

*Sacred
Trust*

Sacred Trust

*. . . a destined recompense
and sure reward*

Prepared by the Treasurer's Office of
the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States


Bahá'í Publishing Trust
Wilmette, IL 60091-2886

Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 415 Linden Avenue, Wilmette, Illinois 60091-2886

Copyright © 2001 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the
Bahá'ís of the United States
All rights reserved. Published 2001
Printed in the United States of America

04 03 02 01

4 3 2 1

ISBN 0-87743-295-3

Prayer for the Bahá'í Fund

All the friends of God . . . should contribute to the extent possible, however modest their offering may be. God doth not burden a soul beyond its capacity. Such contributions must come from all centers and all believers. . . . O Friends of God! Be ye assured that in place of these contributions, your agriculture, your industry, and your commerce will be blessed by manifold increases, with goodly gifts and bestowals. He who cometh with one goodly deed will receive a tenfold reward. There is no doubt that the living Lord will abundantly confirm those who expend their wealth in His path.

O God, my God! Illumine the brows of Thy true lovers, and support them with angelic hosts of certain triumph. Set firm their feet on Thy straight path, and out of Thine ancient bounty open before them the portals of Thy blessings; for they are expending on Thy pathway what Thou hast bestowed upon them, safeguarding Thy Faith, putting their trust in their remembrance of Thee, offering up their hearts for love of Thee, and withholding not what they possess in adoration for Thy Beauty and in their search for ways to please Thee.

O my Lord! Ordain for them a plenteous share, a destined recompense and sure reward.

Verily, Thou art the Sustainer, the Helper, the Generous, the Bountiful, the Ever-Bestowing.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá

Dearest Friends:

This volume of passages offers an opportunity to explore the empowering confirmations of the Holy Spirit through participation in contributing to the Bahá'í Funds. In addition, it provides clarity on procedural obligations and spiritual requirements particularly for those who are called upon to administer the Fund.

The Institution of the Fund is an avenue which when traveled can facilitate a closer binding of the heart of each individual to the covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. We can anticipate joy and enlightenment as we strive to develop our understanding of the Fund and broaden our expressions of love for our Faith.

Our hope is that new and creative actions will emerge as this information is internalized throughout the community.

We send you our heartfelt appreciation and love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Roberts". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Dr. William Roberts
Treasurer

Table of Contents

The Gift of Creation

GOD PROVIDES ALL 3

CREATION PROVIDES ALL NEEDS 3

The Funds

GIVE TO FUND, NOT INDIVIDUALS 7

OTHER TYPES OF FUNDS 7

The International Fund 8

The Bahá'í International Fund 8

*The Bahá'í International Fund—Recent Victories
and Immediate Challenges 8*

The Duties of the International Teaching Center 9

Where Do International Funds Go? 10

Early Needs of the Bahá'í World Center 11

Contributions Can Be Sent to Haifa 12

The Continental Fund 12

Zakát 14

Payment of Zakát 14

Who Can Contribute

THOSE ELIGIBLE TO CONTRIBUTE 17

CHILDREN AND YOUTH 18

Contributions from Children of Non-Bahá'ís
or in Case Child Is Bahá'í 19

Youth 19

GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTING FUNDS FROM
GOVERNMENTAL AND OTHER SOURCES 19

All Gifts By Non-Bahá'ís Are to Be Used
for Charity Only 20

Non-Bahá'í Gifts, the Temple Dependencies,
and Ḥazíratu'l-Quds 21

Permissible to Seek Grants for Public Service Activities 21

Admission Charged to Aid Bahá'í Public School 22

Believers Deprived of Administrative Rights 22

Importance of Giving

CONTRIBUTION TO FUNDS—A FUNDAMENTAL
SPIRITUAL OBLIGATION 27

Sacred Trust

RELiance ON BAHÁ'U'LLÁH ENABLES ACHIEVEMENT
OF AUDACIOUS PLANS 30

BLESSINGS 31

FULFILLMENT OF EVERY UNDERTAKING DEPENDENT
ON MATERIAL MEANS 32

LIFE-BLOOD OF THE CAUSE 34

SUPPORT THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 35

Money Required to Maintain Properties 36

Builds the Kingdom of God on Earth 37

Give Directly to All Funds 40

Do Not Be Discouraged 40

Contributing while Receiving Public Assistance 41

Individual Consecration

HOW EVERY BELIEVER CAN TEST THE MEASURE
OF HIS FAITH 45

EACH MUST ARISE TO CAPACITY 45

EVERY BELIEVER CAN CONTRIBUTE 45

INDIVIDUAL ROLE UNIQUELY IMPORTANT 46

REGULARITY 47

EACH BELIEVER MUST ACT ACCORDING TO
HIS OWN JUDGMENT 47

GOD DOES NOT ASK FROM ANY SOUL EXCEPT
ACCORDING TO HIS ABILITY 47

Generosity

TO GIVE AND TO BE GENEROUS 51

Sacrifice

WHAT IS SACRIFICE? 55

SACRIFICE NEEDED FOR SUCCESS 55

FROM LOVE COMES SACRIFICE 55

SACRIFICE IS HONOR AND CHALLENGE 57

SACRIFICIAL STORIES 57

Detachment

- DETACHMENT 61
- DETACHMENT NECESSARY WHETHER RICH OR POOR 61
- FREE SOUL THROUGH DETACHMENT 61
- THOSE WHO ARE TRAVELING TEACHERS SHOW UTMOST
IN DETACHMENT 62
- FIND TRUE REALITY 63
- MATERIAL WEALTH TRANSIENT 64
- STORIES OF DETACHMENT 67
- WE HAVE NEVER FAILED 68

Treasurer

- TREASURER HANDLES FUND AND ISSUES RECEIPTS
AND MUCH, MUCH MORE! 73
- SPECIFIC DUTIES 74
- AUDITS PROTECT TREASURER AND FUNDS 74
- SOME GUIDELINES FOR TREASURERS 74
 - Contributions Confidential 75
 - The Treasurer of an Assembly Should Never Commingle
His Own Funds with Those of the Faith 76
 - Local Assembly of a Large Community Might Appoint a
Committee to Assist Treasurer 76
 - National Treasury Committee 77

Qualities of Treasurer and Committees

- TREASURER MUST BE TRUSTWORTHY 81
- TRUSTWORTHINESS 81
- TRUSTWORTHINESS BEDROCK OF ALL VIRTUES 81
- TRUSTWORTHINESS SUPREME INSTRUMENT FOR
PROSPERITY OF WORLD 82
- TRUSTWORTHINESS DOOR OF SECURITY 82
- TRUSTWORTHINESS WILL END SUFFERING 83
- SUCCESSFUL COMMERCE DEPENDENT ON
TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRUSTFULNESS 83

Sacred Trust

REPAYING DEBTS ACT OF TRUSTWORTHINESS 83
SHOW UTMOST IN UPRIGHT CHARACTER, ESPECIALLY
IN HIGH POSITIONS 84

Wealth

TRUE WEALTH 87

CONTENT OF CHARACTER DETERMINES WEALTH 88

Disparity of Rich and Poor 90

Do Not Be Satisfied with the Disparity 90

Justice Can Help Solve Disparity 90

Why Can't We All Be Rich? 91

A NEW UNIVERSAL ATTITUDE NEEDS TO BE FOSTERED—
BASED ON SPIRITUAL VERITIES 92

GOD CONFERS SOVEREIGNTY 92

DISPARITY OF RICH AND POOR SOLVED BY
VOLUNTARY SHARING 92

Responsibility of the Rich 93

Let Not Riches Be a Hindrance to the Eternal Kingdom 93

Bahá'u'lláh, an Example 93

A King and a Poor Man 93

The Wealthy Should Share 94

Deeds, Not Wealth, Will Count on Day of Reckoning 95

Rich Should Be Mindful of Religion 96

Those Possessed of Riches Must Have the Utmost Regard for the Poor 96

The Responsibility of Moderation 97

Be Detached 97

God's Bounty Exists Regardless of Wealth 98

Story of the King of Martyrs 98

A Story of Mirzá Áqá Khán 98

Story of Lua Getsinger and the Poor Man 99

Be Generous 99

Dedicate Resources to Building the Kingdom 99

Enjoy God's Bounty 100

The Poor 101

The Poor Most Reliant on God 101

The Poor More Beloved Because More Tested 102

The Greatest Gift We Can Give to the Poor 103

The Importance of Work

- MAN MUST ALWAYS WORK 107
- WORK IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP 108
- WHEN CONSIDERING A PROFESSION 108
- EDUCATION 109
 - Arts and Business 109
- RETIREMENT 109

Types of Contributions

- CONTRIBUTIONS MAY BE ANONYMOUS 113
- GIFTS IN KIND 113
- CONTRIBUTIONS IN HONOR AND MEMORY OF A
LOVED ONE OR SPECIAL OCCASION 113
- AUTOMATIC CONTRIBUTION SYSTEM 114
- PLANNED GIVING AND ESTATE BEQUESTS 114
- INSURANCE AND SECURITIES 114
- TRUSTS 114
 - Earmarking 115
 - The Purpose of Earmarking Funds Should Not Be Defeated 115*
 - Earmarked Funds for Specific Purchases or Projects 115*
 - Proceeds from Sale of Property Purchased with Earmarked
Funds Retain Same Earmarking 115*
 - The Proper Accounting for Earmarked Funds Is Very Important 116*
 - Donor Has No Right to Change Earmarked Purpose Unless
the Assembly Accepts the Request to Do So 116*
 - The Assembly Should Try to Preserve Real Value of Funds in Its Care—
Especially True of Earmarked Funds 116*
 - Often It Is Better That the Friends Do Not Restrict Funds 117*
 - When Earmarked Contribution Can Be Impractical or Unwise 118*
 - Assembly Must Determine Whether Gift Supports Budget
or Is Separate 119*
 - Pledges 119
 - Pledges Can Be a Useful Means of Encouraging Contributions 119*
 - Endowments 120
 - Inheritance and Will-Making 121
 - Each Individual Enjoined to Write a Will 121*
 - Consider Bahá'í Concepts of Over-Accumulation of Wealth When
Bequeathing Inheritance 121*

Sacred Trust

Deputization 123

Deputization of Traveling Teachers 123

Subsidies Are Temporary 124

If Delegates Cannot Pay Own Expenses 126

Pioneers 126

Bahá'í Representatives 127

International Deputization Fund 127

Fund-Raising

FUND-RAISING CAN BE ACCEPTABLE 131

IT IS NOT PROPER FOR A BAHÁ'Í INSTITUTION TO SPONSOR
A FUND-RAISING SALE OPEN TO PUBLIC 132

AUCTIONS AMONG BAHÁ'ÍS 132

HOLDING OF RAFFLES 132

BENEFITS TO FUND-RAISING TEMPORARY 133

SALE OF PERSONAL ITEMS 134

INVESTMENTS 134

Business Ventures

BAHÁ'Í CONDUCT 137

GUIDELINES TOWARD ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS
VENTURE OWNED BY BAHÁ'ÍS 137

INSTITUTIONAL BAHÁ'Í BUSINESS VENTURES 138

BUDGET AND FUNDS 138

PUBLISHING TRUSTS 139

Capitalization 139

Production 140

Literature Dissemination 140

Independent Publications 140

PRIVATE BUSINESS INITIATIVES 141

WHEN BAHÁ'ÍS DO BUSINESS WITH EACH OTHER 142

Community Maturation

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY? 145

INDIGENOUS MEMBERS BEDROCK OF COMMUNITY 145

SIGNS OF A MATURE COMMUNITY 145

HOW CAN A COMMUNITY MATURE: EDUCATION 146
HOW DOES A COMMUNITY MATURE: THEY MUST FEEL
A SENSE OF BELONGING 147

Maturation of Local and National Institutions

LOCAL AND NATIONAL FUNDS 151
DEFINITION AND ROLE OF LOCAL
SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES 151
DEFINITION AND ROLE OF NATIONAL
SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES 151
MATURING ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 152
THE EMBRYONIC STAGE 152
FUND TO BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY AFTER
ASSEMBLY FORMATION 153
MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT TO PARALLEL
SPIRITUAL GROWTH 153
RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASSEMBLIES 154
EDUCATION AND MASS ENROLLMENT WILL INCREASE
FINANCIAL SUPPORT 154
ASSEMBLIES SHOULD ENCOURAGE FRIENDS TO GIVE 154
ASSEMBLIES NEED TO EDUCATE BELIEVERS 155
A VISION OF HUMAN PROSPERITY 155
PRUDENT USE OF FUNDS 152
DESIRABLE FOR ASSEMBLY TO MAINTAIN
FINANCIAL RESERVE 156
ENCOURAGEMENT BY PROPAGATION BOARDS 156
WHAT ACTIVITIES DOES THE NATIONAL FUND
SUPPORT? 157
 Teaching 157
 Newsletter 157
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CANNOT ALLOCATE LOCAL FUNDS 157
SOLICITING FUNDS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES 158
DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL BAHÁ'Í FUND 158
GIVING SHOULD BE SACRIFICIAL AND USED WISELY 159
STUDY THE NEEDS OF THE CAUSE 159

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CAN ASSIST PROJECTS 159
INDIVIDUAL BAHÁ'ÍS FREE TO CONTRIBUTE TO PROJECTS
IN ANY COUNTRY THEY WISH 160

PRIORITIES 160

Encouragement vs. Solicitation 162

Contributing to the Fund Is Voluntary 162

Solicitation of Funds Not Permissible 162

Increase Contributions through Love and Encouragement 163

Educate the Friends about the Needs of the Fund 164

Use of the Sacred Writings to Encourage 165

CENTERS 166

National Bahá'í Centers 166

Local Bahá'í Centers 167

Acquisition of Properties 167

Is It Time for a Center? 168

Purpose of a Local Center 168

Financial Requirements of a Center 169

TRAINING INSTITUTES 169

Teaching Center Funds Institutes 169

Training Institutes Develop Human Resources 170

Institutes Require Careful Bookkeeping 171

HOLY PROPERTIES 171

Shrine of the Báb 171

Eleven Temple Funds 171

The House of Worship and Its Dependencies

ESTABLISH A MASHRIQU'L-ADHKÁR 175

THE MASHRIQU'L-ADHKÁR 176

THE MASHRIQU'L-ADHKÁR AND ITS DEPENDENCIES 179

Benevolent Associations

GIVING TO CHARITY 185

ASSOCIATE THOU WITH THE POOR 187

BE A HELPER 187

BELIEVERS MUST NOT FORGET BUILDING

NEW WORLD ORDER 188

Professional Services

- HONORARIA NOT PREFERABLE 191
- REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES 191
- FEES FOR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE ACCEPTABLE 191
- OFFERING CONSULTING SERVICES WITHIN THE
BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY 192
- RULES FOR OFFERING SERVICES TO BAHÁ'ÍS 192

America's Role and Responsibility

- SPIRITUAL DESCENDANTS OF THE DAWN-BREAKERS 195
 - Heroic Deeds of Service 196
 - The Master's Last Tablet to America 196
 - Americans Set Pattern for Administrative Development 197
 - Mission Extends into Golden Age 198
 - Champion Builders of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order 198
 - Resources in America Greatest 198
 - Lion's Share of Funds 199
 - Greater Capacity of America 199
 - Station of America 201
 - Attainment of Spiritual as Well as Material Development 202
 - American Character 202
 - Alliance of East and West 203
 - Combining Spiritual and Material Civilization 203
 - Our Inescapable Responsibility 204
 - Western Believers to Sacrifice Comfort 205
 - Great Success Depends on Great Effort 205
- DEPENDENCE UPON BAHÁ'U'LLÁH 206
 - Rely upon Bahá'u'lláh for Success 206

Bibliography 209

The Gift of Creation

God Provides All

I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.

There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 101

By the righteousness of God! Idle fancies have debarred men from the Horizon of Certitude, and vain imaginings withheld them from the Choice Sealed Wine. In truth I say, and for the sake of God I declare: This Servant, this Wronged One, is abashed to claim for Himself any existence whatever, how much more those exalted grades of being! Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory. Whatever hath been said hath come from God. Unto this, He, verily, hath borne, and beareth now, witness, and He, in truth, is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 44

A single breeze of His affluence doth suffice to adorn all mankind with the robe of wealth; and one drop out of the ocean of His bountiful grace is enough to confer upon all beings the glory of everlasting life.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 53

Lord! Pitiful are we, grant us Thy favor; poor, bestow upon us a share from the ocean of Thy wealth; needy, do Thou satisfy us; abased, give us Thy glory. The fowls of the air and the beasts of the field receive their meat each day from Thee, and all beings partake of Thy care and loving-kindness.

Deprive not this feeble one of Thy wondrous grace and vouchsafe by Thy might unto this helpless soul Thy bounty.

Give us our daily bread, and grant Thine increase in the necessities of life, that we may be dependent on none other but Thee, may commune wholly with Thee, may walk in Thy ways and declare Thy mysteries. Thou art the Almighty and the Loving and the Provider of all mankind.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'i Prayers*, pp. 22–23

Creation Provides All Needs

The honor and exaltation of every existing being depends upon causes and circumstances.

The excellency, the adornment and the perfection of the earth is to be verdant and fertile through the bounty of the clouds of springtime. Plants grow; flowers and fragrant herbs spring up; fruit-bearing trees become full of blossoms and bring forth fresh and new fruit. Gardens become beautiful, and meadows adorned; mountains and plains are clad in a green robe, and gardens, fields, villages and cities are decorated. This is the prosperity of the mineral world.

Sacred Trust

The height of exaltation and the perfection of the vegetable world is that a tree should grow on the bank of a stream of fresh water, that a gentle breeze should blow on it, that the warmth of the sun should shine on it, that a gardener should attend to its cultivation, and that day by day it should develop and yield fruit. But its real prosperity is to progress into the animal and human world, and replace that which has been exhausted in the bodies of animals and men.

The exaltation of the animal world is to possess perfect members, organs and powers, and to have all its needs supplied. This is its chief glory, its honor and exaltation. So the supreme happiness of an animal is to have possession of a green and fertile meadow, perfectly pure flowing water, and a lovely, verdant forest. If these things are provided for it, no greater prosperity can be imagined. For example, if a bird builds its nest in a green and fruitful forest, in a beautiful high place, upon a strong tree, and at the top of a lofty branch, and if it finds all it needs of seeds and water, this is its perfect prosperity.

But real prosperity for the animal consists in passing from the animal world to the human world, like the microscopic beings that, through the water and air, enter into man and are assimilated, and replace that which has been consumed in his body. This is the great honor and prosperity for the animal world; no greater honor can be conceived for it.

Therefore, it is evident and clear that this wealth, this comfort and this material abundance form the complete prosperity of minerals, vegetables and animals. No riches, wealth, comfort or ease of the material world is equal to the wealth of a bird; all the areas of these plains and mountains are its dwelling, and all the seeds and harvests are its food and wealth, and all the lands, villages, meadows, pastures, forests and wildernesses are its possessions. Now, which is the richer, this bird, or the most wealthy man? For no matter how many seeds it may take or bestow, its wealth does not decrease.

Then it is clear that the honor and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches. Material comforts are only a branch, but the root of the exaltation of man is the good attributes and virtues which are the adornments of his reality. These are the divine appearances, the heavenly bounties, the sublime emotions, the love and knowledge of God; universal wisdom, intellectual perception, scientific discoveries, justice, equity, truthfulness, benevolence, natural courage and innate fortitude; the respect for rights and the keeping of agreements and covenants; rectitude in all circumstances; serving the truth under all conditions; the sacrifice of one's life for the good of all people; kindness and esteem for all nations; obedience to the teachings of God; service in the Divine Kingdom; the guidance of the people, and the education of the nations and races. This is the prosperity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the world! This is eternal life and heavenly honor!

These virtues do not appear from the reality of man except through the power of God and the divine teachings, for they need supernatural power for their manifestation. It may be that in the world of nature a trace of these perfections may appear, but they are unstable and ephemeral; they are like the rays of the sun upon the wall.

As the compassionate God has placed such a wonderful crown upon the head of man, man should strive that its brilliant jewels may become visible in the world.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 78–80

The Funds

The institution of the Bahá'í Fund, of which there are four main funds, operates on the international, continental, national, and local levels. . . . Each National Spiritual Assembly and Local Spiritual Assembly administers its own National and Local Fund, respectively. . . .

—*Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, p. 741

Among the powers and duties with which the Universal House of Justice has been invested are . . . to provide for the receipt, disposition, administration and safeguarding of the funds, endowments and other properties that are entrusted to its care. . . .

—The Universal House of Justice, *Constitution of the Universal House of Justice*, p. 5

The funds . . . are managed according to principles laid down by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi. Foremost among the principles are: (1) Except for the portion of the Bahá'í Funds devoted exclusively to charitable, philanthropic, or humanitarian purposes, contributions are accepted only from those who have identified themselves with the Bahá'í Faith and are regarded as its avowed and unreserved supporters. (2) Contributing to the Funds is both a spiritual privilege and a responsibility. (3) All contributions to the Bahá'í Funds are voluntary. (4) The degree of sacrifice and love of the contributor is more important than the amount given. (5) Appeals for donations must be dignified and general in character. (6) Confidentiality of contributions is to be strictly preserved. (7) Receipts are to be issued. Shoghi Effendi referred to the Funds as “the life-blood” of the Bahá'í institutions.

—*Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, p. 741

Give to Fund, Not Individuals

In regard to Miss . . . 's contribution to the fund, Shoghi Effendi wishes you to make it quite clear to her that her money-offerings should be made to the Bahá'í fund, and not to any individual. This being an important principle governing all Bahá'í publications and publishing societies, it should be duly emphasized and clearly understood, so that no difficulty may appear in the future. Of course, contributions should be accepted only when made by the Bahá'ís themselves. You should, therefore, first ascertain whether Miss . . . is a true Bahá'í, and then and only then accept her contributions to your book fund.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 14 April 1934 to an individual, in *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 15

Other Types of Funds

The fifth [specific task facing the Bahá'í world as it enters the Second Phase of the Nine Year Plan] is development of the Panama Temple Fund. The Universal House of Justice is initiating this Fund with a contribution of \$25,000, and now calls upon the believers and Bahá'í communities to contribute liberally and continuously until the funds for the completion of this historic structure are assured. Such contributions should be sent directly to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama. More than fifty designs have been received, and the House of Justice is now considering the recommendations of

Sacred Trust

the National Assembly. The choice will be announced and the friends will be kept fully informed of the progress of this highly significant and inspiring project.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Rīdván 1966 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 34.8

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 October 1964 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

We therefore appeal to the new National Assemblies and the communities they represent to inaugurate, at the time their National Funds are established, a special European Temple Fund, to which all may contribute, in great or small measure, mindful that the act of everyone giving has a spiritual significance far surpassing the size of the gift and releases beneficent forces which react on the life of both the individual and the community in a mysterious and highly potent manner.

—The Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 358

THE INTERNATIONAL FUND

The Bahá'í International Fund

The Bahá'í International Fund supports the vast array of work of the Universal House of Justice. It is used, among other things, to finance the operations of the Bahá'í World Center and of the Bahá'í International Community worldwide, assist various National Spiritual Assemblies, fund agencies for Bahá'í social and economic development, and support programs, carried out in conjunction with various United Nations organizations.

—*Stewardship and Development*, p. 45

The Bahá'í International Fund is administered by the Universal House of Justice and is used to support the work of the Faith at the Bahá'í World Center and to sustain national communities unable to meet their own expenses. The International Deputization Fund, a subsidiary of the Bahá'í International Fund, supports the work of pioneers and traveling teachers and is administered by the International Teaching Center.* The Persian Relief Fund, originally established by the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran to assist victims of persecution by the Islamic Republic, is also a subsidiary of the Bahá'í International Fund and is administered by the Universal House of Justice.

—*Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, p. 741

The Bahá'í International Fund— Recent Victories and Immediate Challenges

At the outset of the Seven Year Plan, faced with tremendous tasks to be accomplished by the Bahá'í world, and confronted by the seemingly crippling financial losses that

* Also supports tutors in Training Institutes the world over.

resulted from the savage onslaught of inveterate enemies upon the valiant believers in the Cradle of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice turned with fervent hope to the believers in the rest of the world, calling upon them to arise and champion the cause of their persecuted brethren in the international arena and, through self-sacrifice and the exercise of wise stewardship of the funds of the Faith, to enable its work to go forward unhindered by the sudden inability of the believers in Iran to continue their major role in providing the lifeblood of the Cause. In both fields, these past two years have witnessed astonishing victories.

The manner in which the case of the persecuted Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has been blazoned in the media, conveying its message to millions of souls who had scarcely if at all heard of it before; and the degree to which world authorities have risen to plead its case and call for its vindication, have both been witnessed with eager and uplifted hearts by Bahá'ís in all lands. Now the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to inform you that in supporting the Bahá'í International Fund the self-sacrificing followers of the Blessed Beauty have won similar victories.

The manifold acts of devotion and service that have been so distinctive a mark of progress in the opening phase of the Seven Year Plan have not only laid a firm foundation for the development of the institutions of the Faith worldwide, but have also been manifested in an outpouring of financial substance that has made possible the setting of goals for the second phase of the Plan that will enhance the prestige of our beloved Faith and hasten the day of its complete emergence from obscurity. The financial needs of the first phase of the Plan have been fully met. The teaching work has continued with unabated zeal. The Seat of the Universal House of Justice is now nearing completion and the funds required for that tremendous task are in hand.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 June 1981 to the Bahá'ís of the World,
Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986, no. 284.1–284.3

The Duties of the International Teaching Center

The duties of the International Teaching Center, including those announced previously and those now being assigned to it, are as follows:

- To assume full responsibility for coordinating, stimulating and directing the Continental Boards of Counselors, acting also 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, from this knowledge, to make reports and recommendations to the Universal House of Justice and give advice to the Continental Boards of Counselors.
- To watch over the security and ensure the protection of the Faith of God.
- To be alert to possibilities for the extension of the teaching work and the development of economic and social life both within and without the Bahá'í community, and to draw the attention of the Universal House of Justice and the Continental Boards of Counselors to such possibilities, making recommendations for action.
- To determine and anticipate needs for literature, pioneers and traveling teachers and to work out teaching plans, both regional and global, for the approval of the Universal House of Justice.

Sacred Trust

- To direct the work of the Continental Pioneer Committees.
- To administer the expenditure of the International Deputization Fund.
- To administer an annual budget that will be provided from the Bahá'í International Fund, allocating therefrom to the Continental Boards of Counselors monies for special teaching projects and literature subvention, and, when necessary, contributions to the Continental Funds.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 May 1963 to the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 361.5

Where Do International Funds Go?

