibility and harmony. The Institution of marriage, as established by Baha'u'llah, while giving due importance to the physical aspect of marital union, considers it as subordinate to the moral and spiritual purposes and

functions with which it has been invested by an all-wise and loving Providence. Only when these different values are given each their due importance, and only on the basis of the subordination of the physical to the moral, and the carnal to the spiritual, can such excesses and laxity in marital relations as our decadent age is so sadly witnessing be avoided, and family life be restored to its original purity, and fulfil the true function for which it has been instituted by God."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to a believer who, having married his first wife out of compassion, now wished permission to marry a woman with whom he had fallen in love, saying that his wife was agreeable to his taking this second wife, May 8, 1939: Extracts from the Baha'i Teachings Discouraging Divorce, pp. 4-5)

1281. Summary of Baha'i Requirements Concerning Marriages with Followers of Other Religions
"In your letter of 1st July 1979 you requested the Universal House of Justice to provide you with a statement on the Baha'i requirements concerning marriages with followers of other Faiths. The House of Justice has instructed us to send you the following summary.

1. When a Baha'i is marrying a non-Baha'i, and the non-Baha'i wishes to have the ceremony of his (or her) own religion, the Baha'i party may take part in it under the following conditions:

1.1 [385] That all concerned, including the officiating priest, know that he is a Baha'i.

1.2 That he does not, by having the ceremony, renounce his faith.

1.3 That he does not undertake any vow to act contrary to Baha'i principles (such as to bring up the children in another Faith).

1.4 That the ceremony be held on the same day as the Baha'i ceremony, either before or after it.

2. If a civil ceremony is required by law in addition to the two religious ceremonies, all three ceremonies must be held on the same day.

3. If a Baha'i has the marriage ceremony of another religion and, in so doing, violates any of the above requirements, he is liable to loss of his voting rights.

4. If voting rights are removed and the offender requests reinstatement, they may be restored if the Assembly is satisfied that the believer is repentant, subject to the following conditions:

4.1 If the Baha'i dissimulated his faith or undertook a vow contrary to Baha'i principles in order to have the ceremony of another religion, and if the holding of the ceremony was dependent upon such an act, he must dissolve the marriage. His voting rights may then be restored, but, if he still wishes to be married to the same woman, he can be so only if they marry in accordance with the requirements of Baha'i law.

4.2 If the Baha'i dissimulated his faith or undertook a vow contrary to Baha'i principles, and the holding of the marriage ceremony of the other faith was not dependent upon such an act, it is not necessary to dissolve the marriage, but the Baha'i must do whatever is necessary to officially inform the appropriate authorities that he was a Baha'i at the time of his marriage, and to withdraw the vow. Following the taking of these steps the Baha'i's voting rights may be restored on condition that a Baha'i marriage ceremony be held immediately after their restoration.

4.3 If the Baha'i neither dissimulated his faith nor undertook any vow contrary to Baha'i principles, and his only offence was failure to have the Baha'i ceremony on the same day as the ceremony of the other religion (or the civil ceremony), his voting rights may be restored on condition that a Baha'i marriage ceremony be held immediately after their restoration.

5. The holding of a Baha'i marriage ceremony, which would permit the restoration of voting rights is subject to the same requirements as any other Baha'i marriage, and if a Baha'i has had a civil ceremony of another religion without a Baha'i ceremony and without obtaining consent of parents, the Assembly, before granting the Baha'i ceremony, must be satisfied that the consent of the parents is freely given.

6 If a Baha'i has a civil marriage or the marriage of another religion, and the Assembly is satisfied that this was because he (or she) was genuinely ignorant of Baha'i law on the subject, the Assembly may excuse the fault. In such a case the person is recognized as married in the same way as if he had been married before accepting the Faith. It is thus neither necessary nor possible for him to have a Baha'i ceremony."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Greece, July 15, 1980)

[386] 1282. Mixed Marriages (i.e., Baha'i and Non-Baha'i)
"With reference to your question regarding mixed marriages, that is to say between Baha'is and non-Baha'is, in all such cases the believer must insist that the Baha'i ceremony should, as far as he is concerned, be performed in its entirety, but should also give full freedom to the other contracting party to carry out the non-Baha'i rite or ceremony be it Muslim, Christian or otherwise, provided the latter does not invalidate the Baha'i marriage act. This is the general principle which your N.S.A. should explain to the friends."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iraq, April 16, 1936)

1283. Roman Catholic Marriage Requirements with Non-Catholics
"We wish to advise you also of a recent instruction by Pope Paul VI, which liberalizes the Roman Catholic attitude to marriage with non-Catholics. It is now permissible for Catholics to enter into 'mixed marriages' and the requirement to bring up children in the Roman Catholic religion need not be enforced. The National Assembly of Italy reports a recent marriage between a Baha'i and a Catholic in which the officiating priest for the Catholic ceremony

required no written undertaking but declared that the couple should promise to bring up their children religiously. Of course, this liberalism on the part of the Roman Catholic Church in no way affects the Baha'i laws of marriage, including the obligation to make clear to all concerned that one is a Baha'i and to abstain from undertaking a vow contrary to the principles of the Faith. You may find, in the case of a Baha'i marrying a Catholic, less difficulty than formerly if a Catholic priest of the newer liberal persuasion can be found."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, January 9, 1967)

1284. In Reality No Individual Performs the Marriage Ceremony and if for Any Reason Non-Baha'i Refuses to Recite Verse, Baha'i Cannot Marry that Person
"When a Baha'i marriage ceremony takes place, there is no individual, strictly speaking, who 'performs' it—no Baha'i equivalent to a minister of the Church. The couple themselves perform the ceremony by each saying, in the presence of at least two witnesses, the prescribed verse 'We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.' This ceremony is performed under the authority of a Spiritual Assembly which has the responsibility for ensuring that the various requirements of Baha'i law, such as obtaining the consent of the parents, are met, to whom the witnesses must be acceptable, and which issues the marriage certificate.

"The sincerity with which the sacred verse is spoken is a matter for the consciences of those who utter it. According to the explicit text of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, both the bride and groom must, in the presence of witnesses, recite the prescribed verse; this is an essential requirement of the marriage ceremony. Thus if a Baha'i is marrying a non-Baha'i and this person for any reason refuses to utter this verse, then the Baha'i cannot marry that person."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Norway, May 23, 1985)

1285. Marriage of Baha'i to Atheist
"The laws conditioning Baha'i marriage are found in the 'Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas' under C., Laws of Personal Status, beginning on [387] page 39 of that publication. No Baha'i marriage can be valid without the recitation of the prescribed verse by both parties."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice in answer to a letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador regarding an atheist who agreed to the Baha'i ceremony but since he did not believe in God did not wish to repeat the marriage verse using the name of God. Letter dated December 19, 1974)

1286. Marriage by Proxy
"In reply to your letter of October 19th asking whether a young believer in your jurisdiction may be married by proxy; we do not approve of the proposed proxy marriage."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 26, 1967)

1287. Hindu Ceremony is Possible for Baha'i, Provided...
"As regards marriage between a Baha'i and a Hindu, having a Hindu ceremony is possible only if the people concerned, including the officiating priest, are aware that the Baha'i remains a Baha'i although taking part in the Hindu marriage ceremony in deference to his or her Hindu partner."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, May 4, 1970: 19-Day Feast Circular of India, February 2, 1971, p. 7)

1288. Inter-Racial Marriage
"In regard to your question concerning the nature and character of Baha'i marriage. As you have rightfully stated, such a marriage is conditioned upon the full approval of all four parents. Also your statement to the effect that the principle of the oneness of mankind prevents any true Baha'i from regarding race itself as a bar to union is in complete accord with the Teachings of the Faith on this point. For both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha never disapproved of the idea of inter-racial marriage, nor discouraged it. The Baha'i Teachings, indeed, by their very nature transcend all limitations imposed by race, and as such can and should never be identified with any particular school of racial philosophy."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 27, 1935: Baha'i News, No. 90, p. 1, March 1935)

1289. Marriage Between Relatives
"The Universal House of Justice has instructed us to acknowledge your letter of 15 December 1980 in which you ask what prohibitions, in addition to the one on marrying one's step-mother, there may be restricting marriage between relatives, and to say that the House of Justice has not as yet seen fit to make regulations on the subject of marriage with one's kindred. For the present, therefore, decisions are left to the consciences of the individual Baha'is who must, of course, obey the civil law. Consideration must also be given to the prevailing customs and traditions in each country so that any action in this respect will not reflect upon the Faith in an adverse way."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 15, 1981)

1290. Marriage Ceremony for Two Non-Baha'is
"There is no objection to performing a Baha'i marriage for two non-Baha'is, if the [388] desire to have our simple ceremony. This, on the contrary, is yet another way of demonstrating our liberality."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 25, 1947: Baha'i News, No. 202, December 1947, p. 2)

1291. The "So-Called" Marriage Tablet
"With regard to your question concerning the so-called Marriage Tablet printed on page 47 of the supplement of the British Prayer Book, this is not a Tablet, but a talk ascribed to the Master by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. It was given some time in December, 1918 about Sohrab's marriage. It cannot be regarded as Baha'i

scripture as 'nothing can be considered as scripture for which we do not have an original text,' as the beloved Guardian pointed out. The friends may use this talk, but it is not to be considered as scripture."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa, January 18, 1971: Baha'i Journal of the United Kingdom, No. 218, August 1973, p. 2)

1292. Wedding Plans Should Be Left Entirely in the Hands of the Bride and Groom
"An Assembly has the overriding duty to protect the good name of the Faith in relation to any activity of the friends, but it should always exercise great care not to restrict the individual's freedom of action unnecessarily. Normally the size of the wedding celebration, the place in which it is to be held and who is to be invited are all left entirely to the discretion of the bride and groom and an Assembly should interpose an objection only if it is quite certain that the Cause will really be injured if it does not do so.

"In the case of any Baha'i wedding, delayed or otherwise, the date on the certificate must be the date the ceremony is performed."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 20, 1966)

1293. Believers Should Not Attend Weddings of Baha'is Marrying Contrary to Baha'i Law
"Further to your letter of 5 September 1974, the Universal House of Justice has now had an opportunity to consider your question about believers attending weddings of Baha'is who are marrying contrary to Baha'i law, and we have been asked to convey to you the following.

"If it is known beforehand that a believer is violating such laws, it would be inappropriate for the friends to attend the ceremony. This is out of respect for Baha'i law. However, if without realizing the situation believers find themselves in attendance at a ceremony in the course of which it is apparent that such a violation is occurring, they should not make an issue of it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, November 11, 1974: Australian Baha'i Bulletin, No. 243, September 1975, p. 4)

1294. The Compulsory Part of a Baha'i Wedding is the Pledge of Marriage in the Presence of Two Assembly Witnesses
"When the consent of the parents is obtained, the only other requirement for the ceremony is the recitation by both parties in the presence of two witnesses of the [389] specifically revealed verse: 'We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.' The following quotations from letters written by the Guardian's secretary indicate the desirability of the Baha'i marriage ceremony being simple:
'There is no ritual, according to the Aqdas, and the Guardian is very anxious that none should be introduced at present and no general form accepted. He believes the ceremony should be as simple as possible....'
'The only compulsory part of a Baha'i wedding is the pledge of marriage, the

phrase to be spoken separately by the Bride and Bridegroom in turn, in the presence of Assembly witnesses.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 23, 1984)

1295. When a Baha'i Marries a Non-Baha'i Both Ceremonies Can Be Held in the Place of Worship of Another Religion, if Requested, and Provided that...
"In response to your email of 6 February 1986 we have been instructed by the Universal House of Justice to send you the following clarifications:

—When two Baha'is are marrying, the wedding ceremony should not be held in the place of worship of another religion, nor should the forms of the marriage of other religions be added to the simple Baha'i ceremony.

—When a Baha'i is marrying a non-Baha'i, and the religious wedding ceremony of the non-Baha'i partner is to be held in addition to the Baha'i ceremony, both ceremonies may, if requested, be held in the place of worship of the other religion provided that:

—Equal respect is accorded to both ceremonies. In other words, the Baha'i ceremony, which is basically so simple, should not be regarded as a mere formal adjunct to the ceremony of the other religion.

—The two ceremonies are clearly distinct. In other words, they should not be commingled into one combined ceremony."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, February 26, 1986)

1296. Witnesses Can Be Any Two Trustworthy People Acceptable to Assembly: Makes Possible for Lone Pioneer to Have Baha'i Marriage in a Remote Post
"...The only requirement, however, is that the bride and groom, before two witnesses, must state 'We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.' These two witnesses may be chosen by the couple or by the Spiritual Assembly, but must in any case be acceptable to the Assembly; they may be its chairman and secretary, or two other members of the Assembly, or two other people, Baha'i or non-Baha'i, or any combination of these. The Assembly may decide that all marriage certificates it issues are to be signed by the chairman and secretary, but that is a different matter and has nothing to do with the actual ceremony or the witnesses.

"...you state that the two witnesses at the marriage must be Baha'is. Although this is the usual practice, it is not essential. The witnesses can be any two trustworthy people whose testimony is acceptable to the Spiritual Assembly under whose jurisdiction the marriage is performed. This fact makes it possible for a lone pioneer in a remote post to have a Baha'i marriage."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland, August 8, 1969)

[390] 1297. Two Essential Obligations Regarding Education of Children
"In all cases of marriage of Baha'is to followers of other religions the Baha'i has two essential obligations as regards the children:

a. He must not educate or assume a vow to educate the children of the marriage in a religion other than his own.

b. He must do whatever he can to provide for the training of the children in the Baha'i teachings.

"...Bearing in mind the obligation of the Baha'i parent to offer his child a Baha'i education, there is no objection to the attendance of the child of a Baha'i parent, or even a Baha'i child, at a parochial school if circumstances require."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 10, 1966)

1298. Baha'i Ceremony Should Be as Simple as Possible, No Rituals
"Regarding the question you raise in your letter about the Baha'i marriage. As you know there is no ritual, according to the Aqdas, and the Guardian is very anxious that none should be introduced at present and no general forms accepted. He believes this ceremony should be as simple as possible, the parties using the words ordained by Baha'u'llah, and excerpts from the writings and prayers being read if desired. There should be no commingling of the old forms with the new and simple one of Baha'u'llah, and Baha'is should not be married in the Church or any other acknowledged place of worship of the followers of other Faiths...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 13, 1944)

1299. Meaning of Consummation of Marriage
"The Universal House of Justice has instructed us to give the following answer to your letter of 24 June in which you ask questions about the principle that the Baha'i and other wedding ceremony must take place on the same day.

i. In a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian he pointed out that this requirement is because of a provision in Baha'i law that marriage must be consummated within twenty-four hours of the ceremony.

ii. Both ceremonies must precede the consummation of the marriage, and both the ceremonies and the consummation must take place within the same 24-hour period. As the House of Justice does not wish to go beyond this at this time we are asked to tell you that it is within the discretion of your Assembly to fix the time at which the 24-hour period is to begin."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, dated 31 July 1979)

"The consummation of marriage by a couple is, as you aptly state, an intimate and private matter outside the scrutiny of others. While consummation normally implies a sexual relationship, the Baha'i law requiring consummation to take place within twenty-four hours of the ceremony can be considered as fulfilled if the couple has commenced cohabitation with the intention of setting up the family relationship."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an

individual believer, dated 28 July, 1978)

[391] 1300. Consummation of Marriage Must Take Place Within Twenty-Four Hours of Baha'i Marriage Ceremony
"As to cases involving another ceremony in addition to the Baha'i one, the friends should bear in mind that according to Baha'i law the consummation of the marriage must take place within twenty-four hours of the Baha'i marriage ceremony. If other marriage ceremonies are to be held in addition to the Baha'i one, all the ceremonies must precede consummation of the marriage and, together with the consummation, fall within one twenty-four hour period. Naturally any requirements of civil law as to the order in which the ceremonies should be held must be observed."
(From the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, February 17, 1976)

1301. Reporting Baha'i Marriage: Individual Only Acts for Assembly
"...In reporting Baha'i marriages it is much better to mention that the ceremony was performed by the Assembly, as this is the proper thing to do, and an individual only acts for the Assembly on this occasion. As a funeral is not a legal ceremony more latitude can be allowed, especially as the family of the deceased may want some particular Baha'i friend to officiate."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 20, 1946: Baha'i News, No. 188, p. 3, October 1946)

K. Divorce

1302. Attitude of Present-Day Society Towards Divorce
"The Universal House of Justice has noted with increasing concern that the undisciplined attitude of present-day society towards divorce is reflected in some parts of the Baha'i World Community. Our Teachings on this subject are clear and in direct contrast to the loose and casual attitude of the 'permissive society' and it is vital that the Baha'i Community practise these Teachings."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, January 18, 1980)

1303. There Are No Grounds for Divorce in the Faith—Divorce Should Only Be Considered if There is a Strong "Aversion" to One's Partner
"Concerning the definition of the term 'aversion' in relation to Baha'i divorce law, the Universal House of Justice points out that there are no specific 'grounds' for Baha'i divorce such as there are in some codes of civil law. Baha'i law permits divorce but, as both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha have made very clear, divorce is abhorred. Thus, from the point of view of the individual believer he should do all he can to refrain from divorce. Baha'is should be profoundly aware of the sanctity of marriage and should strive to make their marriages an eternal bond of unity and harmony. This requires effort and sacrifice and wisdom and self-abnegation. A Baha'i should consider the possibility of divorce only if the situation is intolerable and he or she has a

strong aversion to being married to the other partner. This is the standard held up to the individual. It is not a law, but an exhortation. It is a goal to which we should strive."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, November 3, 1982)

[392] 1304. Youth Should Be So Deepened in the Teachings that the Thought of Divorce Will Be Abhorrent to Them
"From the point of view of the Spiritual Assembly, however, the matter is somewhat different. The Spiritual Assembly should always be concerned that the believers in its community are being deepened in their understanding of the Baha'i concept of marriage, especially the young people, so that the very thought of divorce will be abhorrent to them. When an application for divorce is made to a Spiritual Assembly, its first thought and action should be to reconcile the couple and to ensure that they know the Baha'i teachings on the matter. God willing, the Assembly will be successful and no year of waiting need be started. However, if the Assembly finds that it is unable to persuade the party concerned to withdraw the application for divorce, it must conclude that, from its point of view, there appears to be an irreconcilable antipathy, and it has no alternative to setting the date for the beginning of the year of waiting. During the year the couple have the responsibility of attempting to reconcile their difference, and the Assembly has the duty to help them and encourage them. But if the year of waiting comes to an end without reconciliation the Baha'i divorce must be granted as at the date of the granting of the civil divorce if this has not already taken place."
(Ibid.)

1305. The Party Who is the Cause of Divorce Will Become Victim of Formidable Calamities
"It can be seen, therefore, that 'aversion' is not a specific legal term that needs to be defined. Indeed a number of other terms are used in describing the situation that can lead to divorce in Baha'i law, such as 'antipathy', 'resentment', 'estrangement', 'impossibility of establishing harmony' and 'irreconcilability'. The texts, however, point out that divorce is strongly condemned, and should be viewed as 'a last resort' when 'rare and urgent circumstances' exist, and that the partner who is the 'cause of divorce' will 'unquestionably' become the 'victim of formidable calamities'."
(Ibid.)

1306. The Friends Must Strictly Refrain from Divorce
"Formerly in Persia divorce was very easily obtained. Among the people of the past Dispensation a trifling matter would cause divorce. However, as the light of the Kingdom shone forth, souls were quickened by the spirit of Baha'u'llah, then they totally eschewed divorce. In Persia now divorce doth not take place among the friends, unless a compelling reason existeth which maketh harmony impossible. Under such rare circumstances some cases of divorce take place.

"Now the friends in America must live and conduct themselves in this way. They must strictly refrain from divorce unless something ariseth which compelleth

them to separate because of their aversion for each other, in that case with the knowledge of the Spiritual Assembly they may decide to separate. They must then be patient and wait one complete year. If during this year harmony is not re-established between them, then their divorce may be realized. It should not happen that upon the occurrence of a slight friction of displeasure between husband and wife, the husband would think of union with some other woman or, God forbid, the wife also think of another husband. This is contrary to the standard of heavenly value and true chastity. The friends of God must so live and conduct themselves, and evince such excellence of character and conduct, as to make others astonished. The love [393] between husband and wife should not be purely physical, nay rather it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it would be to divide a single soul! Nay, great would be the difficulty!

"In short, the foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony and love, oneness, relationship and union, not upon differences, especially between husband and wife. If one of these two become the cause of divorce, that one will unquestionably fall into great difficulties, will become the victim of formidable calamities and experience deep remorse."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Extracts from the Baha'i Teachings Discouraging Divorce: A Compilation prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, January 1980)

1307. Divorce is Conditional Upon the Approval and Permission of the Spiritual Assembly
"Regarding divorce, the Guardian stated that it is discouraged, deprecated and against the good pleasure of God. The Assembly must circulate among the friends whatever has been revealed from the Pen of 'Abdu'l-Baha in this connection so that all may be fully reminded. Divorce is conditional upon the approval and permission of the Spiritual Assembly. The members of the Assembly must in such matters independently and carefully study and investigate each case. If there should be valid grounds for divorce and it is found that reconciliation is utterly impossible, that antipathy is intense and its removal is not possible, then the Assembly may approve the divorce."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, July 7, 1938—translated from the Persian: Ibid., p. 3)

1308. Should Think of Future of Children
"He was very sorry to hear that you and your husband are still so unhappy together. It is always a source of sorrow in life when married people cannot get on well together, but the Guardian feels that you and your husband, in contemplating divorce, should think of the future of your children and how this major step on your part will influence their lives and happiness.

"If you feel the need of advice and consultation he suggests you consult your Local Assembly; your fellow Baha'is will surely do all they can to counsel and help you, protect your interests and those of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 16, 1945: Extracts from the Baha'i Teachings Discouraging Divorce, p.

4)

1309. Divorce Concerns Children's Entire Future and Their Attitude Towards Marriage
"There is no doubt about it that the believers in America, probably unconsciously influenced by the extremely lax morals prevalent and the flippant attitude towards divorce which seems to be increasingly prevailing, do not take divorce seriously enough and do not seem to grasp the fact that although Baha'u'llah has permitted it, He has only permitted it as a last resort and strongly condemns it.

"The presence of children, as a factor in divorce, cannot be ignored, for surely it places an even greater weight of moral responsibility on the man and wife in considering such a step. Divorce under such circumstances no longer just concerns them and their desires and feelings but also concerns the children's entire future and [394] their own attitude towards marriage."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 19, 1947: Ibid., p. 5)

1310. One May Discover He Has Not Purchased Either Freedom or Happiness
"He was very sorry to hear that you are contemplating separation from your husband. As you no doubt know, Baha'u'llah considers the marriage bond very sacred; and only under very exceptional and unbearable circumstances is divorce advisable for Baha'is.

"The Guardian does not tell you that you must not divorce your husband; but he does urge you to consider prayerfully, not only because you are a believer and anxious to obey the laws of God, but also for the sake of the happiness of your children, whether it is not possible for you to rise above the limitations you have felt in your marriage hitherto, and make a go of it together.

"We often feel that our happiness lies in a certain direction; and yet, if we have to pay too heavy a price for it in the end we may discover that we have not really purchased either freedom or happiness, but just some new situation of frustration and disillusion."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 5, 1951: Extracts from the Baha'i Teachings Discouraging Divorce, pp. 5-6)

1311. Cannot Use the Cause or Service to It as Reason for Divorce
"Shoghi Effendi wishes me to add this note in connection with your marriage; he does not feel that any believer, under any circumstances whatsoever, can ever use the Cause or service to it as a reason for abandoning their marriage; divorce, as we know, is very strongly condemned by Baha'u'llah, and only grounds of extreme gravity justify it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 7, 1947: Ibid., p. 4)

1312. Every Effort Should Be Made to Salvage Marriage—In Case of Pioneers, It is Even More Important

"He has been very sorry to hear that your marriage seems to have failed utterly. I need not tell you as a Baha'i that every effort should be made by any Baha'i to salvage their marriage for the sake of God, rather than for their own sake. In the case of pioneers, it is even more important, because they are before the public eye. However, in such matters it is neither befitting nor right that the Guardian should bring pressure on individuals. He can only appeal to you and ... to try again; but if you cannot rise to this test, that is naturally a personal matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 13, 1956: Ibid., p. 6)

1313. Baha'i Family Should Be Preserved
"Wherever there is a Baha'i family, those concerned should by all means do all they can to preserve it, because divorce is strongly condemned in the Teachings, whereas harmony, unity and love are held up as the highest ideals in human relationships. This must always apply to the Baha'is, whether they are serving in the pioneering field or not."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America, November 9, 1956: Ibid., p. 6)

[395] 1314. One Year of Waiting Whether Baha'i When Married or Not
"As regards Baha'i divorce as mentioned in your letter of June 12th: Baha'is (whether one party or both are believers) should follow the Baha'i law of divorce, i.e., one year of waiting, and not neglect this divinely given law. Whether they were Baha'is when married or not has nothing to do with it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, June 12, 1952)

1315. If Divorce is Illegal Within a Country, Baha'is Are Bound by Law of the Country
"In answer to the question raised in your letter of June 5 as regards divorce: The Guardian says that if within a country divorce, because of affiliation of church and State in this matter, is considered illegal, the Baha'is must be bound by this law. At the present time they must under no circumstances raise such matters with any Government in question. This means that it is not right for a believer to get a divorce outside of, say Colombia, and then remarry outside and return there, where his divorce would be illegal."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America, July 11, 1951)

1316. If One Party is Mentally Ill
"We have reviewed your letter of January 21, 1964 requesting instructions as to how to handle Baha'i divorce when one of the parties is mentally ill.

"Far from being required to live together during the year of patience, the parties are in fact prohibited from doing so.
"The Baha'i divorce must be handled either by the Local Assembly or by the National Assembly, but either may handle it at the discretion of your Assembly."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, February 23, 1964)

1317. Baha'is Who Intend to Divorce Must Consult with Local or National Assembly

"However, it is necessary that Baha'is who intend to divorce be aware that they must consult with their Local or National Assembly, that basically a year of waiting must ensue before divorce can be effected, and that the Assembly has certain responsibilities toward the couple concerned about which they will be informed through consultation with the Assembly."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 16, 1967)

1318. The Believers Should Know that Although Divorce is Permitted in Baha'i Law, It is Condemned

"It is, of course, important for the friends to realise that although divorce is permitted in Baha'i law, it is nevertheless condemned, and great efforts should be made to avoid it. It is always the hope that, during the year of patience, affection between the couple will recur and that divorce will not be necessary. Therefore, although normal social relationships between each of the partners and [396] members of both sexes is permissible, it is quite contrary to the spirit of the teachings for either party to be courting a new partner during the year of waiting. This should be made clear to the couple and they should be exhorted to conduct themselves as Baha'is. However, this is not an area in which the Assembly should resort to sanctions if either or both of the pair disregard this principle. Naturally, if one of the parties conducts himself or herself in a way that is blatantly or flagrantly immoral the matter should be handled as any other similar case would be, but from your cables we understand that this is not the situation in the case at present before you."

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, February 15, 1973)

1319. The Assembly Should Determine that Irreconcilable Antipathy Exists Before Setting the Date of the Beginning of the Year of Waiting

"Regarding the case of the married couple who have separated and wish to set the date of the beginning of the year of waiting retroactively, we are directed to say that the conclusions expressed in the fourth paragraph of your letter are correct; that is, that the Local Assembly should determine, before setting the date of the beginning of the year of waiting, that irreconcilable antipathy exists. While a Local or National Assembly may request the advice of the Continental Board of Counsellors and their Board members, and should be grateful for their assistance, it is the Assembly's responsibility to conduct its own investigation and come to a decision. Assemblies are, of course, discouraged from probing unnecessarily into details of personal lives and the examination of a divorce problem should not go beyond what is necessary to ascertain whether or not such antipathy does, indeed, exist.

"When a Spiritual Assembly receives an application for Baha'i divorce its first duty is to try to reconcile the couple. If this is not possible, and the couple

separates, further efforts at reconciliation should be made during the ensuing year.

"While there are circumstances in which the date of waiting may be fixed retroactively, the situation you describe of the husband leaving for the purpose of finding work cannot be accepted as one of them."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, May 30, 1983)

1320. Procedure for an Assembly When Application for Divorce is Received
"The procedure, briefly, is that when a Spiritual Assembly receives an application for divorce its first duty is to try to reconcile the couple. When it determines that this is not possible, it should then set the date of the beginning of the year of waiting. That could be the date on which the Assembly reaches the decision, unless the couple are still living together, in which case it must be postponed until they separate. If the couple had already separated some time before, the Assembly may back-date the beginning of the year; however, the earliest date on which it can be set is the date on which the couple last separated with the intention of obtaining a divorce."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Netherlands, September 11, 1986)

1321. The Setting of the Date of the Beginning of the Year of Patience is Not Automatic
"...The setting of the date of the beginning of the year of patience is not automatic. [397] The Assembly must first determine whether grounds for a Baha'i divorce exist and should make every effort to reconcile the parties. If the aversion existing between the parties is found to be irreconcilable then the Assembly may set the date for the beginning of the year of waiting..."
(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 7, 1970)

1322. Beginning of the Year of Patience Normally Commences When Parties Notify Assembly of their Separation with Intent to Divorce
"Thus the date of the beginning of the year of patience normally commences when one of the parties notifies the Assembly that they have separated with the intention of divorce. However, the Assembly may establish the beginning of the year of patience on a prior date provided it is satisfied such prior date reflects the actual date of separation and there is good reason for so doing."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 26, 1965)

1323. Duties of Assembly or Committee on Divorce Procedures
"In the opening paragraphs of your letter you speak of your Committee adjudicating upon divorce settlements, and the House of Justice feels that the use of the word 'adjudicate' may lie at the root of some of the problems that the committee is facing. In a country like the United Kingdom, where divorce is subject to the civil law, the function of the Assembly (or its committee) in dealing with a divorce case is not primarily a matter of adjudication. Its

first duty is to try to reconcile the couple. If it finds that it is unable to do this, it then sets the beginning of the year of waiting and continues, as circumstances permit and wisdom dictates, throughout the running of the year, its attempts at reconciliation.
"One of the duties of the committee is to see that the requirements of Baha'i law governing the year of waiting are not violated—that is to say, that the two parties live apart and that proper provisions are made for the financial support of the wife and children. As you will see from the enclosures, this is a matter that needs to be considered for each case on its own merits. If the matter can be amicably arranged between the parties, well and good. If not, the basic principle of Baha'i law is that the husband is responsible for the support of his wife and children so long as they are married; that is until the granting of the divorce. In a particular case, however, it may have been the wife who was the bread-winner of the family, or both the husband and wife may have been earning income. The Assembly should not ignore such specific situations and change them merely because a year of waiting is running. The application of these principles should not be in the form of an adjudication which the Assembly will require the couple to accept, but as a basis for an arrangement which the couple will amicably agree to and present to the court for endorsement. If the Assembly is unable to get the couple to agree, it should leave the matter to the civil court."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, February 24, 1983)

1324. Dating During the Year of Patience
"It is always the hope that, during the year of patience, affection between the couple [398] will recur and that divorce will not be necessary. Therefore, although normal social relationships between each of the partners and members of both sexes are permissible, it is quite contrary to the spirit of the teachings for either party to be courting a new partner during the year of waiting. This should be made clear to the couple if necessary and they should be exhorted to conduct themselves as Baha'is. However, this is not an area in which the Assembly should resort to sanctions if either or both of the pair disregard this principle. Naturally, if one of the parties conducts himself or herself in a way that is blatantly or flagrantly immoral the matter should be handled as any other similar case would be."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 6, 1974)

1325. Summary—Relating to the Fixing of the Date of Separation
"1. The first task of the National Spiritual Assembly is to attempt to reconcile the couple, but if it finds that this is not possible and that an irreconcilable antipathy exists, it must register the beginning of the year of waiting. The Assembly may meet with the couple together or separately in its attempts to reconcile them. If there are compelling reasons for doing so, the Assembly may set a date retroactively for the beginning of the year of waiting, but this date can in no case be earlier than the last day the couple separated with the intention of having a divorce.

"2. Attempts at reconciliation should continue during the year of waiting. Divorce, though permitted in the Baha'i Faith, is abhorred and it is the hope that during the year of waiting the couple may become reconciled and divorce avoided.

"3. With this in mind, it is more within the spirit of Baha'i law for Baha'is to postpone the initiation of civil proceedings, (if the law of the country requires a civil divorce) until the end of the year of waiting. However, if such postponement gives rise to inequity or to a legal prejudice against the possibility of a civil divorce, it is, of course, permissible for the civil proceedings to be initiated during the year of waiting.

"4. In most countries a civil divorce is required and, where this is so, the Baha'i divorce does not become effective until the civil divorce has been granted. If the year of waiting has run its course when the civil divorce is granted, the Baha'i divorce becomes automatically effective on that date. If the couple become reconciled before the granting of the civil divorce, even if the year of waiting has already elapsed, they have merely to inform the Spiritual Assembly and resume their marital status.

"5. In case the civil divorce is actually granted before the end of the year of waiting and the couple become reconciled within that time between the granting of the civil divorce and the end of the year of waiting, they are, of course, still married in the eyes of the Baha'i law and need only a civil marriage to restore the marriage bond.

"6. The parties to a divorce must live apart in separate residences during the year of waiting. Any cohabitation of the parties stops the running of the year of waiting. If thereafter a divorce is desired a new date for the beginning of a new year of waiting must be set by the Assembly.

"7. It is the responsibility of the husband to provide support for his wife and children during the year of waiting.

[399] "8. It is the responsibility of the Assembly to assist the divorced couple to arrive at an amicable settlement of their financial affairs and arrangement for the custody and support of the children rather than let these matters be a subject of litigation in the civil courts. If the Assembly is unable to bring the couple to an agreement on such matters then their only recourse is to the civil court.

"These are some of the general guidelines your Assembly should have in mind in divorce cases...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 20, 1977)

1326. It is Not Possible to Shorten the Period of Waiting
"It is not possible to shorten the period of waiting as this is a provision of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. However, a National Spiritual Assembly may, if circumstances justify it, backdate the beginning of the year provided that this is not earlier than the date the parties last separated with the intention of

obtaining a divorce. It is not clear in the case you have cited whether the parties lived together during the period between June 1975 and the date you set for the beginning of the year of waiting on January 15th. If the parties were separated during this period and living in separate residences, then you could consider backdating the beginning of the year of waiting."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Assembly, July 18, 1976)

1327. The Assembly is Obliged to Consider Application for a Year of Waiting
"An Assembly is obliged to consider an application for a year of waiting from either party to a marriage, whether the other party wants the divorce or not. In this specific case you should therefore follow the usual procedure."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 28, 1985)

1328. During Period of Legal Separation Dating in the Spirit of Courtship is Outside Bounds of Propriety
"The Universal House of Justice has instructed us to transmit its reply to your letter of 8 October concerning dating during the time of legal separation of one party.

"While the Baha'i woman should not be forbidden to have occasional meetings in the spirit of friendship with a man legally separated from his wife, dating in the spirit of courtship is outside the bounds of Baha'i propriety, even where the interpersonal relationship of the couple is not blatant or flagrant, casting reflections upon the strict morality required of Baha'is. The Baha'i should be advised to break off the acquaintanceship should it appear to progress beyond friendship, for the non-Baha'i man is, as you correctly state, still married; the legal separation may carry with it the hope and prospect of restoration of his marriage, a possibility which should not be obstructed by involvement with another woman. In cases such as this one, counsel rather than sanctions are called for, should the involvement of the Baha'i woman require intervention."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 6, 1981)

[400] 1329. Parties May Withdraw Their Application for Divorce at Any Time During the Year of Waiting
"It is not within the discretion of the parties to a Baha'i divorce to extend the year of waiting and ask for the Baha'i divorce 'at whatever time they feel so inclined.' If there has been no reconciliation of the parties in the meantime, the Baha'i divorce becomes final at the end of the year of waiting unless the granting of the civil divorce is delayed beyond that time.

"The parties may, however, withdraw their application for Baha'i divorce at any time during the year of waiting. Should they later desire to apply for divorce, a new year of waiting would have to be commenced."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, November 4, 1974)

1330. Assembly Should Not Interfere into Marital Affairs Until Believers Bring Their Problems to the Assembly
"...There should be no intervention into the marital affairs of individuals in a Baha'i community unless and until the parties themselves bring a problem to the Assembly. Prior to that it is not the business of the Assembly to counsel the parties. These are but two or three instances illustrating that the commentary should not be added to the quotations."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 22, 1968)

1331. There is No Law to Remove Voting Rights for Obtaining Civil Divorce Before the Year of Waiting Terminates
"...There is no Baha'i law requiring the removal of voting rights for obtaining a civil divorce before the end of the year of waiting. It is, of course, preferred that civil divorce action be not instituted or completed before the end of the year unless there are special circumstances justifying such action. If a Baha'i should marry another prior to the end of the year of waiting however, voting rights should be suspended as, under Baha'i law, he is still regarded as married whether or not the civil divorce has been granted. On the other hand, if a non-Baha'i partner, having obtained a civil divorce, marries during the year of waiting, the Baha'i partner is released from the need to wait further."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 20, 1974)

1332. Annulment or Divorce
"...a divorce or annulment is called for only when the Baha'i partner has denied his faith.

"When reinstatement calls for a divorce or annulment of an improperly contracted marriage, no year of waiting is necessary because Baha'i divorce is not involved. The purpose of the year of waiting is to attempt the saving of a marital relationship which was originally accepted as valid in the eyes of Baha'is, and is now in jeopardy. A delayed Baha'i marriage, conducted for reasons of fulfilment of Baha'i law and in the full spirit of the Baha'i ceremony, should not be viewed as a mockery but as the confirmation of a union contracted outside Baha'i law."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 27, 1969)

[401] 1333. Refund of Marriage Expenses
"Concerning ... divorce: He has no right to demand from his wife a refund of the marriage expenses he incurred. In the Aqdas it is quite clear that the husband must not only give the dowry but must support his wife until the time when the divorce is completed. In view of this she is not required to repay expenses of the marriage, etc."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India: Dawn of a New Day, p. 118)

1334. Not Wise to Announce New Marriage Plans Before Divorce is Final
"It is not within the spirit of Baha'i law for one to become involved in the announcement of new marriage plans while he or she is still legally married to another. There is no objection to urging the friends not to go so far as to seek consent of parents before the divorce becomes final in all respects, but no sanctions should be applied to enforce such exhortation."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, January 17, 1971: Australian Baha'i Bulletin, No. 198, February 1971, p. 8)

1335. Guidance Regarding Financial Support in Divorce Cases
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 9 December 1982 requesting guidance on the responsibility of Baha'i Spiritual Assemblies in the matter of financial support in divorce cases. It has instructed us to send you the following reply.

"In some cases, usually those of Iranian believers whose marriage is not recognized in civil law and who, therefore, do not need and cannot have a civil divorce, the divorce must be entirely adjudicated by the Spiritual Assembly. We enclose a summary of points written on behalf of the House of Justice in answer to questions on this matter, which should be of assistance should such a case occur in Canada.

"In general, however, a Baha'i couple in Canada who are obtaining a divorce must, in addition to the Baha'i divorce, obtain a civil divorce, and the civil divorce decree will usually cover all such matters as division of property, provision of support and custody of children. The function of the Spiritual Assembly in such ancillary aspects of the divorce is thus advisory rather than judicatory. In order to prevent, if possible, a public dispute between Baha'is in front of the law courts, the Assembly should attempt to bring the couple to an amicable arrangement about all such questions, which can then be submitted to the court for its endorsement. If the efforts of the Assembly are of no avail, then the matter must be left to the civil court to decide.

"Once the divorce decree with its related provisions has been handed down by the court, it is the obligation of both parties, as good Baha'is, to obey it and, if either is lax in so doing, the Assembly should advise him or her about his or her duties and press for their fulfilment. The wronged party, however, should at the same time be left free to apply to the civil authorities for the enforcement of the decision. Unfortunately such enforcement is notoriously difficult, especially when the parties subsequently reside in different countries. It is here that the action of the Spiritual Assembly, reinforcing the decision of the civil courts, can often be of help. Except in circumstances of unusual gravity or cases where the responsible party fails to obey [402] a court decision to provide support for the children, an Assembly should not contemplate imposing sanctions for lack of compliance in these matters. Actual enforcement should normally be left to the action of the civil courts.

"The House of Justice believes that the above should provide all the guidance

you require in your collaboration with the National Spiritual Assembly of ... over the divorce of ... and .... In the case of ... and ... you state that there is unlikely to be a civil judgement covering the question of financial support of the wife by the husband following the divorce. The House of Justice states that there is no general requirement in Baha'i law for a husband to continue to support his former wife beyond the ending of the year of waiting and the granting of the divorce. Therefore, in the absence of a ruling by the civil court or of an agreement between the couple registered with the Spiritual Assembly, there is nothing further for your Assembly to do in this case." (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, January 13, 1983)

1336. It is Preferable that Couple Should Amicably Agree on the Custody of the Children—The Husband is Obligated to Support Wife and Children Until Divorce is Granted and He Has Continuing Obligation to Support His Children
"The following points are summarized from guidance of the Universal House of Justice given to Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers so that they may arrive at decisions in accordance with the spirit of Baha'i Law either in coming to an amicable agreement to present to the civil courts, or in making a decision when no civil divorce decree is involved.

1. The decisions in each case must be made in light of the particular conditions of that case. The guidelines given below are general in nature and should be applied as far as possible unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.

2. Custody of Children

2.1 It is preferable that the couple amicably agree on the custody of the children and submit their agreement to the Assembly for endorsement. Normally in the case of very young children custody is given to the mother unless there are compelling reasons which make this inadvisable.

2.2 Regardless of which parent is given custody, the children should be so educated that they may develop a proper Baha'i attitude towards, and due regard for, both parents. Fair and practical arrangements should be made to protect the rights of the parent not having custody to associate with the children and spend time with them.

2.3 Usually custody arrangements continue until the child comes of age unless, of course, new circumstances transpire during this period which call for a review of the arrangements.

3. Financial Support

3.1 The husband is obligated to support the wife and children until the granting of the Baha'i divorce. This normally takes place at the end of the year of waiting unless it has to be postponed pending the granting of a civil divorce.

3.2 [403] Following the granting of the divorce the father continues to be

under the obligation of providing the necessary funds for the support of the children, but he has no continuing obligation to support his former wife."
(The Universal House of Justice: Considerations Affecting Custody of Children and Provision of Financial Support in Cases Not Adjudicated in Civil Law, a summary, January 5, 1983)

1337. Wife Support During Year of Patience and After Divorce—Assembly Should Encourage Husband to Honor His Responsibilities in Paying Required Support Money
"The House of Justice wrote to another National Spiritual Assembly on 5 April 1970 as follows:

'The only provision in Baha'i law regarding the support of the wife is that which makes the husband responsible for her support during the year of waiting. This does not mean, however, that further support is prohibited; all such matters will require legislation in the future. At the present time it is the responsibility of the Assembly to arrange an amicable and just financial settlement between the couple, and any such arrangement must, obviously, take into consideration the financial situation of both parties and their relative responsibilities.'

"While it is obvious that the Assembly should encourage the husband to honour his Baha'i responsibilities in paying the required support money, matters of support may be covered by the civil courts when a civil divorce is applied for and, in such a case, the wife would, of course, be able to invoke whatever civil remedy is available. In any case, at the present time National Spiritual Assemblies should not normally apply sanctions in cases of failure to comply with support requirements."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, February 6, 1978)

1338. No Husband Should Batter His Wife
"It is clear from Baha'i teachings that no husband should batter his wife. As to divorce, while it is permitted by Baha'u'llah, it is heavily discouraged and the greatest efforts must be made to avoid it. In Baha'i society the only grounds for divorce are an irreconcilable antipathy between the parties."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 27, 1986)

XXX. LOVE AND UNITY

[404] 1339. The Best Remedy for Hate is Love, as Hate is the Absence of Love
"The best remedy for hate is love, as hate is the absence of love! In this respect you must show forth the love of God to others, Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike, and thus do your part to dispel the darkness in this world. This is what the beloved Master expects of His servants."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 12, 1949)

1340. The Standard which Must Govern the Conduct of Believers Toward Each Other

is Love
"...If between the friends true love—based on the love of God—could become manifest, the Cause would spread very rapidly. Love is the standard which must govern the conduct of one believer towards another. The administrative order does not change this, but unfortunately sometimes the friends confuse the two, and try to be a whole spiritual assembly,—with the discipline and justice and impartiality that body must show,—to each other, instead of being forgiving, loving and patient to each other as individuals."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 18, 1950)

1341. We Must Love God and Thus Love for All Men Becomes Possible
"We must never take one sentence in the Teachings and isolate it from the rest: it does not mean we must not love, but we must reach a spiritual plane where God comes first and great human passions are unable to turn us away from Him. All the time we see people who either through the force of hate or the passionate attachment they have to another person, sacrifice principle or bar themselves from the Path of God.

"We know absence of light is darkness, but no one would assert darkness was not a fact. It exists even though it is only the absence of something else. So evil exists too, and we cannot close our eyes to it, even though it is a negative existence. We must seek to supplant it by good, and if we see an evil person is not influenceable by us, then we should shun his company for it is unhealthy.

"We must love God, and in this state, a general love for all men becomes possible. We cannot love each human being for himself but our feeling towards humanity should be motivated by our love for the Father who created all men.

"The Baha'i Faith teaches man was always potentially man, even when passing through lower stages of evolution. Because he has more powers, and subtler powers than the animal, when he turns towards evil he becomes more vicious than an animal because of these very powers."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 4, 1950)

1342. The Kind of Love Every Believer Should Cultivate
"You mention the fact that at times you feel strongly attracted to people whom [405] you have never known before; this is surely the kind of love which every Baha'i should cultivate. For we Baha'is should come to love all human beings, whether believers or not, alien or friendly. The love which Baha'u'llah wishes us to acquire is a love that embraces the whole mankind. The reason why one feels attracted is due to such gifts and qualities with which the soul is endowed and which exert a powerful and latent influence."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 20, 1937)

1343. 'Abdu'l-Baha Explained the Meaning of Baha'u'llah's Words Regarding Love of Humanity
"As regards the meaning of Baha'u'llah's words regarding love of humanity, the

Master often explained it to mean that man should love his family, then his native town, then his province, then his nation, but should not stop there and acquire a narrow nationalism, but grow to love the whole-wide world and mankind at large. Baha'is love their country but should also love the world, that is, other peoples."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 5, 1950)

1344. Spiritual Relationships Are Far More Important Than Rules and Regulations
"He urges you to do all you can to promote unity and love amongst the members of the Community there, as this seems to be their greatest need.

"So often young communities, in their desire to administer the Cause, lose sight of the fact that these spiritual relationships are far more important and fundamental than the rules and regulations which must govern the conduct of Community affairs."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 4, 1950)

1345. The People of the World Need to See the Love Engendered by the Faith in the Hearts of the Believers
"The people of the world not only need the laws and principles of the Baha'i Faith—they desperately need to see the love that is engendered by it in the hearts of its followers, and to partake of that atmosphere of tolerance, understanding, forbearance and active kindness which should be the hall-mark of a Baha'i Community."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 5, 1942)

1346. The Morbid and Turbulent Influence of the Dark Forces of the World is Felt by All
"The believers, to better understand their own internal condition, should realize that the forces of darkness in the world are so prevalent and strong that their morbid and turbulent influence is felt by all. They should therefore consciously strive to be more loving, more united, more dedicated and prayerful than ever before, in order to fight against the atmosphere of present day society which is unloving, disunited, careless of right and wrong, and heedless of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 20, 1946)

1347. We Must Pray to be Protected from the Contamination of Society
"The friends must, at all times, bear in mind that they are, in a way, like soldiers [406] under attack. The world is at present in an exceedingly dark condition spiritually; hatred and prejudice, of every sort, are literally tearing it to pieces. We, on the other hand, are the custodians of the opposite forces, the forces of love, of unity, of peace and integration, and we must constantly be on our guard, whether as individuals or as an Assembly or Community, lest through us these destructive, negative forces enter into our

midst. In other words, we must beware lest the darkness of society become reflected in our acts and attitudes, perhaps all unconsciously. Love for each other, the deep sense that we are a new organism, the dawn-breakers of a New World Order, must constantly animate our Baha'i lives, and we must pray to be protected from the contamination of society which is so diseased with prejudice."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of Atlanta, February 5, 1947)

1348. Heroism is Needed by the Believers
"These, indeed, are the days when heroism is needed on the part of the believers. Self-sacrifice, courage, indomitable hope and confidence are the characteristics they should show forth, because these very attributes cannot but fix the attention of the public and leads them to enquire what, in a world so hopelessly chaotic and bewildered, leads these people to be so assured, so confident, so full of devotion? Increasingly, as time goes by, the characteristics of the Baha'is will be that which captures the attention of their fellow-citizens. They must show their aloofness from the hatreds and recriminations which are tearing at the heart of humanity, and demonstrate by deed and word their profound belief in the future peaceful unification of the entire human race."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 26, 1941)

1349. God's Ways Do Not Necessarily Coincide with Human Devices and Policies
"...God's ways and methods do not coincide necessarily with human devices and man-made policies. We should certainly exert our utmost in order that God's Faith may be widely proclaimed and firmly established. But we should under no circumstances be led to think that such a triumph depends solely or even mainly on our own efforts, however effective, united and fruitful they may be. We are but instruments in the hands of the Almighty and it would be certainly a sign of shortsightedness on our part to believe that we are the controlling agents of the divine machinery of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 10, 1934)

1350. If Divided, Both Sides to a Difference Are Wrong; If United, They Are Both Right
"During the days of Baha'u'llah some of the prominent teachers of the Cause in Persia were divided as to the station of Baha'u'llah and at last wrote to Him for arbitration. In answer Baha'u'llah said that if they were united both sides were right and if they were divided both were wrong. The Master often denied Himself any station just to maintain the unity of the friends for that was His primary object."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of Yonkers, April 20, 1931)

XXXI. MILITARY SERVICE

[407] 1351. Baha'is Cannot Voluntarily Enlist Where Subject to Taking Human Life

"Baha'is cannot voluntarily enlist in any branch of the Armed Forces where they would be subject to orders to engage in the taking of human life."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Fiji Islands, August 2, 1971)

1352. Baha'is Are Not Conscientious Objectors

"Our position as Baha'is is not that we won't obey our Government or support the country if attacked, it is that we do not believe in, or wish to take part in, killing our fellow-men. We are not conscientious objectors at all; we will serve, but wish, as there is a provision in the law in the U.S.A. covering our attitude, to be classified as non-combatants. If you need to consult on this matter, you should refer to the N.S.A., as this question continually arises, and they can give you advice which will be the most accurate and applicable to present conditions."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 15, 1952)

1353. There Are Many Avenues Through which the Believers Can Assist in Time of War

"It is still his firm conviction that the believers, while expressing their readiness to unreservedly obey any directions that the authorities may issue concerning national service in time of war, should also, and while there is yet no outbreak of hostilities, appeal to the government for exemption from active military service in a combatant capacity, stressing the fact that in doing so they are not prompted by any selfish considerations, but by the sole and supreme motive of upholding the Teachings of their Faith, which make it a moral obligation for them to desist from any act that would involve them into direct warfare with their fellow-humans of any other race or nation.

"The Baha'i Teachings, indeed, condemn, emphatically and unequivocally, any form of physical violence, and warfare in the battlefield is obviously a form, and perhaps the worst form, which such violence can assume.

"There are many other avenues through which the believers can assist in times of war by enlisting in services of a non-combatant nature—services that do not involve the direct shedding of blood—such as ambulance work, anti-air raid precaution service, office and administrative works, and it is for such types of national service that they should volunteer.

"It is immaterial whether such activities would still expose them to dangers, either at home or in the front, since their desire is not to protect their lives, but to desist from any acts of wilful murder.

"The friends should consider it their conscientious duty, as loyal members of the Faith, to apply for such exemption, even though there may be slight prospect of their obtaining the consent and approval of the authorities to their petition. It is most [408] essential that in times of such national excitement and emergency as those through which so many countries in the world

are now passing that the believers should not allow themselves to be carried away by the passions agitating the masses, and act in a manner that would make them deviate from the path of wisdom and moderation, and lead them to violate, however reluctantly and indirectly, the spirit as well as the letter of the Teachings."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, June 4, 1939)

1354. Baha'is Recognize the Right and Duty of Governments to Protect Their People
"...Baha'is recognize the right and duty of governments to use force for the maintenance of law and order and to protect their people. Thus, for a Baha'i, the shedding of blood for such a purpose is not necessarily essentially wrong. The Baha'i Faith draws a very definite distinction between the duty of an individual to forgive and 'to be killed rather than to kill' and the duty of society to uphold justice. This matter is explained by 'Abdu'l-Baha in 'Some Answered Questions'. In the present condition of the world Baha'is try to keep themselves out of the internecine conflicts that are raging among their fellow men and to avoid shedding blood in such struggles, but this does not mean that we are absolute pacifists. This point is explained in the following statement written by the Guardian's secretary on his behalf on 21 November, 1935:

'With reference to the absolute pacifists, or conscientious objectors to war; their attitude, judged from the Baha'i standpoint, is quite anti-social and due to its exaltation of the individual conscience leads inevitably to disorder and chaos in society. Extreme pacifists are thus very close to the anarchists, in the sense that both of these groups lay an undue emphasis on the rights and merits of the individual. The Baha'i conception of social life is essentially based on the subordination of the individual will to that of society. It neither suppresses the individual nor does it exalt him to the point of making him an anti-social creature, a menace to society. As in everything, it follows the 'golden mean'. The only way that society can function is for the minority to follow the will of the majority.

'The other main objection to the conscientious objectors is that their method of establishing peace is too negative. Non-cooperation is too passive a philosophy to become an effective way for social reconstruction. Their refusal to bear arms can never establish peace. There should first be a spiritual revitalization which nothing, except the Cause of God, can effectively bring to every man's heart.'

"A further quotation which may help this dear friend to understand this matter is the passage about the establishment of the Lesser Peace on page 65 of 'The Secret of Divine Civilization'."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, February 9, 1967)

1355. It is Their Duty as Loyal and Devoted Citizens to Offer Their Services to Their Country

"He has noted your Assembly's request for his advice as to what forms of national service the friends may volunteer for in times of emergency. While the believers, he [409] feels, should exert every effort to obtain from the authorities a permit exempting them from active military service in a combatant capacity, it is their duty at the same time, as loyal and devoted citizens, to offer their services to their country in any field of national service which is not specifically aggressive or directly military. Such forms of national work as air raid precaution service, ambulance corps, and other humanitarian work or activity of a noncombatant nature, are the most suitable types of service the friends can render, and which they should gladly volunteer for, since in addition to the fact that they do not involve any violation of the spirit or principle of the Teachings, they constitute a form of social and humanitarian service which the Cause holds sacred and emphatically enjoins."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, November 27, 1938)

1356. "Specifically Aggressive or Directly Military" Activities Are to be Avoided
"From study of the beloved Guardian's letters it is apparent that what he wanted the friends to avoid is 'specifically aggressive or directly military' activities. As regards indirect activities it would be extremely difficult in modern society for anyone to disassociate himself from activities which, in the long run and by devolution, are inimical to the human race."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, November 29, 1967)

1357. A Baha'i May Enlist in the Armed Forces if Not Made Liable for Combatant Service
"...there is no objection to a Baha'i enlisting voluntarily in the armed forces of a country in order to obtain a training in some trade or profession, provided that he can do so without making himself liable to undertake combatant service.

"There is likewise no objection to a Baha'i seeking or continuing a career in the armed forces, provided that he can do so without making himself liable to undertake combatant service."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 13, 1981)

1358. National Service Through Professions Useful to Mankind—National Spiritual Assembly Has Responsibility to Counsel Youth
"Whenever circumstances of military or paramilitary service arise the Baha'i friends should do their utmost to avoid taking part. If, however, they are compelled to do so they should then do everything possible to ensure that they are engaged only in non-combatant services. When the question of National Service, such as you describe in Guyana, includes training in skills and professions useful to mankind, such as agriculture, the friends may certainly volunteer for such services, provided they are definitely assured that their training will not subject them later to call up for military service in

combatant roles.

"If compelled to enter training of a military kind the friends should endeavour to be assigned to such non-combatant activities as stretcher bearing, the medical corps, administrative duties, and other essential departments of military organizations which would not involve them directly in the taking of life.

"It is therefore for your National Spiritual Assembly to decide whether the National Service programme in Guyana is a permissible occupation for Baha'i youth and [410] if so whether on a voluntary basis, or if under compulsion, what steps can be taken to enable Baha'i youth to serve as non-combatants."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guyana, Surinam and French Guiana, September 14, 1975)

1359. Baha'is Are Not Asking to be Given a Safe Berth During Hours of National Crisis
"Regarding your question about military service, the Guardian sees no reason why the Baha'i in question should not bring a test case, and press the matter. It is now, since he has become a follower of Baha'u'llah, against his conscience to kill his fellow-men; and he should have the right to explain his position and ask to be exempted from combatant service. During the hearing of such cases, the Baha'is should make it absolutely clear that we do not fear being placed in danger, and are not asking to be given a safe berth in hours of national crisis—quite the contrary—any dangerous service that Baha'is can render their fellow-men during the agonies of war, they should be anxious to accept."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 25, 1951)

XXXII. MUSIC

[411] 1360. Music is a Ladder by which Souls May Ascend
"We have made it lawful for you to listen to music and singing. Take heed, however, lest listening thereto should cause you to overstep the bounds of propriety and dignity. Let your joy be the joy born of My Most Great Name, a Name that bringeth rapture to the heart, and filleth with ecstasy the minds of all who have drawn nigh unto God. We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high; make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion. Truly, We are loath to see you numbered with the foolish."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 51, p. 38)

1361. Music is an Important Means to the Education and Development of Humanity
"Music is an important means to the education and development of humanity, but the only true way is through the Teachings of God. Music is like this glass, which is perfectly pure and polished. It is precisely like this pure chalice before us, and the Teachings of God, the utterances of God are like the water. When the glass or chalice is absolutely pure and clear, and the water is

perfectly fresh and limpid, then it will confer Life; wherefore, the Teachings of God, whether they be in the form of anthems or communes or prayers, when they are melodiously sung, are most impressive."
(From talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha: Extracts from the Baha'i Writings on Music, p. 7, also, Star of the West, Vol. XV, p. 130)

1362. It is Necessary that the Schools Teach Music
"...The art of music is divine and effective. It is the food of the soul and spirit. Through the power and charm of music the spirit of man is uplifted. It has wonderful sway and effect in the hearts of children, for their hearts are pure and melodies have great influence on them. The latent talents with which the hearts of these children are endowed will find expression through the medium of music. Therefore, you must exert yourselves to make them proficient; teach them to sing with excellence and effect. It is incumbent upon each child to know something of music, for without knowledge of this art, the melodies of instrument and voice cannot be rightly enjoyed. Likewise it is necessary that the schools teach it in order that the souls and hearts of the pupils may become vivified and exhilarated and their lives be brightened with enjoyment."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 52)

1363. Music as a Praiseworthy Science
"O servant of Baha! Music is regarded as a praiseworthy science at the Threshold of the Almighty, so that thou mayest chant verses at large gatherings and congregations in a most wondrous melody and raise such hymns of praise at the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar [412] as to enrapture the Concourse on High. By virtue of this, consider how much the art of music is admired and praised. Try, if thou canst, to use spiritual melodies, songs and tunes, and to bring the earthly music into harmony with the celestial melody. Then thou wilt notice what a great influence music hath and what heavenly joy and life it conferreth. Strike up such a melody and tune as to cause the nightingales of divine mysteries to be filled with joy and ecstasy."
('Abdu'l-Baha, from a recently translated Tablet to an individual believer: Baha'i Writings on Music, p. 5, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, Oakham, England)

1364. Music as One of the Arts
"Music, as one of the arts, is a natural cultural development, and the Guardian does not feel that there should be any cultivation of 'Baha'i Music' any more than we are trying to develop a Baha'i school of painting or writing. The believers are free to paint, write and compose as their talents guide them. If music is written incorporating the sacred writings, the friends are free to make use of it, but it should never be considered a requirement at Baha'i meetings to have such music. The further away the friends keep from any set forms, the better, for they must realize that the Cause is absolutely universal, and what might seem a beautiful addition to their mode of celebrating a Feast, etc., would perhaps fall on the ears of people of another country as unpleasant sounds—and vice versa. As long as they have music for its own sake it is all right, but they should not consider it Baha'i music."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 20, 1946: Ibid., p. 11)

1365. Prayers Set to Music
"It is entirely proper to set prayers to music, and the friends are free to sing prayers in unison. Indeed, assuming that the music is appropriate and that the believers do not make a ritual out of it, it is highly praiseworthy for choirs to sing appropriate verses revealed by Baha'u'llah and the Master....

"We would assume also that the friends will always keep in mind that whether read, chanted or sung, prayers should be uttered with a proper sense of reverence."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, February 6, 1973)

1366. Singing and Chanting Prayers in Unison
"We have your letter of 22nd January, 1973 asking whether it is proper for choirs or groups to sing or chant prayers in unison.

"In answering a similar letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda and Central Africa about congregational singing in services at the House of Worship we said:

'Singing by a congregation present at a service in the House of Worship should not be confused with congregational prayer prescribed by Baha'u'llah for the dead...

'Regarding singing in the Temple, we must bear in mind the reference made by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas to the need for the person who enters the Temple to sit silently and listen to the chanting of the verses of God...

[413] 'In connection with the desire of the Africans to sing, this aptitude in them should be encouraged. The Guardian elucidated this principle in a letter written on his behalf by his Secretary: 'Shoghi Effendi would urge that choir singing by men, women and children be encouraged in the Auditorium, and that rigidity in the Baha'i service be scrupulously avoided.' (Baha'i News, September, 1931)"
(Ibid.)

1367. Not Appropriate to Set Obligatory Prayers to Music
"We have not come across any instructions which would prohibit the setting of the obligatory prayers to music. However, because of their special nature, we do not consider it appropriate to do so."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 6, 1966)

1368. Standing on the Threshold of Baha'i Culture, We Cannot Foresee Forms and Characteristics of the Future Arts
"Regarding your future plans: The Guardian feels that, as your music is your career and means of livelihood, you should carefully consider whether it is not necessary to your future that you go on with your education in this field. If

you feel this is a matter which you, alone, are not able to decide, he would advise you to seek the advice of your Spiritual Assembly.

"Also, you raise the question of what will be the source of inspiration to Baha'i musicians and composers: the music of the past or the Word? We cannot possibly foresee, standing as we do on the threshold of Baha'i culture, what forms and characteristics the arts of the future, inspired by this mighty new Revelation, will have. All we can be sure of is that they will be wonderful; as every Faith has given rise to a culture which flowered in different forms, so too our beloved Faith may be expected to do the same thing. It is premature to try and grasp what they will be at present."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 23, 1942)

1369. The Greatest Name and the Names of the Manifestations of God or the Central Figures Should Be Used with Respect
"We have found nothing in the texts forbidding the use of the Greatest Name, the Names of the Manifestations of God or the names of the Central Figures of our Faith in the lyrics of music. However, we feel that when they are used they should be used with reverence and respect, both in the manner in which they are incorporated in the lyrics and in the manner of presentation."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 14, 1968)

1370. Music More Helpful Before a Talk
"Music is one of the important arts. It has a great effect upon the human spirit. Musical melodies are a certain something which prove to be accidental upon etheric vibrations, for voice is nothing but the expression of vibrations, which, reaching the tympanum, affect the nerves of hearing. Musical melodies are, therefore, those peculiar effects produced by, or from, vibration. However, they have the keenest effect upon [414] the spirit. In sooth, although music is a material affair, yet its tremendous effect is spiritual, and its greatest attachment is to the realm of the spirit. If a person desires to deliver a discourse, it will prove more effectual after musical melodies. The ancient Greeks, as well as Persian philosophers, were in the habit of delivering their discourses in the following manner: first, playing a few musical melodies, and when their audience attained a certain receptivity thereby they would leave their instruments at once and begin their discourse. Among the most renowned musicians of Persia was one named Barbod, who, whenever a great question had been pleaded for at the court of the King, and the Ministry had failed to persuade the King, they would at once refer the matter to Barbod, whereupon he would go with his instrument to the court and play the most appropriate and touching music, the end being at once attained, because the King was immediately affected by the touching musical melodies, certain feelings of generosity would swell up in his heart, and he would give way. You may try this: if you have a great desire and wish to attain your end, try to do so on a large audience after a great solo has been rendered, but it must be on an audience on which music is effective, for there are some people who are like

stones, and music cannot affect stones.

"It was for this reason that His Holiness David sang the psalms in the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem with sweet melodies. In this Cause the art of music is of paramount importance. The Blessed Perfection, when He first came to the barracks (Acca) repeated this statement: 'If among the immediate followers there had been those who could have played some musical instrument, i.e., flute or harp, or could have sung, it would have charmed every one.' In short, musical melodies form an important role in the associations, or outward and inward characteristics, or qualities of man, for it is the inspirer or motive power of both the material and spiritual susceptibilities. What a motive power it is in all feelings of love! When man is attached to the love of God, music has a great effect upon him."
('Abdu'l-Baha: 'Table Talk', cited in Compilation of Extracts from the Baha'i Writings on Music, p. 6, Oakham, England)

1371. Music Helps to Communicate with the Soul
"The Guardian values the hymns that you are so beautifully composing. They certainly contain the realities of the Faith, and will indeed help you to give the Message to the young ones. It is the music which assists us to affect the human spirit; it is an important means which helps us to communicate with the soul. The Guardian hopes that through this assistance you will give the Message to the people, and will attract their hearts."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 15, 1932: Ibid., p. 10)

XXXIII. THE NUMBER NINE

[415] 1372. The Number Nine is Reverenced for Two Reasons by Baha'is
"Concerning the number nine: The Baha'is reverence this for two reasons, first because it is considered by those who are interested in numbers as a sign of perfection. The second consideration which is the more important one is that it is the numerical value for the word 'Baha'. (B=2, h=5, a=1, and there is an accent at the end of the word which is also = 1; the 'a' after the 'B' is not written in Persian so it does not count.) In the Semitic languages—both Arabic and Hebrew—every letter of the alphabet had a numerical value, so instead of using figures to denote numbers they used letters and compounds of letters. Thus every word had both a literal meaning and also a numerical value. This practice is no more in use but during the time of Baha'u'llah and the Bab it was quite in vogue among the educated classes, and we find it very much used in the Bayan. As the word Baha also stood for the number nine it could be used interchangeably with it.

"Besides these two significances the number nine has no other meaning. It is however enough to make the Baha'is use it when an arbitrary number is to be chosen."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 19, 1932)

1373. The Number Nine is Considered by Baha'is as Sacred

"The number nine which in itself is the number of perfection is considered by the Baha'is as sacred because it is symbolic of the perfection of the Baha'i Revelation which constitutes the ninth in the line of existing religions, the latest and fullest Revelation which mankind has ever known. The eighth is the religion of the Bab, and the remaining seven are: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the religion of the Sabeans. These religions are not the only true religions that have appeared in the world, but are the only ones still existing. There have always been divine Prophets and Messengers, to many of whom the Qur'an refers. But the only ones existing are those mentioned above."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 28, 1936: Baha'i News, No. 105, February 1937, p. 2)

1374. The Number Nine Symbolizes the Nine Great World Religions and Perfection and is the Numerical Value of Baha
"First, regarding the significance of the number nine: Its importance as a symbol used so often in various connections by the believers lies in three facts: first, it symbolizes the nine great world religions of which we have any definite historical knowledge, including the Babi and Baha'i Revelations; second, it represents the number of perfection, being the highest single number; third, it is the numerical value of the word 'Baha'."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1939)

[416] 1375. Nine as the Highest Digit Symbolizes Comprehensiveness, Culmination
"Regarding your various questions: We must avoid giving the impression of being all tied up with peculiar religious theories; on the other hand, the 9 sides of the Temple, and the 9-pointed star require an explanation, and he feels the best one is this:

"Nine is the highest digit, hence symbolizes comprehensiveness, culmination; also, the reason it is used in the Temple's form is because 9 has the exact numerical value of 'Baha' (in the numerology connected with the Arabic alphabet) and Baha is the name of the Revealer of our Faith, Baha'u'llah. The 9-pointed star is not a part of the teachings of our Faith, but only used as an emblem representing '9'. In telling people of the 9 religions of the world, that is, existing religions, we should not give this as the reason the Temple has 9 sides. This may have been an idea of the architect, and a very pleasing idea, which can be mentioned in passing, but the Temple has 9 sides because of the association of 9 with perfection, unity and 'Baha'.

"The Guardian feels that with intellectuals and students of religion the question of exactly which are the 9 existing religions is controversial, and it would be better to avoid it. He does not want the friends to be rigid in these matters, but use their judgment and tact; sometimes one statement is exactly the right thing for one type of mind and the wrong thing for another.

"Strictly speaking the 5-pointed star is the symbol of our Faith, as used by the Bab and explained by Him. But the Guardian does not feel it is wise or

necessary to complicate our explanations of the Temple by adding this."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 28, 1949)

1376. The Bab Utilized the Numerical Value of Words to Symbolize Spiritual Concepts
"The Bab made use of the numerical value of words to symbolize spiritual concepts. The Persian for 'The Letters of the Living' is 'Huruf-i-Hay'; there were 18 of these first disciples of the Bab and the numerical value of the word 'Hay' is 18. These 18 letters, together with the Bab Himself, constitute the first 'Vahid' of the Revelation. The word 'Vahid' has a numerical value of 19, and means 'Unity'. It symbolizes the unity of God, and thus the number 19 itself symbolizes the unity of God, and it was used by the Bab as the basis for His Calendar. One may also note the reference on 'The Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas' to 19 or 95 mithqals of gold or silver in connection with the laws of marriage and of Huququ'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, November 13, 1980)

1377. Superstition Concerning the Number 13
"Such suppositions regarding lucky or unlucky numbers are purely imaginary. The superstition concerning thirteen had its origin in the fact that His Holiness Jesus Christ was surrounded by twelve disciples and that Judas Iscariot was the thirteenth member of their gathering. This is the source of the superstition, but it is purely imaginary. Although Judas was outwardly a disciple, in reality he was not. Twelve is the original number of significance and completion. Jacob had twelve sons, from whom [417] descended twelve tribes. The disciples of Jesus were twelve; the Imams of Muhammad were twelve. The zodiacal signs are twelve, the months of the year are twelve, etc."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 196-197, 1982 ed.)

XXXIV. OPPOSITION

[418] 1378. No Need to Fear Opposition if the Inner Life Be Sound and Vigorous
"There is no need to fear opposition from without if the life within be sound and vigorous. Our Heavenly Father will always give us the strength to meet and overcome tests if we turn with all our hearts to Him, and difficulties if they are met in the right spirit only make us rely on God more firmly and completely."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 14, 1925)

1379. Refuting Attacks and Criticisms Against the Cause Devolve Upon the National Spiritual Assembly to Consider
"The matter of refuting attacks and criticisms directed against the Cause through the press is, he feels, one which devolves on the N.S.A. to consider. This body, whether directly or through the agency of its committees, should decide as to the advisability of answering any such attacks, and also should carefully examine and pass upon any statements which the friends wish to send

to the press to this effect. Only through such supervision and control of all Baha'i press activities can the friends hope to avoid confusion and misunderstanding in their own minds and in the mind of the general public whom they can reach through the press."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 28, 1938)

1380. The Cause Cannot Be Effectively Established Unless It Encounters and Triumphs Over the Forces of Opposition
"The Guardian has been very much interested regarding your letter of May 18th, though he has been made truly grieved to learn of the continued and malignant opposition which the enemies of the Cause in Lima, and particularly the clerical element, are directing against the believers in that centre. He wishes you, however, to urge the friends not to feel in the least disheartened or discouraged, but to pursue with renewed determination, unity and vigour their sacred task of spreading and establishing the Faith, confident in the glorious future awaiting them. The greater the number of persecutions, and the more intense they become in character, the deeper their faith should be in the unique mission entrusted to them by Baha'u'llah, and the greater their zeal to help in hastening its complete fulfilment.

"This Cause, as every divine Cause, cannot be effectively established unless it encounters and valiantly triumphs over the forces of opposition with which it is assailed. The history of the Faith is in itself a sufficient proof of that. Trials and persecutions have always been, and will continue to be, the lot of the chosen ones of God. But these they should consider as blessings in disguise, as through them their faith will be quickened, purified and strengthened. Baha'u'llah compares such afflictive trials to the oil which feeds the lamp of the Cause of God.

"The friends should, therefore, not assume an attitude of mere resignation in the face of persecutions; they should rather welcome them, and utilize them as means for their own spiritual uplift and also for the promotion of the Cause. As the Faith [419] grows stronger and attracts the serious attention and consideration of the world outside, the friends must expect a similar, if not a greater, increase in the forces of opposition which from every direction, both secular and religious, will be massed to undermine the very basis of its existence. The final outcome of such a struggle, which will be surely gigantic, is clear to us believers. A Faith born of God and guided by His Divine and all-pervasive spirit cannot but finally triumph and firmly establish itself, no matter how persistent and insidious the forces with which it has to contend. The friends should be confident, and act with the utmost wisdom and moderation, and should particularly abstain from any provocative act. The future is surely theirs."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 24, 1936)

1381. Baha'i Wife Should Show Utmost Love and Kindness to Husband in Spite of His Opposition to Faith

"The Guardian ... is very much grieved indeed to learn of the severe opposition which you are encountering from your husband because of your affiliation with the Cause. He can very well realize the terrible condition facing you, but feels confident that Baha'u'llah is guiding you to follow the right way, and is continually assisting and strengthening you in your efforts to solve this most serious and challenging problem of your life. The staunch and unwavering loyalty and devotion which you have thus far so splendidly demonstrated in your attitude to the Faith is truly remarkable and worthy of the highest praise and admiration. The persecutions from which you are now suffering have this one great advantage, namely to deepen your faith in the Cause, and to revive and refresh your energies for its service. You should, therefore, rejoice and welcome those sufferings insofar as they serve to further awaken your consciousness of being a member of the New World Order of Baha'u'llah.

"The Guardian wishes me specially to urge you to remain patient and confident and above all to show your husband the utmost kindness and love, in return for all the opposition and hatred you receive from him. A conciliatory and friendly attitude in such cases is not only the duty of every Baha'i but is also the most effective way of winning for the Cause the sympathy and admiration of its former foes and enemies. Love is, indeed, a most potent elixir that can transform the vilest and meanest of people into heavenly souls. May your example serve to further confirm the truth of this beautiful teaching of our Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 6, 1935)

1382. How to Rehabilitate Our Perturbed Society and Eliminate War
"...He was very glad to see that you are active in representing the Cause among Peace Societies and gradually bringing them to contact our principles on that all-important subject. The sooner they come to appreciate the significance of the Message of Baha'u'llah, the sooner will they be able to bring about the realization of their object and hope and rehabilitate our perturbed society.

"War is really nothing more but the result of existing forces. Should we desire to end that devastating consequence we should go back to the basic causes and remedy those evils. We should eliminate the hatreds, national bigotry, mistrust and self aggrandisement as well as economic, social and religious differences which now prevail in the world if we desire to establish an abiding peace. And nothing can achieve [420] this save the teachings of Baha'u'llah, for they change the human heart and also prescribe definite precepts that would render our social environment healthy and peaceful."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 11, 1932)

1383. The Church and the Clergy Often Are the Most Bitter Opponents of the Cause
"It seems both strange and pitiful that the Church and clergy should always, in every age, be the most bitter opponents of the very Truth they are continually admonishing their followers to be prepared to receive! They have become so

violently attached to the form that the substance itself eludes them!

"However, such denunciations as those your minister made publicly against you and the Baha'i Faith can do no harm to the Cause at all; on the contrary, they only serve to spread its name abroad and mark it as an independent religion."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 7, 1945)

XXXV. ORGANIZATIONS, NON-BAHA'I

[421] 1384. Affiliation with Faith Alone is Insufficient
"So far as non-Baha'is affiliating with the Baha'i Faith is concerned, either a person becomes a Baha'i and accepts Baha'u'llah as the divine Manifestation for this day, or he does not. The tenets of the Baha'i Faith are simple as outlined by the Guardian, but they do not permit of any variations. In other words, if any members of the ... Movement wish to become Baha'is, they will be most welcome; but they can only become Baha'is on the basis of accepting Baha'u'llah as a divine Manifestation, and of course, with this goes the acceptance of the Bab as the Forerunner, and 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Center of the Covenant, and the present Administrative Order.

"When a person has reached the sea of immortality, it is idle to keep seeking elsewhere...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of Japan, July 24, 1953: Japan Will Turn Ablaze, pp. 76-77)

1385. Affiliation with Non-Baha'i Organizations
"Regarding association with the World Fellowship of Faiths and Kindred Societies, Shoghi Effendi wishes to reaffirm and elucidate the general principle that Baha'i elected representatives as well as individuals should refrain from any act or word that would imply a departure from the principles, whether spiritual, social or administrative, established by Baha'u'llah. Formal affiliation with and acceptance of membership in organizations whose programs or policies are not wholly reconcilable with the Teachings is of course out of the question.... To merely address such gatherings on one or two occasions on a subject which is in harmony with the spirit of the Teachings does not constitute acceptance by the Baha'i speaker of the entire program of the Fellowship. We should welcome and seize every opportunity that presents itself, however modest it may be, to give a wider publicity to the Cause, to demonstrate its all-inclusiveness and liberal attitude, its independence and purity, without committing ourselves, whether by word or deed, to programs or policies that are not in strict conformity with the tenets of the Faith. Shoghi Effendi hopes that this principle will guide your distinguished Assembly in its dealings with various associations which will increasingly seek, in the days to come, the support of Baha'i individuals and Assemblies for the attainment of their ends."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, June 17, 1933)

1386. Association and Affiliation Defined for Baha'i Purposes

"There should be no confusion between the terms affiliation and association. While affiliation with ecclesiastical organizations is not permissible, association with them should not only be tolerated but even encouraged. There is no better way to [422] demonstrate the universality of the Cause than this. Baha'u'llah indeed urges His followers to consort with all religions and nations with utmost friendliness and love. This constitutes the very spirit of His Message to mankind."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 11, 1935: Compilation on Association with Non-Baha'i Organizations, Baha'i World Centre)

1387. Baha'is Belonging to Churches, Synagogues, Freemasonry and the Like
"As regards the question of Baha'is belonging to churches, synagogues, Freemasonry, etc., the friends must realize that now that the Faith is over 100 years old, and its own institutions arising, so to speak, rapidly above-ground, the distinctions are becoming ever sharper, and the necessity for them to support whole-heartedly their own institutions and cut themselves off entirely from those of the past, is now clearer than ever before. The eyes of the people of the world are beginning to be focused on us; and, as humanity's plight goes from bad to worse, we will be watched ever more intently by non-Baha'is, to see whether we do uphold our own institutions wholeheartedly; whether we are the people of the new creation or not; whether we live up to our beliefs, principles and laws in deed as well as word. We cannot be too careful. We cannot be too exemplary.

"There is another aspect to this question which the friends should seriously ponder, and that is that, whereas organizations such as Freemasonry may have been in the past entirely free from any political taint, in the state of flux the world is in at present, and the extraordinary way in which things become corrupted and tainted by political thought and influences, there is no guarantee that such an association might not gradually or suddenly become a political instrument. The less Baha'is have to do, therefore, with such things, the better."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, August 5, 1955)

1388. Baha'is Requested to Withdraw from Masonic and Other Secret Societies
"As regards your question about Masonry, the Baha'is, the Guardian feels very strongly, must learn at the present time to think internationally and not locally. Although each believer realizes that he is a member of one great spiritual family, a member of the New World Order of Baha'u'llah, he does not often carry this thought through to its logical conclusion: which is that if the Baha'is all over the world each belong to some different kind of society or church or political party, the unity of the Faith will be destroyed, because inevitably they will become involved in doctrines and policies that are in some way against our Teachings, and often against another group of people in another part of the world, or another race, or another religious block.

"Therefore, all the Baha'is everywhere have been urged to give up their old

affiliations and withdraw from membership in the Masonic and other secret Societies in order to be entirely free to serve the Faith of Baha'u'llah as a united body. Such groups as Masonry, however high the local standard may be, are in other countries gradually being influenced by the issues sundering the nations at present.

"The Guardian wants the Baha'is to disentangle themselves from anything that [423] may in any way, now or in the future, compromise their independent status as Baha'is and the supra-national nature of their Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 17, 1956)

1389. Why Baha'is Are Requested to Withdraw from Membership in the Church, Synagogue, etc.
"The point is not that there is something intrinsically wrong with Masonry, which no doubt has many very high ideals and principles, and has had a very good influence in the past.

"The reasons why the Guardian feels that it is imperative for the Baha'is to be dissociated from masonry at this time, and I might add, other secret associations, is that we are the building blocks of Baha'u'llah's New World Order ... the Baha'is should be absolutely independent, and stand identified only with their own teachings. That is why they are requested to withdraw from membership in the church, the synagogue, or whatever other previous religious organization they may have been affiliated with, to have nothing whatsoever to do with secret societies, or with political movements, etc. It protects the Cause, it reinforces the Cause, and it asserts before all the world its independent character.

"Another reason is that unfortunately the tremendous political influences in the world today are seeping deeper and deeper into men's minds; and movements which in the past were absolutely uninfluenced by any political tinge of thought now in many places are becoming infiltrated with political side-taking and political issues; and it becomes all the more important for the Baha'is to withdraw from them in order to protect the Faith.
"The Guardian believes that you, as an intelligent man, a Baha'i, will see the need for this. It is only by all living according to general principles that we can knit the fabric of the Faith all over the world into a closer unity.

"He is fully aware that certain individuals are struck much more forcibly by such requests than others. This has been the case with some of the old Baha'is in England, who have been Masons from their boyhood on; but, as it is his duty to protect the Faith, he can only appeal to the Baha'is to assist him in doing so; and to consider the general good, rather than their personal feelings, however deep they may be, in such matters."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 12, 1956)

1390. Resignation from the Masonic Order
"As regards your question about the Masonic Order, he considers that the honest

and courageous thing for you to do is to inform your Lodge that you no longer consider yourself, for purely personal reasons, a Mason; and would like to have your name taken off their list. If they should press you for an explanation, which he imagines is unlikely, everybody being free to do as they please in this world, you can explain to them that in the present chaotic period the world is passing through, with so many streams and counterstreams of political thoughts and prejudices of all kinds, racial, religious, etc., storming the minds of men, that you wish to disentangle yourself from all association with the past and to stand alone, free in your own ideas.

"He does not think that such an explanation will prejudice the Masons or their [424] friends, or arouse in them a feeling of anger against the Faith, or indeed need involve the Faith at all."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 26, 1956)

1391. The Believers Should Dissociate Themselves from Secret Organizations
"...Generally speaking, the friends should not enter secret societies. It is certainly much better for the believers to dissociate themselves from such organizations..."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, March 2, 1951)

1392. Theosophists: One Cannot Be Baha'i and Theosophist at the Same Time
"A Baha'i cannot at the same time be a Theosophist; many theosophists have become believers and very enlightened ones, but as we do not believe in reincarnation we obviously cannot be active as Theosophists and Baha'is at the same time."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, June 28, 1950: Dawn of a New Day, p. 140)

"With regard to the Theosophists and their activities; although they obviously try to copy and claim as their own some of the principles of the Cause, yet the Guardian feels that it would be of no advantage to oppose them and to refute their arguments. The best attitude for the friends to adopt in such cases at the present time is to totally disregard and even neglect their opponents. This has invariably been his advice to the friends, whether in the East or the West."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Dawn of a New Day, pp. 64-65)

1393. World Government Organization—Should Be Non-Partisan and Non-Discriminatory
"There is no objection to the Baha'is associating with such organizations as the World Government Organization.... However, great care should be taken to make sure these organizations are absolutely non-partisan in their political views and lean neither to East or West."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 1950: Baha'i News, No. 241, March 1951, p. 15)

"Baha'is should certainly not belong to clubs or societies that practice any form of discrimination."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America, April 23, 1957)

1394. New History Society—Avowed Enemies of the Faith
"As regards ..., he should be kindly but firmly admonished by your Assembly that he cannot consider himself spiritually a Baha'i and be associated with the avowed enemies of the Faith such as the New History Society; and that he should discontinue supporting their work or having anything to do with them; otherwise, he will find that he has been deprived wholly of his association with the Baha'i Cause; in other words, he will not only lose his voting rights, but be outside the Faith."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 24, 1957)

[425] 1395. Social Organizations, Relief Work—The Believers Are Building a Refuge for Mankind
"He feels that, although your desire to partake actively of the dangers and miseries afflicting so many millions of people today is natural and a noble impulse, there can be no comparison between the value of Baha'i work and any other form of service to humanity.

"If the Baha'is could evaluate their work properly they would see that whereas other forms of relief work are superficial in character, alleviating the sufferings and ills of men for a short time at best, the work they are doing is to lay the foundation of a new spiritual Order in the world founded on the Word of God, operating according to the laws He has laid down for this age. No one else can do this work except those who have fully realized the meaning of the Message of Baha'u'llah, whereas almost any courageous, sincere person can engage in relief work, etc.

"The believers are building a refuge for mankind. This is their supreme sacred task and they should devote every moment they can to this task."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer: Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 24)

1396. Membership in Non-Baha'i Religious Organizations
"Concerning membership in non-Baha'i religious associations. The Guardian wishes to re-emphasize the general principle already laid down in his communications to your Assembly and also to the individual believers that no Baha'i who wishes to be a wholehearted and sincere upholder of the distinguishing principles of the Cause can accept full membership in any non-Baha'i ecclesiastical organization. For such an act would necessarily imply only a partial acceptance of the Teachings and laws of the Faith, and an incomplete recognition of its independent status, and would thus be tantamount to an act of disloyalty to the verities it enshrines. For it is only too obvious that in most of its fundamental assumptions the Cause of Baha'u'llah is completely at variance with outworn creeds, ceremonies and institutions. To be

a Baha'i and at the same time accept membership in another religious body is simply an act of contradiction that no sincere and logically-minded person can possibly accept. To follow Baha'u'llah does not mean accepting some of His teachings and rejecting the rest. Allegiance to His Cause must be uncompromising and whole-hearted...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, June 15, 1935)

1397. Teaching in a Mission School
"He does not think there is any objection to your teaching in a mission school, as long as it is clearly understood that you are, yourself, a Baha'i; and if you do not have to teach their brand of religion to the pupils. There are many people nowadays employed in mission work in different parts of the world who do not belong to the Church; and, wherever such a tolerant relationship is possible, there can certainly be no objection from our side.

"Naturally it would be better if you could get a job where you would be completely independent of such relationships...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 1, 1954)

[426] 1398. Baha'is Should Not Attack the Church
"The Guardian agrees with you that the Baha'is should be very careful not to criticize or rather attack the church. As we believe the church of Rome to be the inheritor, so to speak, of Christ's teachings, the direct line, however perverted by men's doctrines, it certainly does not befit us to show antagonism towards it. We know it is out-dated. Tact is required!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 22, 1950)

1399. A Baha'i Cannot Be a Spiritist
"...the Guardian feels it incumbent upon him to make it quite clear that membership in every Baha'i organization excludes the possibility of joining any religious or political association, even though such an alliance does not involve a complete repudiation of Baha'i principles and doctrines. It would be utterly impossible to reconcile the teachings of the Faith with all the views and conceptions which any existing group, whether religious or political, may advocate. In view of that, it seems but logical that a Baha'i cannot be a spiritist at the same time. Not that the ideas which the spiritists proclaim are each and all in direct opposition to the Baha'i teachings. As a matter of fact there are some good points in spiritism. But this is not sufficient justification for a believer to accept membership in a spiritist organization.

"While Shoghi Effendi would urge you to dissociate yourself from the spiritists, he wishes you at the same time to act with caution and wisdom. Your separation from the spiritists should be gradual, and in a way that would not arouse the antagonism of your friends and relatives. Too sudden and abrupt a change is, indeed, harmful not only to you but to those who through you have been attracted to the Cause...."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 14, 1934)

1400. Relationship of Baha'i Community to the United Nations
"The outstanding development in the relationship of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations was the accreditation of the Community as a non-governmental organization with consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The Baha'i International Community now has a permanent representative at the United Nations and maintains an office in New York."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1973)

1401. All Social Movements Have Some Spark of Truth
"There are so many movements in the world at present akin to various Baha'i principles; indeed we can almost say that the principles of Baha'u'llah have been adapted by thinking people all over this planet. But what they do not realize, and what the Baha'is must therefore teach them, is that these principles, however perfect, will never be able to create a new society unless and until they are animated by the spirit which alone changes the hearts and characters of men, and that spirit is recognition of their divine origin in a teacher sent from God, in other words, Baha'u'llah. When they recognize this, their hearts will change and a change of heart is what people need, not merely a change of intellectual outlook."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Baha'i Youth of Lima, Peru, November 17, 1945)

[427] 1402. A Baha'i Should Not Seek Financial Help from a Religious Organization as a Baha'i
"The questions raised in your letter of 9 January 1985 have been considered by the Universal House of Justice, and we are asked to inform you that Baha'is should not seek financial assistance from a religious organization as Baha'is. However, if some charitable organization, operated by the followers of another religion, grants scholarships to individuals, for example, a Baha'i may accept such general assistance as an individual, but not as a Baha'i.

"The House of Justice states that while Mr. ... may continue to receive assistance from the Catholic Commission, other Baha'i refugees should not ask or receive aid from that body if the nature of the aid is different from what is explained above. The time will come when the Baha'i Faith is strong enough to extend financial assistance to Catholics and others. At that time, it would be possible for Baha'is to partake of the facilities of the Catholic Commission. However, at present, when mutual reciprocity cannot be established, the House of Justice advises that it is not dignified for Baha'is to apply for such assistance."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Peru, February 7, 1985)

1403. Membership in Trade Unions—Election Procedures

"The Alaska Public Employees Association appears to be a type of union organization. As long as this and other associations, such as the special interest groups you mention, are not affiliated with any political party and are not involved in political activities there is no objection to Baha'is belonging to them nor to their holding office in them.

"As for participation in elections of non-Baha'i organizations which are open to Baha'is but which employ electional methods different from Baha'i practices, believers need not avoid the election procedures carried out in such organizations.

"In all such activities the friends should bear in mind the following exhortation so clearly set forth by the beloved Guardian in a letter dated February 20, 1927 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada:

'Fully aware of the repeated statements of 'Abdu'l-Baha that universality is of God, Baha'is in every land are ready, nay anxious, to associate themselves by word and deed with any association of men which, after careful scrutiny, they feel satisfied is free from every tinge of partisanship and politics and is wholly devoted to the interests of all mankind.... They should always bear in mind, however, the dominating purpose of such collaboration, which is to secure in time the recognition by those with whom they are associating of the paramount necessity and the true significance of the Baha'i Revelation in this day.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, January 4, 1979)

1404. As to Participation in Strikes
"As to participation in strikes, when one of the believers who was employed in a factory as a supervisor to labourers and who felt that a strike was likely at the factory asked the Guardian what the Baha'i attitude should be if a strike were called, the Guardian's secretary in a letter dated June 30, 1937 wrote on his behalf:

'With regard to your question concerning the Baha'i attitude towards labour [428] problems; these cannot assuredly be solved, 'Abdu'l-Baha tells us, through the sheer force of physical violence. Non-cooperation too, even though not accompanied by acts of violence, is ineffective. The conflict between labour and capital can best be solved through the peaceful and constructive methods of cooperation and of consultation.

'The Baha'is, therefore, are advised to avoid, as much as they can, getting mixed in labour strikes and troubles, and particularly to desist from all acts of physical violence which indeed run counter to the very spirit of the Cause. The Faith of Baha'u'llah stands for peace, harmony, and cooperation between the individuals and nations of the world.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Luxembourg, April 4, 1973)

XXXVI. ORIENTALS

[429] 1405. Warning Concerning Oriental Moslems

"As to your question as to what races should be regarded as coming under the heading of 'Orientals' in connection with 'Abdu'l-Baha's warnings: there is no doubt He was primarily thinking of the Near Eastern races of Islamic extraction, who have every reason to look upon the Faith either with contempt as a mere heresy within, or sect of, Islam, or with hatred as a potential threat to the supremacy of their religion. Likewise, it is these Near Eastern races, particularly the Persian, who have been most persistently exposed to the propaganda and bad example of the Covenant-breakers, old and new, and from whose ranks these very Covenant-breakers have sprung. These circumstances, combined with the fact that, like His Prophetic Forebears, Baha'u'llah appeared amongst the people most in need of enlightenment—and hence at their lowest ebb morally—are the reasons for not only 'Abdu'l-Baha's and his own repeated warnings concerning Orientals, but also for the conduct, so often demonstrated, unfortunately, by these same Orientals, and which amply justifies our attitude of great precaution and wariness concerning receiving them in our midst and believing their declarations to be sincere. Shoghi Effendi also feels that the Moslems of India should likewise be included in this category, owing to their respective religious and racial background."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 9, 1947: Baha'i News, No. 197, July 1947, pp. 6-7)

1406. The Mere Name of Baha'i Does Not Constitute a Baha'i

"...the Guardian wishes the Baha'is to bear in mind the repeated counsels of the Master that the friends should be on their guard when dealing with Easterners. Not only should they trust no one unless he bears some letter of introduction from his Assembly but also after he is permitted in the Baha'i group they should be very careful in their dealings with him. This does not mean that they should be unkind to him or have a constant suspicion that would gradually alienate him from the Cause, but to be on their guard lest he misuses their trust. The case of Ahmed Sohrab is a very good example of what an Easterner can do. He thinks to be doing shrewd business when a westerner would consider the act to be deceitful. As Baha'u'llah says often in His Tablets the friends should develop a flair wherewith they can detect the good from the evil person. Mere name of Baha'i does not constitute a Baha'i. His character also has to be Baha'i."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, December 18, 1932)

1407. Avoid Making Any Effort to Convert Orientals to the Faith—i.e., Muslims from the Middle East, Pakistan and India

"As a general rule the friends should not seek out contacts among Orientals (i.e., [430] those of Muslim background from the Middle East, Pakistan and India), whether students or not. However, when contact with Orientals occurs in the course of normal social events the friends, as in all other cases, should

show courtesy and kindness, but in these days when the political situation is so confused the friends should consciously avoid making any effort to convert Orientals to the Faith.

"Should such individuals, however, show real interest in the Faith even to the point of wishing to declare, your National Assembly should be contacted by either the Local Spiritual Assembly or the individual teacher so that you in turn can contact the National Spiritual Assembly of the country of origin of the applicant, giving that Assembly full particulars and requesting it to inform you whether there is any objection to the enrolment of that particular individual. Nevertheless, if it appears that the Oriental wishing to declare is contemplating a return to his own country soon, you should follow your present practice of requesting that he declare to the proper administrative institution of his own country."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 18, 1968)

1408. Iranian Baha'is Need Not Avoid All Contact with Iranian Muslims—However, They Should Not Seek Them Out for Friendly Contacts nor for Teaching

"The House of Justice feels that the friends, and sometimes the Baha'i institutions, have tended to over-react to the instructions given from time to time about contacting and teaching Muslims from Iran and other places in the Middle East, and they often take to extremes the cautions given in such instructions. The friends sometimes think they should shun such people entirely or that any contact with them is considered a breach of Baha'i law. We are asked to point out that the House of Justice has never forbidden the friends to contact Iranian Muslims, as such a general prohibition would be contrary to the spirit of the Faith. However, given the history and the current situation of the Faith in Iran, it has urged the friends in the West to act toward these people with wisdom and caution. In fact, the House of Justice has clarified the matter on various occasions by stating the following to National Spiritual Assemblies:

'The instructions of the beloved Guardian regarding teaching orientals from the Middle East are to be upheld, even more so at this time because of the present situation in Iran. Iranian Muslims in particular should not be sought out in order to teach them the Faith. It cannot be categorically said, however, that the friends should have no contact with Iranian Muslims. Some of the Baha'is have relatives who are Iranian Muslims, some have close Iranian Muslim friends who happen to reside in the West, and they should not relinquish these friendships. At the same time it should be stressed to the Iranian Baha'is that while they should not cut themselves off from their Muslim relatives and friends—a step which could create animosity and turn them against the Faith—they should not normally seek out Iranian Muslims in order to initiate friendly contacts with them or teach them the Faith.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, March 6, 1983)

[431] 1409. In Certain Cases Iranian Muslims Could Be Considered for Enrolment—Each Instance to be Referred to the Universal House of Justice for Approval

"Moreover, the House of Justice feels that there are a number of cases in which Iranian Muslims could be considered for enrolment as Baha'is; for example, in cases where the Muslim spouse of a Baha'i has shown his or her interest and sincerity and has never engaged in opposing the Cause. Another example is when an Iranian is a permanent resident of the United States or Canada and apparently has no ulterior motives, such as assuming Baha'i membership to resolve his visa problems. Proposed enrolments should be referred to the House of Justice for approval so that, if necessary, the matter can be taken up with the Iranian National Assembly. Of course, even in the cases cited enrolment cannot always be immediately effected. Consideration must be given to other factors: the reaction of relatives in Iran could be a factor in determining the timeliness of enrolling such persons. In such instances it could be explained to them that although they have accepted the Faith in their hearts and are regarded as Baha'is in belief, their enrolment must be postponed because of the situation in Iran. Meanwhile, the Baha'is should maintain friendly contacts with them and deepen them in their knowledge of the Faith."

(Ibid.)

1410. Baha'i Professionals Should Not Refuse to Make Themselves Available Professionally to Iranian Muslims

"Already a number of Baha'i professionals are being approached by Iranian Muslims seeking their expertise. It would be unwise for these Baha'is to refuse to make themselves available to them professionally. However, cultural and social contacts should take place only with the knowledge and approval of the appropriate Baha'i institution."

(Ibid.)

XXXVII. PEACE

[432] 1411. The Ministers of the House of Justice to Promote Peace

"First: It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the earth may be relieved from the burden of exorbitant expenditures. This matter is imperative and absolutely essential, inasmuch as hostilities and conflict lie at the root of affliction and calamity."

(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 89)

1412. The Time and Means Through which the Lesser and the Most Great Peace Will Be Established

"With reference to the question you have asked concerning the time and means through which the Lesser and Most Great Peace, referred to by Baha'u'llah, will be established, following the coming World War. Your view that the Lesser Peace will come about through the political efforts of the states and nations of the world, and independently of any direct Baha'i plan or effort, and the Most Great Peace established through the instrumentality of the believers, and by the direct operation of the laws and principles revealed by Baha'u'llah and the

functioning of the Universal House of Justice as the supreme organ of the Baha'i super-state—your view on this subject is quite correct and in full accord with the pronouncements of the Guardian as embodied in the 'Unfoldment of World Civilization'."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 14, 1939)

1413. Unless the Message of Baha'u'llah Reaches into the Hearts of Men and Transforms Them, There Can Be No Peace
"Indeed when we see the increasing darkness in the world today we can fully realize that unless the Message of Baha'u'llah reaches into the hearts of men and transforms them, there can be no peace and no spiritual progress in the future.

"His constant hope is that the believers will conduct themselves, individually and in their Baha'i Community life, in such a manner as to attract the attention of others to the Cause. The world is not only starving for lofty principles and ideals, it is, above all, starving for a shining example which the Baha'is can and must provide."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 22, 1945)

1414. Predictions of Peace, Prophecy of Daniel—1335 Days
"Now concerning the verse in Daniel, the interpretation whereof thou didst ask, namely, 'Blessed is he who cometh unto the thousand three hundred and thirty five days'. These days must be reckoned as solar and not lunar years. For according to this calculation a century will have elapsed from the dawn of the Sun of Truth, then will the teachings of God be firmly established upon the earth, and the Divine
[433] Light shall flood the world from the East even unto the West. Then, on this day, will the faithful rejoice."
('Abdu'l-Baha: From a Tablet to a Kurdish friend: The Passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 31, Shoghi Effendi and Lady Blomfield)

"...The 1335 days is figured according to the solar calendar, but in adjusting the 1335 days, one must take into consideration the time at which the prophecies were given and change them into solar time, which would bring the date to 1963.

"There is one thing of importance for the Baha'is to understand; and that is, that this prophecy refers to happenings within the Faith, not occurrences outside the Faith. It refers specifically to the spread of the Faith over the face of the earth. This will be accomplished when the Baha'i Faith is firmly established in all the virgin areas outlined in the Ten-Year Crusade, and the other goals of the Crusade are completed. Thus it behooves us to work day and night in order to accomplish this glorious goal."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 4, 1946: Some Extracts from Letters written on behalf of the Guardian on the subject of the Prophecy of Daniel: A Compilation from the World Centre to the

compiler)

1415. Prerequisite to Peace
"The prerequisite to real success is a harmonious gathering. When the friends begin to have peace at home they can teach the people to have peace between the nations and classes."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 27, 1926)

1416. Radiation of Thought Will Not Bring Peace
"I might add that he does not believe any radiations of thought or healing, from any group, is going to bring peace. Prayer, no doubt, will help the world, but what it needs is to accept Baha'u'llah's system so as to build up the World Order on a new foundation, a divine foundation!..."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 6, 1948: Extracts From the Guardian's Letters, Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 8: A Compilation from the World Centre, February 1970)

1417. No Greater Bliss Than to Find One Has Become the Cause of Peace
"...Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellowmen. No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 2-3)

1418. Volition and Action Are Necessary Before International Peace Can Be Established.
"All of us know that international peace is good, that it is conducive to human welfare and the glory of man, but volition and action are necessary before it can be established. Action is essential. Inasmuch as this century is a century of light, capacity for action is assured to mankind. Necessarily the divine principles will be spread among men
[434] until the time of action arrives. Surely this has been so, and truly the time and conditions are ripe for action now."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 ed., p. 121)

1419. Every Means that Produces War Must Be Checked
"In short, every means that produces war must be checked and the causes that prevent the occurrence of war be advanced—so that physical conflict may become an impossibility. On the other hand, every country must be properly delimited, its exact frontiers marked, its national integrity secured, its permanent independence protected, and its vital interests honoured by the family of nations. These services ought to be rendered by an impartial, international Commission. In this manner all causes of friction and differences will be removed. And in case there should arise some disputes between them, they could arbitrate before the Parliament of Man, the representatives of which should be chosen from among the wisest and most judicious men of all the nations of the world."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. V, pp 115-116, cited in Peace, A

Compilation from the Universal House of Justice, August 1985)

1420. Every Century Holds the Solution of One Predominating Problem
"Every century holds the solution of one predominating problem. Although there may be many problems, yet one of the innumerable problems will loom large and become the most important of all. ...in this luminous century the greatest bestowal of the world of humanity is Universal Peace, which must be founded, so that the realm of creation may obtain composure, the East and the West, which include in their arms the five continents of the globe, may embrace each other, mankind may rest beneath the tent of oneness of the world of humanity, and the flag of universal peace may wave over all the regions...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. V, pp. 115-117)

1421. Do Not Rest Until the Peace Foretold by the Prophets is Permanently Established
"The world is in great turmoil, and what is most pathetic is that it has learned to keep away from God, Who alone can save it and alleviate its sufferings. It is our duty, we who have been trusted with the task of applying the divine remedy given by Baha'u'llah, to concentrate our attention upon the consummation of this task and not rest until the peace foretold by the Prophets of God is permanently established."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 9, 1931: Peace, op. cit.)

1422. To Disregard the Baha'i Solution for Peace is to Build on Foundations of Sand
"...He is firmly convinced that through perseverance and concerted action the cause of Peace will eventually triumph over all the dark forces which threaten the welfare and progress of the world to-day. But such purely human attempts are undoubtedly ineffective unless inspired and guided by the power of faith. Without the assistance of God, as given through the message of Baha'u'llah, peace can never be safely and adequately established. To disregard the Baha'i solution for world peace is to build on foundations of sand. To accept and apply it is to make peace not a mere dream, or an ideal, but a living reality. This is the point which the Guardian wishes you [435] to develop, to emphasize again and again, and to support by convincing arguments. The Baha'i peace program is, indeed, not only one way of attaining that goal. It is not even relatively the best. It is, in the last resort, the sole effective instrument for the establishment of the reign of peace in this world. This attitude does not involve any total repudiation of other solutions offered by various philanthropists. It merely shows their inadequacy compared to the Divine Plan for the unification of the world. We cannot escape the truth that nothing mundane can in the last resort be enduring, unless supported and sustained through the power of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, September 25, 1933: Ibid.)

1423. The Unification of Mankind is Assured by Baha'u'llah and No Power Can Prevent It
"Whatever our shortcomings may be, and however formidable the forces of

darkness which besiege us to-day, the unification of mankind as outlined and ensured by the World Order of Baha'u'llah will in the fullness of time be firmly and permanently established. This is Baha'u'llah's promise, and no power on earth can in the long run prevent or even retard its adequate realization. The friends should, therefore, not lose hope, but fully conscious of their power and their role they should persevere in their mighty efforts for the extension and the consolidation of Baha'u'llah's universal dominion on earth."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, November 6, 1933: Ibid.)

1424. Baha'u'llah's Teachings Will Establish a Universal Consciousness and a Universal Way of Life
"The Teachings of Baha'u'llah will establish a new way of life for humanity. Those who are Baha'is must endeavour to establish this way of life just as rapidly as possible. Now that the hour has arrived when the Baha'i Faith is gaining prominence, and is being viewed and reviewed by so many peoples, it is necessary that the adherents of the Faith should live up to the high ideals of the Faith in every way. In this way they can demonstrate that the Baha'i Faith does create a new way of life, which brings to the individual a complete association with the Will of God, and thus the establishment of a peaceful and universal society. Divisional attachments are of man, while universal service is of God.

"The Guardian is now anxious that all the friends achieve a universal consciousness and a universal way of life."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, November 20, 1955: Ibid.)

1425. Peace Will Come
"It is true that 'Abdu'l-Baha made statements linking the establishment of the unity of nations to the twentieth century. For example: '...The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which, in this century, will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland....' And, in 'The Promised Day is Come', following a similar statement quoted from 'Some Answered Questions', Shoghi Effendi makes this comment: 'This is the stage which the world is now approaching, the stage of world unity, which, as 'Abdu'l-Baha assures us, will, in this century, be securely established.'

[436] "There is also this statement from a letter written in 1946 to an individual believer on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary: '...All we know is that the Lesser and the Most Great Peace will come—their exact dates we do not know. The same is true as regards the possibility of a future war; we cannot state dogmatically it will or will not take place—all we know is that mankind must suffer and be punished sufficiently to make it turn to God.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, July 29, 1974: Ibid.)

1426. The Aims and Purpose of the Faith Are to Eliminate War and Establish Peace and Unity
"...the Baha'i Faith aims to eliminate all war, including nuclear. The

fundamental purpose of our Faith is unity and the establishment of peace. This goal, which is the longing of people throughout an increasingly insecure world, can only be achieved through the Teachings of Baha'u'llah. Since it is only the Baha'is who can give these Teachings to mankind, the friends must weigh carefully how they will spend their time and energy and guard against associating with activities which unduly distract them from their primary responsibility of sharing the Message of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, July 4, 1982: Ibid.)

1427. Nuclear Disarmament
"At the present time, the subject of nuclear disarmament has become very much a political issue, with demonstrations taking place not only in the United States but also in England and some western European countries. To single out nuclear disarmament falls short of the Baha'i position and would involve the Faith in the current disputes between nations. It is very clear that Baha'is believe disarmament, not only of nuclear weapons but of biological, chemical and all other forms, is essential."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, January 12, 1983: Ibid.)

1428. The Transition from the Present System of National Sovereignty to a System of World Government
"Concerning the transition from the present system of national sovereignty to a system of the world government, the House of Justice fully agrees with your view that the Baha'is must now do all in their power to promote this transition. This requires several related activities, all of which are goals of the present Seven Year Plan. One is the establishment as rapidly as possible of firmly grounded efficiently functioning Local Spiritual Assemblies in every part of the world, so that seekers everywhere will have a point of reference to which they can turn for guidance and for the Teachings of the Faith. A second is the deepening of the believers, of all ages, in their understanding of and obedience to the Teachings. A third is the proclamation of the Faith to all strata of society, and in particular to those in authority and to leaders of thought so that those who hold the direction of peoples in their hands will learn accurately about the nature and tenets of the Faith and will grow to respect it and implement its principles. A fourth is the promotion of Baha'i scholarship, so that an increasing number of believers will be able to analyse the problems of mankind in every field and to show how the Teachings solve them. A fifth is the development of relations [437] between the Baha'i International Community and the United Nations both directly with the highest U.N. institutions and at a grass-roots level in areas of rural development, education, etc.

"As you are no doubt aware, the Guardian indicated that the development of mankind from its present chaotic condition to the stage of the Baha'i World Commonwealth would be a long and gradual one. The coming into existence of a World Authority and the initiation of the Lesser Peace is one major

transformation in this process, and will be followed by other stages of the development of the Faith as outlined by Shoghi Effendi in his writings. Undoubtedly, as these developments are taking place, the counsel the institutions of the Faith can give to governments, the pattern of world administration offered by the Baha'i community and the great humanitarian projects which will be launched under the aegis of the Universal House of Justice will exercise a great influence on the course of progress."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, January 19, 1983: Ibid.)

1429. Baha'is Are Not Pacifists
"...It is true that Baha'is are not pacifists since we uphold the use of force in the service of justice and upholding law. But we do not believe that war is ever necessary and its abolition is one of the essential purposes and brightest promises of Baha'u'llah's revelation. His specific command to the kings of the earth is: 'Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice.' (Tablet to Queen Victoria, 'The Proclamation of Baha'u'llah', p. 13) The beloved Guardian has explained that the unity of mankind implies the establishment of a world commonwealth, a world federal system, '...liberated from the curse of war and its miseries ... in which Force is made the servant of Justice...' whose world executive 'backed by an international Force ... will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth.' This is obviously not war but the maintenance of law and order on a world scale. Warfare is the ultimate tragedy of disunity among nations where no international authority exists powerful enough to restrain them from pursuing their own limited interests. Baha'is therefore ask to serve their countries in non-combatant ways during such fighting; they will doubtless serve in such an international Force as Baha'u'llah envisions, whenever it comes into being."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, September 11, 1984: Ibid.)

1430. The Lesser Peace Will Initially Be a Political Unity
"Baha'u'llah's principal mission in appearing at this time in human history is the realization of the oneness of mankind and the establishment of peace among the nations; therefore, all the forces which are focused on accomplishing these ends are influenced by His Revelation. We know, however, that peace will come in stages. First, there will come the Lesser Peace, when the unity of nations will be achieved, then gradually the Most Great Peace—the spiritual as well as social and political unity of mankind, when the Baha'i World Commonwealth, operating in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Most Holy Book of the Baha'i Revelation, will have been established through the efforts of the Baha'is.

"As to the Lesser Peace, Shoghi Effendi has explained that this will initially be a political unity arrived at by decision of the governments of various nations; it will not be established by direct action of the Baha'i community. This does not mean, [438] however, that the Baha'is are standing aside and

waiting for the Lesser Peace to come before they do something about the peace of mankind. Indeed, by promoting the principles of the Faith, which are indispensable to the maintenance of peace, and by fashioning the instruments of the Baha'i Administrative Order, which we are told by the beloved Guardian is the pattern for future society, the Baha'is are constantly engaged in laying the groundwork for a permanent peace, the Most Great Peace being their ultimate goal.

"The Lesser Peace itself will pass through stages: at the initial stage the governments will act entirely on their own without the conscious involvement of the Faith; later on, in God's good time, the Faith will have a direct influence on it in ways indicated by Shoghi Effendi in his 'The Goal of a New World Order'. In connection with the steps that will lead to this latter stage, the Universal House of Justice will certainly determine what has to be done, in accordance with the guidance in the Writings, such as the passage you quoted from 'Tablets of Baha'u'llah', page 89. In the meantime, the Baha'is will undoubtedly continue to do all in their power to promote the establishment of peace."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, January 31, 1985: Ibid.)

XXXVIII. PILGRIMS' NOTES

[439] 1431. Any Narrative Not Authenticated by a Text Should Not Be Trusted
"Thou has written concerning the pilgrims and pilgrims' notes. Any narrative that is not authenticated by a Text should not be trusted. Narratives, even if true, cause confusion. For the people of Baha, the Text, and only the Text, is authentic."
('Abdu'l-Baha: from a previously untranslated Tablet)

1432. Privilege of Friends to Share Results of These Visits
"Regarding the notes taken by pilgrims at Haifa. The Guardian has stated that he is unwilling to sign the notes of any pilgrim, in order that the literature consulted by the believers shall not be unduly extended... This means that the notes of pilgrims do not carry the authority resident in the Guardian's letters written over his own signature. On the other hand each pilgrim brings back information and suggestions of a most precious character, and it is the privilege of all the friends to share in the spiritual results of these visits."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States: Baha'i News, No. 281, p. 4, July 1954)

1433. Pilgrims' Notes Are Hearsay and Cannot Claim the Authority of the Sacred Text
"The instructions of the Master and the Guardian make it very clear that Pilgrims' notes are hearsay and cannot claim the authority and binding power of the Sacred Text.... Moreover, the fact that the pilgrim writing of his experience is a reliable or well-known believer, or that the reported statement seems to be repeated in the notes of several pilgrims, does not in itself

confer authority upon the pilgrim's note in question."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 23, 1980)

1434. The Notes of Pilgrims Are for Their Own Use
"Shoghi Effendi has often said that the notes of the pilgrims should be for their own personal use and bear absolutely no authority. What he desires to convey to the friends at large he will always say in his general letters."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 26, 1933)

1435. The Difference Between Talks and Tablets
"Shoghi Effendi has laid down the principle that the Baha'is should not attribute much importance to talks reported to have been given by the Master, if these have not in one form or other obtained His sanction.

"Baha'u'llah has made it clear enough that only those things that have been revealed in the form of Tablets have a binding power over the friends. Hearsays may [440] be matters of interest but can in no way claim authority. This basic teaching of Baha'u'llah was to preserve the Faith from being corrupted like Islam which attributes binding authority to all the reported sayings of Muhammad.

"This being a basic principle of the Faith, we should not confuse Tablets that were actually revealed and mere talks attributed to the founders of the Cause. The first have absolute binding authority while the latter can in no way claim our obedience. The highest thing this can achieve is to influence the activities of the one who has heard the saying in person.

"Those talks of the Master that were later reviewed by Him, corrected or in some other form considered authentic by Himself, such as the 'Some Answered Questions', these could be considered as Tablets and therefore be given the necessary binding power. All the other talks such as are included in Ahmad's diary or the diary of pilgrims, do not fall under this category and could be considered only as interesting material to be taken for what they are worth.

"For this reason Shoghi Effendi has not been encouraging the publication of reported sayings that were not authenticated by the Master Himself. And when he said that they may be published if quotation marks are taken away, Shoghi Effendi tried to prevent the friends from considering as actual words of the Master things that were not authenticated by Him."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the United States Publishing Committee, December 29, 1931)

1436. Stories Told About 'Abdu'l-Baha
"He would also urge you to attach no importance to the stories told about 'Abdu'l-Baha or to those attributed to Him by the friends. These should be regarded in the same light as the notes and impressions of visiting pilgrims. They need not be suppressed, but they should not also be given prominence or official recognition."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 2, 1935)

1437. Only Signed or Sealed Tablets Are Considered Authentic
"According to the Teachings of Baha'u'llah no authority can be attached to a mere hearsay, no matter through whom it may come. The Tablets that bear the seal or signature of Baha'u'llah and the Master are the only parts of the literature that have any authority and that constitute the basis of our belief. All other forms of literature may bear points of interest but they cannot be considered as authentic. This is the view that Shoghi Effendi took towards the talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha that Ahmad Sohrab had incorporated in his book, and it is the attitude that he would take towards any other reported saying, naturally unless the Master has appended His signature to that talk and thereby given it the authority of a Tablet such as is the case with 'Some Answered Questions' that was actually corrected by Him."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 18, 1931)

1438. Pilgrim's Notes Reporting the Master's Words on Embracing and Kissing
"The pilgrim's note reports the Master as saying: 'Women and men must not [441] embrace each other when not married, or not about to be married. They must not kiss each other... If they wish to greet each other, or comfort each other, they may take each other by the hand.' In a letter to an individual written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi it is said: 'The Master's words to ..., which you quoted, can certainly be taken as the true spirit of the teachings on the subject of sex. We must strive to achieve this exalted standard.' (October 19, 1947)"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, February 10, 1974)

1439. Haifa Notes Collected by Mrs. Maxwell
"With reference to the Haifa notes collected by dear Mrs. Maxwell: These have exactly the same status as all other pilgrims' notes, and as such there should be no objection to their circulation among the believers. While these notes taken down by the pilgrims do not constitute as official pronouncements made by the Guardian, and therefore should not be imposed on the friends, those who wish to share them with the members of the Community should, under no circumstances, be prevented from doing so. Though not strictly official, and in some instances inaccurate and misleading, these notes, as experience has shown, can be of tremendous help, guidance and inspiration to many individual believers, and their value as such should therefore be readily admitted."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 28, 1939)

XXXIX. POLITICS AND GOVERNMENTS

A. Politics

[442] 1440. Political Figures
"The Guardian wishes me to draw the attention of the friends through you that

they should be very careful in their public utterance not to mention any political figures—either side with them or denounce them. This is the first thing to bear in mind. Otherwise they will involve the friends in political matters, which is infinitely dangerous for the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 12, 1933: Baha'i News, No. 72, April 1933, p. 3)

1441. Politicians: Non-Political Government Jobs
"Actual politicians, he feels, will for the most part never be willing to forget their ambitions, work and prestige in order to embrace the Faith, but association with all people, in government occupation or otherwise, who are progressive minded, is advisable, as we publicize the Faith this way and may meet receptive souls. There is no objection to Baha'is serving in government jobs that are purely non-political."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 30, 1947)

1442. No Baha'i Can Be Regarded as Republican or Democrat
"...no vote cast or office undertaken by a Baha'i should necessarily constitute acceptance, by the voter or office holder, of the entire programme of any political party. No Baha'i can be regarded as either Republican or Democrat, as such. He is above all else, the supporter of the principles enunciated by Baha'u'llah, with which, I am firmly convinced, the programme of no political party is completely harmonious...."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 26, 1933: Baha'i News, No. 85, July, 1934, p. 2)

1443. Voting in Civil Elections
"As regards the non-political character of the Faith,... The friends may vote, if they can do it, without identifying themselves with one party or another. To enter the arena of party politics is surely detrimental to the best interests of the Faith and will harm the Cause. It remains for the individuals to so use their right to vote as to keep aloof from party politics, and always bear in mind that they are voting on the merits of the individual, rather than because he belongs to one party or another. The matter must be made perfectly clear to the individuals, who will be left free to exercise their discretion and judgement. But if a certain person does enter into party politics and labours for the ascendency of one party over another, and continues to [443] do it against expressed appeals and warnings of the Assembly, then the Assembly has the right to refuse him the right to vote in Baha'i elections."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 16, 1933)

1444. Avoid Identification with Political Parties
"We have received your letter of 12 December 1973 concerning the problem of ... who says that it is very difficult for him to keep his job as a teacher in a public school without being registered as a member of one of the political

parties now in the government.

"A similar question has arisen in some other countries, particularly in Africa where the one-party system is in use. Although we understand that there is more than one political party in your country, we think it would be helpful to you to have a summary of the instructions we have given to African Assemblies, and this is enclosed.

"We suggest that ...'s case might offer your Assembly an opportunity to seek an appointment with the proper government official or officials to explain the Baha'i position on non-interference in political affairs, as well as on obedience and loyalty to government. Your approach should be to seek advice on what can be done in ...'s situation and in similar cases to avoid identification with party politics while at the same time showing the utmost loyalty to the government. Certainly this would afford your Assembly yet another opportunity to proclaim the Faith and its principles and to seek the respect and understanding of the officials."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, December 28, 1973)

1445. For Baha'is Living in Countries Where the Political Structure is Based on a One-Party System
"1. The beloved Guardian repeatedly emphasized the principle of refusing to join any political party. In 'The Advent of Divine Justice', in speaking of the rectitude of conduct which must manifest itself in the Baha'i community, he said: 'It must characterize the attitude of every loyal believer towards non-acceptance of political posts, non-identification with political parties, non-participation in political controversies, and non-membership in political organizations...'

"2. a. If the National Spiritual Assembly is satisfied that membership in the party is not compulsory according to the law of the land, but is promoted merely by persuasion, encouragement, and inducement through the granting of privileges and even threats, then the Baha'is should refrain from joining the party, whatever the personal sacrifices may be.

"b. If, however, it is ascertained by the National Spiritual Assembly, that the law requires every citizen to belong to the party, Baha'is may pay money equivalent to the dues involved, without accepting membership of the party. There is no objection to their carrying receipts indicating that the contribution has been made.

[444] "c. If alternative 2b. is not possible, Baha'is have no choice but to accept membership, without becoming active in the party, such as holding offices."
(From a Summary of Instructions of the Universal House of Justice attached to the above cited letter to Bolivia, December 28, 1973)

1446. No Loyal Believer Should Commit Himself to a Political Program
"...no loyal believer should under any circumstances commit himself in any way

to a political program or policy formulated and upheld by a political party. For affiliation with such a party necessarily entails repudiation of some principles and teachings of the Cause, or partial recognition of some of its fundamental verities. The friends should, therefore, keep aloof from party politics. What they should mainly keep away from under all circumstances and in all its forms is partisanship."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 17, 1935)

1447. Baha'is Should Refrain from Voting, if They Must Identify with a Political Party or Doctrine
"The main principle, as you know, is that the friends should refrain from participating in any political election, unless they ascertain that in casting their vote for this or that candidate they are not affiliating themselves with any political party or organization, and are not identifying themselves with any political program. The whole question hinges on the matter of identification, and not on voting in itself.

"The application of this principle the Guardian has left to the individuals who are conscientiously required to submit their own special cases in which they are doubtful to their assemblies for consideration and guidance."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 28, 1936)

1448. Enrolment When Political Affiliation or Activities Are Involved
"No additional requirements should be laid upon new members at the time of their declaration of belief. Rather, your Assembly should undertake to make the issues clear with such friends so that prospective new adherents may know beforehand of the position of the Faith in regard to political connections. When it is found that, in spite of this, a new Baha'i still has political associations or activities, he should be lovingly and patiently educated so that he will withdraw from them. Some will be able to achieve this immediately, but others will need time to sever their connections discreetly. This can be a delicate matter and requires an awareness of each individual's particular situation and obligations. Of course, if such a believer does not respond to the Assembly's efforts to disengage him from politics, he must be warned and, if this still produces no effect, the Assembly would ultimately have to consider depriving him of his voting rights."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Dominican Republic, July 12, 1984)

1449. Membership in Any Political Party Entails Repudiation of Principles of Peace and Unity
"The Baha'i Community is a world-wide organization seeking to establish true [445] and universal peace on earth. If a Baha'i works for one political party to overcome another it is a negation of the very spirit of the Faith. Membership in any political party, therefore, necessarily entails repudiation of some or all of the principles of peace and unity proclaimed by Baha'u'llah. As 'Abdu'l-Baha stated: 'Our party is God's party; we do not belong to any

party.'

"If a Baha'i were to insist on his right to support a certain political party, he could not deny the same degree of freedom to other believers. This would mean that within the ranks of the Faith, whose primary mission is to unite all men as one great family under God, there would be Baha'is opposed to each other. Where, then, would be the example of unity and harmony which the world is seeking?

"If the institutions of the Faith, God forbid, became involved in politics, the Baha'is would find themselves arousing antagonism instead of love. If they took one stand in one country, they would be bound to change the views of the people in another country about the aims and purposes of the Faith. By becoming involved in political disputes, the Baha'is instead of changing the world or helping it, would themselves be lost and destroyed. The world situation is so confused and moral issues which were once clear have become so mixed up with selfish and battling factions, that the best way Baha'is can serve the highest interests of their country and the cause of true salvation for the world is to sacrifice their political pursuits and affiliations and whole-heartedly and fully support the system of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies in Africa, February 8, 1970)

1450. Regarding a Baha'i Producing Television Advertising for a Political Campaign
"In reply to your query of 24 September concerning the involvement of a Baha'i in producing television advertising for a political campaign, the Universal House of Justice has directed us to convey its advice that the person in question should refrain from activities promoting the campaign of a politician, although this should not be construed as a restriction on non-Baha'i associates."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, October 29, 1979)

1451. Baha'is Can Neither Campaign for Office nor Undertake Partisan Political Activities—They May Hold Appointive Posts which Are Not Political
"In the case of Mr. ..., it is important that you ascertain precisely what his membership on a village council entails, and how he achieved such membership, i.e., by election or appointment. Your Assembly should understand that Baha'is do not engage in political activities nor belong to political parties, but may freely undertake non-political administrative work with governments, may hold appointive posts which are not political in character, or may serve on local councils if they do not campaign for office and are not required to undertake partisan political activities."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Leeward Islands, February 15, 1982)

[446] 1452. No Objection to a Baha'i Being Elected as a Neighbourhood Captain or Serving on a Neighbourhood Council, Provided...

"There is no objection to a Baha'i being elected a Barrio Captain or serving on a Barrio Council provided:

1. He is not required to become a member of a political party.

2. Service as a Barrio Captain or as a member of the Barrio Council does not involve him in partisan politics.

3. That he does not campaign for election to office. There is no objection to allowing one's name to be placed in nomination if nominations are required by law. If nominations are not obligatory and the voter is allowed to write on the ballot paper and vote for the names of those he wishes to be elected, this procedure should be followed by the Baha'is.

"It would be preferable, of course, if the election of members of a Barrio Council and Barrio Captains could be strictly in accordance with Baha'i principles. We would appreciate knowing whether this can be done in ... or whether it may be possible to amend the laws so that this procedure can be adopted in villages where the population is entirely or predominately Baha'i." (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Philippines, April 24, 1972)

B. Governments and Civil Authorities

1453. Shun Politics Like the Plague and be Obedient to the Government in Power
"The cardinal principle which we must follow, (in connection with your questions), is obedience to the Government prevailing in any land in which we reside. We cannot, because, say, we do not personally like a totalitarian form of government, refuse to obey it when it becomes the ruling power. Nor can we join underground Movements which are a minority agitating against the prevailing government.

"If a state of Revolution and complete chaos exists in a Country, so that it is impossible to say there is one government in power, then the friends must consult with their National or their Local Assembly, and be guided by what the Assembly considers the proper action to take; in other words which party might be best considered the legal governing authority.

"We see, therefore, that we must do two things—shun politics like the plague, and be obedient to the Government in power in the place where we reside. We cannot start judging how a particular government came into power, and therefore whether we should obey it or not. This would immediately plunge us into politics. We must obey in all cases except where a spiritual principle is involved, such as denying our Faith. For these spiritual principles we must be willing to die. What we Baha'is must face is the fact that society is rapidly disintegrating—so rapidly that moral issues which were clear half a century ago are now hopelessly confused, and what is more, thoroughly mixed up with battling political interests. That is why the Baha'is must turn all their forces into the channel of building up the Baha'i Cause and its administration. They can neither change nor help the world in any other way at present. If they become involved in the issues the Governments of the world are struggling over,

they will be lost. But if they build up the Baha'i pattern they can offer it as a remedy when all else has failed."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 21, 1948)

[447] 1454. The Baha'i Cause is Above Political Parties, But the Believers Are Obliged to Whole-Heartedly Obey Existing Political Regime
"At the outset it should be made indubitably clear that the Baha'i Cause being essentially a religious movement of a spiritual character stands above every political party or group, and thus cannot and should not act in contravention to the principles, laws, and doctrines of any government. Obedience to the regulations and orders of the state is, indeed, the sacred obligation of every true and loyal Baha'i. Both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha have urged us all to be submissive and loyal to the political authorities of our respective countries. It follows, therefore, that our ... friends are under the sacred obligation to whole-heartedly obey the existing political regime, whatever be their personal views and criticisms of its actual working. There is nothing more contrary to the spirit of the Cause than open rebellion against the governmental authorities of a country, specially if they do not interfere in and do not oppose the inner and sacred beliefs and religious convictions of the individual...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 11, 1934)

1455. The Baha'is Should Obey the Government Even at Risk of Sacrificing Administrative Affairs—In Matters of Faith No Compromise Allowed, Even Though Outcome is Death
"For whereas the friends should obey the government under which they live, even at the risk of sacrificing all their administrative affairs and interests, they should under no circumstances suffer their inner religious beliefs and convictions to be violated and transgressed by any authority whatever. A distinction of a fundamental importance must, therefore, be made between spiritual and administrative matters. Whereas the former are sacred and inviolable, and hence cannot be subject to compromise, the latter are secondary and can consequently be given up and even sacrificed for the sake of obedience to the laws and regulations of the government. Obedience to the state is so vital a principal of the Cause that should the authorities in ... decide to-day to prevent the Baha'is from holding any meeting or publishing any literature they should obey... But, as already pointed out, such an allegiance is confined merely to administrative matters which if checked can only retard the progress of the Faith for some time. In matters of belief, however, no compromise whatever should be allowed, even though the outcome of it be death or expulsion."
(Ibid.)

1456. Principle of Obedience to Government Does Not Oblige Baha'i Teachings to be Identified with Political Program
"There is one more point to be emphasized in this connection. The principle of

obedience to government does not place any Baha'i under the obligation of identifying the teachings of his Faith with the political program enforced by the government. For such an identification, besides being erroneous and contrary to both the spirit as well as the form of the Baha'i Message, would necessarily create a conflict within the conscience of every loyal believer.

"For reasons which are only too obvious the Baha'i philosophy of social and political organization cannot be fully reconciled with the political doctrines and conceptions that are current and much in vogue to-day. The wave of nationalism, [448] so aggressive and so contagious in its effects, which has swept not only over Europe but over a large part of mankind is, indeed, the very negation of the gospel of peace and of brotherhood proclaimed by Baha'u'llah. The actual trend in the political world is, indeed, far from being in the direction of the Baha'i teachings. The world is drawing nearer and nearer to a universal catastrophe which will mark the end of a bankrupt and of a fundamentally defective civilization.

"From such considerations we can well conclude that we as Baha'is can in no wise identify the teachings of Baha'u'llah with man-made creeds and conceptions, which by their very nature are impotent to save the world from the dangers with which it is being so fiercely and so increasingly assailed."
(Ibid.)

1457. Employment with the Foreign Service
"Baha'is are permitted to apply to the International Communication agency for employment with the United States Foreign Service..."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 7, 1979)

"The House of Justice feels that it would be permissible for you to accept the position of Vice-Consul on the understanding that you are not required to become involved in political activities. The House of Justice urges you to pay particular attention to this matter so that you do not enter upon a course that, at a later stage, would inevitably lead you into political affairs such as policy-making discussions with the Consul General on political matters. The House of Justice feels sure that you are aware of this point and of the delicate line that must be drawn."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 15, 1984)

1458. Baha'is Must Be Loyal to Their Spiritual Assembly and at the Same Time to Civil Government, Whether Tribal Council, a Cacique or a Municipal Authority
"As to your query about the Local Spiritual Assembly, it is indeed a divine institution, created by Baha'u'llah in His Kitab-i-Aqdas as the Local House of Justice. 'Abdu'l-Baha has clearly set out its provenance, authority and duties and has explained the differences between it and other administrative institutions, whether of the past or the present. We refer you to the book 'Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha', sections 37, 38, and 40.

"It is clear that while Local Spiritual Assemblies must supervise all Baha'i

matters in their areas, including arrangement for the Nineteen Day Feast, the observance of the Holy Days, the election of the members of the Assembly, promoting the teaching work, caring for the spiritual welfare and Baha'i education of the friends and children, etcetera, they and the friends themselves must at the same time be good citizens and loyal to the civil government, whether it be a Tribal Council, a Cacique or a municipal authority.

"In another national community, where the number of believers had increased to the point where the population of some villages had become 100% or almost 100% Baha'i, the House of Justice upheld the above principles and stated that in each such village, while they should elect their Local Spiritual Assembly, they should [449] continue to elect the local Council as required by the Government, and the functions of these two bodies should be kept distinct, even if their memberships were identical."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, April 13, 1983)

1459. Elective or Appointive Posts in Government Should Be Accepted Only if They Do Not Contravene Given Guidelines
"It is better if the friends avoid accepting either elective or appointive posts of the nature described in your letter... Such posts should only be accepted if in the process of obtaining the appointment, in winning the election, or in discharging their duties they do not contravene Baha'i principles. This includes the following:

"That they do not campaign for election.

"That they do not contravene the guidelines set forth by the beloved Guardian in the following passage:

'Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster. Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen. Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them. Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world. It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representatives, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must necessarily involve. Let them affirm

their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Baha'u'llah, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to become worthy agencies of that Divine Polity which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men.'