The vast increase in the financial resources of the Faith called for under the Plan has evoked a heartwarming response from the entire Bahá'í community. Not only the Bahá'í International Fund but the local, national and continental Funds of the Faith have been sacrificially supported. This practical proof of the love which the friends bear for the Faith has enabled all the work to go forward—the support of pioneers and traveling teachers, the raising of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs and acquisition of Bahá'í properties, the purchase of Holy Places in the Cradle of the Faith and at the World Center, the development of educational institutions and all the multifarious activities of a vigorous, onward-marching, constructive world community. It is of interest that sixty percent of the international funds of the Faith is used to assist the work of National Spiritual Assemblies, to promote the teaching work and to defend the Cause against attacks in many parts of the world. Without such help from the Bahá'í world community many National Assemblies would be paralyzed in their efforts of expansion and deepening.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 1973 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 128.14

The onward march of the Faith requires, and is indeed dependent upon, a very great increase in contributions to the various funds. All the goals assigned to the World Center of the Faith, and particularly those dealing with the development and beautification of the properties surrounding the Holy Shrines and the extension of the gardens on Mount Carmel entail heavy expenditures. The building of the two Temples called for in the Plan will require further large sums, and the worldwide process of teaching and consolidation now to be intensified must be sustained by a greatly increased and uninterrupted flow of funds. The International Deputization Fund must be maintained and expanded, not only for further pioneering needs, but in order to assist and develop the traveling teacher program now called for. Since only those who have openly proclaimed their recognition of Bahá'u'lláh 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 1966 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 34.14

The administration of Ḥuqúqu'lláh has been strengthened in preparation for its extension to other parts of the world. An International Deputization Fund was established at the World Center to assist pioneers and traveling teachers who were ready to serve but unable to provide their own expenses, and this Fund was later extended to the support of projects on national homefronts. Contribution to the Fund is a service which will never cease to be open to all believers; the growth of the Faith and the rise of its Administrative Order require an ever-increasing outpouring of our substance, commensurate in however small a measure with the bounty and liberality of the outpouring confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riḍván 1973 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 128.14

Early Needs of the Bahá'í World Center

The time has now come in the progress of the Nine Year Plan when the Bahá'í world must devote a greater effort towards the development of the Faith at its World Center.

Nearly all the accessible unsettled territories of the Plan have now been settled, bases have been established throughout the world for the future expansion of the Faith; a program of progressive consolidation is being pursued hand-in-hand with continued expansion; plans for the construction of the Panama Temple are well advanced; the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, Temple sites, and endowments called for in the Plan are being steadily acquired; by the end of the next Riḍván period 81 out of the 108 National Spiritual Assemblies called for by 1973 will have been established; and the opening of the period of the proclamation of the Faith is fast approaching.

Since the Universal House of Justice came into being in 1963, its primary concern at the World Center of the Faith has been with the basic, minimum essentials of undertaking repairs to the Holy Places; establishing its administrative offices; reorganizing the accommodation of pilgrims; gathering its staff, developing a suitable housing program for the Hands of the Cause and their families, the members of the House of Justice and their families, and all other believers serving at the World Center; formulating plans for the expansion of the Gardens and taking the first steps in their initiation; collating the Sacred Texts and the letters of Shoghi Effendi and indexing them; and fostering relations with the Government of the State of Israel and with the United Nations.

The increased burden which these essential steps have imposed upon the International Fund we have endeavored to keep at a minimum so that, in the early stages of the Plan, the maximum resources could be utilized in the teaching work throughout the world.

However, we must now embark upon certain major undertakings vital to the future progress of the Cause. Extensive beautification of the sacred endowments surrounding the Holy Shrines in Bahjí and Haifa, as well as at the site of the future Mashriqu'l-Adhkár on Mount Carmel must be undertaken, both for its own sake and for the protection of these lands which are situated within the boundaries of rapidly expanding cities; the work of classifying and codifying the Holy Texts must be urgently pros-

Sacred Trust

ecuted; the arrangements for pilgrimage may have to be greatly expanded to provide for the ever-increasing number of applications from East and West; the Intercontinental Conferences and the International Convention must be held and paid for; and the auxiliary institutions of the Universal House of Justice must begin to unfold so that the ever-growing and increasingly complex work of the World Center of the Faith may continue to be efficiently discharged. Moreover, the vital assistance given by the International Fund to the work of the Hands of the Cause and National Spiritual Assemblies must be maintained.

The minimum budget requirements of the International Fund have nearly doubled since 1963, and if in addition we are to be enabled to undertake these developments, a much greater flow of funds will be needed than is now available.

We call upon every National Spiritual Assembly to consider now the amount that it can allocate as a contribution to the International Fund in its budget for the coming year. In some cases this may mean that contributions made hitherto will be doubled, trebled, or even more greatly increased. Please write as soon as your decision has been made, and not later than 21st April, telling us the estimated amount of your allocation.

This is a vitally important matter, and we shall pray in the Holy Shrines that the friends throughout the world will respond wholeheartedly to this call.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7 March 1967 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 40.1–40.8

Contributions Can Be Sent 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 BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL FUND.

This continues the policy established by the beloved Guardian who wrote that participation of individuals through “contributions directly transmitted to the Holy Land” was “imperative and beyond the scope of the jurisdiction of National and Local Assemblies.”

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 December 1963 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 872

Please Note: In the United States believers may receive a tax deduction for contributions to the Bahá'í International Fund only if they contribute to the National Bahá'í Fund in a non-discretionary way and express the wish, hope, and desire that a specific amount is assigned to one of the International Funds.

THE CONTINENTAL FUND

Urge initiation five Continental Bahá'í Funds which, as they develop, will increasingly facilitate the discharge of the functions assigned to the Boards. . . .

—Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 59

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

Measures have been undertaken and Bahá'í Continental Funds inaugurated in anticipation of the forthcoming appointment by the fifteen Hands residing outside the Holy Land of five Auxiliary Boards, one in each of the continents of the globe, the members of which will act as deputies of the Hands in their respective continents, and will aid and advise them in the effective prosecution of the Ten-Year Plan, and will assist them, at a later period, in the discharge of their dual and sacred task of safeguarding the Faith and of promoting its teaching activities.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 63

The Guardian leaves to the discretion of the Hands, the number of times members of the Board should visit different localities. This of course would depend on the location of the city and the funds, which are available, as well as the strength of the community itself.

The Guardian feels that funds which have been contributed to the Continental Fund for the use of the Teaching Boards, should not all be used for travel, but that a certain amount should be retained for necessary administrative activities of the Hands of the Cause involved.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Auxiliary Board Members*, p. 2

The Continental Bahá'í Fund supports the propagation and protection work of the International Teaching Center, the Continental Boards of Counselors, the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 December 1963 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 872

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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 December 1963 to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 13.6

The increase in the numbers of Board members will inevitably be reflected in an increase in the needs of the Continental Funds. This is a matter for discussion with the Hands in your continent, and we feel sure that you will do your utmost to meet the new requirements, bearing in mind the importance which the beloved Guardian attached to direct contributions to these Funds by National and Local Spiritual Assemblies, as well as by individual believers.

The fostering of this important relationship between the exalted body of the Hands of the Cause and the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í world will inevitably strengthen the foundation and functioning of the Cause of God and enable its embry-

Sacred Trust

onic world order to grow as a healthy tree under whose shade all mankind will eventually find security and peace.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated November 1964 to National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 21.7–21.8

ZAKÁT

Payment of Zakát

Zakát is referred to in the Qur'án as a regular charity binding upon Muslims. In due course the concept evolved into a form of alms tax which imposed the obligation to give a fixed portion of certain categories of income, beyond specified limits, for the relief of the poor, for various charitable purposes, and to aid the Faith of God. The limit of exemption varied for different commodities, as did the percentage payable on the portion assessable.

Bahá'u'lláh states that the Bahá'í law of Zakát follows “*what hath been revealed in the Qur'án*” (Q&A 107). Since such issues as the limits for exemption, the categories of income concerned, the frequency of payments, and the scale of rates for the various categories of Zakát are not mentioned in the Qur'án, these matters will have to be set forth in the future by the Universal House of Justice. Shoghi Effendi has indicated that pending such legislation the believers should, according to their means and possibilities, make regular contributions to the Bahá'í Fund.

—*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, n161

Who Can Contribute

To offer contributions towards this end [in support of the activities of the Spiritual Assembly] is one of the pressing requirements of the Cause of God, is deemed highly essential, and is of fundamental importance. Next to the payment of the Ḥuqúq, it is the obligation of every Bahá'í.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 27 February 1927 to the Bahá'ís of the East,
Compilation of Compilations, 1: no. 1256

Those Eligible to Contribute

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

Sacred Trust

insinuate that so beauteous, so significant an Edifice has been reared by anything short of the unanimous, the exclusive, and the self-sacrificing strivings of the small yet determined body of the convinced supporters of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. How delicate our task, how pressing the responsibility that weighs upon us, who are called upon on one hand to preserve inviolate the integrity and the identity of the regenerating Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and to vindicate on the other its broad, its humanitarian, its all-embracing principles!

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 182–83

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

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12 July 1938
to an individual, in *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 15

One of the distinguishing features of the Cause of God is its principle of nonacceptance of financial contributions for its own purposes from non-Bahá'ís; support of the Bahá'í Fund is a bounty reserved by Bahá'u'lláh to His declared followers. This bounty imposes full responsibility for financial support of the Faith 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 Bahá'í 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Naw-Rúz 1974 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 141.8

Children and Youth

. . . Any Bahá'í can give to the Cause's Funds, adult or child. No statement is required on this subject; Bahá'í children have always given to the Cause, everywhere. Whatever situation may arise in a class which non-Bahá'í children attend is for the teacher of the class to solve. No ruling should be made to cover such things.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 18 August 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1261

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CHILDREN OF NON-BAHÁ'ÍS OR IN CASE CHILD IS BAHÁ'Í

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 31 August 1975 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 848

YOUTH

The prevailing distress in America and Europe should awaken the youth to the futility of concentrating their whole life on purely material pursuits. They should learn the lesson that spiritual considerations should be the dominating factors of our life, that our guiding purpose should be to enhance our moral life and seek what is eternal and abiding.

Should the different nations continue to go wrong and be guided by the selfish desire of personal aggrandizement, you will be the group that will suffer most. Our present policies bear their fruits only in the future and it is the youth of the present that are the men and women of the future.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2 November 1931 to an individual, *Youth*, no. 16

The initiatives that youth can take in various fields of development, education and administration is great indeed. It is essential that, from an early age, they learn to shoulder their responsibilities, including their sacred duty to contribute generously to the funds of the Faith.

—The Universal House of Justice, email dated 17 December 1998 to the National Bahá'í Youth Committee of India

Guidelines for Accepting Funds from Governmental and Other Sources

The crucial point in deciding whether or not funds may be accepted from non-Bahá'ís for funds, it sometimes happens that a person who has a great know, it is absolutely forbidden in the Faith to accept from non-Bahá'ís 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-Bahá'í sources may be accepted towards such activities. Indeed, although we never ask individual non-Bahá'ís for funds, it sometimes happens that a person who has a great admiration for the Faith insists on contributing. In such

Sacred Trust

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 undertaken 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6 March 1983 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 855

ALL GIFTS BY NON-BAHÁ'ÍS ARE TO BE USED FOR CHARITY ONLY

Regarding Mr. —'s bequest to the Temple: your Assembly should inform his widow that, because he was not a Bahá'í, we cannot use his money for our purposes, as we consider our Faith and its institutions our free gift to humanity. You can, however, and indeed should, accept it for charity and expend it in his name.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5 July 1950 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Bahá'í News*, no. 236 (October 1950), p. 2

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

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 December 1988 to an individual

We are asked to point out that friends should not solicit contributions from non-Bahá'ís for the Persian Relief Fund. If such contributions are spontaneously received from non-Bahá'ís, the Local Assembly should ensure that such funds are spent only for humanitarian purposes.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 July 1982 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

NON-BAHÁ'Í GIFTS, THE TEMPLE DEPENDENCIES, AND HAZÍRATU'L-QUDS

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 February 1966 to
the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 30 October 1966 to
the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 32 December 1966 to
the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 September 1976 to
the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

PERMISSIBLE TO SEEK GRANTS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITIES

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

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

Sacred Trust

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10 April 1983 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

ADMISSION CHARGED TO AID BAHÁ'Í PUBLIC SCHOOL

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10 April 1983 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 31 August 1975 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 848

BELIEVERS DEPRIVED OF ADMINISTRATIVE RIGHTS

Formerly We have mentioned that were a person to possess the whole world and would tender his possessions at the cost of degrading the honour of the Cause, even to the extent of a grain of mustard, it would be essential and imperative to refuse to accept such wealth. Such is the Cause of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Well is it with them that act accordingly.

—Bahá'u'lláh, in *Huqúqu'lláh*, no. 32

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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7 March 1955 to the National Spiritual Assembly of South Africa, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 178

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

It is only those who have been spiritually ex-communicated by the Guardian with whom the believers are forbidden to associate, and not a person who is being punished by being deprived of his voting rights. As contributions to Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í Cemetery or receiving charity—which we even give to non-Bahá'ís—if in dire need.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8 May 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 123

Importance of Giving

Contribution to Funds— A Fundamental Spiritual Obligation

Moreover, the institutions of the local and national Funds, that are now the necessary adjuncts to all local and national spiritual assemblies, have not only been established by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Tablets He revealed to the Bahá’ís of the Orient, but their importance and necessity have been repeatedly emphasized by Him in His utterances and writings. The concentration of authority in the hands of the elected representatives of the believers; the necessity of the submission of every adherent of the Faith to the considered judgment of Bahá’í Assemblies; His preference for unanimity in decision; the decisive character of the majority vote; and even the desirability for the exercise of close supervision over all Bahá’í publications, have been sedulously instilled by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as evidenced by His authenticated and widely-scattered Tablets. To accept His broad and humanitarian Teachings on one hand, and to reject and dismiss with neglectful indifference His more challenging and distinguishing precepts, would be an act of manifest disloyalty to that which He has cherished most in His life.

—Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 6

The institution of the National Fund, so vital and essential for the uninterrupted progress of these activities must, in particular, be assured of the whole-hearted, the ever-increasing and universal support of the mass of believers, for whose welfare, and in whose name, these beneficent activities have been initiated and have been conducted. All, no matter how modest their resources, must participate.

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter dated 8 August 1957 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central and East Africa, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1250

Above all he wishes through you to reiterate his wish, already expressed in his recent cable to the N.S.A., that the National Fund, which undoubtedly constitutes the bed-rock upon which all the activities of the Cause ultimately rest, should receive the continued and whole-hearted support of all the believers. Both the local Assemblies and the individual believers should realize that unless they contribute regularly and generously to that Fund the progress of the Faith in India and Burma will not only be considerably retarded, but will inevitably come to a standstill. There should be a continual flow of funds to the National treasury of the N.S.A., if that body wishes to properly administer the manifold and ever-increasing activities of the Faith. Every Bahá’í 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 Bahá’u’lláh will largely depend upon the measure in which he proves, in deeds, his readiness to support materially the divine institutions of His Faith.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 17 July 1937 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 68

Sacred Trust

Every Bahá'í 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 Bahá'u'lláh will largely depend upon the measure in which he proves, in deeds, his readiness to support materially the divine institutions of His Faith.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 17 July 1937 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 68

This is the immediate need. Beyond this there is, we believe, a worldwide need for appreciation of this basic principle of our Faith: that contributing to the Fund should constitute an integral part of the spiritual life of every Bahá'í and be regarded as the fulfillment of a fundamental spiritual obligation. In too many countries we have encountered a reluctance among the teachers of the Cause to include, in their presentation of the Teachings, support of the Fund as a natural part of Bahá'í life. In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh more than once refers to the necessity for combining spiritual and material means in achieving the purposes of the Faith. Shoghi Effendi, for his part, referred to the Fund as the lifeblood of the Cause.

We urge all the friends to give deep thought to the importance of supporting the Cause financially and to the effect that Bahá'í activities have on the condition of the entire human race.

It is our fervent prayer at the Sacred Threshold that Bahá'u'lláh will inspire His devoted followers in every land to arise unitedly in the service of His Cause and will reward their sacrifices with an outpouring of heavenly bounties.

—The Universal House of Justice, *Wider Horizon*, pp. 94–95

Consolidation must comprise not only the establishment of Bahá'í 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 behavior in all aspects of private and public life, in the particular practice of Bahá'í life in such things as daily prayer, education of children, observance of the laws of Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í administration.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 1966 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 34.13

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 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 Bahá'u'lláh, however hard it may seem, grows spiritually, while the one who compromises with the law for the sake of his

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6 February 1973 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 126.4

Since only those who have openly proclaimed their recognition of Bahá'u'lláh 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riqdán 1966 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 34.14

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7 August 1985 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 453.3

Contributing to the Bahá'í fund constitutes an act of spiritual discipline which is an intrinsic element of the devotional life of the individual. No believer should be unaware of the privilege of contributing to the advancement of the Cause of God, irrespective of his material circumstances. The practice of giving to the Fund strengthens the connection between the believer and the Cause and enhances his sense of identification with it. Divine confirmations redound upon those who offer a portion of their material resources in a spirit of sacrifice, motivated by their love of the Faith and their desire to assist in its progress.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 17 September 1992, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 11

It seems fitting, then, that the sacred law which enables each one to express his or her personal sense of devotion to God in a profoundly private act of conscience that promotes the common good, which directly connects the individual believer with the Central Institution of the Faith, and which, above all, ensures to the obedient and the sincere the ineffable grace and abundant blessings of Providence, should, at this favorable juncture, be embraced by all who profess their belief in the Supreme Manifestation of God.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riqdán 1991 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Six Year Plan*, p. 81

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

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

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

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

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11 January 1971 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 13

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7 August 1985 to National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 435.2

Blessings

Unveiled and unconcealed, this Wronged One hath, at all times, proclaimed before the face of all the peoples of the world that which will serve as the key for unlocking the doors of sciences, of arts, of knowledge, of well-being, of prosperity and wealth. Neither have the wrongs inflicted by the oppressors succeeded in silencing the shrill voice of the Most Exalted Pen, nor have the doubts of the perverse or of the seditious been able to hinder Him from revealing the Most Sublime Word. I earnestly beseech God that He may protect and purge the people of Bahá from the idle fancies and corrupt imaginings of the followers of the former Faith.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 96

. . . All the friends of God . . . should contribute to the extent possible, however modest their offering may be. God doth not burden a soul beyond its capacity. Such contributions must come from all centers and all believers. . . . O Friends of God! Be ye assured that in place of these contributions, your agriculture, your industry, and your commerce will be blessed by manifold increases, with goodly gifts and bestowals. He who cometh with one goodly deed will receive a tenfold reward. There is no doubt that the living Lord will abundantly confirm those who expend their wealth in His path.

O God, my God! Illumine the brows of Thy true lovers, and support them with angelic hosts of certain triumph. Set firm their feet on Thy straight path, and out of Thine ancient bounty open before them the portals of Thy blessings; for they are expending on Thy pathway what Thou hast bestowed upon them, safeguarding Thy Faith, putting their trust in their remembrance of Thee, offering up their hearts for love of Thee, and withholding not what they possess in adoration for Thy Beauty and in their search for ways to please Thee.

O my Lord! Ordain for them a plenteous share, a destined recompense and sure reward.

Verily, Thou art the Sustainer, the Helper, the Generous, the Bountiful, the Ever-Bestowing.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, pp. 84–85

We must be like the fountain or spring that is continually emptying itself of all that it has and is continually being refilled from an invisible source. To be continually giving out for the good of our fellows undeterred by fear of poverty and reliant on the unflinching bounty of the Source of all wealth and all good—this is the secret of right living.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated September 1926,
Compilation of Compilations, 2: no. 1212

. . . Your donations to the Temple as well as the remarkable manner in which you are assisting the believers in their efforts to widen the scope of their publicity work are real and abiding contributions you have made to the Faith. And although at present you are unable to contribute financially as much as you did in former years you should not feel discouraged, much less disappointed. For the best way in which you can effectively support the Temple cause is not through material means but by the moral help which is

Sacred Trust

your primary obligation to extend to those who are in charge of the building of that sacred and unique Edifice. It is devotion, sincerity and genuine enthusiasm which in the long run can ensure the completion of our beloved Temple. Material considerations, though essential, are not the most vital by any means. Had it been otherwise the Temple would have never reached the stage of progress which it has already so well attained. For the resources of the community are limited, and have been severely affected during the last two years by an unprecedented and world-wide economic crisis. But despite all these material obstacles the Temple has made a steady progress and this alone is sufficient to convince every unbiased observer of the divine potency animating the Faith—a potency before which all material difficulties must inevitably wane.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 1933 to two believers,
Compilation of Compilations, 1: no. 1228

Contributions to this fund constitute . . . a practical and effective way whereby every believer can test the measure and character of his faith, and to prove in deeds the intensity of his devotion and attachment to the Cause.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 25 September 1924,
Compilation of Compilations, 1: no. 1229

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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 December 1963
to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Messages from the
Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 13.2

The overwhelming majority of the Bahá'ís in the world are poor people, but it is to the believers, and to the believers alone, that Bahá'u'lláh 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 13 April 1975
to all National Spiritual Assemblies receiving assistance from
the Bahá'í International Fund, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 841

Fulfillment of Every Undertaking Dependent on Material Means

Thou hast asked about material means and prayer. Prayer is like the spirit and material means are like the human hand. The spirit operateth through the instrumentality of the hand. Although the one true God is the All-Provider, it is the earth which is the means to supply sustenance. “The heaven hath sustenance for you”* but when sustenance is decreed it becometh available, whatever the means may be. When man refuseth

* Qur'án 51:22.

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

to use material means, he is like a thirsty one who seeketh to quench his thirst through means other than water or other liquids. The Almighty Lord is the provider of water, and its maker, and hath decreed that it be used to quench man's thirst, but its use is dependent upon His Will. If it should not be in conformity with His Will, man is afflicted with a thirst which the oceans cannot quench.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 1742

And as the progress and execution of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of local as well as National Spiritual Assemblies, a Bahá'í Fund be established, to be placed under the exclusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. All donations and contributions should be offered to the Treasurer of the Assembly, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Cause, throughout that locality or country. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12 March 1923 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 41–42

That you may reinforce this Teaching Campaign—so vitally needed in these days—and conduct, properly and efficiently, the rest of your manifold activities, spiritual as well as humanitarian, it is urgently necessary to establish that Central Fund, which if generously supported and upheld by individual friends and local Assemblies, will soon enable you to execute your plans with promptness and vigor.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6 May 1923 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 49

Both the local Assemblies and the individual believers should realize that unless they contribute regularly and generously to that Fund the progress of the Faith in India and Burma will not only be considerably retarded, but will inevitably come to a standstill. There should be a continual flow of funds to the National treasury of the N.S.A., if that body wishes to properly administer the manifold and ever-increasing activities of the Faith. Every Bahá'í 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 Bahá'u'lláh will largely depend upon the measure in which he proves, in deeds, his readiness to support materially the divine institutions of His Faith.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 17 July 1937, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 68

It is only evident that unless the flow of donations is regularly maintained by means of generous and continual support by all the believers, individually and collectively, the National Fund will never be able to meet the needs and requirements of the Cause, particularly in these days when the national activities of the American believers are assuming such wide and increasing proportions.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3 February 1941 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1235

Sacred Trust

Bahá'u'lláh has written that, “. . . He Who is the Eternal Truth—exalted be His glory—hath made the fulfilment of every undertaking on earth dependent on material means.” The community of the Greatest Name is in this day embarked upon the mightiest of undertakings destined to give rise to the spiritualization of mankind and the transformation of human society. Its needs should not, and indeed will not, be met only by the contributions from believers resident in those countries now enjoying a relatively high standard of living; rather should every follower of Bahá'u'lláh, undeterred by the meagerness of his material resources, resolve to offer his share for the work of the Faith.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 17 September 1992,
Stewardship and Development, p. 10

It is portentous of the profound change in the structure of present-day society which attainment to the Lesser Peace implies. Hopeful as are the signs, we cannot forget that the dark passage of the Age of Transition has not been fully traversed; it is as yet long, slippery and tortuous. For godlessness is rife, materialism rampant. Nationalism and racism still work their treachery in men's hearts, and humanity remains blind to the spiritual foundations of the solution to its economic woes. For the Bahá'í community the situation is a particular challenge, because time is running out and we have serious commitments to keep. The most immediate of these are: One, to teach the Cause of God and build its divinely ordained institutions throughout the world with wisdom, courage and urgency; and two, to complete on Mount Carmel the construction of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb and the remaining buildings on the Arc of the World Administrative Center of the Faith. The one calls for resolute, sustained and confident action on the part of the individual believer. The other requires a liberal outpouring of funds. Both are intimately related.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 1990
to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Wider Horizon*, p. 79

Life-Blood of the Cause

The supply of funds, in support of the national Treasury, constitutes, at the present time, the life-blood of these nascent institutions which you are labouring to erect. Its importance cannot, surely, be overestimated. Untold blessings shall no doubt crown every effort directed to that end.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1231

. . . Each and every believer, undaunted by the uncertainties, the perils and the financial stringency afflicting the nation, must arise and insure, to the full measure of his or her capacity, that continuous and abundant flow of funds into the national Treasury, on which the successful prosecution of the Plan must chiefly depend.

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter dated 30 January 1938
written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the
United States and Canada, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1234

To accomplish these many essential tasks the resources of the Cause are being stretched to their uttermost.

At this crucial moment when the activities of the believers and the expenditure of funds should be increased to seize the opportunities which lie before us, the Bahá'í International Fund finds itself plunged into a grave crisis by a steep reduction in contributions. Undoubtedly worldwide economic difficulties are one of the causes of this, but we are confident that the believers throughout the world will respond to this challenge and will make every sacrifice to ensure that the work of the Cause of God goes forward unimpeded.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 29 December 1970 to the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in every land, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 87.1–87.2

Support the Administrative Order

With the rapid approach of the launching of the Nine Year Plan, the Universal House of Justice feels that it is timely to lay clearly before the Bahá'ís of all countries, the needs of the Fund at all its levels: local, national, continental and international.

The continual expansion of the Faith and the diversification of the activities of Bahá'í communities make it more and more necessary for every believer to ponder carefully his responsibilities and contribute as much and as regularly as he or she can. 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. As the beloved Guardian wrote in August 1957: “All, no matter how modest their resources, must participate. Upon the degree of self-sacrifice involved in these individual contributions will directly depend the efficacy and the spiritual influence which these nascent administrative institutions, called into being through the power of Bahá'u'lláh, and by virtue of the Design conceived by the Center of His Covenant, will exert.”*

Not only the individual's responsibility to contribute is important at this time, but also the uses to which the fund is put and the areas in which it is expended.