"The application of the above principles is left to the discretion of your National Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, October 12, 1977)

1460. The Faith is Not Opposed to True Interests of Any Nation
"The Faith is not opposed to the true interests of any nation, nor is it against any party or faction. It holds aloof from all controversies and transcends them all, while enjoining upon its followers loyalty to government and a sane patriotism. This love for their country the Baha'is show by serving its well-being in their daily activity, or working in the administrative channels of the government instead of through party [450] politics or in diplomatic or political posts. The Baha'is may, indeed are encouraged to mix with all strata of society, with the highest authorities and with leading personalities as well as with the mass of the people, and should bring the knowledge of the Faith to them; but in so doing they should strictly avoid becoming identified, or identifying the Faith, with political pursuits and party programmes."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assemblies of Africa, February 8, 1970)

1461. Not Our Purpose to Violate Any Country's Constitution
"...Let them proclaim that in whatever country they reside, and however advanced their institutions, or profound their desire to enforce the laws, and apply the principles enunciated by Baha'u'llah, they will, unhesitatingly, subordinate the operation of such laws and the application of such principles to the requirements and legal enactments of their respective governments. Theirs is not the purpose, while endeavoring to conduct and perfect the administrative affairs of their Faith, to violate, under any circumstances, the provisions of their country's constitution, much less to allow the machinery of their administration to supersede the government of their respective countries."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 21, 1933: World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 65-66)

1462. Baha'is Obey the Law, Federal or State
"...Baha'is obey the laws, Federal or state, unless submission to these laws amounts to a denial of their Faith. We live the Baha'i life, fully and continuously, unless prevented by the authorities. This implies, if it does not categorically state, that a Baha'i is not required to make a judgment as to the precedence of Federal or state law—this is for the courts to decide."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 30, 1965: National Baha'i Review, No. 32, August, 1970, p. 1)

1463. Obedience to Just Governments—What It Means
"Regarding your question about politics and the Master's Will: The attitude of the Baha'is must be two-fold, complete obedience to the government of the country they reside in, and no interference whatsoever in political matters or questions. What the Master's statement really means is obedience to a duly constituted Government, whatever that Government may be in form. We are not the ones, as individual Baha'is, to judge our Government as just or unjust—for each believer would be sure to hold a different viewpoint, and within our own Baha'i fold a hotbed of dissension would spring up and destroy our unity. We must build up our Baha'i system, and leave the faulty systems of the world to go their way. We cannot change them through becoming involved in them; on the contrary, they will destroy us.

"The Guardian does not think any part of this statement of his is suitable for publication in the Press. The less 'politics' is associated in any way with the name Baha'i, the better. It should always be made clear that we are a religious non-political community, working for humanitarian ends."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Teaching Committee for Central America, July 3, 1948)

[451] 1464. Taking of Oaths
"In reply to your letter of September 12th the Universal House of Justice asks us to refer you to a letter on this subject written on behalf of the beloved Guardian on July 11th, 1956 to your National Spiritual Assembly:

'Regarding taking oaths, there is nothing in the Teachings on this subject. As a Baha'i is enjoined by Baha'u'llah to be truthful, he would express his truthfulness, no matter what the formality of the law in any local place required of him. There can be no objection to Baha'is conforming to the requirements of the law court whatever they may be in such matters, as in no case would they constitute in any way a denial of their own beliefs as Baha'is.'

"The above direction makes it clear that Baha'is may take an oath, if required, on any sacred book. The Universal House of Justice considers that it may be preferable for them to do so on a Baha'i book, if possible."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, September 20, 1973)

1465. Implicit Obedience to Administrative Regulations
"To all administrative regulations which the civil authorities have issued from time to time, or will issue in the future in that land, as in all other countries, the Baha'i community, faithful to its sacred obligations towards its government, and conscious of its civic duties, has yielded, and will continue to yield implicit obedience...."
(Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, p. 372, Wilmette, 1987 ed.)

1466. There is No Objection to Taking Case to Civil Court if Assembly and Baha'is Are Unable to Negotiate a Settlement of a Dispute
"...The House of Justice ... states that believers should take their

differences to the Spiritual Assembly and abide by the decision of the Assembly. However, if Baha'is cannot negotiate a settlement of a dispute between them, and if the Spiritual Assembly cannot succeed in arbitrating a solution to the dispute, then there is no objection to the Baha'is having recourse to the civil courts. The Assembly should not hesitate to refuse to act in a case which it is satisfied is more properly a question for the law courts. However, the Assembly does not have the authority to prohibit a believer from having recourse to the civil courts if he decides to do so."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, cited in a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom, February 9, 1983)

1467. Let the World Know the Real Aim of Baha'u'llah
"...We should let the world know what the real aim of Baha'u'llah was. Up to the present the Unity of Mankind was only of an academic importance. Now it is becoming more and more a subject for international statesmen to think of. It is coming to the field of practical politics. It is therefore a wonderful chance for us to come to the front and expound the teaching which is the goal and aim of the social precepts of Baha'u'llah. Shoghi Effendi hopes that the friends will re-echo this call to an organic unity of mankind until it forms part of the conscious faith of every living man in [452] the world. Great judgment should be however practiced lest we be misunderstood and our Faith be classed among radical movements."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 28, 1932)

1468. Non-Interference in Political Affairs—We Must Shun Pronouncements About Systems of Politics and Not Write About Current Political Affairs
"There is one fundamental point which Shoghi Effendi wishes me to emphasize. By the principle of non-interference in political matters we should not mean that only corrupt politics and partial and sectarian politics are to be avoided, but that any pronouncement on any current system of politics connected with any government must be shunned. We should not only take sides with no political party, group or system actually in use, but we should also refuse to commit ourselves to any statement which may be interpreted as being sympathetic or antagonistic to any existing political organization or philosophy. The attitude of the Baha'is must be one of complete aloofness. They are neither for nor against any system of politics. Not that they are the ill-wishers of their respective governments but that due to certain basic considerations arising out of their teachings and of the administrative machinery of their Faith they prefer not to get entangled in political affairs and to be misinterpreted and misunderstood by their countrymen.

"In the light of this principle it becomes clear that to contribute articles on current political affairs to any newspaper must inevitably lead the writer to express, directly or in an indirect manner, his view and his criticisms on the subject. He is, in addition, always liable to be misinterpreted and misunderstood by the politicians. The best thing to do, therefore, is simply

not to write on current politics at all."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 2, 1934)

1469. One Method by which One Can Criticize the Present Day Socio-Political Order
"There is, however, one case in which one can criticize the present social and political order without being necessarily forced to side with or oppose any existing regime. And this is the method adopted by the Guardian in his 'Goal of a New World Order'. His criticisms of the world conditions beside being very general in character are abstract; that is, instead of condemning existing institutional organizations it goes deeper and analyzes the basic ideas and conceptions which have been responsible for their establishment. This being a mere intellectual and philosophical approach to the problem of world political crisis, there is no objection if you wish to try such a method, which immediately carries you from the field of practical politics to that of political theory. But in view of the fact that no clear-cut line can be drawn between theory and practice you should be extremely careful not to make too free a use of such a method."
(Ibid.)

1470. Kingship in the Future
"As to your query whether or not there will be kingship throughout the world in future, the Universal House of Justice calls to your attention Shoghi Effendi's statement on page 219 of 'God Passes By':

[453] 'The establishment of a constitutional form of government, in which the ideals of republicanism and the majesty of kingship, characterized by Him as 'one of the signs of God', are combined, He recommends as a meritorious achievement.'

"In 'The Promised Day Is Come' on pages 73 to 76, the Guardian quotes many passages from the Writings of Baha'u'llah lauding the principle of kingship and envisaging an increase of monarchies in the future. The House of Justice suggests that a study of this section of the book will provide you with the understanding you seek."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 29, 1977)

1471. President Wilson and Dr. Jordan
"With regard to Ex-President Wilson and Dr. Jordan, it seems fairly clear that both of these men were considerably influenced by the Baha'i Teachings; but at the same time it is well to avoid making dogmatic statements that they 'got all their principles from Baha'u'llah', or the like, as we are not in a position to prove such statements, and to make claims which we cannot prove weakens instead of strengthening our position."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 16, 1925)

C. Government Employees

1472. Those Engaged in Government Service Should Perform Their Duties with Utmost Fidelity, Trustworthiness...
"As for those who are engaged in government service, they should perform their duties with the utmost fidelity, trustworthiness, rectitude, uprightness, integrity and high-mindedness. Let them not tarnish their good repute by pursuing personal interests, nor, for the sake of transient worldly benefits, make themselves objects of public odium and outcasts of the Threshold of Grandeur."
('Abdu'l-Baha: from a previously untranslated Tablet: Trustworthiness: A Cardinal Baha'i Virtue, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, January 1987)

1473. Government Employees Should Perform Deeds and Actions of the Highest Degree of Rectitude and Honesty
"Ye who are the sincere well-wishers of the state, who are the dutiful and compliant subjects of the government, should occupy yourselves in constant service. Anyone who entereth the employ of the government should show forth in all his deeds and actions the highest degree of rectitude and honesty, of temperance and self-discipline, of purity and sanctity, of justice and equity. If, God forbid, he should be guilty of the least breach of trust, or approach his duties in a slack or desultory fashion, or extort so much as a farthing from the populace, or seek to further his own selfish interests and personal gain—then it is certain that he shall be deprived of the outpourings of God's grace."
(Ibid.)

1474. Those Who Are Selected to Serve the Public Should Perform Their Duties in a Spirit of the True Servitude
"Those persons who are selected to serve the public, or are appointed to administrative positions, should perform their duties in a spirit of true servitude and ready [454] compliance. That is to say, they should be distinguished by their goodly disposition and virtuous character, content themselves with their allotted remuneration and act with trustworthiness in all their doings. They should keep themselves aloof from unworthy motives, and be far removed above covetous designs; for rectitude, probity and righteousness are among the most potent means for attracting the grace of God and securing both the prosperity of the country and the welfare of the people. Glory and honour for man are not to be found in fortunes and riches, least of all in those which have been unlawfully amassed through extortion, embezzlement and corruption practised at the expense of an exploited populace. Supreme honour, nobility and greatness in the human world, and true felicity in this life and the life to come—all consist in equity and uprightness, sanctity and detachment. If a man would seek distinction, he should suffice himself with a frugal provision, seek to better the lot of the poor of the realm, choose the way of justice and fair-mindedness, and tread the path of high-spirited service. Such a one, needy though he be, shall win imperishable riches and attain unto everlasting honour."
(Ibid., p. 11)

1475. Those Who Enter Service of the Government Should Shun All Forms of Venality and Corruption

"If any of the friends should enter into service of the government, they should make their occupation a means of drawing nearer to the divine Threshold: they should act with probity and uprightness, rigorously shun all forms of venality and corruption, and content themselves with the salaries they are receiving, taking pride, rather, in the degree of sagacity, competence and judgement that they can bring to their work. If a person content himself with a single loaf of bread, and perform his duties with as much justice and fair-mindedness as lieth within his power, he will be the prince of mortals, and the most praiseworthy of men. Noble and distinguished will he be, despite his empty purse! Pre-eminent will he rank among the free, although his garb be old and worn! For man, praise and glory reside in virtuous and noble qualities; honour and distinction in nearness to the divine Threshold."

(Ibid.)

1476. If One Abuses His Position with the Government Through Corrupt or Mercenary Behavior...

"If one of the friends ... be appointed to a high administrative office, he should strive diligently, to perform the duties committed to his charge with perfect honesty, integrity, sincerity, rectitude and uprightness. If, however, he abuse his position through corrupt or mercenary behaviour, he will be held in detestation at the Threshold of Grandeur and incur the wrath of the Abha Beauty—nay, he shall be forsaken by the One True God and all who adore Him. So far from acting thus, he should content himself with his salary and allowance, seek out the way of righteousness, and dedicate his life to the service of state and people. Such must be the conduct and bearing of the Baha'is. Whoso transgresseth these bounds shall fall at length into manifest loss."

(Ibid.)

[455] 1477. If a Man Deals Faithlessly with a Just Government, He Deals Faithlessly with God

"All government employees, whether of high or low rank, should, with perfect integrity, probity and rectitude, content themselves with the modest stipends and allowances that are theirs. They should keep their hands unsullied and preserve their fair name from blemish.... If a man deals faithlessly with a just government he shall have dealt faithlessly with God; and if he render it faithful service he shall have rendered that service to God."

(Ibid.)

1478. Content with Wages Received, They Should Not Stain Their Character Through Acts of Bribery and Fraud nor Misappropriate a Single Penny

"Those souls who are employed in government departments should approach their duties with entire detachment, integrity and independence of spirit, and with complete consecration and sanctity of purpose. Content with the wages they are receiving, they should see that they do not stain their fair character through acts of bribery and fraud. Were one of the friends in this day to

misappropriate so much as a single penny, the sacred mantle of God's Cause would become sullied by his action and the shame of it would attach to the whole community. Heaven forbid! Nay, rather, the government and people should come to repose such trust in the Baha'is as to wish to commit all affairs of state throughout the provinces into the chaste, pure hands of God's well-beloved."
(Ibid.)

XL. PRAYER AND MEDITATION

A. Prayer and Meditation

[456] 1479. A Prayerful Condition is the Best of Conditions, Especially in Private and at Midnight
"The prayerful condition is the best of all conditions, for man in such a state communeth with God, especially when prayer is offered in private and at times when one's mind is free, such as at midnight. Indeed, prayer imparteth life."
('Abdu'l-Baha, from a recently translated Tablet: Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, 1980)

1480. The Reason for Privacy When Communing with God
"The reason why privacy hath been enjoined in moments of devotion is this, that thou mayest give thy best attention to the remembrance of God, that thy heart may at all times be animated with His Spirit, and not be shut out as by a veil from thy Best Beloved. Let not thy tongue pay lip service in praise of God while thy heart be not attuned to the exalted summit of Glory, and the Focal Point of communion. Thus if haply thou dost live in the Day of Resurrection, the mirror of thy heart will be set towards Him Who is the Day-Star of Truth; and no sooner will His light shine forth than the splendour thereof shall forthwith be reflected in thy heart. For He is the Source of all goodness, and unto Him revert all things. But if He appeareth while thou hast turned unto thyself in meditation, this shall not profit thee, unless thou shalt mention His Name by words He hath revealed. For in the forthcoming Revelation it is He Who is the Remembrance of God, whereas the devotions which thou art offering at present have been prescribed by the Point of the Bayan, while He Who will shine resplendent in the Day of Resurrection is the Revelation of the inner reality enshrined in the Point of the Bayan—a Revelation more potent, immeasurably more potent, than the one which hath preceded it."
(The Bab: Selections from the Writings of the Bab, pp. 93-94)

1481. The More Detached and Pure the Prayer the More Acceptable to God
"The most acceptable prayer is the one offered with the utmost spirituality and radiance; its prolongation hath not been and is not beloved of God. The more detached and the purer the prayer, the more acceptable is it in the presence of God."
(Ibid., pp 77-78)

1482. The Inspiration Received Through Meditation
"...There are no set forms of meditation prescribed in the teachings, no plan,

as such, for inner development. The friends are urged—nay enjoined—to pray, and [457] they also should meditate, but the manner of doing the latter is left entirely to the individual...

"The inspiration received through meditation is of a nature that one cannot measure or determine. God can inspire into our minds things that we had no previous knowledge of, if he desires to do so."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 25, 1943: Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude, op. cit.)

1483. With Prayer and Meditation Must Go Action and Example
"Prayer and meditation are very important factors in deepening the spiritual life of the individual, but with them must go also action and example, as these are the tangible results of the former. Both are essential."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 15, 1944: Ibid.)

1484. The Importance and Power of Meditation
"Through meditation the doors of deeper knowledge and inspiration may be opened. Naturally, if one meditates as a Baha'i he is connected with the Source; if a man believing in God meditates he is tuning in to the power and mercy of God; but we cannot say that any inspiration which a person, not knowing Baha'u'llah, or not believing in God, receives is merely from his own ego. Meditation is very important, and the Guardian sees no reason why the friends should not be taught to meditate, but they should guard against superstitious or foolish ideas creeping into it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Ibid.)

1485. Every Day Upon Arising One Should Compare Today with Yesterday and Pray...
"...Every day, in the morning when arising one should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. VIII, No. 6, p. 68)

1486. How to Pray—One Must Start Out with the Right Concept of God
"...we must not be rigid about praying; there is not a set of rules governing it; the main thing is we must start out with the right concept of God, the Manifestation, the Master, the Guardian—we can turn, in thought, to any one of them when we pray. For instance, you can ask Baha'u'llah for something, or, thinking of Him, ask God for it. The same is true of the Master or the Guardian. You can turn in thought to either of them and then ask their intercession, or pray direct to God. As long as you don't confuse their

stations, and make them all equal, it does not matter much how you orient your thoughts."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 24, 1946)

[458] 1487. Wiser to Use Meditations Given by Baha'u'llah—Not Set Form Recommended by Someone Else
"As to your question about prayer and whether it is necessary to recite the prayers of only the Central Figures of our Faith, we have been asked to quote here the following two excerpts on this subject, from letters written by Shoghi Effendi's secretary on his behalf:

'...as the Cause embraces members of all races and religions we should be careful not to introduce into it the customs of our previous beliefs. Baha'u'llah has given us the obligatory prayers, also prayers before sleeping, for travellers, etc. We should not introduce a new set of prayers He has not specified, when He has given us already so many, for so many occasions.'

'He thinks it would be wiser for the Baha'is to use the Meditations given by Baha'u'llah, and not any set form of meditation recommended by someone else; but the believers must be left free in these details and allowed to have personal latitude in finding their own level of communion with God.'

"As to the reading of prayers or selections from the Sacred Writings of other religions: Such readings are permissible, and indeed from time to time are included in the devotional programmes of Baha'i Houses of Worship, demonstrating thereby the universality of our Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 7, 1974)

1488. Turn to Manifestation
"While praying it would be better to turn one's thoughts to the Manifestation as He continues, in the other world, to be our means of contact with the Almighty. We can, however, pray directly to God Himself."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, April 27, 1937: Dawn of a New Day, p. 67)

1489. Praying to Baha'u'llah
"You have asked whether our prayers go beyond Baha'u'llah: It all depends whether we pray to Him directly or through Him to God. We may do both, and also can pray directly to God, but our prayers would certainly be more effective and illuminating if they are addressed to Him through His Manifestation, Baha'u'llah.

"Under no circumstances, however, can we, while repeating the prayers, insert the name Baha'u'llah where the word 'God' is used. This would be tantamount to a blasphemy."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 14, 1937)

1490. Praying to Baha'u'llah—As the Door

"We cannot know God directly, but only through His Prophets. We can pray to Him realizing that through His Prophets we know Him, or we can address our prayer in thought to Baha'u'llah, not as God, but as the Door to our knowing God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer: High Endeavors: Messages to Alaska, p. 71)

[459] 1491. We May Turn to the Guardian in Prayer, But Should Not Confuse His Station with that of a Prophet
"We pray to God, or to Baha'u'llah, as we please. But if in our thoughts we desire to turn to the Guardian first and then address our prayer, there is no objection, as long as we always bear in mind he is only the Guardian, and do not confuse his station with that of the Prophet or even of the Master."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 22, 1947)

1492. Turning Toward the Shrine of Baha'u'llah in Prayer
"In prayer the believers can turn their consciousness toward the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, provided that in doing so they have a clear and correct understanding of His station as a Manifestation of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 15, 1935)

1493. Through 'Abdu'l-Baha One Can Address Baha'u'llah
"If you find you need to visualize someone when you pray, think of the Master. Through Him you can address Baha'u'llah. Gradually try to think of the qualities of the Manifestation, and in that way a mental form will fade out, for after all the body is not the thing, His Spirit is there and is the essential, everlasting element."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 31, 1949)

1494. People Who Desire to Meet and Pray
"In some places the Baha'is have held meetings for prayer, for people who desire to meet and pray. As we have such wonderful prayers and meditations in our writings, the reading of these with friends who are interested in and crave for this type of small meeting is often a step towards attracting them to the Faith. Perhaps you can start such an activity in your city."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 4, 1956: Baha'i Meetings, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, November 1975)

1495. Prayers Should Be Read as Printed
"Regarding your question as to the changing of pronouns in Baha'i prayers: The Guardian does not approve of such changes, either in the specific prayers or in any others. They should be read as printed without changing a single word."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 13, 1944: Baha'i News, No. 171, November 1944, p. 3)

1496. Strictly Adhere to the Text of the Holy Writings

"In regard to your question as to whether it is permissible to substitute the plural pronoun for the singular in prayers worded in the singular, the Guardian would strongly urge your N.S.A. to inform the friends to strictly adhere to the text of the Holy Writings, and not to deviate even a hair-breadth from what has been revealed by the Holy Pen. Besides, it should be noted that congregational prayer has been discouraged by Baha'u'llah, and that it is allowed only in the case of the prayer for the dead."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, October 17, 1934)

[460] 1497. In Quoting Prayers
"In quoting prayers any part may be used, but should be quoted as it is, however short."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

1498. Specific Time for Remembrance of God
"...Moreover the friends must observe the specific times for the remembrance of God, meditation, devotion and prayer, as it is highly unlikely, nay, rather impossible, that any enterprise should prosper and develop short of Divine bestowals and confirmations...."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the Baha'is of the East, December 19, 1923: Living the Life, p. 1)

1499. Dawn Prayers
"Blessed is he who, at the hour of dawn, centring his thoughts on God, occupied with His remembrance, and supplicating His forgiveness, directeth his steps to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar and, entering therein, seateth himself in silence to listen to the verses of God, the Sovereign, the Mighty, the All-Praised...."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 115, p. 61)

"QUESTION: Concerning the remembrance of God in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar 'at the hour of dawn'.

"ANSWER: Although the words 'at the hour of dawn' are used in the Book of God, it is acceptable to God at the earliest dawn of day, between dawn and sunrise, or even up to two hours after sunrise."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas: Q 15, p. 111)

1500. Morning Prayers
"One of the characteristics of Baha'i society will be the gathering of the believers each day during the hours between dawn and two hours after sunrise to listen to the reading and chanting of the Holy Word. In many communities at the present time, especially in rural ones, such gatherings would fit naturally into the pattern of the friends' daily life, and where this is the case it would do much to foster the unity of the local community and deepen the friends' knowledge of the Teachings if such gatherings could be organized by the Local Spiritual Assembly on a regular basis. Attendance at these gatherings is not to be obligatory, but we hope that the friends will more and more be drawn to take part in them. This is a goal which can be attained gradually."

(From the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Naw-Ruz, 1974)

1501. We Should Not Make a Practice of Saying Grace or of Teaching It to Our Children

"He does not feel that the friends should make a practice of saying grace or of teaching it to children. This is not part of the Baha'i Faith, but a Christian practice, and as the Cause embraces members of all races and religions we should be careful not to introduce into it the customs of our previous beliefs. Baha'u'llah has given us the obligatory prayers, also prayers before sleeping, for travellers, etc. We should not introduce a new set of prayers He has not specified, when He has given us already so many, for so many occasions."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 27, 1947)

1502. Congregational Prayer Only for the Dead

"The daily prayers are to be said each one for himself, aloud or silent makes no difference. [461] There is no congregational prayer except that for the dead. We read healing and other prayers in our meetings, but the daily prayer is a personal obligation, so someone else reading it is not quite the same thing as saying it for yourself..."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 31, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 220, June 1949, pp. 2-3)

1503. Prayers May Be Recited in Unison

"You have asked whether it is permissible for the friends to chant a prayer collectively. There is a difference between chanting a prayer collectively and congregational prayer. The latter is a formal prayer usually led by an individual using a prescribed ritual. Congregational prayer in this form is forbidden in the Faith except in the case of the Prayer for the Dead. While reciting prayers in unison and spontaneously joining in the recitation of the Words of God is not forbidden, the friends should bear in mind the advice of the beloved Guardian on this subject when he stated that:

'...although the friends are thus left free to follow their own inclination, ... they should take the utmost care that any manner they practice should not acquire too rigid a character, and thus develop into an institution. This is a point which the friends should always bear in mind, lest they deviate from the clear path indicated in the Teachings.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, February 6, 1975)

1504. One Person Should Read the Funeral Prayer

"We have received your letter of 14th December inquiring which funeral prayer is considered as the desirable one for use in Europe, whether there is any obligatory prayer and what instructions are concerning standing at a Baha'i funeral service.

"The only obligatory prayer for use at Baha'i funerals is the prayer No. 167 in 'Prayers and Meditations'. This prayer should be recited by one of those

present and all present should stand while it is being read. There is no requirement to face the Qiblih or any other particular direction while this prayer is being read.

"The reading of any other prayers or writings at a Baha'i funeral is entirely optional. In general it is desirable to keep the service simple and dignified."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Finland, January 31, 1971)

1505. Recital or Chanting of Prayers—Prayer is Essentially Communion Between God and Man
"...There is no objection to the recital or chanting of prayers in the Oriental language, but there is also no obligation whatever of adopting such a form of prayer at any devotional service in the auditorium of the Temple. It should neither be required nor prohibited. The important thing that should always be borne in mind is that with the exception of certain specific obligatory prayers, Baha'u'llah has given us no strict or special rulings in matters of worship whether in the Temple or elsewhere. Prayer is essentially communion between man and God, and as such transcends all ritualistic forms and formulae."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 15, 1935: Baha'i News, No. 93, July 1935, p. 1)

[462] 1506. Healing Prayer and Prayers for the Fast
"Concerning the Healing Prayer, the Guardian wishes me to inform you that there is no special ruling for its recital. The believer is free to recite it as many times and in the way he wishes. There are also no obligatory prayers for the Fast. But there are some specific ones revealed by Baha'u'llah for that purpose."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, October 17, 1934)

1507. Effectiveness of Healing Prayer
"The Healing Prayers revealed by Baha'u'llah can be effective even though used by non-believers. But their effectiveness is of course greater in the case of those who fully accept the Revelation."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 19, 1939: Baha'i News, No. 134, March 1940, p. 2)

1508. Prayers Answered Through Action
"...It is not sufficient to pray diligently for guidance, but this prayer must be followed by meditation as to the best methods of action and then action itself. Even if the action should not immediately produce results, or perhaps not be entirely correct, that does not make so much difference, because prayers can only be answered through action and if someone's action is wrong, God can use that method of showing the pathway which is right."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 22, 1957: The Individual and Teaching, A Compilation of the Universal

House of Justice, 1977)

1509. Pray to be Protected from Contamination of Society
"...Love for each other, the deep sense that we are a new organism, the dawn-breakers of a New World Order, must constantly animate our Baha'i lives, and we must pray to be protected from the contamination of society which is so diseased with prejudice."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of Atlanta, Georgia, February 5, 1947: Living the Life, p. 13)

1510. Five Steps of Prayer
"Regarding the five steps of prayer outlined by the Guardian and recorded by Mrs. Moffett in her booklet the 'Call to Prayer': These, he wishes me to explain, are merely personal suggestions and need not, therefore, be adopted strictly and universally by the believers."
(From a letter dated June 30, 1938 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer)

1511. Reciting Any Prayer Nine Times Not Obligatory
"There is no obligation for a believer to recite always any prayer nine times. Ritualism is certainly to be avoided in all matters affecting Baha'i worship...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 26, 1939)

[463] 1512. The Spiritual Man Prays Only for Love of God
"In the highest prayer, men pray only for the love of God, not because they fear Him or hell, or hope for bounty or heaven... When a man falls in love with a human being, it is impossible for him to keep from mentioning the name of his beloved. How much more difficult is it to keep from mentioning the Name of God when one has come to love Him... The spiritual man finds no delight in anything save in commemoration of God."
(Report of 'Abdu'l-Baha's words quoted in Baha'u'llah and the New Era, p. 105, Wilmette 1976 ed: The Importance of Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, A Compilation)

1513. Prayer Beads, Chanting, Congregational Prayer, etc.
"In the matter of the distribution and use of prayer beads, in this and other matters of secondary importance he does not wish that any hard and fast rules be set up. The believers should not be required to use prayer beads, nor should they be prevented from doing so, as the Teachings do not contain any specific instructions on the subject."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 4, 1940: Baha'i News, No. 137, July 1940, p. 3)

1514. Reading Prayers on the Radio
"You have asked specifically about reading prayers on the radio. Of course this is permissible, but you will be cautious concerning the setting of the prayers, i.e., what kind of materials may be presented before and after the prayers ...

so that they are assured of that dignity and reverence which they deserve. There may also be considerations of timing (the hours of the day best chosen, Sunday as the customary day of religious observance, etc.), in relation to the customs of the station, of the area, or other. Such recorded disc programs as 'Words for the World' include prayers, of course."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, July 8, 1973)

1515. Baha'i Children, Communes and Prayers
"...Every day at first light, ye gather the Baha'i children together and teach them the communes and prayers. This is a most praiseworthy act, and bringeth joy to the children's hearts; that they should, at every morn, turn their faces toward the Kingdom and make mention of the Lord and praise His Name, and in the sweetest of voices, chant and recite."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Education, p. 28)

"...there is no objection to children who are as yet unable to memorize a whole prayer learning certain sentences only."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 27, 1947)

1516. Mothers or Others Delegated Should Choose Excerpts from the Sacred Word for Children to Memorize
"The Guardian feels that it would be better for either the mothers of Baha'i children—or some Committee your Assembly might delegate the task to—to choose excerpts [464] from the Sacred Word to be used by the child rather than just something made up. Of course prayer can be purely spontaneous, but many of the sentences and thoughts combined in Baha'i writings of a devotional nature are easy to grasp, and the revealed Word is endowed with a power of its own."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, August 8, 1942)

1517. There Are No Special Instructions for Repeating Prayers of the Bab*
"Concerning the prayer for difficulty revealed by the Bab: He wishes me to inform you that it is not accompanied by any instructions for its recital."*
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 6, 1937)

"Regarding your questions: The Guardian feels it is not necessary to repeat the Bab's prayer so many times."**
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 30, 1950)

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*Written in response to a question as to how often this prayer should be repeated to produce the greatest results.

**Written in response to a question about the repetition 114 times in the morning for 19 days of the prayer of the Bab, 'Say! God sufficeth all things above all things...' (See also: No. 1528)

1518. Community Prayer Sessions
"The Guardian wishes me to assure you that he sees no objection to the friends coming together for meditation and prayer. Such a communion helps in fostering fellowship among the believers, and as such is highly commendable."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 20, 1937: Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, op. cit.)

1519. Baha'is Should Be Taught to Meditate, But Also to Guard Against Superstitious Practices
"Through meditation the doors of deeper knowledge and inspiration may be opened. Naturally, if any one meditates as a Baha'i he is connected with the Source; if a man believing in God meditates he is tuning in to the power and mercy of God; but we cannot say that any inspiration which a person not knowing Baha'u'llah, or not believing in God, receives is merely from his own ego. Meditation is very important, and the Guardian sees no reason why the friends should not be taught to meditate, but they should guard against superstitious or foolish ideas creeping into it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 19, 1945)

1520. "O Subduer of Winds", an Invocation for Moments of Danger
"Regarding the invocation 'Ya Musakin el Ariah': It literally means 'O Subduer of Winds'. The believers are not required to recite it, but may do so in moments of personal danger."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 6, 1939)

B. Obligatory Prayer

[465] 1521. There Are Mysteries and a Wisdom in Every Word and Movement of the Obligatory Prayers
"Know thou that in every word and movement of the obligatory prayer there are allusions, mysteries and a wisdom that man is unable to comprehend, and letters and scrolls cannot contain."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. I, p. 85)

1522. Obligatory Prayers
"As obligatory prayers require either genuflection or ablution and orienting toward Bahji, they cannot truly be said by one person for a group of people without it being in effect a form of congregational prayer, so he thinks it better to avoid it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 31, 1946: Baha'i News, No. 197, July 1947, p. 6)

1523. Turning Towards Akka in Prayer is a Physical Symbol of an Inner Reality —One Who Does Not Understand the Acts Accompanying the Long Prayer Can Use the Short
"He would advise you to only use the short midday Obligatory Prayer. This has no genuflections and only requires that when saying it the believer turn his

face towards Akka where Baha'u'llah is buried. This is a physical symbol of an inner reality, just as the plant stretches out to the sunlight—from which it receives life and growth—so we turn our hearts to the Manifestation of God, Baha'u'llah, when we pray; and we turn our faces, during this short prayer, to where His dust lies on this earth as a symbol of the inner act.

"Baha'u'llah has reduced all ritual and form to an absolute minimum in His Faith. The few forms that there are—like those associated with the two longer obligatory daily prayers, are only symbols of the inner attitude. There is a wisdom in them, and a great blessing but we cannot force ourselves to understand or feel these things; that is why He gave us also the very short and simple prayer, for those who did not feel the desire to perform the acts associated with the other two."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 24, 1949: Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, op. cit.)

1524. If a Believer is Ill or Physically Unable to Perform Genuflexions
"As regards the questions about the proper use of the Long Obligatory Prayer: All the writings of the Faith may be read and should be read for the instruction and inspiration of the friends. This includes the specific prayers. If a believer is physically incapable of performing the genuflexions accompanying one of the prayers, and yet he longs to say it as an obligatory prayer, then he may do so. By physically incapable is meant a real physical incapacity which a physician would attest as genuine."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, February 17, 1955)

[466] 1525. The Medium Prayer—Repeating the Greatest Name 95 times
"With regard to the three daily obligatory prayers:... The Baha'i worshipper is free to choose any of these three prayers. The short prayer consists of one verse to be recited once a day at noon. The medium prayer should be recited three times a day: in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. It is accompanied by certain physical gestures such as kneeling, raising the hands, etc. The long prayer which is also accompanied by regulations should be recited once every twenty-four hours. The adoption of one of these three prayers is a spiritual obligation imposed upon all the believers. For as 'Abdu'l-Baha says in His Writings—prayer and fasting are the twin pillars that sustain the Law of God.

"As regards the repeating of the Greatest Name ninety-five times, this also has been mentioned by Baha'u'llah but He has given no directions as to how the prayer beads should be used in this connection."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 25, 1937)

1526. Physical Gestures and Washing Hands and Face in Connection with Obligatory Prayers Are Laws of Baha'u'llah
"...The genuflections and washing of hands and face (as clearly put down in

'Prayers and Meditations of Baha'u'llah', which he himself translated), associated with the two longer daily prayers (obligatory prayers) are laws of Baha'u'llah, applicable to any Baha'i whether of Muslim background, Christian background or otherwise. It is blasphemy to suggest otherwise. However, the Baha'is have been left free by Baha'u'llah to choose one of the 3 obligatory prayers, and those who prefer not to perform these acts can say the very short one."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, June 30, 1949)

1527. Each One Must Say His Obligatory Prayer by Himself
"As to the obligatory prayer: Each one must say his prayer alone by himself, and this is not conditional on a private place; that is, both at home and in the worshipping-place, which is a gathering-place, it is allowable for one to say his prayer; but each person must say his prayer by himself. But if they chant supplications together, in a good and effective voice, that is very good."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. II, p. 464)

1528. Regarding Reading the Bab's Prayer 500 Times
"On page 1 of your October News letter you have quoted the Bab's prayer for the removal of difficulties and have added: 'Baha'u'llah has said to repeat this prayer 500 times by day and by night that it may aid us to recognize Him and our souls will be illumined.'

"The above statement gives the impression that the repetition of the said prayer 500 times is one of the prescribed devotionals of the Faith, and has a specified effect on the believer who observes this form of prayer.

"We do not feel it is justified to infer such conclusions from the reference in 'God Passes By', page 119, which you mention. The passage in question obviously refers to a specific circumstance in the life of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad before the declaration of His Mission, and should not be presented to the believers as one of the prescribed observances of the faith."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 24, 1971)

[467] 1529. The Medium Prayer to be Recited Morning, Noon and Evening—Three Times a Day
"...The friends are free to choose any one of these three prayers, but have to follow the instructions revealed by Baha'u'llah concerning them. The long prayer should be recited once in every 24 hours, and is accompanied by certain physical acts. The short prayer, consisting of one verse, should be recited once a day at noon; while the medium prayer should be said three times a day; in the morning, at noon and in the evening. The believer is entirely free to choose any one of these three prayers for daily use."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, April 27, 1937)

1530. Definition of "Morning", "Noon" and "Evening"

"By 'morning', 'noon' and 'evening', mentioned in connection with the Obligatory Prayers, is meant respectively the intervals between sunrise and noon, between noon and sunset, and from sunset till two hours after sunset." (Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 146)

1531. In High Latitudes the National Spiritual Assembly May Fix Hours of Prayer and Fasting by the Clock.
"Concerning the times for prayer and fasting, it is correct that, in the high latitudes, where the lengths of day and night vary considerably from season to season of the year, it is permissible to observe the laws of prayer and fasting in accordance with the clock rather than with the rising and setting of the sun. As Iceland lies in such latitudes, it is for your Assembly to decide this matter for the believers in your country. All should then abide by whatever your Assembly lays down."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 27, 1976: Notes on Obligatory Prayers and Ablutions, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

1532. Based on Texts in the "Kitab-i-Aqdas" and "Questions and Answers"—The Universal House of Justice Permits Use of Clock
"There are two texts, in the Kitab-i-Aqdas and its annexe, which refer to the use of clocks. In the Book itself it is written that in lands where the days and nights are long the hours of prayer shall be determined by reference to clocks and other timepieces. In the 'Questions and Answers', in answer to the more general question whether, in determining time, it is permissible to make use of timepieces, Baha'u'llah states that it is permissible.

"Although in the first instance the Sacred Text specifically mentions the use of clocks for determining the times of prayer it does not limit their use to that purpose, and the Universal House of Justice, on the basis of the more general statement in the 'Questions and Answers', has permitted their use also in determining the hours of fasting, leaving the application of the law to the National Spiritual Assembly in each country that lies in the high latitudes.

"In the case of fasting, as Mr. ... correctly comments, there is little difference between sunrise and sunset as observed astronomically and hours of fasting as fixed by the clock, because the fast falls just before the Equinox. However, by this ruling it is possible for the believers in the high latitudes to use the same standard for both prayer and fasting, as well as for fixing the ending of each day in the Baha'i calendar in determining the time for the starting of each Holy Day and the holding of the [468] Nineteen Day Feasts."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 13, 1978: Ibid.)

1533. "Allah-u-Abha" is the Form of the Greatest Name to be Used in the Long Obligatory Prayer
"Shoghi Effendi has explained that 'Allah-u-Abha' should be used when the Greatest Name is to be repeated three times in the Long Obligatory Prayer."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an

individual believer, January 28, 1977: Ibid.)

1534. Instructions in the Long Obligatory Prayer
"The Universal House of Justice received your letter of 7 January 1975, enquiring about the correct way of following certain instructions in the Long Obligatory Prayer, and has asked us to give you this reply.

"In following the direction stating: 'Let him then stand and raise his hands twice in supplication, and say ... ': the believer does not have to read twice the paragraph which follows. Whether the believer raises his hands twice before the reciting of the paragraph, or commences the reciting after having raised his hands once, and raises them a second time soon thereafter, is left to his choice.

"As to the direction which states: 'Let him then raise his hands thrice, and say ... ', an individual believer asked the beloved Guardian the following question:

"...the direction to raise the hands thrice and say "Greater is God than every great one." Does this mean after every raising of the hands, or only to be said once, after the three raisings?'

"Shoghi Effendi's secretary answered on his behalf as follows: 'The hands should be raised three times and each time the sentence be repeated in conjunction with the act.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, February 13, 1975: Ibid.)

1535. Instructions for the Medium Obligatory Prayer
"Each phrase which one may substitute is for a particular portion of the prayer, and the instructions are quite specific where the substitutions may be made. For instance, the longest verse in the prayer begins with the same words as those which may be substituted; that is, after the instructions 'Then let him stand up, and facing the Qiblih, let him say: God testifieth that there is none other God but Him.' The second phrase which may be substituted, which states, 'it would suffice were he, while seated,...' may be used in place of the concluding paragraph which carries the instruction 'Let him, then, be seated and say:'—and, again, the substituted words follow exactly the first sentence of that final paragraph."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 23, 1981: Ibid.)

1536. The Correct Position for "Sitting" During Obligatory Prayers
"...one of the believers asked the Guardian a question about the correct position for sitting. From the context it seems clear that this question is related to the medium Prayer, but this is not explicitly stated. The Guardian's reply states that sitting on [469] a chair is permissible, but to sit on the floor is preferable and more fitting."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 1, 1982: Ibid.)

1537. Ablutions and Movements to Accompany the Recitation of the Long Obligatory Prayer

"Concerning the movements to accompany the recitations of the Long Obligatory Prayer, in response to an enquiry from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Near East, the House of Justice stated in a letter dated September 1, 1975:

'Ablutions are necessary for all three Obligatory Prayers.'

'Reciting the words specified in the medium Obligatory Prayer pertains only to that prayer, i.e., for the short and long Obligatory Prayers it would be sufficient to wash one's hands and face in preparation for each of these two prayers.'

"However, the Universal House of Justice has stated to National Spiritual Assemblies in the West that no issue should be made of this matter at the present time and since it has not been clarified and applied in detail to the western believers, they are under no obligation to go beyond the instructions given by the beloved Guardian in 'Prayers and Meditations' in which ablutions are prescribed only in connection with the medium Obligatory Prayer.

"The instruction to raise one's hands occurs once in the medium Obligatory Prayer and five times in the long Obligatory Prayer. The term used in the original Arabic for the first, second and fourth occasions in the long Prayer is the same as that used in the medium Prayer. Therefore it would be entirely correct for the worshipper, when raising his hands on these occasions during the recitation of the long Obligatory Prayer, to follow the more specific instructions given in English by the Guardian in his translation of the medium one. On the third and fifth occasions the instruction is given in the long Prayer, the words 'in supplication' are omitted. The House of Justice does not wish at this time to give any specific guidance in this connection; it leaves the matter to the discretion of the friends."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 1, 1982: Ibid.)

1538. Ablutions Before Obligatory Prayers and Repetition of the Greatest Name

"It hath been ordained that every believer in God, the Lord of Judgement, shall, each day, having washed his hands and then his face, seat himself and, turning unto God, repeat 'Allah-u-Abha' ninety-five times. Such was the decree of the Maker of the Heavens when, with majesty and power, He established Himself upon the thrones of His Names. Perform ye likewise, ablutions for the Obligatory Prayer; this is the command of God, the Incomparable, the Unrestrained."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 18, p. 26)

1539. The Verse to be Recited When There is No Water

"...Let him that findeth no water for ablution repeat five times the words 'In the Name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure', and then proceed to his devotions. Such is the command of the Lord of all worlds...."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 10, p. 23)

XLI. PROPHETS—MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

A. The Bab

[470] 1540. Duration of the Bab's Dispensation
"The Bab said that whenever 'He Whom God will make manifest' appears, accept Him. He never said don't accept Him until after the lapse of 1000 years. Also Baha'u'llah says that in the year 9 of the Babi Dispensation the time was ripe for the Revelation of 'He Whom God will make manifest.' As the Bab was not only a Manifestation but a Herald of this Baha'i Faith, the interval between His revelation and that of Baha'u'llah was of shorter duration. His Dispensation in a sense will last as long as Baha'u'llah's lasts."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, December 27, 1941: Dawn of a New Day, p. 94)

1541. Declaration of the Bab
"...The believers must hold gatherings for the Baha'is at exactly 2 hours and 11 minutes after sunset on May 22nd ..., as this is the exact time when the Bab declared His mission to Mulla Husayn...."
(Ibid., June 22, 1943, p. 105)

1542. The Declaration of the Bab and the Birthday of 'Abdu'l-Baha
"...regarding the declaration of the Bab and the birthday of the Master: The Bab declared His Mission on the fourth day of the month of Jamadi I, two hours and eleven minutes after sunset, corresponding with the evening of May 22nd. But as the Baha'i day begins after sunset, and not after midnight as in the West, the Bab's declaration is celebrated on the fifth day of Jamadi I, corresponding to the 23rd of May. 'Abdu'l-Baha was born in the course of that same night, but the exact hour of His birth has not been ascertained."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, November 25, 1936)

1543. The Bayan
"In the Bayan the Bab says that every religion of the past was fit to become universal. The only reason why they failed to attain that mark was the incompetence of their followers. He then proceeds to give a definite promise that this would not be the fate of the Revelation of 'Him Whom God would make manifest', that it will become universal and include all the people of the world. This shows that we will ultimately succeed. But could we not through our shortcomings, failures to sacrifice, and reluctance to concentrate our efforts in spreading the Cause, retard the realization [471] of that ideal. And what would that mean? It shall mean that we will be held responsible before God, that the race will remain longer in its state of waywardness, that wars would not be so soon averted, that human suffering will last longer."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, February 20, 1932: Living the Life, pp. 3-4)

1544. The Iqan and the Bayan
"The Bab specified that the 'Bayan' is not completed and that 'He Whom God

would manifest' (Baha'u'llah) would complete it, though not in its actual form, but only spiritually in the form of another book. The 'Iqan' is believed to be its continuation."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, February 17, 1939: Dawn of a New Day, p. 78)

1545. Reason for Severe Laws Revealed by the Bab
"...The severe laws and injunctions revealed by the Bab can be properly appreciated and understood only when interpreted in the light of His own statements regarding the nature, purpose and character of His own Dispensation. As these statements clearly reveal, the Babi Dispensation was essentially in the nature of a religious and indeed social revolution and its duration had therefore to be short, but full of tragic events, of sweeping and drastic reforms. These drastic measures enforced by the Bab and His followers were taken with the view of undermining the very foundations of Shi'ah orthodoxy, and thus paving the way for the coming of Baha'u'llah. To assert the independence of the new Dispensation, and to prepare also the ground for the approaching Revelation of Baha'u'llah, the Bab had therefore to reveal very severe laws, even though most of them were never enforced. But the mere fact that He revealed them was in itself a proof of the independent character of His Dispensation and was sufficient to create such widespread agitation, and excite such opposition on the part of the clergy that led them to cause His eventual martyrdom."
(Ibid., pp. 77-78)

1546. Portrait of the Bab
"...The portrait of the Bab should be regarded as an inestimable privilege and blessing to behold, as past generations were denied a glimpse of the Face of the Manifestation, once He had passed on."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 13, 1944: Baha'i News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 2)

1547. Hour of Birth of the Bab
"The Bab was born before dawn."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

1548. The Term "Afnan" Refers to Relatives of the Bab
"The term 'afnan' means literally small branch, and refers to the relatives of the Bab, both men and women. As the Bab's only son died while in infancy, the former had no direct descendants. The 'afnan' are, therefore, all indirectly related to the Bab.

[472] "As to 'aghsan', it also means branch. But it is a bigger branch than 'afnan'. It refers to Baha'u'llah's descendants."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 25, 1934)

1549. The Sacrifice of 19 Lambs by the Bab Was Prior to His Revelation
"As regards your question concerning the sacrifice of 19 choice lambs which the

Bab is reported to have made on the day of Nahr: This is indeed an Islamic custom. But the sacrifice in question was performed by the Bab prior to the revelation of His own laws, and at a time, therefore, when the laws and practices of Islam had not yet been entirely abrogated by Him."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 22, 1939)

B. Baha'u'llah

1550. No Prophet in Same Category as Baha'u'llah
"There are no Prophets, so far, in the same category as Baha'u'llah, as He culminates a great cycle begun with Adam."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, December 26, 1941: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, p. 41)

1551. Baha'u'llah Has Appeared in God's Greatest Name
"...By 'Greatest Name' is meant that Baha'u'llah has appeared in God's Greatest Name, in other words, that He is the Supreme Manifestation of God."
(Ibid., p. 41)

1552. Baha'u'llah Conversed with Moses in the Burning Bush
"Baha'u'llah is not the Intermediary between other Manifestations and God. Each has His own relation to the Primal Source. But in the sense that Baha'u'llah is the greatest Manifestation to yet appear, the One Who consummates the Revelation of Moses; He was the One Moses conversed with in the Burning Bush. In other words Baha'u'llah identifies the glory of the Godhead on that occasion with Himself. No distinction can be made amongst the Prophets in the sense that They all proceed from One Source, and are of One Essence. But Their stations and functions in this world are different."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 19, 1947)

1553. Baha'u'llah is Not God—But Through Him We Can Know God
"As regards your question: Baha'u'llah is, of course, not God and not the Creator; but through Him we can know God, and because of this position of Divine Intermediary, in a sense, He (or the other Prophets) is all we can ever know of that Infinite Essence which is God. Therefore, we address ourselves in prayer and thought to Him, or through Him to that Infinite Essence behind and beyond Him."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 4, 1951)

1554. Why He Uses the Pronoun "We"
"When Baha'u'llah uses the plural—'We', 'Our' etc.—He is merely using a form [473] which is regal and has greater power than the singular 'I'. We have this same usage in English, when the King says 'we'. The Pope does the same thing."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 18, 1951)

1555. There is No Record of a Prophet Similar in Station to Baha'u'llah
"Regarding your questions: There is no record in history, or in the teachings, of a Prophet similar in station to Baha'u'llah having lived 500,000 years ago. There will, however, be one similar to Him in greatness after the lapse of 500,000 years, but we cannot say definitely that His Revelation will be inter-planetary in scope. We can only say that such a thing may be possible. What Baha'u'llah means by His appearance in 'other worlds' He has not defined, as we could not visualize them in our present state, hence He was indefinite, and we cannot say whether He meant other planets or not...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 24, 1941)

1556. Hour of Baha'u'llah's Birth
"Baha'u'llah was born at dawn."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

1557. The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, Certain Passages Clarified
"Concerning the meaning of the passage on p. 12 of the 'Dispensation of Baha'u'llah' beginning with the words 'But for Him no Divine Messenger...', this refers to the reality of God in Him and not to His Person.

"Page 20, first line, of the same pamphlet: The passage refers to any opportunities that are missed through neglect and not to any particular event.

"Page 21, line 20: The meaning of the passage should not be taken literally. The purpose is to emphasize the theme and heighten its effect.

"Page 24, line 20: It refers to the reality of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 17, 1937)

1558. Reckoning of Days Mentioned in the "Dispensation"
"Concerning the passage in the 'Dispensation of Baha'u'llah' in which the Guardian quotes 'Abdu'l-Baha's interpretation of the prophecy referring to the times when the sun would stand still in the heavens, he wishes me to explain that the days referred to in this prophecy have to be reckoned differently. In the Sacred Scripture of various religions there are to be found frequent references to days, but these have been considered as indicating different periods of time, as for instance in the Qur'an a day is reckoned as one thousand years. The first ten days in the above-mentioned prophecy represent each a century, making thus a total of one thousand lunar years. As to the twenty days referring to the Babi Dispensation, each of them represents only one lunar year, the total of twenty years marking the duration of the Revelation of the Bab. The thirty days in the last Dispensation should not be reckoned numerically, but should be considered as symbolizing the incomparable greatness of the Baha'i Revelation which, though not final, is nonetheless thus far the fullest revelation of God to man. From a physical point of view, the thirty days represent the maximum time taken by the sun to pass through a sign of the zodiac. They thus [474] represent a culminating point in the evolution

of this star. So also from a spiritual standpoint these thirty days should be viewed as indicating the highest, though not the final, stage in the spiritual evolution of mankind."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, August 7, 1934: Baha'i News, No. 87, September 1934, p. 1)

1559. Baha'u'llah Was a Descendent of Abraham Through Both Katurah and Sarah—Jesse, Son of Sarah, Was the Father of David and Ancestor of Baha'u'llah
"Regarding your question concerning the Jesse from whom Baha'u'llah is descended: The Master says in 'Some Answered Questions', referring to Isaiah, chapter 11, verses 1 to 10, that these verses apply 'Word for word to Baha'u'llah'. He then identifies this Jesse as the father of David in the following words: '...for Joseph was of the descendants of Jesse the father of David...', thus identifying the Jesse of Isaiah, chapter 11, with being the father of David. Baha'u'llah is thus the descendant of Jesse, the father of David.

"The Guardian hopes that this will clarify the matter for you. It is a tremendous and fascinating theme, Baha'u'llah's connection with the Faith of Judaism, and one which possesses great interest to Jew and Christian alike."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 11, 1942)

"Regarding your question concerning the descent of Baha'u'llah from Abraham: The Master has stated that Baha'u'llah is a descendant of Abraham through a son of his, other than Isaac and Ishmael, from his wife Katurah...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 24, 1943)

1560. As the Return of Christ
"In accepting Baha'u'llah you have accepted Christ in His appearance as the Father, as He Himself so clearly foretold. The Catholic Church does not believe this; on the contrary, it still awaits the return of Christ. If you decide, in order to be buried next to your dear husband, to return to the Church, you either would have to, in good faith, deny Baha'u'llah or you would be just using the Church as a means to satisfying a desire of your own, which would certainly not be an upright and conscientious thing to do!"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 28, 1950)

1561. Appearance of Later Prophets
"After Baha'u'llah many Prophets will, no doubt, appear, but they will be all under His shadow. Although they may abrogate the laws of the Dispensation, in accordance with the needs and requirements of the age in which they appear, they nevertheless draw their spiritual force from this mighty Revelation. The Faith of Baha'u'llah constitutes, indeed, the stage of maturity in the development of mankind. His appearance has released such spiritual forces which

will continue to animate, for many long years to come, the world in its development. Whatever progress may be achieved in later ages—after the unification of the whole human race is achieved—will be but improvements in the machinery of the world. For the machinery itself has already been created by Baha'u'llah. The task of continually improving and perfecting this machinery is one which later Prophets will be called upon to achieve. They will move and work within the orbit of the Baha'i cycle."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 14, 1935)

[475] 1562. Fears for Next Manifestation
"As to the meaning of the quotation, 'My fears are for Him Who will be sent down unto you after Me', this refers to the Manifestation Who is to come after a thousand or more years, Who like all previous Messengers of God will be subjected to persecutions, but will eventually triumph over them. For men of ill-will have been and will always continue to be in this world, unless mankind reaches a state of complete and absolute perfection—a condition which is not only improbable but actually impossible to attain. The fundamental difference, however, between this Dispensation and all previous ones is this, that in this Revelation the possibility of permanent schism between the followers of the Prophet has been prevented through the direct and explicit instructions providing for the necessary instruments designed to maintain the organic unity of the body of the faithful."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 1, 1934, Baha'i News, No. 89, p. 1, January 1935)

1563. He Does Not Ask Us to Follow Him Blindly
"Just as in the past the Prophets have been persecuted and their Mission was ridiculed, so has the Message of Baha'u'llah been scoffed at as a mere impractical idealism. From His earliest youth He was put in chains, expatriated and persecuted. But what do we observe in this Day? ...the principles He advocated are the only solution for practical political politics, the spiritual truths He voiced are the crying needs of man and the very things he requires for his moral and spiritual development.

"He does not ask us to follow Him blindly; as He says in one of His Tablets, God has endowed man with a mind to operate as a torchlight and guide him to the truth. Read His Words, consider His teachings and measure their value in the light of contemporary problems and the truth will surely be revealed to you. Read books such as the Iqan, Some Answered Questions, Nabil's Narrative, and you will appreciate the truth of His mission, as well as the true spirit He creates in whosoever follows His ways."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 26, 1933: Baha'i News, No. 80, p. 5, January 1934)

1564. Christ and Baha'u'llah
"The beloved Guardian has been very impressed with the latest book written by our dear departed coworker, George Townshend, 'Christ and Baha'u'llah'.

"This book outlines clearly the relationship of Christ and Baha'u'llah, and presents the manners in which the Baha'is are setting up the Kingdom of God for which the Christians are praying.

"It is challenging, and surely will affect many religious leaders.

"The Guardian feels your Assembly should make this book the basis of a very active teaching campaign."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 19, 1957: Baha'i News, No. 316, p. 5, June 1957)

1565. Duration of the Baha'i Cycle and Dispensation
"Concerning your question relative to the duration of the Baha'i Dispensation. There is no contradiction between Baha'u'llah's statement in the Iqan about the [476] renewal of the City of God once every 1000 years, and that of the Guardian in the 'Dispensation' to the effect that the Baha'i cycle will extend over a period of at least 500,000 years. The apparent contradiction is due to the confusion of the terms cycle and dispensation. For while the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah will last for at least one thousand years, His cycle will extend still further to at least 500,000."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 14, 1935: Baha'i News, No. 102, August 1936, pp. 2-3)

1566. No Explanation Given for 500,000 Year Period of Baha'i Cycle
"Abdu'l-Baha has given no explanation regarding the 500,000 year period of the Baha'i cycle. Individual believers are free to work out for themselves the explanation they desire, so long as they do not impose their views on others."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

1567. Identifies Himself with Other Prophets
"As to the list of the prophets with whom Baha'u'llah identified Himself in the passage found on pages 26 and 27 of 'The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah', their names are as follows: Abraham, Moses, Joseph, John the Baptist, Jesus, Imam Husayn, on whom Baha'u'llah has conferred an exceptionally exalted station, (and) the Bab."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, August 7, 1936)

1568. Baha'u'llah Did Not Name "Letters of the Living" for Himself
"There were no 'Letters of the living' for Baha'u'llah, as there had been for the Bab's Dispensation. Dayyan was evidently the 3rd to believe in Baha'u'llah; who the second and the others were we don't know. The Bab, being the Manifestation, cannot be considered the first in this sense."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 19, 1947)

1569. The "Trustees" of Knowledge
"We cannot be sure to whom Baha'u'llah refers as the 'trustees' of knowledge."

(Ibid.)

"Those words uttered by the Luminaries of Truth must needs be pondered, and should their significance be not grasped, enlightenment should be sought from the Trustees of the depositories of Knowledge, that these may expound their meaning, and unravel their mystery...."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Iqan, pp. 181-182)

1570. The Baha'i Faith is a Way of Life Not a Mere Philosophical or Social Doctrine

"For the Baha'i Faith is above all a way of life. It is not a mere philosophical or social doctrine. It is a closely-knit and harmoniously functioning community, a worldwide spiritual fraternity which seeks to reform the world first and foremost by bringing about a deep inner spiritual change in the heart of individuals. To live the Teachings of the Cause should be the paramount concern of every true believer, and the only way to do so is to commune both in spirit and through actual concrete means with the entire community of the faithful. The Baha'i Cause encourages community [477] life and makes it a duty for every one of its followers to become a living, a fully active and responsible member of the world-wide Baha'i fellowship."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 13, 1936)

1571. The Teachings Should Be Conceived of as One Great Whole with Many Facets

"He feels that many of the perplexities that arise in your mind could be dissipated if you always conceived of the teachings as one great whole with many facets. Truth may, in covering different subjects, appear to be contradictory, and yet it is all one if you carry the thought through to the end. For instance the statement on life after death and the condition of believers and non-believers; you might say that a wonderful believer is like a diamond blazing in the sun, an unawakened soul like one in a dark room. But we must couple this concept with the other part of the teachings, that God's Mercy exceeds His Justice, and that soul can progress in the world beyond; the unillumined soul can become brilliant."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 24, 1947)

1572. The Whole Theory of Divine Revelation Rests on the Infallibility of the Prophets

"Regarding your Baha'i friend who does not fully understand the infallibility of the Manifestation of God: You should influence that person to study the matter more deeply, and to realize that the whole theory of Divine Revelation rests on the infallibility of the Prophet, be He Christ, Muhammad, Baha'u'llah, or one of the others. If they are not infallible, then They are not Divine, and thus lose that essential link with God which, we believe, is the bond that educates men and causes all human progress."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 11, 1942)

1573. There Are a Minimum of Rituals in the Baha'i Faith and No Man-Made Dogmas
"In response to your letter of 3rd September 1979 asking if there are dogmas and rites in the Baha'i Faith, the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to convey its reply.

"A dogma is a principle, tenet or teaching, especially an authoritative teaching, and in these senses it is apparent that the Faith has 'dogmas'. The word is also used, however, to describe that body of rigid doctrines that have accumulated in a religion after the passing of its Founder; such man-made dogmas are entirely absent from the Baha'i Faith, nor can it ever acquire them.

"Concerning rituals, the beloved Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer on 24th June 1949:

'Baha'u'llah has reduced all ritual and form to an absolute minimum in His Faith. The few forms that there are—like those associated with the two longer obligatory daily prayers—are only symbols of the inner attitude. There is a wisdom in them and a great blessing, but we cannot force ourselves to understand or feel these things; that is why He gave us also the very short and simple prayer, for those who did not feel the desire to perform the acts associated with the other two.'

[478] "Thus it can be seen that the Faith has certain simple rites prescribed by Baha'u'llah, such as the obligatory prayers, the marriage ceremony and the laws for the burial of the dead, but its teachings warn against developing them into a system of uniform and rigid rituals incorporating man-made forms and practices, such as exist in other religions where rituals usually consist of elaborate ceremonial practices performed by a member of the clergy. In another letter written on behalf of the Guardian his secretary stated:

'In these days the friends should, as much as possible, demonstrate through their deeds the independence of the Holy Faith of God, and its freedom from the customs, rituals and practices of a discredited and abrogated past.'
(Translated from the Persian).

"In freeing the believers from the religious rituals of the past and from those customs which are contrary to Baha'i principles, the institutions of the Faith should be careful not to press the friends to arbitrarily discard those local traditions which are harmless and often colourful characteristics of particular peoples and tribes. In 'The World Order of Baha'u'llah', on page 41, we read:

'Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Baha'u'llah. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate,

of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world....'"
(From a letter written of behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, October 16, 1979)

C. Explanation of Some Baha'i Teachings

1574. What is Meant by a Personal God—God is Not Anthropomorphic

"What is meant by a personal God is a God Who is conscious of His creation, Who has a Mind, a Will, a Purpose, and not, as many scientists and materialists believe, an unconscious and determined force operating in the universe. Such conception of the Diving Being, as the Supreme and ever present Reality in the world, is not anthropomorphic, for it transcends all human limitations and forms, and does by no means attempt to define the essence of Divinity which is obviously beyond any human comprehension. To say that God is a personal Reality does not mean that He has a physical form, or does in any way resemble a human being. To entertain such belief would be sheer blasphemy."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 21, 1939)

1575. Man Lives in a Three Dimensional Plane of Consciousness

"When we say that man lives in a three dimensional plane of consciousness, we should not interpret such statement in mathematical terms, though the basic idea at its root is certainly correct."
(Ibid.)

[479] 1576. Possibly Indians of America Were Influenced by Prophets in Asia

"It is possible the Indians of the Americas were influenced in the remote past by Prophets in Asia. But again, as there is nothing in our teachings about it, we cannot do more than speculate."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 25, 1950)

1577. Mustaghath

"The meaning of 'Mustaghath' is: 'He Who is invoked for help.'"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 14, 1947)

1578. Reference in Gospel of St. John to Revelation of Baha'u'llah

"The passage in the Gospel of St. John 14:26, is a reference to the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, through Whose coming this prophecy was fulfilled."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 21, 1939)

1579. "Lord" and "God" Refer to the Creator in Baha'i Writings

"In the Baha'i Writings 'Lord' and 'God' refer to the Creator, not the Manifestations of God; in a few passages the word 'Lord' refers to the Manifestation, but usually it means 'God'!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 4, 1950)

1580. Copper Can Be Transmuted into Gold
"Considering that a century ago, nobody knew the nature of matter, and couldn't split any kind of an atom, it should not surprise the scientist that 'Abdu'l-Baha states that copper can be transmuted into gold.

"There may come a time, for all we know, when the mass of many atoms can be changed by scientists. We have no way of proving or disproving at present the statement of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Just because we cannot demonstrate a contention in the Baha'i Teachings does not mean the contention is not true.

"The same holds true of the statement of Baha'u'llah in the Iqan, regarding transmutation of copper into gold after seventy years, under certain conditions.

"We as Baha'is must assume that, as He had access to all knowledge, He was referring to a definite physical condition which theoretically might exist. Because we don't know what this condition is in scientific terms does not refute Baha'u'llah's statement at all.

"The Guardian hopes that Mr. ... will not let so small a thing stand in his path. The principle of Faith is to accept anything the Manifestation of God says, once you have accepted Him as being the Manifestation. That is really the crux of the whole matter. It is a question of confidence."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 14, 1955)

1581. Creatures Are to be Found on Every Planet
"Regarding the passage on p. 163 of the 'Gleanings': The creatures which Baha'u'llah states to be found on every planet cannot be considered to be necessarily similar or different from human beings on this earth. Baha'u'llah does not specifically state whether such creatures are like or unlike us. He simply refers to the fact that there are creatures on every planet. It remains for science to discover one day the exact nature of these creatures."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 9, 1937)

[480] 1582. "Dayspring" Defined
"I have asked the Guardian concerning the exact meaning of the word 'Dayspring'. Literally it means 'Dawn'. It is sometimes used in the sense of 'Horizon' or 'Rising point', and taken figuratively it is equivalent to fountain or source. It can also be used as referring to a Manifestation of God, as in the following expression 'Dayspring of Truth'."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 19, 1935)

1583. Absolute Being Can Be Attributed Only to God—His Creation Has Relative Existence, a Separate Reality
"In a Tablet Baha'u'llah says that even though absolute being can be attributed only to God we cannot say that other objects have no being. A table has an existence even though its existence compared with the existence of the

carpenter who is its maker is almost nothing. Compared to God nothing has existence but this does not mean that even stones do not have being. It is speaking relatively. Moreover, God reveals Himself in all things in the sense that He is the Source of their being and the Cause of their existence. Without Him all things will shrink down to nothing. This however does not mean that all things are parts of God as the pantheist believes. The pantheist says that only God exists, objects are mere modes of His attributes. Baha'u'llah however says that objects have a separate reality that is created by God. The Master explains these things in the 'Some Answered Questions', especially in one of the last chapters. There are also many Tablets of Baha'u'llah explaining these matters. Most of them, however, have not yet been translated into English. Let us hope that some day this work will be done and the friends will appreciate how Baha'u'llah has solved their problems."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 26, 1932)

1584. Meaning of "Sciences that Begin and End in Words"
"What Baha'u'llah meant primarily with 'sciences that begin and end in words' are those theological treatises and commentaries that encumber the human mind rather than help it to attain the truth. The students would devote their life to their study but still attain nowhere.

"Baha'u'llah surely never meant to include story writing under such a category; and shorthand and typewriting are both most useful talents very necessary in our present social and economic life."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 30, 1932)

1585. Atomic Energy—"A Strange and Wonderful Instrument"
"The words of Baha'u'llah regarding 'a strange and wonderful instrument...' can, in the light of what the Master said in San Francisco, be taken as a reference to the great destructive power atomic energy can be made to release."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 16, 1946)

1586. Baha'u'llah Exhorts Man to Try to Develop His Dormant Qualities
"The passage in the 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf' in which Baha'u'llah says: 'Give that which is asked of you' means that man must always try to develop and reveal [481] the qualities that are to be found potentially in him. It is an urge to self-improvement and individual progress, and has, therefore, no connection with that passage in the 'Aqdas' wherein Baha'u'llah forbids mendicity."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 8, 1936)

1587. The "Veils" Are Very Thin at the Time of the Manifestation
"As to the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha about the 'vineyard will not then be so easy to find', etc. This supports many such remarks: He explained often that at the time of the Manifestation the veils are very thin, so to speak. Many souls

accepted seemingly spontaneously, on the basis of a dream, or just hearing the Cause existed! But later, this first phase passes, and the people require more arguments and proof, acceptance comes less as a flash of spiritual insight and more as an intellectual process. This is quite different from the future glory of the Cause and the divine origin of its institutions, graphically outlined by Him. When the Master says the Local and National Assemblies are the 'Voice of truth', He means here that they must be obeyed, not that they are infallible."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 25, 1947)

1588. Today It is a Greater Responsibility to Reject the Manifestation
"It is certainly a much greater responsibility to reject the Manifestation in this day than it was in the past Dispensations, inasmuch as man, and indeed humanity as a whole, have been endowed with a greater measure of spiritual receptivity than ever before, and consequently it would be a much graver sin to repudiate the revealed Truth now than it would have been the case in bygone ages and centuries."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 14, 1939)

1589. Cornerstone of All the Teachings—Oneness of Humanity
"It is most essential that the believers should be quite clear on this point, as the principle of the oneness of humanity is the cornerstone of all the Teachings of Baha'u'llah, and should be presented as such, without the least hesitation, by the friends."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 11, 1937; cited by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 8, 1968)

1590. "He Who Loves His Kind"
"With reference to your question as to the meaning of the passage of 'he who loves his kind', the statement of Baha'u'llah does not refer to any special race or class of people. Rather it includes the entire human race, irrespective of any class, creed or colour. The Message of Baha'u'llah is not a particularistic appeal to a group of people. It is a Universal Message and all-inclusive appeal. His principle of the oneness of mankind is world-wide in its spirit, in its application, and covers the entire field of human relationships."
(Ibid.)