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

* The nascent administrative institutions referred to are the Local and National Spiritual Assemblies. Bahá'u'lláh ordained the institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (see ¶30, n49); 'Abdu'l-Bahá established the institution of the National Spiritual Assembly (see *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 14–15).

Sacred Trust

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 Bahá'í 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 of the Nine Year Plan such as Oceanic Conferences, and to carry forward the work of beautifying the land surrounding the Holy Shrines at the World Center of the Faith.

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.

In the midst of a civilization torn by strifes and enfeebled by materialism, the people of Bahá 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 labors.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 December 1963 to the Bahá'ís of the East and West, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 13.1–13.7

MONEY REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN PROPERTIES

Emergence of independent sovereign state in Holy Land, synchronizing with the rise and consolidation of the Administrative Center of the World Faith of Bahá'u'lláh of which the establishment of the International Bahá'í Council and the construction of the superstructure of the Báb's Sepulcher constitute the initial major evidences, as well as the projected acquisition of extensive properties in close neighborhood of the Most Holy Tomb of Bahá and the precincts of the Shrine of Mount Carmel, Haifa, . . . demand henceforth reorientation and necessitate increasing financial support by Bahá'í National Communities of East and West, through curtailment of national and local budgets. . . . Moreover, participation of individual believers, through contributions directly transmitted to the Holy Land are imperative and beyond the scope of the jurisdiction of National and local Assemblies.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, pp. 13–14

Approaching Centenary of the birth of the prophetic Mission of the Founder of the Faith, the virtual consummation of the fifty year project culminating in the termination of the interior ornamentation of the Mother Temple of the West, the risks involved in any delay owing to the threatening international situation, the necessity to insure increasing support to reinforce the newly-forged ties with the civil authorities of the recently emerged State in the Holy Land through the formation of the Interna-

tional Bahá'í Council, the considerable saving effected through signature to the contract for the entire stone work required to erect the superstructure of the edifice, impel me to take the major step in the development of the swiftly progressing, irresistibly advancing enterprise transcending in sacredness any collective undertaking launched in the course of the history of the hundred year old Faith.

I am moved to renew my fervent plea addressed to all national and local Assemblies and believers in all continents of the globe to arise and determinedly gird up their loins to contribute, through curtailment of budgets, adequate appropriations from national and local funds, as well as direct sustained individual donations, to insure uninterrupted financial support, however great the sacrifice involved, however heavy the burdens, however distracting the successive crises of the present critical hour. Austerity period previously affecting the fortunes of the American Bahá'í community unavoidably prolonged and now extended to embrace the entire Bahá'í world in recognition of the pressing needs and paramount importance of this glorious international task.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 9

The onward march of the Faith requires, and is indeed dependent upon, a very great increase in contributions to the various funds. All the goals assigned to the World Center of the Faith, and particularly those dealing with the development and beautification of the properties surrounding the Holy Shrines and the extension of the gardens on Mount Carmel entail heavy expenditures. The building of the two Temples called for in the Plan will require further large sums,* and the worldwide process of teaching and consolidation now to be intensified must be sustained by a greatly increased and uninterrupted flow of funds. The International Deputization Fund must be maintained and expanded, not only for further pioneering needs, but in order to assist and develop the traveling teacher program now called for. Since only those who have openly proclaimed their recognition of Bahá'u'lláh 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 1966 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 34.14

BUILDS THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

Mere knowledge of principles is not sufficient. We all know and admit that justice is good, but there is need of volition and action to carry out and manifest it. For example, we might think it good to build a church, but simply thinking of it as a good thing will not help its erection. The ways and means must be provided; we must will to build it

* The two Temples referred to are the Houses of Worship that were to be built in Asia and Latin America. Plans for the construction of a Temple in Asia, to be located in Iran, had to be held in abeyance, due to antagonism toward the Faith in that country. The Temple for Latin America, completed in 1986, is in Panama.

Sacred Trust

and then proceed with the construction. 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 until the time of action arrives. Surely this has been so, and truly the time and conditions are ripe for action now. All men know that, verily, war is a destroyer of human foundations, and in every country of the world this is admitted and apparent.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 121

Liberal and increased contributions to the various Funds of the Faith will be essential if the above-mentioned tasks are to be successfully pursued. Furthermore, the now observable emergence from obscurity of our beloved Faith will impose the necessity of new undertakings involving large calls on the Funds. The growing awareness of the friends throughout the world in the past few years that the Funds of the Faith are indeed the lifeblood of its activities is a heartening augury for the future. We are confident that this awareness will increase, that more National Spiritual Assemblies will make great strides towards financial independence, that national budgets will be met, and the Bahá’í International Fund will receive an ever-increasing outpouring of contributions enabling that Fund to keep pace with the ever-increasing international needs of the Faith.

Beloved friends, the world moves deeper into the heart of darkness as its old order is rolled up. Pursuing our objectives with confidence, optimism, and an unshakable resolve, we must never forget that our service is a spiritual one. Mankind is dying for lack of true religion and this is what we have to offer to humanity. It is the love of God, manifest in the appearance of Bahá’u’lláh, which will feed the hungry souls of the world and eventually lead the peoples out of the present morass into the orderly, uplifting, and soul-inspiring task of establishing God’s Kingdom on earth.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated March 1981 to the Bahá’ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 275.10–275.11

. . . The devoted followers of Bahá’u’lláh have, even without it, every opportunity to contribute regularly and sacrificially to the work of the Cause. It is to a greater realization of the privilege and responsibility of supporting the multiple activities of our beloved Faith that we call you all at this critical time in world history, and remind you that to support the Bahá’í funds is an integral part of the Bahá’í way of life. The need is not only now, but throughout the years to come, until our exertions, reinforced by confirmations from on high, will have overcome the great perils now facing mankind and have made this world another world—a world whose splendor and grace will surpass our highest hopes and greatest dreams.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3 January 1985, *Wider Horizon*, pp. 30–31

The gathering of the representatives of the Bahá’í world at the International Convention last Ridván was held in an atmosphere charged with awareness of the sacrifices being made by our fellow believers in Iran and with eager anticipation of the new prospects opening before the Cause as a result of changing conditions in the world, the

widespread publicity that the Faith has received in all continents, and the growing maturity of its administrative institutions. During the succeeding eight months we have been developing the agencies and formulating the plans to enable the Faith to seize the unprecedented opportunities now before it, but we are confronted with a shortage of funds which, if not remedied, could frustrate these plans. For the last two years there has been a decline in the amount of contributions to the international funds of the Faith, and we note that many national funds also are facing the danger of deficits.

Beyond carrying on the general work of the Cause there are four areas where immediate action is required. The first is the completion of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs* in India and Samoa. Any delay in this work can but make it more expensive and also seriously injure the reputation of the Faith in these two vital areas.

The second is the development of the World Centre, the focal point of the entire Administrative Order of the Faith where, in the words of Shoghi Effendi, "the dust of its Founders reposes, where the processes disclosing its purposes, energizing its life and shaping its destiny all originate."

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

The fourth area is in the development and coordination of world-wide efforts to present to a far more extensive audience than ever before the divine remedy for the problems besetting society and its individual members, to establish the universality of the Faith and the implications of its teachings in the eyes of statesmen, and to ensure that the leaders of thought become thoroughly aware of the Bahá'í Revelation and the profundity of its message. The work on the Temples is already well advanced and must not be stopped; the development of the agencies of the World Centre, located in one of the principal trouble-spots of the world, cannot be indefinitely held back; the time for the expansion of social and economic development as an aspect of the work of the Cause has arrived and it cannot be neglected without grave consequences to the life of Bahá'í communities; the unprecedented opportunity for proclamation of the Faith has been given to us as a direct result of the persecutions inflicted on the believers in the Cradle of the Faith. If we are to be worthy of the sacrifices of these valiant friends, and if we are not to betray the trust that Bahá'u'lláh has placed upon us for the redemption of mankind in this hour of its acute need, we must not fail to seize the opportunities now before us.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 21 January 1984 to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in every land, *Wider Horizon*, pp. 11–13

Sacred Trust

GIVE DIRECTLY TO ALL FUNDS

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 9

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1231

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

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3 February 1941 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1235

The fixing of priorities is dependent on many factors, relating both to the Cause as a whole and to each individual in his or her own circumstances.

As far as the Cause is concerned, all the work must be kept going; all the funds need to be supported, both directly by the believers, and also by the making of contributions by Bahá'í institutions from one fund to another, which do not take the place of contributions from individuals—the source of the life-blood of the Cause.

At the level of the individual believer, attention to the needs of the funds of the Faith parallels the principles which govern multiple loyalties. The first loyalty of a Bahá'í is to the whole of mankind, for the benefit of the part is best achieved through the welfare of the whole. But this widest loyalty does not eliminate the lesser loyalties of love for one's country, for the area in which one lives, or for one's family. They all constitute a network of interdependent and mutually beneficial loyalties. So it is with the individual believer's relationship to the International, Continental, National and Local Funds.

Although the setting of priorities for contributing is a matter for personal judgement, the individual believer will certainly bear in mind the priorities of the work of the Cause as a whole.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated June 1993, *Stewardship and Development*, pp. 44-45

DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED

True, we cannot fail to realize at the present stage of our work the extremely limited number of contributors qualified to lend financial support to such a vast, such an

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

elaborate and costly enterprise. We are fully aware of the many issues and varied Bahá'í activities that are unavoidably held in abeyance pending the successful conclusion of the Plan of Unified Action. We are only too conscious of the pressing need of some sort of befitting and concrete embodiment of the spirit animating the Cause that would stand in the heart of the American Continent both as a witness and as a rallying center to the manifold activities of a fast growing Faith. But spurred by those reflections may we not bestir ourselves and resolve as we have never resolved before to hasten by every means in our power the consummation of this all-absorbing yet so meritorious a task? I beseech you, dear friends, not to allow considerations of number, or the consciousness of the limitation of our resources, or even the experience of inevitable setbacks which every mighty undertaking is bound to encounter, to blur your vision, to dim your hopes, or to paralyse your efforts in the prosecution of your divinely appointed task. Neither, do I entreat you, to suffer the least deviation into the paths of expediency and compromise to obstruct those channels of vivifying grace that can alone provide the inspiration and strength vital not only to the successful conduct of its material construction, but to the fulfillment of its high destiny.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 25 October 1929 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 182–84

CONTRIBUTING WHILE RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Concerning your question whether a person is to contribute to the Bahá'í 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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9 March 1939 to an individual, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 856

Individual Consecration

How Every Believer Can Test the Measure of His Faith

. . . He wishes you particularly to impress the believers with the necessity of maintaining the flow of their contributions to the Temple, and also to stress the importance of the institution of the national Bahá'í Fund, which, in these early days of the administrative development of the Faith, is the indispensable medium for the growth and expansion of the Movement. Contributions to this fund constitute, in addition, a practical and effective way whereby every believer can test the measure and character of his faith, and prove in deeds the intensity of his devotion and attachment to the Cause.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 25 September 1934 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1229

The great thing is to “live the life”—to have our lives so saturated with the Divine teachings and the Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í Spirit. Unless we can show this transformation in our lives, this new power, this mutual love and harmony, then the Bahá'í teachings are but a name to us.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 14 February 1925 to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 1271

Each Must Arise to Capacity

The evolution of the Plan imposes a threefold obligation, which all individual believers, all Local Assemblies, as well as the National Assembly itself, must respectively recognize and conscientiously fulfil. Each and every believer, undaunted by the uncertainties, the perils and the financial stringency afflicting the nation, must arise and ensure, to the full measure of his or her capacity, that continuous and abundant flow of funds into the national Treasury, on which the successful prosecution of the Plan must chiefly depend.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 1445

Every Believer Can Contribute

. . . The Guardian would advise your Assembly to continue impressing upon the believers the necessity of their contributing regularly to the national fund, irrespective of whether there is an emergency to be met or not. Nothing short of a continuous flow of contributions to that fund can, indeed, ensure the financial stability upon which so much of the progress of the institutions of the Faith must now inevitably depend.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 29 July 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1230

Sacred Trust

In addition to teaching, every believer can pray. Every believer can strive to make his “own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendor of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh.”* Every believer can contribute to the Fund. Not all believers can give public talks, not all are called upon to serve on administrative institutions. But all can pray, fight their own spiritual battles, and contribute to the Fund. If every believer will carry out these sacred duties, we shall be astonished at the accession of power which will result to the whole body, and which in its turn will give rise to further growth and the showering of greater blessings on all of us.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated September 1964 to the Bahá’ís of the World,
Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986, no. 19.5

Individual Role Uniquely Important

The role of the individual is of unique importance in the work of the Cause. It is the individual who manifests the vitality of faith upon which the success of the teaching work and the development of the community depend. . . .

Shoghi Effendi underscored the absolute necessity of individual initiative and action. He explained that without the support of the individual, “at once wholehearted, continuous and generous,” every measure and plan of his National Spiritual Assembly is “foredoomed to failure,” the purpose of the Master’s Divine Plan is “impeded”; furthermore, the sustaining strength of Bahá’u’lláh Himself “will be withheld from every and each individual who fails in the long run to arise and play his part.” Hence, at the very crux of any progress to be made is the individual believer, who possesses the power of execution which only he can release through his own initiative and sustained action.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996]
to the Bahá’ís of the World, *Four Year Plan*, no. 3.20, 3.22

The end of the century is fast approaching. There is so little time and so much to do. We call upon every follower of the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh to consecrate the utmost endeavour to the two primary tasks of teaching the Faith to every thirsting soul, and of providing the material means for the completion of the monumental projects being pursued on Mount Carmel. Whatever the outward conditions of mankind in the year ahead, the Bahá’í community must gather strength, demonstrate more clearly the distinguishing character of its way of life, reach out with confidence to proclaim and teach its message, and draw down in ever-greater measure the confirming assistance of the Hosts of the Supreme Concourse. In every aspect of this work, it is the individual Bahá’í who holds the key to victory.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 151 [1994]
to the Bahá’ís of the World

* Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 6.

Regularity

The continual expansion of the Faith and the diversification of the activities of Bahá'í communities make it more and more necessary for every believer to ponder carefully his responsibilities and contribute as much and as regularly as he or she can.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 December 1963 to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 13.2

Each Believer Must Act According to His Own Judgment

Regarding your questions: He does not feel that it is desirable to lay down any conditions for giving to the Bahá'í Fund. This is an entirely personal matter, and each believer must act according to his own judgment and the needs of the Faith. In times of crisis, whether in the affairs of the Cause or in one's own family, people naturally behave differently than under normal circumstances. But decisions in these matters must rest with each individual Bahá'í.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 19 October 1947 to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1239

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.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet translated 24 August 1909, in *Star of the West*, 6 (19 January 1916) p. 139

Generosity

To Give and to Be Generous

O CHILDREN OF DUST!

Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 49

. . . Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. . . .

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138

I implore Thee by the splendour of the light of Thy glorious face, the majesty of Thine ancient grandeur and the power of Thy transcendent sovereignty to ordain for us at this moment every measure of that which is good and seemly and to destine for us every portion of the outpourings of Thy grace. For granting of gifts doth not cause Thee loss, nor doth the bestowing of favours diminish Thy wealth.

—The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 186

If man were to care for himself only he would be nothing but an animal for only the animals are thus egoistic. If you bring a thousand sheep to a well to kill nine hundred and ninety-nine the one remaining sheep would go on grazing, not thinking of the others and worrying not at all about the lost, never bothering that its own kind had passed away, or had perished or been killed. To look after one's self only is therefore an animal propensity. It is the animal propensity to live solitary and alone. It is the animal proclivity to look after one's own comfort. But man was created to be a man—to be fair, to be just, to be merciful, to be kind to all his species, never to be willing that he himself be well off while others are in misery and distress—this is an attribute of the animal and not of man. Nay, rather, man should be willing to accept hardships for himself in order that others may enjoy wealth; he should enjoy trouble for himself that others may enjoy happiness and well-being. This is the attribute of man. This is becoming of man. Otherwise man is not man—he is less than the animal. . . .

. . . Consider how the greatest men in the world—whether among prophets or philosophers—all have forfeited their own comfort, have sacrificed their own pleasure for the well-being of humanity. They have sacrificed their own lives for the body politic. They have sacrificed their own wealth for that of the general welfare. They have forfeited their own honor for the honor of mankind. Therefore it becomes evident that this is the highest attainment for the world of humanity. . . .

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 42

Sacred Trust

He [Bahá'u'lláh] was most generous, giving abundantly to the poor. None who came to Him were turned away. The doors of His house were open to all. He always had many guests. This unbounded generosity was conducive to greater astonishment from the fact that He sought neither position nor prominence. In commenting upon this His friends said He would become impoverished, for His expenses were many and His wealth becoming more and more limited.

“Why is he not thinking of his own affairs?” they inquired of each other; but some who were wise declared: “This personage is connected with another world; he has something sublime within him that is not evident now; the day is coming when it will be manifested.” In truth the Blessed Perfection was a refuge for every weak one, a shelter for every fearing one, kind to every indigent one, lenient and loving to all creatures.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 25–26

Concerning the sincerity of motive and purity of deeds, the Tongue of Grandeur addressed them in these words:

“Suppose there is a very rich person whose wealth is enormous and beyond measure. And suppose that gradually and in the course of time he bestows so much of his wealth upon a poor person . . . that he himself is reduced to absolute poverty while the poor man has turned into a very rich man . . . Suppose in his poor and distressed state he reaches a situation in which he incurs some small debt. Being unable to pay it, he is brought to a public square in town where he is humiliated and punished. He is further informed that his release will not be considered until he pays his debt. At this point suppose he sees his friend (who once was poor and as a result of his generosity has become rich). Should the thought flash through his mind that he wishes that in return for all his generosity to him, this friend would now come forward and relieve him of this calamity, immediately all his deeds would become void, he would become deprived of the virtue of contentment and acquiescence, and would be shut away from the virtues of the human spirit.

“The same thing is true of the second man who has become rich (through the generosity of the captive). Should he think in his heart that he is obliged to pay this man’s debts, free him from his ordeal, and enable him to live the rest of his life in comfort, because he had earlier shown immeasurable love and kindness towards him, then such a motive leading him to repay his friend’s generosity (instead of giving for the sake of humanity) would cause him to be deprived of the chalice of sincerity and would drive him into the world of ignominy.

“The only way acceptable to God would have been for the first man to have based his acts of generosity on humanitarian principles wholly for the sake of God. In the same way, the second rich man should have acted for the sake of God and as a duty to the world of humanity regardless of the events of the past or the future. Thus is it revealed: ‘We nourish your souls for the sake of God; we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks’ . . .”

—Nabíl-i-A’zam, “Panj Kanz,” quoted in Adib Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, 2:142–43

Sacrifice

What Is Sacrifice?

Sacrifice (n.) 1. act of making an offering . . . to a deity, in propitiation or worship. . . . 3. a. act of giving up, foregoing or destroying something, esp. something valued or desired, usually for the sake of something else. b. that which is given up. [Old French SACRIFICE offering to a god, from Latin SACRIFICIUM, from SACER holy + FACERE to make.]

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 Bahá'ís.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4 May 1932 to an individual,
Compilation of Compilations, 1: no. 1226

Sacrifice Needed for Success

We therefore call upon every true-hearted Bahá'í to consecrate his life anew to the service of God and the betterment of the lot of mankind, so that manpower will not be lacking in the fields of pioneering, teaching and administrative service. Most urgently, may every believer give sacrificially of his substance, each in accordance with his means, to the funds of the Cause, local, national, continental and international, so that the material resources—the lifeblood of all activities—will be adequate to the tremendous work that we have to perform in the months and years immediately ahead. It requires a concentration of effort, a unity of purpose and a degree of self-sacrifice to match the heroic exertions of the victors of past plans in the progress of the Cause.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2 January 1984 to the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in every Land, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 385.10

From Love Comes Sacrifice

Do Thou sacrifice the thing which Thou lovest most in the path of God. . . .

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 232

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 36.5

As to the fourth significance of sacrifice: It is the principle that a reality sacrifices its own characteristics. Man must sever himself from the influences of the world of matter, from the world of nature and its laws; for the material world is the world of corruption and death. . . .

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 451

Sacred Trust

. . . Man must become evanescent in God. Must forget his own selfish conditions that he may thus arise to the station of sacrifice. It should be to such a degree that if he sleep, it should not be for pleasure, but to rest the body in order to do better, to speak better, to explain more beautifully, to serve the servants of God and to prove the truths. When he remains awake, he should seek to be attentive, serve the Cause of God and sacrifice his own stations for those of God. When he attains to this station, the confirmations of the Holy Spirit will surely reach him, and man with this power can withstand all who inhabit the earth.

—Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 384

. . . For where is Bahá’í love? Where is putting unity and harmony first? Where is the willingness to sacrifice one’s personal feelings and opinions to achieve love and harmony? What makes the Bahá’ís think that when they sacrifice the spiritual laws the administrative laws are going to work? . . .

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 24 February 1950 to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 1325

With regard to your question concerning contributions to the Temple fund: the friends should certainly be encouraged and even urged to support financially this, as well as other national institutions of the Cause. But they should, under no circumstances, be required to do so. As to the idea of “giving what one can afford”: this does by no means put a limit or even exclude the possibility of self-sacrifice. There can be no limit to one’s contributions to the national fund. The more one can give the better it is, especially 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. It is the spirit, not the mere fact of contributing, that we should always take into account when we stress the necessity for a universal and whole-hearted support of the various funds of the Cause.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 31 December 1935 to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1232

The physical reality of the progress thus far so marvelously realized is proof of an even more profound achievement, namely, the unity of purpose effected throughout our global community in the pursuit of this gigantic, collective enterprise. The intensity of the interest and support it has evoked has expressed itself in an unprecedented outpouring of contributions, reflecting a level of sacrifice that bespeaks the quality of faith and generosity of heart of Bahá’u’lláh’s lovers throughout the planet.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996] to the Bahá’ís of the World, *Four Year Plan*, no. 3.3.

The motive for contribution by the believers to the Ḥuqúq’u’lláh or the Bahá’í Funds, whether in the days of Bahá’u’lláh or in any other time, has been and always will be their love for Bahá’u’lláh and His Cause. It is the love of the individual for Him that endows the offering, no matter how small, with a celestial potency through which the

Cause of God can be propelled forward. This is why the privilege of giving to the Bahá'í Fund is exclusively vouchsafed to the believers. For the promotion of the Cause of God, whether through teaching or contributing to the Bahá'í Funds, is dependent upon devotion to Bahá'u'lláh and the performance of stainless deeds by the believers. These two factors bring victory to the Cause.

During the days of Bahá'u'lláh, the majority of the believers in Persia were poor, and some needy. But when Hájí Amin visited them, they had set aside through sacrifice small sums of money and were able to offer them for the Cause of God. It must be made clear that under Bahá'u'lláh's supervision the funds were spent for the promotion of the Cause, and very little, if any, for His own expenses or those of His companions. The history of the life of Bahá'u'lláh bears ample testimony to this fact. For during the forty years of His ministry He lived for the most part in the utmost poverty. There were days when a mere loaf of bread was not available to Him, and the garments He wore were the only clothes He had. The last few years of His earthly life, although relatively more comfortable, were nevertheless greatly influenced by the austerity that had characterized His life since the days of the *Síyáh-Chál* in Tíhrán, when all His possessions had been confiscated and He had been deprived of the means to support Himself and His Family.

—Adib Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, 3:80

Sacrifice Is Honor and Challenge

As to the idea of “giving what one can afford”: this does by no means put a limit or even exclude the possibility of self-sacrifice. There can be no limit to one's contributions to the national fund. The more one can give the better it is, especially 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. It is the spirit, not the mere fact of contributing, that we should always take into account when we stress the necessity for a universal and whole-hearted support of the various funds of the Cause.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 31 December 1935 to an individual,
Compilation of Compilations, 1: no. 1232

The House of Justice believes that the financial needs of the Cause should be met by universal participation in giving and urges national and local spiritual assemblies to pursue this goal with vigor and imagination, recalling to the friends the plea of the beloved Guardian to every believer “unhesitatingly to place, each according to his circumstances, his share on the altar of Bahá'í sacrifice.” The fact that only we, the Bahá'ís, can contribute financially to the Cause is both our honor and our challenge.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 1967 to the Bahá'ís of the World,
Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986, no. 42.14

Sacrificial Stories

The expressions of zealous enthusiasm and hope, of genuine self-abnegation and love that the American believers and especially our precious sister Mrs. Agnes Parsons dem-

Sacred Trust

onstrated in their last Convention meeting have greatly brightened the closing days of her life.*

—*Bahíyyih Khánum*, p. 68

The cheque for the amount of two hundred pounds that you had sent as your contribution to the Temple Fund has been received and duly forwarded to Chicago. Behold what a pervasive power this evidence of co-operation and support, this spirit of selfless consecration is bound to release in the realm of the heart and spirit. Consider to what extent the world of human virtues will be enriched and adorned by this munificent act, and how glorious the light that this manifestation of unity and solidarity is likely to shed upon all regions. Indeed, this mighty endeavour has been accomplished despite the adverse economic situation in Persia, where the evidences of hardship, privation and depression are clearly apparent. But since the object of this noble enterprise and praiseworthy effort is to enhance the glory of the Cause of God, therefore it will unfailingly attract divine blessings and bounty.

—*Bahíyyih Khánum*, p. 190

* Refers to the Annual Convention held in April 1932, at which the delegates and friends responded in an impressive manner to the need of the Fund associated with the name of the Greatest Holy Leaf, initiated in order to complete the exterior ornamentation of the House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois. Mrs. Parsons spontaneously removed a valuable pearl necklace from her neck to assist in meeting the Fund's goal. See *Bahá'í News*, No. 62, May 1932, for a report of that Convention.

Detachment

Detachment

O SON OF MAN!

Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 56

O SON OF DUST!

Blind thine eyes, that thou mayest behold My beauty; stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet melody of My voice; empty thyself of all learning, that thou mayest partake of My knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth. Blind thine eyes, that is, to all save My beauty; stop thine ears to all save My word; empty thyself of all learning save the knowledge of Me; that with a clear vision, a pure heart and an attentive ear thou mayest enter the court of My holiness.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 11

Detachment Necessary Whether Rich or Poor

A rich man and a poor man lived in the same town. One day the poor man said to the rich man, "I want to go to the Holy Land." The rich man replied, "Very good, I will go also," and they started from the town and began their pilgrimage. But night fell and the poor man said, "Let us return to our houses to pass the night." The rich man replied, "We have started for the Holy Land and must not now return." The poor man said, "The Holy Land is a long distance to travel on foot. I have a donkey, I will go and fetch it." "What?" replied the rich man, "are you not ashamed? I leave all my possessions to go on this pilgrimage and you wish to return to get your donkey! I have abandoned with joy my whole fortune. Your whole wealth consists of a donkey and you cannot leave it!" You see that fortune is not necessarily an impediment. The rich man who is thus detached is near to reality. There are many rich people who are severed and many poor who are not.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy*, p. 136

Free Soul through Detachment

... Therefore, consider how base a nature it reveals in man that, notwithstanding the favors showered upon him by God, he should lower himself into the animal sphere, be wholly occupied with material needs, attached to this mortal realm, imagining that the greatest happiness is to attain wealth in this world. How purposeless! How debased is such a nature! God has created man in order that he may be a dove of the Kingdom, a heavenly candle, a recipient of eternal life. God has created man in order that he may be resuscitated through the breaths of the Holy Spirit and become the light of the world. How debased the soul which can find enjoyment in this darkness, occupied with itself, the captive of self and passion, wallowing in the mire of the material world! How degraded is such a nature! What an ignorance this is! What a blindness! How

Sacred Trust

glorious the station of man who has partaken of the heavenly food and built the temple of his everlasting residence in the world of heaven!

The Manifestations of God have come into the world to free man from these bonds and chains of the world of nature. Although They walked upon the earth, They lived in heaven. They were not concerned about material sustenance and prosperity of this world. Their bodies were subjected to inconceivable distress, but Their spirits ever soared in the highest realms of ecstasy. The purpose of Their coming, Their teaching and suffering was the freedom of man from himself. Shall we, therefore, follow in Their footsteps, escape from this cage of the body or continue subject to its tyranny? Shall we pursue the phantom of a mortal happiness which does not exist or turn toward the tree of life and the joys of its eternal fruits?

I have come to this country in the advanced years of my life, undergoing difficulties of health and climate because of excessive love for the friends of God. It is my wish that they may be assisted to become servants of the heavenly Kingdom, captives in the service of the will of God. This captivity is freedom; this sacrifice is glorification; this labor is reward; this need is bestowal. For service in love for mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 185–86

Those Who Are Traveling Teachers Show Utmost in Detachment

O thou who art ignited through the brilliant Flame which is blazing in this Blessed Spot!

Verily, I considered the meanings of thy letter and my heart overflows with perfect and spiritual love unto thee and unto the beloved ones of God, whose eyes are brightened by witnessing the lights of God and whose innermost hearts are purified by the love of God and whose consciences are made clear by the knowledge of God and whose hearts are tranquilized by the commemoration of God. Theirs is the treasury of the Kingdom and the abundant wealth of the storehouse of the divine world! They are wealthy, not poor; they are powerful, not weak; they are grandees, not mean persons; and they are kindred, not strangers! Because, verily, their wealth and honor is divine and supreme and will never be consumed. Blessed are they! Glad-tidings be unto them!

As to those souls who are preaching the Word of God, it behooveth them to shake the dust of every land which they have passed by off their shoes and to be with God and without need of the rich—although their bed is the soil, their light is the stars of the sky and their food is the herbs of the desert—because theirs is the wealth of the Kingdom, the honor of the realm of might and the bounty of the divine world; and they are not in want of this world and its cares. Their throne is the mat of humility, their honor is in suffering every lowliness in the path of the Loving Lord and their wealth is being empty-handed from the pomps of the world and its vanities and their provision is trusting in God and being severed from all that is on the earth and its wealth.

—Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, 1:60–61

Find True Reality

Man's distinction lieth not in ornaments or wealth, but rather in virtuous behaviour and true understanding.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 57

Man must be lofty in endeavor. He must seek to become heavenly and spiritual, to find the pathway to the threshold of God and become acceptable in the sight of God. This is eternal glory—to be near to God. This is eternal sovereignty—to be imbued with the virtues of the human world. This is boundless blessing—to be entirely sanctified and holy above every stain and dross.

Consider the human world. See how nations have come and gone. They have been of all minds and purposes. Some were mere captives of self and desire, engulfed in the passions of the lower nature. They attained to wealth, to the comforts of life, to fame. And what was the final outcome? Utter evanescence and oblivion. Reflect upon this. Look upon it with the eye of admonition. No trace of them remains, no fruit, no result, no benefit; they have gone utterly—complete effacement.

Souls have appeared in the world who were pure and undefiled, who have directed their attention toward God, seeking the reward of God, attaining nearness to the threshold of God, acceptable in the good pleasure of God. They have been the lights of guidance and stars of the Supreme Concourse. Consider these souls, shining like stars in the horizon of sanctity forevermore.

It must not be implied that one should give up avocation and attainment to livelihood. On the contrary, in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh monasticism and asceticism are not sanctioned. In this great Cause the light of guidance is shining and radiant. Bahá'u'lláh has even said that occupation and labor are devotion. 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. Bahá'u'lláh has thereby encouraged action and stimulated service. But the energies of the heart must not be attached to these things; the soul must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy, the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source.

We have forsaken the path of God; we have given up attention to the divine Kingdom; we have not severed the heart from worldly attractions; we have become defiled with qualities which are not praiseworthy in the sight of God; we are so completely steeped in material issues and tendencies that we are not partakers of the virtues of humanity.

Little reflection, little admonition is necessary for us to realize the purpose of our creation. What a heavenly potentiality God has deposited within us! What a power God has given our spirits! He has endowed us with a power to penetrate the realities of things; but we must be self-abnegating, we must have pure spirits, pure intentions, and strive with heart and soul while in the human world to attain everlasting glory.

I have come for the purpose of admonition and voicing the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. It is my hope that His will and guidance may influence your spirits, souls and hearts,

Sacred Trust

causing them to become pure, holy, sanctified and illumined and making you lamps of heavenly illumination to the world. This is my desire; this is my hope through the assistance of God.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 186–87

Material Wealth Transient

Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say: Can ye claim that what ye own is lasting or secure? Nay! By Myself, the All-Merciful. The days of your life flee away as a breath of wind, and all your pomp and glory shall be folded up as were the pomp and glory of those gone before you. Reflect, O people! What hath become of your bygone days, your lost centuries? Happy the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise. By My life! Neither the pomp of the mighty, nor the wealth of the rich, nor even the ascendancy of the ungodly will endure. All will perish, at a word from Him. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty. What advantage is there in the earthly things which men possess? That which shall profit them, they have utterly neglected. Erelong, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Did they but know it, they would renounce their all, that their names may be mentioned before His throne. They, verily, are accounted among the dead.

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 138–39

O SON OF MY HANDMAID!

Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, “In truth ye are the poor,” and the holy words, “God is the all-possessing,” shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously resplendent upon the horizon of the lover’s heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth.

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 51

O concourse of monks! Seclude not yourselves in churches and cloisters. Come forth by My leave, and occupy yourselves with that which will profit your souls and the souls of men. Thus biddeth you the King of the Day of Reckoning. Seclude yourselves in the stronghold of My love. This, verily, is a befitting seclusion, were ye of them that perceive it. He that shutteth himself up in a house is indeed as one dead. It behoveth man to show forth that which will profit all created things, and he that bringeth forth no fruit is fit for fire.

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 95

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

These few brief days shall pass away, this present life shall vanish from our sight; the roses of this world shall be fresh and fair no more, the garden of this earth's triumphs and delights shall droop and fade.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 188.13

Consider ye! No matter how much man gains wealth, riches and opulence in this world, he will not become as independent as a cow. For these fattened cows roam freely over the vast tableland. All the prairies and meadows are theirs for grazing, and all the springs and rivers are theirs for drinking! No matter how much they graze, the fields will not be exhausted! It is evident that they have earned these material bounties with the utmost facility.

Still more ideal than this life is the life of the bird. A bird, on the summit of a mountain, on the high, waving branches, has built for itself a nest more beautiful than the palaces of the kings! The air is in the utmost purity, the water cool and clear as crystal, the panorama charming and enchanting. In such glorious surroundings, he expends his numbered days. All the harvests of the plain are his possessions, having earned all this wealth without the least labor. Hence, no matter how much man may advance in this world, he shall not attain to the station of this bird! Thus it becomes evident that in the matters of this world, however much man may strive and work to the point of death, he will be unable to earn the abundance, the freedom and the independent life of a small bird. This proves and establishes the fact that man is not created for the life of this ephemeral world—nay, rather, is he created for the acquirement of infinite perfections, for the attainment to the sublimity of the world of humanity, to be drawn nigh unto the divine threshold, and to sit on the throne of everlasting sovereignty!

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, 7:19–20

Shall that which anyone hath of wealth endure unto him, or avail him tomorrow with him who holdeth his forelock? If any should look on those who sleep under slabs and keep company with the dust, can he distinguish the bones of the king's skull from the knuckles of the slave? No, by the King of Kings! Or doth he know governors from herdsmen, or discern the wealthy and the rich from him who was without shoes or carpet? By God, distinction is removed, save for him who fulfilled righteousness and judged uprightly. Where are the doctors, the scholars, the nobles? Where is the keenness of their glances, the sharpness of their sight, the subtlety of their thoughts, the soundness of their understandings? Where are their hidden treasures and their apparent gauds, their bejeweled thrones and their ample couches? Alas! All have been laid waste, and the decree of God hath rendered them as scattered dust! Emptied is what they treasured up, and dissipated is what they collected, and dispersed is what they concealed: they have become [such that] thou seest naught but their empty places, their gaping roofs, their uprooted beams, their new things waxed old. As for the discerning man, verily wealth will not divert him from regarding the end; and for the prudent man, riches will not withhold him from turning toward [God] the Rich, the Exalted. Where is he who held dominion over all whereon the sun arose, and who spent

Sacred Trust

lavishly and sought after curious things in the world and what is therein created? Where is the lord of the swarthy squadron and the yellow standard? Where is he who ruled Zawra,* and where he who wrought injustice in [Damascus] the spacious? Where are they at whose bounty treasures were afraid, at whose openhandedness and generosity the ocean was dismayed? Where is he whose arm was stretched forth in rebelliousness, whose heart turned away from the Merciful One? Where is he who used to make choice of pleasures and cull the fruits of desires? Where are the dames of the bridal chambers, and the possessors of beauty? Where are their waving branches and their spreading boughs, their lofty palaces and trellised gardens? Where is the smoothness of the expanses thereof and the softness of their breezes, the rippling of their waters and the murmur of their winds, the cooing of their doves and the rustling of their trees? Where are their laughing hearts and their smiling teeth? Woe unto them! They have descended to the abyss and become companions to the pebbles; today no mention is heard of them nor any sound; nothing is known of them nor any hint. Will the people dispute it while they behold it? Will they deny it when they know it? I know not in what valley they wander erringly: do they not see that they depart and return not? How long will they be famous in the low countries and in the high, descend and ascend? “Is not the time yet come to those who believe for their hearts to become humble for the remembrance of God?”* Well is it with that one who hath said or shall say, “Yea, O Lord, the time is ripe and hath come,” and who severeth himself from all that is. Alas! naught is reaped but what is sown, and naught is taken but what is laid up, save by the grace of God and His favor. Hath the earth conceived Him whom the veils of glory prevent not from ascending into the Kingdom of His Lord, the Mighty, the Supreme? Have We any good works whereby defects shall be removed or which shall bring Us near unto the Lord of causes? We ask God to deal with Us according to His grace, not His justice, and to make Us of those who turn toward Him and sever themselves from all beside Him.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Traveler’s Narrative*, pp. 77–79

. . . As for the discerning man, verily wealth will not divert him from regarding the end; and for the prudent man, riches will not withhold him from turning toward God, the Rich, the Exalted. . . .

—Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Scriptures*, p. 77

. . . The passing of the father is an admonition for the son, and it reminds him that he too must pass away. It would be well if the people of the world who are amassing great fortunes and are deprived of the True One, knew what would become of their great wealth. . . .

—Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Scriptures*, p. 86

O Ye Who Boast Because of Mortal Possessions! Know ye that wealth is a strong barrier between the seeker and the Desired One, between the lover and the Beloved. Never

* Baghdád.

* Qur’án 57:15.

shall the rich arrive at the abode of nearness, nor enter into the city of contentment and resignation, save only a few. Then good is the state of that wealthy one, whose wealth preventeth him not from the Everlasting Kingdom, and depriveth him not of the Eternal Possessions. Verily, I declare by the Greatest Name that the light of that wealthy one shall illumine the people of Heaven, as the sun shines upon the people of the earth.

—Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Scriptures*, p. 180

Stories of Detachment

O SON OF BEING!

Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 55

Because it was the early days of the rise of the Day-Star of the World, Bahá’u’lláh asked me to give Him an account of the state of the believers in Tīhrán, Qazvín, Zanján and Tabríz, the towns I had passed through. He enquired of their faith, and their love for the Cause. I did not reply. After we [Hájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-‘Alí and his two companions] were dismissed from His presence, we were taken to a place where it was arranged for us to stay. There, Bahá’u’lláh sent someone to whom I could recount the conditions of the believers. I reported all I knew about each person, including the late Hájí Muḥammad-Báqir who was at that time a well-known merchant, foremost among the believers in faith, certitude and enthusiasm, and was serving the Cause with devotion self-sacrifice.

The messenger left and after some minutes returned with an exalted Tablet which had been revealed in honour of the Hájí. He stated [on behalf of Bahá’u’lláh]: “This man attained the presence of Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdád. There He [*sic*] wrote a letter to Him and begged for wealth and prosperity. In answer, this exalted and wonderful Tablet was revealed for him. In it Bahá’u’lláh stated that his request would be granted and that the doors of prosperity and wealth would be opened for him from every direction. He warned him, however, to be on his guard and not to allow riches to become a barrier and make him heedless.

“Now you are here to attain the presence of Bahá’u’lláh and in the future you will witness that this man [Hájí Muḥammad-Báqir] will be overtaken with fear to such an extent that he will renounce God and His Cause. Not long after, he will make substantial losses, following which he will write a letter to Bahá’u’lláh and repent. God will then turn his losses into profit and he will become again highly successful in his business and will emerge as the foremost merchant in Constantinople and Tabríz. However, this time he will wax prouder than before, more heedless and deprived. . . . This time he will lose all his possessions, will be unable to continue trading and will become helpless in arranging his affairs. It is then that he will repent and return, and will be content to live as a poor man. He will spend the days of his life in the service of the Cause of God. His end will be blessed and he will receive great confirmations from God.” He then said to me: “Remember all these things, for they will come to pass, and you shall witness them.”

Sacred Trust

We were in Adrianople when news came that Javád, the younger brother of the Hájí had been arrested and cast into prison. Hájí Muḥammad-Báqir had paid one thousand túmáns for the release of his brother and had left Tabríz for Constantinople in great haste. Upon arrival he had gone to visit the late Mushíru'd-Dawlih, the Persian Ambassador, and there in his presence had recanted his Faith. Bahá'u'lláh affirmed that this was the beginning of his tests and instructed that believers passing through Constantinople should not associate with him.

Later, I left Adrianople for Constantinople where I stayed for fourteen months. There I heard that the Hájí had brought enormous quantities of cotton and because the prices had suddenly fallen so drastically, not only had he lost all his possessions, but he was also unable to pay his creditors. . . . When this happened he wrote a letter supplicating Bahá'u'lláh and repenting. A holy and blessed Tablet was revealed in his honour. In it Bahá'u'lláh gave him the glad-tidings that he would soon make enormous profits. When I went to Egypt, I heard that the price of cotton had risen considerably and the Hájí's wealth as a result increased tenfold.

—Hájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí, quoted in Adib Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, 2:277–78

The Báb, in His Tablet addressed to Muḥammad Sháh, states that He foretold, in a letter to two divines in Yazd, the date of the death of Manúchíhr Khán, eighty-seven days before it occurred. And He mentions that Manúchíhr Khán had offered Him all that he possessed, even taking off his rings and placing them before Him. Manúchíhr Khán had come to realize that his wealth was the product of oppression. The Báb accepted both his repentance and his wealth, then returned to him his riches for his use until his death, which occurred in the month of Rabí'u'l-Avval 1263 A.H. (February–March 1847 A.D.)

—H. M. Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 116

We Have Never Failed

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.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, extract from a Tablet to the friends of the east and the west, *Star of the West*, 6, no. 17 (19 January 1916), p. 139

The unity of the believers, rich and poor alike, in their support of the Fund will be a source of spiritual confirmations far beyond our capacity to envisage.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 17 September 1992, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 6

Face to face with the gravity of our present obligations, we must never for a moment lose heart. We have never failed. Our record is unblemished. Miraculously, at the last hour, battles greater and more critical in the fortunes of our Faith have been won.

* That is, toward the building of the House of Worship in Wilmette.

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

That the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the “priceless gem of Divine Revelation enshrining,” as the Guardian wrote, “the Spirit of God and incarnating His Purpose for mankind in this age,” “feeds itself upon . . . hidden springs of celestial strength” and “propagates itself by ways mysterious and utterly at variance with the standards accepted by the generality of mankind” is, in every field of Bahá'í activity, being constantly demonstrated. . . .

—The Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land, letter dated Ridván 1961 to Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, pp. 268–69

Treasurer

Treasurer Handles Fund and Issues Receipts and Much, Much More!

In the November Minutes of the National Assembly Meeting, Page 28, the Guardian has noticed that the National Assembly plans to make a contribution of . . . dollars to the Australia and New Zealand Assembly for their Temple. He wishes to know whether this is the contribution that Mrs. Collins has made for that purpose, or whether this is another contribution given from the funds of the National Assembly. If it is Mrs. Collins' contribution, then it should naturally be given under her name.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 15 December 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 13

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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 30 July 1972, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 167

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 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 August 1973 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 858

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 this 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 Bahá'í contributions, since the information made available to the Treasurer or other members of the Assembly is to be treated in strict confidence.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11 January 1977 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 863

Sacred Trust

Specific Duties

The House of Justice has not established any uniform procedure for Bahá'í 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. 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-Bahá'í firm.

—The Universal House of Justice, quoted in
Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities, p. 10.17

Audits Protect Treasurer and Funds

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 the Holy Texts and published in your newsletter, and through talks at conferences, summer schools and other Bahá'í 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.

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

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice,
letter dated 18 May 1980, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 23

Some Guidelines for Treasurers

In general terms . . . 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.

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

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 insure 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 spending of earmarked funds for 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. 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 requirement 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 checks 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11 January 1977
to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 866

CONTRIBUTIONS CONFIDENTIAL

There is no objection to the Adelaide S. A. keeping a record of the names of contributors, and sums received, but no pressure must ever be brought on the Bahá'ís to contribute; it must be voluntary, and should be considered confidential, unless the friends themselves wish to mention it openly.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 26 October 1945
to an individual, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 11

Sacred Trust

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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 29 September 1951
to an individual, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 12

THE TREASURER OF AN ASSEMBLY SHOULD NEVER COMMINGLE HIS OWN FUNDS WITH THOSE OF THE FAITH

. . . The Treasurer of a Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly, even if momentarily holding Bahá'í 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 June 1971
to an individual, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 859

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.

—Memorandum of comments and suggestions attached to letter dated 7 August 1985
from the Universal House of Justice, to all National Spiritual Assemblies,
Lights of Guidance, no. 860

. . . It is envisaged that these Treasury Committees would serve a number of functions:

- 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 meeting 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 handy crafts. 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.

—Memorandum of comments and suggestions attached to letter dated 7 August 1985
from the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies,
Lights of Guidance, no. 861

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 system 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 the 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 area and transmit them to the national Treasurer.

—Memorandum of comments and suggestions attached to letter dated 7 August 1985
from the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies,
Lights of Guidance, no. 862

Qualities of Treasurer and Committees

Treasurer Must Be Trustworthy

A primary requisite for all who have responsibility for the care of the funds of the Faith is trustworthiness. This, as Bahá'u'lláh 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7 August 1985, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 22

Trustworthiness

Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not treacherously with any one. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures, and the emblems of His generosity amidst His people. They that follow their lusts and corrupt inclinations have erred and dissipated their efforts. They, indeed, are of the lost.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 297

Trustworthiness Bedrock of All Virtues

Were a man in this day to adorn himself with the raiment of trustworthiness it would be better for him in the sight of God that he should journey on foot towards the holy court and be blessed with meeting the Adored One and standing before His Seat of Glory. Trustworthiness is as a stronghold to the city of humanity, and as eyes to the human temple. Whosoever remaineth deprived thereof shall, before His Throne, be reckoned as one bereft of vision.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2024

Not long ago these sublime words were revealed from the Pen of the Most High:

“We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Throne. One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: ‘O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.’ Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation.”

Sacred Trust

O people of Bahá! Trustworthiness is in truth the best of vestures for your temples and the most glorious crown for your heads. Take ye fast hold of it at the behest of Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Informed.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 37–38

If a man were to perform every good work, yet fail in the least scruple to be entirely trustworthy and honest, his good works would become as dry tinder and his failure as a soul-consuming fire. If, on the other hand, he should fall short in all his affairs, yet act with trustworthiness and honesty, all his defects would ultimately be righted, all injuries remedied, and all infirmities healed. Our meaning is that, in the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock of His Faith and the foundation of all virtues and perfections. A man deprived of this quality is destitute of everything. What shall faith and piety avail if trustworthiness be lacking? Of what consequence can they be? What benefit or advantage can they confer? Wherefore 'Abdu'l-Bahá counselleth the friends—nay, rather, fervently imploreth them—so vigilantly to guard the sanctity of the Cause of God and preserve their own dignity as individuals that all nations shall come to know and honour them for their trustworthiness and integrity. They can render no greater service than this today. To act otherwise would be to take an axe to the root of the Cause of God—we take refuge with God from this heinous transgression and pray that He will protect His loved ones from committing so flagrant a wrong.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2058

Trustworthiness Supreme Instrument for Prosperity of World

One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: “O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.” Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 136–37

Trustworthiness Door of Security

The fourth Taráz concerneth trustworthiness. Verily it is the door of security for all that dwell on earth and a token of glory on the part of the All-Merciful. He who partaketh thereof hath indeed partaken of the treasures of wealth and prosperity. Trust-

worthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people. In truth the stability of every affair hath depended and doth depend upon it. All the domains of power, of grandeur and of wealth are illumined by its light.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 37

Trustworthiness Will End Suffering

They who dwell within the tabernacle of God, and are established upon the seats of everlasting glory, will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands and seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor, however vile and worthless he may be.

The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 298–99

Successful Commerce Dependent on Trustworthiness and Truthfulness

Commerce is as a heaven, whose sun is trustworthiness and whose moon is truthfulness. The most precious of all things in the estimation of Him Who is the Sovereign Truth is trustworthiness: thus hath it been recorded in the sacred Scroll of God. Entreat ye the one true God to enable all mankind to attain to this most noble and lofty station.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2046

One day the Báb asked that some honey be purchased for Him. The price at which it had been bought seemed to Him exorbitant. He refused it and said: “Honey of a superior quality could no doubt have been purchased at a lower price. I who am your example have been a merchant by profession. It behoves you in all your transactions to follow in My way. You must neither defraud your neighbour nor allow him to defraud you. Such was the way of your Master. The shrewdest and ablest of men were unable to deceive Him, nor did He on His part choose to act ungenerously towards the meanest and most helpless of creatures.” He insisted that the attendant who had made that purchase should return and bring back to Him a honey superior in quality and cheaper in price.

—Nabíl-i-A'ẓam, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 303

Repaying Debts Act of Trustworthiness

In connection with the demands for payment of which thou hast written in thy letter, it is manifestly clear that anyone who hath the ability to settle his debts, and yet neglecteth to do so, hath not acted in accordance with the good pleasure of the one true God. Those who incur debts should strive to settle them with all diligence and application. God's binding commandments with respect to trustworthiness, uprightness and the

Sacred Trust

honouring of rights have been recorded in clear and perspicuous language in all the sacred Books, Tablets, Scriptures and holy Writings. Well is it with him whom the fleeting vanities of the world have not deprived of a lasting adornment, and whom avarice and negligence have not shut out from the illumination of the sun of trustworthiness. These matters, however, depend on the existence of ability, for the making of a demand is contingent upon ability to meet it. By the Lord of the Book, the former is not permissible in the absence of the latter. To this testifieth the Verse: “Respite thy debtor till he findeth means to pay.”*

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2047

Show Utmost in Upright Character, Especially in High Positions

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 Abhá 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 allowances, 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 Bahá’ís. Whoso transgresseth these bounds shall fall at length into manifest loss.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2069

Let them perform their services with complete sanctity and detachment, and on no account defile themselves by receiving bribes, harbouring unseemly motives, or engaging in noxious practices. Let them be content with their wages, and seek distinction in truthfulness, straightforwardness, and the pursuit of virtue and excellence; for vanity in riches is worthy of none but the base, and pride in possessions besemeth only the foolish. To attain to true glory and honour, man should exercise justice and equity, forbear to act in an oppressive manner, render service to his government, and work for the good of his fellow-citizens. Were he to seek after aught else but this he would indeed be in manifest loss.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2072

* Qur’án 2:280.

Wealth

True Wealth

A dewdrop out of the ocean of Thy mercy is able to adorn all things with the ornament of sanctity, and a sprinkling of the waters of Thy bounty can cause the entire creation to attain unto true wealth.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 246

Thou art He, O God, Who hath proclaimed Himself as the Lord of Wealth, and characterized all that serve Him as poor and needy. Even as Thou hast written: “O ye that believe! Ye are but paupers in need of God; but God is the All-Possessing, the All-Praised.” Having acknowledged my poverty, and recognized Thy wealth, suffer me not to be deprived of the glory of Thy riches. Thou art, verily, the Supreme Protector, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 134

Every conqueror is but a serf whom Thy hand hath subjected, and the richest of the rich is as destitute before the immensity of Thy wealth. The noblest of nobles is humbled when faced with the manifestations of Thy glory, and the mightiest of potentates is a mere abject one when confronted with the compelling evidences of Thine authority.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 101

Every man of insight is bereft of vision when confronted with the effulgence of the glory of Thy face, and he who is possessed of riches is poor and desolate when beholding the plenteousness of Thy wealth.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 138

Thus Jesus, Son of Mary, whilst seated one day and speaking in the strain of the Holy Spirit, uttered words such as these: “O people! My food is the grass of the field, where-with I satisfy my hunger. My bed is the dust, my lamp in the night the light of the moon, and my steed my own feet. Behold, who on earth is richer than I?” By the righteousness of God! Thousands of treasures circle round this poverty, and a myriad kingdoms of glory yearn for such abasement! Shouldst thou attain to a drop of the ocean of the inner meaning of these words, thou wouldst surely forsake the world and all that is therein, and, as the Phoenix wouldst consume thyself in the flames of the undying Fire.