1591. "From It (Earth) We Have Created You"
"Regarding the passage on page 231 of the 'Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah', the sentence beginning with the words 'From it (earth) have We created you', is a quotation from the Qur'an....

[482] "By 'second time' is meant the spiritual resurrection of man, that is to say, his acceptance of the Divine Manifestation. But Muslims have given this term a literal interpretation: the physical resurrection of man. Baha'u'llah is using this same interpretation current among Muslims to defeat their argument."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 8, 1936)

1592. Second Time—Means the Spiritual Resurrection of Man
"With regard to the Racine Assembly's request for an explanation of the passage on page 231 of the 'Gleanings' beginning with the words: 'From it (earth) have We created you...': this is a verse from the Qur'an... Baha'u'llah in quoting this passage seeks to refute the argument of the Muslims, who attach a purely literal interpretation to this verse of the Qur'an, and therefore consider it as implying bodily resurrection. To these Muslims He says, you who literally believe that the human body will return to dust and will be raised from it again, and therefore attach so much importance to this mortal world, how then can you wax so proud, and boast over things which are but perishable and consequently void of any true and lasting value."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Racine Assembly, February 7, 1939: Baha'i News, No. 124, p. 6, April 1939)

1593. The Day of Resurrection, of Judgement, and the Tomb
"...Concerning the meaning of 'Resurrection': Although this term is often used by Baha'u'llah in His Writings, as in the passage quoted in your letter, its meaning is figurative. The tomb mentioned is also allegorical, i.e., the tomb of unbelief. The Day of Resurrection, according to Baha'i interpretation, is the Judgement Day, the Day when unbelievers will be called upon to give account of their actions, and whether the world has prevented them from acknowledging the new Revelation."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, Dawn of a New Day, p. 79)

1594. Revelation of Baha'u'llah Primarily for This Planet
"...On page 231 of the same book (Gleanings): No particular force is meant. It is symbolic of the regenerative power with which a righteous act is endowed.

"As to your question whether the power of Baha'u'llah extends over our solar system and to higher worlds: While the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, it should be noted, is primarily for this planet, yet the spirit animating it is all-embracing, and the scope therefore cannot be restricted or defined."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 14, 1938)

1595. Abha Kingdom
"With reference to your question as to the meaning of the term 'Abha Kingdom', it is another term for the spiritual world beyond the grave."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 21, 1939)

1596. "Singled Out"
"The term 'singled out' on p. 172 of the 'Gleanings' means chosen one or favoured one."
(From a letter of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 26, 1939, from Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 5)

[483] 1597. Evolution of the Soul
"The passage on p. 156 of 'Gleanings' regarding the evolution of the soul after death clearly proves that the soul after its separation from the body keeps its individuality and its consciousness both in relation to other souls and to the human beings in the world."
(Ibid.)

1598. "Perishing"
"The word 'perish' on p. 190 of 'Gleanings' does not mean that the human soul will cease to exist, but will be deprived of all spiritual capacity and understanding."
(Ibid.)

1599. "No Man Attaineth Everlasting Life"
"Also on p. 183, the passage: 'No man can attain everlasting life...' should not be taken literally: by 'everlasting life' is meant spiritual felicity, communion with the Divine Spirit."
(Ibid.)

1600. Differences of Station and Classes in Society
"As regards the meaning of the passage of page 188 of the 'Gleanings': It is an emphasis by Baha'u'llah on the importance of maintaining differences of station and classes in society and does not refer to the question of race."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 22, 1936: Baha'i News, No. 105, p. 1, February 1937)

1601. "Hidden Words"
"As to the passage No. 13 of the Arabic Hidden Words: That which Baha'u'llah declares we can find abiding within us is the power of the Divine Spirit, the reflection of the light of His Revelation. This reflection of the Divine Spirit, however, can in no way be compared to the Revelation which God discloses to His Prophets and Messengers. The similarity in the terminology should not confuse this distinction which is most fundamental."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers, December 7, 1935)

1602. Iqan, Kitab-I-Iqan—"City of God", Meaning of
"...as to the meaning of the passage in the 'Iqan' in which Baha'u'llah refers to the renewal of the 'City of God' once in about a thousand years: this, as the word about implies, is simply an approximate date, and should not therefore be taken literally."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 29, 1938: Dawn of a New Day, p. 202)

1603. "Who Out of Utter Nothingness"
"The statement in the 'Gleanings', pp. 64-65, 'who out of utter nothingness...', etc., should be taken in a symbolic and not a literal sense. It is only to demonstrate the power and greatness of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand 1923-1957, p. 41)

[484] 1604. "Hosts of His Testament" and "Cord"
"Regarding your questions: By 'Government', on page 210 of the 'Baha'i World' Vol. VI, is meant the executive body which will enforce the laws when the Baha'i Faith has reached the point when it is recognized and accepted entirely by any particular nation. On page 205, indem, the 'Hosts of His Testament' refers to those who are firm in the Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah and who defend and uphold it.

"The word 'cord', so often mentioned in the teachings, means both the Faith itself and also the power of the Faith which sustains those who cling to it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 18, 1941; also see The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 14-15)

1605. Sura of the Sun, Explanation of
"The passage in Baha'u'llah's Tablet in which He explains the sura of 'The Sun' should not be interpreted literally. It does not mean that after the Day of Resurrection praise and peace will cease to be vouchsafed to the Prophet. Rather it means to the end of time, i.e., indefinitely and for all times."
(Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, pp. 79-80)

1606. Intercession
"The intercession spoken of by Baha'u'llah in one of His prayers which you have quoted is a purely spiritual act and is applicable to Muhammad as well as to all Prophets. This passage, however, refers more particularly to that kind of intercession in which Muslims believe, though the manner and circumstances of it, according to Baha'i belief, are mysterious and unknowable."
(Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, p. 80)

1607. "Knowledge Consists of Twenty-Seven Letters..."
"Regarding the passage beginning with the words: 'Knowledge consists of twenty-seven letters': this should not be interpreted literally. It only indicates the relative greatness and superiority of the new Revelation."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

1608. Tablet of Ahmad—The Word "Ungodly"
"In the passage 'eschew all fellowship with the ungodly,' Baha'u'llah means that we should shun the company of those who disbelieve in God and are wayward. The word 'ungodly' is a reference to such perverse people. The words 'Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones' should not be taken in their literal sense. Baha'u'llah's advice is that again we should flee from the enemies of God and instead seek the fellowship of His lovers."
(Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, p. 200)

"The Tablet of Ahmad was revealed by Baha'u'llah to be read when one feels himself in exceptionally difficult circumstances. There is nothing obligatory about its use, and every person has to decide for himself whether he desires to learn it by heart or not...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of Kenosha,

April 14, 1932)

1609. The Tablet of the Holy Mariner
"The Tablet of the Holy Mariner was revealed by Baha'u'llah in Baghdad. The [485] Holy Mariner is a reference to Baha'u'llah Himself, and the Ark mentioned in that Tablet is the Ark of His Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 8, 1936)

"Concerning the Tablet of the Holy Mariner, it is one of the most significant Tablets revealed by Baha'u'llah during the last days of His stay in Baghdad, and refers to the sad though momentous events which were to transpire soon after His arrival in Adrianople. Its main significance lies in the fact that in it Baha'u'llah clearly foreshadows the grave happenings which eventually led to the defection of Subh-i-Azal, and to the schism which the latter thought to create within the ranks of the faithful."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 10, 1934)

1610. Tablet to the Presidents of the Republics of the Americas
"Baha'u'llah never revealed a Tablet to the President of the U.S.A. In His Book the Aqdas He revealed words addressed to the Presidents of the Republics of the Americas, but no single Tablet was ever revealed to any one of them."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 21, 1942)

1611. Tablet of Joseph
"The Tablet of Joseph does not refer to Joseph Smith.

"Joseph Smith we do not consider a Prophet, minor or otherwise. Certainly no references he made would have foretold the coming of this Revelation in his capacity as a Prophet."
(Ibid.)

1612. Meaning of "Verities of the Faith"
"By 'verities of the Faith' he means the great teachings and fundamentals enshrined in our Baha'i literature; these we can find by reading the books, studying under Baha'i scholars at summer schools and in classes, and through the aid of study outlines."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 19, 1947)

1613. Meaning of the Word "Patron" in Seven Valleys
"Regarding your question about the meaning of the words on page 50 of the Seven and Four Valleys: This is a verse of the Qur'an which Baha'u'llah quotes; the word patron here means helper—in other words when God misleads a soul, he shall find no other helper. You would find Sale's translation and comments on the Qur'an helpful in getting at the story back of such verses as this one."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 18, 1946)

D. 'Abdu'l-Baha

1614. 'Abdu'l-Baha
"...The herald who proclaimed the written names is 'Abdu'l-Baha Who announceth the names of those who deserve salvation and are firm in the Covenant of God...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 681)

[486] 1615. All Thy Doings Recorded
"...Thou shalt, after thy departure, discover what We have revealed unto thee, and shalt find all thy doings recorded in the Book wherein the works of all them that dwell on earth, be they greater or less than the weight of an atom, are noted down...."
(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 226)

1616. Chief Objectives of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Ministry
"As to the three aims which Shoghi Effendi has stated in his 'America and the Most Great Peace' to have been the chief objectives of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry, it should be pointed out that the first was the establishment of the Cause in America. The erection of the Baha'i Temple in Ishqabad and the building on Mt. Carmel of a mausoleum marking the resting-place of the Bab were the two remaining ones."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 14, 1933: Baha'i News, No. 51, February 1934, p. 5)

1617. Experiences with 'Abdu'l-Baha
"It is very important that the Baha'is should accurately record their experiences with the Master and events in the Cause's progress for these things form data for future histories of the Cause. They have not, however, the authority of the revealed Word of the Tablets,..."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 23, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 228, February 1950, p. 4)

1618. Stories About 'Abdu'l-Baha
"He would also urge you to attach no importance to the stories told about 'Abdu'l-Baha or to those attributed to Him by the friends. These should be regarded in the same light as the notes and impressions of visiting pilgrims. They need not be suppressed, but they also should not be given prominence or official recognition."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 2, 1935)

1619. Day of the Covenant, Day of the Ascension
"The Day of the Covenant Nov. 26th, and the Day of the Ascension, Nov. 28th, anniversaries of the birth and the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha, must be observed by the friends coming together, but work is not prohibited. In other words the friends must regard observance of these two anniversaries as obligatory—but suspension of work is not to be regarded as obligatory."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual

Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, January 21, 1951: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, p. 89)

1620. When the Interpreter of the Writings Says Nothing on a Subject Then the Individual is Free to Accept or Refute

"As regards what Mirza Abu'l Fazl has said concerning the Seven Religions of the past, Shoghi Effendi wishes to emphasize that what is truly authoritative are the words of the Master. In all such cases we should try and find out what He has said [487] and abide by His words, even though they seem in conflict with the findings of modern scholars. If He does not say anything on the subject, then the individual is free to accept, or refute what scholars, such as Abu'l Fazl, say. Through the discussion of these (statements by scholars), the truth will ultimately be found, but at no time should their decision be considered as final."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 23, 1933: On Hinduism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism and Related Subjects, A Compilation from the Universal House of Justice, p. 1)

1621. Praying to 'Abdu'l-Baha

"...he wishes me to explain that although 'Abdu'l-Baha's station is not that of a Manifestation of God, nevertheless supplications may be addressed to Him. It is essential, however, that every believer should realize that while doing so he is directing his thoughts towards the Master as an intermediary between him and the Manifestation, and not as the Source of Divine Revelation and spiritual guidance. Provided this distinction is clearly established there can be no harm or objection in addressing prayers to 'Abdu'l-Baha."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 1, 1934: Baha'i News, No. 89, February 1935, p. 4)

1622. Through Him One Can Address Baha'u'llah

"If you find you need to visualize someone when you pray, think of the Master. Through Him you can address Baha'u'llah. Gradually try to think of the qualities of the Manifestation, and in that way a mental form will fade out, for after all the body is not the thing. His Spirit is there and is the essential, everlasting element."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 31, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 222, August 1949, p. 2)

1623. Photographs of 'Abdu'l-Baha

"In connection with the selection of particular photographs of 'Abdu'l-Baha for circulation among the friends, the Guardian strongly feels that no definite ruling should be laid down establishing the superiority or distinction of any particular photograph. The friends should be left quite free to use their individual independent judgement in this matter."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 15, 1940: Baha'i News, No. 138, September 1940, p. 1)

1624. Photograph Placed in a Dignified Position
"It is quite important that the Greatest Name or a picture of 'Abdu'l-Baha be placed in a dignified position. They should not be placed on the floor nor, on the other hand, should they be held above the heads of the people in the photograph. It would seem that the proper position would be for them to be held about chest height."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States: Baha'i News, No. 265, March 1953, p. 4)

1625. Preservation of Relics
"Regarding the preservation of relics associated with 'Abdu'l-Baha, the general principle should be that any object used by Him in person should be preserved for [488] posterity, whether in the Local or the National archives. It is the duty and responsibility of the Baha'i Assemblies to ascertain carefully whether such objects are genuine or not, and to exercise the utmost care and caution in the matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 28, 1936: Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 34)

1626. Ages of the Faith and Epochs of the Ages
"The Guardian wishes me to explain that there is no relationship between the epochs of the Divine Plan, and the epochs of the Ages of the Faith.
"The Faith is divided into three Ages: the Heroic, the Formative, the Golden Age, as has been outlined in his writings. The Heroic Age closed with the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha. The Formative Age is divided into epochs. The first epoch lasted 25 years. We are now actually in the second epoch of the Formative Age. How long the Formative Age will last is not known—and there will probably be a number of epochs in it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 18, 1953)

1627. The Divine Plan
"The Divine Plan of 'Abdu'l-Baha is divided into epochs. The first Seven Year Plan constituted the first stage of the first epoch; the second Seven Year Plan constitutes the second stage;—while the 10 year Crusade will constitute the third stage of the first epoch of the Divine Plan. The first epoch of the Divine Plan will conclude with the conclusion of the 10 year Crusade."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, January 18, 1953)

1628. The Tablets of the Divine Plan Are the Charter for Teaching
"As you are no doubt aware, the Tablets of the Divine Plan, which were revealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha during the First World War, are the Charter for the teaching of the Faith. All the teaching plans launched by the beloved Guardian, as well as those subsequently directed by the Universal House of Justice, are stages in the implementation of this master plan conceived by the Centre of the Covenant for the diffusion of the Message of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an

individual believer, September 29, 1977)

1629. Apostolic and Heroic Age of the Faith
"...the Apostolic and Heroic Age of our Faith fell into three distinct epochs, of nine, of thirty-nine and of twenty-nine years duration, associated respectively with the Babi Dispensation and the ministries of Baha'u'llah and of 'Abdu'l-Baha. This Primitive Age of the Baha'i Era, unapproached in spiritual fecundity by any period associated with the mission of the Founder of any previous Dispensation, was impregnated, from its inception to its termination, with the creative energies generated through the advent of two independent Manifestations and the establishment of a Covenant unique in the spiritual annals of mankind."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the American Baha'is, June 5, 1947)

1630. The Application of the Term "Iron Age"
"The term 'Iron Age' suggests the age of labour, of construction; a relatively [489] primitive epoch as opposed to a 'Golden Age', an age of fulfilment, fruition, attainment."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 19, 1947)

E. Hidden Words

1631. The "Hidden Words"—A Collection of Gem-Like Utterances
"...the Hidden Words was originally designated the 'Hidden Book of Fatimih,' and was identified by its Author with the Book of that same name, believed by Shi'ah Islam to be in the possession of the promised Qa'im, and to consist of words of consolation addressed by the angel Gabriel, at God's command, to Fatimih, and dictated to the Imam Ali, for the sole purpose of comforting her in her hour of bitter anguish after the death of her illustrious Father. The significance of this dynamic spiritual leaven cast into the life of the world for the reorientation of the minds of men, the edification of their souls and the rectification of their conduct can best be judged by the description of its character given in the opening passage by its Author: 'This is that which hath descended from the Realm of Glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old....'"
(Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, p. 140)

1632. The Meaning of the Name "Hidden Words"
"With regard to your question concerning the meaning of the name 'Hidden Words'. It is, indeed, one of the most suggestive titles of the Writings of Baha'u'llah. These words are called hidden due to the fact that men have had neither the knowledge nor a true sense of appreciation of them before they were revealed by Baha'u'llah. It is through Him, Who is the sole Mouthpiece of God in this age, that spiritual realities and truths have been once more reinterpreted and revealed afresh to mankind. Baha'u'llah's Message is thus the only key to a true understanding of the mysteries that envelop man's spiritual life."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

September 1, 1935)

1633. The Hidden Words Have No Sequence
"The Hidden Words have no sequence. They are jewel-like thoughts cast out of the mind of the Manifestation of God to admonish and counsel men...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 22, 1949)

1634. Passages in which Baha'u'llah Refers to Man as "Son of Spirit"
"As to your second question concerning those passages in the 'Hidden Words' in which Baha'u'llah refers to man as 'Son of Spirit', 'Son of existence', 'Son of humanity' etc., the word 'son' used in this connection is a kind of collective noun, meaning mankind and has, therefore, no connotation of any sex differentiation between man and woman whatever."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 19, 1935)

1635. Hidden Words (Arabic) No. 13 Explained
"Thou hast asked about the statement in the Hidden Words which reads, 'O Son of Spirit! Turn thy face so that thou mayest find Me within thee, Powerful, Mighty, and Supreme.' This is the statement to which His Holiness, the Christ, referred His Apostles in the Gospel, saying: 'The Father is in the Son and the Son is in you.'

[490] "This is evident that, when the hearts are purified and through the divine education and heavenly teachings become the manifestators of infinite perfections, they are like clear mirrors and the Sun of Truth will reflect with might, power and omnipotence in such mirrors, and to such an extent that whatsoever is brought before them is illumined and ignited. This is a brief interpretation because of lack of time. Therefore, do thou reflect and ponder over it, so that the doors of significance may be opened before thine eyes."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Extract from Tablet to Thornton Chase, June 1911: Star of the West, Vol. II, Nos. 7 and 8, pp. 11-12)

F. Christ

1636. Date of Birth of Jesus Christ
"Regarding the date of the birth of Jesus Christ: 'Abdu'l-Baha's statement on this subject should be considered by the Baha'is as the standard, and as the basis of their calculation."
(From a letter dated July 10, 1939 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer)

1637. Christ, Virgin Birth of
"First regarding the birth of Jesus Christ. In light of what Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha have stated concerning this subject it is evident that Jesus came into this world through the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, and that consequently His birth was quite miraculous. This is an established fact, and the friends need not feel at all surprised, as the belief in the possibility of miracles has never been rejected in the Teachings. Their importance, however,

has been minimized."
(From a letter dated December 31, 1937 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer)

1638. Miracles Are Always Possible
"Again with regard to your question relative to the birth of Jesus: He wishes me to inform you that there is nothing further he can add to the explanation he gave you in his previous communication regarding this point. One thing, however, he wishes again to bring to your attention, namely that miracles are always possible, even though they do not constitute a regular channel whereby God reveals His power to mankind. To reject miracles on the ground that they imply a breach of the laws of nature is a very shallow, well-nigh a stupid argument, inasmuch as God Who is the Author of the universe can, in His Wisdom and Omnipotence, bring any change, no matter how temporary, in the operation of the laws which He Himself has created.

"The Teachings do not tell us of any miraculous birth besides that of Jesus."
(From a letter dated February 27, 1938 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer)

1639. Baha'i Teachings in Agreement with Doctrines of Catholic Church Concerning the Virgin Birth
"With regard to your question concerning the Virgin Birth of Jesus: On this point, as on several others, the Baha'i Teachings are in full agreement with the doctrines of the Catholic Church. In the 'Kitab-i-Iqan' (Book of Certitude) p. 56, and in a few other Tablets still unpublished, Baha'u'llah confirms, however indirectly, the Catholic conception of the Virgin Birth. Also 'Abdu'l-Baha in the 'Some [491] Answered Questions', Chap. XII, p. 73, explicitly states that 'Christ found existence through the Spirit of God' which statement necessarily implies, when viewed in the light of the text, that Jesus was not the son of Joseph."
(From a letter dated October 14, 1945 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer)

1640. Christ's Brothers and Sisters Were Born in the Natural Way
"We believe that Christ only was conceived immaculately. His brothers and sisters would have been born in the natural way and conceived naturally."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to Dr. Shook, November 19, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 210, p. 3, August 1948)

1641. High Station of Mary—False Accusations
"It would be sacrilege for a Baha'i to believe that the parents of Jesus were illegally married and that the latter was consequently of an illegal union. Such a possibility cannot be even conceived by a believer who recognizes the high station of Mary and the Divine Prophethood of Jesus Christ. It is this same false accusation which the people of His Day attributed to Mary that Baha'u'llah indirectly repudiated in the Iqan. The only alternative therefore is to admit that the birth of Jesus has been miraculous. The operation of miracles is not necessarily irrational or illogical. It does by no means

constitute a limitation of the Omnipotence of God. The belief in the possibilities of miracles, on the contrary, implies that God's power is beyond any limitation whatsoever. For it is only logical to believe that the Creator, Who is the sole Author of all the laws operating in the universe, is above them and can, therefore, if He deems it necessary, alter them at His Own Will. We, as humans, cannot possibly attempt to read His Mind, and to fully grasp His Wisdom. Mystery is therefore an inseparable part of true religion, and as such, should be recognized by the believers."
(From a letter of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 1, 1935: Canadian Baha'i News, February 1968, p. 11)

1642. "Dove" Simply a Metaphor
"...The story about the dove is simply a metaphor. No dove came down. Amongst the people, John the Baptist felt that the Holy Spirit was in Christ. The Holy Spirit was always with Christ. He knew about His mission from early childhood."
(Words of 'Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. XIV, p. 274)

1643. The Baha'i Faith Recognizes the Divine Origin of Christianity and the Immaculacy of the Virgin Mary
"As to the position of Christianity, let it be stated without any hesitation or equivocation that its divine origin is unconditionally acknowledged, that the Sonship and Divinity of Jesus Christ are fearlessly asserted, that the divine inspiration of the Gospel is fully recognized, that the reality of the mystery of the Immaculacy of the Virgin Mary is confessed, and the primacy of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, is upheld and defended. The Founder of the Christian Faith is designated by Baha'u'llah as the 'Spirit of God,' is proclaimed as the One Who 'appeared out of the breath of the Holy Ghost,' and is even extolled as the Essence of the Spirit. His mother [492] is described as 'that veiled and immortal, that most beauteous countenance,' and the station of her Son eulogized as a 'station which hath been exalted above the imaginings of all that dwell on earth', whilst Peter is recognized as one whom God has caused 'the mysteries of wisdom and of utterance to flow out of his mouth'...."
(Shoghi Effendi: The Promised Day is Come, pp. 109-110)

1644. Regarding the Station of Jesus—All Prophets Can Be Regarded as Sons of God for They All Reflect His Light
"As regards your questions concerning the station of Jesus Christ, and His return as explained in the Gospel. It is true that Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of God, but this, as explained by Baha'u'llah in the Iqan, does not indicate any physical relationship whatever. Its meaning is entirely spiritual, and points out to the close relationship existing between Him and the Almighty God. Nor does it necessarily indicate any inherent superiority in the station of Jesus over other Prophets and Messengers. As far as their spiritual nature is concerned all Prophets can be regarded as Sons of God, as they all reflect His light, though not in an equal measure, and this difference in reflection is due to the conditions and circumstances under which they appear."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 29, 1937)

1645. According to the Gospel Jesus Gave Only Two Material Ordinances
"...in regard to the material ordinances and ceremonies instituted by Jesus, the Guardian would suggest that you should point out that, only so far as it is recorded in the Gospel, Jesus gave two material ordinances only. Our knowledge of Jesus' life and teachings is rather fragmentary and so it would be more correct if you specify that these ordinances are only those recorded in the Gospel, and they may not be the only ones. There may be other teachings and ordinances too, of which no record is left."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 12, 1933)

1646. The Crucifixion as Recorded in the New Testament is Correct
"...Though we cannot imagine exactly what the Manifestations of the remote past were like, we can be sure of two things: They must have been able to reach their fellow-men in a normal manner—as Baha'u'llah reached His generation, and They were sent from God and thus Divine Beings. The crucifixion as recounted in the New Testament is correct. The meaning of the Qur'anic version is that the spirit of Christ was not crucified. There is no conflict between the two."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 14, 1943)

1647. The Father Himself Has Come and Fulfilled the Mission of Christ the Son
"A Catholic background is an excellent introduction to the Faith, and one that Mrs. ... should feel gratified for having had. Though doctrines of the church today are no longer needed—as the Father Himself has come, and thus fulfilled the mission of Christ the Son—yet the foundation they lay of spiritual discipline, and their emphasis on spiritual values and adherence to moral laws, is very important and very close to our own beliefs."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to two believers, August 17, 1941)

[493] 1648. Baha'is Do Not Believe in a Bodily Resurrection After the Crucifixion
"...We do not believe that there was a bodily resurrection after the Crucifixion of Christ, but that there was a time after His Ascension when His disciples perceived spiritually His true greatness and realized He was eternal in being. This is what has been reported symbolically in the New Testament and been misunderstood. His eating with His disciples after the resurrection is the same thing."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 9, 1947)

1649. Baha'is Should Try to Find a Spiritual Meaning to the So-Called Miraculous Events Recorded in the Gospel
"Concerning the resurrection of Christ, he wishes to call your attention to the fact that in this as well as in practically all the so-called miraculous events recorded in the Gospel we should, as Baha'is, seek to find a spiritual meaning and to entirely discard the physical interpretation attached to them by many of

the Christian sects. The resurrection of Christ was, indeed, not physical but essentially spiritual, and is symbolic of the truth that the reality of man is to be found not in his physical constitution, but in his soul. A careful perusal of the 'Iqan' and of the 'Some Answered Questions' makes this indubitably clear."
(From a letter written to an individual believer on behalf of the Guardian, August 14, 1934)

1650. Jesus Christ Established Beyond a Doubt the Primacy of Peter*
"Now with regard to your questions. First concerning the statement of Jesus Christ 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock etc.'; this saying of Jesus establishes beyond any doubt the primacy of Peter and also the principle of succession, but is not explicit enough regarding the nature and functioning of the Church itself. The Catholics have read too much into that statement, and derived from it certain conclusions which are quite unjustifiable."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 7, 1938)

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*(See also: Nos. 542, 1643)

1651. Regarding the Signs that Would Herald the Advent of the New Manifestation
"Now as regards the signs that would herald the advent of the new Manifestation. The Guardian wishes you to read over very carefully Baha'u'llah's explanation as recorded in the 'Iqan'. There it is made clear that what is meant by the appearance of the Son of God after the calamitous events preceding His coming is the revelation of His full glory and its recognition and acceptance by the peoples of the world, and not his physical appearance. For Baha'u'llah, Whose advent marks the return of the Son in the Glory of the Father, has already appeared, and the signs predicted in the Gospel have not yet fully been realized. Their complete fulfilment, however, would mark the beginning of the recognition of His full station by the peoples of the world. Then and only then will His appearance be made completely manifest."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 29, 1937)

1652. The Qur'an Concerning Christ
"Regarding the passage you enclosed about the Qur'an: In reality there is no contradiction at all; when the Qur'an denies Christ is the Son of God it is not refuting His Words but the false interpretation of them by the Christians who read [494] into them a relationship of an almost corporeal nature, whereas Almighty God has no parents or offspring. What is meant by Christ, is His spirit's relation to the Infinite Spirit, and this the Qur'an does not deny. It is in a sense attributable—this kind of Sonship—to all the Prophets."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 19, 1945)

1653. The Reformation Was a Challenge to Man-Made Organization of the Church
"What contribution the Reformation did really make was to seriously challenge,

and partly undermine, the edifice which the Fathers of the Church had themselves reared, and to discard and demonstrate the purely human origin of the elaborate doctrines, ceremonies and institutions which they had devised. The Reformation was a right challenge to the man-made organization of the Church, and as such was a step in advance. In its origins, it was a reflection of the new spirit which Islam had released, and a God-sent punishment to those who had refused to embrace its truth."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 28, 1936)

1654. The Period of Turmoil which Accompanies a New Manifestation
"The passage in the Gospel of Matthew 19:30 is a reference to the period of turmoil that accompanies the appearance of a new Manifestation, at which time the humble and the lowly who accept the new Revelation will be raised and the outwardly high, but inwardly corrupt and low, will be abased and degraded."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 14, 1938)

1655. Ecclesiastics 12:6—Man's Neglect of God
"The passage in Ecclesiastics 12:6 should be interpreted allegorically, and not be taken in its literal meaning. It has reference to the effect of man's neglect of God his creator."
(Ibid.)

1656. There is a Spark of Divinity in Man
"In the book of Genesis 1:26—This passage simply means that there is a spark of divinity in man, and not that man is co-equal with the Manifestation of God. Again the friends should avoid literal interpretations of the Bible."
(Ibid.)

1657. Reference to Baha'u'llah in St. John
"The passage in the Gospel of St. John 14:26 is a reference to the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, through Whose coming this prophecy was fulfilled."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 21, 1939)

1658. We Do Not Believe in Genesis Literally—The World Was Not Created in Seven Days
"We Baha'is do not believe in Genesis literally. We know this world was not created in seven days, or six, or eight, but evolved gradually over a period of millions of years, as science has proved. As to where the idea of a seven-day week originated, it is certainly very ancient and you should refer to scholars for an answer."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 28, 1949)

[495] 1659. The Years of Noah Are Not Years as We Count Them and We Cannot Substantiate Stories of the Old Testament
"The years of Noah are not years as we count them, and as our teachings do not state that this reference to years means His dispensation, we cannot interpret

it this way.

"We have no way of substantiating the stories of the Old Testament other than references to them in our teachings, so we cannot say exactly what happened at the battle of Jericho."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 25, 1950)

1660. When 'Abdu'l-Baha States that We Believe What is in the Bible, He Means in Substance
"When 'Abdu'l-Baha states we believe what is in the Bible, He means in substance. Not that we believe every word of it to be taken literally or that every word is the authentic saying of the Prophet."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer and cited on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, March 13, 1986 in a letter to a believer)

G. Islam

1661. The Date of Birth of Muhammad is Unknown
"There is a disagreement among Oriental scholars relative to the exact date of the birth of Muhammad. You should refer to authorities on the subject, such as Sale, whose translation of the Qur'an has become almost classical."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939: Baha'i News, No. 162, p. 5, April 1943)

1662. Biblical References to Muhammad and Ali
"References in the Bible to 'Mt. Paran' and 'Paraclete' refer to Muhammad's Revelation: Deuteronomy 33:2, Genesis 21:21, Numbers 12:16, Numbers 13:3. Genesis 17:20 refers to the twelve Imams and in the Revelation of St. John, chapter 11, where it mentions two witnesses, it refers to Muhammad and Ali.

"The figures 1290 date from the declaration of Muhammad, ten years before His flight to Medina."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, December 26, 1941)

1663. Islam
"Islam attained a very high spiritual state, but western scholars are prone to judging it by Christian standards. One cannot call one world Faith superior to another, as they all come from God; they are progressive, each suited to certain needs of the times."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian by his secretary to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 210, p. 3, August 1948)

[496] 1664. Muhammad's Teachings Heightened and Guarded the Cause of Human Development
"Shoghi Effendi hopes that your lectures will not only serve to deepen the knowledge of the believers in the doctrines and culture of Islam, but will set their hearts afire with the love of everything that vitally pertains to

Muhammad and His Faith.

"There is so much misunderstanding about Islam in the West in general that you have to dispel. Your task is rather difficult and requires a good deal of erudition. Your chief task is to acquaint the friends with the pure teachings of the Prophet as recorded in the Qur'an, and then to point out how these teachings have, throughout succeeding ages, influenced nay guided the course of human development. In other words you have to show the position and significance of Islam in the history of civilization.

"The Baha'i view on that subject is that the Dispensation of Muhammad, like all other Divine Dispensations, has been fore-ordained, and that as such forms an integral part of the Divine plan for the spiritual, moral and social, development of mankind. It is not an isolated religious phenomenon, but is closely and historically related to the Dispensation of Christ, and those of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. It was intended by God to succeed Christianity, and it was therefore the duty of the Christians to accept it as firmly as they had adhered to the religion of Christ.

"You should also cautiously emphasize the truth that due to the historical order of its appearance, and also because of the obviously more advanced character of its teachings, Islam constitutes a fuller revelation of God's purpose for mankind. The so-called Christian civilization of which the Renaissance is one of the most striking manifestations is essentially Muslim in its origins and foundations. When medieval Europe was plunged in darkest barbarism, the Arabs regenerated and transformed by the spirit released by the religion of Muhammad were busily engaged in establishing a civilization the like of which their contemporary Christians in Europe had never witnessed before. It was eventually through Arabs that civilization was introduced to the West. It was through them that the philosophy, science and culture which the old Greeks had developed found their way to Europe. The Arabs were the ablest translators, and linguists of their age, and it is thanks to them that the writings of such well-known thinkers as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were made available to the Westerners. It is wholly unfair to attribute the efflorescence of European culture during the Renaissance period to the influence of Christianity. It was mainly the product of the forces released by the Muhammadan Dispensation.

"From the standpoint of institutionalism Islam far surpasses true Christianity as we know it in the Gospels. There are infinitely more laws and institutions in the Qur'an than in the Gospel. While the latter's emphasis is mainly, not to say wholly, on individual and personal conduct, the Qur'an stresses the importance of society. This social emphasis acquires added importance and significance in the Baha'i Revelation. When carefully and impartially compared, the Qur'an marks a definite advancement on the Gospel, from the standpoint of spiritual and humanitarian progress.

[497] "The truth is that Western historians have for many centuries distorted the facts to suit their religious and ancestral prejudices. The Baha'is should

try to study history anew, and to base all their investigations first and foremost on the written Scriptures of Islam and Christianity."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 27, 1936)

1665. Clarification of Certain Issues Regarding Islam, the Imam Husayn, the Imamate, etc.
"Ali's appointment was clear to the Khalifs, who actually disregarded the Prophet's oral statements.

"The usurpation occurred immediately after the Prophet's death.

"Ali did not feel unqualified, but wished to avoid schism, which, unfortunately, could not be prevented.

"The schisms that have afflicted the religions preceding the Faith of Baha'u'llah establish its distinction from all previous Revelations, and single it out among all other Dispensations, as stated by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

"The guidance vouchsafed to the Imams regarding the laws and institutions of Islam was absolute and unqualified. Their infallibility was derived directly from the Manifestation.

"The Bab's descent from the Imam Husayn is no doubt a proof of the validity of the Imamate. According to Nabil the dream the Bab had made him first conscious of His Revelation.

"The precedence of the name Husayn over Ali does establish the greatness of Imam Husayn.

"Imam Husayn has, as attested by the Iqan, been endowed with special grace and power among the Imams, hence the mystical reference to Baha'u'llah as the return of Imam Husayn, meaning the Revelation in Baha'u'llah of those attributes with which Imam Husayn had been specifically endowed.

"Joseph was one of the 'Sent Ones' of the Qur'an, meaning a Manifestation of God.

"The friends should uphold Islam as a revealed Religion in teaching the Cause but need not make, at present, any particular attempt to teach it solely and directly to non-Baha'is at this time.

"The mission of the American Baha'is is, no doubt, to eventually establish the truth of Islam in the West.

"The spirit of Islam, no doubt, was the living germ of modern Civilization; which derived its impetus from the Islamic culture in the Middle Ages, a culture that was the fruit of the Faith of Muhammad."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 30, 1941)

1666. How to Study the Qur'an
"It is certainly most difficult to thoroughly grasp all the Surihs of the

Qur'an, as it requires a detailed knowledge of the social, religious and historical background of Arabia at the time of the appearance of the Prophet. The believers cannot possibly hope, therefore, to understand the Surihs after the first or even second or third reading. They have to study them again and again, ponder over their meaning, with the help of certain commentaries, and explanatory notes as found, for instance in the admirable translation made by Sale, endeavor to acquire as clear and correct understanding of their meaning [498] and import as possible. This is naturally a slow process, but future generations of believers will certainly come to grasp it. For the present, the Guardian agrees, that it would be easier and more helpful to study the book according to subjects, and not verse by verse and also in the light of the Bab's, Baha'u'llah's, and 'Abdu'l-Baha's interpretations which throw such floods of light on the whole of the Qur'an."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 22, 1939: Baha'i News, No. 134, pp. 2-3, March 1940)

1667. Meaning of "Jin" or "Genii"
"Regarding your question as to the meaning of Jin or Genii referred to in the Qur'an, these are not beings or creatures that are actually living, but are symbolic references to the power of men of evil and may be likened to evil spirits. But the point to bear in mind is that these have no positive existence of any kind."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 26, 1936: Baha'i News, No. 105, p. 1, February 1937)

1668. Caliphate and Imamate
"Both Caliphate and Imamate means successorship. Either term could be used."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

1669. Muhammad Says that the Jews Did Not Crucify Christ
"Regarding your question relative to Surih 4, 156 of the 'Qur'an' in which Muhammad says that the Jews did not crucify Jesus, the Christ, but one like Him; what is meant by this passage is that although the Jews succeeded in destroying the physical body of Jesus, yet they were impotent to destroy the divine reality in Him."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 19, 1938)

1670. Muhammadanism is a Fuller Revelation Than Any One Preceding It
"...Muhammadanism is not only the last of the world religions, but a fuller Revelation than any one preceding it. The Qur'an is not only more authoritative than any previous religious gospel, but it contains also much more ordinances, teachings and precepts, which taken together constitute a fuller Revelation of God's purpose and law to mankind than Christianity, Judaism or any other previous Dispensation. This view is in complete accord with the Baha'i philosophy of progressive revelation, and should be thoroughly accepted and taught by every loyal Christian Baha'i."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer,

November 12, 1933)

1671. Muhammad's Teachings Fostered the National State
"Regarding your questions: It is not the City State, but the National State which Muhammad's teachings fostered. Christ had nothing to do with the City State concept in any direct manner."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 22, 1949)

1672. The Plurality of Wives in Muslim Countries Does Not Conform with the Teachings of Muhammad
"Concerning the question of plurality of wives among the Muslims: This practice [499] current in all Islamic countries does not conform with the explicit teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. For the Qur'an, while permitting the marriage of more than one wife, positively states that this is conditioned upon absolute justice. And since absolute justice is impossible to enforce, it follows, therefore, that polygamy cannot and should not be practised. The Qur'an, therefore, enjoins monogamy and not polygamy as has hitherto been understood."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 29, 1939)

1673. Imam Husayn
"The names of those cited in Baha'u'llah's prayer in the Dispensation are quite correct as you have them.

"The Prophets 'regarded as One and the same person' include the Lesser Prophets as well, and not merely Those Who bring a 'Book'. The station is different, but they are Prophets and Their nature thus different from that of ours.

"In the prayer mentioned above Baha'u'llah identifies Himself with Imam Husayn. This does not make him a Prophet, but his position was very unique, and we know Baha'u'llah claims to be the 'return' of the Imam Husayn. He, in other words, identifies His Spirit with these Holy Souls gone before; that does not, of course, make Him in any way their reincarnation. Nor does it mean all of them were Prophets.

"Your constant and devoted Baha'i services are deeply valued by the Guardian, you may be sure, and he will pray in the Holy Shrines that your labours may be blessed and your power to confirm the souls increased."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 8, 1949)

H. Israel

1674. Israel
"The word Israel, used throughout the Bible, simply refers to the Jewish people, and not to the chosen ones of this day."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 21, 1939)

1675. Position of Jerusalem
"...whereas Jerusalem is the spiritual center of Christendom it is not the administrative centre of either the Church of Rome or any other Christian denomination. Likewise, although it is regarded by Moslems as the spot where one of its most sacred shrines is situated, the Holy Sites of the Muhammadan Faith and the centre of its pilgrimages are to be found in Arabia, not in Palestine. The Jews alone offer somewhat of a parallel to the attachment which the Baha'is have for this country inasmuch as Jerusalem holds the remains of their Holy Temple and was the seat of both the religious and political institutions associated with their past history. But even their case differs in one respect from that of the Baha'is, for it is in the soil of Palestine that the three Central Figures of our religion are buried, and it is not only the centre of Baha'i pilgrimages from all over the world but also the permanent seat of our Administrative Order...."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, July 14, 1947: Baha'i News, No. 199, September 1947, p. 3)

[500] 1676. All Palestine to Become Home
"You can see that from all the parts of the world tribes of Jews are coming to the Holy Land; they live in villages and lands which they make their own, and day by day they are increasing to such an extent, that all Palestine will become their home."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, p. 66, 1985 ed.)

1677. Gathering of Israel
"You have asked Me a question with regard to the gathering of the children of Israel in Jerusalem in accordance with the prophecy.

"Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies, is a revered Temple, a sublime name, for it is the City of God... The gathering of Israel at Jerusalem means, therefore, and prophesies, that Israel as a whole is gathering beneath the banner of God and will enter the Kingdom of the Ancient of Days. For the celestial Jerusalem, which has as its center the Holy of Holies, is a City of the Kingdom, a Divine City. The East and West are but a small corner of that City.

"Moreover, materially as well (as spiritually), the Israelites will gather in the Holy Land. This is irrefutable prophecy, for the ignominy which Israel has suffered for well-nigh twenty-five hundred years will now be changed into eternal glory, and in the eyes of all, the Jewish people will become glorified to such an extent as to draw the jealousy of its enemies and the envy of its friends."
(According to information received by the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States several years ago this Tablet was revealed by the Master in the year 1897 to a Jewish Community in the Orient: Baha'i News, No. 250, December 1951, p. 5)

1678. Journey of the Israelites
"It was both spiritual and physical. They journeyed to the Promised Land and

geography and history both prove that this was a physical journey.

"Moses viewed the Promised Land but died before it was reached, having given over his charge to Joshua.

"The crossing of the Red Sea has a spiritual meaning. It was a spiritual journey, through and above the sea of corruption and iniquity of the Pharaoh and his people, or army. By the help of God through Moses, the Israelites were able to cross this sea safely and reach the Promised Land (spiritual state) while Pharaoh and his people were drowned in their own corruption.

"The Egyptian History recorded even trifling events. Had such a wonderful thing happened as the parting of the physical sea it would also have been recorded."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Daily Lessons Received at Akka, p. 45, 1979 ed.)

1679. Erroneous Belief
"The belief, according to which Judah represents the Jews and Israel the Chosen people, is erroneous."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

1680. Ten Tribes of Israel
"The Teachings throw no light on the question as to what became of the ten tribes of Israel, or whether they were absorbed into some other nation or not."
(Ibid.)

[501] 1681. The Jews Have a Great Spiritual Destiny and Will Enter the Faith in Large Groups
"Regarding your question concerning the future of the Jews: They certainly have, as explicitly stated by the Master, a great spiritual destiny, and will gradually enter the Faith in large groups."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 13, 1937)

1682. Greek Philosophers Visited Israel's Scholars and Religious Leaders
"It is furthermore a matter of record in numerous historical works that the philosophers of Greece such as Pythagoras acquired the major part of their philosophy, both divine and material, from the disciples of Solomon. And Socrates after having eagerly journeyed to meet with some of Israel's most illustrious scholars and divines, on his return to Greece established the concept of the oneness of God and the continuing life of the human soul after it has put off its elemental dust. Ultimately, the ignorant among the Greeks denounced this man who had fathomed the inmost mysteries of wisdom, and rose up to take his life; and then the populace forced the hand of their ruler, and in council assembled they caused Socrates to drink from the poisoned cup."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 77, 1975 ed.)

I. Prophets and Prophecies of Various Religions

1683. Baha'u'llah is the Culmination of the Adamic Cycle and the Inaugurator of the Baha'i Cycle

"The Adamic Cycle inaugurated 6000 years ago by the Manifestation of God called Adam is only one of the many bygone cycles. Baha'u'llah, as you say, is the culmination of the Adamic Cycle. He is also the Inaugurator of the Baha'i Cycle.

"Obviously there must have been Prophets and Manifestations in the ages preceding the Adamic Cycle. This is supported by the following statement revealed by Baha'u'llah.

'And now regarding thy question, "How is it that no records are to be found concerning the Prophets that have preceded Adam, the Father of Mankind, or of the Kings that lived in the days of those Prophets?" Know thou that the absence of any reference to them is no proof that they did not actually exist. That no records concerning them are now available, should be attributed to their extreme remoteness, as well as to the vast changes which the earth hath undergone since their time.'

"With regard to your question about the creation story, we are asked to quote the following from an unpublished Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

'Know ye that the Torah is that which was revealed in the Tablets to Moses, may peace be upon Him, or that to which He was bidden. But the stories are historical narratives and were written after Moses, may peace be upon Him.'

"Concerning the story of Adam and Eve, 'Abdu'l-Baha, in 'Some Answered Questions', explains that it cannot be taken literally. You are asked to refer to pages 122-126 of this book for the symbolic meaning of the story."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 13, 1986)

[502] 1684. Buddha Was a Manifestation Like Christ
"The Buddha was a Manifestation of God, like Christ, but His followers do not possess His authentic writings."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, December 26, 1941: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957, p. 41)

1685. Confucius Was Not a Prophet But a Great Reformer
"Confucius was not a Prophet. It is quite correct to say he is the founder of a moral system and a great reformer."
(Ibid.)

1686. Daniel, Prophecies of
"As regards the question concerning prophecies of Daniel in 'Some Answered Questions'... The seventy weeks comes right to the martyrdom of Christ. The sixty-nine weeks must be understood to mean that after 69 weeks He was crucified, which, as the Master points out, brings us to the last week, the week between 69 and 70, when He ascended."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 21, 1957)

1687. King David
"The David referred to by the Bab, and stated by Him to have preceded Moses, is not the same one as King David, the father of King Solomon, who lived in the tenth century B.C. and who obviously lived many years, and indeed many centuries after Moses. 'Abdu'l-Baha has explained this in a Tablet."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, February 17, 1939: Dawn of a New Day, pp. 76-77)

1688. Genesis 22:9—Sacrifice of Ishmael
"As to the question raised by the Racine Assembly in connection with Baha'u'llah's statement in the 'Gleanings' concerning the sacrifice of Ishmael: Although this statement does not agree with that made in the Bible, Genesis 22:9, the friends should unhesitatingly, and for reasons that are only too obvious, give precedence to the sayings of Baha'u'llah which, it should be pointed out, are fully corroborated by the Qur'an, which book is more authentic than the Bible including both the New and the Old Testaments. The Bible is not wholly authentic, and in this respect is not to be compared with the Qur'an, and should be wholly subordinated to the authentic writings of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, July 28, 1936: Baha'i News, No. 103, p. 1, October 1936)

1689. Lot
"Genesis XIX, 29-38—the text makes it quite clear that Lot was not responsible for the action committed by His two daughters, as they gave him wine and made him drunk."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, p. 201)

1690. Zoroaster—Was Not Abraham
"Zoroaster was not Abraham; the Muslims, some of them, contend that they [503] were the same, but we believe they were two distinct Prophets. There is a misunderstanding in the reference in 'Baha'i Proofs' to this matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, p. 41)

1691. Beginning of Zoroastrian Era
"1. Regarding the beginning of the Zoroastrian era, in one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha states that Zoroaster lived about 750 years after Moses; in a letter to an individual believer the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf: 'Zoroaster lived about a thousand years before Christ. There is no exact date in the teachings regarding the beginning of His Dispensation.'

"2. Concerning your second question referring to a purported Tablet of the Bab stating that there were thirty Zoroasters, the Research Department states that no text from the Bab has been found on this subject. However, Mirza Abu'l-Fazal has stated in his writings that there appeared in Iran many prophets prior to the Dispensation of Zoroaster."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, Department of the Secretariat, May 13, 1979, to Mrs. Gayle Woolson)

1692. Hindu Religion
"...The origins of this and many other religions that abound in India are not quite known to us, and even the Orientalists and the students of religions are not in complete accord about the results of their investigations in that field. The Baha'i writings also do not refer specifically to any of these forms of religion current in India. So, the Guardian feels it impossible to give you any definite and detailed information on that subject. He would urge you, however, to carry on your studies in that field, although its immensity is well-nigh bewildering, with the view of bringing the Message to the Hindus...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, p. 198)

1693. Sabeanism
"With reference to your question concerning the Sabean and Hindu religions: There is nothing in the Teachings that could help us in ascertaining which one of these two Faiths is older. Neither history seems to be able to provide a definite answer to this question. The records concerning the origin of these religions are not sufficiently detailed and reliable to offer any conclusive evidence on this point."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 9, 1940: Extracts from the Guardian's letters on Hinduism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

1694. Lao-Tse and the Sabeans
"Regarding Lao-Tse: The Baha'is do not consider him a prophet, or even a secondary prophet or messenger, unlike Buddha or Zoroaster, both of whom were divinely-appointed and fully independent Manifestations of God.

"As to the religion of the Sabeans very little is known about the origins of this religion, though we Baha'is are certain of one thing, that the founder of it has been a divinely-sent Messenger. The country where Sabeanism became widespread and [504] flourished was Chaldea, and Abraham is considered as having been a follower of that Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 10, 1939)

1695. There Were No Followers of the Bab and Baha'u'llah from the Far East During Their Ministry
"As there were no followers of the Bab or Baha'u'llah derived from the religions of the Far East in Their days, this may be the reason that they did not address any Tablets directly to these people. Also we must remember that every religion springs from some root, and just as Christianity sprang from Judaism, our own religion sprang from Islam, and that is why so many of the teachings deduct their proofs from Islam."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 5, 1957)

"The teachings bear no reference to any genealogical tie between the Prophets of the Near and Far East."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

March 31, 1941)

1696. Hinduism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism
(Following are some quotations taken from a compilation of extracts from letters written on behalf of the Guardian on these and related subjects, enclosed with a letter to an individual believer on November 30, 1980 from the Universal House of Justice)

Lesser Prophets: "Regarding your questions: We cannot possibly add names of people we (or anyone else) think might be Lesser Prophets to those found in the Qur'an, the Bible and our own Scriptures. For only these can we consider authentic Books."
(March 13, 1950, to an individual believer)

Asiatic Prophets: "Regarding your questions: The only reason there is not more mention of the Asiatic prophets is because their names seem to be lost in the mists of ancient history. Buddha is mentioned and Zoroaster in our scriptures—both non-Jewish prophets or non-semitic prophets. We are taught there always have been Manifestations of God, but we do not have any record of their names."
(October 4, 1950, to an individual believer)

Scriptures of Buddha and Krishna: "We cannot be sure of the authenticity of the scriptures of Buddha and Krishna, so we certainly cannot draw any conclusions about virgin births mentioned in them. There is no reference to this subject in our teachings, so the Guardian cannot pronounce an opinion.

"As our teachings do not state Zoroaster is the connecting link between the Euphrates and the Prophets in India, we cannot assert this.

"Abraham and Krishna are two separate individuals, with no connection that we know of.

"We know no more about the prophets mentioned in the Iqan than what Baha'u'llah states in that Book."
(November 25, 1950, to an individual believer)

Brahma and Krishna: "Your question concerning Brahma and Krishna: Such matters, as no reference occurs to them in the Teachings, are left for students of history and religion to resolve and clarify."
(April 14, 1941, to an individual believer)

Actual Dates of Prophets of Adamic Cycle Not Given: "There are no dates in our teachings regarding the actual dates of the Prophets of the Adamic Cycle, so we cannot [505] give any. Tentatively we can accept what historians may consider accurate. Naturally the dates referring to Muhammad, the Bab and Baha'u'llah we are sure of."
(November 25, 1950, to an individual believer)

1697. Existence is of Two Kinds
"Existence is of two kinds: One is the existence of God which is beyond the comprehension of man. He, the invisible, the lofty and the incomprehensible, is

preceded by no cause but rather is the originator of the Cause of Causes. He, the Ancient, has had no beginning and is the All-Independent. The second kind of existence is the human existence. It is a common existence, comprehensible to the human mind, is not ancient, is dependent and has a cause to it. The mortal substance does not become eternal and vice-versa; the human kind does not become a Creator and vice-versa. The transformation of the innate substance is impossible.

"In the world of existence, that which is comprehensible, is in three stages of mortality: the first stage is the mineral world, next the vegetable world, and in the latter the mineral world does exist but has a distinctive feature which is the vegetable characteristic. Likewise, in the animal world, the mineral and vegetable characteristics are present and in addition the characteristics of the animal world are to be found: it has the faculties of hearing and of sight. In the human world the characteristics of the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds are found and in addition those of the human kind are existing. That is the intellectual characteristic, which discovers the realities of things and comprehends the all-important facts.

"Man, therefore, on the plane of the contingent beings is the most perfect being. By man is meant the perfect individual, who is like unto a mirror in which the divine perfections are manifested and reflected. But the sun does not condescend from the height of its sanctity to enter into the mirror, but when the latter is purified and turned towards the Sun of Truth, the perfections of this Sun, consisting of light and heat, are reflected and manifested in that mirror. These souls are the Divine Manifestations of God."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, July 20, 1919: Star of the West, Vol. XI, No. 10, p. 159)

1698. Manifestations Had Some Consciousness of Their Station
"The Manifestations no doubt had some consciousness of Their station, but what the nature of that consciousness was we do not know."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

1699. The Souls of the Prophets Are Pre-Existent
"The soul or spirit of the individual comes into being with the conception of his physical body.

"The Prophets, unlike us, are pre-existent. The Soul of Christ existed in the spiritual world before His birth in this world. We cannot imagine what that world is like, so words are inadequate to picture His state of being.

"We cannot know God directly, but only through His Prophets. We can pray to Him, realizing that through His Prophets we know Him, or we can address our prayer in thought to Baha'u'llah, not as God, but as the Door to our knowing God.

"We find God only through the Intermediary of His Prophet. We see the Perfection of God in His Prophets. Time and space are physical things; God the

Creator is [506] not in a 'place' as we conceive of place in physical terms. God is the Infinite Essence, the Creator. We cannot picture Him or His state; if we did, we would be His equals, not His Creatures. God is never flesh, but mirrored in the attributes of His Prophets, we see His Divine characteristics and perfections.

"Shoghi Effendi advises you to study 'Some Answered Questions' and the 'Dispensation of Baha'u'llah' which help you to grasp these questions."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 9, 1947)

"Regarding your question concerning the passage in 'Seven Valleys' referring to pre-existence. This in no way presupposes the existence of the individual soul before conception. The term has not been absolutely accurately translated, and what is meant is that man's soul is the repository of the ancient, Divine mysteries of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 5, 1948)

1700. Hadrat—His Holiness
"In Persian it is impolite not to use the word Hadrat before the name of the Prophet, so that strictly speaking a proper translation should always have 'His Holiness Moses' etc. However, as this seems peculiar in English, and not in the best usage of our language, he feels it can be dispensed with. Pronouns referring to the Manifestation, or the Master, should, however, invariably be capitalized."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, November 8, 1948: Baha'i News, No. 216, p. 1, February 1949)

1701. Fundamental Purpose of All Religions
"...the fundamental purpose of all religions—including our own—is to bring man nearer to God, and to change his character, which is of the utmost importance. Too much emphasis is often laid on the social and economic aspects of the Teachings; but the moral aspect cannot be overemphasized.

"He urges you not to allow yourself to be discouraged, as all these temporary conditions will pass away as the Faith grows, but to concentrate on the constructive work of teaching and exemplifying the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 6, 1946: Baha'i Youth, p. 8)

1702. Fundamentals of Religions
"The fundamentals of all divinely-instituted religions cannot be rigidly classified. No definite or exhaustive list of them can be set up, as we have no means of ascertaining that what we consider to be those fundamentals are common to all such religions."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

1703. Cosmic Religion
"Regarding the question you have asked in connection with a passage in Dr. Einstein's 'Cosmic Religion': According to the Baha'i conception there is and can be no incompatibility between the idea of causal law and that of an omnipotent and omniscient God, Who, if He deems it fit, may at times interfere with the normal sequence of events in the world, and thus retard or altogether stop the operation of certain laws, whether in the physical universe, or in any other worlds of nature and man.

"The other statement reported to have been made by Dr. Einstein to the effect [507] that the ethical behavior of man 'requires no support from religion' is incompatible with the Baha'i viewpoint which emphatically stresses the fact that no sound ethics can exist and become effective unless based on revealed religion. To dissociate ethics from religion is to render the former not only void of any firm foundation but without the necessary driving power."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 6, 1939)

1704. Core of Religious Faith
"For the core of religious faith is that mystical feeling which unites man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer. And this is the reason why Baha'u'llah has so much stressed the importance of worship. It is not sufficient for a believer merely to accept and observe the teachings. He should, in addition, cultivate the sense of spirituality which he can acquire chiefly by means of prayer."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 8, 1935: Baha'i News, No. 102, August 1936, p. 2)

1705. Oneness of Mankind Cornerstone of Teachings
"With reference to your question as to the meaning of the passage 'he who loves his kind', the statement of Baha'u'llah does not refer to any special race or class of people. Rather it includes the entire human race, irrespective of any class, creed or colour. The Message of Baha'u'llah is not a particularistic appeal to a group of people. It is a Universal Message, an all-inclusive appeal. His principle of the Oneness of Mankind is worldwide in its spirit, in its application, and covers the entire field of human relationships.

"It is most essential that the believers should be quite clear on this point as the principle of the oneness of humanity is the corner-stone of all the teachings of Baha'u'llah, and should be presented as such, without the least hesitation, by the friends."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 11, 1937, cited in a letter by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, August 8, 1968)

1706. Primary Importance of the Cause Among Existing Religions
"The primary importance of the Cause among the existing religions of the world is that, whereas the others have no coherent program upon which they are united, the Movement is rich with the very spirit and teachings the world needs

for solving its present international problems...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 14, 1932: Baha'i News, No. 59, February 1932, p. 2)

1707. Meaning of "Mysterious Power that Creates New Spiritual Worlds"
"You inquired regarding the meaning of the sentence, 'The mysterious power that creates new spiritual worlds'. This, Shoghi Effendi believes, refers to the transcendental Essence of God Who is the Creator of this world and the worlds to come; for Baha'u'llah says, 'God's worlds are infinite'."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Spiritual Assembly of Eliot, Maine, March 27, 1933: Baha'i News, No. 73, May 1933, p. 2)

[508] 1708. Meaning of Personal God: Value of Religion
Please refer to No. 1574

1709. Religion Should Change Our Acts as Well as Our Thoughts
"...The inestimable value of religion is that when a man is vitally connected with it, through a real and living belief in it and in the Prophet who brought it, he receives a strength greater than his own which helps him to develop his good characteristics and overcome his bad ones. The whole purpose of religion is to change not only our thoughts but our acts; when we believe in God and His Prophet and His teachings, we find we are growing even though we perhaps thought ourselves incapable of growth and change."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 3, 1943)

1710. World Religion Day, Purpose of
"Your letter of September 30, with the suggestion that 'there should be one day in the year in which all of the religions should agree' is a happy thought, and one which persons of good will throughout the world might well hail. However, this is not the underlying concept of World Religion Day, which is a celebration of the need for and the coming of a world religion for mankind, the Baha'i Faith itself. Although there have been many ways of expressing the meaning of this celebration in Baha'i communities in the United States, the Day was not meant primarily to provide a platform for all religions and their emergent ecumenical ideas. In practice, there is no harm in the Baha'i communities' inviting the persons of other religions to share their platforms on this Day, providing the universality of the Baha'i Faith as the fulfillment of the hopes of mankind for a universal religion are clearly brought forth."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Chicago, October 22, 1968)

1711. Significance of Remains of the Prophets
"...There is no special physical significance in the remains of the Prophets or relics of Their Persons. But there is a profound spiritual significance in the sense that Their dust was the physical mirror of the greatness of God. In other words we know God through His Prophets, Who have bodies, these bodies—Their very dust—are precious through association. It is natural for people to be touched by a lock of hair or some token of one they loved; how much more should

we treasure and feel moved by a relic of the Beloved of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 13, 1944: Baha'i News, No. 210)

1712. The Atoms of the Prophets Are Just Atoms
"The reflection of the qualities of holy souls can take place at any time; it is not confined to the period when the Manifestation is on this Earth.

"The atoms of the Prophets are just atoms, like all others, but the association of this great spiritual power with them leaves in the place They are laid to rest a spiritual atmosphere, if one can use this expression. They are, no doubt, endowed with a tremendous spiritual influence and far-reaching power. But the physical character of Their atoms are not different from other peoples, any more than Their bodies and physical functions are different."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 28, 1949)

[509] 1713. The Four and Twenty Elders
"Regarding the four and twenty elders: The Master, in a Tablet, stated that they are the Bab, the 18 Letters of the Living and five others who would be known in the future. So far we do not know who these five others are."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 22, 1943: Baha'i News, No. 171, November 1944, p. 2)

1714. Perfection of God Found in His Prophets
"We find God only through the Intermediary of His Prophet. We see the Perfection of God in His Prophets. Time and space are physical things; God, the Creator, is not a 'place'; as we conceive of place in physical terms. God is the Infinite Essence, the Creator. We cannot picture Him or His state, but if we did, we would be His equals, not His creatures. God is never flesh, but mirrored in the attributes of His Prophets we see His Divine characteristics and perfections."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer: High Endeavors, Messages to Alaska, p. 70)

1715. References to Baha'u'llah
"As to the questions thou hast asked: Concerning Malachi, chapter 3, verses 16, 17 and 18 refer to the friends of God, and in St. Matthew, chapter 25, the object of verses 31, 32 and 33 is the Blessed Beauty. As to Micah, chapter 5, the 4th verse refers to Christ. In Zephaniah, chapter 1, verses 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18, and in Zechariah, chapter 2, verses 10, 11, 12 and 13, and in St. Luke, chapter 21, verses 20 to the end—all these refer to the century of the Blessed Beauty."
('Abdu'l-Baha Abbas, translated by Shoghi Rabbani, June 4, 1919: Star of the West, Vol. X, No. 12, p. 232)

1716. The Ark and the Flood
"The statement in 'Seven Days of Creation' certainly cannot be considered authoritative or correct. The Ark and the Flood we believe are symbolical."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer,

October 28, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 228, February 1950, p. 4)

1717. Generation, the Word Has Different Meanings
"...the word generation has a different meaning in different places. Christ referred to the Christ Dispensation, or cycle, and the other refers to the physical generation.

"For example, if a man does a great injustice to another in his life, then, after his death, his son will be despised for having had such a father and in some cases the injury might be so serious that the effect would reach to the grandson, etc., or a man may, by wrong living, fall into consumption and give that disease to his children unto the third or fourth generation.

"Both physically and mentally the sins of the fathers may be visited upon the children."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Daily Lessons Received at Akka, 1979 ed., pp. 45-46)

1718. The Cross—This Figure Exists in All Things
"As for the symbol of the cross, appointed in former times: Know verily, that the cross form is a wonderful figure and consists of two right lines placed crosswise—one perpendicular to the other—and this figure exists in all things.

[510] "Meditate upon these words and pay attention to the tissue in all existing substances, either plant, animal or man, and thou wilt see that they all are formed of the cross figure or two crosswise lines. Consider this intently with true meditation. Then thou wilt be taught by the Holy Ghost that it is for this reason that God hath chosen this symbol to be displayed as the token of sacrifice in all periods of the ages.

"As for the crescent: It hath reference to the beginning of the religion of God which shall grow to be a full moon.

"As for the stars: They are types of guides; for, verily, the star is a guide to people, even in the most gloomy darkness, on both land and sea. In former centuries, people were guided by the pole-star in whatever direction they went."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, pp. 598-599)

1719. The Teachings of Swedenborg and Emerson Should Be Considered as Advanced Stirrings of the Time
"...The teachings of such spiritually enlightened souls as Swedenborg, Emerson, and others should be considered as the advanced stirrings in the minds of great souls foreshadowing that Revelation which was to break upon the world through the Bab and Baha'u'llah. Anything they say which is not substantiated by the Teachings, however, we cannot regard as absolute truth, but merely as the reflection of their own thoughts."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 6, 1943)

1720. Emanuel Swedenborg

"In connection with your question regarding the reference made by 'Abdu'l-Baha to 'His Highness Emanuel' in Vol. III of His Tablets, this obviously refers to the Bab as the text shows it clearly and is in no way a reference to Swedenborg."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 9, 1938: Baha'i News, No. 134, March 1940, p. 2)

1721. 'Abdu'l-Baha Praised Emanual Swedenborg for His Efforts for Social and Religious Reconstruction
"...concerning Emanuel Swedenborg and his writings: While 'Abdu'l-Baha praised the man and his noble efforts for social and religious reconstruction there is nothing in the Master's Writings that can justify the believers in giving him any special station or importance beside that of an enlightened and constructive thinker of wide spiritual vision. There can be therefore no official Baha'i attitude in respect of the man or his work."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 7, 1939)

1722. Because of the Progressiveness of the Teachings of Swedenborg He Can Be Considered a Herald of This Day
"Regarding your questions: The rational faculty is a manifestation of the power of the soul. The soul is the mirror of reflection. Swedenborg, because of the extreme progressiveness of his teachings may, in a way, be considered a herald of this Day. There is nothing definite in the Teachings concerning the subconscious mind's relation to the spirit of man."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 26, 1943)

[511] 1723. People Like Emerson Were No Doubt Inspired by God
"The point of view expressed in your letter was of special interest because it was typical of those sincere and seeking souls who are trying to obtain peace and inward certainty by reading the universally-minded writers of our age. People like Emerson were undoubtedly inspired by God, for many of the thoughts that quicken us in this day were uttered and stimulated by them. Only gradually will we come to appreciate their work and place them in the growing world of ours. The tendency of these writers, however, is rather to diminish rather than to enhance the position of the prophet in civilization. These bid us come into communion with God by looking within us. They tell us that the prophets were humans and that we can become like them if we only strive. This renders religion the religion of the few, the religion of only those who have experiences."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 29, 1929)

1724. The Difference Between the Gnostics and the Religionists
"Abdu'l-Baha says that the main difference between the gnostics and the religionists is that the gnostics maintain the existence of only two worlds, the world of God and the world of the creature. The prophets, however, maintained the existence of three worlds: the world of God, the world of the

Will or the Word, and the world of created things. The prophets, therefore, maintained that a knowledge of God is impossible. As 'Abdu'l-Baha says, man can never know God or even imagine Him. If he does, that object is not God but an imaginary idol."
(Ibid.)