In like manner, it is related that on a certain day, one of the companions of Şádiq complained of his poverty before him. Whereupon, Şádiq, that immortal beauty, made reply: “Verily thou art rich, and hast drunk the draught of wealth.” That poverty-stricken soul was perplexed at the words uttered by that luminous countenance, and said: “Where are my riches, I who stand in need of a single coin?” Şádiq thereupon observed: “Dost thou not possess our love?” He replied: “Yea, I possess it, O thou scion of the Prophet of God!” And Şádiq asked him saying: “Exchangest thou this love for one thousand dinars?” He answered: “Nay, never will I exchange it, though the world and all that is therein be given me!” Then Şádiq remarked: “How can he who possesses such a treasure be called poor?”

Sacred Trust

This poverty and these riches, this abasement and glory, this dominion, power, and the like, upon which the eyes and hearts of these vain and foolish souls are set—all these things fade into utter nothingness in that Court! Even as He hath said: “O men! Ye are but paupers in need of God; but God is the Rich, the Self-Sufficing.”* By “riches” therefore is meant independence of all else but God, and by “poverty” the lack of things that are of God.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 130–32

Content of Character Determines Wealth

Consequently it should be known to a certainty that although these Suns of Grandeur dwell upon the earth, yet they abide upon the most great throne; although they may not possess a single coin, yet they soar upon the summit of wealth; and while afflicted in the hands of the enemy, they are seated upon the right hand of power and dominion. They are established and rest upon the throne of eternal might, although outwardly in the utmost humiliation; and occupy the seat of sovereignty and authority while apparently in the extremity of weakness.

—Attributed to Bahá'u'lláh, in *Bahá'í Scriptures*, pp. 34–35

Verily, man is not called man until he be imbued with the attributes of the Merciful. He is not man because of wealth and adornment, learning and refinement. Blessed is he who is free from the names, seeking the shore of the sea of purity, and loving the melody of the dove of virtue.

—Attributed to Bahá'u'lláh, in *Bahá'í Scriptures*, p. 158

O SON OF MY HANDMAID!

Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, “In truth ye are the poor,” and the holy words, “God is the all-possessing,” shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously resplendent upon the horizon of the lover’s heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 51

Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man’s merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138

By God! In earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed. Consider ye and call to mind that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur’án: “Woe betide every

* Qur’án 35:15.

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

slanderer and defamer, him that layeth up riches and counteth them.”* Fleeting are the riches of the world; all that perisheth and changeth is not, and hath never been, worthy of attention, except to a recognized measure.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 218

The essence of wealth is love for Me; whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things, and he that loveth Me not is indeed of the poor and needy. This is that which the Finger of Glory and Splendor hath revealed.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 156

The purpose of the foregoing statements is to demonstrate at least this, that the happiness and greatness, the rank and station, the pleasure and peace, of an individual have never consisted in his personal wealth, but rather in his excellent character, his high resolve, the breadth of his learning, and his ability to solve difficult problems. How well has it been said: “On my back is a garment which, were it sold for a penny, that penny would be worth far more; yet within the garment is a soul which, if you weighed it against all the souls in the world, would prove greater and nobler.”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 23–24

I desire distinction for you. The Bahá'ís 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 sincerity, for justice and fidelity, for firmness 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 for acquiring the bestowals of God. I desire this distinction for you. This must be the point of distinction among you.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 190

Evil is nonexistent; it is the absence of good. Sickness is the loss of health; poverty, the lack of riches. When wealth disappears, you are poor; you look within the treasure box but find nothing there. Without knowledge there is ignorance; therefore, ignorance is simply the lack of knowledge. Death is the absence of life. Therefore, on the one hand, we have existence; on the other, nonexistence, negation or absence of existence.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 295–96

* Qur’án 104:1–2.

Sacred Trust

A firm conviction that human honor and happiness lie in self-respect and noble purpose, in integrity and moral quality, and not in the mere pursuit of wealth and power for their own sake.

—Bahá'í International Community Task Force on Education, statement dated 2 January 1989, "Position Statement on Education," no. 3

DISPARITY OF RICH AND POOR

God is not partial and is no respecter of persons. He has made provision for all. The harvest comes forth for everyone. The rain showers upon everybody and the heat of the sun is destined to warm everyone. The verdure of the earth is for everyone. Therefore there should be for all humanity the utmost happiness, the utmost comfort, the utmost well-being.

But if conditions are such that some are happy and comfortable and some in misery; some are accumulating exorbitant wealth and others are in dire want—under such a system it is impossible for man to be happy and impossible for him to win the good pleasure of God. God is kind to all. The good pleasure of God consists in the welfare of all the individual members of mankind.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 41

Do Not Be Satisfied with the Disparity

The condition of the destitute in the country villages as well as in London impressed 'Abdu'l-Bahá greatly. In an earnest talk with the Rector of a Parish, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "I find England awake; there is spiritual life here. But your poor are so *very* poor! This should not be. On the one hand you have wealth, and great luxury; on the other hand men and women are living in the extremities of hunger and want. This great contrast of life is one of the blots on the civilization of this enlightened age.

"You must turn attention more earnestly to the betterment of the conditions of the poor. Do not be satisfied until each one with whom you are concerned is to you as a member of your family. Regard each one either as a father, or as a brother, or as a sister, or as a mother, or as a child. If you can attain to this, your difficulties will vanish, you will know what to do. This is the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh."

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 91

Justice Can Help Solve Disparity

There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved.

The government of the countries should conform to the Divine Law which gives equal justice to all. This is the only way in which the deplorable superfluity of great wealth and miserable, demoralizing, degrading poverty can be abolished. Not until this is done will the Law of God be obeyed.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, no. 46:12

Why Can't We All Be Rich?

Among the proofs of the existence of a divine power is this: that things are often known by their opposites. Were it not for darkness, light could not be sensed. Were it not for death, life could not be known. If ignorance did not exist, knowledge would not be a reality. It is necessary that each should exist in order that the other should have reality. Night and day must be in order that each may be distinguished. Night itself is an indication and evidence of day which follows, and day itself indicates the coming night. Unless night were a reality, there could not be day. Were it not for death, there could be no life. Things are known by their opposites.

Therefore, our weakness is an evidence that there is might; our ignorance proves the reality of knowledge; our need is an indication of supply and wealth. Were it not for wealth, this need would not exist; were it not for knowledge, ignorance would be unknown; were it not for power, there would be no impotence. In other words, demand and supply is the law, and undoubtedly all virtues have a center and source. That source is God, from Whom all these bounties emanate.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 82–83

Again, in the contingent world there is poverty; then necessarily wealth exists, since poverty is apparent in the world.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 5–6

Lycurgus, King of Sparta, who lived long before the day of Christ, conceived the idea of absolute equality in government. He proclaimed laws by which all the people of Sparta were classified into certain divisions. Each division had its separate rights and function. First, farmers and tillers of the soil. Second, artisans and merchants. Third, leaders or grandees. Under the laws of Lycurgus, the latter were not required to engage in any labor or vocation, but it was incumbent upon them to defend the country in case of war and invasion. Then he divided Sparta into nine thousand equal parts or provinces, appointing nine thousand leaders or grandees to protect them. In this way the farmers of each province were assured of protection, but each farmer was compelled to pay a tax to support the grandee of that province. The farmers and merchants were not obliged to defend the country. In lieu of labor the grandees received the taxes. Lycurgus, in order to establish this forever as a law, brought nine thousand grandees together, told them he was going upon a long journey and wished this form of government to remain effective until his return. They swore an oath to protect and preserve his law. He then left his kingdom, went into voluntary exile and never came back. No man ever made such a sacrifice to ensure equality among his fellowmen. A few years passed, and the whole system of government he had founded collapsed, although established upon such a just and wise basis.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 216–17

Sacred Trust

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, *Promise of World Peace*, p. 25

God Confers Sovereignty

Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Thou art in truth the King of kings. Thou dost confer sovereignty upon whomsoever Thou willest and dost seize it from whomsoever Thou willest. Thou dost exalt whomsoever Thou willest and dost abase whomsoever Thou willest. Thou dost render victorious whomsoever Thou willest and dost bring humiliation upon whomsoever Thou willest. Thou dost bestow wealth upon whomsoever Thou willest and dost reduce to poverty whomsoever Thou willest. Thou dost cause whomsoever Thou willest to prevail over whomsoever Thou willest. Within Thy grasp Thou dost hold the empire of all created things and through the potency of Thy sovereign behest Thou dost call into being whomsoever Thou willest. Verily Thou art the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Lord of power.

—The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 213–14

Disparity of Rich and Poor Solved by Voluntary Sharing

To state the matter briefly, the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh 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.

Man reacheth perfection through good deeds, voluntarily performed, not through good deeds the doing of which was forced upon him. And sharing is a personally chosen righteous act: that is, the rich should extend assistance to the poor, they should expend their substance for the poor, but of their own free will, and not because the poor have gained this end by force. For the harvest of force is turmoil and the ruin of the social order. On the other hand voluntary sharing, the freely-chosen expending of one's substance, leadeth to society's comfort and peace. It lighteth up the world; it bestoweth honor upon humankind.

I have seen the good effects of your own philanthropy in America, in various universities, peace gatherings, and associations for the promotion of learning, as I traveled from city to city. Wherefore do I pray on your behalf that you shall ever be encom-

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

passed by the bounties and blessings of heaven, and shall perform many philanthropic deeds in East and West. Thus may you gleam as a lighted taper in the Kingdom of God, may attain honor and everlasting life, and shine out as a bright star on the horizon of eternity.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, no. 79.2–79.4

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

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 39

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE RICH

Let Not Riches Be a Hindrance to the Eternal Kingdom

O YE THAT PRIDE YOURSELVES ON MORTAL RICHES!

Know ye in truth that wealth is a mighty barrier between the seeker and his desire, the lover and his beloved. The rich, but for a few, shall in no wise attain the court of His presence nor enter the city of content and resignation. Well is it then with him, who, being rich, is not hindered by his riches from the eternal kingdom, nor deprived by them of imperishable dominion. By the Most Great Name! The splendor of such a wealthy man shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven even as the sun enlightens the people of the earth!

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 53

Bahá’u’lláh, an Example

Having in His earlier years of hardship shown how to glorify God in a state of poverty and ignominy, Bahá’u’lláh in His later years at Bahjí showed how to glorify God in a state of honor and affluence. The offerings of hundreds of thousands of devoted followers placed at His disposal large funds which He was called upon to administer. Although His life at Bahjí has been described as truly regal, in the highest sense of the word, yet it must not be imagined that it was characterized by material splendor or extravagance. The Blessed Perfection and His family lived in very simple and modest fashion, and expenditure on selfish luxury was a thing unknown in that household.

—J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, p. 38

A King and a Poor Man

A Persian king was one night in his palace, living in the greatest luxury and comfort. Through excessive joy and gladness he addressed a certain man, saying: “Of all my life this is the happiest moment. Praise be to God, from every point prosperity appears and fortune smiles! My treasury is full and the army is well taken care of. My palaces are

Sacred Trust

many; my land unlimited; my family is well off; my honor and sovereignty are great. What more could I want!"

The poor man at the gate of his palace spoke out, saying: "O kind king! Assuming that you are from every point of view so happy, free from every worry and sadness—do you not worry for us? You say that on your own account you have no worries—but do you never worry about the poor in your land? Is it becoming or meet that you should be so well off and we in such dire want and need? In view of our needs and troubles how can you rest in your palace, how can you even say that you are free from worries and sorrows? As a ruler you must not be so egoistic as to think of yourself alone but you must think of those who are your subjects. When we are comfortable then you will be comfortable; when we are in misery how can you, as a king, be in happiness?"

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 41

A financier with colossal wealth should not exist whilst near him is a poor man in dire necessity. When we see poverty allowed to reach a condition of starvation it is a sure sign that somewhere we shall find tyranny. Men must bestir themselves in this matter, and no longer delay in altering conditions which bring the misery of grinding poverty to a very large number of the people. The rich must give of their abundance, they must soften their hearts and cultivate a compassionate intelligence, taking thought for those sad ones who are suffering from lack of the very necessities of life.

There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, no. 46:10–46:11

The Wealthy Should Share

It is clear from what has already been said that man's glory and greatness do not consist in his being avid for blood and sharp of claw, in tearing down cities and spreading havoc, in butchering armed forces and civilians. What would mean a bright future for him would be his reputation for justice, his kindness to the entire population whether high or low, his building up countries and cities, villages and districts, his making life easy, peaceful and happy for his fellow beings, his laying down fundamental principles for progress, his raising the standards and increasing the wealth of the entire population.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 67

But in the divine teachings equality is brought about through a ready willingness to share. It is commanded as regards wealth that the rich among the people, and the aristocrats should, by their own free will and for the sake of their own happiness, concern themselves with and care for the poor. This equality is the result of the lofty characteristics and noble attributes of mankind.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 44

With regard to the human world, on the contrary, their throne is a mat on the floor, and their place of honor is at the lowly row of shoes by the door. The apex of their

honor lies in the lowest depths of servitude, and the palace of their sovereignty is a secluded corner. They see grand chateaux as dusty graves, and consider the world's pomp to be an unbearable hardship, looking upon wealth and riches as pain and torment. For them, unparalleled pageantry is but a hardship for the conscience and the soul. Like grateful birds in this realm of vainglory, they content themselves with a few kernels of grain. In the garden of divine unity, upon the branches of detachment, they eloquently sing the praises and glorification of the Living and pre-existent God. Indeed, this was the principle referred to in the sound tradition, "Rulership is the gift of the Lord of grandeur, and government is a mercy of the Lord of divinity. The ultimate conclusion is this, that complete rulers and just kings must, out of gratitude for this divine grace and these glorious marks of favor, be justice incarnate. They must be the personification of reason as a grace from the Unknowable, the very image of the sun of loving kindness, the cloud of compassion, the banner of God, and the sign of the All-Merciful.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Treatise on Leadership," n.d.

Wealth or material power will not deflect him from moderation and fairness, neither will poverty or need inhibit him from showing forth happiness and tranquility.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in *Issues Related to the Study of the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 41

Deeds, Not Wealth, Will Count on Day of Reckoning

Can we maintain that it is contrary to the fundamentals of the Faith to encourage the acquisition of useful arts and of general knowledge, to inform oneself as to the truths of such physical sciences as are beneficial to man, and to widen the scope of industry and increase the products of commerce and multiply the nation's avenues of wealth? Would it conflict with the worship of God to establish law and order in the cities and organize the rural districts, to repair the roads and build railroads and facilitate transportation and travel and thus increase the people's well-being? Would it be inconsistent with the Divine commands and prohibitions if we were to work the abandoned mines which are the greatest source of the nation's wealth, and to build factories, from which come the entire people's comfort, security and affluence? Or to stimulate the creation of new industries and to promote improvements in our domestic products?

By the All-Glorious! I am astonished to find what a veil has fallen across their eyes, and how it blinds them even to such obvious necessities as these. And there is no doubt whatever that when conclusive arguments and proofs of this sort are advanced, they will answer, out of a thousand hidden spites and prejudices: "On the Day of Judgment, when men stand before their Lord, they will not be questioned as to their education and the degree of their culture—rather will they be examined as to their good deeds." Let us grant this and assume that man will not be asked as to his culture and education; even so, on that great Day of Reckoning, will not the leaders be called to account? Will it not be said to them: "O chiefs and leaders! Why did ye cause this mighty nation to fall from the heights of its former glory, to pass from its place at the heart and center of the civilized world? Ye were well able to take hold of such measures as would lead to the high honor of this people. This ye failed to do, and ye even went on to deprive them of the common benefits enjoyed by all. Did not this people once

Sacred Trust

shine out like stars in an auspicious heaven? How have ye dared to quench their light in darkness! Ye could have lit the lamp of temporal and eternal glory for them; why did ye fail to strive for this with all your hearts? And when by God's grace a flaming Light flared up, why did ye fail to shelter it in the glass of your valor, from the winds that beat against it? Why did ye rise up in all your might to put it out?"

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 101–02

Rich Should Be Mindful of Religion

When the Day-Star of Wisdom rose above the horizon of God's Holy Dispensation it voiced this all-glorious utterance: They that are possessed of wealth and invested with authority and power must show the profoundest regard for religion. In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil. Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine. Unto this will bear witness every man of true understanding.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 125

Yea, some of the intellectually cultured people in those countries exert themselves to reach the loftiest summits of prosperity in worldly affairs and most of them are desiring wealth and are making an effort to attain it somehow. But they are unmindful of the treasury of the Kingdom, the spiritual affluence and the wealth of mind; therefore, thou findest them subject to the rage of lusts and under the influence of egotistic and selfish desires, sinking into intemperance and engaged in drinking the cup of lust. Were they to become mindful of their heedlessness and awakened from the sleep of ignorance, they would become intoxicated by the cup of the love of God and exhilarated by the good cheer of the wine of the knowledge of God.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, 3:648–49

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. . . .

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 202–03

O YE RICH ONES ON EARTH!

The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 54

The Responsibility of Moderation

Certainly, some being enormously rich and others lamentably poor, an organization is necessary to control and improve this state of affairs. It is important to limit riches, as it is also of importance to limit poverty. Either extreme is not good. To be seated in the mean* is most desirable. If it be right for a capitalist to possess a large fortune, it is equally just that his workman should have a sufficient means of existence.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, no. 46:10

Yet another sacred duty is that of clinging to the cord of moderation in all things, lest they who are to be the essence of detachment and moderation be deluded by the trappings of this nether world or set their hearts on its adornments and waste their lives. If they are wealthy, they should make these bestowals a means of drawing nigh unto God’s Threshold, rather than being so attached to them that they forget the admonitions of the Pen of the Most High. The Voice of Truth has said, “Having attained the stage of fulfillment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom.” If wealth and prosperity become the means of service at God’s Threshold, it is highly meritorious; otherwise it would be better to avoid them.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10 February 1980 to Iranian Bahá’ís throughout the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 246.8

Be Detached

How numerous are those negligent souls, particularly from among your own compatriots, who have been deprived of the blessings of faith and true understanding. Witness how, no sooner had they attained their newly amassed wealth and status, than they became so bewitched by them as to forget the virtues and true perfections of man’s station. They clung to their empty and fruitless lifestyle. They had naught else but their homes, their commercial success, and their ornamental trappings of which to be proud. Behold their ultimate fate. Many a triumphal arch was reduced to a ruin, many an imperial palace was converted into a barn. Many a day of deceit turned into a night of despair. Vast treasures changed hands and, at the end of their lives, they were left only with tears of loss and regret. “. . . all that perisheth and changeth is not, and hath never been, worthy of attention, except to a recognized measure.” Therefore the people of Bahá must not fall prey to the corruption of the ruthless, but rather cling to contentment and moderation. They must make their homes havens for the believers, folds for their gatherings and centers for the promulgation of His Cause and the diffusion of

* “Give me neither poverty nor riches.”—Proverbs 30:8.

Sacred Trust

His love, so that people of all strata, whether high or low, may feel at home and be able to consort in an atmosphere of love and fellowship.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10 February 1980 to Iranian Bahá'ís throughout the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 246.8

God's Bounty Exists Regardless of Wealth

O Samandar! How many are the souls who, with the utmost endeavour and effort, collect a handful of worldly goods and greatly rejoice in this act and yet in reality the Pen of the Most High hath decreed this wealth for others; that is, it is not meant to be their lot or it may even fall into the hands of their enemies! We seek shelter in God from such an evident loss. One's life is wasted; by day and by night, troubles are endured, and wealth becometh a source of affliction. Most of the wealth of men is not pure. Should they follow what is revealed by God, they would assuredly not be deprived of His grace and they would, in all circumstances, be protected under His bounty and blessed by His mercy.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1145

Story of the King of Martyrs

Bahá'u'lláh testifies that the King of the Martyrs had indeed achieved this exalted station. His wealth and that of his brother did not become a barrier between them and God. These words of Bahá'u'lláh in *The Hidden Words* are truly applicable to these twin shining lights of the Cause of God:

O ye that pride yourselves on mortal riches! Know ye in truth that wealth is a mighty barrier between the seeker and his desire, the lover and his beloved. The rich, but for a few, shall in no wise attain the court of His presence nor enter the city of content and resignation. Well is it then with him, who, being rich, is not hindered by his riches from the eternal kingdom, nor deprived by them of imperishable dominion. By the Most Great Name! The splendour of such a wealthy man shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven, even as the sun enlightens the people of the earth!

—Adib Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, 4:82

A Story of Mírzá Áqá Khán

As time went by Mírzá Áqá Khán became a truly outstanding Bahá'í. To the nobility and courage of his character was now added the power of faith. He arose to serve the Cause with a zeal and devotion which few among his contemporaries could match. At first he began to earn a modest living and became independent of his father's wealth, but soon he was faced with serious financial difficulties. Then he had a dream: Bahá'u'lláh appeared to him, pointed to a hill nearby, and directed him to dig out some valuable relics which were buried on the side of the hill. Believing his dream to be true, Mírzá Áqá Khán carried out the excavation and recovered a great quantity of priceless relics and jewels. He thus became one of the richest men in Arák and the most influential of its residents. Throughout his long years of life he used his enormous wealth and influence to further the interests of the Cause he loved and served so well. Although he was wealthy, he lived a very simple life. He was a tower of strength for the believers and a

guide and refuge for the downtrodden and the needy. His generosity, magnanimity and care for the welfare of people earned him the love and respect of the public in general and the Bahá'ís in particular.

—Adib Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, 4:223

Story of Lua Getsinger and the Poor Man

To Him prejudice for or against a soul because of outward wealth or poverty, sin or virtue, was unknown. He was at every moment what in one of His Divine Tablets He has told us we all must be, a “thrall of mankind.”

As I write there is brought to memory a story told by Lua Getsinger, she who then sat in the audience before me. In the very early days of the knowledge of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in America Mrs. Getsinger was in 'Akká having made the pilgrimage to the prison city to see the Master. She was with Him one day when He said to her, that He was too busy today to call upon a friend of His who was very ill and poor and He wished her to go in His place. Take him food and care for him as I have been doing, He concluded. He told her where this man was to be found and she went gladly, proud that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should trust her with this mission.

She returned quickly. “Master,” she exclaimed, “surely you cannot realize to what a terrible place you sent me. I almost fainted from the awful stench, the filthy rooms, the degrading condition of that man and his house. I fled lest I contract some terrible disease.”

Sadly and sternly 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarded her. “Dost thou desire to serve God,” He said, “serve thy fellow man for in him dost thou see the image and likeness of God.” He told her to go back to this man's house. If it is filthy she should clean it; if this brother of yours is dirty, bathe him; if he is hungry, feed him. Do not return until this is done. Many times had He done this for him and cannot she serve him once?

—H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 195–96

Be Generous

O CHILDREN OF DUST!

Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 49

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.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 231

Dedicate Resources to Building the Kingdom

It is therefore imperative for the individual American believer, and particularly for the affluent, the independent, the comfort-loving and those obsessed by material pursuits,

Sacred Trust

to step forward, and dedicate their resources, their time, their very lives to a Cause of such transcendence that no human eye can even dimly perceive its glory. Let them resolve, instantly and unhesitatingly, to place, each according to his circumstances, his share on the altar of Bahá'í sacrifice, lest, on a sudden, unforeseen calamities rob them of a considerable portion of the earthly things they have amassed.

Now if ever is the time to tread the path which the dawn-breakers of a previous age have so magnificently trodden. Now is the time to carry out, in the spirit and in the letter, the fervent wish so pathetically voiced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who longed, as attested in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, to "travel though on foot and in the utmost poverty" and raise "in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans" "the call of Yá-Bahá'u'l-Abhá!"

Then, and only then, can the members of this community hasten the advent of the day when, as prophesied by His pen, "heavenly illumination" will "stream" from their country "to all the peoples of the world." Then, and only then will they find themselves "securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion."

That the members of this community, of either sex and of every age, of whatever race or background, however limited in experience, capacity and knowledge, may arise as one man, and seize with both hands the God-given opportunities now presented to them through the dispensations of an all-loving, ever-watchful, ever-sustaining Providence, and lend thereby a tremendous impetus to the propelling forces mysteriously guiding the operations of this newly launched, unspeakably potent, world-encompassing Crusade, is one of the dearest wishes which a loving and longing heart holds for them at this great turning point in the fortunes of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the American continent.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 131–32

Enjoy God's Bounty

Should a man wish to adorn himself with the ornaments of the earth, to wear its apparels, or partake of the benefits it can bestow, no harm can befall him, if he alloweth nothing whatever to intervene between him and God, for God hath ordained every good thing, whether created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His servants as truly believe in Him. Eat ye, O people, of the good things which God hath allowed you, and deprive not yourselves from His wondrous bounties. Render thanks and praise unto Him, and be of them that are truly thankful.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 276

It should not be imagined that the writer's earlier remarks constitute a denunciation of wealth or a commendation of poverty. 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-Bahá, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 24–25

THE POOR

The Poor Most Reliant on God

Tonight I am very happy, for I have come here to meet my friends. I consider you my relatives, my companions; and I am your comrade.

You must be thankful to God that you are poor, for Jesus Christ has said, “Blessed are the poor.” He never said, “Blessed are the rich.” He said, too, that the Kingdom is for the poor and that it is easier for a camel to enter a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter God’s Kingdom. Therefore, you must be thankful to God that although in this world you are indigent, yet the treasures of God are within your reach; and although in the material realm you are poor, yet in the Kingdom of God you are precious. Jesus Himself was poor. He did not belong to the rich. He passed His time in the desert, traveling among the poor, and lived upon the herbs of the field. He had no place to lay His head, no home. He was exposed in the open to heat, cold and frost—to inclement weather of all kinds—yet He chose this rather than riches. If riches were considered a glory, the Prophet Moses would have chosen them; Jesus would have been a rich man. When Jesus Christ appeared, it was the poor who first accepted Him, not the rich. Therefore, you are the disciples of Jesus Christ; you are His comrades, for He outwardly was poor, not rich. Even this earth’s happiness does not depend upon wealth. You will find many of the wealthy exposed to dangers and troubled by difficulties, and in their last moments upon the bed of death there remains the regret that they must be separated from that to which their hearts are so attached. They come into this world naked, and they must go from it naked. All they possess they must leave behind and pass away solitary, alone. Often at the time of death their souls are filled with remorse; and worst of all, their hope in the mercy of God is less than ours. Praise be to God! Our hope is in the mercy of God, and there is no doubt that the divine compassion is bestowed upon the poor. Jesus Christ said so; Bahá’u’lláh said so. While Bahá’u’lláh was in Baghdád, still in possession of great wealth, He left all He had and went alone from the city, living two years among the poor. They were His comrades. He ate with them, slept with them and gloried in being one of them. He chose for one of His names the title of The Poor One and often in His Writings refers to Himself as *Darvish*, which in Persian means poor; and of this title He was very proud. He admonished all that we must be the servants of the poor, helpers of the poor, remember the sorrows of the poor, associate with them; for thereby we may inherit the Kingdom of heaven. God has not said that there are mansions prepared for us if we pass our time associating with the rich, but He has said there are many mansions prepared for the servants of the poor, for

Sacred Trust

the poor are very dear to God. The mercies and bounties of God are with them. The rich are mostly negligent, inattentive, steeped in worldliness, depending upon their means, whereas the poor are dependent upon God, and their reliance is upon Him, not upon themselves. Therefore, the poor are nearer the threshold of God and His throne.

Jesus was a poor man. One night when He was out in the fields, the rain began to fall. He had no place to go for shelter so He lifted His eyes toward heaven, saying, "O Father! For the birds of the air Thou hast created nests, for the sheep a fold, for the animals dens, for the fish places of refuge, but for Me Thou hast provided no shelter. There is no place where I may lay My head. My bed consists of the cold ground; My lamps at night are the stars, and My food is the grass of the field. Yet who upon earth is richer than I? For the greatest blessing Thou hast not given to the rich and mighty but unto Me, for Thou hast given Me the poor. To me Thou hast granted this blessing. They are Mine. Therefore am I the richest man on earth."

So, my comrades, you are following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Your lives are similar to His life; your attitude is like unto His; you resemble Him more than the rich do. Therefore, we will thank God that we have been so blessed with real riches. And in conclusion, I ask you to accept 'Abdu'l-Bahá as your servant.

At the end of this meeting, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood at the Bowery entrance to the Mission hall, shaking hands with four or five hundred men and placing within each palm a piece of silver.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 32–34

The Poor More Beloved Because More Tested

O SON OF BEING!

If poverty overtake thee, be not sad; for in time the Lord of wealth shall visit thee. Fear not abasement, for glory shall one day rest on thee.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 53

Incline your ears, O friends of God, to the voice of Him Whom the world hath wronged, and hold fast unto whatsoever will exalt His Cause. He, verily, guideth whomsoever He pleaseth unto His straight Path. This is a Revelation that infuseth strength into the feeble, and crowneth with wealth the destitute.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 183–84

What could be better before God than thinking of the poor? For the poor are beloved by our heavenly Father. When Christ came upon the earth, those who believed in Him and followed Him were the poor and lowly, showing that the poor were near to God. When a rich man believes and follows the Manifestation of God, it is a proof that his wealth is not an obstacle and does not prevent him from attaining the pathway of salvation. After he has been tested and tried, it will be seen whether his possessions are a hindrance in his religious life. But the poor are especially beloved of God. Their lives are full of difficulties, their trials continual, their hopes are in God alone. Therefore, you must assist the poor as much as possible, even by sacrifice of yourself. No deed of

man is greater before God than helping the poor. Spiritual conditions are not dependent upon the possession of worldly treasures or the absence of them. When one is physically destitute, spiritual thoughts are more likely. Poverty is a stimulus toward God. Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent increase of poverty. The greatest means for prevention is that whereby the laws of the community will be so framed and enacted that it will not be possible for a few to be millionaires and many destitute. One of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings is the adjustment of means of livelihood in human society. Under this adjustment there can be no extremes in human conditions as regards wealth and sustenance. For the community needs financier, farmer, merchant and laborer just as an army must be composed of commander, officers and privates. All cannot be commanders; all cannot be officers or privates. Each in his station in the social fabric must be competent—each in his function according to ability but with justness of opportunity for all.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 126

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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 18 May 1927 to an individual,
Lights of Guidance, no. 421

The Greatest Gift We Can Give 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.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 231

Regarding your question concerning helping the poor: The Bahá'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 is to aid to build up the divine institutions inaugurated in this day by Bahá'u'lláh 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 Bahá'í Fund, and also be kind and generous to the needy.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11 March 1942 to an individual,
Lights of Guidance, no. 420

In Boston He called at Denison House, where a society that looked after the poor among Syrian and Greek immigrants had its headquarters. He was entertained to lunch,

Sacred Trust

and donated ten pounds to the funds of the society. He told the members seated round the luncheon table that they were blessed to be serving the poor, and that He would deem it an honour were He Himself to be considered as one of the poor.

—H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 198

The Importance of Work

Man Must Always Work

O people of Bahá! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation—such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, ¶33

O MY SERVANTS!

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 80

O MY SERVANT!

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

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 82

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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 26 December 1935
to an individual, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1870

With reference to Bahá'u'lláh'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, Bahá'u'lláh further states that mendicancy 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, especially when performed in the spirit of service, is according to Bahá'u'lláh 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, quoted in *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, n56

Sacred Trust

Work Is an Act of Worship

We have enjoined upon all to become engaged in some trade or profession, and have accounted such occupation to be an act of worship. Before all else, however, thou shouldst receive, as a sign of God's acceptance, the mantle of trustworthiness from the hands of divine favour; for trustworthiness is the chief means of attracting confirmation and prosperity. We entreat God to make of it a radiant and mercifully showering rain-cloud that shall bring success and blessings to thy affairs. He of a truth is the All-Bountiful, the Gracious.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2044

Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. . . . Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138

In the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, it is incumbent upon every soul to acquire a trade and an occupation. For example, I know how to weave or make a mat, and you know some other trade. This, in itself is an act of worship, provided that it is conducted on the basis of utmost honesty and faithfulness. And this is the cause of prosperity. Yet, in spite of being so occupied,—if the heart is not chained and tied to this world, and is not troubled by current events, neither hindered by wealth from rendering service to mankind, nor grieved because of poverty,—then this is human perfection. Otherwise in a state of poverty, to manifest generosity and in a state of weakness to claim justice—this can easily be said, but it is not a proof of man's attainments and alertness.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in Dr. Z. Baghdadi, "Abdu'l-Baha in America," *Star of the West*, Vol. 19, No. 7, p. 219

When Considering a Profession

Commerce, agriculture and industry should not, in truth, be a bar to service of the one true God. Indeed, such occupations are most potent instruments and clear proofs for the manifestation of the evidences of one's piety, of one's trustworthiness and of the virtues of the All-Merciful Lord.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2063

The social services of Bahá'ís are not restricted to what they do as a community. Every Bahá'í has a duty to work and earn his living, and in choosing a career a Bahá'í should consider not only its earning capacity but also the benefit of the work to his fellowmen. All over the world Bahá'ís are rendering outstanding services in this way.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3 January 1982 to an individual, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 308.6

Education

The first Ṭaráz and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples. They are, in truth, cup-bearers of the life-giving water of knowledge and guides unto the ideal way. They direct the peoples of the world to the straight path and acquaint them with that which is conducive to human upliftment and exaltation. The straight path is the one which guideth man to the dayspring of perception and to the dawning-place of true understanding and leadeth him to that which will redound to glory, honour and greatness.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 34–35

ARTS AND BUSINESS

O MY SERVANTS!

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Persian no. 80

In response to a question concerning whether Bahá'u'lláh's injunction requires a wife and mother, as well as her husband, to work for a livelihood, the Universal House of Justice has explained that Bahá'u'lláh's directive is for the friends to be engaged in an occupation which will profit themselves and others, and that homemaking is a highly honorable and responsible work of fundamental importance to society.

—*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, n56

Retirement

Concerning the retirement from work for individuals who have reached a certain age, Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf stated that “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.”

—*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, n56

Types of Contributions

Contributions May Be Anonymous

As to your question: the friends can give their contribution 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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 29 September 1951
to an individual, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 12

Gifts in Kind

In many parts of the world gifts of produce and handicrafts may be a large potential source of regular donations and could well be encouraged, proper arrangements being made for their collection and sale, and the disposition of the proceeds.

—The Universal House of Justice, memorandum attached to letter dated 7 August 1985 to National Spiritual Assemblies, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 30

Gifts in kind may include a wide variety of non-cash items and are generally acceptable as contributions to the Funds. Local and National Assemblies prefer that donors sell the items or property themselves and contribute the proceeds to the fund whenever possible. But in circumstances where the market available to the donor may be limited or other factors prevent the donor from selling the item, the Assembly may accept the contribution. The discretion to accept such gifts remains with the receiving Assembly.

—*Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 10.33

Contributions in Honor and Memory of a Loved One or Special Occasion

The progress of man's spirit in the divine world, after the severance of its connection with the body of dust, is through the bounty and grace of the Lord alone, or through the intercession and the sincere prayers of other human souls, or through the charities and important good works which are performed in its name.

—'Abdu'l Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 240

Contributions in memory or honor of a friend or loved one are accepted for all of the Funds. A memorial card is available to inform the family of the deceased when a gift has been made to the National Bahá'í Fund in the decedent's memory. It will be sent at the request of the donor when the family's name and address are provided to the office of the treasurer. (Request forms are available from the Office of the Treasurer.) Such gifts can also be made without requesting a card.

A friend or loved one can be honored by sending a special gift to the Fund in his or her name. Birthdays, graduations, marriages, Ayyám-i-Há, wedding anniversaries, Bahá'í declarations, pioneering moves, firesides given, hospitality, services rendered, Naw-Rúz and the 12 days of Ridván are among the occasions on which such gifts might be offered.

—*Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, pp. 10.34–10.35

Sacred Trust

Automatic Contribution System

The Office of the Treasurer has developed a convenient way for individuals, Bahá'í groups and Local Spiritual Assemblies to contribute to the National, Continental and International Bahá'í Funds through direct electronic withdrawal from the donor's bank account. This program is called the Automatic Contribution System (ACS).

It benefits the donor by assuring regularity, reducing postage and handling costs, and saving time otherwise spent in writing out checks. It benefits the National Assembly and the Universal House of Justice by reducing processing costs and providing a steady flow of funds for the work of the Faith. The automatic withdrawals are made once every Gregorian month and are recorded on the donor's bank statement. An annual statement is sent to each donor for tax purposes.

To obtain an ACS subscription form or to make further inquiries, contact the Office of the Treasurer.

—*Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 10.35

Planned Giving and Estate Bequests

Planned giving may include gifts given during the life of the donor or gifts that will take effect after the donor's death. Gifts that take effect after a donor's death are called "testamentary gifts" or "estate bequests." They are usually created through a trust or will.

Planned gifts may typically involve simple financial instruments or property (e.g., insurance policies, securities or notes) or more sophisticated instruments and techniques (e.g., trusts, life estates, annuities, etc.). These gifts are planned and structured to account for the donor's needs and the benefit to the faith. There are often tax considerations that should be carefully reviewed.

—*Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 10.35

Insurance and Securities

Contributions to the Bahá'í Funds may also be made through insurance policies and in the form of securities (i.e., stocks and bonds).

Questions about any of these methods of contributing to the Fund may be directed to the Office of the Treasurer at the Bahá'í National Center.

—*Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 10.35

Trusts

Thank you for the report you enclosed in your letter regarding the Fund, and in this connection he wishes to answer your question about Mrs. . . .'s Trust Fund: We cannot accept money from non-Bahá'ís for the Cause. It would seem if the family of Mrs. . . . wish to do this for her (and it is certainly a highly praiseworthy idea) they must take action during her lifetime to establish such a Trust as the property of Mrs. . . . , otherwise the Cause could only accept to use the money for charitable purposes, for Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4 October 1950, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 17

EARMARKING

The 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 contribution 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 to the Bahá'í International Funds from your National Fund would be wrong unless the earmarking so specifies [*sic*]. Funds earmarked merely to the Bahá'í International Fund should be sent to the World Centre in addition to whatever contribution is made from the National Fund.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 29 January 1971 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 882

Earmarked Funds for Specific Purchases or Products

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 21 June 1979 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 883

Proceeds from Sale of Property Purchased with Earmarked Funds Retain Same Earmarking

As to the proceeds from the sale of Bahá'í property, if it was acquired by the use of the general funds of the Faith and no earmarking of contributions is involved, the only principle to be applied is that first stated above, namely, that the national community should not be without a Ḥazíratu'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 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 21 August 1980 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 885

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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6 August 1984 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 886

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 Bahá'í funds, given for specified purposes, unless the donor consents to a change. If the Assembly cannot use the contribution for 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, as [*sic*] its own discretion, accept his request to do so.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 30 December 1984 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 887

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. . . . 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 21 June 1979, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 883

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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 March 1985 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 888

Often It Is Better That the Friends Do Not Restrict Funds

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

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 26 November 1923 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 53–54

In your letter of September 28, 1953, you mentioned the sum of . . . as being included in the . . . allocated from your Assembly's Budget to the World Centre. The principle involved is as follows: The Guardian feels that your Assembly when allocating its annual budget, and having stipulated what sum is for the purposes of the International Centre of the Faith, should immediately pigeonhole that sum to be at the Guardian's disposal. Any monies received as contributions from the Bahá'ís for the International Centre should not be credited to this account which represents a national joint contribution, and has nothing to do with individual or local contributions forwarded to the World Centre in your care.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 20 June 1954 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 12

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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 21 August 1980 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 889

When Earmarked Contribution Can Be Impractical or Unwise

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

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter dated 19 February 1926
written on his behalf to Corinne True

Whatever is contributed to the National Assembly for a specific purpose should be expended for that purpose only, but I would encourage the friends to send unlabelled contributions in order not to tie the hands of the National Assembly although I do not in the least require them to do so. I will pray for your success from all my heart.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 16 November 1926 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 15

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

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 19 February 1926 to Corinne True

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

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 23 June 1950 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, *Messages to Canada*, p. 15

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

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 30 December 1968 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

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 Na-

tional 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 22 June 1980 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 884

Assembly Must Determine Whether Gift Supports Budget or Is Separate

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

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 January 1968 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

PLEDGES

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 Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds or the establishment of a tutorial school, and needs to have some understanding in advance of whether the funds for the project will be available. However, it would be entirely contrary to Bahá'í 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, memorandum attached to letter dated 18 December 1963 to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 874

Sacred Trust

ENDOWMENTS

Just as the formulation of Bahá'í constitutions had provided the foundation for the incorporation of Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies, so did the recognition accorded by local and national authorities to the elected representatives of Bahá'í communities pave the way for the establishment of national and local Bahá'í endowments—a historic undertaking which, as had been the case with previous achievements of far-reaching importance, the American Bahá'í Community was the first to initiate. In most cases these endowments, owing to their religious character, have been exempted from both government and municipal taxes, as a result of representations made by the incorporated Bahá'í bodies to the civil authorities, though the value of the properties thus exempted has, in more than one country, amounted to a considerable sum.

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 339

The development of the local and national Funds must be continuously maintained as a prelude to the establishment of local and national endowments and the ultimate erection of a House of Worship that will incarnate the soul of a flourishing nation-wide community.

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter dated 19 June 1949 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, *Messages to Canada*, p. 114

Of no less importance, though involving a smaller outlay of funds, is the establishment of token national endowments in the aforementioned cities, in anticipation of the formation of an independent National Spiritual Assembly in each of them, at a later stage in the execution of this stupendous Plan.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 129

The acquisition of local endowments, which is given as a specific goal to some national communities, is intended to assist in the consolidation of local communities and to foster the spirit of unity and collaboration among the believers. A local endowment can be quite a small piece of land; it can be purchased by the Local Spiritual Assembly or is 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. In some countries the land is owned by the state or the tribe and only the use of the land can be assigned; in such places the goal can be considered achieved if the Local Spiritual Assembly can obtain the use of a plot of land in its own name. In some countries, even if the land can be purchased, government regulations require that within a specific time a building must be erected on land held by religious institutions. This problem can be met in several ways: it may be possible for the Spiritual Assembly to obtain the use of, or acquire, a plot of land for agricultural purposes, thus avoiding the need to erect a building; or if the most practical course is to erect on the land a Bahá'í institution such as a local Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, the Assembly could, in its own records, demarcate

a portion of the land to be the endowment, distinct from the portion on which the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds stands.*

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Naw-Rúz 1974 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 142.13

INHERITANCE AND WILL-MAKING

Each Individual Enjoined to Write a Will

Unto everyone hath been enjoined the writing of a will. The testator should head this document with the adornment of the Most Great Name, bear witness therein unto the oneness of God in the Dayspring of His Revelation, and make mention, as he may wish, of that which is praiseworthy, so that it may be a testimony for him in the kingdoms of Revelation and Creation and a treasure with his Lord, the Supreme Protector, the Faithful.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, ¶59

A person has full jurisdiction over his property. If he is able to discharge the Ḥuqúqu'lláh, and is free of debt, then all that is recorded in his will, and any declaration or avowal it containeth, shall be acceptable. God verily, hath permitted him to deal with that which He hath bestowed upon him in whatever manner he may desire.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Q&A 69

Consider Bahá'í Concepts of Over-Accumulation of Wealth When Bequeathing Inheritance

In this connection, a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi explains that:

. . . even though a Bahá'í is permitted in his will to dispose of his wealth in the way he wishes, yet he is morally and conscientiously bound to always bear in mind, while writing his will, the necessity of his upholding the principle of Bahá'u'lláh regarding the social function of wealth, and the consequent necessity of voiding its over-accumulation and concentration in a few individuals or groups of individuals.

This verse of the *Aqdas* introduces a lengthy passage in which Bahá'u'lláh elaborates the Bahá'í law of inheritance. In reading this passage one should bear in mind that the law is formulated with the presumption that the deceased is a man; its provisions apply, *mutatis mutandis*, when the deceased is a woman.

The system of inheritance which provides for distribution of the deceased's estate among seven categories of heirs (children, spouse, father, mother, brothers, sisters, and teachers) is based on the provisions set out by the Báb in the Bayán. The major features of the Bahá'í laws of inheritance in the case of intestacy are:

* Endowments can be in the form of land, administrative buildings, schools or other institutions. For further information on endowments, see Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 337–39.

Sacred Trust

1. If the deceased is a father and his estate includes a personal residence, such residence passes to the eldest son (Q&A 34).
2. If the deceased has no male descendants, two-thirds of the residence pass to his female descendants and the remaining third passes to the House of Justice (Q&A 41, 72). See note 42 concerning the levels of the institution of the House of Justice to which this law applies. (See also note 44.)
3. The remainder of the estate is divided among the seven categories of heirs. For details of the number of shares to be received by each group, see Questions and Answers, number 5, and Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.3.a.
4. In case there is more than one heir in any category the share allotted to that class should be divided between them equally, be they male or female.
5. In cases where there is no issue, the share of the children reverts to the House of Justice (Q&A 7, 41).
6. Should one leave offspring, but either part or all of the other categories of heirs be non-existent, two thirds of their shares revert to the offspring and one third to the House of Justice (Q&A 7).
7. Should none of the specified categories exist, two-thirds of the estate revert to the nephews and nieces of the deceased. If these do not exist, the same shares revert to the aunts and uncles; lacking these, to their sons and daughters. In any case the remaining third reverts to the House of Justice.
8. Should one leave none of the aforementioned heirs, the entire estate reverts to the House of Justice.
9. Bahá'u'lláh states that non-Bahá'ís have no right to inherit from their Bahá'í parents or relatives (Q&A 34). Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf indicates that this restriction applies “only to such cases when a Bahá'í dies without leaving a will and when, therefore, his property will have to be divided in accordance with the rules set forth in the Aqdas. Otherwise, a Bahá'í is free to bequeath his property to any person, irrespective of religion, provided however he leaves a will, specifying his wishes.” It is always possible, therefore, for a Bahá'í to provide for his or her non-Bahá'í partner, children or relatives by leaving a will.

Additional details of the laws of inheritance are summarized in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.3.a.-o.

—*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, n38

Questions and Answers amplifies the provisions of the law as it relates to the shares of the inheritance allocated to the brothers and sisters of the deceased. If the brother or sister is from the same father as the deceased, he or she will inherit his or her full

allotted share. If, however, the brother or sister is from another father he or she will inherit only two-thirds of the allotted share, the remaining one-third reverting to the House of Justice (Q&A 6). Further, in the case where the deceased has full brothers or full sisters among his heirs, half-brothers and half-sisters from the mother's side do not inherit (Q&A 53). The half-brothers and half-sisters will, of course, be due to receive inheritance from their own father's estate.

—*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, n39

On the question of inheritance, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that Bahá'u'lláh had lived a life of austerity and had left no estate for anyone to inherit. He is reported to have quoted the celebrated passage from the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd*, "Earthly treasures We have not bequeathed, nor have We added such cares as they entail. By God! in earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed."

—Adib Taherzadeh, *Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 200

DEPUTIZATION

Deputization of Traveling Teachers

You have observed that while in America many souls in the utmost of supplication and entreaty desired to offer some gifts, but this servant, in accord with the exhortations and behests of the Blessed Perfection, never accepted a thing, although on certain occasions we were in most straitened circumstances. But on the other hand, if a soul for the sake of God, voluntarily and out of his pure desire, wishes to offer a contribution (toward the expenses of a teacher) in order to make the contributor happy, the teacher may accept a small sum, but must live with the utmost contentment.

The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others? Unless he is detached from aught else save God, how can he teach severance to others?

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, no. 8.12–8.13

Regarding his special contribution to the Teaching Fund: he feels that this is a matter to be left entirely to the discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly. He believes that the continuous expenditure of a considerable sum to provide for 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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 14 November 1936 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Bahá'í Funds*, pp. 13–14

The Supreme Pen says:

Sacred Trust

In one of the Tablets this exalted Word hath been revealed from the Supreme Pen:

“Whoso is unable to teach should appoint a deputy.”

Praised be God, this munificent banquet is now spread for the enjoyment of all. The Four Year Plan provides guidance to each and every one involved with the achievement of the teaching goals. In some cases, when people are unable to directly teach the Cause, they have been exhorted to deputize someone to carry out this duty on their behalf. Should they be unable to deputize one person, they can, in accordance with their financial ability, make contributions earmarked for deputization through the local, national, continental and international funds of the Faith. In brief, all means have been provided for everyone to participate in the teaching work which, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, is the foremost duty, leaving no room for any excuse. Moreover, the people of the world who are weary and helpless in the face of present-day ordeals are more than ever ready to embrace the Cause of God. Failure to take advantage of this opportunity would indeed be a grave loss, for it would deprive the aching body of humanity of a remedy placed freely in the hands of the people of Bahá. This is the day on which, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “The cry of ‘where are Bahá’í teachers’ is raised from every corner of the world.” Blessed are the ones who have hearkened and responded with heart and soul. This appeal is particularly significant these days because, according to the Four Year Plan, in the concluding years of this century the number of teachers should so increase as to hasten the entry of troops under the shadow of God’s Cause. The dearly loved Iranian believers, wherever they reside, must not deprive themselves of the bounty of participation in Bahá’í activities. They should rather arise unitedly with the native friends and join forces with them to offer befitting service under the direction of Bahá’í institutions. Nay, they should even take the lead and become renowned in servitude to the Divine Threshold.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Bahá 154 B.E. [1997 A.D.]
to the Lovers of the Most Great Beauty, pp. 5–6

Subsidies Are Temporary

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 Bahá’í 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 Bahá’í funds.”

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

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 Bahá’í 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.

“Bahá’u’lláh 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.”

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2 July 1985 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1937

Pioneers, traveling teachers and a fresh outpouring of funds are essential ingredients to the onward march of the Cause throughout Australia, New Zealand and the islands of the South Pacific. Let those who can offer their valued services to the teaching work arise without delay; let those who cannot travel or pioneer deputize those who can go in their stead.

We cherish the highest hopes for the success of your endeavors and it is our constant prayer that Bahá’u’lláh will shower His richest blessings and confirmations upon you.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated January 1977 to the friends assembled at the International Teaching Conference in Auckland, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 184.7–184.8

While teaching projects of short duration, in terms of days and one or two weeks, are useful, the time has come for long-term teaching projects of three to six months and possibly more, as envisaged in the Five Year Plan, to be more vigorously prosecuted in every continent, so that more lasting results may accrue from these teaching trips and the rich harvest anticipated at the outset of the Plan may become a reality, imparting its inestimable benefits to the devoted laborers in His divine Vineyard.

It is hoped that those who will arise will be mostly self-supporting or supported by private deputization, and that the funds of the Faith, nationally for projects on the homefront, and internationally for projects in foreign fields, will be requested only when the individual concerned is regarded as well qualified and there is no other source of funds available to him.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 December 1976 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 183.2–183.3

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.

Sacred Trust

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 Bahá'í funds.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 June 1974 to all National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in mass teaching work, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1991

As stated in our circular letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in teaching work among the masses, dated 25th June, 1964: “. . . no Bahá'í teacher anywhere should consider himself as permanently employed by the Faith. We do not have in the Cause of God any paid career open to Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í funds.”

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2 July 1965 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1937

If Delegates 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9 February 1967 to a number of National Spiritual Assemblies, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 62

Pioneers

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 Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í funds.”

and to the British National Spiritual Assembly on May 29, 1946:

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

“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 Bahá’í 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.

“Bahá’u’lláh 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.”

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2 July 1985 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1937

Pioneers, traveling teachers and a fresh outpouring of funds are essential ingredients to the onward march of the Cause throughout Australia, New Zealand and the islands of the South Pacific. Let those who can offer their valued services to the teaching work arise without delay; let those who cannot travel or pioneer deputize those who can go in their stead.

We cherish the highest hopes for the success of your endeavors and it is our constant prayer that Bahá’u’lláh will shower His richest blessings and confirmations upon you.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated January 1977 to the friends assembled at the International Teaching Conference in Auckland, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 184.7–184.8

The prizes won at such a cost of sacrifice and devotion on the part of not only those souls who abandoned their own countries or their own homes in order to assist in establishing the Cause in other lands or other centres, but on the part of many dedicated souls who poured their substance into the Joint Deputization Fund and various national funds, must be safeguarded and strengthened at all costs.

—The Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land, letter dated Riqḍán 1962 to Annual Bahá’í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 347

Bahá’í Representatives

As to the raising of funds to provide for the expenses of the Bahá’í representatives, I am sure the friends in England will find in the National Assemblies of India and America and in myself ready and generous supporters of a step that will undoubtedly prove of immediate and universal value for the ultimate recognition of the Cause by the world.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 29 November 1923 to the members of the English National Spiritual Assembly, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 17

International Deputization Fund

For the first time in Bahá’í history, an International Deputization Fund has been established at the World Center under the administration of the Universal House of Justice. From it supplementary support will be given to specific pioneering projects when other

Sacred Trust

funds are not available. All friends, and particularly those who are unable to respond to the pioneer call are invited to support this Fund, mindful of the injunction of Bahá'u'lláh, "Center your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation, Whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be dumbfounded."