1725. Christ Referred to the World of the Prophets as the "Word", 'Abdu'l-Baha Calls It the "Will"
"There is, therefore, only one way to God and that is through the realization of his Manifestation or Prophet in that age. Christ called the world of the prophets 'the word' in the verse of 'the word became flesh' while 'Abdu'l-Baha calls it the Will. Anyhow it is only through these that we can know God. These manifest the divine attributes and therefore by knowing them we can know God. The mystic path that the traveller should follow is therefore to the Prophet. By coming in contact with Him will he obtain peace."
(Ibid.)

1726. God Will Continue to Send His Prophets that Man May Obtain His Highest Goal
"If these are the only means through which man can obtain his highest goal, namely the knowledge of God, could we believe that God has ceased to send them? As Baha'u'llah says, will it not be a blasphemy to say that God's bounty existed in the past and that ever since the time of Christ it stopped to pour—and for all eternity. No, God has ever sent and will ever send these prophets who would represent God on this earth and by reflecting the divine attributes give us a knowledge of Him."
(Ibid.)

1727. Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon
"Regarding your question concerning Joseph Smith and the 'Book of Mormon': [512] as the Baha'i Teachings quite clearly outline the succession of Prophets from the days of Christ as being Muhammad, the Bab, and finally Baha'u'llah, it is obvious that Joseph Smith is not a Manifestation of God.

"The Baha'is should deal with the members of all religious sects, however, with the greatest tolerance and friendliness, and try to point out to them the significance of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah to the world in this great Day. The Guardian would advise you to teach the Mormons like everyone else, the Faith, when you find them receptive. They have many good principles, and their teachings regarding chastity, not drinking or smoking, etc., are quite similar to ours, and should form a point of common interest."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 18, 1941: Baha'i News, No. 416, November 1965)

1728. Status of Joseph Smith
"As for the status of Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Faith, he is not considered by Baha'is to be a prophet, minor or otherwise. But of course he was a religious teacher sensitive to the spiritual currents flowing in the early 19th century directly from the appearance of the Bab and Baha'u'llah and the

Revelation of Their Messages of hope and divine Guidance. In this respect you might find chapter ten in the late Hand of the Cause George Townshend's book, 'Christ and Baha'u'llah,' interesting."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, February 7, 1977)

1729. The Mormons Have High Principles and Ideals
"The Mormons are a people with high principles and ideals, and the step spiritually into the Cause is not as difficult for them as for many others not possessing their faith and devotion. However, the very zeal with which they serve their own Faith makes it difficult for them to grasp the greater vision of our Holy Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer: cited in a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, February 16, 1976)

XLII. PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

[513] 1730. Source of Evil Thoughts
"They come from other minds: they are reflected. One should not become a mirror for them—to reflect them, neither should one try to control them for this is impossible: it only aggravates the difficulty, causing more to appear.

"One should constantly turn the mirror of his heart squarely toward God so that the Light of the Sun of Truth may be reflected there.

"This is the only cure for attacks of evil thoughts. The face of the mirror should be turned toward God and the back of the mirror toward the evil thoughts."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Daily Lessons Received at Akka, p. 35, 1979 ed.)

1731. Evil Spirits
"As to the question of evil spirits, demons and monsters, any references made to them in the Holy Books have symbolic meaning. What is currently known among the public is but sheer superstition."
(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha: Spiritualism and Psychic Phenomena, p. 3)

1732. Influence of Evil Spirits
"You have asked regarding the influence of evil spirits. Evil spirits are deprived of eternal life. How then can they exercise any influence? But as eternal life is ordained for holy spirits, therefore their influence exists in all the divine worlds."
(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to Mrs. Ella Goodall Cooper: Daily Lessons Received at Akka, p. 78, 1979 ed.)

1733. Evil Spirits Refer to Lower Nature of Man
"The reality underlying this question is that the evil spirit, Satan or whatever is interpreted as evil, refers to the lower nature in man. This baser nature is symbolized in various ways. In man there are two expressions: One is the expression of nature; the other the expression of the spiritual realm. The world of nature is defective. Look at it clearly, casting aside all

superstition and imagination... God has never created an evil spirit; all such ideas and nomenclature are symbols expressing the mere human or earthly nature of man. It is an essential condition of the soil of earth that thorns, weeds and fruitless trees may grow from it. Relatively speaking, this is evil; it is simply the lower state and baser product of nature."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 294-295, 1982 ed.)

1734. Evil Exists
"We must never take one sentence in the Teachings and isolate it from the rest: it does not mean we must not love, but we must reach a spiritual plane where God comes first and great human passions are unable to turn us away from Him. All [514] the time we see people who either through the force of hate or the passionate attachment they have to another person, sacrifice principle or bar themselves from the Path of God.

"We know absence of light is darkness, but no one would assert darkness was not a fact. It exists even though it is only the absence of something else. So evil exists too, and we cannot close our eyes to it, even though it is a negative existence. We must seek to supplant it by good, and if we see an evil person is not influenceable by us, then we should shun his company for it is unhealthy."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 4, 1950: Spiritualism, Psychic Phenomena and Related Subjects, A Compilation from the Universal House of Justice, February 14, 1973 to National Spiritual Assemblies)

1735. Psychic Powers in Children—Dangerous to Cultivate
"What 'Abdu'l-Baha always pointed out in this matter is that these psychic powers were not to be used in this world, and that, indeed, it was dangerous to cultivate them here. They should be left dormant, and not exploited, even when we do so with the sincere belief we are helping others. We do not understand their nature and have no way of being sure of what is true and what is false in such matters.

"If children are inclined to be psychic they should not be blamed for it too harshly; they should not be encouraged to strengthen their powers in this direction."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 4, 1946: Ibid.)

1736. The Fourth Dimension
"There is nothing in the teachings of our Faith about the Fourth Dimension, and he feels that with all the practical work the Baha'is have to do during the next ten years you should put such abstruse subjects out of your mind entirely. They can do no good and will lead you nowhere."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 19, 1953: Ibid.)

1737. Avoid Psychic Phenomena
"With reference to psychic phenomena referred to in your letter: These in most cases are an indication of a deep psychological disturbance. The friends should

avoid as much as possible giving undue consideration to such matters."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 20, 1937: Extracts from the Guardian's letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, February 1970)

1738. Possession
"Regarding your question relative to the condition of those people who are described in the Gospel as being possessed of devils: This should be interpreted figuratively; devil or satan is symbolic of evil and dark forces yielding to temptation."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 20, 1938: Ibid.)

1739. Should Strive to Have Pure Thoughts and Dreams
"...That truth is often imparted through dreams no one who is familiar with [515] history, especially religious history, can doubt. At the same time dreams and vision are always coloured and influenced more or less by the mind of the dreamer and we must beware of attaching too much importance to them. The purer and more free from prejudice and desire our hearts and minds become, the more likely is it that our dreams will convey reliable truth, but if we have strong prejudices, personal likings and aversions, bad feelings or evil motives, these will warp and distort any inspirational impression that comes to us.... In many cases dreams have been the means of bringing people to the truth or of confirming them in the Faith. We must strive to become pure in heart and 'free from all save God'. Then our dreams as well as our waking thoughts will become pure and true. We should test impressions we get through dreams, visions or inspirations, by comparing them with the revealed Word and seeing whether they are in full harmony therewith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 16, 1925: Ibid.)

1740. Difficult to Distinguish Truth from Imagination
"First concerning visions: It is very difficult to distinguish between true visions which are true spiritual experiences of the soul and imaginations which have no reality in spiritual truths. True visions, however, can be granted to those who are spiritually pure and receptive, and are not therefore confined to the Prophets alone."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi dated November 26, 1939, to an individual believer: Baha'i News, No. 152, p. 2, April 1942)

1741. Difference Between Divine Revelation and Personal Experience
"As regards ...'s claim to have direct revelations from God: Such visions and communications as he may receive cannot, from the standpoint of the Cause, be well considered in the nature of a direct and authoritative revelation from God such as experiences by Divine Prophets and Messengers. There is a fundamental difference between Divine Revelation as vouchsafed by God to His Prophets, and the spiritual experiences and visions which individuals may have. The latter should, under no circumstances, be construed as constituting an infallible source of guidance, even for the person experiencing them.

"The Guardian wishes you to fully explain and clarify this point to ... that he may have no illusion regarding the true Baha'i attitude on this and similar matters.
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi dated November 1, 1940, to an individual believer, Mrs. Kathryn Frankland: Ibid.)

1742. True Mystical Experiences Rare
"Regarding your question: In His chapter on 'Visions and Communications with Spirits' in 'Some Answered Questions', the Master evidently desires to point out that there can be, under certain rare circumstances, such as those experienced by the Prophets, communion with some soul gone before into the invisible world, but that most of this type of experience which people often claim to have with departed souls is nothing but the product of their own imaginations—however real it may seem to them to be.

"We have no way of knowing historically, at present, whether the experience [516] Saul had of Samuel was an actual spiritual intercourse. It is not the product of imagination, however, as the Bible unmistakably affirms it.

"Truly mystical experiences based on reality are very rare, and we can readily see how dangerous it is for people to go groping about in the darkness of their imagination after the true thing. That is why, as you point out, we are warned against all psychical practices by the Master.

"If we are going to have some deeply spiritual experience we can rest assured God will vouchsafe it to us without our having to look for it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated October 25, 1942, to an individual believer: Ibid.)

1743. No Need for Individual Revelations
"The Guardian thinks that it is best to assume that generally speaking when people claim they are receiving messages or communications from the Master or Baha'u'llah, etc., it is a psychic experience or their imagination, and that they are not in real contact with them. These Holy Beings have the channels of the Cause through which to guide us. They do not need to go outside these and send individual revelations."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated December 22, 1947, to an individual believer: Ibid., p. 3)

1744. Let the Future Take Care of Itself
"In the second place he would advise you to consider the voice you heard a phenomenon which might be your subconscious mind, might be some psychic influence, but whatever it was you should not let it disturb you and certainly not place much importance on it. No one knows what the future holds for him, or to what degree he is spoiling it or creating it; therefore the thing to do is one's daily best and let the future take care of itself. It would be very unwise for you to let this experience of a voice—the origin and purpose of which you have no way of knowing—influence you in any way or to set any store on its observations."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated April 9, 1948, to an

individual believer: Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects)

1745. Development of Psychic Faculties Weakens Spiritual Capacities
"...The Guardian would suggest that you study very carefully the statement of 'Abdu'l-Baha in connection with the question of visions, dreams, etc., as 'Abdu'l-Baha has very fully explained this delicate subject. You will find references to this in 'Baha'u'llah and the New Era,' 'Some Answered Questions' and the Books of Tablets. The Guardian likewise has commented on this matter.

"Briefly, there is no question that visions occasionally do come to individuals, which are true and have significance. On the other hand, this comes to an individual through the grace of God, and not through the exercise of any of the human faculties. It is not a thing which a person should try to develop. When a person endeavors to develop faculties so that they might enjoy visions, dreams etc., actually what they are doing is weakening certain of their spiritual capacities; and thus under such circumstances, dreams and visions have no reality, and ultimately lead to the destruction of the character of the person."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated May 6, 1952, to an individual believer: Ibid.)

[517] 1746. Astronomy is a Science, Astrology is Not
"Astronomy is a science, astrology does not come under the same category, but we should be patient with people who believe in it, and gradually wean them away from reliance on such things."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated December 24, 1941, to an individual believer: Ibid.)

1747. Non-Sensical Pseudo-Science
"Yes, the Guardian considers 'astrology', which is a pseudo-science, as for the most part 'non-sensical', as it is mostly made up of superstitious beliefs and practices."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated July 10, 1939, to an individual believer: Ibid.)

1748. Horoscopes
"We should attach no importance to astrology or horoscopes. No exact science is involved, though sometimes some truth seems involved, but the percentage is small."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated January 15, 1951, to an individual believer: Ibid.)

1749. Fruitless Sciences
"Fruitless sciences is what Baha'u'llah refers to, like metaphysical hair splittings, and other abstract things carried to the extreme.

"The friends should be encouraged not to waste time on such things as astrology etc., which you mention. They cannot be forbidden to do so. The exercise of our free will to choose to do the right things is much more important."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, dated July 30, 1956, to an

individual believer: Baha'i News, No. 230, p. 1, April 1950)

1750. Influence of the Stars and Planets
"Concerning your question as to the influence of the stars and planets on the life of a believer: Such ideas should be entirely dissociated from the Teachings. The passage on p. 133 of the 'Gleanings' bears no reference whatsoever to this matter.

"As to illness or poverty: Such calamities may be either irrevocable or, and it is often the case, they may be avoided. There is no reference in the Teachings as to whether the stars have any influence on healing such diseases. These astrological ideas are for the most part sheer superstitions."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 17, 1937: Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects)

1751. Numerology
"...it is absolutely essential that the teachings should not be confused with the obscure ideas related to numerology and astrology and the like. Individuals interested in them are free to believe in and credit such ideas and to make any inferences and deductions they desire from them, but under no circumstances are they expected to identify them with the principles and teachings of the Cause. We must at this stage preserve the purity and sanctity of the Baha'i teachings. I will pray that you may be guided [518] in your efforts, and may succeed in safeguarding and promoting the interests of our beloved Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 26, 1928: Ibid.)

1752. Neither Numerology nor Astrology Needed by the Believers
"There is nothing in the teachings which leads us to believe numerology or astrology are needed by the believers to guide them in any way."
(From a letter dated June 25, 1950 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer: Spiritualism, Psychic Phenomena and Related Subjects)

1753. Automatic Writing
"This power is neither heavenly nor spiritual; neither is it an influence from disembodied spirits. It is the human spirit—magnetism within the self of the one doing the writing.

"When the thoughts have taken possession of the mind and are not consciously directed, one becomes subject to their promptings and, unconsciously, or automatically, takes a pencil and writes them down. The oftener this is done the stronger becomes the magnetic prompting.

"For instance, one may learn a lesson or poem by heart, and he repeats and repeats it so often that the thoughts take possession of him and he will repeat it unconsciously even in his sleep. This is magnetism belonging to the human spirit.

"Or, he may walk many times upon a certain road and he takes his walk so often he is able to take it unconsciously or automatically. This power is his own magnetism.

"A mother rocks and rocks her babe to sleep in a cradle, but the thoughts of the child's sleep may so take possession of her mind that sometimes she is able to put him to sleep without the aid of the cradle. This effect is produced by the mother's magnetism.

"In regard to automatic writing, if one will pray very earnestly, and pray sufficiently, the mind will turn against the automatic writing and one will be freed from the effects of that power.

"Pray, and pray, and not be misled by the seeming beauty of the writings."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Daily Lessons Received at Akka, pp. 37-38, Wilmette 1979)

1754. World's Greatest Writers and Painters Have Not Been Under Psychic Influence
"...he feels that the methods you are pursuing in regard to receiving inspired written messages, and your way of approaching your painting are really psychic, and that you should give them up for your own good. Some of Baha'u'llah's and 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets are so poorly translated that it is almost impossible to grasp the true meaning, and one is misled into thinking that by getting into a practically psychic state the Holy Spirit will guide one. This is not what is meant: the world's greatest writers and painters have not been under psychic influence, but through innate ability, practice and study, have given us their masterpieces; this is the normal way for inspiration to reach us, through the channels of our own abilities, and not through control by forces which the Master warned us against and which we do not understand, and which—as you yourself know—are neither consistent nor reliable."
(From a letter dated February 24, 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer: Spiritualism, Psychic Phenomena and Related Subjects)

[519] 1755. Table Writing
"Regarding your question in connection with ...'s desire to be informed about 'table writing' and such things: Though there is no specific reference in the teachings to this particular thing, Shoghi Effendi feels very strongly that, in view of other statements about avoiding all psychic dabbling and exercise of psychic faculties, this should also be avoided by the Baha'is and such messages be disregarded."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, dated June 24, 1941, to an individual believer: Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects)

1756. Spiritualism and Psychic Phenomena
"There is no ambiguity about the Master's attitude towards psychic forces. He very strongly warned the believers against using them."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, August 9, 1945, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles: Ibid.)

1757. Numerology, Physiognomy—Too Much Exaggerated
"The Master has said that there is a certain amount of truth in numerology, physiognomy etc. but it is too much exaggerated by those who advocate them."
(From a letter dated October 27, 1926 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer: Spiritualism, Psychic Phenomena and Related Subjects)

1758. Telepathy
"The Teachings bear no reference to the question of telepathy. It is a matter that concerns psychology."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, February 28, 1938, to an individual believer: Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects)

1759. Be Not Afraid Anyone Can Affect Your Mind
"You should not be afraid anyone can affect your mind. Even when we want to catch the thoughts of those we love most we cannot do so, how much less other people succeed in penetrating our minds."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated January 18, 1951, to an individual believer: Ibid., p. 4)

1760. Spiritualists
"He is of the opinion that to pay much attention to persons who are imbued with spiritualistic ideas is rather useless, because what they have, though it has a germ of truth, has much of personal imagination added to it. Moreover, when after much effort they become Baha'is, they are reluctant to turn a completely new sheet in their life and begin to conceive Baha'i ideals in spiritualistic terms. There are thousands of other pure souls who are more ready for the teachings and who would accept it unreservedly. So we had better concentrate our attention upon them. The Cause everywhere has suffered from spiritualists with psychic pretended powers, and it is high time to take a step along that line."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian dated July 10, 1928, to an individual believer: Ibid., p. 1)

[520] 1761. Mesmerism or Trumpet Communications
"The planets and stars have no spiritual effect in the earthly world, but the parts of the universe which are in endless space are closely connected with each other. This connection produces material effects. Outside of the Bounty of the Holy Spirit all that thou hearest concerning mesmerism or trumpet communications from the dead are sheer imagination."
('Abdu'l-Baha, Tablet to Ella Goodall Cooper: Daily Lessons Received at Akka, p. 85, 1976 ed.)

1762. Materialization of Spirits Through Mediums
"Regarding the materialization of spirits through mediums: A person finding himself in a state of trance, or unconsciousness, is like one who sleeps; whatever he feels and sees he imagines to be matter and of material things, but in reality they are wholly immaterial."
(Ibid., p. 82)

1763. "Masters" Behind the Scenes
"As regards the question you asked in your letter about a concealed group of masters in the Himalayas or anywhere else, there is no foundation whatsoever for this in the Baha'i Writings. We as Baha'is must not believe in the divine origin of any such things which have not been mentioned in our own Sacred Scriptures by either the Bab, Baha'u'llah or the Master.

"There is nothing whatsoever to lead us to believe that there is any foundation or truth in these mystical stories of beings that are 'behind the scenes', so to speak. We must avoid such thoughts and teachings, and try to wean others away from them as we give them the Message."
(From a letter dated May 11, 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer: Spiritualism, Psychic Phenomena and Related Subjects)

1764. Pyramids
"We have nothing in our writings about the so-called prophecies of the Pyramids; so he does not think you need attach any importance to them."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated November 21, 1949, to an individual believer: Baha'i News, No. 230, p. 1, April 1950: Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects)

1765. Pyramid of Cheops
"Also no reference is to be found in the Baha'i Teachings regarding the pyramid of Cheops, and as to its being considered a monument of prophecy."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, dated July 10, 1939, to an individual believer: Ibid.)

1766. Protection of the Holy Spirit
"The friends must realize the Power of the Holy Spirit which is manifest and quickening them at this time through the appearance of Baha'u'llah. There is no force of heaven or earth which can affect them if they place themselves wholly under the influence of the Holy Spirit and under its guidance. Such individuals who are subject to the negative influences of the world are those who are not properly consecrated in the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 11, 1957)

[521] 1767. Heaven and Hell Conditions Within Our Own Beings—The Prophets Know God...
"To answer you briefly: What the original state of the Universe was, no one as yet knows. But we believe God is a spiritual Being and did create it; how, we do not know. We will have experience of God's spirit through His Prophets in the next world, but God is too great for us to know without this Intermediary. The Prophets know God, but how is more than our human minds can grasp. We believe we attain in the next world to seeing the Prophets. There is certainly a future life. Heaven and hell are conditions within our own beings."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 14, 1947: High Endeavours, Messages to Alaska, pp. 49-50)

1768. Psychic Arts—The Influence of Such Arts is Dependent on Conviction of the Person Affected
"The House of Justice fully appreciates that in ... and ... there are many instances of individuals being affected adversely by the psychic arts of other people. This is an observable phenomenon in many parts of the world and must, as you say, be taken into account by those who would teach the Faith. The important thing for Baha'is to understand is that the influence of such 'arts'

is dependent on the conviction, even the subconscious conviction, of the person affected and, similarly, the power of the 'priests' to overcome the influence is likewise an outcome of the sufferer's conviction that it is from the 'priest' that he or she will be able to obtain help.

"The Manifestation of God describes the reality which is conducive to the happiness, health and development of mankind. His Teachings serve as a compass to help us find our way in the new world. They outline not only what is good for mankind but also the steps to be taken to secure individual freedom and well-being. Within this framework it is important to understand the statements in the Writings about evil spirits and psychic phenomena."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 30, 1984)

1769. Baha'is Recognize that Evil is Negative and Can Take Control of Our Life But We Have the Power to Become Free of Such Forces
"Baha'is recognize that evil is negative and has no existence in its own right, but that does not mean that there is no power in evil. Do not Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha warn us repeatedly of the spiritual infection of Covenant-breaking? In one of His Tablets, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote:

'If you seek immunity from the sway of the forces of the contingent world, hang the 'Most Great Name' in your dwelling, wear the ring of the 'Most Great Name' on your finger, place the picture of 'Abdu'l-Baha in your home and always recite the prayers that I have written. Then you will behold the marvellous effect they produce. Those so-called forces will prove but illusions and will be wiped out and exterminated.'

"In a letter dated 26th November 1939 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer we find the following:

'Evil forces do take control of our life, but it is within our power to free ourselves from falling under their subjection.'

"There are, therefore, specific actions that Baha'is can take when confronted [522] with the kind of situation of which you write, but the principal way in which they can overcome them is to deepen themselves in the Teachings of Baha'u'llah so that they will come to recognize the lack of any true reality to such negative forces.
(Ibid.)

1770. Evil Souls Who Have Passed Away Can Exercise No Power Over the People
"One of the Baha'i pilgrims from the West who asked 'Abdu'l-Baha about the power exercised by evil souls who had passed to the next world, recorded His answer as 'There is no power exercised over the people by those evil souls that have passed away. Good is stronger than evil and even when alive they had very little power. How much less have they after they are dead...'

"Also, in a letter to an individual believer, written on behalf of the Guardian on 18th January 1951, it is stated: 'You should not be afraid any one can affect your mind. Even when we want to catch the thoughts of those we love most

we cannot do so, how much less can other people succeed in penetrating our minds.'

"In relation to individuals seeking the advice of 'priests' to assist their healing when the cause of their illness is diagnosed as 'supernatural forces', we enclose for your study a passage from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and several extracts from letters written on behalf of the Guardian to individual believers on the subject of spiritual healing."
(Ibid.)

1771. The Solution to Such Beliefs and Problems Involves a Process of Educating the Friends in the Teachings
"Concerning your appeal for a solution to the problem, we are instructed to say that the approach is twofold. It involves a process of educating the friends, deepening their understanding of the Teachings and their trust in the power of the Cause, and gradually weaning them away from those illusions and practices which are potentially destructive of their spiritual and material well-being.

"You are encouraged to ponder the advice contained in the following statement written on behalf of the beloved Guardian to an individual believer who was troubled about matters that are similar, although not identical, to those which concern the friends in Trinidad and Tobago:

'We must use the Writings of the Prophets as our measurement. If Baha'u'llah had attached the slightest importance to occult experiences, to the seeing of auras, to the hearing of mystic voices; if He had believed that reincarnation was a fact, He, Himself, would have mentioned all of these things in His Teachings. The fact that He passed over them in silence shows that to Him, they had either no importance or no reality, and were consequently not worthy to take up His time as the Divine Educator
of the human race.

'We must turn our faces away from these things, and toward the actual practice of His Teachings in our everyday life through our Baha'i Administration, and in our contact with other people and the examples we give.'"
(Ibid.)

1772. What is Commonly Called Evil Spirits is Normally an Imaginary Creation But Evil Influences Both in This World and the Next
"In regard to your question concerning evil spirits and their influence upon souls, [523] Shoghi Effendi wishes me to inform you that what is generally called evil spirit is a purely imaginary creation and has no reality whatever. But as to evil, there is no doubt that it exerts a very strong influence both in this world and in the next. 'Abdu'l-Baha in the 'Some Answered Questions' gives us a thorough and true analysis of the problem of evil. You should preferably refer to that book for further explanation on that point."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 1, 1934)

1773. Occult Practices of Certain Hindus Introduced in the States Are

Completely Contrary to the Teachings and Should Be Avoided by the Friends
"...indeed, such occult practices as certain Hindus have introduced in the States, and which some superficial and superstitious individuals have adopted and are trying, by all sorts of devices, to popularize, are absolutely foreign, nay positively opposed to the very spirit and letter of the Teachings, and the believers, therefore, should strictly and at all times avoid the company of such people, lest they may unconsciously and inevitably fall under their baneful influence and become gradually alienated from the Cause.

"...The friends also should be warned not to indulge in such activities that draw their inspiration from Hindu occultist sources, as these do not only lead them away from the Cause, but can cause them considerable mental harm, and thus permanently injure their mind as well as their body."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to two believers, August 5, 1939)

1774. Spiritual Experiences Can Have Great Influence On Us But the Call Today is to Try to Save the Human Race—This is the Duty of Every Soul
"Spiritual experiences have undoubtedly great influence on us individually and, therefore, arouse deep interest, but of paramount importance in this day is to forget them and go out into the world trying to save the human race from its threatening condition. This is the call of the day, this is the duty of every soul who desires to follow the path traced by Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 7, 1933)

XLIII. RACES

[524] 1775. Aboriginal Inhabitants—Downtrodden People
"Shoghi Effendi is also most anxious for the Message to reach the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas. These people, for the most part downtrodden and ignorant, should receive from the Baha'is a special measure of love, and every effort be made to teach them. Their enrollment in the Faith will enrich them and us and demonstrate our principle of the Oneness of Man far better than words or the wide conversion of the ruling races ever can."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Meso-America and the Antilles, July 11, 1951: A Special Measure of Love, p. 5)

1776. Tablets of the Divine Plan—Natives of America May Become Great Standard Bearers of the Faith
"The Guardian attaches the utmost importance, as you know, to the teaching of the natives of America.

"In the Tablets of the Divine Plan, the Master pays the utmost attention to this most important matter. He states that if the Power of the Holy Spirit today properly enters into the minds and the hearts of the natives of the great American continents that they will become great standard bearers of the Faith, similar to the Nomads (Arabians) who became the most cultured and enlightened people under the Mohammadan civilization."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, Peru, Columbia, Ecuador and Venezuela, August 22, 1957)

1777. Prejudice and Condescension—Contact with City Indians
"He adds one suggestion (he does not know if it is practicable or not): Can contact not be made with Indians who have become more or less absorbed into the life of the white element of the Country and live in or visit the big cities? There, people, finding the Baha'is sincerely lacking in either prejudice—or that even worse attitude, condescension—might not only take interest in our teachings, but also help us to reach their people in the proper way.

"It is a great mistake to believe that because people are illiterate or live primitive lives, they are lacking in either intelligence or sensibility. On the contrary, they may well look on us with the evils of our civilization, with its moral corruption, its ruinous wars, its hypocrisy and conceit, as people who merit watching with both suspicion and contempt. We should meet them as equals, well-wishers, people who admire and respect their ancient descent, and who feel that they will be interested as we are in a living religion and not in the dead forms of present-day churches."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Comite Nacional de Ensenanza Baha'i para los Indigenas de Sur America, September 21, 1951)

[525] 1778. Afro-Americans and Amerindians
"The Americas have been a melting pot and a meeting place for the races of men, and the need is acute for the fulfillment of God's promises of the realization of the oneness of mankind. Particularly do the Master and the Guardian point to the Afro-Americans and the Amerindians, two great ethnic groups whose spiritual powers will be released through their response to the Creative Word. But our Teachings must touch all, must include all people. And, in this hour of your tireless activity what special rewards shall come to those who will arise, summoned by 'Abdu'l-Baha's words: 'Now is the time to divest yourselves of the garment of attachment to this phenomenal realm, be wholly severed from the physical world, become angels of heaven, and travel and teach through all these regions.'"
(The Universal House of Justice's Message to the Caribbean Conference, May 1971)

1779. First Member of His Race to Embrace the Cause
"Even Mrs. Hearst's butler, a negro named Robert Turner, the first member of his race to embrace the Cause of Baha'u'llah in the West, had been transported by the influence exerted by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the course of that epoch-making pilgrimage. Such was the tenacity of his faith that even the subsequent estrangement of his beloved mistress from the Cause she had spontaneously embraced failed to becloud its radiance, or to lessen the intensity of the emotions which the loving-kindness showered by 'Abdu'l-Baha upon him had excited in his breast."
(Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, p. 259)

1780. Service of the Negro

"He was very pleased to have the first pioneer from America go forth under this organized African campaign; he was doubly happy that it should have been an American Negro who went. This is highly appropriate and surely has delighted the heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha Who watched over the race with particular love, tenderness and understanding. The ever increasing part the coloured friends are taking in the work of the Cause, and especially of late years in the pioneer work gratifies the Guardian immensely. And now, to add further to the record of their services, they can count a member of their race a Hand of the Cause. When we read in the Will and Testament how great is the function of the Hands we appreciate to what an exalted station our dear brother Louis Gregory attained...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, November 23, 1951: Baha'i News, No. 252, February 1952, p. 1)

1781. Guardian's Appeal to Negro Race
"...I appeal particularly to its dearly beloved members belonging to the Negro race to participate in the contemplated project marking a significant milestone in the world unfoldment of the Faith..."
(Shoghi Effendi: Citadel of Faith, p. 87)

1782. Concentrate on Teaching the Negroes
"...he urges the friends to concentrate on teaching the negroes. They should be courageous in their racial stand, particularly as so many non-Baha'is and non-Baha'i organizations are showing marked courage at this time... The friends must [526] remember that the cardinal principle of their Faith is the Oneness of Mankind. This places an obligation on them far surpassing the obligation which Christian charity and brotherly love places upon the Christians. They should demonstrate this spirit of oneness constantly and courageously..."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 21, 1957: Baha'i News, No. 321, November 1957)

1783. Compared with Pupil of the Eye
"...RECALL WITH PROFOUND EMOTION MESSAGE BELOVED GUARDIAN OCCASION 1953 CONFERENCE WHEREIN HE EXTOLLED PUREHEARTED SPIRITUALLY RECEPTIVE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AFRICA WHOM BAHA'U'LLAH COMPARED PUPIL EYE THROUGH WHICH LIGHT OF SPIRIT SHINETH FORTH AND FOR WHOSE CONVERSION BOTH GUARDIAN AND MASTER BEFORE HIM YEARNED AND LABOURED..."
(From the cable of the Universal House of Justice to the Africa International Conference, October 6, 1967)

1784. Work of Negro Has Been of Greatest Help
"The Negro believers must be just as active as their white brothers and sisters in spreading the Faith, both among their own race and members of other races. It has been a great step forward in the Cause's development in America to have Negro pioneers go forth, and their work has been of the greatest help and very productive of results."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two individual believers,

March 19, 1944)

1785. The Negroes Have a Contribution to Make to Baha'u'llah's World Order
"The negroes, though they themselves may not realize it, have a contribution to make to the World Order of Baha'u'llah. His Teachings and the society He has come to establish are for every race and every nation, and each one of them has his own part to play and the gift of his own qualities and talents to give to the whole world.

"The Cause of God has room for all. It would, indeed, not be the Cause of God if it did not take in and welcome everyone—poor and rich, educated and ignorant, the unknown, and the prominent—God surely wants them all, as He created them all."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers, December 10, 1942)

1786. Pure-Hearted, Spiritually Receptive Negro Race
"I welcome with open arms the unexpectedly large number of the representatives of the pure-hearted and the spiritually receptive Negro race, so dearly loved by 'Abdu'l-Baha, for whose conversion to His Father's Faith He so deeply yearned and whose interests He so ardently championed in the course of His memorable visit to the North American continent. I am reminded, on this historic occasion, of the significant words uttered by Baha'u'llah Himself, Who, as attested by the Center of the Covenant, in His Writings, 'compared the coloured people to the black pupil of the eye', through which 'the light of the spirit shineth forth'."
(Shoghi Effendi: Messages to the Baha'i World, pp. 135-136)

1787. Faces Are as Pupil of the Eye
"As to ... and ..., verily the faces of these are as the pupil of the eye; although [527] the pupil is created black, yet it is the source of light. I hope God will make these black ones the glory of the white ones and as the depositing of the lights of love of God. And I ask God to assist them in all circumstances, that they may be encompassed with the favours of their Loving Lord throughout centuries and ages."
(Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. II, p. 292)

1788. The Principle of the Oneness of Mankind Precludes Possibility of Considering Race as a Bar to Social Interaction
"In regard to your question concerning the Baha'i attitude towards the Coloured Race. It is only evident that the principle of the oneness of mankind—which is the main pivot round which all the teachings of Baha'u'llah revolve—precludes the possibility of considering race as a bar to any intercourse, be it social or otherwise. The Faith, indeed, by its very nature and purpose, transcend all racial limitations and differences, and proclaims the basic and essential unity of the entire human race. Racial prejudice, of whatever nature and character, is therefore severely condemned, and as such should be wiped out by the friends in all their relations, whether private or social."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 16, 1935)

1789. The Guardian Addresses the Negro
"...Let the Negroes, through a corresponding effort on their part, show by every means in their power the warmth of their response, their readiness to forget the past, and their ability to wipe out every trace of suspicion that may still linger in their hearts and minds. Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other. Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved. Let neither think that they can wait confidently for the solution of this problem until the initiative has been taken, and the favorable circumstances created by agencies that stand outside the orbit of their Faith...."
(Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 40, Wilmette, 1990)

1790. Addressed to Members of the White Race
"...I hope that ye may cause that downtrodden race to become glorious, and to be joined with the white race, to serve the world of man with the utmost sincerity, faithfulness, love, and purity. This opposition, enmity, and prejudice among the white race and the coloured cannot be effaced except through faith, assurance, and the teachings of the Blessed Beauty... This question of the union of the white and the black is very important, for if it is not realized, erelong great difficulties will arise, and harmful results will follow ... enmity will be increased day by day, and the final result will be hardship and may end in bloodshed."
('Abdu'l-Baha: quoted in The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 39)

1791. Let the White Make a Supreme Effort
"Let the white make a supreme effort in their resolve to contribute their share to the solution of this problem, to abandon once for all their usually inherent and at times subconscious sense of superiority, to correct their tendency towards revealing a patronizing attitude towards the members of the other race, to persuade them [528] through their intimate, spontaneous and informal association with them of the genuineness of their friendship and the sincerity of their intentions, and to master their impatience of any lack of responsiveness on the part of a people who have received, for so long a period, such grievous and slow-healing wounds."
(Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 40)

1792. Unity in Diversity
"The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. If you meet those of a different race and colour from yourself, do not mistrust them, and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Quoted in The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 38)

1793. The Guardian Addresses Both Races—Neither Race Can Claim to be Absolved from Obligation

"...White and Negro, high and low, young and old, whether newly converted to the Faith or not, all who stand identified with it must participate in, and lend their assistance, each according to his or her capacity, experience, and opportunities, to the common task of fulfilling the instructions, realizing the hopes, and following the example, of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Whether coloured or noncoloured, neither race has the right, or can conscientiously claim, to be regarded as absolved from such an obligation, as having realized such hopes, or having faithfully followed such an example. A long and thorny road, beset with pitfalls, still remains untravelled, both by the white and the Negro exponents of the redeeming Faith of Baha'u'llah....

"...If any discrimination is at all to be tolerated, it should be a discrimination not against, but rather in favour of the minority, be it racial or otherwise. Unlike the nations and peoples of the earth, be they of the East or of the West, democratic or authoritarian, communist or capitalist, whether belonging to the Old World or the New, who either ignore, trample upon, or extirpate, the racial, religious, or political minorities within the sphere of their jurisdiction, every organized community enlisted under the banner of Baha'u'llah should feel it to be its first and inescapable obligation to nurture, encourage, and safeguard every minority belonging to any faith, race, class, or nation within it. So great and vital is this principle that in such circumstances, as when an equal number of ballots have been cast in an election, or where the qualifications for any office are balanced as between the various races, faiths or nationalities within the community, priority should unhesitatingly be accorded the party representing the minority, and this for no other reason except to stimulate and encourage it, and afford it an opportunity to further the interests of the community...."
(Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 35)

1794. God Makes No Distinction
"God maketh no distinction between the white and the black. If the hearts are pure both are acceptable unto Him. God is no respecter of persons on account of either colour or race. All colours are acceptable unto Him, be they white, black, or yellow. Inasmuch as all were created in the image of God, we must bring ourselves [529] to realize that all embody divine possibilities... God did not make these divisions; these divisions have had their origin in man himself. Therefore, as they are against the plan and purpose of God they are false and imaginary."
('Abdu'l-Baha: quoted in The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 37)

1795. Prejudice Destroys Edifice of Humanity
"Baha'u'llah tells us that prejudice in its various forms destroys the edifice of humanity. We are adjured by the Divine Messenger to eliminate all forms of prejudice from our lives. Our outer lives must show forth our beliefs. The world must see that, regardless of each passing whim or current fashion of the generality of mankind, the Baha'i lives his life according to the tenets of his Faith. We must not allow the fear of rejection by our friends and neighbours to deter us from our goal: to live the Baha'i life. Let us strive to blot out from

our lives every last trace of prejudice—racial, religious, political, economic, national, tribal, class, cultural, and that which is based on differences of education or age. We shall be distinguished from our non-Baha'i associates if our lives are adorned with this principle."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 13, 1972)

1796. Object of Inter-Racial Work—Japanese, Americans, Mexicans, Chinese, Negroes
"He feels that, as the main object of the Baha'i inter-racial work is to abolish prejudice against any and every race and minority group, it is obviously proper for them to include in particular any group that is receiving especially bad treatment—such as the Japanese Americans are being subjected to. There is also no reason why work should not be done among, and in cooperation with, the Mexicans, the Chinese, and so on.

"He has always been very anxious to have the Indians taught and enlisted under the banner of the Faith, in view of the Master's remarkable statements about the possibilities of their future and that they represent the aboriginal American population.

"The Negroes, likewise, are, one might say, a key problem and epitomise the feelings of colour prejudice so rife in the United States. That is why he has constantly emphasized the importance of the Baha'is actively and continuously demonstrating that in the Faith this cruel and horrible taint of discrimination against, and contempt for, them does not exist but is, on the contrary, supplanted by a feeling of esteem for their great gifts and a complete lack of prejudice against associating with them in every field of life.

"The work of the Race Unity Committee should include, as far as is feasible, contacts with all minority groups, and wherever there is a particularly stout prejudice against a special group—such as the feeling against the Japanese in the Western states and the Negroes in the Southern, etc.,—efforts should be made to counteract it by showing publicly the Baha'i example of loving tolerance and brotherly association."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 30, 1945)

1797. Just Interest of Minorities
"To discriminate against any tribe because they are in a minority is a violation of [530] the spirit that animates the Faith of Baha'u'llah. As followers of God's Holy Faith it is our obligation to protect the just interests of any minority element within the Baha'i Community. In fact in the administration of our Baha'i affairs, representatives of minority groups are not only enabled to enjoy equal rights and privileges, but they are even favoured and accorded priority. Baha'is should be careful never to deviate from this noble standard even if the course of events of public opinion should bring pressure to bear upon them. The principles in the Writings are clear, but usually it is when these principles are applied that questions arise...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly in Africa, February 8, 1970)

1798. The Coloured Friends Need the Faith—Have Suffered and Been Downtrodden
"The coloured friends need the Faith very much as they have suffered and been downtrodden in the past a great deal and they must realize that in the propagation of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah lies their hope for a better future, just as much as the hope of the entire world."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 8, 1942)

1799. Guilty Before God to Allow Prejudice to Manifest Itself
"If we allow prejudice of any kind to manifest itself in us, we shall be guilty before God of causing a setback to the progress and real growth of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. It is incumbent upon every believer to endeavour with a fierce determination to eliminate this defect from his thoughts and acts. The fundamental purpose of the Faith of Baha'u'llah is the realization of the organic unity of the entire human race..."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Assemblies, July 13, 1972)

1800. To Be a Baha'i is to be Different
"It is indeed strange that the cultured class, the people of thought and experience, are often more filled with prejudice than just plain ordinary souls who have not enjoyed such advantages. They are so afraid of seeming in any way 'different' from their fellows, and of course to be a Baha'i is to be different!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 15, 1950)

1801. Baha'is Are Not Perfect
"He does not doubt—though it grieves him to have to admit it—that there are believers who have not overcome their racial prejudices. The Baha'is are not perfect, but they have made a great step forward by embracing the Faith of God. We must be patient with each other, and realize that each one of us has some faults to overcome, of one kind or another.

"You, he feels, need to use greater wisdom and forbearance in dealing with your fellow-Baha'is and with difficult situations. To be courageous—as you evidently are—to rebel against the injustices of race prejudice and fight them is not enough, you must also show some patience for those who suffer from this terrible American ailment of Negro prejudice and act with wisdom in overcoming it, instead of going at it so vehemently that you alienate the Baha'is instead of leading them to greater manifestations of the Baha'i spirit of brotherhood and racial amity....

[531] "He hopes that you will concentrate your energies on serving the Faith.

"This is the only real solution to man's problems, all others are more or less palliatives, but we who are identified with Baha'u'llah's message can alone

build up the pattern for the future through helping to establish our Administrative Order and assisting in its proper functioning. This is the fundamental thing."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer during the year 1949)

1802. 'Abdu'l-Baha Foretold for the Indians of America a Great Future if They Accepted the Teachings of Baha'u'llah
"The original population of the United States was very dear to 'Abdu'l-Baha's heart, and He foretold for the Indians a great future if they accepted and became enlightened by the Teachings of Baha'u'llah.

"To believe in the Mouthpiece of God in His Day confers very great blessings, not only on individuals, but on races, and He hopes that you who are now numbered amongst the followers of Baha'u'llah will give His Message to many more of your tribe, and in this way hasten for your people a bright and happy future."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 21, 1947)

1803. Baha'is Approve of Inter-Racial Unions
"He thinks you did well to marry, and he is glad you married an American Indian. We Baha'is approve of inter-racial unions, and you should do all you can to make your marriage a success and make your husband happy."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 31, 1950)

1804. Campus Protest Against Racial Prejudice
"In connection with the subject matter of Mr. Blackwell's letter and your reference to it, the Guardian feels that, as he said in his letter to Mr. Blackwell, there was no objection at all to the students taking part in something so obviously akin to the spirit of our teachings as a campus demonstration against race prejudice. The Baha'is did not inaugurate this protest, they merely were proud to have a voice as Baha'is in such a protest, took part, and he thinks they did quite right and violated no administrative principle."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, November 18, 1948)

1805. The Baha'i Must Scrupulously Avoid Involvement in Political Issues Therefore Cannot Participate in Anti-Apartheid Demonstrations
"In reply to your letter of 15 July 1985 seeking further clarification on the issue of apartheid, the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to point out that as the policy of apartheid derives from racial discrimination, it cannot be accepted by Baha'is wherever, and in whatever form, it may be practised.

"While the friends should, of course, support the principles of the Faith, including those advocating the oneness of mankind, and may associate with groups and engage in activities which promote these principles, they must

scrupulously take care not to become involved in political issues. As stated in the letter to you dated 16 April 1985, participation in anti-apartheid demonstrations and protest activities could [532] be construed as involvement in politics, and therefore should be avoided.

"...The world around us is seething with unrest caused by the conflicting interests of governments, peoples, races and individuals. Each of these contending parties has some good and some evil on its side, and, whereas we will unhesitatingly uphold Baha'i principles, we will never become embroiled in these internecine conflicts by identifying ourselves with one or other of the parties, however much in our hearts we may sympathize with its aims.

"The positive attitude to the question of racial prejudice is radiant and whole-hearted exemplification of the principle of the oneness of mankind, first among the members of your National Spiritual Assembly and then throughout the Baha'i community...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, August 18, 1985)

1806. Teaching Multi-Racial Students in the Universities and Other Minority Groups in America, Such as Czechs, Poles, Russians...
"...urge the Baha'is, wherever they may be, to devote more attention to the minorities. This is particularly true in places where there are universities where foreign students belonging to the black, yellow and brown races are studying. In this way, the friends cannot only obey one of the most beautiful principles of our Faith, to show hospitality to the stranger in our midst, but also demonstrate the universality of our Teachings and the true brotherhood that animates us, and in addition, confirm Baha'is who may go back to the distant place of the earth—the Pacific, Africa, Asia, etc., and be of inestimable help to the newly-born Baha'i Communities.

"Likewise the friends should carry their friendship and their teachings to other minority groups in America, such as the Italians, the Jews, the Czechs, the Poles, the Russians, etc."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i Inter-Racial Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 27, 1957)

1807. Racial Prejudice is Simply a Negation of Faith
"The attitude of the Cause towards the problem of race, be it in America or elsewhere, has been repeatedly clarified by the Guardian. To the faithful followers of Baha'u'llah who fully grasp the essential implications of the principle of the oneness of mankind so much emphasized in His teachings, racial prejudice, in all its forms, is simply a negation of faith, a repudiation of the belief in the brotherhood of man which is, beyond doubt, the cornerstone of the Religion of God. Loyalty to this basic principle should, therefore, be whole-hearted and unqualified."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 11, 1936)

1808. It is the Responsibility of the Believers to Combat and Uproot Racial Prejudice in Their Midst
"In America, where racial prejudice is still so widely prevalent, it is the responsibility of the believers to combat and uproot it with all their force, first by endeavouring to introduce into the Cause as many racial and minority groups as they can [533] approach and teach, and second, by stimulating close fellowship and intercourse between them and the rest of the Community.

"It should be the paramount concern of your Committee to foster this aim through every means available. Not only the coloured people, who because of the increasing receptivity they are evincing to the Message and truly deserve special attention, but all other minorities, whether racial or religious, Jews, Red Indians, all alike should be contacted and confirmed. The greater the receptivity of a particular class or group, the stronger should wax the desire and determination of the believers to attract and teach its members. At a time when the whole world is steeped in prejudices of race, class, and nation, the Baha'is, by upholding firmly and loyally this cardinal principle of their Faith, can best hope to vindicate its truth, and establish its right to bring order and peace out of the chaos and strife of this war-torn world."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 20, 1941)

1809. God Has Richly Endowed the Negro Race
"You already are well aware of the importance he attaches to teaching the negroes the Faith and breaking down the shameful wall of prejudice that has for so long shut out from each other the black and white citizens of America.

"The qualities of heart so richly possessed by the Negro are much needed in the world today—their great capacity for faith, their loyalty and devotion to their religion when once they believe, their purity of heart. God has richly endowed them, and their contribution to the Cause is much needed, especially as there is a lack of Negro Baha'i teachers who can go out to their own people, along with their white brothers and sisters, and convince them of the active universality of our Faith. He will especially pray that you may confirm souls of capacity in this field."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers, September 27, 1941)

1810. The Negro Race and the White Race Must Do All in Their Power to Destroy the Prejudice which Exists on Both Sides
"The negro race has been, and still is, the victim of unjust prejudice, and it is obviously the duty of every Baha'i, negro or white, to do all in their power to destroy the prejudices which exist on both sides. They can do this not only by exemplifying the true Baha'i spirit in all their associations and acts, but also by taking an active part in any progressive movements aimed at the betterment of the lot of those who are underprivileged, as long as these movements are absolutely non-political and non-subversive in every respect.

"Movements for social progress and social justice, as long as they are

disassociated from both political and religious partisanship, should be supported by those Baha'is who feel urged to undertake such work. Consequently there is no reason why you should not work for the betterment of your race through channels that in no way conflict with our Baha'i attitude."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 23, 1941)

1811. The Negro Baha'is Have a Great Responsibility Towards Their Own Race and Fellow Believers
"The Guardian feels very strongly that the negro Baha'is have great responsibilities, [534] both towards their own race and towards their fellow-believers. They must not only arise to teach the Cause to the members of their own race, but must do all in their power to ensure that within the Baha'i Community itself the negro and white believers understand and love each other and are truly as one soul in different bodies. Our allegiance as believers is to Baha'u'llah; we must fix our attention and devotion on Him and His will and, heedless of the shortcomings of our fellow-Baha'is, act as He would have us towards them."
(Ibid.)

1812. Principle of the Oneness of Mankind—Incompatible with Racial Prejudices
"Regarding the solution of the racial problem: The believers should of course realize that the principle of the oneness of mankind which is the cornerstone of the Message of Baha'u'llah is wholly incompatible with all forms of racial prejudice. Loyalty to this foundation principle of the Faith is the paramount duty of every believer and should be therefore whole-hearted and unqualified. For a Baha'i racial prejudice, in all its forms, is simply a negation of faith, an attitude wholly incompatible with the very spirit and actual teachings of the Cause.

"But while the friends should faithfully and courageously uphold this Baha'i principle of the essential unity of all human races, yet in the methods they adopt for its application and further realization on the social plane they should act with tact, wisdom and moderation. These two attitudes are by no means exclusive. Baha'u'llah urges us to always act wisely and moderately. Baha'is do not believe that the spread of the Cause and its principles and teachings can be effected by means of radical and violent methods. While they are loyal to all these Teachings yet they believe in the necessity of resorting to peaceful and friendly means for the realization of their aims."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 22, 1936)

1813. The Evil Forces of Prejudice
"The believers must realize that the forces of prejudice are, along with so many other evil practices, growing at present stronger in the darkness surrounding humanity. The Baha'is must exercise not only tact and judgement, but courage and confidence in the aid of Baha'u'llah, which He will vouchsafe to those who attempt to live up to His teachings, in their whole approach to this racial question. Too much hesitance, too great timidity in the face of

public opinion, can be just as bad as too much disregard of the actual situation and the problems it involves."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 23, 1941)

1814. The Negroes Should Be Proud and Happy in the Praises which Baha'u'llah Bestowed Upon Them and Other Downtrodden Races
"As we neither feel nor acknowledge any distinction between the duties and privileges of a Baha'i, whoever he may be, it is incumbent upon the negro believers to rise above this great test which the attitude of some of their white brethren may present. They must prove their innate equality not by words but by deeds. They must accept the Cause of Baha'u'llah for the sake of the Cause, love it, and cling to it, and teach it, and fight for it as their own Cause, forgetful of the shortcomings of others. Any other attitude is unworthy of their faith.

[535] "Proud and happy in the praises which even Baha'u'llah Himself has bestowed upon them, they must feel He revealed Himself for them and every other downtrodden race, loves them, and will help them to attain their destiny.

"The whole race question in America is a national one and of great importance. But the negro friends must not waste their precious opportunity to serve the Faith, in these momentous days, by dwelling on the admitted shortcomings of the white friends. They must arise and serve and teach, confident of the future they are building, a future in which we know these barriers will have once and for all been overcome!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 9, 1942)

1815. The Guardian Encourages Participation with Non-Political Progressive Groups
"Regarding your question: The Guardian does not see how Baha'i participation with other organizations and religious bodies in a non-political meeting to promote civic unity and welfare along some line can be considered political. Much as the friends must guard against in any way ever seeming to identify themselves or the Cause with any political party, they must also guard against the other extreme of never taking part with other progressive groups, in conferences or committees designed to promote some activity in entire accord with our teachings—such as, for instance, better race relations."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 21, 1948)

1816. The Whites Should Welcome Negroes in Their Homes and Even Marry Them if They Wish—Both Sides Have Prejudice to Overcome
"He feels it is time that the Baha'is stopped worrying entirely about the white element in a community, and that they should concentrate on showing the negro element that this is a Faith which produces full equality and which loves and wants minorities. The Baha'is should welcome the negroes to their homes, make every effort to teach them, associate with them, even marry them if they want

to. We must remember that 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself united in Baha'i marriage a coloured and a white believer. He could not do more.

"Also, as the Guardian has been pointing out to the pilgrims, the Faith must be representative of the population. In a great many places in the South the majority of the population is still negro. This should be reflected in the Baha'i Community, fearlessly. Both the white Baha'is and the coloured Baha'is must steadily work to attain this objective of bringing the Faith to the coloured people, and of confirming many of them in it. Both sides have prejudices to overcome; one, the prejudice which is built up in the minds of a people who have conquered and imposed their will, and the other the reactionary prejudice of those who have been conquered and sorely put upon."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i Inter-Racial Teaching Committee, May 27, 1957)

1817. The Sufferings and Tribulations of the Jews Will Terminate During the Baha'i Era
"...You should certainly endeavour to establish further contacts with your Jewish fellow-citizens, as their spiritual destiny is assuredly bright. The age-long sufferings and tribulations which the Jews all over the world have so cruelly experienced will [536] be terminated during the Baha'i era, as they will be gradually led to embrace the Faith which, indeed, constitutes the only means of salvation to their race."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 22, 1937)

1818. The Glorious Destiny of the Jews
"...If the Jews study the teachings they will find in them the hopes and aspirations that they have always cherished. Baha'u'llah bears a wonderful message to the Jews and many of them have come to appreciate it and are active in carrying it to others of their race. Through Baha'u'llah, the Master tells us, they shall regain their ancient glory and become loved by all the people of the whole world."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 14, 1932)

1819. Believers of Jewish Descent Should Call Themselves Baha'is
"He feels you did the right thing to have yourself under 'Religion' registered as a Baha'i. Unfortunately, owing to this obnoxious and vicious race prejudice of every sort which afflicts the world today, the term Jew has come more to mean a race than a religion. You certainly, as your father feels, should never wish to disassociate yourself from a group of people who have contributed as much to the world as the Jews have. On the other hand your actual religion today is Baha'i, and he feels that Jews should, when they become Baha'is, always give this as their Faith, but as their racial descent they should give 'Jewish'."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 15, 1948)

XLIV. REINCARNATION

[537] 1820. Baha'i Position on Reincarnation
"It is clear from the teachings of Baha'u'llah about the nature of the soul and of life after death as published in 'Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah', that the Baha'i position on this subject is wholly incompatible with the theory of reincarnation. We suggest that you refer this friend to the explanation of 'return' as given by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Iqan and the statements made by 'Abdu'l-Baha in 'Some Answered Questions'.

"...for your additional information we give the following quotations from letters written on behalf of the beloved Guardian on this subject:

'No revelation from God has ever taught reincarnation; this is a man-made conception. The soul of man comes into being at conception.'
(To an individual believer, April 1, 1946)

'The Baha'i view of 'reincarnation' is essentially different from the Hindu conception. The Baha'is believe in the return of the attributes and qualities, but maintain that the essence or the reality of things cannot be made to return. Every being keeps its own individuality, but some of his qualities can be transmitted. The doctrine of metempsychosis upheld by the Hindus is fallacious.'

'Evolution in the life of the individual starts with the formation of the human embryo and passes through various stages, and even continues after death in another form. The human spirit is capable of infinite development.
(To an individual believer, November 26.1939)

'Man's identity or rather his individuality is never lost. His reality as a person remains intact throughout the various states of his development. He does not preexist in any form before coming into this world.'
(To an individual believer, November 26, 1939)

'We as Baha'is are not influenced by the categorical assertions of scholars. We believe that what Baha'u'llah has revealed and 'Abdu'l-Baha has written is from God, and divinely inspired; that Baha'u'llah is a Manifestation of God, and has access to a knowledge denied to ordinary human beings.'"
(Letter written to an individual believer, April 22, 1954 on behalf of the Guardian)
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Monaco, August 5, 1969)

1821. Everybody is Entitled to Their Own Opinion
"Everybody is entitled to their own opinion. If they do not set it forth with conviction, they are failing in their duty to expose their ideas sincerely and graphically; but because they believe something firmly themselves does not in anyway imply that what they believe is the truth. Between the truth which comes from God through His Prophets, and the glimmerings, often misunderstood and misinterpreted, of truth which come [538] from the philosophers and thinkers, there is an immense difference. We must never, under any circumstances, confuse

the two."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 22, 1954: Ibid.)

1822. Learning Can Be the Veil Between the Soul of Man and Truth
"Baha'u'llah has said that learning can be the veil between the soul of man and the eternal truth; in other words, between man and the knowledge of God. We have seen that many people who become very advanced in the study of modern physical sciences are led to deny God, and to deny His Prophets. That does not mean that God and the Prophets have not and do not exist. It only means that knowledge has become a veil between their hearts and the light of God.

"It would be absolutely impossible for anyone to answer all the questions that might be asked by the curious, whether scholars or ordinary people, on any subject. If the Prophets of God only came to this world in order to answer people's questions, and elucidate all the 'nonsense', for the most part, that people have gotten together and formed into cults and philosophies, they would have no time to instruct man by their example and through their teachings in a new way of life."
(Ibid.)

1823. Have Not Had Time to Evolve Baha'i Scholars Who Can Deal with These Subjects
"We must turn aside from these vain imaginings and suppositions and philosophizings of the world, and fix our eyes upon the clear stream of the Teachings of Baha'u'llah. Out of these teachings, and the society which they will create on this planet, will come a solution to all of the problems of men. Gradually, greater scholars, more deeply spiritual thinkers, will be able to answer from a Baha'i standpoint many of these questions. It is not necessary that they should be in the divine text; they can be studied and learned in the future; but at present we have not had time to evolve the Baha'i scholars who can deal with these subjects in detail, and take upon themselves to answer the abstruse points and the many unfounded doctrines which are advanced by modern philosophers."
(Ibid.)

1824. Unlikely You Will Be Able to Convert People Who Study These Topics
"It is very unlikely that you will be able either to successfully argue with, or to convert, any of the people who study these topics you have mentioned in your letter. They are more interested in mystical things, and in mystery itself, than in this present world in which we live, and how to solve its problems. They enjoy abstractions and complications. Minds such as these are not going to be able to accept the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, which is for here and now, and which involves the purification of the mind, and as application of His teachings to daily life...."
(Ibid.)

1825. What Baha'u'llah Means by Faculty of Sight and Hearing
"What Baha'u'llah means by the faculty of sight and hearing is the physical

faculty, not a spiritual abstraction. He means that we have been given eyes and ears to appreciate what goes on in this world, by Almighty God; in other words, we can [539] read the Teachings and listen to the Message of the Prophet. This is to be taken literally."
(Ibid.)

1826. Reincarnation Does Not Exist
"We know from His Teachings that reincarnation does not exist. We come on to this planet once only. Our life here is like the baby in the womb of its mother, which develops in that state what is necessary for its entire life after it is born. The same is true of us. Spiritually we must develop here what we will require for the life after death. In that future life, God, through His Mercy, can help us to evolve characteristics which we neglected to develop while we were on this earthly plane. It is not necessary for us to come back and be born into another body in order to advance spiritually and grow closer to God.

"This is the Baha'i Teaching, and this is what the followers of Baha'u'llah must accept, regardless of what experiences other people may feel they have. You yourself must surely know that modern psychology has taught that the capacity of the human mind for believing what it imagines is almost infinite. Because people think they have a certain type of experience, they think they remember something of a previous life, does not mean they actually had the experience, or existed previously. The power of their mind would be quite sufficient to make them believe firmly such a thing had happened."
(Ibid.)

1827. We Must Use Writings of the Prophets as Our Measurement
"We must use the Writings of the Prophets as our measurement. If Baha'u'llah had attached the slightest importance to occult experiences, to the seeing of auras, to the hearing of mystic voices; if He had believed that reincarnation was a fact, He, Himself, would have mentioned all of these things in His Teachings. The fact that He passed over them in silence shows that to Him, they had either no importance or no reality, and were consequently not worthy to take up His time as the Divine Educator of the human race."
(Ibid.)

XLV. REVERENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

A. Reverence

[540] 1828. Reverence and Respect Toward the Holy Places
"You have asked about visiting holy places and the observance of marked reverence toward these resplendent spots. Holy places are undoubtedly centres of the outpouring of Divine grace, because on entering the illumined sites associated with martyrs and holy souls, and by observing reverence, both physical and spiritual, one's heart is moved with great tenderness...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 61)

1829. The Record of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Voice Should Be Listened to with the Utmost

Reverence

"...the friends to exercise restraint and caution in the use and distribution of the record of the Master's voice. In my view, it should be used only on special occasions and be listened to with the utmost reverence. The dignity of the Cause, I am sure, would suffer from too wide and indiscriminate use of one of the most precious relics of our departed Master."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi, November 26, 1923)

1830. Viewing the Film of 'Abdu'l-Baha

"Regarding the use of the Master's film, the greatest care must be exercised lest we cheapen its value by too frequent and indiscriminate exhibition either amongst the believers or the non-Baha'is. Only on special occasions, such as important anniversaries, should the film be shown and its solemn sacred character should be duly emphasized."
(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi, February 28, 1928)

1831. Portrayal of Any of the Manifestations of God Forbidden

"Your understanding that the portrayal of the Bab and Baha'u'llah in works of art is forbidden, is correct. The Guardian made it clear that this prohibition refers to all the Manifestations of God; photographs, or reproductions of portraits, of the Master may be used in books, but no attempt should be made to portray Him in dramatic or other works where He would be one of the 'dramatic personae'. However, there can be no objection to symbolic representation of such Holy Figures, provided it does not become a ritual and that the symbol used is not irreverent."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, December 3, 1972)

1832. Showing Reverence Differs from Culture to Culture

"Problems arise when there are disagreements among the friends as to what is dignified and reverent. The Universal House of Justice is reluctant to specify such matters [541] in detail and urges the believers not to make an issue of them. If a believer is seriously worried about a particular case, he may refer it to his National Spiritual Assembly and should abide by the Assembly's decision."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, March 12, 1980)

1833. Photograph of Baha'u'llah

"There is no objection that the believers look at the picture of Baha'u'llah, but they should do so with the utmost reverence, and should also not allow that it be exposed openly to the public, even in their private homes."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 6, 1939)

B. Spirituality

1834. Man is at the Beginning of Spirituality

"Man is the highest degree of materiality, and at the beginning of spirituality—that is to say, he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. He is at the last degree of darkness, and at the beginning of

light; that is why it has been said that the condition of man is the end of the night and the beginning of day, meaning that he is the sum of all the degrees of imperfection, and that he possesses the degrees of perfection. He has the animal side as well as the angelic side, and the aim of an educator is to so train human souls that their angelic aspect may overcome their animal side. Then if the divine power in man, which is his essential perfection, overcomes the satanic powers, which is absolute imperfection, he becomes the most excellent among creatures; but if the satanic power overcomes the divine power, he becomes the lowest of the creatures. That is why he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. Not in any other of the species in the world of existence is their such a difference, contrast, contradiction and opposition as in the species of man. Thus the reflection of the Divine Light was in man, as in Christ, and see how loved and honoured He is!..."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, pp. 235-236, Wilmette, 1984 ed.)

1835. Requisites for Spiritual Growth
"Baha'u'llah has stated quite clearly in His Writings the essential requisites for our spiritual growth, and these are stressed again and again by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Talks and Tablets. One can summarise them briefly in this way:

1. The recital each day of one of the Obligatory Prayers with pure-hearted devotion.

2. The regular reading of the Sacred Scriptures, specifically at least each morning and evening, with reverence, attention and thought.

3. Prayerful meditation on the teachings, so that we may understand them more deeply, fulfil them more faithfully, and convey them more accurately to others.

4. Striving every day to bring our behaviour more into accordance with the high standards that are set forth in the Teachings.

5. Teaching the Cause of God.

6. Selfless service in the work of the Cause and in the carrying on of our trade or profession."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 1, 1983)

[542] 1836. Points Towards the Attainment of True Spirituality—Spiritual Exercises of Prayer and Meditation
"These points, expressed in other words, have already been conveyed to the friends ... by the Counsellors, but the House of Justice wishes to stress them, because they represent the path towards the attainment of true spirituality that has been laid down by the Manifestation of God for this age.

"It is striking how private and personal the most fundamental spiritual exercises of prayer and meditation are in the Faith. Baha'is do, of course, have meetings for devotions, as in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar or at Nineteen Day Feasts, but the daily obligatory prayers are ordained to be said in the privacy

of one's chamber, and meditation on the Teachings is, likewise, a private individual activity, not a form of group therapy. In His talks 'Abdu'l-Baha describes prayer as 'conversation with God', and concerning meditation He says that 'while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed!'"
(Ibid.)

1837. Baha'u'llah Specified No Procedure to be Followed in Meditation and No Method Should Be Taught in Summer Schools
"There are, of course, other things that one can do to increase one's spirituality. For example, Baha'u'llah has specified no procedures to be followed in meditation, and individual believers are free to do as they wish in this area, provided that they remain in harmony with the teachings, but such activities are purely personal and should under no circumstances be confused with those actions which Baha'u'llah Himself considered to be of fundamental importance for our spiritual growth. Some believers may find that it is beneficial to them to follow a particular method of meditation, and they may certainly do so, but such methods should not be taught at Baha'i Summer Schools or be carried out during a session of the School because, while they may appeal to some people, they may repel others. They have nothing to do with the Faith and should be kept quite separate so that enquirers will not be confused."
(Ibid.)

1838. For Private Meditation, Believer May Desire to Use the Greatest Name
"It would seem that there are ... many believers who draw particular benefit from meditation. The House of Justice suggests that for their private meditations they may wish to use the repetition of the Greatest Name, Allah-u-Abha, ninety-five times a day which, although not yet applied in the West, is among the Laws, Ordinances and Exhortations of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. (See p. 46 of the 'Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas'.)

"The House of Justice is confident that if the believers ... will conscientiously strive to increase their spirituality in the six ways outlined above, and become aware in their inmost beings that in all their services they are but vehicles for the confirming power of God, they will attract the hearts of their fellow citizens and penetrate the miasma of materialism that veils the sight of so many of their countrymen. Effort, activity, [543] unity and constant reliance on the power of Baha'u'llah will assuredly overcome all obstacles."
(Ibid.)

1839. Cleanliness Contributes to Spirituality
"...in every aspect of life, purity and holiness, cleanliness and refinement, exalt the human condition and further the development of man's inner reality. Even in the physical realm, cleanliness will conduce to spirituality, as the Holy Writings clearly state. And although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit...."