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 1965 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 24.11

It is our hope that, as far as possible, travel teaching projects will be self-supporting or can be assisted by the National Funds involved, but where necessary, the International Deputization Fund is available to assist. Whenever assistance from the Deputization Fund is required, the request should be made to the Continental Pioneer Committee, giving details of the project. If the sum required is small the Committee may be able to help immediately; otherwise it will pass the request, together with its recommendation, to the Universal House of Justice for consideration.

We sincerely hope that in the forefront of the volunteers, the Bahá'í 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.

We shall offer our ardent prayers at the Holy Shrines for the confirmation of the efforts of all those who will heroically respond to this call.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 March 1975 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 158.5–158.7

Some youth may have financial resources of their own, others may be able and willing to work and save the funds necessary for such projects, still others may have the financial backing of their parents, relatives or friends. In other cases the Bahá'í funds may be able to supplement whatever resources the prospective traveling teacher may be able to supply.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 May 1975 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 162.33

Fund-Raising

Fund-Raising Can Be Acceptable

. . . Appeals of a general character, carefully worded and moving and dignified in tone are welcome under all circumstances. . . .

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 101

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

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 30 June 1952 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 16

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3 April 1967 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, in *Stewardship and Development*, p. 60

The House of Justice feels 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 Bahá'í life by applying to it too many “gimmicks” or treating 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.

Within this framework, there is clearly a difference in the range of activities open to individuals and those which it would be befitting and dignified for a Spiritual Assembly to engage in or sponsor.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 June 1982, *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 10.29

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

There would be no objection to the Bahá'í community's joining with others to give a concert or undertake some other similar activity to raise funds for a deserving charity.

Sacred Trust

Such activities or even the making of donations to humanitarian work should be, and should be seen to be, acts of sincere assistance and co-operation. In choosing to engage in such fundraising, a Bahá'í community would need to ensure that assisting the charity would not have partisan political implications or support purposes contrary to the interests of the Faith. It would need to watch carefully that its involvement in such activities does not divert its energies from the vital work of teaching the Faith and consolidating its Institutions.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 20 August 1987, *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 10.33

It Is Not Proper for a Bahá'í Institution to Sponsor a Fund-Raising Sale Open to Public

. . . It is not proper for a Bahá'í institution to sponsor a “garage sale” of personal items contributed by believers for the benefit of a Bahá'í fund. This is not to say that an Assembly may not sell items of property to non-Bahá'ís for fair market value, but rather the non-Bahá'ís should not be led to purchase items at a fundraising sale on the representation that the proceeds are to be used for Bahá'í purposes.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1 April 1968 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 850

Auctions among Bahá'ís

There is no objection to the friends' holding an auction among Bahá'ís for the purpose of contributing the proceeds to the fund, nor is there any objection to Bahá'ís' selling their own property to non-Bahá'ís 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 Bahá'í 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 the aspects of Bahá'í 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 holding of auctions is legally permissible, since we are informed that in some countries it is legal only if conducted by a licensed auctioneer.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 July 1984 to the National Spiritual Assemblies of Chile, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 851

Holding of Raffles

There is nothing explicit in the authoritative texts of the Faith concerning lotteries, and it is a matter to which we will give consideration in detail at some future time. For the present, the believers are advised not to make an issue of such matters. It should be left to each individual to decide about participation in lotteries.

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

In light of this policy, there can be no objection on the part of the institutions to an individual who chooses to purchase lottery tickets. Any revenue received as a result of such activities would be treated as a source of income in determination of the Ḥuqúqu'lláh obligations.

—The Universal House of Justice, memorandum dated 31 May 2001
to the Office of Ḥuqúqu'lláh

The holding of raffles has not been specifically mentioned in the Kitáb-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 Bahá'í institutions to raise funds by this method.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 15 January 1984 to the
National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 852

In reviewing your Minutes for 15 March 1967, we note Item 25-8 which the Treasurer suggests a lottery as a means of disposing of a Persian carpet which had been given to you by one of the believers. We do not feel this is an appropriate way in which to raise funds . . . 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 20 November 1980,
Stewardship and Development, p. 61

The House of Justice has ruled that it is not appropriate for funds for the Faith to be raised through lotteries, raffles, and games of chance.

—*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, n169

Benefits to Fund-Raising Temporary

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

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3 January 1985 to the Bahá'ís of
the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, no. 419.3, 419.6

Sacred Trust

Sale of Personal Items

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

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4 January 1929 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 15

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 March 1973 to a Local Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 412

Investments

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

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *High Endeavours*, p. 71

You have given much thought to finding other ways of increasing your material resources . . . It is entirely within the purview of your Assembly to devise wise means for this purpose by adopting methods that rest on a sound basis of fiscal management, one which avoids the snares and pitfalls of entrepreneurial speculation. But, however helpful such methods might be they should be seen only as providing a supplement to the fundamental source of support for the Funds, namely, the contributions of individual believers offered in the spirit of service and sacrifice to the Cause of God. The foundation of the Funds should be strengthened and sustained principally on the basis of contributions.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 April 1993 to a National Spiritual Assembly

Business Ventures

Bahá'í Conduct

Your criterion should be to pursue your commercial activities with such fairness and equity as to be a cause of guidance to others. The friends of God should, through the instrumentality of their business, lead the people to God's path, and make them so astonished as to exclaim: "How great is their truthfulness, how high their trustworthiness, and how true is their good will!"

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2061

Every business company should be established on divine principles. Its foundations should be trustworthiness, piety and truthfulness in order to protect the rights of the people.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2062

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 130

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

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, 1:216

Guidelines toward Establishing a Business Venture Owned by Bahá'ís

The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 15 February concerning the proposal by a number of Bahá'ís to establish a private company whose shares would be owned by Bahá'ís 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 your other friends have suggested, the Universal House of Justice . . . has decided that the time has not yet come to have Bahá'í 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 noth-

Sacred Trust

ing wrong with it in principle—it would be well to advise the Bahá'ís 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.

—On the behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 5 April 1982 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Jamaica, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 853

Institutional Bahá'í Business Ventures

Therefore the Bahá'ís must seek to extend the value of Bahá'í funds through their careful and sacrificial expenditure. At the present time Bahá'í institutions offer remuneration usually calculated to meet the living expenses of staff members. Bahá'í pay scales do not, therefore, necessarily reflect the pay scales of the society at large.

Each staff member will receive remuneration that will permit him (or her) to meet his living expenses and those of his family; thus a man or woman with children doing the same work as a single person may receive more income than this fellow. Some staff members may be self-supporting, or are deputized, working entirely as volunteers without cost to the institution which they serve; many pioneers fall into this category. Others may receive reduced pay for full-time work, in effect volunteering a portion of their time. Still others will be paid the wages required by law for the positions held. Legally acceptable contracts are usually called for to protect those involved in the work agreement over the time period of employment; such contracts should adhere to whatever government regulations may obtain, but take into account the spirit of Bahá'í service.

The administration of such a system of remuneration calls for loving concern on the part of the Assembly; and the sacrifices of those who serve in Bahá'í institutions merit warm appreciation. Great care must be taken to make clear to each worker precisely what is expected of him or her but making no distinction among workers receiving different type of remuneration, while establishing appropriate methods to assure fair dealing between the responsible administrators and the workers, and to meet contingencies. All staff members as a group should know the conditions of Bahá'í employment and service, so that the National Assembly, its committees or its managers will not be felt to be unjust in their dealings with staff members.

Non-Bahá'ís may be employed in Bahá'í institutions, and it cannot be assumed that they will undertake conditions of Bahá'í employment which may call for service beyond the ordinary. Each non-Bahá'í should know clearly in advance.

—*Guidance for Bahá'í Radio*

Budget and Funds

In the future, however, we shall wish to have very prompt analyses of the budgets for our assistance. Each budget, moreover, should show whatever funds are being carried over at the end of the fiscal year, subtracted then from, the total requested in the new budget. As for the World Centre's holding funds for the yet-unfilled positions, deduc-

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

tions can be made at the time of the last quarter's allocations if necessary for personnel funds unspent.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 November 1982 to F. Schiantarelli, *Guidance for Bahá'í Radio*

The study of the budget and financial reports should be regarded as essential to the proper management of the radio station. They are not meant to be immutable, but should rather be regarded as guidelines for planning and evaluation of the activities of the station. For management of the station the National Assembly must use wisdom in the light of day-to-day requirements and make wise and necessary financial decisions accordingly, referring to the World Centre if necessary.

—Office of Social and Economic Development, memorandum dated 20 November 1985 to the Universal House of Justice

The sacrificial efforts of those who are offering to work for the radio on a voluntary basis and those who are accepting a lower remuneration than that which might be expected from other employment are deeply appreciated, and such economies are considered as a positive contribution to the Funds of the Faith.

—Office of Social and Economic Development, letter dated 4 January 1986 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, *Guidance for Bahá'í Radio*

Publishing Trusts

The difference between a Bahá'í Publishing Trust and any other Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly lies chiefly in the fact that the publishing agency does not operate on a budget from the National Spiritual Assembly but is established as a business with its own capital (whose sources are listed at 6 below), trading in the publishing and sale of Bahá'í literature and allied items, and the results of this trading remain within its own financial structure. It is a business, owned by the National Spiritual Assembly, to carry out its publishing requirements.

While it may first be set up as a Committee the aim should be to form some association, legally established, by which the National Spiritual Assembly may act as a publisher. This may be achieved either through the National Spiritual Assembly's own incorporation or by the establishment of a separate legal entity with the National Spiritual Assembly having full control. But in any case legal advice must be sought.

The Company or Trust must be a non-profit-making organization, that is to say all proceeds from its transactions must be used for such things as paying salaries and other operational expenses, royalties and interests on loans and augmenting its own capital. It is not operated for individual profit.

—The Universal House of Justice, memorandum dated May 1974, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 146.5–146.6

CAPITALIZATION

Since the agency is to be operated solely for Bahá'í purposes, capital funds may not be received from non-Bahá'ís, although of course the aim is to sell books to the largest

Sacred Trust

possible public. Capital may be obtained from:

- a) Grants from the National Spiritual Assembly
- b) Gifts from individual Bahá'ís or from Spiritual Assemblies
- c) Profit from trading
- d) Loans from Bahá'ís or Bahá'í institutions. Such loans may be interest free or interest bearing but for every loan there must be a written contract setting out the terms of the loan, its duration, condition of repayment and all details.
- e) Taking over any publishing assets (stock, outstanding accounts, etc.) which your National Spiritual Assembly or one of your Committees may at present have.

—The Universal House of Justice, memorandum dated May 1974,
Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986, no. 146.8

PRODUCTION

Publishing is not the same as printing or manufacturing books. The publisher engages manufacturing firms to produce his books according to his—the publisher's—design and specifications. The actual production and distribution of books need not be confined to the country in which the Publishing Trust operates.

—The Universal House of Justice, memorandum dated May 1974,
Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986, no. 146.9

LITERATURE DISSEMINATION

. . . In each national area the agencies for obtaining and disseminating Bahá'í literature should be greatly strengthened so that they will efficiently ensure an uninterrupted supply of the literature which is available from the various Publishing Trusts and organize its distribution throughout the area, through Local Assemblies and groups, by sale at conferences and summer schools, and directly to individuals. At the same time these agencies should ensure that the monies received from the sale of literature are kept separate from other funds of the Faith and are used for the replenishment of stocks of books and the widening of the range of literature available. National Assemblies must also give consideration to the need to cover the cost of certain literature out of the National Fund, so that it can be supplied free or sold at a price within the reach of those who urgently require it.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 May 1975 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 162.20

INDEPENDENT PUBLICATIONS

Regarding the publication of Bahá'í periodicals in America, there is no doubt whatsoever that every individual Bahá'í is free to inaugurate and conduct any magazine of his own provided that nothing is published therein which in the estimation of the National Assembly tends in the least to become detrimental or injurious to the highest interests of the Cause. Within these limits, and these limits only, private initiative should in no wise be discouraged and is indeed highly praiseworthy. It is for the Na-

tional Assembly, however, to exercise its judgment as to what extent the resources at their disposal enable them to aid financially the individual undertakings of the friends. Should the response of the friends and Assemblies to the appeals made on behalf of the National Fund be prompt, sustained and generous, the National Assembly will, I am certain, justify its sympathy, good-will and genuine cooperation with every individual Bahá'í enterprise. I would, however, at this early state of our work, strongly urge, nay entreat, the friends not to dissipate their efforts, but to seek, after frank, mature and continuous deliberation, to arrive at a common conclusion as to the most urgent requirements and needs of the hour, and having unified their views to strive to uphold and enforce them with promptitude, wholeheartedness and understanding.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 76–77

Private Business Initiatives

As a national community grows, the activities undertaken by its members also increase in number and diversity. Some of these activities will be initiated and administered by the Bahá'í institutions. Others will fall in the realm of private initiative. When an initiative is in the form of a private business venture undertaken by an individual or a group, the institutions of the Faith have little reason to interfere with its daily affairs. In general, only if difficulties arise among the friends involved in such an enterprise, if their activities could damage the good name of the Faith, or if they misrepresent their relationship to the Faith, would a Local or National Spiritual Assembly intervene. Bahá'í institutions should, of course, welcome any effort by such private ventures to apply the Teachings to their operations and to use their position in society to further the interests of the Faith. Spiritual Assemblies would do well to offer them guidance as requested or as circumstances require, and to help them develop their potential for the advancement of the Cause. . . .

The private initiatives of believers need not, however, be limited to business ventures. The laws of most societies allow for the establishment of non-profit organizations which, while private, are subject to special regulations and enjoy certain privileges. Customarily a board of trustees is responsible for all the affairs of such an organization and must ensure that its income is spent for the purpose stipulated in its by-laws. This board also oversees the functioning of the projects of the organization and the work of those who are in charge of them. An increasing number of believers around the world are taking advantage of this possibility and creating organizations dedicated to the application of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings to the analysis and resolution of important social and economic issues. The House of Justice looks with keen interest on this growing phenomenon in the Bahá'í world. It only cautions the friends that in establishing such organizations they should exercise care not to become a burden on the institutions or unduly divert the contributions of the believers from the essential and primary tasks of supporting the Funds of the Faith and the activities of the institutions. It also expects them to conduct their affairs according to Bahá'í moral and ethical principles.

A question that often arises in relation to private organizations dedicated to social and economic development is whether they are “Bahá'í” or not. Such a question cannot be answered by a simple “yes” or “no.” Clearly, the fact that they have their own management structures puts them in a different category from projects and organizations

Sacred Trust

administered by Bahá'í institutions. In that sense they are not “Bahá'í” enterprises. In another sense, to the extent that they are owned and directed by Bahá'ís and strive to apply the Teachings and serve the purposes of the Cause, they may indeed be regarded as “Bahá'í.” It is important to avoid the impression that participating in the projects of these organizations does not constitute legitimate service to the Cause. Otherwise sincere and devoted believers will be discouraged from engaging in activities that are “Bahá'í” in nature.

—Office of Social and Economic Development, letter dated 28 August 1994
on “The Evolution of Institutional Capacity”

When Bahá'ís Do Business with Each Other

You have written on the question of how the friends should proceed in their business dealings with one another. This is a question of the greatest importance and a matter that deserveth the liveliest concern. In relations of this kind, the friends of God should act with the utmost trustworthiness and integrity. To be remiss in this area would be to turn one's face away from the counsels of the Blessed Beauty and the holy precepts of God. If a man in his own home doth not treat his relations and friends with entire trustworthiness and integrity, his dealings with the outside world—no matter how much trustworthiness and honesty he may bring to them—will prove barren and unproductive. First one should order one's own domestic affairs, then attend to one's business with the public. One should certainly not argue that the friends need not be treated with undue care, or that it is unnecessary for them to attach too great importance to the practice of trustworthiness in their dealings with one another, but that it is in their relations with strangers that correct behaviour is essential. Talk like this is sheer fantasy and will lead to detriment and loss. Blessed be the soul that shineth with the light of trustworthiness among the people and becometh a sign of perfection amidst all men.

—‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilation of Compilations*, 2: no. 2059

Community Maturation

What Is a Community?

A community is of course more than the sum of its membership; it is a comprehensive unit of civilization composed of individuals, families and institutions that are originators and encouragers of systems, agencies and organizations working together with a common purpose of the welfare of people both within and beyond its own borders; it is a composition of diverse, interacting participants that are achieving unity in an unremitting quest for spiritual and social progress.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996] to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Four Year Plan*, no. 3.25

Indigenous Members Bedrock of Community

He hopes there will be a great deal more teaching activity during the present year, and that the Latin American Bahá'ís will increasingly feel that this is their Faith, and consequently their obligation, primarily, to spread it amongst their own people. Great as are the services rendered by pioneers, and unforgettable as are the deeds they accomplish, they cannot take the places of the indigenous element which must constitute the bedrock of the Community, carry on its own affairs, build its own institutions, support its own funds, publish its own literature, etc. A mother gives birth to a child, but the child then has to grow for itself. The older it gets, the more responsible it is for its own acts. The Latin American friends are rapidly coming of age, and they are showing this by the manner in which they are arising to serve the Faith, to demonstrate it, to sacrifice for it, to protect it and consolidate it.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3 July 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, *Special Measure of Love*, p. 17

Signs of a Mature Community

First and foremost, the vital process of the conversion of the Africans must acquire a momentum which will surpass any hitherto witnessed in African Bahá'í history. Any barrier impeding the discharge of this preeminent duty must be determinedly swept aside. Simultaneously, the emergence of new centers, the conversion of groups into Assemblies and the multiplication of the Assemblies themselves, must be accelerated to an unprecedented extent. . . . The institution of the National Fund, so vital and essential for the uninterrupted progress of these activities must, in particular, be assured of the whole-hearted, the ever-increasing and universal support of the mass of believers, for whose welfare, and in whose name, these beneficent activities have been initiated and have been conducted. All, no matter how modest their resources, must participate. Upon the degree of self-sacrifice involved in these individual contributions will directly depend the efficacy and the spiritual influence which these nascent administrative institutions, called into being through the power of Bahá'u'lláh, and by virtue of the Design conceived by the Centre of His Covenant, will exert. A sustained and strenuous effort must henceforth be made by the rank and file of the avowed upholders of the Faith, whose number far surpasses that of their brethren residing in the areas administered by the three other Regional Spiritual Assemblies, to enable the communities

Sacred Trust

under your jurisdiction to become self-supporting and ensure a steady flow of funds to the Treasury which now stands in dire need of substantial financial support.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8 August 1957
to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central and East Africa,
Special Measure of Love, p. 21

How Can a Community Mature: Education

Thousands upon thousands of believers will need to be aided to express the vitality of their faith through constancy in teaching the Cause and by supporting the plans of their institutions and the endeavors of their communities. . . .

The magnitude of the tasks the Bahá'í community is being summoned to perform during the Four Year Plan will call for a considerable outlay of funds. The pressing demands of the Arc Projects will continue to place severe constraints on the International Funds of the Faith. Yet, the Universal House of Justice will do its utmost to make available to the Counselors and the National Spiritual Assemblies the financial means necessary for the discharge of the tasks of expansion and consolidation in areas requiring assistance. This will include funds for the all-important work of the Auxiliary Boards.

As experience has shown, however, the expenditure of money does not, by itself, bring results. The challenge before you is to help develop in the various institutions and agencies involved in the execution of the Plan the capacity to expend funds in a judicious and effective manner. In addition, you must redouble your efforts to educate every member of the Bahá'í community—the new and the old believer, the youth and the adult—on the spiritual significance of contributing to the Fund.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 24 December 1996 to the Conference of Continental Boards of Counselors, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 25

In the visits made to the villages, the visiting teacher meets with the Local Communities to give them basic Bahá'í knowledge, such as living the Bahá'í life, the importance of teaching, prayer, fasting, Nineteen Day Feasts, Bahá'í elections, and contributions to the Fund. The question of contributions to the Fund is of utmost importance, so that the new believers may quickly feel themselves to be responsible members of the Community.

—The Universal House of Justice, in *Special Measure of Love*, p. 28

The universal participation of the believers in every aspect of the Faith—in contributing to the Fund, in teaching, deepening, living the Bahá'í life, administering the affairs of the community, and, above all, in the life of prayer and devotion to God—will endow the Bahá'í community with such strength that it can overcome the forces of spiritual disintegration which are engulfing the non-Bahá'í world, and can become an ocean of oneness that will cover the face of the planet.

We ask every one of you to ponder these matters deeply, and to join us in fervent prayer that this momentary crisis will prove to have been a providential test that will spur the community of the Greatest Name to new heights of dedication and triumphant achievement.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 29 December 1970 to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in every land, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 87.7

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 31 October 1967 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 52.2

How Does a Community Mature: They Must Feel a Sense of Belonging

A beginning, however modest, should be made in the direction of establishing local Funds, supported by native believers and designed to supplement the financial assistance extended by the parent community in North America, for the furtherance of pioneer activity, for the dissemination of Bahá'í literature, for the maintenance of local Bahá'í headquarters, for the gradual initiation of Bahá'í endowments, such as the land offered for a Bahá'í Temple in Chile, for the holding of conferences and of summer schools, for the creation of publicity agencies, and for the conduct and expansion of youth activities.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 15

Until the public sees in the Bahá'í Community a true pattern, in action, of something better than it already has, it will not respond to the Faith in large numbers.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 13 March 1944 to an individual, *Promoting Entry by Troops*, p. 3

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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9 February 1967 to various National Spiritual Assemblies, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 847

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, letter dated 7 August 1985 to National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 435.12

As we have said in an earlier message, the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behavior: those pat-

Sacred Trust

terns by which the collective expression of the virtues of the individual members and the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly . . . manifest in the unity and fellowship of the community and the dynamism of its activity and growth. This calls for the integration of the component elements—adults, youth and children—in spiritual, social, educational and administrative activities; and their engagement in local plans of teaching and development.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Rīḍván 153 [1996] to the Bahá'ís of the world, *Four Year Plan*, no. 3.27

Every stratum of society must be brought within your embrace, as you vigorously advance toward the goal of entry by troops at this time when powerful spiritual forces are at work in the hearts of the people. Neither the affluent nor the indigent should be excluded from your purview.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Rīḍván 153 [1996] to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in North America, *Four Year Plan*, no. 7.16

Maturation of Local and National Institutions

Local and National Funds

It should be carefully borne in mind that the local as well as the international Houses of Justice have been expressly enjoined by the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; that the institution of the National Spiritual Assembly, as an intermediary body, and referred to in the Master's Will as the "Secondary House of Justice," has the express sanction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; and that the method to be pursued for the election of the International and National Houses of Justice has been set forth by Him in His Will, as well as in a number of His Tablets. Moreover, the institutions of the local and national Funds, that are now the necessary adjuncts to all local and national spiritual assemblies, have not only been established by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets He revealed to the Bahá'ís of the Orient, but their importance and necessity have been repeatedly emphasized by Him in His utterances and writings. . . .

—Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 5–6

Definition and Role of Local Spiritual Assemblies

. . . Designated as "Spiritual Assemblies"—an appellation that must in the course of time be replaced by their permanent and more descriptive title of "Houses of Justice," bestowed upon them by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation; instituted, without any exception, in every city, town and village where nine or more adult believers are resident; annually and directly elected, on the first day of the greatest Bahá'í Festival by all adult believers, men and women alike; invested with an authority rendering them unanswerable for their acts and decisions to those who elect them; solemnly pledged to follow, under all conditions, the dictates of the "Most Great Justice" that can alone usher in the reign of the "Most Great Peace" which Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed and must ultimately establish; charged with the responsibility of promoting at all times the best interests of the communities within their jurisdiction, of familiarizing them with their plans and activities and of inviting them to offer any recommendations they might wish to make; cognizant of their no less vital task of demonstrating, through association with all liberal and humanitarian movements, the universality and comprehensiveness of their Faith; dissociated entirely from all sectarian organizations, whether religious or secular; assisted by committees annually appointed by, and directly responsible to, them, to each of which a particular branch of Bahá'í activity is assigned for study and action; supported by local funds to which all believers voluntarily contribute; these Assemblies, the representatives and custodians of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, numbering, at the present time, several hundred, and whose membership is drawn from the diversified races, creeds and classes constituting the world-wide Bahá'í community, have, in the course of the last two decades, abundantly demonstrated, by virtue of their achievements, their right to be regarded as the chief sinews of Bahá'í society, as well as the ultimate foundation of its administrative structure.

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 331

Definition and Role of National Spiritual Assemblies

Having established the structure of their local Assemblies—the base of the edifice which the Architect of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh had di-

Sacred Trust

rected them to erect—His disciples, in both the East and the West, unhesitatingly embarked on the next and more difficult stage, of their high enterprise. In countries where the local Bahá'í communities had sufficiently advanced in number and in influence measures were taken for the initiation of National Assemblies, the pivots round which all national undertakings must revolve. Designated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will as the "*Secondary Houses of Justice*," they constitute the electoral bodies in the formation of the International House of Justice, and are empowered to direct, unify, coordinate and stimulate the activities of individuals as well as local Assemblies within their jurisdiction. Resting on the broad base of organized local communities, themselves pillars sustaining the institution which must be regarded as the apex of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, these Assemblies are elected, according to the principle of proportional representation, by delegates representative of Bahá'í local communities assembled at Convention during the period of the Riḍván Festival; are possessed of the necessary authority to enable them to insure the harmonious and efficient development of Bahá'í activity within their respective spheres; are freed from all direct responsibility for their policies and decisions to their electorates; are charged with the sacred duty of consulting the views, of inviting the recommendations and of securing the confidence and cooperation of the delegates and of acquainting them with their plans, problems and actions; and are supported by the resources of national funds to which all ranks of the faithful are urged to contribute.

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 332–33

Maturing Administrative Order

It should be borne in mind in this connection that the preliminary steps aiming at the disclosure of the scope and working of this Administrative Order, which was now to be formally established after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, had already been taken by Him, and even by Bahá'u'lláh in the years preceding His ascension. The appointment by Him of certain outstanding believers in Persia as "Hands of the Cause"; the initiation of local Assemblies and boards of consultation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in leading Bahá'í centers in both the East and the West; the formation of the Bahá'í Temple Unity in the United States of America; the establishment of local funds for the promotion of Bahá'í activities; the purchase of property dedicated to the Faith and its future institutions; the founding of publishing societies for the dissemination of Bahá'í literature; the erection of the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhikár* of the Bahá'í world; the construction of the Báb's mausoleum on Mt. Carmel; the institution of hostels for the accommodation of itinerant teachers and pilgrims—these may be regarded as the precursors of the institutions which, immediately after the closing of the Heroic Age of the Faith, were to be permanently and systematically established throughout the Bahá'í world.