('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 146-147)

1840. The Obligatory Prayers and Reading Sacred Scriptures Every Morning and Evening Nourish Growth of Spirituality
"The law of the Obligatory Prayers is, of course, binding on the friends in Europe, and regular, whole-hearted obedience to this law will in itself nourish the growth of spirituality. Nor should the friends neglect Baha'u'llah's exhortation to read the Sacred Scriptures every morning and evening."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 31, 1983)

1841. The Foundation of Spirituality is Steadfastness in the Covenant
"The thing the ... believers must do is to deepen themselves in the Covenants of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. Mere intellectual understanding of the Teachings is not enough. Deep spirituality is essential, and the foundation of true spirituality is steadfastness in the Covenant."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 31, 1949)

1842. People Are So Markedly Lacking in Spirituality These Days
"People are so markedly lacking in spirituality these days that the Baha'is should consciously guard themselves against being caught in what one might call the undertow of materialism and atheism, sweeping the world these days. Skepticism, cynicism, disbelief, immorality and hard-heartedness are rife, and as the friends are those who stand for the antithesis of all these things they should beware lest the atmosphere of the present world affects them without their being conscious of it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 19, 1945)

1843. There is a Need for a True Spiritual Awareness
"The need is very great, everywhere in the world, in and outside the Faith, for a true spiritual awareness to pervade and motivate peoples' lives. No amount of administrative procedure or adherence to rules can take the place of this soul-characteristic, this spirituality which is the essence of Man. He is very glad to see you are stressing this and aiding the friends to realize its supreme importance."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 25, 1945)

[544] 1844. Spiritual Education and Progress Depend on Recognition of the Infallibility of the Manifestation of God
"Regarding your Baha'i friend who does not fully understand the infallibility of the Manifestation of God: You should influence that person to study the matter more deeply, and to realize that the whole theory of Divine Revelation rests on the infallibility of the Prophet, be He Christ, Muhammad, Baha'u'llah, or one of the Others. If They are not infallible, then They are not divine, and thus lose that essential link with God which, we believe, is the bond that educates men and causes all human progress."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 11, 1942)

1845. Prayer Absolutely Indispensable—To Attain Spirituality
"...How to attain spirituality is indeed a question to which every young man and woman must sooner or later try to find a satisfactory answer. It is precisely because no such satisfactory answer has been given or found, that the modern youth finds itself bewildered, and is being consequently carried away by the materialistic forces that are so powerfully undermining the foundations of man's moral and spiritual life... It is this condition, so sadly morbid, into which society has fallen, that religion seeks to improve and transform.

"For the core of religious faith is that mystic feeling which unites man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer. And this is the reason why Baha'u'llah has so much stressed the importance of worship.

"It is not sufficient for a believer merely to accept and observe the teachings. He should, in addition, cultivate the sense of spirituality which he can acquire chiefly by means of prayer...

"The believers, particularly the young ones, should therefore fully realize the necessity of praying. For prayer is absolutely indispensable to their inner spiritual development, and this, as already stated, is the very foundation and purpose of the religion of God."
(From a letter of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 8, 1935: Baha'i Youth, p. 10)

XLVI. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. Guidelines

[545] 1846. A Wider Horizon is Opening Before Us
"The growing maturity of a world-wide religious community which all these processes indicate is further evidenced in the reaching out, by a number of national communities, to the social and economic life of their countries, exemplified by the founding of tutorial schools, the inception of radio stations, the pursuit of rural development programs and the operation of medical and agricultural schemes.

"A wider horizon is opening before us, illumined by a growing and universal manifestation of the inherent potentialities of the Cause for ordering human affairs. In this light can be discerned not only our immediate tasks but, more dimly, new pursuits and undertakings upon which we must shortly become engaged."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the world, Ridvan 1983)

1847. The Concept of Social and Economic Development is Enshrined in the Teachings of Baha'u'llah
"...Thus, we can readily appreciate that although it has hitherto been

impracticable for Baha'i institutions generally to emphasize development activities, the concept of social and economic development is enshrined in the sacred Teachings of our Faith. The beloved Master, through His illuminating words and deeds, set the example for the application of this concept to the reconstruction of society. Witness, for instance, what social and economic progress the Iranian believers attained under His loving guidance and, subsequently, with the unfailing encouragement of the Guardian of the Cause."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, October 20, 1983)

1848. His Teachings Emphasize Bringing into Being a World Unified in All Essential Aspects of Life
"From the beginning of His stupendous Mission, Baha'u'llah urged upon the attention of nations the necessity of ordering human affairs in such a way as to bring into being a world unified in all the essential aspects of its life. In unnumbered verses and Tablets He repeatedly and variously declared the 'progress of the world' and the 'development of nations' as being among the ordinances of God for this day. The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal of His Revelation, implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth. The indispensability of this [546] coherence is unmistakably illustrated in His ordination of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, the spiritual centre of every Baha'i community round which must flourish dependencies dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific advancement of mankind."
(Ibid.)

1849. Steps to be Taken to Attain This Goal Must Begin in the Baha'i Community
"Now, after all the years of constant teaching activity, the Community of the Greatest Name has grown to the stage at which the processes of this development must be incorporated into its regular pursuits; particularly its action compelled by the expansion of the Faith in Third World countries where the vast majority of its adherents reside. The steps to be taken must necessarily begin in the Baha'i Community itself, with the friends endeavouring, through their application of spiritual principles, their rectitude of conduct and the practice of the art of consultation, to uplift themselves and thus become self-sufficient and self-reliant. Moreover, these exertions will conduce to the preservation of human honour, so desired by Baha'u'llah. In the process and as a consequence, the friends will undoubtedly extend the benefits of their efforts to society as a whole, until all mankind achieves the progress intended by the Lord of the Age."
(Ibid.)

1850. Establishment of Office of Social and Economic Development in the World Centre
"It is indeed propitious that systematic attention be given to this vital sphere of Baha'i endeavour. We are happy, therefore, to announce the establishment at the World Centre of the Office of Social and Economic

Development, which is to assist the Universal House of Justice to promote and coordinate the activities of the friends throughout the world in this new field."
(Ibid.)

1851. The Powers Released by Baha'u'llah Match the Needs of the Time
"...The powers released by Baha'u'llah match the needs of the times. We may therefore be utterly confident that the new throb of energy now vibrating throughout the Cause will empower it to meet the oncoming challenges of assisting, as maturity and resources allow, the development of the social and economic life of peoples, of collaborating with the forces leading towards the establishment of order in the world, of influencing the exploitation and constructive uses of modern technology, and in all these ways enhancing the prestige and progress of the Faith and uplifting the conditions of the generality of mankind."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1983)

1852. Progress in Development Field Depends on Stirrings at the Grass Roots
"We call now upon National Spiritual Assemblies to consider the implications of this emerging trend for their respective communities, and to take well-conceived measures to involve the thought and actions of Local Spiritual Assemblies and [547] individuals in the devising and implementing of plans, within the constraints of existing circumstances and available resources. Progress in the development field will largely depend on natural stirrings at the grassroots, and it should receive its driving force from those sources rather than from an imposition of plans and programs from the top."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, October 20, 1983)

1853. The Major Tasks of National Spiritual Assemblies
"...The major task of National Assemblies, therefore, is to increase the local communities' awareness of needs and possibilities, and to guide and coordinate the efforts resulting from such awareness. Already in many areas the friends are witnessing the confirmations of their initiatives in such pursuits as the founding of tutorial and other schools, the promotion of literacy, the launching of rural development programs, the inception of educational radio stations, and the operation of agricultural and medical projects. As they enlarge the scope of their endeavours other modes of development will undoubtedly emerge."
(Ibid.)

1854. Applying Systematically Principles of the Faith to Upraising Quality of Human Life
"This challenge evokes the resourcefulness, flexibility and cohesiveness of the many communities composing the Baha'i world. Different communities will, of course, perceive different approaches and different solutions to similar needs. Some can offer assistance abroad, while, at the outset, others must of necessity receive assistance; but all, irrespective of circumstances or

resources, are endowed with the capacity to respond in some measure; all can share; all can participate in the joint enterprise of applying more systematically the principles of the Faith to upraising the quality of human life. The key to success is unity in spirit and in action."
(Ibid.)

1855. Universal House of Justice Calls Individual to Action
"Ultimately, the call to action is addressed to the individual friends, whether they be adult or youth, veteran or newly-enrolled. Let them step forth to take their places in the arena of service where their talents and skills, their specialized training, their material resources, their offers of time and energy and, above all, their dedication to Baha'i principles, can be put to work in improving the lot of man."
(Ibid.)

1856. The Nature and Extent of Believers' Involvement Must Vary from Country to Country
"...the House of Justice wishes us to stress that the nature and extent of the believers' involvement in social and economic development must vary from country to country, both in relation to the general conditions of that country and in relation to the stage of development of the Baha'i community. It is only because a number of Baha'i communities have sufficiently increased their membership numerically, and have developed strongly functioning Baha'i administrative institutions that the House [548] of Justice has been able to contemplate the launching of this new stage in the work of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 30, 1984: Extracts Concerning Baha'i Social and Economic Development, A Compilation prepared by the International Teaching Centre of communications written by or on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, January 1985)

B. Agriculture

1857. Strive to Become Proficient in the Science of Agriculture
"...Strive as much as possible to become proficient in the science of agriculture, for in accordance with the Divine Teachings, the acquisition of sciences and the perfection of arts are considered as acts of worship. If a man engages with all his power in the acquisition of a science or in the perfection of an art, it is as if he has been worshipping God in the churches and temples. Thus as thou entereth a school of agriculture and strivest in the acquisition of that science, thou art day and night engaged in acts of worship—acts that are accepted at the threshold of the Almighty. What bounty greater than this that science should be considered as an act of worship and art as service to the Kingdom of God."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i World Faith, pp. 377-378)

1858. Solution to Economic Problem Should Begin with the Farmer
"The question of economics must commence with the farmer and then be extended to the other classes inasmuch as the number of farmers is greater than all

other classes, many many times greater. Therefore, it is fitting that the economic problem be first solved with the farmer, for the farmer is the first active agent in the body politic. In brief, from among the wise men in every village a board should be organized and the affairs of that village should be under the control of that board."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Extract from a Tablet to an individual believer, October 4, 1912, translation corrected in the World Centre, December 1985)

1859. A General Warehouse Will Be Founded which Will Have Seven Revenues
"...Likewise a general storehouse should be founded with the appointment of a secretary. At the time of the harvest, with the approval of the members of that board, a determined percentage of the entire harvest should be appropriated for the storehouse.

"The storehouse is to have seven revenues: Tithes, taxes on animals, wealth without inheritors, all things found whose owners cannot be discovered, a third of all treasures (money) found in the earth, a third of the mines, and voluntary contributions.

"On the other hand, there are seven expenditures:

1. General running expenses of the institution—salaries etc., and the administration of public safety, including the department of hygiene.

2. Tithes to the general government (State).

3. Taxes on animals for the State.

4. Support of an orphanage.

5. Support of cripples and the incurable.

6. Support of educational institutions.

7. [549] Supplying any deficiency for the expenses of the poor.

"The first revenue is the tithe. For example, if the income of a farmer is five hundred dollars and his necessary expenses are five hundred dollars, no tithes will be collected from him. Another's expenses being five hundred and his income one thousand dollars, one tenth will be taken from him, for he hath more than his needs; if he giveth one tenth his livelihood will not be disturbed. Another's expenses are one thousand dollars, and his income is five thousand dollars; as he hath four thousand dollars surplus, he will be required to give one and a half tenths. Another hath necessary expenses of one thousand dollars; but his income is ten thousand dollars; from him two tenths will be required. The necessary expenses of another person are five thousand dollars, and his income one hundred thousand; therefore, one fourth will be required from him. On the other hand, a person's income may be two hundred, but his needs absolutely essential for his livelihood are five hundred dollars; provided he hath not failed in effort and exertion or his farm hath not been blessed with a harvest, such a one must be helped from the general storehouse, so that he may not remain in need and may live in ease."

(Ibid.)

C. Economics

1860. Baha'i System Prevents Extremes of Wealth and Poverty
"...Of course conditions in the East differ where the Countries are rarely industrial and mostly agricultural; we should have to apply different laws from the West and that is why the principles of the Movement strike at the root which is common to them both. 'Abdu'l-Baha has developed in various of His talks, which you will find in different compilations, the principles upon which the Baha'i economic system would be based. A system that prevents among others the gradual control of wealth in the hands of a few and the resulting state of both extremes, wealth and poverty."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 28, 1927: Extracts from the Baha'i Writings on the Subject of Agriculture and Related Subjects, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

1861. Should Not Confuse Methods Explained by 'Abdu'l-Baha with Present Day Systems
"As to your fourth question, Shoghi Effendi believes that it is preferable not to confuse the methods explained by the Master with present systems. They may have many resemblances but also many points of difference. Moreover these general statements we have in the teachings have to be explained and applied by the House of Justice before we can really appreciate their significance."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 21, 1932: Ibid.)

1862. Regarding Problems of Ownership, Control and Distribution of Capital
"Regarding your questions concerning the Baha'i attitude on various economic problems, such as the problem of ownership, control and distribution of capital, and of other means of production, the problem of trusts and monopolies, and such economic experiments as social cooperatives; the Teachings of Baha'u'llah and [550] 'Abdu'l-Baha do not provide specific and detailed solutions to all such economic questions which mostly pertain to the domain of technical economics, and as such do not concern directly the Cause. True, there are certain guiding principles in Baha'i Sacred Writings on the subject of economics, but these do by no means cover the whole field of theoretical and applied economics, and are mostly intended to guide further Baha'i economic writers and technicians to evolve an economic system which would function in full conformity with the spirit and the exact provisions of the Cause on this and similar subjects. The International House of Justice will have, in consultation with economic experts, to assist in the formulation and evolution of the Baha'i economic system of the future. One thing, however, is certain, that the Cause neither accepts the theories of the Capitalistic economics in full, nor can it agree with the Marxists and Communists in their repudiation of the principle of private ownership and of the vital sacred rights of the individual."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

June 10, 1930: Ibid.)

1863. Voluntary Sharing
"The Teachings of Baha'u'llah advocate voluntary sharing, and this is a greater thing than the equalization of wealth. For equalization must be imposed from without, while sharing is a matter of free choice."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Peace More Than an End to War, Wilmette, p. 115)

1864. Spirit that Permeates Economic Life Will Crystallize into Definite Institutions
"As you say, the Writings are not so rich on this subject and many issues at present baffling the minds of the world are not even mentioned. The primary consideration is the spirit that has to permeate our economic life and this will gradually crystallize itself into definite institutions and principles that will help to bring about the ideal conditions foretold by Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, December 20, 1931: Baha'i News, No. 90, March 1935, p. 2)

1865. Social Inequality
"...social inequality is the inevitable outcome of the natural inequality of men. Human beings are different in ability and should, therefore, be different in their social and economic standing. Extremes of wealth and poverty should, however, be totally abolished. Those whose brains have contributed to the creation and improvement of the means of production must be fairly rewarded, though these means may be owned and controlled by others."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 26, 1935)

1866. "Equality is a Chimera!"
"Equality is a chimera! It is entirely impracticable! Even if equality could be achieved it could not continue—and if its existence were possible, the whole order of the world would be destroyed. The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. Heaven has so decreed in the creation of man."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, p. 152, London, 1969 ed.)

[551] 1867. Wages
"...The Master has definitely stated that wages should be unequal, simply because that men are unequal in their ability, and hence should receive wages that would correspond to their varying capacities and resources. This view seems to contradict the opinion of some modern economists. But the friends should have full confidence in the words of the Master, and should give preference to His statements over those voiced by our so-called modern thinkers."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 26, 1935)

1868. Application of Spiritual Principles to Economic System
"...There are practically no technical teachings on economics in the Cause, such as banking, the price system, and others. The Cause is not an economic

system, nor can its Founders be considered as having been technical economists. The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as it consists in the application of spiritual principles to our present-day economic system. Baha'u'llah has given us a few basic principles which should guide future Baha'i economists in establishing such institutions which will adjust the economic relationships of the world."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 25, 1936: Baha'i News, No. 103, October 1936, p. 2)

1869. Profit Sharing Recommended to Solve One Form of Economic Problems
"No, Baha'u'llah did not bring a complete system of economics to the world.

"Profit-sharing is recommended as a solution to one form of economic problems.

"There is nothing in the teachings against some kind of capitalism; its present form, though, would require adjustments to be made."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 19, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 210, August 1948, p. 3)

1870. Man Will Always Have to Toil to Earn His Living
"...Whatever the progress of the machinery may be, man will have always to toil in order to earn his living. Effort is an inseparable part of man's life. It may take different forms with the changing conditions of the world, but it will be always present as a necessary element in our earthly existence. Life is after all a struggle. Progress is attained through struggle, and without such a struggle life ceases to have a meaning; it becomes even extinct. The progress of machinery has not made effort unnecessary. It has given it a new form, a new outlet."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 26, 1935)

1871. Religion Alone Can Enable Man to Adjust the Economic Relationships of Society
"...By the statement 'the economic solution is divine in nature' is meant that religion alone can, in the last resort, bring in man's nature such a fundamental change as to enable him to adjust the economic relationships of society. It is only in this way that man can control the economic forces that threaten to disrupt the foundations of his existence, and thus assert his mastery over the forces of nature."
(Ibid.)

[552] 1872. A New Universal Attitude Needs to be Fostered—Based on Spiritual Verities
"The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war. Few societies have dealt effectively with this situation. The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical approaches. A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be

made. It is an issue that is bound up not only with the necessity for eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty but also with those spiritual verities the understanding of which can produce a new universal attitude. Fostering such an attitude is itself a major part of the solution."
(The Universal House of Justice: The Promise of World Peace, pp. 10-11, Haifa, 1985)

D. Projects

1873. Participation in Projects Depends Largely on Certain Conditions in the Community
"The suggestions (concerning possible development projects) are now referred to you so that you may initiate consultation at the grass roots level of the local Baha'i communities, involving Local Spiritual Assemblies of that area. In addition to projecting Counsellor ...'s broad ideas, you should seek the suggestions of the believers regarding local needs and initiatives. Your Assembly is also asked to consider the practicability of such projects and conduct a survey of the localities, indicating which of these would be able to host the projects. Among the criteria of capacity would be the following:

1. Strength of the community and its ability to benefit from projects spiritually as well as materially, including the beneficial effects of collective action upon the community and its participants.

2. Willingness of the local believers to participate, collaborate and support the projects.

3. Degree and dimension of the local contributions to the projects in terms of manpower (labour), materials and resources.

4. Presence of able people to manage the human resources and direct the energies of the friends, including strong liaisons between volunteers (international and national) and local believers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 9, 1983: A Compilation on Social and Economic Development)

1874. The Primary Objective of Such Projects Should Be Service to the Community, Not as a Business
"While it is the wish of the House of Justice to see social and economic development become a part of the life of Baha'i communities, great care should be exercised that our limited efforts are directed to projects whose primary objective is not business but service to the community. Such projects as engagement in commercial activities and the erection of factories will surely divert the attention of Baha'i institutions from directly promoting the Cause at this time. The Counsellors will be able to advise [553] and guide you in selecting, if favourable conditions exist, modest projects which promote the welfare of members of the Baha'i community, as well as the betterment of their fellow men."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a

National Spiritual Assembly, December 8, 1983: Ibid.)

1875. Social and Economic Development Projects Should Meet Needs and Aspirations of Local Believers
"...Baha'is who wish to start a business as a group effort in the service of the Faith are advised to consult with their Local or National Spiritual Assemblies. Projects of economic and social development undertaken by Baha'i institutions, or assisted by them, should usually be quite modest at first, so that experience can be gained. They should be suited to the local situation and meet the particular needs and aspirations of the local believers. Gradually, as knowledge and experience are gained, each National Spiritual Assembly can encourage and develop larger projects and perhaps include even the whole national community in appropriate endeavours."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 7, 1984: Ibid.)

1876. Two Fundamental Principles
"There are two principles which the House of Justice feels are fundamental to the generality of such projects of social and economic development, although, of course, there will be exceptions. The first is that they must be built on a substructure of existing, sufficiently strong local Baha'i communities. The second is that the long-term conduct of the project should aim at self-sufficiency and not be dependent upon continuing financial support from outside.

"The first principle implies that the projects of social and economic development now to be undertaken are a natural stage of the growth of the Baha'i community and are needed by the community itself although they will, of course, benefit a much wider segment of society. The Baha'i world is in no position financially or from the point of view of manpower, to launch undertakings for the economic and social development of populations in areas where there are but few believers. The greatest need of all peoples is for the Faith itself, so that they may know the destiny towards which they as individuals and as members of society must strive, and will learn from the teachings those virtues and methods which will enable them to work together in harmony, forbearance and trustworthiness.

"The second principle must take into account that any project started by the Cause should be designed to grow soundly and steadily, and not to collapse from attrition. In other words, external assistance and funds, Baha'i and non-Baha'i, may be used for capital acquisitions, to make surveys, to initiate activities, to bring in expertise, but the aim should be for each project to be able to continue and to develop on the strength of local Baha'i labour, funds and enthusiasm even if all external aid should be cut off."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, May 8, 1984)

1877. Social and Economic Development Must Be Placed on a Spiritual Basis to Prove Productive

"...It cannot be over-emphasized that venturing into social and economic [554] development rests upon the fundamental principles enshrined in the Teachings concerning the inter-relationship between the spiritual and material aspects of life, and if social and economic activity is not placed on a spiritual basis it may well prove counter-productive or even harmful, as without a spiritual base the people are likely to become corrupt or materialistic.

"As the friends deepen their understanding of the message of the Universal House of Justice dated 20 October 1983, they will rise to the challenge and re-orient their thoughts and actions to meet the situations which they encounter in their daily life, drawing on the wisdom of consultation and sustained by the high and noble spiritual principles of our Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 12, 1984)

1878. Suggestions for Projects Are Welcome
"Suggestions for projects for development are welcome from whatever source they spring but ideally they should emanate from the local communities and receive support of the Local and National Assemblies; it should not be necessary to send people to countries to solicit projects. However, if a community has the desire to plan a special project, it is free to call upon people with experience to assist in the planning, design and implementation of the scheme."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre, November 1, 1983: A Compilation on Social and Economic Development)

1879. Projects May Receive Help in Finances and Manpower from Baha'i Sources
"The message of the House of Justice dated 20th October 1983 has clearly set out the concepts, defined the objectives and outlined the guiding principles for the selection and implementation of Baha'i development projects, programmes or activities. The vast majority of Baha'i projects will be primarily generated at the grass roots, and, initially as required, will receive help from Baha'i sources, in terms of finances and manpower. The projects will, as you have surmised, be non-profit making, concerned mainly with activities closely related to education, health and hygiene, agriculture and simple community development activities. It is hoped that all these types of projects will reflect the strength of the spiritual principles enshrined in the Teachings of Baha'u'llah.

"It is important that our undertakings be modest in their scope at the present time. Then, as we gain in confidence and experience and as our resources increase, our work will encompass expanded objectives, and the friends will explore new areas of social and economic activity."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 23, 1983: Ibid.)

E. Objectives for Social and Economic Development

1880. The Preservation of Cultural Identities and Customs
"Baha'is should obviously be encouraged to preserve their inherited cultural identities, as long as the activities involved do not contravene the principles

of the Faith. The perpetuation of such cultural characteristics is an expression of unity in diversity. [555] Although most of these festive celebrations have no doubt stemmed from religious rituals in bygone ages, the believers should not be deterred from participating in those in which, over the course of time, the religious meaning has given way to purely culturally oriented practices. For example, Naw-Ruz itself was originally a Zoroastrian religious festival, but gradually its Zoroastrian connotation has almost been forgotten. Iranians, even after their conversion to Islam, have been observing it as a national festival. Now Naw-Ruz has become a Baha'i Holy Day and is being observed throughout the world, but, in addition to the Baha'i observance, many Iranian Baha'is continue to carry out their past cultural traditions in connection with this Feast. Similarly, there are a number of national customs in every part of the world which have cultural rather than religious connotations."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia, May 26, 1982)

1881. Arts, Crafts and Sciences
"The third Tajalli is concerning arts, crafts and sciences. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book on the day of His return. Happy are those possessed of a hearing ear. In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Thus hath the Tongue of Grandeur spoken in this Most Great Prison."
(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, pp. 51-52)

1882. Wealth is Praiseworthy—If Acquired by Efforts and Grace of God, and if Expended for Philanthropic Purposes
"Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes. Above all, if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor—in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society—its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent

of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 24-25, Wilmette, 1975)

1883. The Promotion of Education
"The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is [556] inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of time."
(Ibid., p. 109)

F. Requisites for Success

1884. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar—The Spiritual Precedes the Material
"A symbol of this process may be seen in the House of Worship and its dependencies. The first part to be built is the central edifice which is the spiritual heart of the community. Then, gradually, as the outward expression of this spiritual heart, the various dependencies, those 'institutions of social service as shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant' are erected and function. This process begins in an embryonic way long before a Baha'i community reaches the stage of building its own Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, for even the first local centre that a Baha'i community erects can begin to serve not only as the spiritual and administrative centre and gathering place of the community, but also as the site of a tutorial school and the heart of other aspects of community life. The principle remains, however, that the spiritual precedes the material. First comes the illumination of hearts and minds by the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, and then the grass roots stirring of the believers wishing to apply these teachings to the daily life of their community. Such stirrings can be fostered, encouraged and assisted by the national and continental institutions of the Faith, but without them any activities introduced from above might well prove abortive."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, May 8, 1984)

1885. The Spiritual Principle Induces an Attitude, a Dynamic, a Will, an Aspiration
"There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonizes with that which is imminent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by them."

(The Universal House of Justice: The Promise of World Peace, p. 28, Wilmette, 1985)

G. Tutorial Schools

1886. The Importance of Establishing Tutorial Schools
"The importance of establishing such schools has repeatedly been emphasized by [557] the House of Justice. They not only are instruments for the immediate consolidation of Baha'i communities and neighbourhood areas, but also serve to train Baha'i children and youth in rendering services to the Faith and demonstrate the fact that Baha'is are engaged in humanitarian services to the community at large. By their establishment, Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike are assisted. In addition, such schools foster a healthy relationship between Baha'i communities and institutions, inasmuch as they are called upon to help the communities by providing teachers, facilities, etc. Some of the local friends may be inspired to contribute land and/or building materials for the schools, or may wish to help in their construction."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, January 3, 1983)

1887. Baha'i Youth and Young Adults Should Be Willing to Become Teachers
"The Universal House of Justice is confident there are literally hundreds of Baha'i youth and young adults who would willingly and happily become teachers in tutorial schools, especially if the National Spiritual Assembly assured them of adequate wages and secure employment. It may be possible for their salaries to be paid by charging reasonable tuition fees to students attending the schools. This in itself would be a major step in educating new believers to contribute to the Fund, and would help the schools to become self-supporting."
(Ibid.)

1888. School Should Be Planned by Baha'is in Consultation with Non-Baha'is
"The establishment of a school is presumably to meet the needs of the Baha'i and non-Baha'i community. It should be planned by the Baha'is and if advisable, in consultation with the non-Baha'is; it should be presented as an effort of the community; the collaboration and the cooperation of all should be invited and assured.

"If adequate manpower is available, it should be managed by the Baha'i community and its management be responsible to the Local Spiritual Assembly of the locality in which it is situated, or the National Spiritual Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uruguay, June 18, 1986)

1889. A Privately Owned Kindergarten Could Be Considered a Social and Economic Activity for Statistics
"In regard to the kindergarten which belongs to a Baha'i pioneer family, it could be considered as a private social and economic activity and would be listed as such, although it is clearly recognized that the Baha'i community does not have any responsibility for the management or operation of such a school.

"The individual initiative of the friends should be carefully nurtured and encouraged so that they may, guided by the spiritual principles of our Faith, arise to fulfil their spiritual responsibilities."
(Ibid.)

1890. Contributions from Non-Baha'is for Maintenance of Tutorial Schools
"Your letter ... about accepting donations from non-Baha'is for the maintenance of tutorial schools has been received, and we have been asked to reply as follows.

"Baha'is may receive contributions from non-Baha'is for charitable activities whose [558] beneficiaries are non-Baha'is as well. However, it is very important to ensure that the acceptance of funds from any source should in no way affect the school's direction and policy."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, January 13, 1978)

XLVII. BAHA'I SUMMER SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTES

A. Summer Schools

[559] 1891. Purpose of Summer Schools
"The basic purpose of all Baha'i Summer Schools, whether in East or West, is to give the believers the opportunity to fully acquaint themselves, not only by mere study but through whole-hearted and active collaboration in various Baha'i activities, with the essentials of the Administration and in this way enable them to become efficient and able promoters of the Cause...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 25, 1933: Centers of Baha'i Learning, p. 8, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, Wilmette, 1980 ed.)

1892. Undue Time Should Not Be Spent on Philosophic and Esoteric Subjects
"The reports we have received on summer school sessions held in Europe this year indicate that some of them spend undue time on philosophic and esoteric subjects and insufficient emphasis on the Baha'i Faith and its Teachings.

"The beloved Guardian stressed that one of the important purposes of Baha'i summer schools is to deepen the knowledge of the believers in the history and Teachings of the Faith so that they can become better teachers. To this end he emphasized the study of Islam and the Qur'an so that the friends would have a background against which to study the Baha'i Writings, and he urged study of the principles of Baha'i Administration.

"In addition he stated that summer schools should become high occasions for teaching the Message. To an individual believer he wrote:

'Through daily association with the believers, non-Baha'is will come to see the Cause functioning as an active and living community entirely dedicated to the service of what is best and highest in the world. The lectures will familiarize them with the principles underlying the New World Order, while their participation in the social life of the believers will enable them to see the

way in which these very same principles are put into operation.'

"It is requested that National Assemblies review summer school and winter school curricula in light of these important principles. At this time, when the prosecution of the Nine Year Plan to final victory is of supreme importance, it is also urged that during summer school sessions opportunities be provided to impress upon the believers the urgent need for pioneering and teaching.

"We pray that summer schools may become increasingly effective in educating the friends so that they in turn may become useful channels for the diffusion of the Divine fragrances."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies of Europe, September 26, 1969)

[560] 1893. Summer Schools Can Attract Many Souls
"How wonderful it would be if all the friends could arrange to spend at least a few days in one of these summer schools and take an active part in their development. These centers could attract many souls if properly arranged and made interesting; those non-Baha'is who visit them will then have some time to get into the spirit of the place and make a study of the Cause...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, received about May 1, 1932: Centers of Baha'i Learning, p. 2)

1894. Lecture Method Not Sufficient
"Shoghi Effendi feels that the real purpose of these Summer Schools is to deepen the knowledge of the friends. Lectures are very essential for they give a wonderful picture of the subject matter. But it is not sufficient to have a picture; the friends should deepen their knowledge and this can be achieved if, together with the lectures, there are study classes and seminar work carried on by the same lecturer. The world is undoubtedly facing a great crisis and the social, economic and political conditions are daily becoming more complex. Should the friends desire to take the lead in informing the world, they should start by educating themselves and understand what the troubles and problems really are which baffle the minds of men. It is in these Summer Schools that this training should be provided for the friends."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 27, 1932: Ibid., pp. 1-2)

1895. Supervised by National Assembly
"Regarding the Summer Schools in general: Although there is no objection to their being under the direct management of a special Committee elected for that purpose, they must be generally supervised by the N.S.A. in respect to policy, etc. In other words, they must be considered as a national and not a purely local institution.

"For purposes of convenience the N.S.A. may appoint as members of such Committees, those who are situated near the Summer Schools and are able to pay direct attention to their affairs."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, April 18, 1942: Letters from the

Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, p. 45)

1896. Summer Schools Inseparable Part of Teaching Campaign
"...The institution of the Summer School constitutes a vital and inseparable part of any teaching campaign, and as such ought to be given the full importance it deserves in the teaching plans and activities of the believers. It should be organized in such a way as to attract the attention of the non-believers to the Cause and thus become an effective medium for teaching. Also it should afford the believers themselves an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the Teachings, through lectures and discussions and by means of close and intense community life."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, October 17, 1936: Centers of Baha'i Learning, pp. 2-3)

[561] 1897. Introduce Baha'i Atmosphere
"...They must try and introduce the Baha'i atmosphere of life and thought into their Summer Schools, rather than making the Summer School an episode and a pleasant vacation period, during which they learn a little more about the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, May 23, 1954: Ibid., p. 12)

1898. Dancing, Nothing in Teachings Against
"As regards the questions you asked him: There is nothing in the teachings against dancing, and any arrangements for it at summer schools, etc., is left to the discretion of the Committee or Assembly in charge to make."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 24, 1947: Ibid., p. 16)

1899. Topics to be Discussed
"The wide range of the topics that are to be discussed and studied by the friends cover most of the important aspects of the Cause and such a plan will undoubtedly give them a broad and a sound knowledge of the essentials of the Faith. Special stress, however, should be put on the history of the Movement as well as on the guiding principles of Baha'i Administration; for on these two points most of the believers are not adequately informed. It is, therefore, a great opportunity for them to strengthen the basis of their beliefs and to try to deepen their understanding of the basis of the present-day Baha'i administrative system."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 5, 1932: Ibid., p. 7)

1900. The Summer School Curriculum Should Concentrate on Deepening the Student's Grasp of the Teachings
"He feels ... that some of the courses are not sufficiently Baha'i in nature, but carry the student off into an unnecessary study of special techniques—history, psychology or whatever it may be, which however valuable these topics may be in training the human mind and fitting the individual for

contact with others, are a waste of time, in view of the very limited period that most of the Baha'is spend at a Baha'i summer school.

"The friends should concentrate on deepening their grasp of the Teachings, particularly on studying what has already been done, and what must be done to fulfil the goals...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 11, 1954)

1901. It is Important that Courses on Covenant-Breaking Be Included in the Summer School Curriculum
"...your Assembly cannot be too careful or vigilant in watching over the Community, seeking out the sources of corruption and protecting the friends. He feels that a course in Covenant-breaking should be included in the Summer School curriculum, so that the friends may understand the nature of this evil, and how it has affected our Faith for one hundred years, and other Faiths in the past. The American Baha'is, aside from the older ones, do not seem to have any concept whatsoever of what a Covenant-breaker is, and the place to educate them in these matters is in the Summer [562] Schools and on other occasions when they meet in large numbers."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 21, 1957)

1902. Indispensable for Students to Study the Pattern of the World Order of Baha'u'llah
"A careful look at the subjects mentioned in your program clearly reveals the fact that the friends have at last come to realize how indispensible it is for them to deepen their knowledge of the background and of the administrative development of the Cause. These were, indeed, the two main points which they had hitherto neglected to study, and the time has come when they have to attach to them all the importance they deserve. Particularly remarkable has been your effort in regard to the study of the Administration—an important new feature in the history of the Cause, the study of which is becoming increasingly indispensable to every thoughtful student of the Faith. It is hoped that in the next few years all our Baha'i Summer Schools, whether in the States or abroad, will make a conscious and thorough attempt to fully acquaint the friends with the origin, nature and peculiar significance of the nascent administrative institutions of the Cause, which constitute a humble, though a very exact pattern, of the World Order of Baha'u'llah. It is of the utmost importance that from now the believers should get familiar with the rudiments of the Administration, that they may not follow the path which the followers of older religions have trodden and which have led to their eventual downfall."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 20, 1933)

1903. The Importance of the Study of Islam—Need Competent Lecturers and Writers, Not Necessarily Baha'is
"First is the importance of the study of Islam—which subject is still new to the majority of the believers, but whose importance for a proper and sound

understanding of the Cause is absolutely indispensible. Your Committee should therefore continue to emphasize the study of this all-important subject, and make every effort to provide the attendants with all the facilities required, such as textbooks, competent lecturers and writers, who though not necessarily Baha'is, should have a correct knowledge and sound appreciation of Islam, so as to be able to impress its true significance and mission upon all the attendants at the school."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 14, 1939)

1904. Teaching of the Qur'an is Absolutely Indispensable
"...the Guardian would certainly advise, and even urge the friends to make a thorough study of the Qur'an as the knowledge of this Sacred Scripture is absolutely indispensable for every believer who wishes to adequately understand and intelligently read the Writings of Baha'u'llah. Although there are very few persons among our Western Baha'is who are capable of handling such a course in a scholarly way, yet, the mere lack of such competent teachers should encourage and stimulate the believers to get better acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures of Islam. In this way, there will gradually appear some distinguished Baha'is who will be so well versed in the [563] teachings of Islam as to be able to guide the believers in their study of that religion."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 2, 1935: Centers of Baha'i Learning, p. 9)

1905. Character Building and Ethics
"The course on character building ... the Guardian feels, is particularly important and should be given due emphasis and studied carefully and thoroughly specially by the young believers in attendance at the school. Those standards of Baha'i conduct, which he himself has set forth in his last general epistle, 'The Advent of Divine Justice', and which it should be the paramount duty of every loyal and conscientious believer to endeavor to uphold and promote, deserve serious study and meditation, and should constitute the main central theme of this year's program....

"The principles and methods laid down by the Guardian in his 'Advent of Divine Justice' on this vital subject of Baha'i ethics, should indeed prove of invaluable inspiration and guidance to all the students and friends attending the Summer School classes, and thus prepare them to better appreciate the privileges, and more adequately discharge the responsibilities, of their citizenship in the World Order of Baha'u'llah."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 20, 1939: Ibid., p. 10)

1906. Few Days Not Sufficient to Learn Everything
"Definite courses should be given along the different phases of the Faith and in a manner that will stimulate the students to proceed in their studies privately once they return home, for the period of a few days is not sufficient to learn everything. They have to be taught the habit of studying the Cause constantly, for the more we read the Words the more will the truth they contain

be revealed to us."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 24, 1932)

1907. Baha'i Youth Attendant at Louhelen Shoulder Responsibility in Connection with Development of the Baha'i University
"Remembering the strong emphasis repeatedly laid by the Guardian on the importance of the institutions of the summer school, both as a center for the preparation and training of prospective teachers and pioneers, and for the commingling and fellowship of various elements in the Baha'i Community, the Baha'i Youth, on whom Louhelen Ranch has exercised a particular and indeed irresistible appeal, and whose sessions they have so frequently and in such large numbers attended, have a peculiar responsibility to shoulder in connection with its development into that ideal Baha'i University of the future, which should be the aim of every existing Baha'i Summer School to establish in the fulness of time.

"Through their regular attendance at each and every session of the school, and their participation in all phases of its activities, intellectual, spiritual, social and recreational, and above all by their faithful and close adherence to those high standards of Baha'i life and conduct, they can best and most effectively contribute towards the growth [564] of that institution and attract to it the attention and interest of the non-Baha'i world outside."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Louhelen School, July 29, 1939)

B. Baha'i Teaching Institutes

1908. Teaching Institutes
"...this is essentially an activity aimed at deepening the knowledge of the friends to prepare them for active participation in the teaching work. In some countries it may continue to be an activity conducted either in local Baha'i Centres or possibly housed in hired quarters, like most Summer Schools. However, in other countries, and particularly in mass teaching areas, it may have to be a modest structure acquired or erected in the rural areas where the majority of the believers reside rather than in capital cities, to obviate transportation expenses for those attending."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 14, 1964: Centers of Baha'i Learning, p. 19)

1909. Institute Should Be Centre of Complex Activities
"Your Institutes should not only be seats of Baha'i learning but also centres from which mass teaching and consolidation work over a large area must be inspired and conducted. The Institute is not merely a building, nor solely a place where Baha'i classes can be held for a few days. It should be the centre of complex activities which systematically assist your Assembly in the achievement of its goal in teaching and consolidation."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of India: June 23, 1966)

1910. Subjects to be Taught
"The material to be taught is prepared ahead of time, presented in simple language, and translated into the vernacular...
"The subjects taught usually consist of Baha'i History, Laws and Teachings, and the Administrative Order. Special emphasis is laid upon living the Baha'i life, the importance of teaching, prayer, fasting, Nineteen Day Feasts, Baha'i elections, and contribution to the Fund."
(From 'Suggestions on Operation of Teaching Institutes': enclosure in letter dated 24 December, 1964, from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala: Centers of Baha'i Learning, p. 19)

1911. Issuing Diplomas Discouraged—Sometimes They Are Misused
"We have also noted that you intend to give graduation diplomas to the friends who attend the institutes. Your desire to acknowledge devoted attendance at the institutes is most commendable, but we feel it would be preferable in future to give a suitable gift, such as a book, rather than a diploma. From experience in other areas of the world we have learned that such diplomas sometimes are misused by their recipients. For this reason we have discouraged their use."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala, October 27, 1965: Ibid., p. 20)

[565] 1912. A Teaching Institute at Present is a Function and Not Necessarily a Building
"We greatly appreciate your desire to serve the Cause and at the same time honour the beloved Hand of the Cause and wonder whether more feasible plans would appeal to you. For instance, you might consider establishing a fund to maintain Baha'i tutors in villages, who would teach not only reading and writing but the elements of the Faith as well. We have always stressed to those National Spiritual Assemblies which establish Teaching Institutes that at the present time such an Institute is a function and not necessarily a building and there are many places where such educational work can be pursued if a number of teachers can be supported. On the other hand, we have no idea of the size of the principal you have in mind for your endowment and wonder whether a very simple school where not only children but adult literary classes could be held, would meet your intention."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 18, 1971: Ibid.)

XLVIII. TEACHING

A. Deepening

[566] 1913. Incumbent on Believers to Read Sacred Writings Daily
"Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God. Fear ye God, O My servants, one and all...."
(Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 149, p. 73)

1914. Deepening—What It Means—No Limit to the Study of the Cause
"To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Baha'u'llah and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form. There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for. They, therefore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their own. As the Cause is still in its early days we must be most careful lest we fall under this error and injure the Movement we so much adore.

"There is no limit to the study of the Cause. The more we read the writings the more truths we can find in them the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 25, 1926)

1915. Deepening Generates Stimulus
"...Deepening the newly-enrolled believers generates tremendous stimulus which results in further expansion. The enrollment of new believers, on the other hand, creates a new spirit in the community and provides additional potential manpower that will reinforce the consolidation work."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to All National Spiritual Assemblies, July 13, 1964)

1916. Study with Others
"He urges you to study deeply the teachings, teach others, study with those Baha'is who are anxious to do so the deeper teachings of our Faith, and through example, effort and prayer bring about a change."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 30, 1949: Living the Life, p. 16)

1917. Study Classes—Little Knowledge is Dangerous—Quote from the Tablets
"It is also very important to hold study classes and go deep in the Teachings. A great harm is done by starting to teach without being firmly grounded in the literature. 'Little knowledge is dangerous' fully applies to the teaching work. The friends [567] should read the Writings and be able to quote from the Tablets when discussing subjects pertaining to the Faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 9, 1932: Baha'i News, No. 67, October 1932, p. 4)

1918. Deepen Their Knowledge
"...the friends should deepen their knowledge and this can be achieved if, together with the lectures, there are study classes and seminar work carried on by the same lecturer...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, January 27, 1932: Baha'i Summer Schools, p. 1)

1919. Understanding the Import of His Teachings Motivates New Believers to Dedicate Their Lives to His Service
"Shoghi Effendi trusts, however, that these souls who are attracted by the teachings would be made to live the life and also deepen their knowledge of the writings of Baha'u'llah. For it is only by fully appreciating the spiritual and

social import of His mission that we can be willing to dedicate our life to its service.

"By holding study classes where the Word is read and understood and obtaining a thorough knowledge of the spirit that animated the early believers we can make sure that these newcomers are grounded in the teachings and made into real and devoted believers. Books such as the Iqan, Some Answered Questions, the Tablets of Baha'u'llah, Nabil's Narrative and Dr. Esselmont's book should be read and read over again by every soul who desires to serve the Movement or considers himself an active member of the group."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 9, 1932)

1920. Study and Application
"Without the study and application of the administration the teachings of the Cause becomes not only meaningless, but loses in effectiveness and in scope."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 31, 1935: Baha'i News, No. 105, p. 1, February 1937)

1921. Spiritual Teachings of Faith—Will and Testament, Firm Grounding Needed
"...Some of the ... believers, from letters and reports received here, seem to lack a firm grounding on such matters as the Will and Testament and the deeper spiritual teachings of the Faith. Whenever the grasp of these fundamentals is weak, the friends are almost sure to pay undue attention to secondary procedures, to quibble over details, to lose themselves in personalities, and to founder in a sea of unnecessary inharmony. This has nothing to do with their devotion, their loyalty, their zeal, their eagerness to serve. It is merely a question of not having received, perhaps through lack of sufficient teachers to carry on the all-important work of deepening the friends in their own faith, a strong enough education in the Covenant before the duties and responsibilities of the Administrative Order were thrust upon them."
(Shoghi Effendi: Messages to Canada, pp. 58-59)

[568] 1922. Presenting the Master's Will to Newcomers
"Concerning the best method of presenting the Master's Will to the newcomers, Shoghi Effendi is of the opinion that the N.S.A. should first make some suitable extracts from the Testament, and to send these to all the Local Assemblies for their use, so that there may be full unity in circulating the provisions of the Will among the new believers... The main thing, as it appears to the Guardian, is that the full station of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha be clearly explained, and that the origins, nature and working of the Administrative Order of the Faith be clearly stated. The full implications of such a recognition are evidently beyond the comprehension of any new believer. Such a knowledge can be acquired gradually and only when the essentials of the Faith have been clearly recognized and adequately understood."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 21, 1934: Baha'i News, No. 211, September 1948, p. 1)

1923. The Cause Needs People—Whose Faith Stands on a Rock, No Trial Can Move
"Another essential thing is that those who do embrace the Faith should be constantly urged to study the literature of the Cause. It is not sufficient that our numbers should increase, we want people whose faith stands on a rock and no trial can move. We want people who in turn arise and carry the message to other people and guide other souls."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 13, 1932: Baha'i News, No. 64, July 1932, p. 4)

1924. Education of New Believers
"It is not enough to bring people into the Faith; one must educate them and deepen their love for it and their knowledge of its teachings, after they declare themselves. As the Baha'is are few in number, especially the active teachers, and there is a great deal of work to be done, the education of these new believers is often sadly neglected, and then results are seen such as the resignations you have had recently."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, July 18, 1957: A Special Measure of Love, p. 19)

1925. Regarding Spiritual Children, Each Soul Receives Gift of Faith for Himself, Independent of Teachers
"As to your question about the spiritual children of people who enter the Cause with some old ideas still clinging to them: Everyone should study the Faith for himself, and just because a person's Baha'i teacher has some concept not strictly Baha'i, it does not stand to reason that the new believer must be saddled with it; old believers, as well as new, should constantly endeavour to grow more fully into the Baha'i pattern of thought and of life. Each soul receives the gift of faith for himself, and from then on is a Baha'i in his own right, independent of his teacher."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 17, 1945)

1926. One Cannot Catch the Spirit of the Cause Through the Reading of Books Alone
"It behooves you now to try to deepen your knowledge of the history and the teachings of the Faith and get acquainted with the principles that stand at the basis of its [569] present-day Administration. The best way to attain that goal is through continued cooperation with the friends and through participation in their spiritual activities. For you cannot catch the spirit of the Cause through the reading of books alone. You should reinforce the knowledge you get through Baha'i Writings with a whole-hearted association with the friends."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 20, 1932)

1927. Imperative Need to Deepen in the Cause—God's Purpose for Man
"A detailed and exact knowledge of the present structure of Baha'i administration, or of the By-laws of National and Local Spiritual Assemblies or of the many and varied applications of Baha'i law under the diverse conditions prevailing around the world, while valuable in itself, cannot be regarded as

the sort of knowledge primarily intended by deepening. Rather is suggested a clearer apprehension of the purpose of God for man, and particularly of His immediate purpose as revealed and directed by Baha'u'llah, a purpose as far removed from current concepts of human well-being and happiness as is possible...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1967: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 113)

1928. The Study of Dawn-Breakers Will Arouse the Friends to Renewed Zeal
"The reading of the Dawn-Breakers is sure to arouse the friends to renewed zeal and added perseverance in spreading the Cause of Baha'u'llah. Consider to what extent the Bab and those early leaders of the Faith suffered. It was not through a blind religious zeal but because they desired to bring about for the future generations that promised era that the Faith of the Bab promised to start—an era of peace, good-will and full realization of the spiritual significance of the life of man upon the earth. They suffered that we may be happy. They died that we may live in perfect bliss. What a sacred debt, therefore, we owe to them! How much we ought to labour to repay them for their sacrifices, and how willing and earnest we should be in consecrating our life in the path they trod!"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 27, 1933)

1929. Theme Pursued in Effort to Deepen—What is God's Purpose for the Human Race?
"...this is the theme we must pursue in our efforts to deepen in the Cause. What is Baha'u'llah's purpose for the human race? For what ends did He submit to the appalling cruelties and indignities heaped upon Him? What does He mean by a 'new race of men'? What are the profound changes which He will bring about? The answers are to be found in the Sacred Writings of our Faith and in their interpretation by 'Abdu'l-Baha and our beloved Guardian. Let the friends immerse themselves in this ocean, let them organize regular study classes for its constant consideration, and as reinforcements to their effort, let them remember conscientiously the requirements of daily prayers and reading of the Word of God enjoined upon all Baha'is by Baha'u'llah."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1967: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 114-115)

1930. Presenting Greatest Name Prematurely
"He feels that it is not necessary to present, prematurely, to every new Baha'i the teachings regarding the use of the Greatest Name. Some souls need and are ready [570] for this; others are not. Judgement must be used in such matters. It is more essential to stress the importance of prayer and to urge the use of one of the obligatory prayers."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 11, 1949: Baha'i News, No. 228, February 1950, p. 4)

1931. One Must Deepen His Knowledge of the Literature in Order to Teach Others and Render Service to the Faith

"...Shoghi Effendi hopes that you will exert all your effort to deepen your knowledge of the literature of the movement, until you become fully acquainted with its spirit and tenets. Unless you do obtain such a firm hold you will never be able to teach others and render real service to the promulgation of the Faith. Of special importance is the Book of the Iqan which explains the attitude of the Cause towards the prophets of God and their mission in the history of society. Besides this there is 'Some Answered Questions' of the Master and the 'Dawn-Breakers' of Nabil. Every Baha'i should master these books and be able to explain their contents to others. Besides their importance, they are interesting and most absorbing."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 9, 1932)

1932. The Teachings of Baha'u'llah Deal with Many Aspects of Man's Inner and Communal Life
"The Teachings of Baha'u'llah are so great, and deal with so many aspects of both the inner life of man and his communal life, that it takes years to really plumb them to the depths. He has brought spiritual food for the soul of the individual, to help each one to find himself and become a finer and better developed personality; and also He has brought the laws and principles needed to enable all men to live in harmony together in a great, united world. The Guardian hopes you, together with ..., will do all in your power to help the believers to understand both aspects of the teachings, and to develop both as individuals and as a community, an ever higher, finer way of life."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 12, 1942)

1933. Progress of Cause Now to be Characterized by Increasing Relationship with Non-Baha'i World—Our Preparation Must Be Continual Deepening
"There can be no doubt that the progress of the Cause from this time onward will be characterized by an ever increasing relationship to the agencies, activities, institutions and leading individuals of the non-Baha'i world. We shall acquire greater stature at the United Nations, become better known in the deliberations of governments, a familiar figure to the media, a subject of interest to academics, and inevitably the envy of failing establishments. Our preparation for and response to this situation must be a continual deepening of our faith, an unwavering adherence to its principles of abstention from partisan politics and freedom from prejudices, and above all an increasing understanding of its fundamental verities and relevance to the modern world."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1984)

B. Pioneers and Pioneering

[571] 1934. Pioneers—Homeless and Wanderers in the Path of God
"O ye homeless and wanderers in the Path of God! Prosperity, contentment, and freedom, however much desired and conducive to the gladness of the human heart, can in no wise compare with the trials of homelessness and adversity in the pathway of God; for such exile and banishment are blessed by the divine favour,

and are surely followed by the mercy of Providence. The joy of tranquillity in one's home, and the sweetness of freedom from all cares shall pass away, whilst the blessings of homelessness shall endure forever, and its far-reaching results shall be made manifest.

"Abraham's migration from His native land caused bountiful gifts of the All-Glorious to be made manifest, and the setting of Canaan's brightest star unfolded to the eyes the radiance of Joseph. The flight of Moses, the Prophet of Sinai, revealed the Flame of the Lord's burning Fire, and the rise of Jesus breathed the breaths of the Holy Spirit into the world. The departure of Muhammad, the Beloved of God, from the city of His birth was the cause of the exaltation of God's Holy Word, and the banishment of the Sacred Beauty led to the diffusion of the light of His divine Revelation throughout all regions.

"Take ye good heed, O people of insight!"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 280-281)

1935. Not for a Moment Are Ye Alone
"O ye My soldiers of the Kingdom! Be ye valiant and fearless! Day by day add to your spiritual victories. Be ye not disturbed by the constant assaults of the enemies. Attack ye like unto the roaring lions. Have no thought of yourselves, for the invisible armies of the Kingdom are fighting on your side. Enter ye the battlefield with the confirmations of the Holy Spirit. Know ye of a certainty that the powers of the Kingdom of Abha are with you. The hosts of the heaven of Truth are with you. The cool breezes of the Paradise of Abha are wafting over your heated brows. Not for a moment are ye alone. Not for a second are ye left to yourselves. The beauty of Abha is with you. The Glorious God is with you. The King of Kings is with you."
(Words of 'Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. XIII, No. 5, p. 113)

1936. Flee Their Homelands
"...The hour is ripe to disencumber themselves of worldly vanities, to mount the steed of steadfastness, unfurl the banner of renunciation, don the armor of utter consecration to God's Cause, gird themselves with the girdle of a chaste and holy life, unsheathe the sword of Baha'u'llah's utterance, buckle on the shield of His love, carry as sole provision implicit trust in His promise, flee their homelands, and scatter far and wide to capture the unsurrendered territories of the entire planet."
(From cablegram of the Guardian, May 5, 1953: Messages to the Baha'i World, p. 49)

1937. House of Justice Defines "Pioneer" and "Pioneering"—There Can Be No Question of "Recalling" a Pioneer from His Field of Service
"From the Baha'i point of view it is quite clear that a pioneer can be likened to neither an employee nor a minister....

[572] "...We wish to share with you the following points of fundamental importance.

"1. The Secretary of the beloved Guardian wrote to the National Spiritual

Assembly of India and Burma, on his behalf, on August 12, 1944:

'Regarding the question of paid teachers: As we have no clergy or priests there is no paid career open to Baha'i teachers. This, however, does not mean that teachers going out to spread the Faith, and unable to support themselves, should not receive money from the National Spiritual Assembly or a Local Assembly. At present it would be quite impossible to spread the Cause if those who arise to serve it as teachers or pioneers were not given financial assistance. All must realize, however, that the moneys they receive are only to enable them to fulfil their objectives, and that they cannot consider themselves permanently entitled to be supported by the Cause. In America the pioneers have made every effort to establish themselves in some position in the place they have gone to settle in, and thus be freed from the necessity of drawing further upon Baha'i Funds.'

"and to the British National Spiritual Assembly on May 29, 1946:

'Pioneers who volunteer for work, if they are not able to support themselves, should be supported by the National Fund until they either find work or their task is completed.

'Likewise, travelling teachers should be assisted financially to carry out the 'projects' assigned to them. The friends should not for a moment confuse this type of support with the creation of a paid clergy. Any Baha'i can, at the discretion of the N.S.A., receive this necessary assistance, and it is clearly understood it is temporary and only to carry out a specific plan.

'Baha'u'llah Himself has not only enjoined on every one the duty of teaching His Faith, but stated if you cannot go yourself, to send someone in your stead.'

"and in a letter to Mr. Ioas, Chairman of your own National Teaching Committee, on March 5, 1934:

'Concerning the abolition of the institution of paid national teachers, the Guardian wishes to re-affirm his former statements on this matter, and to stress once more that great care be taken to avoid the difficulties and the misunderstandings which in former days had caused so much trouble among the friends. The main point to be emphasized in this connection is that of making the teaching of the Cause not the work of a limited group but the chief duty and responsibility of every Baha'i. This is why no salaried teachers should any longer exist. But occasionally to defray the expenses of a teaching trip of a certain Baha'i, particularly when it is done spontaneously, can do no harm to the Cause. Such an action, provided it is done with care and only when circumstances make it necessary, constitutes no violation of the principles already referred to. The danger in all activities of this nature is to give the impression that the teaching of the Cause is an institution, depending on the support of paid teachers. Those who willingly and with utmost detachment arise to promote the Cause should, undoubtedly, be helped in every way. But they have no claim whatever on the financial help which some friends may freely choose to

extend to them.'

"2. As stated in our circular letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in teaching work among the masses, dated 25th June, 1964:

'...no Baha'i teacher anywhere should consider himself as permanently employed by the Faith. We do [573] not have in the Cause of God any paid career open to Baha'i teachers....' 'Likewise, when pioneer projects are envisaged, it must be made clear to the pioneer that he must make every effort to establish himself in some position in his pioneering post and thus become freed from the necessity of drawing further on Baha'i funds.'

"3. The duties of teaching and pioneering are enjoined upon all believers. There are no special categories of believers for these functions. Any Baha'i who spreads the Message of Baha'u'llah is a teacher, any Baha'i who moves to another area to spread the Faith is a pioneer.

"4. The duty of the Assembly to give financial assistance to a believer who cannot support himself is a general one, and is in no way limited to those who may perform specific services for the Faith.

"5. No special training is required for a pioneer. A believer who leaves his home spontaneously and goes to teach the Faith elsewhere without consulting anybody is as much a pioneer as one who goes after consultation with the committee responsible. This is a matter of principle, no matter how desirable it may be that all prospective pioneers first consult to ensure the best use of their services.

"6. Similarly, there can be no question of 'recalling' a pioneer from his field of service. If a committee is providing a pioneer with financial assistance it can terminate this assistance whenever it judges it right and proper, in which case it would, in all justice, offer the pioneer his travel expenses to return to his home or to go to some place where he could earn his living—but this is quite different in principle from recalling the pioneer. In many instances the pioneer's intention when going to his chosen goal is to put his roots down and make it his home.

"7. A pioneer who goes to the area of jurisdiction of another National Spiritual Assembly comes under the authority of that Assembly, and the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States ceases to have any authority over him. The matter of financial assistance to such a pioneer, should he need it, is arranged on a basis of expediency. Usually, for simplicity's sake, the National Assembly of origin continues to give assistance direct to the pioneer concerned until he becomes self-supporting or until his own National Spiritual Assembly is able to take over the responsibility. As far as the matter of control is concerned, it would be quite in order and perfectly legal to arrange for the pioneer to receive his budget without having any contact whatsoever with the United States National Spiritual Assembly.

"8. A pioneer has no special administrative status except in the case where he goes to a new area where there are no Baha'is. He then usually remains the

channel of communication between the new Baha'i group, as it is formed, and the National Committee in charge, until such time as a Local Spiritual Assembly is formed. At that point his special status ceases altogether. Any services he may perform in advising or teaching the new believers spring from the fact that he is an older believer, and not from his being a pioneer. Many pioneers who go to places where Baha'is of long standing already live often receive the counsel and spiritual support of the older native believers rather than vice-versa. Similarly there is no special significance in the dwelling of a pioneer—it frequently happens that the homes of some of the new believers, being less cramped than the quarters of the pioneer, are the places used for meetings of the community."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 2, 1965)

[574] 1938. Pioneer Status Clarified: Who is a Pioneer?
"The place of settlement of any pioneer depends on his circumstances. If therefore, he can not settle in the localities suggested by the receiving National Spiritual Assembly, this does not mean that he should not be considered a pioneer. Any believer who arises and leaves his home to journey to another country for the purpose of teaching the Cause is a pioneer.

"As you know, one of the objectives of every pioneer is to settle and become self-supporting, if possible. If the localities where this condition can be met are not the same as the goals of the National Assembly, such goals may have to be filled by the National Assembly making use of homefront pioneers. The friends are free to go wherever they like and even those supported by the Fund should not be subjected to rigid rules."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, March 30, 1971)

1939. Every Baha'i, Especially Those Who Leave Their Homes to Serve in Foreign Lands, Should Turn Their Gaze to Marion Jack
"For over thirty years, with an enlarged heart, and many other ailments, she remained at her post in Bulgaria. Never well-to-do, she often suffered actual poverty and want; want of heat, want of clothing, want of food, when her money failed to reach her because Bulgaria had come under the Soviet zone of influence. She was bombed, lost her possessions, she was evacuated, she lived in drafty, cold dormitories for many, many months in the country, she returned valiant to the capital of Bulgaria after the war, and continued, on foot, to carry out her teaching work.

"The Guardian himself urged her strongly, when the war first began to threaten to cut her off in Bulgaria, to go to Switzerland. She was a Canadian subject, and ran great risks by remaining, not to mention the danger and the privations of war. However, she begged the Guardian not to insist, and assured him her one desire was to remain with her spiritual children. This she did, up to the last breath of her glorious life. Her tomb will become a national shrine, immensely loved and revered, as the Faith rises in stature in that country.

"He thinks that every Baha'i, and most particularly those who have left their homes and gone to serve in foreign fields, should know of, and turn their gaze to, Marion Jack."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the European Teaching Committee, May 24, 1954)

1940. A Self-Supporting Pioneer Cannot Be Required to Settle in Any Given Locality

"In regard to pioneering, this is a matter requiring the greatest degree of consultation and encouragement. Naturally, if an Assembly is supporting a pioneer from the Fund, it can decide to withdraw such support if the pioneer refuses to go to the post that he had agreed to serve in, or if, for any other reason, the Assembly decides that the project should not be continued, but in so doing the Assembly must give the pioneer ample opportunity to become self-supporting. If, however, a pioneer is entirely self-supporting, an Assembly has no right to direct him to live in one place or another; it, or its appropriate committee, should consult with the pioneer, explain the needs, [575] offer assistance to enable the pioneer to become established in the post where he is needed, and in consultation with him, decide where it would be best for him to settle, but the ultimate decision rests with the believer himself.
You have believers coming from abroad as pioneer to Austria, and you certainly hope that they will settle in those cities which most urgently need help, but, if a self-supporting pioneer feels that he cannot go where you would like him to, you should then consider how best you can make use of his services wherever he may be."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Austria, March 30, 1970)

1941. Only if Especially Required for a Specific Locality Can a Pioneer Be Required to Settle There

"...When pioneers arise to settle in foreign fields, they do not, and in fact cannot, be required to commit themselves to settle in a given locality, unless they are especially recruited for such a purpose and they understand and accept the nature of the local living conditions they are to face.

"At this stage of the development of the Faith, best results are achieved when the National Spiritual Assembly or one of its appropriate committees deals with each case separately, consults with the pioneer concerned individually, takes into consideration his personal circumstances, points out the needs of the Faith in the locality requiring pioneer support, and encourages him to move to the area in question, if feasible."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, March 20, 1980: cited in a compilation included with a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, August 23, 1981)

1942. The Guardian's Exhortations to Baha'is to Leave Centres Where Large Numbers Had Congregated Were to Disperse Them to Needy Goals—The Spiritual Importance of Remaining at Their Posts

"The beloved Guardian's exhortations to the Baha'is to leave those centers where large numbers had congregated was not primarily for the sake of their safety but in order to disperse them to greatly needy pioneer goals. These urgings, which were in the form of admonitions, were often repeated by the Guardian himself, and have been reiterated by the Universal House of Justice, not only by calling on the friends to disperse, but also by drawing to their attention the spiritual importance of remaining at their posts. While it is correct to say that a number of these pioneers, because of a variety of personal reasons, and at time insuperable visa difficulties, unfortunately did not remain at their posts and returned to their original homelands, it is equally true to say that the majority of the pioneers, who were able and free to continue serving in the pioneer field, steadfastly remained at their posts."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 5, 1980: Ibid.)

1943. All Baha'is Have the Duty to Teach and Serve; Some Who Settle for Personal Purposes May Fill Pioneer Goals
"Whether a Baha'i is in a place because he pioneered there or has settled there for some other reason does not affect the duty of teaching and serving the Cause [576] laid upon him by Baha'u'llah. Generally, a person who goes to a country expressly as a pioneer should be counted as such. There are also many who, although they go primarily for some other purpose, nevertheless fill a goal or are very active in the service of the Faith, and there is no reason not to record them as pioneers in your files. The decision whether to consider a person as a pioneer for the purposes of your records must be made in each individual case."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a Continental Pioneer Committee, September 22, 1974: cited in a compilation regarding the definition of a pioneer sent to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, February 22, 1984)

1944. Iranians Who Settle in the Americas
"Regarding your query whether Iranians who settle in the Americas should be considered as filling assigned pioneer goals, each case should be judged by itself according to the circumstances. Consideration should be given to such questions as: Does the National Spiritual Assembly of the country involved feel that the individual concerned fills a pioneer goal? Is it the intent of the individual to remain if possible in that place? Would the National Spiritual Assembly responsible for sending a pioneer consider the post filled? Otherwise, the believer concerned could be considered as filling a supplementary goal."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Continental Pioneer Committee, November 28, 1979: Ibid.)

1945. Persians Can Render Utmost Service to the Teaching Work, But They Must Settle as Pioneers and be in the Minority
"He feels the Persians can render the utmost assistance to the teaching work, wherever they settle; but they must go on the basis of pioneers, and take up residence where they can render the best service to the Cause of God. It does

little good for the Faith to have large groups of Persians settled in a city, and thus constitute an Assembly. When they move the Assembly falls. What we need in all areas is native believers. The pioneers should be in the minority, and aid the natives to shoulder the responsibilities of the Faith.

"Thus he feels you should encourage the friends leaving Persia, to settle in outlying areas, in smaller cities, where there are no Baha'is, or few, and teach there."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, February 17, 1957: cited in a compilation included with a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, August 23, 1981)

1946. Whether Youth and Children Should Be Listed as Pioneers
"Regarding your question on whether children and youth should be listed as pioneers, the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to share with you the following excerpts from letters addressed to National Spiritual Assemblies who asked similar questions:

'...if a Baha'i child, that is to say one under the age of 15, has gone to a country to serve the Cause, he should be numbered among the pioneers. Children born to pioneers in the country of their pioneer service are not considered pioneers, although of course, for completeness of your information on pioneer families you may wish to keep a note of them in your files.'"
(From a letter dated 2nd March 1981 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

[577] '...CHILDREN CERTAINLY PIONEERS BUT THOSE UNDER 15 CANNOT COUNT FILL QUOTAS SET.'
(Cable dated 15 April, 1982 from the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

"Therefore, children under the age of 15, even though they are pioneers, should not be added to the list which you send to the World Centre as they do not count towards filling the goals given; however, youth 15 years of age and over should be listed, and when children reach the age of 15 and register as Baha'is they should be included.

"We must stress that the above definitions are merely guidelines intended to assist you in keeping your records of pioneer goals and their fulfilment. They are not to be regarded as definitions of the term 'pioneer' in any general sense."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Surinam, June 19, 1984)

1947. The Native Believers Should Be Encouraged to Become the Pivot of the Teaching Activities
"The House of Justice noted your comments about how heavily certain of your communities rely on resident pioneers; that in fact the pioneers have become the pivot of the teaching activities of the Faith in these communities. Your

comment underscores how important it is to encourage the believers native to the community themselves to seek out friends and neighbours to investigate the Faith. The House of Justice understands that it is not easy for believers who have always relied on ministers or priests to now be responsible for their own spiritual development. The very act of teaching the Cause will help them to realize their own worth and enable them to fulfil their individual spiritual responsibilities."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahamas, April 20, 1986)

1948. Pioneering is the Highest Form of Baha'i Cooperation in Marriage
"He appreciates very much the pioneer services you have rendered. He hopes that from now on you and your dear husband will be able to serve the Faith unitedly and devotedly together, as that is the highest form of Baha'i cooperation in marriage."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 3, 1955)

1949. Neither Persian nor American Pioneers Should Congregate in a Few Chosen Places
"The Guardian feels that the Persians should not congregate in a few chosen places, but rather that they should, ... spread out in the various cities of these countries where there are no Baha'is. If this is done, it will greatly facilitate the teaching work in those countries, and at the same time will overcome the problem of establishing Persian colonies....

"One of the problems ... is that so many of the Persian pioneers congregate in certain cities, and this creates actually a Persian colony, and little or nothing seems to be done about teaching the natives. If the Persian pioneers dispersed to various cities, then of course they would automatically begin to teach the natives, because they would not be burdened with the necessity of Assembly functioning and association with other Persian Baha'is.

[578] "The same situation exists with regard to American pioneers in these countries. They all want to congregate in one place, and thus little or nothing is done for the country itself."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, February 5, 1956)

1950. Pioneer Should Not Leave Post Until There is Nothing Else to Do—They Should Confirm Native People Like Enoch Olinga Who Will Ignite the Flame of Faith in Others
"...He constantly impresses upon the pioneers in all countries that they should not leave their posts unless there is nothing else possible for them to do; otherwise the effort, time and sacrifice which have been put into the work there are lost to the Faith.

"He has emphasized on more than one occasion that the important thing for the pioneer to do is to bend his energies toward teaching the native people of the country. He should teach and confirm them, and assist them to gradually

shoulder their responsibilities in the Faith and become the active supporters and upholders of its institutions. This means that the Cause then is built on a solid foundation, and is not being carried forward by people who have gone to that country from other lands. Then too, in most people there is a certain degree of hidden feeling of racial distinction, whether or not they realize or admit it; and those other than natives may be called upon to experience great tests upon accepting the Faith, because of its principle of complete freedom from prejudice.

"This does not mean that people other than natives are not to be taught, if you find they are really spiritually prepared for the Message of Baha'u'llah; but the important thing is to strive to teach and confirm a few native people, who will not only themselves become quickened with its spirit, but who will in turn, like Enoch Olinga from Uganda, quickly ignite the flame of the Faith in the hearts of others of their countrymen."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 2, 1955)

1951. Initial Obscurity Surrounding Work of Pioneer—Protection to Faith
"The pioneers and settlers, as well as the National Assemblies responsible for the administration of the Faith in areas assigned to them, should ever bear in mind that in the initial states of the establishment of the Faith in any territory the obscurity surrounding the work of the pioneer or the local Baha'is is in itself a protection to the Faith. Patience, tact and wisdom should be exercised. Public attention should not be attracted to the Faith until such time as the believers see the Faith touch more and more of the hearts of receptive souls responding to its Divine Call."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, June 5, 1966)

1952. The Purpose of Dispersal
"By dispersal the Guardian means the friends should get away entirely from the large centres of population and, leaving a nucleus of about 15 Baha'is to maintain the Local Assembly, go settle, live and teach in new towns, cities and even villages. Naturally, it is no service to the Cause to disperse if it breaks up an existing Assembly. The purpose of dispersal is to create more Assemblies over a wider area. Until a given [579] assembly can spare some of its local Community to go out and settle, they should by all means at least do extension teaching.

"In the instance you cited about the friend who with independent means was willing to go out and sell her home and move to a new area, he feels she would have done better to go. You had more than 9 members in your Community; you could have found another place to meet. This is just the type of pioneering the Guardian is urging. Those who can go should go. Others will arise locally to take their places."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 19, 1955)

1953. Pioneers Entering Pioneer Field Should Realize They Go as National Spiritual Assembly Representatives—To Represent the Cause
"...The principle is that pioneers entering the pioneer field should realize that they are going there to represent the Cause, in fact, to be the Cause. Their minds and their hearts should be centered in their new tasks and in their new environment. The should not be thinking of when they can return home, or when they can go somewhere else. Only when the Faith is firmly established should they give any thought to moving, and then, only in consultation with the National Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, June 28, 1954)

1954. The Work of the Pioneer is the Most Important Task an Individual Can Perform; Its Blessings Are Great
"The Guardian is well aware of the great sacrifices required of the devoted pioneers, and of the problems they must meet and conquer. This is why he feels that the work of the pioneers is the most important Baha'i task any individual can perform today—more important than serving on a National Assembly, or any administrative post.

"While it carries great responsibilities and difficulties, yet its spiritual blessings are so great, they overshadow everything else; and the opportunities for special victories of the Faith so abundant; the soul who once tastes the elixir of pioneering service, seldom will do anything else."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 5, 1954)

1955. When an Administrative Body is Established, the Pioneer Ceases to Have a Unique Status
"The pioneer, as soon as an administrative body has been established, ceases to have any unique status in the Community. But of course the service he has rendered remains very great, and he should continue to do his utmost for the Cause in conjunction with the Assembly and the other believers."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two individual believers, March 24, 1945)

1956. Pioneers Enhance Prestige of Faith
"The pioneers themselves must realize that not only are they fulfilling the wishes of Baha'u'llah, and doing that which the Master Himself said He longed to do; namely, to go, if necessary on foot, and carry His Father's Message to all the regions of the earth; but they are enhancing the prestige of the Faith to a remarkable degree [580] in the eyes of the public, and especially in the eyes of officials. There is no doubt that the rapid forward march of the Faith recently has attracted a far greater measure of attention on the part of thoughtful people, and people of position in society and in educational fields, than has been the case for almost one hundred years."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 20, 1954: Baha'i News, No. 283, p. 1, September 1954)

1957. Perseverance of Pioneers Assured Reward in Both Worlds
"The pioneers who have already settled or are settling in their posts, particularly in virgin unoccupied territories, must be reminded that their movement to their goals is far from being a short stay designed to class a particular territory or island as opened, or label it as having received one or more pioneers, even if, in some cases, new believers native to the land have been enrolled. It is basically and clearly intended to establish the Faith of God securely and firmly in the hearts of people of the area and to ensure that its divinely-ordained institutions are understood, adopted and operated by them. The perseverance of the pioneers in their posts, however great the sacrifices involved, is an act of devoted service, which, as attested by our teachings, will have an assured reward in both worlds. The admonitions of the Guardian on this subject are too numerous to cite and amply demonstrate the vital nature of this clear policy."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, June 5, 1966)

1958. Isolated Pioneers Are Like a Lighthouse of Baha'u'llah
"...It is hard for the friends to appreciate, when they are isolated in one of these goal territories, and see that they are making no progress in teaching others, are living in inhospitable climes for the most part, and are lonesome for Baha'i companionship and activity, that they represent a force for good, that they are like a lighthouse of Baha'u'llah shining at a strategic point and casting its beam out into the darkness. This is why he so consistently urges these pioneers not to abandon their posts."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, July 18, 1957: Messages to Canada, p. 68)

1959. Struggles of a Pioneer—God Will Assist All Those Who Arise to Serve Him
"Your struggles have been richly blessed and must serve as an example to other pioneers and a sure proof that God will assist all those who arise to serve Him. It is part of the preciousness of this great work being done in the teaching field that it should be done through real sacrifices and not without heartaches attending it. There is a tendency in the American outlook on life at present to believe that suffering is produced by clumsiness and is not only avoidable but not a good thing, and not essential. While there is some truth in this attitude, we as Baha'is cannot but believe that suffering is often an essential part of our service. The Prophets suffered bitterly, so did all the Saints and Martyrs, and often 'fed on the fragments of those broken hearts', as Baha'u'llah says in one of His beautiful prayers."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 4, 1949)

[581] 1960. Even if Bereft of Every Human Knowledge, Everyone Who with a Pure, Detached Heart Arises to Serve His Cause is Promised Baha'u'llah's Divine Assistance
"...Do not feel discouraged if your labours do not always yield an abundant fruitage. For a quick and rapidly-won success is not always the best and the

most lasting. The harder you strive to attain your goal, the greater will be the confirmations of Baha'u'llah, and the more certain you can feel to attain success. Be cheerful, therefore, and exert yourself with full faith and confidence. For Baha'u'llah has promised His Divine assistance to everyone who arises with a pure and detached heart to spread His holy Word, even though he may be bereft of every human knowledge and capacity, and notwithstanding the forces of darkness and of opposition which may be arrayed against him. The goal is clear, the path safe and certain, and the assurances of Baha'u'llah as to the eventual success of our efforts quite emphatic. Let us keep firm, and whole-heartedly carry on the great work which He has entrusted into our hands."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 3, 1937)

1961. Baha'u'llah is Always on the Watch, Ready to Come to Our Assistance
"Such pioneer work is always difficult and unless we are strong-hearted and have faith in our Cause, we are apt to be discouraged. We should always bear in mind that Baha'u'llah is always on the watch ready to come to our assistance if we only rise to serve Him with the spirit of self consecration and absolute detachment. His promises along those lines are very forceful and clear, we are only to act upon them."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 11, 1931)

1962. In the Best and Highest Sense of the Term "Missionary" It Can Be Applied to Our Teachers—There is No Objection to the Word Appearing on Passports
"He sees no objection to the word 'Missionary' appearing on your Passport as long as it is clearly understood what kind of a 'missionary' a Baha'i pioneer is. In the best and highest sense of the term it certainly could be applied to our teachers. Unfortunately this word has often been associated with a narrow-minded, bigoted type of proselytizing quite alien to the Baha'i method of spreading our teachings."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 7, 1945)

1963. Assembly Should Arrange to Replace Pioneer Before He Leaves Post
"No pioneer should leave his post unless there is some very urgent reason and then only after consultation with the appropriate committee or National Assembly. If it is found someone must leave their post because of very urgent matters, then the National Assembly should arrange to replace the pioneer before the pioneer leaves...."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian: Messages to Canada, p. 43)

1964. No Service in Entire Baha'i World as Important as Pioneering Work in Virgin Areas
"...he feels there is no service in the entire Baha'i world as important as their pioneering work in the virgin areas. They have achieved a great station of service. They are the representative of the Faith in these virgin areas. They have the [582] inestimable privilege of bringing the light of Baha'u'llah to those hitherto deprived of Divine Guidance for this day. The Guardian has

repeatedly pointed out that they can and should become the spiritual conquerors of these new lands."
(Ibid., p. 43)

1965. Pioneers in Virgin Areas Cannot Vote in National Elections
"...all pioneers in virgin areas, or new Baha'is who are confirmed in those virgin areas, are not part of the National Baha'i Community, and cannot vote in elections.

"The virgin areas are separate, administratively, and under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly responsible for their development. The same ruling applies to any Assemblies which might develop in these virgin areas. They do not become part of the National Baha'i Community."
(Ibid., p. 50)

1966. Pioneers Should Work in Close Harmony with Local Believers
"...all National Spiritual Assemblies receiving pioneer support should devise ways and means for the pioneers and local believers to work together in close harmony, thus taking full advantage of the help and support that pioneers are anxious to offer, often at great sacrifice, to the teaching or deepening work of the community to which they have gone, and demonstrating to a sceptical world the undivided solidarity and exemplary unity of the followers of the Most Great Name."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 6, 1969)

C. Publicity and Proclamation

1967. Youth Should Not Be Stultified
"Publicity itself should be well conceived, dignified, and reverent. A flamboyant approach which may succeed in drawing much initial attention to the Cause may ultimately prove to have produced a revulsion which would require great effort to overcome. The standard of dignity and reverence set by the beloved Guardian should always be upheld particularly in musical and dramatic items; and photographs of the Master should not be used indiscriminately. This does not mean that activities of the youth, for example, should be stultified; one can be exuberant without being irreverent or undermining the dignity of the Cause.
"Every land has its own conditions... National Spiritual Assemblies need not follow or copy programs initiated in other countries...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, July 2, 1967: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 118)

1968. Mass Distribution of Reply Paid Inquiry Cards
"The details of such matters are within the discretion of each National Spiritual Assembly to decide in the light of certain fundamental principles and in the context of the situation in each country.

"In deciding such a matter you should bear in mind not only the effectiveness of the project from the teaching point of view, but also its bearing upon the

dignity of the Faith. Any leaflet used in such a way should be brief, contain the minimum of quotations from the Sacred Writings, and be designed primarily to arouse the [583] interest of the reader so that he will request more information, and should not, at that stage, be intended to convince or convert the reader."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, December 9, 1971)

1969. Importance of Reaching Distinguished Persons with the Teachings
"Your letters with the wonderful reports of your activities in teaching the Cause and interesting distinguished persons always bring him much joy and pleasure. He wished he had a large number of your type, so devoted to the Faith and so determined to spread its message throughout the world.

"Even though the men you contact do not immediately embrace the Cause and whole-heartedly support it, yet the Word of God that has penetrated their mind and heart will not remain idle. They will be bound, once they read something or lend an attentive ear, to unconsciously modify their views, for the Message will be gradually working in their subconscious mind and thereby moulding their views and interests. One day the Cause will pass the threshold of their consciousness and they will become completely converted. But even before that day, they will be expressing that spirit in their deliberations and thereby helping the progress of the cause of peace throughout the world."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 3, 1932)

1970. Eminent Men Are Often Captives of Their Cherished Ideas, But When the Pendulum Starts to Swing...
"He sincerely hopes and prays that the literature and letters you are sending to eminent men in the different parts of the country will bear their desired effect and that the Word of God will gradually permeate into their heart and win it. It however takes time. Such men are generally captive into the hands of some cherished ideas and principles which they cannot give up so quickly. The mere fact that a person is learned does not mean that he is free from prejudices. The academic life also has its fashions and fads even though they are of different nature from the fads of the man in the street.

"These fashions are not permanent; they are bound to change. Today the fad is a materialistic view of life and of the world. A day will soon come when it will become deeply religious and spiritual. In fact we can discern the beginning of such a change in the writings of some of the most eminent souls and liberal minds. When the pendulum will start its full swing then we shall see all such eminent men turn again to God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 18, 1932)

1971. Proclaiming the Faith to Modern Thinkers and Leaders of Society
"It is really strange how much modern thinkers are, of their own accord, drawing nearer to the teachings of the Faith and voicing views very much like

ours. It shows clearly the truth of the saying of the Master that the spirit of the Movement has permeated the hearts of all the people of the world. It is God's hands operating and guiding the nations and intellectual men and leaders of society to a gradual acceptance of His Message revealed through Baha'u'llah.

"The way we can hasten the development of this process is by doing our share in spreading the words of God far and wide. Even though we may not see any case of sudden conversion on the part of these intellectuals, yet they are bound to [584] be influenced in their views and look to the Faith with greater admiration and with a more willing desire to be led by its precepts. Shoghi Effendi, therefore, wishes me to encourage you in your work, in sending appropriate literature to such men of learning."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 7, 1933)

D. Radio

1972. Power of Radio for Proclamation
"It is our hope that the great power of radio for proclamation, teaching and deepening may be mobilized wherever possible, and with the promising initiatives which have occurred in Ecuador and elsewhere we now anticipate the development of more widespread uses of the medium which will be of service to the Cause and to mankind."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, April 7, 1974)

1973. Historic Forward Step in Proclamation
"The religious and cultural content of your programs is important alike for achieving the goals of the Faith and bringing education and service to the non-Baha'is' community....

"Your perception of Baha'i needs and their satisfaction through radio broadcasts has prepared you for what may well, in time, be hailed as an historic forward step in proclamation, expansion and deepening through the medium of radio, a medium which the beloved Guardian hoped would be exploited on behalf of the Cause of God. We congratulate you and look forward to news of your progress in this significant initial program."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, December 12, 1974)

1974. Bring to Attention of the Public the Fact that the Faith Exists
"In connection with the radio work ... he would suggest that the main consideration is to bring to the attention of the public the fact that the Faith exists, and its teachings. Every kind of broadcast, whether of passages from the writings, or on topical subjects, or lectures, should be used. The people need to hear the word 'Baha'i' so that they can, if receptive, respond and seek the Cause out. The primary duty of the friends everywhere in the world is to let the people know such a Revelation is in existence; their next duty is to teach it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer,

July 24, 1943: A Compilation on the 'Use of Radio and Television in Teaching', April 1, 1975, from the World Centre)

1975. Examples of Prudence to be Exercised in Presenting History and Teachings of the Faith
"He feels that the projected radio broadcasts are of the utmost importance as they afford you an opportunity of bringing to many listeners a sense of the greatness of the Cause. In this connection he has some advice to give you: You should stick carefully to facts and beware of putting any interpretations of facts into it. Your [585] best sources are Nabil's Narrative and Martha Root's book on Tahirih, as far as she is concerned, and, of course the general literature of our Faith. The Guardian advises you not to introduce into a series for public consumption anything obscure or mystical. By all means avoid the scene in the Presence of Baha'u'llah between Tahirih and Quddus. Her separation from her husband and children, her teaching in Baghdad, her imprisonment and death, and her poems, make a beautiful and moving tale. He would not call her the first suffragette, for this certainly was strictly speaking no part of her concept."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a group of believers, November 9, 1949)

1976. Voluntary Contributions May Be Accepted—However, Fund-Raising Activities Should Not Be Carried Out by Baha'i Radio
"The Universal House of Justice sees no objection to accepting voluntary donations spontaneously contributed by non-Baha'is for your radio activities. In a letter written to a National Spiritual Assembly on behalf of the House of Justice, the following advice was given.

'...A point to bear in mind is that a Baha'i radio station should strictly uphold a standard for its operations that will guard its programs against being confused in the public mind with the radio programs sponsored by other religious groups. The latter programs often involve fund-raising activities which, if associated with Baha'i programs, would eventually undermine the prestige of the Faith and expose its institutions to certain dangers.'

"The donations accepted from non-Baha'is must be used toward providing services or programs which are not a direct Baha'i teaching."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, April 15, 1985)

E. Teaching

1977. Arise to Serve His Cause
"Whosoever ariseth to aid our Cause, God will render him victorious over ten times ten thousand souls, and, should he wax in his love for Me, him will We cause to triumph over all that is in the heaven and all that is on earth."
(Baha'u'llah: cited by Shoghi Effendi in Messages to the Baha'i World, p. 101)

1978. Teaching Enjoined on Believers in Aqdas
"In the Aqdas Baha'u'llah considers teaching as a spiritual obligation imposed

upon every devoted believer and servant of His Faith. Should the friends become fully conscious of this duty and arise to do their share, this Cause will soon permeate every home throughout the world and the Kingdom of God will be established."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer: Baha'i News, No. 85, p. 8, July 1934)

1979. Meditate on Methods of Teaching
"The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their [586] speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation...."
(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 200)

1980. The Teachings Are Not Given to Us to Treasure and Hide
"The world is in great turmoil and its problems seem to become daily more acute. We should therefore not sit idle; otherwise we would be failing in carrying out our sacred duty. Baha'u'llah has not given us His teachings to treasure them and hide them for our personal delight and pleasure. He gave them to us that we may pass them from mouth to mouth until all the world becomes familiar with them and enjoys their blessings and uplifting influence."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Spiritual Assembly of Eliot, Maine, March 27, 1933: Baha'i News, No. 73, May 1933, p. 2)

1981. 'Abdu'l-Baha Teaches How to Teach
"...in the city of Baghdad, I talked with a learned man, Mulla Hassan, some of whose relatives were believers. No matter how hard they tried to give him the Message, he would not accept it. Once, they brought him to my house when I was just getting up from my sleep and combing my hair. They said, 'We have brought so-and-so here and we beg you to come and speak with him; perhaps, he will become a believer.' I said, 'Very well,' and then I turned to the Blessed Beauty and prayed: 'O Blessed Beauty, confirm me!' Afterwards, I talked to him, and in the same hour he became a believer. He became exceedingly good and was so enkindled that, although he was of high rank, he used to go into the kitchen and cook things with his own hand to entertain the friends."
(Talk by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land, translated by Dr. Zia Baghdadi: Star of the West, Vol. IX, No. 3, p. 36)

1982. Recompense of Martyr Assuredly Recorded
"In this day, the beloved of God must not hesitate or delay an instant in teaching the Cause of the Manifestation; and reconciling words of the religion of majestic oneness; because, verily, in this day, to the soul who is the cause of guidance to another soul the recompense of a martyr in the way of God will be assuredly recorded by the pen of the Cause for his deed. This is from the Bounty of God unto thee. Do according to what thou hast been commanded and do not be of those who tarry."

('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Scriptures, p. 204)

1983. Teaching Not Conditioned by Occupation
"Teaching the Faith is not conditioned by what occupation we have, or how great our knowledge is, but rather on how much we have studied the Teachings, to what degree we live the Baha'i life, and how much we long to share this Message with others. When we have these characteristics, we are sure, if we search, to find receptive souls.

"You should persevere and be confident that, with effort, success can be yours."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary to an American believer, 1957: Baha'i News, No. 351, p. 2, May 1960)

[587] 1984. Intensive Work is of More Lasting Nature
"Shoghi Effendi has seen, through the experience of the international teachers that keep him informed regarding their activities, that intensive work is ultimately of a more lasting nature. It has proven to be far better that a teacher should spend a month or two in one center and wait until a group is formed, than to cover a large area and not stay enough in a center to help the progress of those interested to the stage that they would feel themselves able to embrace the Cause and identify themselves with it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 30, 1932: Baha'i News, No. 67, October 1932, pp. 4-5)

1985. Teachers Must Be Satisfied with Little Food
"As regards the teachers, they must completely divest themselves from the old garments and be invested with a new garment. According to the statement of Christ, they must attain to the station of rebirth—that is, whereas in the first instance they were born from the womb of the mother, this time they must be born from the womb of the world of nature. Just as they are now totally unaware of the experiences of the foetal world, they must also forget entirely the defects of the world of nature. They must be baptized with the water of life, the fire of the love of God and the breaths of the Holy Spirit; be satisfied with little food, but take a large portion from the heavenly table. They must disengage themselves from temptation and covetousness, and be filled with the spirit. Through the effect of their pure breath, they must change the stone into the brilliant ruby and the shell into pearl. Like unto the cloud of vernal shower, they must transform the black soil into the rose garden and orchard. They must make the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the extinguished one enkindled and set aglow, and the dead quickened."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 96)

1986. Develop a System of Travelling Teacher Circuits
"In this connection we feel you would be well advised to develop a system of travelling teacher circuits. There is no doubt whatever that the constant movement of teachers, even though circulating within a small radius, can have a highly stimulating effect on the teaching work. Permanent settlers, a constant stream of visiting teachers to speak at regular firesides, is a pattern which

has not yet been bettered."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, January 20, 1966: Baha'i Journal, No. 173, p. 1, March 4, 1966)

1987. Travelling Teachers Reinforce Work of Pioneers
"While pioneers provide a very valuable long-term reinforcement of a community and are often the only feasible means for opening new areas—and here we are speaking not only of pioneers from foreign lands but of homefront pioneers as well, the use of whom must be greatly developed in most countries—a second vital reinforcement of the work is provided by travelling teachers. As mentioned in the message sent to all believers at Ridvan, a new international travel teaching program is now being launched. National Assemblies and their committees, therefore, need to develop a threefold integrated program for travel teaching. Firstly, there should be within each national community regular circuits of local travelling teachers, that is to say of [588] believers who are members of that national community, whether native or pioneers, who are able and willing to devote time to this activity. Secondly, and integrated with these circuits, provision should be made for planned visits of travelling teachers from abroad. Thirdly, each National Assembly should establish an agency and a procedure for taking advantage of the unheralded arrival of visitors from abroad, or of sudden offers from believers on the homefront, who would be able to give valuable help in the fields of travel teaching or proclamation if properly organized. Such an agency would, of course, be responsible for evaluating the capacity of those who offer services because while an unexpected offer can often provide a very valuable teaching opportunity, it is also true to say that some Baha'i communities have been exhausted and their work hindered by the arrival of a succession of travelling Baha'is who were not really suited, for lack of a language or for other reasons, to assist with teaching in the area concerned. Friends who travel spontaneously in this way can do valuable teaching themselves but should not expect the assistance of local administrative institutions if they have not arranged the trip in advance."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 25, 1975)

1988. What Visiting Teachers Are Supposed to Do
"Visiting teachers, who are, at least in a general way, supposed to be more competent and able than the rest, are undoubtedly of great help. But these can never replace the mass of individual believers and fulfil what must be inevitably accomplished through the collective effort and wisdom of the community at large. What visiting teachers are supposed to do is to give the final touch to the work that has been done, to consolidate rather than supplement individual efforts and thereby direct them in a constructive and suitable channel. Their task is to encourage and inspire individual believers, and to broaden and deepen their vision of the task that is to be done. And this, not by virtue of any inherent spiritual right, but in the spirit of simple and wholehearted cooperation."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 1, 1933)

1989. Travelling Teachers Have No Special Status
"From time to time we receive reports that pioneers or travelling teachers who are subsidized by the International Fund or receive letters of encouragement from the Universal House of Justice are assumed to have some special status or authority.

"In order that there be no misunderstanding, it should be made clear that such individuals have no special status and have no authority or standing other than that of any believer residing in the area where he is pioneering or teaching.

"Furthermore, pioneers and travelling teachers are under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly of the country or area in which they are travelling or residing, as the case may be, and they must be obedient to the instructions of these National Spiritual Assemblies."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, August 3, 1970)

1990. Travelling Expenses of Teachers
"He believes that the continuous expenditure of a considerable sum to provide for\ [589] travelling expenses of teachers who are in need constitutes in these days the chief obligation of the National Fund. An effort should be made to facilitate, as much as possible, the extension of the teaching work by helping those who are financially unable to reach their destination, and once there, to encourage them to settle and earn the means of their livelihood."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, November 14, 1936: Baha'i News, No. 105, February 1937, p. 1: Lifeblood of the Cause, p. 15)

1991. No Baha'i Teachers Permanently Employed by Faith
"The beloved Guardian elucidated this basic principle of Baha'i administration through his repeated letters to National Assemblies from which we quote:

'At present it would be quite impossible to spread the Cause if those who arise to serve it as teachers or pioneers were not given financial assistance. All must realize, however, that the monies they receive are only to enable them to fulfil their objectives, and that they cannot consider themselves permanently entitled to be supported by the Cause.'
(From a letter to the N.S.A. of India and Burma dated August 12, 1944)

"Each National Assembly, through its auxiliary Teaching Committees, should be able to so plan the time and efforts of its band of subsidized traveling teachers that no impression of permanency is given. As far as possible each 'project' must be definite in objective and in duration.

"Likewise, when pioneer projects are envisaged, it must be made clear to the pioneer that he must make every effort to establish himself in some position in his pioneering post and thus become freed from the necessity of drawing further on Baha'i funds."

(From a letter by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in Mass Teaching Work, June 25, 1964)

1992. Travelling Teachers Should Be Assisted Financially to Carry Out Assigned Projects

"Likewise travelling teachers should be assisted financially to carry out the 'projects' assigned to them. The friends should not for a moment confuse this type of support with the creation of a paid clergy. Any Baha'i can, at the discretion of the N.S.A., receive this necessary assistance, and it is clearly understood it is temporary and only to carry out a specific plan. Baha'u'llah Himself has not only enjoined on everyone the duty of teaching His Faith, but stated if you cannot go yourself, to send someone in your stead. The National Assembly, through and with its National Teaching Committee, should take immediate steps to get pioneers out into the goal towns and teachers circulating about, to not only support and inaugurate the new work, but to stimulate the existing Assemblies and groups, and help them to expand."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, May 29, 1946)

1993. We Have No One in the Faith Whose Position is Comparable to Professional Clergymen or Priests

"We have no people in the Baha'i Faith whose position is comparable to professional clergymen or priests. No paid teachers, in other words. However, it is difficult [590] to see how the ever-increasing work of the Cause is to be run unless those devoting all their time to it are not supported from the Fund while doing so. This is administrative work, and there is no objection to those doing it being paid a regular salary if they have not the independent means to do it free of any charge. We cannot lay down a rule that no one receiving remuneration for Baha'i administrative work should be elected to Assemblies, as this would interfere with the free choice of electing the best qualified people for such service on Assemblies."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 9, 1947)

1994. Support by the Fund Only Temporary

"...this is a Cause in which every believer is called upon to teach. If at the present time certain friends are supported by the Fund to enable them to devote all their time to the vital and urgent work of expansion and consolidation, this is but a temporary arrangement designed to meet the exigencies of this period of crisis in human history. It must never be allowed to replace the individual voluntary efforts of the friends, but rather should stimulate and reinforce them.

"If every Baha'i will arise whole-heartedly to support and develop the institutions of the Cause—primarily the Local Spiritual Assemblies—and to teach the Faith, all will be astonished at the vast achievements which can be made with comparatively little assistance from the National Fund."
(From a letter by the Universal House of Justice to various National Spiritual Assemblies, July 27, 1971)

1995. Travelling Teachers and Believers Who Travel Frequently
"It has been reported to the Universal House of Justice by the Continental Board of Counsellors in South America that your National Spiritual Assembly has ruled that full-time travelling teachers are to be considered as not having a fixed residence and are therefore not eligible in any local community for elective service. We have been asked to share with you the following excerpt of a letter written to the National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa dated 5 December, 1972, setting forth the general policy regarding believers who are travelling most of the time.

'At present no hard and fast rule can be laid down for determining the places of residence of the officers of a ship or its crew, or the personnel manning aircraft when such individuals have no fixed home and no family ties to commit them to any specific place of residence. The National Spiritual Assembly should, in each case, discuss the matter with the person involved and decide where his Baha'i membership shall count. Factors such as the frequency of recurrence of his visits to any locality, opportunities to participate in local Baha'i activities, the extent of the period of his stay each time he visits, and his own choice should all be taken into consideration in arriving at a decision.'

"We have been instructed to say that it would not be proper for rules to be laid down that travelling teachers should not be considered as having a fixed place of residence. If one of them should be elected to a Local Spiritual Assembly the question would then arise as to whether his anticipated travels necessitating his frequent absence from the Assembly would constitute a valid reason for him to resign as a member of that Assembly."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 26, 1978)

[591] 1996. Spiritual Maturing is a Slow Process
"a. Visiting pioneers or teachers may find in some places newly enrolled believers not so enthusiastic about their religion as expected, or not adjusting to standards of Baha'i life, or they may find them thinking of material benefits they may hope to derive from their new membership. We should always remember that the process of nursing the believer into full spiritual maturity is slow, and needs loving education and patience.

"b. Some teaching committees, in their eagerness to obtain results, place undue emphasis on obtaining a great number of declarations to the detriment of the quality of teaching.

"c. Some travelling teachers, in their desire to show the result of their services, may not scrupulously teach their contacts, and in some rare cases, if God forbid, they are insincere, may even give false reports."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, Teaching the Masses, dated July 13, 1964: Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 35-36)

1997. Each One of the Believers is Like an Ark of Salvation

"I desire that you may see the divine ships. These ships are the blessed sails who are traversing the sea of Divine mercy; their propellors are the powers of spiritual love and their captains are the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. No ship is ever wrecked in this sea; its waves are life-giving. Each one of the friends of God is like unto an ark of Salvation. Each ark saves many souls from the storms of troubles. The signs and traces of these sails are never-ending and eternal. The future centuries and cycles are like the sea on the surface of which these arks glide blissfully toward their spiritual destination."
(Talk by 'Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. VIII, No. 8, p. 104, August 11, 1917)

1998. First Condition of a Religious Teacher
"It is a wonderful, priceless boon to be a vessel carrying food from God. It cannot be bought with gold. The first condition of a religious teacher is to believe in God; the second, to turn his face toward God; the third to be severed from all save God. Such teachers will constitute illumined lamps of guidance, the stars of the heaven of mercy, the trees of the orchard of Abha, flowers of the garden of mystery and torches of the path of salvation.

"Teaching the Cause of God is not only through the tongue; it is through deeds, a good disposition, happiness of nature, kindness and sympathy, good fellowship, trustworthiness, holiness, virtue, purity of ideals, and lastly, speech."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i News, No. 243, May 1951, p. 8)

1999. Importance of Teaching—Terrible Problems Confronting Humanity
"The more one observes the conditions of the world and the terrible problems confronting humanity, the more deeply one realizes that the only remedy is that which Baha'u'llah has brought, and yet, alas, the masses of the people seem to not yet be aware that the way out of our problems can only be a divine way, given by something far greater than human understanding! However, many souls are seriously thinking and seeking, and the Baha'is must try to bring the knowledge of the teachings to all, so that those prepared to accept may not be denied the Message!"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer: Ibid., p. 72)

[592] 2000. Need Teachers of Spiritual Capacity, Knowledge of Covenant
"...the National Assembly should pay particular attention to getting teachers with spiritual capacity and a deep knowledge of the Covenant out to the weaker communities on circuit teaching trips, and that an effort should be made for them to stay for some time in each place. It is evident that one of the reasons that the work on the home front in America is so seriously lagging is that the Baha'is themselves, though undoubtedly devoted, loyal and conscientious, are not always very deeply grounded in the spiritual fundamentals of their Faith. This produces a maladjustment, so to speak, in the nature of their service to the Cause; and only through a deeper understanding of their Faith and the inner spiritual strength that this understanding brings, will they be able to reinforce themselves to meet their tasks, to see the joy of discharging their

duties and grasping their privileges."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 19, 1956: Baha'i News, No. 307, September 1956, p. 1)

2001. Everyone is a Potential Teacher
"...Not until all the friends come to realize that everyone is able, in his own measure, to deliver the Message can they ever hope to reach the goal that has been set for them by a loving and wise Master. It is no use for some able and eloquent teacher to take all the responsibility for the spread of the Cause. For such a thing is not only contrary to the spirit of the Teachings, but to the explicit text of the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, both of Whom place the obligation of teaching not on any particular class as in former ecclesiastical organizations but on every faithful and loyal follower of the Cause. The teaching of the Word is thus made universal and compulsory. How long, then, shall we wait to carry out this command, the full wisdom of which only future generations will be able to appreciate? We have no special teachers in this Cause. Everyone is a potential teacher. He has only to use what God has given him and thus prove that he is faithful to his trust."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer: The Baha'i World, p. 126, Vol. V)

F. Mass Teaching

2002. Distribution of Baha'i Material in Mail Boxes of Homes and Apartments
"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter ... concerning the distribution of Baha'i material to the mail boxes of the houses and apartments in a locality, and it has instructed us to send you the following reply.

"The details of all such matters are within the discretion of each National Spiritual Assembly to decide in the light of certain principles and in the context of the situation in each country.

"The principles the House of Justice wishes National Assemblies to observe in this connection are:

1. The dignity of the Faith should be carefully safeguarded in all Baha'i activities.

2. It is important that no teaching activity should be an encroachment on people's privacy nor should it force the teachings upon unwilling listeners.

[593] "In general the House of Justice feels that there would be no objection in principle to mailing or distributing to mail boxes such items as invitations to meetings or introductory circular letters, or brief informative leaflets. Any leaflet used in such a way should be designed primarily to arouse the interest of the reader so that he will seek more information. It should not be intended to convince or convert the reader at that stage. A number of National Spiritual Assemblies have produced introductory circulars of this nature, which have a reply-paid card attached. It is not, of course, essential that the card be part of the leaflet provided that the leaflet itself is restrained and dignified. However, each National Spiritual Assembly must decide what is proper

to be done in its own country.

"The quotation which you ask for is as follows: 'He feels that to distribute Baha'i pamphlets from door-to-door ... is undignified and might create a bad impression of the Faith. No doubt, it is the eagerness and devotion of the friends that led them to make this proposal, but he does not think that the best interests of the Cause are served by such a method....'"
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Assembly of Iceland, December 6, 1981)

2003. Great Care Should Be Exercised in Selecting Teachers to Teach
"Great care and discretion should be exercised in the selection of teachers who will be contacting people who are mostly illiterate and cannot benefit from reading for themselves the written word, and are largely dependent on what they hear. Teachers, be they local or from outside, should be acutely aware of this. The spiritual calibre and moral quality of these teachers is of great importance, and particularly they should be of pure spirit and have a true love for the Cause. They should have the capacity to convey that spirit and that love to others. Furthermore, they should avoid pressure tactics in their efforts to obtain declarations of faith."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, dated May 5, 1982, attached to a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany dated February 6, 1986 and entitled "Statement of the Universal House of Justice Regarding Teaching the Faith")

2004. Exercise Care in Presenting Cause to Avoid Misconceptions
"Baha'u'llah, in 'The Hidden Words', Says 'O Son of Dust! The wise are they that speak not unless they obtain a hearing, even as the cup-bearer, who proffereth not his cup till he findeth a seeker, and the lover who crieth not out from the depths of his heart until he gazeth upon the beauty of his beloved...', and on page 55 of 'The Advent of Divine Justice', a letter which is primarily directed towards exhorting the friends to fulfil their responsibilities in teaching the Faith, Shoghi Effendi writes: 'Care, however, should, at all times, be exercised, lest in their eagerness to further the international interests of the Faith they frustrate their purpose, and turn away, through any act that might be misconstrued as an attempt to proselytize and bring undue pressure upon them, those whom they wish to win over to their Cause'. Some Baha'is sometimes overstep the proper bounds, but this does not alter the clear principle."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 3, 1982: Teaching and Commitment, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

[594] 2005. Mankind Has the Right to Hear the Message of Baha'u'llah
"The responsibility of the Baha'is to teach the Faith is very great. The contraction of the world and the onward rush of events require us to seize every chance open to us to touch the hearts and minds of our fellow-men. The Message of Baha'u'llah is God's guidance for mankind to overcome the difficulties of this age of transition and move forward into the next stage of

its evolution, and human beings have the right to hear it. Those who accept it incur the duty of passing it on to their fellow-men. The slowness of the response of the world has caused and is causing great suffering; hence the historical pressure upon Baha'is to exert every effort to teach the Faith for the sake of their fellow-men. They should teach with enthusiasm, conviction, wisdom and courtesy, but without pressing their hearer, bearing in mind the words of Baha'u'llah 'Beware lest ye contend with any one, nay, strive to make him aware of the truth with kindly manner and most convincing exhortation. If your hearer respond, he will have responded to his own behoof, and if not, turn ye away from him, and set your face towards God's sacred Court, the seat of resplendent holiness.' (Gleanings CXXVIII)"
(Extract from "Statement of the Universal House of Justice Regarding Teaching the Faith", op. cit. No. 2003)

2006. The Purpose of Consolidation
"Consolidation activities promote the individual spiritual development of the friends, help to unite and strengthen Baha'i community life, establish new social patterns for the friends, and stimulate the teaching work."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, April 17, 1981)

2007. True Consolidation
"...true consolidation is to ensure that the love of Baha'u'llah and devotion to His Faith are firmly rooted in the hearts of the believers; this is the essential foundation for the subsequent addition of increased knowledge of the Teachings and the development of the Baha'i way of life."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, November 3, 1974)

2008. Proclamation, Expansion and Consolidation
"The House of Justice ... has instructed us to point out that proclamation, expansion, and consolidation are really three different aspects of teaching which to some degree merge into one another and therefore it is largely for each National Spiritual Assembly to decide how it will allocate these different aspects to committees in light of the volume of the work and the condition in each country."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, February 27, 1975)

2009. Consolidation is that Aspect of Teaching which Assists Believers to Deepen Their Knowledge of the Teachings...
"Consolidation is as vital a part of the teaching work as expansion. It is that aspect of teaching which assists the believers to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Teachings, and fans the flame of their devotion of Baha'u'llah and His Cause, so that they will, of their own volition, continue the process of their spiritual development, promote the teaching work, and strengthen the functioning of their administrative institutions. Proper consolidation is essential to the preservation of [595] the spiritual health of the community, to the protection of its interests, to the upholding of its good name, and ultimately to the continuation of the work of expansion itself."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, April 17, 1981)

2010. Consolidation is an Essential and Inseparable Element of Teaching
"...they must remember that consolidation is an essential and inseparable element of teaching, and if they go to a remote area and enrol believers whom no one is going to be able to visit again in the near future, they may well be doing a disservice to those people and to the Faith. To give people this glorious Message and then leave them in the lurch produces disappointment and disillusionment, so that, when it does become possible to carry out properly planned teaching in that area, the teachers may well find the people resistant to the Message. The first teacher who was careless of consolidation, instead of planting and nourishing the seeds of faith has, in fact, 'inoculated' the people against the divine Message and made subsequent teaching very much harder."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all Continental Pioneer Committees, April 16, 1981: Teaching and Commitment, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice)

2011. Expansion and Consolidation Are Co-Equal
"Simultaneous and co-equal with this vast, ordered and ever-growing teaching effort, the work of consolidation must go hand in hand. In fact these two processes must be regarded as inseparable parts of the expansion of the Faith. While the work of teaching inevitably goes first, to pursue it alone without consolidation would leave the community unprepared to receive the masses who must sooner or later respond to the life-giving message of the Cause... Consolidation must comprise not only the establishment of Baha'i administrative institutions, but a true deepening in the fundamental verities of the Cause and in its spiritual principles, understanding of its prime purpose in the establishment of the unity of mankind, instruction in its standards of behaviour in all aspects of private and public life, in the particular practice of Baha'i life in such things as daily prayer, education of children, observance of the laws of Baha'i marriage, abstention from politics, the obligation to contribute to the Fund, the importance of the Nineteen Day Feast and opportunity to acquire a sound knowledge of the present-day practice of Baha'i administration."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1966)

2012. The Purpose of Teaching is Not Complete with a Declaration of Faith
"Teaching the Faith embraces many diverse activities, all of which are vital to success, and each of which reinforces the other. Time and again the beloved Guardian emphasized that expansion and consolidation are twin and inseparable aspects to teaching that must proceed simultaneously, yet one still hears believers discussing the virtues of one as against the other. The purpose of teaching is not complete when a person declares that he has accepted Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God for this age; the purpose of teaching is to attract human beings to the divine Message and so imbue them with its

spirit that they will dedicate themselves to its service, and this world will become another world and its people another people. Viewed in this light a declaration of Faith is merely a milestone along the way—albeit a [596] very important one. Teaching may also be likened to kindling a fire, the fire of faith, in the hearts of men. If a fire burns only so long as the match is held to it, it cannot truly be said to have been kindled; to be kindled it must continue to burn of its own accord. Thereafter more fuel can be added and the flame can be fanned, but even if left alone for a period, a truly kindled fire will not be extinguished by the first breath of wind."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 25, 1975)

2013. Qualities Necessary—Pure Spirit and Love—Illiterates Cannot Read for Themselves
"It must be realized that people who are mostly illiterate cannot have the benefit of reading for themselves the written word and of deriving directly from it the spiritual sustenance they need for the enrichment of their Baha'i lives. They become dependent, therefore, to a large extent on their contacts with visiting teachers. The spiritual calibre or moral quality of these teachers assumes, therefore, great importance. The National Spiritual Assembly or the Teaching Committees responsible for the selection of these teachers should bear in mind that their choice must depend, not only on the knowledge or grasp of the teachings on the part of the teachers, but primarily upon their pure spirit and their true love for the Cause, and their capacity to convey that spirit and love to others."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in mass teaching, October 26, 1967)

2014. Simplicity in Giving the Message—The Unsophisticated People Form Majority
"The unsophisticated people of the world—and they form the large majority of its population—have the same right to know of the Cause of God as others. When the friends are teaching the Word of God they should be careful to give the Message in the same simplicity as it is enunciated in our Teachings. In their contacts they must show genuine and divine love. The heart of an unlettered soul is extremely sensitive, and any trace of prejudice on the part of the pioneer or teacher is immediately sensed."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 13, 1964)

2015. Poorer Classes Should Be Taught—Confirm People
"There is no doubt that the poorer classes should be taught the Cause and given every opportunity to embrace it. More especially in order to demonstrate to people our cardinal lack of prejudice—class prejudice as much as any other kind of prejudice. However, he feels that the great point is to confirm people of true capacity and ability—from whatever social stratum they may be—because the Cause needs now, and will ever increasingly need, souls of great ability who can bring it before the public at large, administer its

ever-growing affairs, and contribute to its advancement in every field."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian by his secretary to an individual believer, October 30, 1941: A Special Measure of Love, p. 2)

2016. Teaching Campaigns

"He fully approves of the concept of uniting the believers' labors through [597] focussing them on nation-wide teaching campaigns and so on. But he feels that the friends should constantly be encouraged to bear in mind certain salient facts: Baha'u'llah has brought a new system and new laws and standards of personal as well as racial conduct into the world. Although outside agencies have been to a certain extent illumined by the radiance of His Message and doctrines, and are exerting efforts to bring the world into that orbit of universal peace and harmony He has set for it, these outside forces cannot achieve what only the followers of His Faith can. The believers must not take their eyes off their own immediate tasks of patiently consolidating their administrative institutions, building up new Assemblies in North, Central and South America, and laboring to perfect the Baha'i pattern of life, for these are things that no other group of people in the world can do or will do, and they alone are able to provide the spiritual foundation and example on which the larger world schemes must ultimately rest.

"At the same time every effort should be made to broadcast the Teaching at this time, and correlate them to the plight of humanity and the plans for its future. Both tasks should go forward simultaneously—internal consolidation and expansion, and a wider contact with the masses, maintained through public meetings, radio, publicity, etc."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 29, 1945: Baha'i News, No. 175, June 1945, p. 3)

2017. Aim of All Baha'i Institutions and Teachers

"The aim, therefore, of all Baha'i institutions and Baha'i teachers is to advance continually to new areas and strata of society, with such thoroughness, that, as the spark of faith kindles the hearts of the hearers, the teaching of the believers continues until and even after they shoulder the responsibilities as Baha'is and participate in both the teaching and administrative work of the Faith.

"There are now many areas in the world where thousands of people have accepted the Faith so quickly that it has been beyond the capacity of the existing Baha'i communities to consolidate adequately these advances. The people in these areas must be progressively deepened in their understanding of the Faith, in accordance with well-laid plans, so that the communities may, as soon as possible, become sources of great strength to the work of the Faith and begin to manifest the pattern of Baha'i life."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 25, 1975)

2018. Challenge to Every Believer and Institution

"Every individual follower of Baha'u'llah, as well as the institutions of the Faith, at local, national, continental and world levels, must now meet the challenge to raise the intensity of teaching to a pitch never before attained, in order to realize that vast increase called for in the Plan. For those believers living in countries where they have freedom to teach their Faith, this challenge is more sharply pointed by the oppressive measures imposed on the Faith elsewhere."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1966)

2019. Challenge to Local and National Administrative Institutions
"The challenge to the local and national administrative institutions of the Faith is [598] to organize and promote the teaching work through systematic plans, involving not only the regular fireside meetings in the homes of the believers, the public meetings, receptions and conferences, the weekend, summer and winter schools, the youth conferences and activities, all of which are so vigorously upheld at present, but in addition through a constant stream of visiting teachers to every locality..."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1966)

2020. Challenge to the Individual Baha'i
"The challenge to the individual Baha'i in every field of service, but above all in teaching the Cause of God, is never-ending. With every fresh affliction visited upon mankind our inescapable duty becomes more apparent, nor should we ever forget that if we neglect this duty, 'others', in the words of Shoghi Effendi, 'will be called upon to take up our task as ministers to the crying needs of this afflicted world.'"
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1966)

2021. How Can True Believer Remain Silent
"Every Baha'i, however humble or inarticulate, must become intent on fulfilling his role as a bearer of the Divine Message. Indeed, how can a true believer remain silent while around us men cry out in anguish for truth, love and unity to descend upon this world?"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, November 16, 1969)

2022. Charitable and Humanitarian Aspects of Faith—Be Careful Not to Emphasize
"When teaching among the masses, the friends should be careful not to emphasize the charitable and humanitarian aspects of the Faith as a means to win recruits. Experience has shown that when facilities such as schools, dispensaries, hospitals, or even clothes and food are offered to the people being taught, many complications arise. The prime motive should always be the response of man to God's message, and the recognition of His Messenger. Those who declare themselves as Baha'is should become enchanted with the beauty of the Teachings, and touched by the love of Baha'u'llah. The declarants need not

know all the proofs, history, laws, and principles of the Faith, but in the process of declaring themselves they must, in addition to catching the spark of faith, become basically informed about the Central Figures of the Faith, as well as the existence of laws they must follow and an administration they must obey."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 13, 1964)

2023. Honoraria or Expenses for Talking on the Faith at Non-Baha'i Events
"As to honoraria, obviously it is preferable for individuals to present the Faith without receiving any fee. However, there is no objection to a Baha'i receiving his travel and other expenses in connection with the talk."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 25, 1966)

2024. Teachers as Administrators
"There is no reason why teachers should not also be administrators; but an active [599] teacher does not have much time for committee work. Unfortunately there are more people qualified to do the administrative work than the teaching work—and teachers are greatly needed."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, July 15, 1947)

2025. Baha'is Should Be Aware that Opening a New Territory or Town is Only the First Move
"It must be made quite clear to the Baha'is that opening a new territory or a new town, for that matter, meritorious as it is, is nevertheless only the first move. The consolidation of the Baha'i work undertaken there is the most important thing of all. Victories are won usually through a great deal of patience, planning and perseverance, and rarely accomplished at a single stroke."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, July 24, 1955)

2026. The Basic Objective of Teaching
"It is reassuring to know that you understand that the basic objective of teaching is to promote the Cause of God—not merely to increase numbers for numbers' sake. However, care should be exercised in applying this principle lest we become so rigid as to exclude from our rolls those waiting souls who have been touched by the spirit of the Faith without being very knowledgeable about all the Teachings.

"A Local Spiritual Assembly should be formed in any locality where nine or more adult believers reside. The fact that some of them are not well grounded in the Faith is not a reason for delaying formation of the Assembly, but is a matter to be dealt with separately."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, November 23, 1975)

2027. The Guardian Encouraged Early Enrollment of New Believers

"...As you are aware, the beloved Guardian encouraged early enrollment of new believers upon their declarations, and not the creation of obstacles to their acceptance. After declaration, follow-up with deepening is imperative, and it may be that some will fall away. However, those who remain are the true fruits of the teaching endeavor and may include persons of great merit who might have been lost to the Cause through arbitrary early judgements."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, November 18, 1980)

2028. Indirect Teaching: What It Constitutes
"As to your question as to what constitutes indirect teaching: It essentially consists in presenting some of the humanitarian or social teachings of the Cause which are shared by those whom we are teaching, as a means of attracting them to those aspects of the Faith which are more challenging in character, and are specifically and solely Baha'i. The teaching of Esperanto, for instance, has been a very useful way of presenting the Cause indirectly to many people. It has opened many doors of contact for the believers, and has lately proved to be of tremendous help in introducing the Teachings into important social and intellectual circles."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 28, 1937)

[600] 2029. The Teaching of the Indians in America
"As you know, the Master attached the utmost importance to the teaching of the Indians in America. The Guardian therefore hopes that your Assembly will devote considerable energy to this most important matter so that contacts are made with Indians in all of the Countries under your jurisdiction and some of these Indians become confirmed in the Faith.

"If the light of Divine Guidance enters properly into the lives of the Indians, it will be found that they will arise with a great power and will become an example of spirituality and culture to all of the people in these countries.

"The Master has likened the Indians in your Countries to the early Arabian Nomads at the time of the appearance of Muhammad. Within a short period of time they became the outstanding examples of education, of culture and of civilization for the entire world. The Master feels that similar wonders will occur today if the Indians are properly taught and if the power of the Spirit properly enters into their living."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America and Mexico, August 22, 1957)

2030. Teaching the Muslims
"...Teaching Muslims the Faith requires to a great degree a knowledge of the Qur'an, so that you can bring them proofs from their own texts. If you have not mastered this yet, he suggests that you do so with the help of some of the Baha'is from the Islamic background. In this way you will attract the well-educated Muslims, and they will be deeply appreciative that an American should know so much about their religion."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 9, 1956)

2031. It is the Holy Spirit that Confirms and the Individual Should Become as a Reed Through which the Spirit May Descend

"One should remember it is not the individual who confirms another, but the Holy Spirit which confirms. Thus the individual must become as a reed, through which the spirit may descend, and quicken souls. Thus the best way to develop capacity in teaching the Faith is to teach. As one teaches, he gains more knowledge himself, he relies more on the guidance of the spirit, and expands his own character. This is why Baha'u'llah made it incumbent on all to teach the Faith."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, November 24, 1956)

2032. Many People Are Ready for and Longing to Find These Teachings

"There are many, many people ready for and longing to find these Teachings of Baha'u'llah. The friends must, through prayers for guidance, and through trying to contact different types of groups, seek out these hungry souls and confirm them."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 5, 1948)

2033. The Teacher Should Use Whatever Method of Expression that Will Attract the Listener

"English is, compared to Latin and oriental languages, lacking (as spoken in daily [601] use) in flowery terms, and the Guardian feels that in teaching you should always use whatever method will most attract your hearers. If such terms as 'The Glory of God' are not suited to certain individuals' mentality you should refrain from using them until they draw really close to the spirit of the Cause. The teaching is of primary, the words of secondary importance."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 23, 1945)

2034. Audacity in Teaching is Essential, But with Tact, Wisdom and Consideration

"...It is certainly necessary, nay indeed vitally urgent, that the believers should make no compromise in teaching the Cause, and should not allow any consciousness of their limited means and resources to deter them from presenting the Teachings in their entirety, and with absolute courage and firm conviction. It is the realization that they are but the instruments of the Divine Will, and as such are endowed with a potency with which no earthly power, be it fame, wealth, human knowledge and capacity, can possibly compare, that should inspire them with an indomitable courage and determination to teach and deliver the Message to whomsoever they contact, and thus insure the faithful execution of the divine trust committed to their charge by Baha'u'llah.

"As the Guardian himself has pointed out, audacity in teaching is essential,

but no less important is the necessity for the exercise of the utmost tact, wisdom and consideration, in approaching either separate individuals or large public audiences. Only when these qualities have been duly combined and harmonized can the teaching work be carried on effectively, and produce lasting results."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 2, 1939)

2035. Regarding Those Who Are Enrolled, But Do Not Consider Themselves Baha'is
"With regard to those who do not consider themselves Baha'is on the basis of the argument that they signed the Declaration Card without actually knowing the significance of what they were doing, you should determine who these people are. You should then deepen their knowledge of the Faith. If they feel, after receiving sufficient information, that they do not wish to be Baha'i, then their names should be removed from the Baha'i membership list."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, June 23, 1985)

2036. The Most Successful Way for the Individual to Carry on the Teaching Work
"The Baha'is must realize that the success of this work depends upon the individual. The individual must arise as never before to proclaim the Faith of Baha'u'llah. The most effective way for them to carry on their work is for the individual to make many contacts, select a few whom they feel would become Baha'is, develop a close friendship with them, then complete confidence, and finally teach them the Faith, until they become strong supporters of the Cause of God."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 13, 1955)

XLIX. TESTS

[602] 2037. Baha'is Often Each Other's Greatest Test
"Perhaps the greatest test Baha'is are ever subjected to is from each other; but for the sake of the Master they should be ever ready to overlook each other's mistakes, apologize for harsh words they have uttered, forgive and forget. He strongly recommends to you this course of action."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 18, 1945: Living the Life, p. 12)

2038. Growing Pains Every Baha'i Community Experiences
"Often these trials and tests which all Baha'i Communities inevitably pass through seem terrible at the moment, but in retrospect we understand that they were due to the frailty of human nature, to misunderstanding, and to the growing pains which every Baha'i community must experience."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 25, 1956: Ibid., p. 19)

2039. Failures, Tests and Trials Are Means of Purifying Our Spirits
"We must always look ahead and seek to accomplish in the future what we may have failed to do in the past. Failures, tests, and trials, if we use them

correctly, can become the means of purifying our spirit, strengthening our characters, and enable us to rise to greater heights of service."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 14, 1941: Ibid., p. 7)

2040. God Sometimes Causes Us to Suffer Much that We May Become Strong in His Cause

"You must not be sad. This affliction will make you spiritually stronger. Do not be sad. Cheer up! Praise be to God, you are dear to Me, I will tell you a story:

'A certain ruler wished to appoint one of his subjects to a high office: so, in order to train him, the ruler cast him into prison and caused him to suffer much. The man was surprised at this, for he expected great favours. The ruler had him taken from prison and beaten with sticks. This greatly astonished the man, for he thought the ruler loved him. After this he was hanged on the gallows until he was nearly dead. After he recovered he asked the ruler, 'If you love me, why did you do these things?' The ruler replied: 'I wish to make you prime minister. By having gone through these ordeals you are better fitted for that office. I wish you to know how it is yourself. When you are obliged to punish, you will know how it feels to endure these things. I love you so I wish you to become perfect.'

"Even so with you. After this ordeal you will reach maturity. God sometimes [603] causes us to suffer much and to have many misfortunes that we may become strong in His Cause. You will soon recover and be spiritually stronger than ever before. You will work for God and carry the Message to many of your people."
(Words of 'Abdu'l-Baha on October 10, 1912 to Mr. Tinsley who was recovering from an accident in San Francisco, California: Star of the West, Vol. IV, No. 12, p. 205)

2041. A Man May Forget God While Happy

"While a man is happy he may forget his God; but when grief comes and sorrows overwhelm him, then will he remember his Father Who is in Heaven, and Who is able to deliver him from his humiliations.
"Men who suffer not, attain no perfection. The plant most pruned by the gardeners is that one which, when the summer comes, will have the most beautiful blossoms and the most abundant fruit."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, pp. 50-51)

2042. Difficulties Are Means for the Spirit to Grow

"Thus you might look upon your own difficulties in the path of service. They are the means of your spirit growing and developing. You will suddenly find that you have conquered many of the problems which upset you, and then you will wonder why they should have troubled you at all. An individual must centre his whole heart and mind on service to the Cause, in accordance with the high standards set by Baha'u'llah. When this is done, the Hosts of the Supreme Concourse will come to the assistance of the individual, and every difficulty

and trial will gradually be overcome."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 6, 1954: Living the Life, p. 19)

2043. Is It Right to Tell Untruth to Save Another?
"As to the question whether it is right to tell an untruth in order to save another, he feels that under no condition should we tell an untruth but at the same time try and help the person in a more legitimate manner. Of course it is not necessary to be too outspoken until the question is directly put to us."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 21, 1927: Living the Life, p. 3)

2044. No Comfort in This World—Some Under Pressure Commit Suicide
"...No comfort can be secured by any soul in this world, from monarch down to the most humble commoner. If once this life should offer a man a sweet cup, a hundred bitter ones will follow; such is the condition of this world. The wise man, therefore, doth not attach himself to this mortal life and doth not depend upon it; at some moments, even, he eagerly wisheth for death that he may thereby be freed from these sorrows and afflictions. Thus it is seen that some, under extreme pressure of anguish, have committed suicide."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 200)

2045. We Can Turn Our Stumbling Blocks Into Stepping Stones
"...We Baha'is can always, with the aid of Baha'u'llah, Who, is ever ready to strengthen and assist us, turn our stumbling blocks into stepping stones, and utilize [604] the often violent forces released by sincere but perhaps misguided friends, as a positive stream of power by turning them into productive channels instead of destructive ones."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, June 30, 1949)

2046. Life Afflicts Us with Very Severe Trials which We Must Accept Patiently
"Life afflicts us with very severe trials sometimes, but we must always remember that when we accept patiently the Will of God He compensates us in other ways. With faith and love we must be patient, and He will surely reward us."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 30, 1951)

2047. Many Tests Are Due to Our Own Nature
"He was very sorry to hear that you have had so many tests in your Baha'i life. There is no doubt that many of them are due to our own nature. In other words, if we are very sensitive, or if we are in some way brought up in a different environment from the Baha'is amongst whom we live, we naturally see things differently and may feel them more acutely; and the other side of it is that the imperfections of our fellow-Baha'is can be a great trial to us.

"We must always remember that in the cesspool of materialism, which is what modern civilization has to a certain extent become, Baha'is—that is some of them—are still to a certain extent affected by the society from which they

have sprung. In other words, they have recognized the Manifestation of God, but they have not been believers long enough, or perhaps not tried hard enough, to become 'a new creation'.

"He feels that, if you close your eyes to the failings of others, and fix your love and prayers upon Baha'u'llah, you will have the strength to weather this storm, and will be much better for it in the end, spiritually. Although you suffer, you will gain a maturity that will enable you to be of greater help to both your fellow-Baha'is and your children."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 5, 1956)

2048. Only Through Suffering Can Nobility of Character Be Made Manifest—The Energy We Spend Enduring the Intolerance of Others is Not Lost
"As to the inconveniences you have experienced during the last ten years, the best consolation I can imagine for you is your own quotation of the Hidden Words, 'My calamity is my providence.' We must bear with one another. It is only through suffering that the nobility of character can make itself manifest. The energy we expend in enduring the intolerance of some individuals of our community is not lost. It is transformed into fortitude, steadfastness and magnanimity. The lives of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha are the best examples for this. Sacrifices in the path of one's religion produce always immortal results, 'Out of the ashes rises the phoenix'."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 30, 1923)

2049. Suffering Seems to be Part of the Polish God Employs to Enable Us to Reflect More of His Attributes
"...Suffering, of one kind or another, seems to be the portion of man in this world. Even the Beloved Ones, the Prophets of God, have never been exempt from [605] the ills that are to be found in our world; poverty, disease, bereavement,—they seem to be part of the polish God employs to make us finer, and enable us to reflect more of His attributes! No doubt in the future, when the foundation of society is laid according to the Divine plan, and men become truly spiritualized, a vast amount of our present ills and problems will be remedied. We who toil now are paving the way for a far better world, and this knowledge must uphold and strengthen us through every trial."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 3, 1943)

2050. Sometimes Things which Seem Difficult to Understand Have a Simple, Reasonable Explanation
"He feels that many of the perplexities that arise in your mind could be dissipated if you always conceived of the teachings as one great whole with many facets. Truth may, in covering different subjects, appear to be contradictory, and yet it is all one if you carry the thought through to the end... He hopes you will ... rest assured inwardly that for these things which sometimes seem difficult to understand there is usually a quite simple and reasonable explanation."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 24, 1947: The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith, A Compilation from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, January 1983)

L. THE TEMPLE MASHRIQU'L-ADHKAR

A. Founding of the Temple*

[606] 2051. Founding of Temple Marks Inception Kingdom of God on Earth
"The founding of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will mark the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. 6, No. 17, 1916, p. 137)

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*(See also: No. 1884)

2052. Temple Ordained to be Ark to Ride Tidal Wave
"...Divinely-founded Temple ordained to be the Ark destined to ride triumphant the tidal wave of world-encircling calamities and offering sole refuge to storm-tossed sufferers of sinful, steadily sinking civilization...."
(Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 23, 1939: Messages to America, p. 30)

2053. First Institute by the Disciples Was a Temple
"The Mashrak-el-Azcar is the most important matter and the greatest divine institute. Consider how the first institute of His Holiness Moses, after His exodus from Egypt, was the 'Tent of Martyrdom' which He raised and which was the travelling Temple. It was a tent which they pitched in the desert, wherever they abode, and worshipped in it. Likewise, after His Holiness Christ—may the spirit of the world be a sacrifice to Him!—the first institute by the disciples was a Temple. They planned a church in every country. Consider the Gospel (read it) and the importance of the Mashrak-el-Azcar will become evident."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Vol. III, p. 633)

2054. Effect on Those Who Build It—Arise for the Service of Temple
"Not only does the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar have an effect upon those who built it but upon the whole world... Whosoever arises for the service of this building shall be assisted with great power from His Supreme Kingdom, and upon him spiritual and heavenly blessings shall descend which shall fill his heart with wonderful consolation and enlighten his eyes by beholding the Glorious and Eternal God."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Year Book, Vol. 1, pp. 60-62)

2055. Accessories to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar
"The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar and its accessories: When these institutions—college, hospital, hospice, and establishments for the incurables, university for the study of higher sciences and giving post-graduate courses, and other philanthropic buildings—are built, its doors will be open to all the nations and all religions. There will be drawn [607] absolutely no line of demarcation. Its charities will be dispensed irrespective of colour and race. Its gates will

be flung wide to mankind; prejudice toward none, love for all. The central building will be devoted to the purpose of prayer and worship. Thus for the first time religion will become harmonized with science and science will be the handmaid of religion, both showering their material and spiritual gifts on all humanity. In this way the people will be lifted out of the quagmires of slothfulness and bigotry."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Star of the West, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1930, p. 20)

2056. One of the Most Vital Institutions in the World is the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar
"The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is one of the most vital institutions in the world, and it hath many subsidiary branches. Although it is a House of Worship, it is also connected with a hospital, a drug dispensary, a traveller's hospice, a school for orphans, and a university for advanced studies. Every Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is connected with these five things. My hope is that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will now be established in America, and that gradually the hospital, the school, the university, the dispensary and the hospice, all functioning according to the most efficient and orderly procedures, will follow. Make these matters known to the beloved of the Lord, so that they will understand how very great is the importance of this 'Dawning-Point of the Remembrance of God.' The Temple is not only a place for worship; rather, in every respect is it complete and whole."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 99-100, Wilmette, 1982 ed.)

2057. The Relationship of an Administrative Building to the Temple is Worship and Service
"As to the question of the relationship of an administrative building to the Temple: This also will have to be defined in future, but whatever the actual form which such relationship may assume, and whatever its details, it should be based on the general principle that these two sets of Baha'i institutions embody two vital and distinct, yet inseparable aspects of Baha'i life: worship and service. The central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, which is exclusively devoted to purpose of worship, represents the spiritual element, and therefore fulfils a primary function in every Baha'i Community, whereas all other Temple accessories, whether of a strictly administrative, cultural or humanitarian character, are secondary, and come next in importance to the House of Worship itself."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 28, 1939)

B. Worship in the Temple

2058. The Reason for a Place of Worship
"You had asked about places of worship and the underlying reason therefor. The wisdom in raising up such building is that at a given hour, the people should know it is time to meet, and all should gather together, and, harmoniously attuned one to another, should engage in prayer; with the result that out of this coming together, unity and affection shall grow and flourish in the human heart."
('Abdu'l-Baha: from a newly translated extract cited in a compilation on the

Temple from the World Centre)

[608] 2059. The Character of Meetings in the Auditorium
"As to the character of the meetings in the Auditorium of the Temple, he feels that they should be purely devotional in character; Baha'i addresses and lectures should be strictly excluded. For the present, he feels that there would be no objection to having Baha'i meetings including addresses and the business sessions of the Convention held in the Foundation Hall. Shoghi Effendi would urge that choir singing by men, women and children be encouraged in the Auditorium and that rigidity in the Baha'i service be scrupulously avoided. The more universal and informal the character of Baha'i worship in the Temple the better. Images and pictures, with the exception of the Greatest Name, should be strictly excluded. Prayers revealed by Baha'u'llah and the Master as well as sacred Writings of the Prophets should be read or chanted as well as hymns based upon Baha'i or non-Baha'i sacred Writings."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 2, 1931)

2060. Non-Baha'i Public Welcome
"Let the friends not hesitate to welcome to their observances, even to those of a devotional character, the non-Baha'i public, many of whom may well be attracted by the prayers and expressions of gratitude of the believers, no less than by the exalted tone of passages from Baha'i Writings."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, June 25, 1967: Wellspring of Guidance, p. 116)

2061. Worship in Temple
"As regard the whole question of the Temple and services held in it: He wishes to emphasize that he is very anxious, now that this first and greatest Temple of the West has been built, and will, within a few years, be used for worship and regular services by the Baha'is, that no forms, no rituals, no set customs be introduced over and above the bare minimum outlined in the teachings. The nature of these gatherings is for prayer, meditation and the reading of writings from the Sacred Scriptures of our Faith and other Faiths; there can be one or a number of readers; any Baha'i chosen, or even, non-Baha'i, may read. The gatherings should be simple, dignified, and designed to uplift the soul and educate it through hearing the Creative Word. No speeches may be made, no extraneous matter introduced.

"The use of pulpits is forbidden by Baha'u'llah: if, in order to be more clearly heard, the person stands on a low platform, there is no objection, but this should not be incorporated as an architectural feature of the building....

"Vocal music alone may be used and the position of the singers or singer is also a matter for your Assembly to decide; but again, there should be no fixed point, no architectural details marking a special spot. Acoustics should certainly be the main consideration in placing the singers."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 11, 1947: Insert with Baha'i News, No.

232, June 1950)

2062. Talking in the Temple
"It is understood of course that there is to be no talking in the auditorium of the Temple. However, the Guardian does feel that in an emergency, it may be necessary to carry on a conversation for a very limited period, in a subdued tone of voice. [609] The Guardian feels that in matters of this type, careful judgement must be used."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 1953: Archives)

2063. Scriptures of Other Religions, Readers, Music in the House of Worship
"Your Assembly is free to use its discretion in choosing excerpts from the generally recognized scriptures of the older religions.

"With reference to your query about the use of several readers in unison, this is permissible provided it does not seem or become theatrical in the view of your Assembly. Concerning the placement of the reader the beloved Guardian has already indicated, 'the reader should stand where he or she will best be seen and heard by all.'

"Music in the House of Worship is to be vocal only, whether by singers or a singer. It does not matter if a guest a capella choir or soloist is used, provided such use is not made the occasion to publicize services of Worship and the precautions you mention are taken. No doubt the excellent recordings available today would assure the highest quality of performance at low cost, but all references to vocal music in the central Edifice imply the physical presence of the singers."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, March 13, 1964)

2064. The Auditorium May Be Used for Special Prayers by Visiting Groups, Baha'i or Non-Baha'i
"...provided the general rules governing the nature of services in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar are observed, there is no objection to your Assembly permitting the use of the auditorium for special prayer meetings by visiting groups at times when no general service is scheduled, and such meetings could include memorial services for departed souls, whether Baha'i or non-Baha'i. However, in some religions it is customary to hold memorial services for the departed at a specific time after the death—for example, in Islam it is forty days after the passing. The Guardian has stated that such practices have nothing to do with the Faith, the friends should be quite clear on this matters, and should preferably discontinue the practice. Therefore, in all such things the National Spiritual Assembly should be careful to ensure that no set practices or forms arise."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, November 24, 1976)

2065. The Chanting of Tablets in the Temple
"As regards the chanting of Tablets in the Temple, Shoghi Effendi wishes in

this connection to urge the friends to avoid all forms of rigidity and uniformity in matter of worship. There is no objection to the reciting or chanting of prayers in oriental languages, but there is also no objection whatever of adopting such a form of prayer at any devotional service in the auditorium of the Temple. It should neither be required nor prohibited. The important thing that should always be borne in mind is that with the exception of certain specific obligatory prayers Baha'u'llah has given us, no strict or special ruling in matters of worship whether in the Temple or elsewhere. [610] Prayer is essentially a communion between man and God and as such transcends all ritualistic forms and formulae."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 15, 1935)

2066. Questions and Answers Concerning Services in the House of Worship
"With reference to your letter of August 2, 1964, and the questions you have asked concerning services at the House of Worship, we have now had opportunity to study your questions in the light of available texts, and we are glad to share with you our conclusions.

"We will set forth your question, ... and then make our comments at the end of each section:

A. Is congregational singing the same as congregational worship? Is it permissible to have singing in which anyone can join? If so, is it permissible for 'Allah-u-Abha' or 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha' to be sung?

"Singing by a congregation present at a service in the House of Worship should not be confused with congregational prayer prescribed by Baha'u'llah for the dead. As the Guardian in a letter written on his behalf by his secretary pointed out: 'When the Aqdas is published the form of congregational prayer prescribed by Baha'u'llah will be made clear to all the friends.' (Baha'i Procedure, 1942, page 5) Regarding singing in the Temple, we must bear in mind the reference made by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas to the need for the person who enters the Temple to sit silently and listen to the chanting of the verses of God, as well as the statements made by the Guardian regarding 'the reader' or 'a number of readers' or a 'choir'.

"In connection with the desire of the Africans to sing, this aptitude in them should be encouraged. The Guardian elucidated this principle in a letter written on his behalf by his secretary: 'Shoghi Effendi would urge that choir singing by men, women and children be encouraged in the Auditorium, and that rigidity in the Baha'i service be scrupulously avoided.' (Baha'i News, September, 1931)."

B. Could we develop musical programs with words not necessarily from Sacred Scriptures? Could Christian hymn tunes with Baha'i words be used?

"We feel that the first question is covered by the following instruction given by the Guardian: 'Prayers ... should be read or chanted, as well as hymns based upon Baha'i or non-Baha'i sacred Writings.' (Baha'i News, September 1931). As

regards using hymn tunes of other religions there is no objection to this. As the Guardian once pointed out, we do not have at this time distinctive music which could be called Baha'i, as such a cultural expression is the flower of the civilization and does not come at the beginning of a new Revelation."

C. Is it necessary at the present time to uphold at all costs a standard of excellence in Temple singing? If so, should it be a Western or an African standard?

"In everything we do we should always try to attain a standard of excellence. Bearing in mind the basic principle of unity in diversity and the undesirability of attempting uniformity, the National Assembly should do all possible to ensure the dignified presentation of whatever is sung in the Temple, African, Western or other."

D. [611] ...may the reader preface his reading by 'This reading is from ...' or words to the effect? Is it permissible to make short comments which might add 'following readings are on the subject of humility...' or 'the following healing prayer is for...'

"There is no objection to the reader very briefly stating at the beginning of his reading, the reference and source of the passage he is about to read. Beyond this, any other comment regarding the passage to be read is inappropriate. If in the future, your Assembly is able to overcome the difficulty of making a printed program available, it would be far better to have such a program."

E. May the writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha be used in the Temple as these are most easily translatable and many are already prepared in the most common local language—Luganda?

"The Guardian's advice on this point is: 'Prayers revealed by Baha'u'llah and the Master as well as Sacred Writings of the Prophets should be read or chanted.' (Baha'i News, September 1931). In response to a specific question put to the Guardian regarding the Public Talks and Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Guardian advised that these should not be used in the devotional services in the Temple...."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda and Central Africa, August 19, 1965)

C. Temple Guiding and Other Activities

2067. The Temple Guide Has a Very Sacred Obligation
"Regarding the guide work at the Temple...: The Guardian attaches the highest importance to it, inasmuch as it affords a splendid opportunity for presenting the Message on a very large scale. The responsibilities which this function calls for are as vital and far reaching as the privileges and bounties it confers on the individual believer. The Baha'i guide has indeed a very sacred obligation to discharge. Not only he has to perfect his knowledge of the Cause, but should develop all those qualities of tact, wisdom, and of ability to present the Message which every Baha'i teacher requires. It is the duty of

those who are in charge of organizing the guide work at the Temple to make every effort to widen its scope, raise the standard of its personnel, and thus increase its effectiveness."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 17, 1937)

2068. Baha'i Guides Should Be Well Informed
"You have asked as to what information the Baha'i guides at the Temple should give the visitors; any information, whether in connection with the purely architectural side of the Edifice or with its spiritual and social significance, should be offered to the inquirers, and it is therefore essential that all those who have been appointed as guides should be well informed regarding every aspect of the Temple.

"The Temple Guide Committee should see to it that every one of the guides fulfils these requirements, and should offer them every advice and suggestion they need in the discharge of their task."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 14, 1939)

[612] 2069. The Essential Requisites for Guides
"The essential requisite of guides is that they should know the Temple and the teachings so as to be able to answer questions and attract the hearts of the people through their spirit as well as their words. It is a very important position as it often marks the very first contact of a person with the Faith and on it may hinge that individual's future attitude towards the Cause. Perhaps some of the older Baha'is, who are not able to climb so many stairs, could answer questions and interest enquirers and a more active person show people over the building and explain the technical points?"
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 5, 1944)

2070. Work at the Temple on Holy Days
"The beloved Guardian made it absolutely clear that the command to cease work during the nine Holy Days is a matter for conscientious obedience by every individual believer. In the case of businesses and other undertakings entirely under Baha'i control, they must also close down during the Baha'i Holy Days, even though non-Baha'is may be members of their staffs.

"It is fully appreciated that the Baha'i Temple must be open for worship on the Holy Days and therefore it is permitted to provide, to the minimum extent possible, essential services. Those necessary tasks, such as cleaning and other preparation of the building, which can be carried out on the previous day should be so done and only those duties which must be performed should be undertaken on the Holy Day. In the case of the Temple it is immaterial whether the workers are Baha'is or non-Baha'is since it is the duty of the Faith to observe, especially in respect of its own institutions, the command to cease work on the Holy Days."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the

National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, August 12, 1977)

2071. Land Grant from Government Not Acceptable for Temple Site
"...it is not permissible to accept a free grant of land from the government to be used as a Temple site. The principle of not accepting gifts from non-Baha'is for strictly Baha'i purposes applies to receiving free grants of land from non-Baha'is, whether individuals, institutions or governments. There is no objection, however, to accepting free plots of land from the government or civic authorities if such plots are used for Baha'i cemeteries or for such institutions that are charitable or humanitarian in nature, such as schools."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Belize, June 15, 1972)

LI. WOMEN

[613] 2072. Both Women and Men Have Been Created in the Image of God
"Know thou, O handmaid, that in the sight of Baha, women are accounted the same as men, and God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness. That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them. Whosoever draweth nearer to God, that one is the most favoured, whether man or woman. How many a handmaid, ardent and devoted, hath, within the sheltering shade of Baha, proved superior to the men, and surpassed the famous of the earth.

"The House of Justice, however, according to the explicit text of the Law of God, is confined to men* this for a wisdom of the Lord God's which will erelong be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, 1978 World Centre edition, pp. 79-80)

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*(From other extracts it is evident that the limitation of membership to men applies only to the Universal House of Justice, and not to the National and Local Houses of Justice.)

2073. Clarification Exclusion of Women on House of Justice
"Your letter of March 26th, 1971 asking for clarification of the exclusion of women from membership in the Universal House of Justice in view of the great principle of the Cause of the equality of men and women has been received and we offer you the following comments.

"In a Tablet to an early woman believer 'Abdu'l-Baha stated: 'O maidservant of God! Know thou that in the sight of God, the conduct of women is the same as that of men... From the spiritual point of view ... there is no difference between women and men...' He added, however:
'As to the House of Justice: according to the explicit text of the Law of God, its membership is exclusively reserved to men. There is divine wisdom in this which will presently be made manifest even as the mid-day sun.'

"The beloved Guardian in reply to the same query from a believer pointed out in

a letter written on his behalf on July 15th 1947: 'People must just accept the fact that women are not eligible to the International House of Justice. As the Master says the wisdom of this will be known in the future, we can only accept, believing it is right, but not able to give an explanation calculated to silence an ardent feminist!'

"We must have faith in the Supreme Manifestation of God and His Exemplar, Whose prescience is revealed in such provisions which will one day 'be made manifest even as the mid-day sun.'"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 26, 1971)

[614] 2074. The Membership of the Universal House of Justice is Confined to Men; This is Not a Function Designated for Women
"As regards the membership of the International House of Justice, 'Abdu'l-Baha states in a Tablet that it is confined to men, and that the wisdom of it will be revealed as manifest as the sun in the future. In any case the believers should know that, as 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself has explicitly stated that sexes are equal except in some cases, the exclusion of women from the International House of Justice should not be surprising. From the fact that there is no equality of functions between the sexes one should not, however, infer that either sex is inherently superior or inferior to the other, or that they are unequal in their rights."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 28, 1936: Women, A Compilation, p. 9)

2075. Women Are Destined to Attain to the Very Highest Station of the World of Humanity—Baha'u'llah Has Willed It So!
"In this Revelation of Baha'u'llah, the women go neck and neck with the men. In no movement will they be left behind. Their rights with men are equal in degree. They will enter all the administrative branches of politics. They will attain in all such a degree as will be considered the very highest station of the world of humanity and will take part in all affairs. Rest ye assured. Do ye not look upon the present condition; in the not far distant future the world of women will become all-refulgent and all-glorious. For His Holiness Baha'u'llah Hath Willed It so! At the time of elections the right to vote is the inalienable right of women, and the entrance of women into all human departments is an irrefutable and incontrovertible question. No soul can retard or prevent it.

"But there are certain matters, the participation in which is not worthy of women. For example, at the time when the community is taking up vigorous defensive measures against the attack of foes, the women are exempt from military engagements. It may so happen that at a given time warlike and savage tribes may furiously attack the body politic with the intention of carrying on a wholesale slaughter of its members; under such a circumstance defence is necessary, but it is the duty of men to organize and execute such defensive measures and not the women—because their hearts are tender and they cannot endure the sight of the horror of carnage, even if it is for the sake of

defence. From such and similar undertakings the women are exempt.

"As regards the constitution of the House of Justice, Baha'u'llah addresses the men. He says: 'O ye men of the House of Justice!'

"But when its members are to be elected, the right which belongs to women, so far as their voting and their voice is concerned, is indisputable. When the women attain to the ultimate degree of progress, then according to the exigency of the time and place and their great capacity, they shall obtain extraordinary privileges. Be ye confident on these accounts. His Holiness Baha'u'llah has greatly strengthened the cause of women, and the rights and privileges of women is one of the greatest principles of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Rest ye assured! Ere long the days shall come when the men addressing the women, shall say: 'Blessed are ye! Blessed are ye! Verily ye are worthy of every gift. Verily ye deserve to adorn your heads with the crown of everlasting [615] glory, because in sciences and arts, in virtues and perfections ye shall become equal to man, and as regards tenderness of heart and the abundance of mercy and sympathy ye are superior'."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, 1961, U.K. edition, pp. 182-184)

2076. Reference to the "Men of Justice" Cited in the Kitab-i-Aqdas is Based on a Certain Principle Deriving from Baha'u'llah
"To the general premise that women and men have equality in the Faith, this, as often explained by 'Abdu'l-Baha, is a fundamental principle deriving from Baha'u'llah and therefore His mention of the 'Men of Justice' in the Kitab-i-Aqdas should be considered in light of that principle."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 29, 1976: Women)

2077. All Mankind Are the Creatures of One God—"Man" is a Generic Term Applying to All Humanity
"In this day man must investigate reality impartially and without prejudice in order to reach the true knowledge and conclusions. What, then, constitutes the inequality between man and woman? Both are human. In powers and function each is the complement of the other. At most it is this: that woman has been denied the opportunities which man has so long enjoyed, especially the privilege of education....

"The truth is that all mankind are the creatures and servants of one God, and in His estimate all are human. Man is a generic term applying to all humanity. The Biblical statement 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' does not mean that woman was not created. The image and likeness of God apply to her as well. In Persian and Arabic there are two distinct words translated into English as man: one meaning man and woman collectively, the other distinguishing man as male from woman the female. The first word and its pronoun are generic, collective; the other is restricted to the male. This is the same in Hebrew.

"To accept and observe a distinction which God has not intended in creation is ignorance and superstition...

"It is my hope that the banner of equality may be raised throughout the five continents where as yet it is not fully recognized and established. In this enlightened world of the West woman has advanced an immeasurable degree beyond the women of the Orient. And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality. God willing, this is to be so."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, pp. 74-77)

2078. Baha'u'llah Made Women Respected by Proclaiming that All Women Be Educated—In Some Societies It was Preferable that She Should Not Know Reading and Writing

"The status of woman in former times was exceedingly deplorable, for it was the belief of the Orient that it was best for woman to be ignorant. It was considered preferable that she should not know reading or writing in order that she might not be [616] informed of the events in the world. Woman was considered to be created for rearing children and attending to the duties of the household. If she pursued educational courses, it was deemed contrary to chastity; hence women were made prisoners of the household. The houses did not even have windows opening upon the outside world. Baha'u'llah destroyed these ideas and proclaimed the equality of man and woman. He made woman respected by commanding that all women be educated, that there be no difference in the education of the two sexes and that man and woman share the same rights. In the estimation of God there is no distinction of sex. One whose thought is pure, whose education is superior, whose scientific attainments are greater, whose deeds of philanthropy excel, be that one man or woman, white or coloured, is entitled to full rights and recognition; there is no differentiation whatsoever."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 166)

2079. The New Age Will Be an Age Less Masculine; the Feminine and Masculine Elements Will Be More Evenly Balanced

"The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting—force is losing its weight and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine, and more permeated with the feminine ideals—or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'u'llah and the New Era, 1976 U.S. edition, p. 156)

2080. Woman Would Be the Peer of Men if Equal Opportunity Were Granted

"It has been objected by some that woman is not equally capable with man and that she is deficient by creation. This is pure imagination. The difference in

capability between man and woman is due entirely to opportunity and education. Heretofore woman has been denied the right and privilege of equal development. If equal opportunity be granted her there is no doubt she would be the peer of man. History will evidence this...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 135)

2081. With the Same Educational Advantages Women Will Show Equal Capacity for Scholarship
"In the world of humanity ... the female sex is treated as though inferior, and is not allowed equal rights and privileges. This condition is due not to nature, but to education. In the Divine Creation there is no such distinction. Neither sex is superior to the other in the sight of God. Why then should one sex assert the inferiority of the other, withholding just rights and privileges as though God had given His authority for such a course of action? If women received the same educational advantages as those of men, the result would demonstrate the equality of capacity of both for scholarship.

"In some respects woman is superior to man. She is more tender-hearted, more receptive, her intuition is more intense."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, 1961 U.K. edition, p. 161)

[617] 2082. She is the Coadjutor of Man
"...if woman be fully educated and granted her rights, she will attain the capacity for wonderful accomplishments and prove herself the equal of man. She is the coadjutor of man, his complement and helpmeet. Both are human, both are endowed with potentialities of intelligence and embody the virtues of humanity. In all human powers and functions they are partners and co-equals. At present in spheres of human activity woman does not manifest her natal prerogatives owing to lack of education and opportunity. Without doubt education will establish her equality with men...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 136-137, 1982 ed.)

2083. The Need to Educate and Guide Women in Their Primary Responsibility as Mothers
"The House of Justice regards the need to educate and guide women in their primary responsibility as mothers as an excellent opportunity for organizing women's activities. Your efforts should focus on helping them in their function as educators of the rising generation. Women should also be encouraged to attract their husbands and male members of their families to the Faith so that the Baha'i community will be representative of the society of which it forms a part. Gradually the spirit of unity and fellowship, as set forth in our teachings, will be reflected in the life of Baha'i families."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, February 29, 1984: Women)

2084. No Nation Can Achieve Success Unless Education is Accorded to All Its Citizens
"The cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves the utmost

support that the governments of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principle reason for the decline and fall of people and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability of many nations to fulfil this necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities.

"The decision-making agencies involved would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration should also be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the standard education of every child."
(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice, October 1985: Ibid.)

2085. If Mother is Educated Then Her Children Will Be Well Taught
"If the mother is educated then her children will be well taught. When the mother is wise, then will the children be led into the path of wisdom. If the mother be religious she will show her children how they should love God. If the mother is moral she guides her little ones into the ways of uprightness... Therefore, surely, God is not pleased that so important an instrument as woman should suffer from want of training in order to attain the perfections desirable and necessary for her great life's work! Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected
[618] since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven. Dignity before God depends, not on sex, but on purity and luminosity of heart. Human virtues belong equally to all!"
('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, p. 162, U.K. 1941 ed.)

2086. The Assumption of Superiority by Men Will Continue to be Depressing to the Ambition of Women
"In brief, the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment of equality was creationally impossible; woman's aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless. On the contrary, we must declare that her capacity is equal, even greater than man's. This will inspire her with hope and ambition, and her susceptibilities for advancement will continually increase. She must not be told and taught that she is weaker and inferior in capacity and qualification. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance by the statement, 'You are most capable, and if you endeavour, you will attain the highest degree'."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, pp. 76-77)

2087. The Boldness which the Women Who Enlisted in the Ranks of the Faith Have Evinced is One of the Miracles which Distinguish This Sacred Dispensation
"Abdu'l-Baha has pointed out that 'Among the miracles which distinguish this sacred Dispensation is this, that women have evinced a greater boldness than men when enlisted in the ranks of the Faith.' Shoghi Effendi has further stated

that this 'boldness' must, in the course of time, 'be more convincingly demonstrated, and win for the beloved Cause victories more stirring than any it has as yet achieved.' Although obviously the entire Baha'i world is committed to encouraging and stimulating the vital role of women in the Baha'i community as well as in society at large, the Five Year Plan calls specifically on eighty National Spiritual Assemblies to organize Baha'i activities for women. In the course of the current year which has been designated 'International Women's Year' as a world-wide activity of the United Nations, the Baha'is, particularly in these eighty national communities, should initiate and implement programs which will stimulate and promote the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of Baha'i community life, so that through their accomplishments the friends will demonstrate the distinction of the Cause of God in this field of human endeavour."
(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 25, 1975: Women, A Compilation)

2088. The Women's Liberation Movement
"Concerning the point you raised in your letter ... that the women's liberation movement in ... is assuming extreme positions which are having some influence on impressionable Baha'i young women, we feel it would be helpful if your Assembly were to stress the unique position that women occupy by being members of the [619] Baha'i Faith particularly through participation in the administration of its affairs on both a local and national scale."
(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, April 9, 1971: Ibid.)

2089. What 'Abdu'l-Baha Meant by Women Arising for Peace
"What 'Abdu'l-Baha meant about the women arising for peace is that this is a matter which vitally affects women, and when they form a conscious and overwhelming mass of public opinion against war, there can be no war. The Baha'i women are already organized through being members of the Faith and the Administrative Order. No further organization is needed. But they should, through teaching and through the active moral support they give to every movement directed towards peace, seek to exert a strong influence on other women's minds in regard to this essential matter."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 24, 1945: Ibid.)

2090. The Emancipation of Women and the Achievement of Full Equality is One of the Most Important Prerequisites for Peace
"The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological

climate be created in which international peace can emerge."
(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice, October 1985)

2091. The Hearts of Women Are More Tender and Susceptible Than the Hearts of Men and They Are More Philanthropic and Responsive Toward the Needy and Suffering

"Therefore, strive to show in the human world that women are most capable and efficient, that their hearts are more tender and susceptible than the hearts of men, that they are more philanthropic and responsive toward the needy and suffering, that they are inflexibly opposed to war and are lovers of peace. Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of universal peace."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 284)

2092. Woman by Nature is Opposed to War

"...imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.

[620] "The evident reasons underlying this are as follows: Woman by nature is opposed to war; she is an advocate of peace. Children are reared and brought up by the mothers who give them the first principles of education and labour assiduously in their behalf. Consider, for instance, a mother who has tenderly reared a son for twenty years to the age of maturity. Surely she will not consent to having that son torn asunder and killed in the field of battle. Therefore, as woman advances toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote and control in human government, most assuredly war will cease; for woman is naturally the most devoted and staunch advocate of international peace."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 375)

2093. The Woman Has Greater Moral Courage Than Man and is of the Greater Importance to the Race

"The woman is indeed of the greater importance to the race. She has the greater burden and the greater work. Look at the vegetable and the animal worlds. The palm which carries the fruit is the tree most prized by the date grower. The Arab knows that for a long journey the mare has the longest wind. For her greater strength and fierceness, the lioness is more feared by the hunter than the lion...

"The woman has greater moral courage than the man; she has also special gifts which enable her to govern in moments of danger and crisis."
('Abdu'l-Baha in London, 1982 U.K. edition, pp. 102-103)

2094. The Duty of Women in Being the First Educators of Mankind

"The duty of women in being the first educators of mankind is clearly set forth in the Writings. It is for every woman, if and when she becomes a mother, to

determine how best she can discharge on the one hand her chief responsibility as a mother and on the other, to the extent possible, to participate in other aspects of the activities of the society of which she forms a part."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 22, 1981: Women, A Compilation)

2095. At Present the Equality of Men and Women is Not Universally Applied
"The equality of men and women is not, at the present time, universally applied. In those areas where traditional inequality still hampers its progress we must take the lead in practising this Baha'i principle. Baha'i women and girls must be encouraged to take part in the social, spiritual and administrative activities of their communities."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 1984)

2096. One of the Factors in Bringing About International Peace is Woman's Suffrage
"Question: Is it not a fact that universal peace cannot be accomplished until there is political democracy in all the countries of the world?

"Answer: It is very evident that in the future there shall be no centralization in the countries of the world, be they constitutional in government, republican or democratic in form. The United States may be held up as the example of future government—that is to say, each province will be independent in itself, but there will be federal union protecting the interests of the various independent states. It may not be a republican or a democratic form. To cast aside centralization which promotes [621] despotism is the exigency of the time. This will be productive of international peace. Another fact of equal importance in bringing about international peace is woman's suffrage. That is to say, when perfect equality shall be established between men and women, peace may be realized for the simple reason that womankind in general will never favour warfare. Women will not be willing to allow those whom they have so tenderly cared for to go to the battlefield. When they shall have a vote, they will oppose any cause of warfare. Another factor which will bring about universal peace is the linking together of the Orient and the Occident."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 167)

2097. Equality of Men and Women is Conducive to the Abolition of Warfare
"When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. Equality between men and women is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the reason that women will never by willing to sanction it."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 175)

2098. The Principle of Equality Can Be Effectively and Universally Established When Pursued in Conjunction with All Other Aspects of Baha'i Life
"The principle of the equality between women and men, like the other teachings of the Faith, can be effectively and universally established among the friends

when it is pursued in conjunction with all the other aspects of Baha'i life. Change is an evolutionary process requiring patience with one's self and others, loving education and the passage of time as the believers deepen their knowledge of the principles of the Faith, gradually discard long-held traditional attitudes and progressively conform their lives to the unifying teachings of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 25, 1984: Women, A Compilation)

2099. God Does Not Inquire, "Art Thou Woman or Art Thou Man?"
"In reality, God has created all mankind, and in the estimation of God there is no distinction as to male and female. The one whose heart is pure is acceptable in His sight, be that one man or woman. God does not inquire, 'Art thou woman or art thou man?' He judges human actions. If these are acceptable in the threshold of the Glorious One, man and woman will be equally recognized and rewarded."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 133)

2100. Woman Must Study the Industrial and Agricultural Sciences in Order to Assist Mankind in that which is Most Needful
"Woman must especially devote her energies and abilities toward the industrial and agricultural sciences, seeking to assist mankind in that which is most needful. By this means she will demonstrate capability and ensure recognition of equality in the social and economic equation."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 283)

[622] 2101. When Woman Receives Education and Full Rights to the Prerogatives of Man, She Will Refuse to Send Her Sons to the Battlefield and She Will Abolish Warfare Among Mankind
"...the principle of religion has been revealed by Baha'u'llah that woman must be given the privilege of equal education with man and full right to his prerogatives. That is to say, there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 108)

2102. 'Abdu'l-Baha Regards Such Inequalities as Remain Between the Sexes in This Age as Being "Negligible"
"Abdu'l-Baha asserts: 'In this divine age the bounties of God have encompassed the world of women. Equality of men and women, except in some negligible instances, has been fully and categorically announced. Distinctions have been

utterly removed.' That men and women differ from one another in certain characteristics and functions is an inescapable fact of nature; the important thing is that He regards such inequalities as remain between the sexes as being 'negligible'."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, January 8, 1981: Women, A Compilation)

2103. The World of Humanity Consists of Two Complementary Parts: Male and Female. If One is Defective the Other Will Necessarily Be Incomplete
"The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. There is a right hand and a left hand in the human body, functionally equal in service and administration. If either proves defective, the defect will naturally extend to the other by involving the completeness of the whole; for accomplishment is not normal unless both are perfect. If we say one hand is deficient, we prove the inability and incapacity of the other; for single-handed there is no full accomplishment. Just as physical accomplishment is complete with two hands, so man and woman, the two parts of the social body, must be perfect. It is not natural that either should remain undeveloped; and until both are perfected, the happiness of the human world will not be realized."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 134)

2104. Universal Peace is Impossible Without Universal Suffrage: It is Historically True that Every Influential Undertaking in the World Where Woman Was a Participant Has Attained Importance
"Again, it is well established in history that where woman has not participated in [623] human affairs the outcomes have never attained a state of completion and perfection. On the other hand, every influential undertaking of the human world wherein woman has been a participant has attained importance. This is historically true and beyond disproof even in religion. Jesus Christ had twelve disciples and among His followers a woman known as Mary Magdalene. Judas Iscariot had become a traitor and hypocrite, and after the crucifixion the remaining eleven disciples were wavering and undecided. It is certain from the evidence of the Gospels that the one who comforted them and re-established their faith was Mary Magdalene...

"The most momentous question of this day is international peace and arbitration, and universal peace is impossible without universal suffrage."
('Abdu'l-Baha: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 U.S. edition, p. 134-135)

LII. WORK

A. Work is Worship

[624] 2105. Work is Worship
"It is made incumbent on every one of you to engage in some occupation, such as arts, trades, and the like. We have made this—your occupation—identical with the worship of God, the True One. Reflect, O people, upon the Mercy of God

and upon His favors, then thank Him in mornings and evenings."
(Baha'u'llah: Baha'i World Faith, p. 195)

2106. Idle People Have No Place in the World Order
"With reference to Baha'u'llah's command concerning the engagement of the believers in some sort of profession: The Teachings are most emphatic on this matter, particularly the statement in the 'Aqdas' to this effect which makes it quite clear that idle people who lack the desire to work can have no place in the new World Order. As a corollary of this principle, Baha'u'llah further states that mendicity should not only be discouraged but entirely wiped out from the face of society. It is the duty of those who are in charge of the organization of society to give every individual the opportunity of acquiring the necessary talent in some kind of profession, and also the means of utilizing such a talent, both for its own sake and for the sake of earning the means of his livelihood. Every individual, no matter how handicapped and limited he may be, is under the obligation of engaging in some work or profession, for work, specially when performed in the spirit of service, is according to Baha'u'llah a form of worship. It has not only a utilitarian purpose, but has a value in itself, because it draws us nearer to God, and enables us to better grasp His purpose for us in this world. It is obvious, therefore, that the inheritance of wealth cannot make anyone immune from daily work."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 22, 1937)

2107. 'Abdu'l-Baha Advocates the Need for a Profession—He Said His Was Mat-Making
"In connection with your dear husband, Shoghi Effendi would consider it in full and happy accord with the expressed desire of the Master that every man should have some permanent work. Much as he desires to see you both devote your entire energies to a well-thought out, progressive and attractive presentation of the Cause—a thing he feels we lack lamentably—he would be very pleased to see your husband follow what the Master often repeated even to His own immediate family, namely [625] the necessity of a profession. Of course you know that He always said His had been mat-making."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, September 20, 1929)

2108. Baha'u'llah Commands that Everyone Should Engage in Some Sort of Profession
"The Guardian fully realizes that from the material standpoint it would be quite easy for you to devote all your time to the service of the Cause, and he deeply appreciates the strong desire you have expressed to consecrate your full life to this noble aim, which should certainly be the chief and constant ambition of every loyal believer.

"But he thinks that in view of Baha'u'llah's emphatic command, as recorded in His Book of Laws, that every person should be engaged in some sort of profession, it would be better and more in conformity with the Teachings if you

remain in your profession and teach the Cause at the same time. As you rightly suggest, the middle path, that is to say practicing one's profession and also teaching the Cause, is the best way for you to follow."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 30, 1936)

2109. Division of Time
"The advice that Shoghi Effendi gave you regarding the division of your time between serving the Cause and attending to your other duties was also given to many other friends both by Baha'u'llah and the Master. It is a compromise between the two verses of the 'Aqdas': one making it incumbent upon every Baha'i to serve the promotion of the Faith and the other that every soul should be occupied in some form of occupation that will benefit society. In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah says that the highest form of detachment in this day is to be occupied with some profession and be self-supporting. A good Baha'i, therefore, is the one who so arranges his life as to devote time both to his material needs and also to the service of the Cause."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 26, 1933)

2110. Art is Worship
"In the Baha'i Cause arts, sciences and all crafts are (counted as) worship.... Briefly, all effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, pp. 176-177)

2111. Working for the Cause Does Not Constitute Professional Activity
"For it must be clearly understood that working for the Cause does not and cannot constitute a sort of professional activity of the type current in ecclesiastical organizations, whether Christian, Muslim or otherwise. We have no priesthood, no specialized class of people who can make the Cause their only life-work. In the Baha'i Cause, where practical considerations are harmoniously combined with those of [626] a more theoretical character, where idealism and realism are each duly recognized and are fused into a harmonious whole, men and women are commanded to work for the Cause not as a substitute to their daily professional occupation but in addition to them."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 30, 1936)

2112. Practice Economy
"Thou hast asked regarding the means of livelihood. Trust in God and engage in your work and practice economy; the confirmations of God shall descend and you will be enabled to pay off your debts. Be ye occupied always with the mention of Baha'u'llah and seek ye no other hope and desire save Him."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i World Faith, p. 375)

2113. All Humanity Must Obtain a Livelihood

"...All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion; at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God. Baha'u'llah has thereby encouraged action and stimulated service...."
('Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 187)

2114. Retirement from Work
"As to the question of retirement from work for individuals who have reached a certain age, this is a matter on which the International House of Justice will have to legislate as there are no provisions in the Aqdas concerning it."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 22, 1937: Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 12)

2115. Work in the Cause at Whatever Age
"Even though you are 79 years old, that does not seem in your case to be any handicap; and in this Cause, as the Guardian has told us there is work for everyone of some sort, of whatever age he or she may be."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 23, 1954: cited by the Universal House of Justice, December 14, 1970)

2116. "Occupy Yourselves with that which Profiteth Yourselves and Others"
"It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some form of occupation, such as crafts, trades and the like, We have graciously exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship unto God, the True One. Ponder ye in your hearts the grace and the blessings of God and render thanks unto Him at eventide and at dawn. Waste not your time in idleness and sloth. Occupy yourselves with that which profiteth yourselves and others. Thus hath it been decreed in this Tablet from whose horizon the day-star of wisdom and utterance shineth resplendent."
(Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, 1978 World Centre ed., p. 26)

2117. Must a Wife and Mother Work for Her Livelihood as Her Husband Does?
"You ask about the admonition that everyone must work, and want to know if this means that you, a wife and mother, must work for a livelihood as your husband does. [627] We are requested to enclose for your perusal an excerpt, 'The twelfth Glad-Tidings', from Baha'u'llah's 'Tablet of Bisharat'. You will see that the directive is for the friends to be engaged in an occupation which will be of benefit to mankind. Homemaking is a highly honourable and responsible work of fundamental importance for mankind."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 16, 1982: Women)

2118. The Man Has Primary Responsibility for the Financial Support of the Family and the Woman is the Chief and Primary Educator of the Children
"With regard to your question whether mothers should work outside the home, it is helpful to consider the matter from the perspective of the concept of a

Baha'i family. This concept is based on the principle that the man has primary responsibility for the financial support of the family, and the woman is the chief and primary educator of the children. This by no means implies that these functions are inflexibly fixed and cannot be changed and adjusted to suit particular family situations, nor does it mean that the place of the woman is confined to the home. Rather, while primary responsibility is assigned, it is anticipated that fathers would play a significant role in the education of the children and women could also be breadwinners. As you rightly indicated, 'Abdu'l-Baha encouraged women to 'participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world'."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 9, 1984: Ibid.)

2119. Concerning the Amount of Time a Mother May Spend Outside the Home
"In relation to your specific queries, the decision concerning the amount of time a mother may spend in working outside the home depends on circumstances existing within the home, which may vary from time to time. Family consultation will help to provide the answers."
(Ibid.)

2120. The Importance of the Mother's Role Derives from the Fact that She is the First Educator of the Child
"The great importance attached to the mother's role derives from the fact that she is the first educator of the child. Her attitude, her prayers, even what she eats and her physical condition have a great influence on the child when it is still in womb. When the child is born, it is she who has been endowed by God with the milk which is the first food designed for it, and it is intended that, if possible, she should be with the baby to train and nurture it in its earliest days and months. This does not mean that the father does not also love, pray for, and care for his baby, but as he has the primary responsibility of providing for the family, his time to be with his child is usually limited, while the mother is usually closely associated with the baby during this intensely formative time when it is growing and developing faster than it ever will again during the whole of its life. As the child grows older and more independent, the relative nature of its relationship with its mother and father modifies and the father can play a greater role."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 23, 1984)

B. Trade Unions and Strikes

[628] 2121. Guidelines in Respect to Membership in Trade Unions and Participation in Strikes
"On the question of trade unions the Guardian's secretary made the following comment on his behalf in a letter dated 2 February 1951.

'Regarding your question about trade unions: The Guardian considers that this is a matter for each National Spiritual Assembly to advise the believers on. As long as the trade unions are not members of any particular political party,

there does not seem to be any objection to the Baha'is belonging to them.'

"...the British National Spiritual Assembly wrote to the Guardian as follows:

'In this country the law recognises strikes as legal when called by properly constituted authorities such as a Trade Union, and our own understanding is that in such circumstances the Baha'i teaching, in spite of 'Abdu'l-Baha's express disapproval of strikes, neither requires nor forbids an individual to strike but leaves him free to decide for himself in the particular circumstances of his case what is the proper course of action.'

"The Guardian's secretary replied on his behalf in a letter dated July 11, 1956:

'As regard strikes, the Guardian feels that your own understanding of the matter as expressed in your letter is quite correct, and he does not see the necessity of adding anything to it. We should avoid becoming rigid and laying down any more rules and regulations of conduct.'

"Based on the above guidelines, we are to emphasize the following points.

1. A Baha'i can become a member of a trade union as long as he is not required to also join a political party.

2. 'Abdu'l-Baha in general disapproved of strikes. The Baha'i attitude is that when the law recognizes strikes as legal, as when called by a properly constituted authority such as a trade union, the Baha'i teaching neither requires nor forbids an individual to participate in the strike but leaves him free to decide for himself what is the proper course of action in the particular circumstances."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 23, 1985

LIII. YOUTH

[629] 2122. Our Expectant Eyes Are Fixed on Baha'i Youth!
"The endurance of youth under arduous conditions, their vitality and vigour, and their ability to adapt themselves to local situations, to meet new challenges, and to impart their warmth and enthusiasm to those they visit, combined with the standard of conduct upheld by Baha'i youth, make them potent instruments for the execution of the contemplated projects. Indeed, through these distinctive qualities they can become the spearhead of any enterprise and the driving force of any undertaking in which they participate, whether local or national. Our expectant eyes are fixed on Baha'i youth!"
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, May 25, 1975)

2123. Teenagers
"You who are at present in your teens, or twenties, must realize that tomorrow, to a large extent, the burden of the Cause will rest on your shoulders; you will have to be the administrators and teachers and scholars of the Faith. Now is the time to prepare yourselves for your future duties.

"He hopes you will study the teachings deeply, their spiritual, moral, and administrative precepts, and at the same time take as active a part as possible in the life of your respective Baha'i communities."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, p. 183)

2124. Special Message and Mission for Youth
"This Cause, although it embraces with equal esteem people of all ages, has a special message and mission for the youth of your generation. It is their charter for their future, their hope, their guarantee of better days to come. Therefore, the Guardian is especially happy that the young Baha'is are active in the pioneer work."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 16, 1942: Baha'i News, No. 161, p. 1, March 1943)

2125. Youth Should Open Their Eyes to Existing Situation of World Conditions and Inquire About What the Future is Going to Bring
"The present condition of the world—its economic instability, social dissensions, political dissatisfaction and international distrust—should awaken the youth from their slumber and make them enquire what the future is going to bring. It is surely they who will suffer most if some calamity sweeps over the world. They should therefore open their eyes to the existing conditions, study the evil forces that are at play and then with a concerted effort arise and bring about the necessary reforms—reforms that shall contain within their scope the spiritual as well as social and political phases of human life."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 13, 1932)

[630] 2126. To Make Their Views Known to Others the Young People Should Keep in Touch with Local Youth Activities
"...the young Baha'is in every city should make a point of keeping in touch with local youth activities and clubs, and endeavouring to make their views known to as many young people in as many ways as possible. Above all they should set a high example to them; chastity, politeness, friendliness, hospitality, joyous optimism about the ultimate future happiness and well-being of mankind should distinguish them and win over to them the love and admiration of their fellow youth. The thing which is most conspicuously lacking in modern life is a high standard of conduct and good character; the young Baha'is must demonstrate both, if they hope to seriously win over to the Faith members of their own generation, so sorely disillusioned and so contaminated by the laxity war gives rise to."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Youth Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, October 20, 1945)

2127. Youth Should Be Scholars of the Faith—Material Training and Material Progress Are Insufficient
"In regard to your questions in your letter of June 15th:

No. 1. The Guardian has always advised young people to study deeply such subjects as History, Economics and Sociology as they are all related to the teachings and aid in understanding the Faith.

No. 2. A course on the Faith suitable for university use should be worked out by some body of Baha'is and educators and approved by the N.S.A.

No. 3. The greatest need of youth today is character training. Prayer is only one factor in this; they must learn to live up to the ethical teachings of the Faith...

No. 4. Once young people become convinced of the existence of the soul they should not need much convincing that material training and material progress are not sufficient. The soul needs training and help too.

"He feels that teaching the Faith to the youth is of the utmost importance in these days, as they will not only become the workers of the future but will be able to widely spread the Message among their own generation. He approves of your devoting as much time to this work as feasible...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 12, 1944)

2128. Saints, Heroes, Martyrs and Administrators
"He urges you to make up your minds to do great, great deeds for the Faith; the condition of the world is steadily growing worse, and your generation must provide the saints, heroes, martyrs and administrators of future years. With dedication and will power you can rise to great heights."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, October 2, 1951: Baha'i Youth, p. 6)

2129. Cause Doomed to Stagnation if Youth Fail
"...If the younger Baha'i generation, in whom Shoghi Effendi has great hopes, take the pain of studying the Cause deeply and thoroughly, read its history, find its underlying principles and become both well informed and energetic, they surely can achieve a great deal. It is upon their shoulders that the Master has laid the tremendous work of teaching. They are the ones to raise the call of the [631] Kingdom and arouse the people from slumber. If they fail the Cause is doomed to stagnation...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, p. 3)

2130. The Responsibility for Teaching is Placed on the Shoulders of the Baha'i Youth
"...The responsibilities that have been laid upon your shoulders are manifold, and unless you exert your utmost to carry them out there can be not much hope for any further progress in the field of Baha'i teaching activity. The obligation to teach is essentially the responsibility of young believers. Their whole training should therefore be directed in such a way as to make them competent teachers. It is for this very purpose that Baha'i Summer Schools, which constitute the very basis upon which the Baha'i universities of the future will be established, should be widely attended by young believers."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to five Baha'i Youth Groups in the United States, May 15, 1936)

2131. Youth Will Inherit the Work of the Older Baha'is
"The responsibility of young believers is very great, as they must not only fit themselves to inherit the work of the older Baha'is and carry on the affairs of the Cause in general, but the world which lies ahead of them—as promised by Baha'u'llah—will be a world chastened by its sufferings, ready to listen to His Divine Message at last; and consequently a very high character will be expected of the exponents of such a religion. To deepen their knowledge, to perfect themselves in the Baha'i standards of virtue and upright conduct, should be the paramount duty of every young Baha'i."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, pp. 179-180)

2132. The Need of Modern Youth for a Type of Ethics Founded on Pure Religious Faith
"...He quite agrees ... that the dangers facing the modern youth are becoming increasingly grave, and call for immediate solution. But as experience clearly shows, the remedy to this truly sad and perplexing situation is not to be found in traditional and ecclesiastical religion. The dogmatism of the church has been discarded once for all. What can control youth and save it from the pitfalls of the crass materialism of the age is the power of a genuine, constructive and living Faith such as the one revealed to the world by Baha'u'llah. Religion, as in the past, is still the world's sole hope, but not that form of religion which our ecclesiastical leaders strive vainly to preach. Divorced from true religion, morals lose their effectiveness and cease to guide and control man's individual and social life. But when true religion is combined with true ethics, then moral progress becomes a possibility and not a mere ideal.

"The need of our modern youth is for such a type of ethics founded on pure religious faith. Not until these two are rightly combined and brought into full action can there be any hope for the future of the race."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 17, 1936: Baha'i Youth, pp. 8-9)

2133. Associate in a Friendly Spirit with Others
"By all means persevere and associate in a friendly spirit with other groups of [632] young people, particularly of a different race or minority nationality, for such an association will demonstrate your complete conviction of the oneness of mankind and attract others to the Faith, both young and old alike. A spirit of prejudice-free, loving comradeship with others is what will open the eyes of people more than any amount of words."
(From a letter of the Guardian to the Dayton Baha'i Youth Group, January 18, 1945)

2134. From Beginning Baha'i Era Youth Played Vital Part
"...From the very beginning of the Baha'i Era, youth have played a vital part

in the promulgation of God's Revelation. The Bab Himself was but twenty-five years old when He declared His Mission, while many of the Letters of the Living were even younger. The Master, as a very young man, was called upon to shoulder heavy responsibilities in the service of His Father in Iraq and Turkey, and His brother, the Purest Branch, yielded up his life to God in the Most Great Prison at the age of twenty-two that the servants of God might 'be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united'. Shoghi Effendi was a student at Oxford when called to the throne of his guardianship, and many of the Knights of Baha'u'llah, who won imperishable fame during the Ten Year Crusade, were young people. Let it, therefore, never be imagined that youth must await their years of maturity before they can render invaluable services to the Cause of God."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to Baha'i youth in every land, June 10, 1966)

2135. We May Well Emulate the Youth
"...We may well emulate Baha'i youth whose recent surge forward into the van of proclamation and teaching is one of the most encouraging and significant trends in the Faith, and who storm the gates of heaven for support in their enterprises by long-sustained, precedent and continuing prayer. We are all able to call upon Baha'u'llah for His Divine, all-powerful aid, and He will surely help us. For He is the Hearer of prayers, the Answerer."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1972)

2136. Upsurge of Baha'i Youth
"The first, the heartwarming upsurge of Baha'i youth, has changed the face of teaching work; impenetrable barriers have been broken or over passed by eager teams of young Baha'is, dedicated and prayerful, presenting the Divine Message in ways acceptable to their own generation from which it has spread and is spreading throughout the social structure. The entire Baha'i world has been thrilled by this development. Having rejected the values and standards of the old world, Baha'i youth are eager to learn and adapt themselves to the standards of Baha'u'llah and so to offer the Divine Programme to fill the gap left by the abandonment of the old order."
(Message from the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1973)

2137. Youth Should Be Encouraged to Think of Their Studies
"Baha'i youth should be encouraged to think of their studies and of their training for a trade or profession as part of their service to the Cause of God and in the context of a lifetime that will be devoted to advancing the interests of the Faith. At the same time, during their years of study, youth are often able to offer specific periods of weeks or months, or even of a year or more, during which they can devote [633] themselves to travel teaching or to serving the Baha'i community in other ways, such as conducting children's classes in remote villages. They should be encouraged to offer such service, which will in itself be admirable experience for the future, and the National Assembly should instruct an appropriate committee to receive such offers and to

organize their implementation so as to derive the greatest possible advantage from them."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, Naw-Ruz 1974)

2138. Youth Will Arise for the Sake of God
"We sincerely hope that the forefront of the volunteers, the Baha'i youth will arise for the sake of God and, through their driving force, their ability to endure inhospitable and arduous conditions, and their contentment with the bare necessities of life, they will offer an inspiring example to the peoples and communities they set out to serve, will exert an abiding influence on their personal lives, and will promote with distinction the vital interests of God's Cause at this crucial stage in the fortunes of the Plan."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, March 25, 1975)

2139. The House of Justice Calls on the Baha'i Youth as "Legatees of the Heroic Early Believers" to Redouble Their Efforts in Spreading the Divine Message
"As to Baha'i youth, legatees of the heroic early believers and now standing on their shoulders, we call upon them to redouble their efforts, in this day of widespread interest in the Cause of God, to enthuse their contemporaries with the divine Message and thus prepare themselves for the day when they will be veteran believers able to assume whatever tasks may be laid upon them. We offer them this passage from the Pen of Baha'u'llah:

'Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord of the beginning and of the end, and adorn his heart with His love. The manifestation of such a grace is greater than the creation of the heavens and of the earth. Blessed are the steadfast and well is it with those who are firm'."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ridvan 1982)

2140. Youth Should Not Indict Non-Baha'i Friends for They Only See a World Crumbling But We See a New World Being Built Up
"Even though the Baha'i youth should feel with the condition in which they see their non-Baha'i friends and not indict them for it, they should not let themselves be carried by the wave of world events as they are being carried. Whereas they see before them only a world that is crumbling down we are also seeing a new world being built up. Whereas they experience the destruction of old institutions that commanded their respect, we are beholding the dawn of a new era with its strict commands and new social bonds. Their materialistic outlook shows them the futility of all things while our faith in a regenerated and spiritualized man makes us look to the future and build for it. To make them follow our ways we should sympathize with their plight but should not follow their ways. We should take our stand on a higher plane of moral and spiritual life and, setting for them the true example, urge them up to our [634] level. The young people should read what Baha'u'llah and the Master say on such matters and follow them conscientiously. That is if they desire to be

true to the teachings and establish them throughout the world."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 26, 1932: Baha'i Youth, A Compilation, pp. 4-5)

2141. Education, One of the Most Fundamental Factors of True Civilization
"Being a Baha'i you are certainly aware of the fact that Baha'u'llah considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the program of the Baha'i Youth all over the world."
(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 9, 1931: Baha'i Youth, pp. 10-11)

2142. Future Peace—Great Responsibility Borne by Youth
"A very great responsibility for the future peace and well-being of the world is borne by the youth of today. Let the Baha'i youth by the power of the Cause they espouse be the shining example for their companions."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, April 15, 1965)

2143. The Universal House of Justice Calls on Baha'i Youth to Rededicate Themselves to the Urgent Needs of the Cause
"RECENT MARTYRDOMS COURAGEOUS STEADFAST YOUTH IN SHIRAZ, SCENE INAUGURATION MISSION MARTYR-PROPHET, REMINISCENT ACTS VALOUR YOUTHFUL IMMORTALS HEROIC AG CONFIDENT BAHA'I YOUTH THIS GENERATION WILL NOT ALLOW THIS FRESH BLOOD SHED ON VERY SOIL WHERE FIRST WAVE PERSECUTION FAITH TOOK PLACE REMAIN UNVINDICATED OR THIS SUBLIME SACRIFICE UNAVAILING. AT THIS HOUR OF AFFLICTION AND GRIEF, AND AS WE APPROACH ANNIVERSARY MARTYRDOM BLESSED BAB CALL ON BAHA'I YOUTH TO REDEDICATE THEMSELVES TO URGENT NEEDS CAUSE BAHA'U'LLAH. LET THEM RECALL BLESSINGS HE PROMISED THOSE WHO IN PRIME OF YOUTH WILL ARISE TO ADORN THEIR HEARTS WITH HIS LOVE AND REMAIN STEADFAST AND FIRM. LET THEM CALL TO MIND EXPECTATIONS MASTER FOR EACH TO BE A FEARLESS LION, A MUSK-LADEN BREEZE WAFTING OVER MEADS VIRTUE. LET THEM MEDITATE OVER UNIQUE QUALITIES YOUTH SO GRAPHICALL MENTIONED IN WRITINGS GUARDIAN WHO PRAISED THEIR ENTERPRISING AND ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT, THEIR VIGOUR, THEIR ALERTNESS, OPTIMISM AND EAGERNESS, AND THEIR DIVINELY-APPOINTED, HOLY AND ENTHRALLING TASKS. WE FERVENTLY PRAY AT SACRED THRESHOLD THAT ARMY OF SPIRITUALLY AWAKENED AND DETERMINED YOUTH, MAY IMMEDIATELY ARISE RESPONSE NEEDS PRESENT HOUR DEVOTE IN EVER GREATER MEASURE THEIR VALUED ENERGIES TO PROMOTE BOTH ON HOMEFRONTS AND IN [635] FOREIGN FIELDS, CAUSE THEIR ALL-WATCHFUL AND EXPECTANT LORD. MAY THEY MANIFEST SAME SPIRIT SO RECENTLY EVINCED THEIR MARTYR BRETHREN CRADLE FAITH, SCALE SUCH HEIGHTS OF ENDEAVOUR AS TO BECOME PRIDE THEIR PEERS CONSOLATION HEARTS PERSIAN BELIEVERS, AND DEMONSTRATE THAT THE FLAME HIS OMNIPOTENT HAND HAS KINDLED BUR EVER BRIGHT AND THAT ITS LIFE-IMPARTING WARMTH AND RADIANCE SHALL SOON ENVELOP PERMEATE WHOLE EARTH."
(From a cable of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'i youth throughout the world, June 24, 1983)

2144. The Baha'i Youth of Today Have the Distinction of Seeing the Establishment of the Lesser Peace and the Reconciliation of Society
"This generation of Baha'i youth enjoys a unique distinction. You will live your lives in a period when the forces of history are moving to a climax, when mankind will see the establishment of the Lesser Peace, and during which the Cause of God will play an increasingly prominent role in the reconstruction of human society. It is you who will be called upon in the years to come to stand at the helm of the Cause in face of conditions and developments which can, as yet, scarcely be imagined."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the European Youth Conference in Innsbruck, July 4, 1983)

2145. The Key to Success is to Deepen Your Understanding of the Teachings and be Able to Explain Them to Your Peers
"European Baha'i youth in particular face tremendous and challenging tasks in the immediate future. Can one doubt that the manner in which the governments of the European nation have rallied to the defence of the persecuted Baha'is in Iran will draw down blessings from on high upon this continent? And who among the people of Europe are more likely to be kindled by the challenge and hope of the Message of Baha'u'llah than the youth? Now is an opportunity to awaken the interest, set afire the hearts and enlist the active support of young people of every nation, class and creed in that continent. The key to success in this endeavour is, firstly, to deepen your understanding of the Teachings of the Cause so that you will be able to apply them to the problems of individuals and society, and explain them to your peers in ways that they will understand and welcome; secondly, to strive to model your behaviour in every way after the high standards of honesty, trustworthiness, courage, loyalty, forbearance, purity and spirituality set forth in the Teachings; and, above all, to live in continual awareness of the presence and all-conquering power of Baha'u'llah, which will enable you to overcome every temptation and surmount every obstacle."
(Ibid.)

2146. Youth and Fellow Believers Exhorted to Arise and Revolutionize the Progress of the Cause
"A vibrant band of Baha'i youth on the European continent, committed to the promotion of the Cause of Baha'u'llah and the upholding of His laws and principles, determined to work in harmony and unity with their fellow believers of all ages and classes, can revolutionize the progress of the Cause. With a rapid increase in the size [636] of the Baha'i communities in Europe, the believers of that continent, the cradle of western civilization, will be the better able to serve as a fountainhead of pioneers, travelling teachers and financial assistance to the Baha'i communities of the Third World.

"A particular challenge to the Baha'i youth of Europe is the vast eastern half of the continent that is as yet scarcely touched by the light of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. It is not easy to settle in those lands, but with ingenuity, determination and reliance upon the confirmations of Baha'u'llah it is

certainly possible both to settle and to persevere in service in goals which demand a spirit of self-sacrifice, detachment and purity of heart worthy of those who would emulate the shining example set by the martyrs in Iran, so many of whom are youth, who have given their lives rather than breathe one word that would be a betrayal of the trust of God placed upon them.
"With love and utmost longing we call upon you to immerse yourselves in the divine Teachings, champion the Cause of God and His Law, and arise for the quickening of mankind."
(Ibid.)

2147. Courses of Study that One Can Pursue to Acquire Skills Needed to Assist the Developing Countries
"When deciding what course of training to follow, youth can consider acquiring those skills and professions that will be of benefit in education, rural development, agriculture, economics, technology, health, radio and in many other areas of endeavour that are so urgently needed in the developing countries of the world. You can also devote time in the midst of your studies, or other activities, to travel teaching or service projects in the Third World."
(Ibid.)

2148. Simultaneously with the Proclamation Engendered by the Persecutions in Iran, More People Are Seeking Their True Identity
"A highlight of this period of the Seven Year Plan has been the phenomenal proclamation accorded the Faith in the wake of the unabating persecutions in Iran; a new interest in its Teaching has been aroused on a wide scale. Simultaneously, more and more people from all strata of society frantically seek their true identity, which is to say, although they would not so plainly admit it, the spiritual meaning of their lives; prominent among these seekers are the young. Not only does this knowledge open fruitful avenues for Baha'i initiative, it also indicates to young Baha'is a particular responsibility so to teach the Cause and live the life as to give vivid expression to those virtues that would fulfil the spiritual yearning of their peers."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'i youth of the world, January 3, 1984)

2149. Persevere in Your Individual Efforts to Teach the Faith, Study the Writings, Serve Mankind, Volunteer for Projects
"May you all persevere in your individual efforts to teach the Faith, but with added zest, to study the Writings, but with greater earnestness. May you pursue your education and training for future service to mankind, offering as much of your free time as possible to activities on behalf of the Cause. May those of you already bent on your life's work and who may have already founded families, strive towards [637] becoming the living embodiments of Baha'i ideals, both in the spiritual nurturing of your families and in your active involvement in the efforts on the home front or abroad in the pioneering field. May all respond to the current demands upon the Faith by displaying a fresh measure of dedication to the tasks at hand.

"Further to these aspirations is the need for a mighty mobilization of teaching activities reflecting regularity in the patterns of service rendered by young Baha'is. The native urge of youth to move from place to place, combined with their abounding zeal, indicates that you can become more deliberately and numerously involved in these activities as travelling teachers. One pattern of this mobilization could be short-term projects, carried out at home or in other lands, dedicated to both teaching the Faith and improving the living conditions of people. Another could be that, while still young and unburdened by family responsibilities, you give attention to the idea of volunteering a set period, say one or two years, to some Baha'i service, on the home front or abroad, in the teaching or development field. It would accrue to the strength and stability of the community if such patterns could be followed by succeeding generations of youth. Regardless of the modes of service, however, youth must be understood to be fully engaged, at all times, in all climes and under all conditions. In your varied pursuits you may rest assured of the loving support and guidance of the Baha'i institutions operating at every level."
(Ibid.)

2150. The Assembly Should Encourage the Invaluable Aid of Youth as Travelling Teachers, to Hold Youth Class, Etc.
"The incalculable value of Baha'i youth in the service of our Faith cannot be overlooked. They should be enlisted as travelling teachers, going on foot when necessary, in the mountains and jungles to visit, teach and encourage the local Baha'is and to help them to elect their Local Spiritual Assemblies should the friends be either unaware of the procedure required, or perhaps illiterate and in need of help in casting their ballots. The youth should be encouraged to hold youth classes, to convey to their peers the Message of Baha'u'llah, to learn to give courses and lectures on the Teachings, and above all, to exemplify by their high moral behavior that which makes the Baha'is outstanding in a corrupt and decadent society."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of Ecuador, Ridvan 1984)

2151. Youth Must Be Encouraged to Devise and Execute Their Own Teaching Plans
"Baha'i youth, now rendering exemplary and devoted service in the forefront of the army of life, must be encouraged, even while equipping themselves for future service, to devise and execute their own teaching plans among their contemporaries."
(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the world, Ridvan 1984)

2152. The House of Justice Applauds Efforts of Youth to Acquire Spiritual Qualities
"We applaud those youth who, in respect of this period,* have already engaged in some activity within their national and local communities or in collaboration with their peers in other countries, and call upon them to persevere in their unyielding [638] efforts to acquire spiritual qualities and useful qualifications. For if they do so, the influence of their high-minded

motivations will exert itself upon world developments conducive to a productive, progressive and peaceful future."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'i youth of the world, May 8, 1985)

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*(International Youth Year)

2153. The Youth Have the Inescapable Duty of Reflecting the Transforming Power of the Faith to Society

"The present requirements of a Faith whose responsibilities rapidly increase in relation to its rise from obscurity impose an inescapable duty on the youth to ensure that their lives reflect to a marked degree the transforming power of the new Revelation they have embraced. Otherwise, by what example are the claims of Baha'u'llah to be judged? How is His healing Message to be acknowledged by a skeptical humanity if it produces no noticeable effect upon the young, who are seen to be among the most energetic, the most pliable and promising elements in any society?

"The dark horizon faced by a world which has failed to recognize the Promised One, the Source of its salvation, acutely affects the outlook of the younger generations; their distressing lack of hope and their indulgence in desperate but futile and even dangerous solutions make a direct claim on the remedial attention of Baha'i youth, who, through their knowledge of that Source and the bright vision with which they have thus been endowed, cannot hesitate to impart to their despairing fellow youth the restorative joy, the constructive hope, the radiant assurances of Baha'u'llah's stupendous Revelation.

"The words, the deeds, the attitudes, the lack of prejudice, the nobility of character, the high sense of service to others—in a word, those qualities and actions which distinguish a Baha'i—must unfailingly characterize their inner life and outer behaviour, and their interactions with friend or foe."
(Ibid.)

2154. The Youth Must Aspire to Excellence, Move Towards Front Ranks of Professions, Trades, Arts and Crafts

"Rejecting the low sights of mediocrity, let them scale the ascending heights of excellence in all they aspire to do. May they resolve to elevate the very atmosphere in which they move, whether it be in the school rooms or halls of higher learning, in their work, their recreation, their Baha'i activity or social service.

"Indeed, let them welcome with confidence the challenges awaiting them. Imbued with this excellence and a corresponding humility, with tenacity and a loving servitude, today's youth must move towards the front ranks of the professions, trades, arts and crafts which are necessary to the further progress of humankind—this to ensure that the spirit of the Cause will cast its illumination on all these important areas of human endeavour. Moreover, while aiming at mastering the unifying concepts and swiftly advancing technologies of this era of communications, they can, indeed they must also guarantee the

transmittal to the future of those skills which will preserve the marvelous, indispensable achievements of the past. The transformation which is to occur in the functioning of society will certainly depend to a great extent on the effectiveness of the preparations the youth make for the world they will inherit."
(Ibid.)

[639] 2155. The Youth Must Constantly Strive to Exemplify a Baha'i Life which is the Opposite of the Moral Decay of Society
"He feels that the youth, in particular, must constantly and determinedly strive to exemplify Baha'i life. In the world around us we see moral decay, promiscuity, indecency, vulgarity, bad manners—the Baha'i young people must be the opposite of these things, and, by their chastity, their uprightness, their decency, their consideration and good manners, attract others, old and young, to the Faith. The world is tired of words; it wants example, and it is up to the Baha'i youth to furnish it."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i Youth who attended the Green Acre Summer School, August 4, 1946, September 19, 1946)

2156. Contact with Racial Minorities in a Country with Such a Large Element of Prejudice is Important
"He urges you all to devote particular attention to the contact with racial minorities. In a country which has such a large element of prejudice against its colored citizens as the United States, it is of the greatest importance that the Baha'is—and more especially the youth—should demonstrate actively our complete lack of prejudice and, indeed, our prejudice in favour of minorities."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the friends who were present at the Senior Youth Session, Louhelen Baha'i School, November 11, 1951)

2157. The Baha'i Faith is a Religion that Belongs to the Youth
"If ever it could be said that a religion belonged to the youth, then surely the Baha'i Faith today is that religion. The whole world is suffering, it is sunk in misery, crushed beneath its heavy problems. The task of healing its ills and building up its future devolves mainly upon the youth. They are the generation who, after the war, will have to solve the terrible difficulties created by the war and all that brought it about. And they will not be able to upbuild the future except by the laws and principles laid down by Baha'u'llah. So their task is very great and their responsibility very grave."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i children and youth of Peoria, May 8, 1942)

2158. Second Declaration: No Such Thing
"There is no such thing as a 'second declaration' in Baha'i administration. The procedure to be followed in a youth's claiming, or being granted, voting rights at the age of 21 is within the discretion of the National Assembly."
(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Austria, June 29, 1967)

2159. The Solution to Difficulties which Stand in the Way of Co-Operation Between Young and Old Believers

"...the Guardian fully realizes the difficulties that stand in the way of co-operation between the young and old believers. This is a problem that confronts the Cause almost everywhere, specially in those communities where the number of young and old Baha'is is nearly the same. The solution, as in all such cases, is to be found through intelligent [640] and mutual compromise. The old believers have to give up something of their old conceptions and ways of working in order to better adapt themselves to the changing social conditions and circumstances. The young too must learn to act with wisdom, tact and moderation, and to take advantage and benefit from the age-long experience of their older fellow-believers. The old and the young have each something specific to contribute to the progress and welfare of the Baha'i community. The energy of youth should be tempered and guided by the wisdom of old age."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 4, 1936)

2160. Laws and Precepts which Some Young Believers Are Inclined to Resent

"As to the attitude of resentment which the young believers are inclined to assume regarding certain precepts of the Cause such as obligatory prayers: There can and should be no compromise whatever in such matters that are specifically enjoined by Baha'u'llah. We should neither have any feeling of shame when observing such laws and precepts, nor should we over-estimate their value and significance. Just as the friends have no difficulty in recognizing the value of the specific prayers revealed by Baha'u'llah, such as the Tablets of Fasting and Healing, so also they should recognize that the obligatory prayers are by their very nature of greater effectiveness and are endowed with a greater power than the non-obligatory ones, and as such are essential."
(Ibid.)

2161. After Each Prayer Supplicate God to Bestow Mercy and Forgiveness Upon Your Parents

"It is seemly that the servant should, after each prayer, supplicate God to bestow mercy and forgiveness upon his parents. Thereupon God's call will be raised: 'Thousand upon thousand of what thou hast asked for thy parents shall be thy recompense!' Blessed is he who remembereth his parents when communing with God. There is, verily, no God but Him, the Mighty, the Well-Beloved."
(The Bab: Selections from the Writings of the Bab, p. 94)

2162. Reaching the Age of Nineteen

"...it behooveth man, upon reaching the age of nineteen, to render thanksgiving for the day of his conception as an embryo. For had the embryo not existed, how could he have reached his present state? Likewise had the religion taught by Adam not existed, this Faith would not have attained its present state...."
(Ibid., p. 89)

2163. Regarding a National Committee to Supervise the Work of the Youth

"The Guardian fully appreciates the significance of the problems involved. Surely there should be no division according to general outlook among the

friends. Should we do such a thing we will soon have parties and factions among the Baha'is—a thing which is absolutely contrary to the spirit of the Faith.

"At the same time if we say that no older person should take part in the organization of the youth it will be depriving them of the necessary experience needed to have a permanent and working institution.
"Shoghi Effendi believes that the best solution is to have some reasonable age limit [641] for the actual membership of the body of the organization so that only the young people may take part in the different activities and have no older person usurp the floor or deprive them from their chances to train themselves, and express their ideas. At the same time the National Assembly could appoint on the National committee that is to supervise their work some older and experienced persons who could co-operate with them and guide them in their activities. The National committee should be composed of both people within the age limit and also older people."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 27, 1932)

— Lights of Guidance