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 329–30

The Embryonic Stage

Conscious of their high calling, confident in the society-building power which their Faith possesses, they press forward undeterred and undismayed, in their efforts to fashion and perfect the necessary instruments wherein the embryonic World Order of

Bahá'u'lláh can mature and develop. It is this building process, slow and unobtrusive, to which the life of the world-wide Bahá'í Community is wholly consecrated, that constitutes the one hope of a stricken society. For this process is actuated by the generating influence of God's changeless Purpose, and is evolving within the framework of the Administrative Order of His Faith.

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

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

Fund to Be Established Immediately after Assembly Formation

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 41–42

Material Development to Parallel Spiritual Growth

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

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter dated 30 December 1948 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, *Letters to Australia and New Zealand, 1923–1957*, p. 76

Sacred Trust

Responsibilities of Assemblies

For such an expansion to be stimulated and accommodated, the Spiritual Assemblies must rise to a new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities as channels of divine guidance, planners of the teaching work, developers of human resources, builders of communities, and loving shepherds of the multitudes. . . . Particularly must the progress in the evolution of the institutions be manifest in the multiplication of localities in which the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly enhances the individual believers' capacity to serve the Cause and fosters unified action.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996] to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Four Year Plan*, no. 3.24

Education and Mass Enrollment Will Increase Financial Support

Regarding the established Bahá'í Funds, your efforts to unify national appeals to encourage contributions to all of them, to increase contributions from Local Spiritual Assemblies themselves and to train and develop local Treasurers, are all worthy pursuits. . . . Real growth of your material resources will come about through two primary means: increase in the number of believers, and increase in the effectiveness of the education of the believers concerning their spiritual obligations, among which is financial support of Bahá'í institutions.

As always the House of Justice is most grateful for the significant support of the American Bahá'í community to the International funds and deeply appreciates your own relentless effort to find ways of increasing the support while at the same attending to the enormous calls upon your National Fund for such major projects as the renovation of the House of Worship and the preservation of the buildings at the Green Acre school. Rest assured of its continued, ardent prayers at the Holy Threshold that the Blessed Beauty may increasingly reward your stewardship.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 April 1993 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

Assemblies Should Encourage Friends to Give

. . . These 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 Bahá'í community; they should know their blessings and responsibilities. The mighty ones of this world rejected the call of Bahá'u'lláh, 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 29 December 1970 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 875

Assemblies Need to Educate Believers

When the true spirit of teaching, which calls for complete dedication, consecration to the noble mission, and living the life, is fulfilled, not only by the individuals, but by the Assemblies also, then the Faith will grow by leaps and bounds.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 19 March 1954 to a Local Spiritual Assembly, *Promoting Entry by Troops*, p. 8

While the friends have the sacred obligation and privilege to contribute to the Fund, each Local and National Assembly also has the inescapable duty of educating itself and the believers in the spiritual principles related to Bahá'í contributions, to devise simple methods to facilitate the flow and receipt of contributions, and to formulate effective procedures to ensure the wise expenditure of the funds of the Faith.

—The Universal House of Justice, memorandum dated 7 August 1985 to National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 435.6

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 Bahá'í 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 13 April 1975 to all National Spiritual Assemblies receiving assistance from the Bahá'í International fund, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 869

Each national assembly must find ways and means to stimulate the offering of contributions, in cash or kind, to make it easy for the friends to contribute and to give proper receipts to the donors.

—The Universal House of Justice, annex to letter dated 13 July 1964 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 18.14

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 12 February 1987 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 871

A Vision of Human Prosperity

Throughout the world, immense intellectual and spiritual energies are seeking expression, energies whose gathering pressure is in direct proportion to the frustration of recent decades. Everywhere the signs multiply that the earth's peoples yearn for an end to conflict and to the suffering and ruin from which no land is any longer immune. These rising impulses for change must be seized upon and channeled into overcoming

Sacred Trust

the remaining barriers that block realization of the age-old dream of global peace. The effort of will required for such a task cannot be summoned up merely by appeals for action against the countless ills afflicting society. It must be galvanized by a vision of human prosperity in the fullest sense of the term—an awakening to the possibilities of the spiritual and material well-being now brought within grasp. Its beneficiaries must be all of the planet's inhabitants, without distinction, without the imposition of conditions unrelated to the fundamental goals of a such a reorganization of human affairs.

—Bahá'í International Community, *Prosperity of Humankind*, p. 1

Prudent Use of Funds

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 Funds.

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 Bahá'í 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.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 December 1963 to the Bahá'ís of the East and the West, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 13.4–13.5

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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 12 February 1987 to the National Spiritual Assembly of France, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 867

Encouragement by Propagation Boards

The primary tasks of the Propagation Boards . . . 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

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 14 August 1947 to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1114

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 work cannot be carried forward unless the life-blood is constantly circulating.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7 June 1954 to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1108

What Activities Does the National Fund Support?

TEACHING

That you may reinforce this Teaching Campaign—so vitally needed in these days—and conduct, properly and efficiently, the rest of your manifold activities, spiritual as well as humanitarian, it is urgently necessary to establish that Central Fund, which if generously supported and upheld by individual friends and local Assemblies, will soon enable you to execute your plans with promptness and vigor.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 49

NEWSLETTER

. . . The National Fund must be firmly established, generously supported and universally and continuously upheld, for it is the prerequisite of future progress and achievement. The "News Letter" should be extended, widely distributed and utilized as a means to supply information, coordinate activities and secure the support of all the believers to the institutions of the Cause. I strongly urge you to ensure the success of these two primary and essential organs of our work.

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter dated 25 May 1926 written on his behalf to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1220

National Assembly Cannot Allocate Local Funds

National Assemblies should avoid instructing their Local Spiritual Assemblies to allocate a certain percentage or portion of their local funds towards specific purposes. They may, however, suggest that the Local Assemblies contribute funds for priority projects at the national budget and suggest that the communities try to underwrite a part of the national budget. Any National Assembly is, of course, empowered to prevent an institution under its jurisdiction from taking any action regarding the use of funds which would not be to the best interests of the Cause. Such cases, however, are rare.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 17 October 1985 to an individual, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 879

Sacred Trust

Soliciting Funds from Other Countries

. . . The incorporation of well-grounded spiritual assemblies, following the example set by the spiritual assemblies of San José, Costa Rica, of Bogotá, Colombia, and of Asunción, Paraguay, as a preliminary to the incorporation of the future national assemblies to be established in Latin America, must be strenuously and efficiently carried out. A beginning, however modest, should be made in the direction of establishing local Funds, supported by native believers and designed to supplement the financial assistance extended by the parent community in North America, for the furtherance of pioneer activity, for the dissemination of Bahá'í literature, for the maintenance of local Bahá'í headquarters, for the gradual initiation of Bahá'í endowments, such as the land offered for a Bahá'í Temple in Chile, for the holding of conferences and of summer schools, for the creation of publicity agencies, and for the conduct and expansion of youth activities.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 14–15

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 the 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 5 September 1982 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 880

Development of National Bahá'í Fund

The Guardian feels that now that the new National Assembly has been established, with headquarters in Kampala, that the Assembly should establish its own Bank Account. When this is done, the monies you have received for the Kampala Temple, should be turned over to them, for deposit in their account. This applies not only to the munificent contribution of Mr. . . . , but also to past contributions which you have received, and any which you may receive in the future.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10 June 1956 to an individual, *Bahá'í Funds*, pp. 12–13

While it is understood that many communities do not have the resources to fully sustain their administrative and teaching work, it is important that each National Assembly make every effort to work out a program and budget which will enable it to become self-sustaining as rapidly as possible.

To accomplish this, the friends should be made to appreciate the bounties which come from regular and systematic contribution to the National Fund. The amount of the contribution is not as important as universal participation. In a letter to the Na-

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

tional Spiritual Assembly of Central and East Africa dated August 8, 1957 the beloved Guardian said:

The institution of the National Fund, so vital and essential for the uninterrupted progress of these activities must, in particular, be assured of the wholehearted, the ever-increasing and universal support of the mass of believers, for whose welfare, and in whose name, these beneficent activities have been initiated and have been conducted. All, no matter how modest their resources, must participate. . . .

National Assemblies needing supplemental assistance for budgets after Riḍván, 1964 should direct their appeal to the Universal House of Justice. They should not appeal to another National Assembly except in specific cases authorized by the Universal House of Justice.

We shall pray that the bounties of the Almighty will descend upon the growing Administrative Order of His promised Kingdom on Earth so that we may be enabled to take His healing message to all peoples everywhere.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 15 November 1963 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, no. 9.1–9.4

Giving Should Be Sacrificial and Used Wisely

Especially in finance is the attainment of independence by national Bahá'í communities urgent. Already the persecutions in Iran have deprived the believers in that country of the bounty of contributing to the international fund of the Faith, of which they have been a major source. Economic disruption in other countries threatens further diminution of financial resources. We therefore appeal to the friends everywhere to exercise the utmost economy in the use of funds and to make those sacrifices in their personal lives which will enable them to contribute their share, according to their means, to the local, national, continental and international funds of the Faith.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Naw-Rúz 1979 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 221.13g

Study the Needs of the Cause

. . . The financial questions that confront the Cause are all very pressing and important. They need a judicious administration and wise policy. We should study the needs of the Cause, find which field will give the greatest yield, and then appropriate the necessary funds. And such a task is surely most difficult and responsible.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 19 December 1929 to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1251

National Assembly Can Assist Projects

. . . It is for the National Assembly . . . to exercise its judgment as to what extent the resources at their disposal enable them to aid financially the individual undertakings of the friends. Should the response of the friends and Assemblies to the appeals made on behalf of the National Fund be prompt, sustained, and generous, the National Assembly will, I am certain, justify its sympathy, goodwill and genuine co-operation with every individual Bahá'í enterprise. I would, however, at this early stage of our work,

Sacred Trust

strongly urge, nay entreat, the friends not to dissipate their efforts, but to seek, after frank, mature, and continuous deliberation, to arrive at a common conclusion as to the most urgent requirements and needs of the hour, and having unified their views to strive to uphold and enforce them with promptitude, whole-heartedness, and understanding.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 76–77

Individual Bahá'ís 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 Bahá'í institutions of any country to appeal for funds to the Bahá'ís of another country, unless the National Spiritual Assembly of that country permits it. This does not mean that individuals are not free to contribute to a Bahá'í project in any country that they wish. For example, if a Bahá'í 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.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6 June 1985 to an individual, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 881

Priorities

As to material sacrifices towards the welfare of the Cause, he wishes you to understand that the general interests of the Cause take precedence over the interests of the particular individuals. For instance contributions to the welfare of individuals are secondary to contributions towards the National and Local Funds and that of the Temple.

This is a general instruction. Of course helping the individuals in case one is able to help, is also desirable and merits appreciation.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 24 November 1925 to two believers, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1218

With regard to your question concerning the National Bahá'í Fund: there is nothing in the Declaration of Trust or the By-Laws which prevents the allocation of any funds to any individual who is in dire financial need. But 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

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

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.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 17 July 1937 to an individual,
Compilation of Compilations, 1: no. 1253

There are two Funds, that of the Shrine of the Báb and the International Fund; but at present it is more important for the friends to concentrate on completing the work in progress on the Shrine, which, thanks to the response of the believers from all over the world, is going forward uninterruptedly, in spite of the very difficult situation in the Holy Land which makes all kinds of building work frightfully complicated.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 16 October 1951, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 268

The fixing of priorities is dependent on many factors, relating both to the Cause as a whole and to each individual in his or her own circumstances.

As far as the Cause is concerned, all the work must be kept going; all the funds need to be supported, both directly by the believers, and also by the making of contributions by Bahá'í institutions from one fund to another, which do not take the place of contributions from individuals—the source of the life-blood of the Cause.

At the level of the individual believer, attention to the needs of the funds of the Faith parallels the principles which govern multiple loyalties. The first loyalty of a Bahá'í is to the whole of mankind, for the benefit of the part is best achieved through the welfare of the whole. But this widest loyalty does not eliminate the lesser loyalties of love for one's country, for the area in which one lives, or for one's family. They all constitute a network of interdependent and mutually beneficial loyalties. So it is with the individual believer's relationship to the International, Continental, National and Local Funds.

Although the setting of priorities for contributing is a matter for personal judgment, the individual believer will certainly bear in mind the priorities of the work of the Cause as a whole.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 31 October 1993
to all National Spiritual Assemblies

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 the more easily understand the importance of the National Fund and the work of the National Spiritual Assembly.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7 August 1985 to all National Spiritual
Assemblies, *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 10.4

Sacred Trust

ENCOURAGEMENT VS. SOLICITATION

Contributing to the Fund Is Voluntary

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 9

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 101

Solicitation of Funds Not Permissible

Regarding solicitation of funds in your country for activities abroad, here again the House of Justice has repeatedly stated that it does not wish Bahá'í institutions of any country to appeal for funds to the Bahá'ís of another country, unless the National Spiritual Assembly of that country permits it. This does not mean that individuals are not free to contribute to a Bahá'í project in any country that they wish. However, an organized and indiscriminate appeal for funds to individuals, say, in the United States by the friends from another country, should not be made without the consent of your National Assembly.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 13 August 1986 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

Increase Contributions through Love and Encouragement

Shoghi Effendi hopes that as the Temple is gradually completed this interest will increase and they will try to share in the spirit that motivates the friends and accepting the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, arise to serve it and dedicate their life to its spread.

Such gatherings for collections of funds are permissible if it is done with a true spirit of sacrifice, not when the audience is especially aroused to a frenzy and mob psychology is used to induce them to pay.

Shoghi Effendi has repeatedly stated that no pressure should be used upon the friends and psychological pressure falls under that category. But there is much difference between such gatherings often used by religious bodies, and a true quiet, prayerful atmosphere when a person is, of his own accord, aroused to make some sacrifice. The distinction is very delicate, but it is for the Chairman to use his power to see that one desirable form is not corrupted into the other. All the activities of the Cause should be carried through in a dignified manner.

Shoghi Effendi is sure that the funds gathered at the last Convention were not due to the play of mob psychology but to the prayerful attitude of the friends and their desire to make further sacrifice.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 28 May 1932
to an individual, *Bahá'í Funds*, p. 8

Participation of all believers in supporting the Bahá'í Funds, the lifeblood of the Cause, must be given adequate attention, and the blessings which reward the act of voluntary giving for the promotion of the Faith, no matter how small the amount may be, must be lovingly and wisely explained.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated November 1979 to the Friends assembled at the International Teaching Conference in Hong Kong, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, no. 181.7

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

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

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3 April 1970 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

Educate the Friends about the Needs of the Fund

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated May 8th 1932 telling him of some incidents that transpired during the Convention this year, especially when funds were collected for the Temple. He was very glad to learn of the wonderful spirit that prevailed in those gatherings; for it is only through such a spirit of devotion and sacrifice that the Cause can prosper and its message embrace the whole world.

It was also wonderful to see the interest shown by the public in the general gatherings that formed part of the Convention programme. Shoghi Effendi hopes that as the Temple is gradually completed this interest will increase and they will try to share in the spirit that motivates the friends and, accepting the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, arise to serve it, and dedicate their life to its spread.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 28 May 1932
to an individual, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1227

. . . The Guardian would advise your Assembly to continue impressing upon the believers the necessity of their contributing regularly to the national fund, irrespective of whether there is an emergency to be met or not. Nothing short of a continuous flow of contributions to that fund can, indeed, ensure the financial stability upon which so much of the progress of the institutions of the Faith must now inevitably depend.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 29 July 1935 to the
National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada,
Compilation of Compilations, 1: no. 1230

These conferences, whether national or regional, in addition to providing good opportunities for fanning the enthusiasm of the friends and fostering their unity, have been effectively used by many National Assemblies as working conferences where reports are given of the status of the goals of the Plan and of the urgent needs and priorities; and, where necessary, calls are raised for pioneers, traveling teachers and funds.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Naw-Rúz 1979
to National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from
the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 222.8

The Universal House of Justice has been carefully studying the progress of the Faith and the extent of universal participation of the friends in areas where mass teaching has been going on. We have noted that many National Spiritual Assemblies have, in consultation with the Hands of the Cause in their continents, adopted various measures to deepen the knowledge of the friends to nurse them into maturity and to initiate them into the workings of the administration and the full support of the institutions of the Faith.

As it has already been pointed out . . . 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.

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 [*sic*] will grow 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 unailing and assured.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9 February 1967
to selected National Spiritual Assemblies

Use of the Sacred Writings to Encourage

Strive, therefore, to create love in the hearts in order that they may become glowing and radiant. When that love is shining, it will permeate other hearts even as this electric light illumines its surroundings. When the love of God is established, everything else will be realized. This is the true foundation of all economics. Reflect upon it. Endeavor to become the cause of the attraction of souls rather than to enforce minds. Manifest true economics to the people. Show what love is, what kindness is, what true severance is and generosity. This is the important thing for you to do. Act in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. All His Books will be translated. Now is the time for you to live in accordance with His words. Let your deeds be the real translation of their meaning. Economic questions will not attract hearts. The love of God alone will attract them. Economic questions are most interesting; but the power which moves, controls and attracts the hearts of men is the love of God.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 239

In times of disappointment, stress and anxiety, which we must inevitably encounter, we should remember the sufferings of our departed Master. Your work, your energy, your vigilance and care, your loving-kindness are assets that I greatly value and prize. Keep on, persevere, redouble in your efforts, repeat and rewrite the admonitions and instructions of our Beloved in your communications with individuals and Assemblies until they sink in their hearts and minds. This was truly our Beloved’s way and method and none better can we ever pursue. Your present pioneer work will surely be remembered and extolled by future generations. My prayers will always be offered for you. In matters of contribution we should not use any compulsion whatsoever and ascertain clearly the desire of the donor. We should appeal to but not coerce the friends.

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter dated 9 July 1926 written on his behalf to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1221

As Bahá’is we should follow the prophet’s method. We know that the Cause will ultimately conquer and its ranks be fully united. We know that the Master’s promises will ultimately be realized, therefore why be discouraged by trivial oppositions we see on our way. We should rather add to our zeal and persist in our prayers and endeavours. Shoghi Effendi has taken the available measures, and, by letter as well as cable, has urged the . . . friends to give a moral and material support to the National fund. It always takes time for a people to change from one administration to another. Up to the present they have been accustomed to think of the Local Assemblies as next only to the

Sacred Trust

Centre of the Cause, and it will take some time and training before they can admit another superior. The same problem existed in America and for some time the work of the National body seemed to be paralysed but through personal contact and Shoghi Effendi's incessant reminding that problem has been solved and now we see the National Assembly considered as the only body to undertake matters that are beyond the purely local jurisdiction of the Local Assemblies.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7 September 1926 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, *Dawn of a New Day*, pp. 13–14

Centers

NATIONAL BAHÁ'Í CENTERS

. . . That the work of the National Spiritual Assemblies may be efficiently conducted, it is incumbent upon their members to seek if feasible the establishment of an adequate and permanent centre for their activities which would be widely and officially advertised and be recognized as the headquarters of their Secretariat. To it all communications from individual friends and Local Assemblies within its province, from the Holy Land and from foreign countries should be directly addressed. It would be its first duty to keep in close and constant touch, without exception, discrimination or favour, with the various localities and isolated believers in its jurisdiction, and diligently and promptly distribute to them as well as to the friends abroad any matter of common concern and general interest.

That this cherished aim may materialize and the standard of efficiency be maintained, the institution of the National Fund is of paramount importance. I would unceasingly urge the individual believers as well as the Local Assemblies throughout India and Burma to arise with heart and soul and generously and regularly contribute toward the upkeep and the extension of a Fund upon which will greatly depend the success of their endeavours.

I am personally instructing the . . . Assembly, whose past services, moral as well as financial, to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in India and elsewhere are graven upon my heart, to concentrate their energies upon, and uphold with their resources the twin institutions of the National Spiritual Assembly and the National Fund. I trust that these may soon be enabled to shoulder the burden that is now weighing upon the self-sacrificing friends. . . .

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 25 March 1925 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1217

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

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8 June 1952, *Messages to Canada*, p. 156

LOCAL BAHÁ'Í CENTERS

The Guardian can only outline to you the principle, which is that Bahá'í funds should not be invested in building up a place that has dear associations for a number of the friends, but is not going to really serve a large group of the believers.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8 June 1952, *Messages to Canada*, p. 156

We feel that each National Assembly should carefully and regularly consult on this vital aspect of the education of the friends, spare no effort and lose no opportunity in bringing to their attention the needs of the hour. For example, where land is difficult to obtain, or where funds for the purchase of endowments are not available, the friends should be appealed to in a dignified and effective manner to donate from their own land for the use of Bahá'í institutions. In the construction of local Bahá'í centres, the National Assembly should carefully devise methods of appealing to the friends to contribute manpower or local materials for the construction of such buildings. If ready cash is not available for contributions to the Fund, the National Assembly should guide the friends in ways they could raise funds by a collective effort to cultivate a piece of land, by contributing cash crops, livestock or home-made dishes, sweetmeats, or handicrafts.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9 February 1967,
Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities, pp. 10.26–10.27

At this time when the calls on the Bahá'í Fund at all levels of its activity far exceed the amount available, good judgment is specially required in the disposition of the financial resources of the Faith. Two extremes are to be avoided: one, where attention is focused entirely on meeting international needs, and the development of the home front is hamstrung; and at the other extreme, where the local and national needs are accorded unduly high priority, including the acquisition of expensive Bahá'í Centres, and international responsibilities are neglected. Through your wise guidance to the Bahá'í community, and through the continuing development of a world-minded consciousness in the believers, the right balance can be found and maintained.

It is surely evident to any observer of world events that human affairs are now volatile and subject to sudden and unforeseen changes. The friends have an opportunity to ensure that their resources are used for the enduring benefit of the Cause through their sacrificial and generous efforts to support its global activities, at this time when their financial circumstances are so favourable.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 May 1999 to
selected National Spiritual Assemblies

ACQUISITION OF PROPERTIES

. . . As prices generally are soaring everywhere it is important that properties called for in the Plan be purchased as soon as funds are made available. Your National Assembly is no doubt conscious of the fact that wherever a Ḥazíratu'l-Quds has been allocated it should be a modest structure, acquired in a dignified location within the civil limits of

Sacred Trust

the town or city named in the Plan. However, a Temple site could be near the city, as it is not essential that it be located within the civil limits of the city.

National Endowments: the object here is not to buy an extensive property. A token piece of land, possibly donated by a believer, is all that is required for the moment.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 14 May 1964 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 16.6–16.7

IS IT TIME FOR A CENTER?

The Guardian requests that you inform all the friends that their most important duty at the present time is the fulfillment of the tasks of the Ten-Year Crusade. This calls for the sacrifice of local activities in order that the national and international development of the Faith may go forward uninterruptedly. No local institutions should be started. The National Assembly should see that money is not spent on local centers at this time, and the friends should be encouraged to concentrate on the national and international activities of the Faith.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, 1:214

He has no objection to the Stuttgart Bahá'ís arranging to have a center of their own on Mrs Schwarz' land. As this was a spot visited by the beloved Master, it is all the more appropriate as a center for the Cause there.

He hopes that the Stuttgart friends will so arrange their affairs that this new undertaking will not prevent them from assisting the national interests of the Cause and spending [*sic*] them their full support.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, 2:69

The Universal House of Justice feels that the United States must not jeopardize its spiritual primacy, and that it must gird itself to raise the major share of the financial reserves which will be necessary to prosecute the Nine-Year Teaching Plan. . . .

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

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

PURPOSE OF A LOCAL CENTER

The House of Justice does not feel that . . . the building or buying of a Local Center will necessarily infuse the friends with a dynamic spirit for community development

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

and inspire them to actively teach. On the contrary, the original cost and responsibilities of operation and maintenance may impose a heavy burden on them and create an adverse effect.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9 July 1978 to an individual

. . . Even the first local center that a Bahá'í community erects can begin to serve not only as the spiritual and administrative center and gathering place of the community, but also as . . . the heart of other aspects of community life.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 May 1984,
Lights of Guidance, no. 1884

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS OF A CENTER

We have been asked to say that there is no objection to the Local Assembly looking for a property to purchase for their Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, but they should be reminded that in addition to the initial cost of acquisition they must be prepared to assume the continuing costs of upkeep, maintenance, and services. They should also decide whether they can manage the financial outlay required without interfering with the discharge of their other responsibilities toward the success of the Five Year Plan [1974–1979].

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6 February 1975 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

A Spiritual Assembly must be careful to consider maintenance as well as acquisition expenses. Acquisition expenses may include damage deposit or purchase fees, necessary rehabilitation and renovation, and purchase of furnishings. If the building is to be constructed, the initial costs would be even higher. Yet, these are only the initial fees. Other expenses include monthly rental or mortgage costs, insurance, utilities, upkeep and repair of furnishings and grounds, routine maintenance costs, and deposits into a reserve fund for major repairs and replacements of building components. The Assembly can prepare for a Center by developing a budget that includes all anticipated expenses, for both initial costs and ongoing costs, and an additional amount for contingencies.

—*Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, pp. 14.9–14.10

Training Institutes

TEACHING CENTER FUNDS INSTITUTES

We are placing at the disposal of the Teaching Centre funds specifically designated for the operation of institutes and intend to call on National Spiritual Assemblies, according to their circumstances, to pay particular attention to the development of institutes in their countries. It is our hope that significant progress in this direction will constitute one of the distinguishing features of the Four Year Plan.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 December 1995 to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, *Four Year Plan*, no. 1.20

Sacred Trust

There should be no delay in establishing permanent institutes. . . . Access of the institute to physical facilities will of course be necessary, but it may not require a building of its own.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996]
to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Four Year Plan*, no. 3.27

The next four years will represent an extraordinary period in the history of our Faith, a turning point of epochal magnitude. What the friends throughout the world are now being asked to do is to commit themselves, their material resources, their abilities and their time to the development of a network of training institutes on a scale never before attempted. . . .

“Center your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God,” Bahá'u'lláh thus instructs His servants, adding, “Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation. . . .” Just as one deputizes another to teach in one's stead by covering the expenses of a pioneer or traveling teacher, one can deputize a teacher serving an institute, who is, of course, a teacher of teachers. To do so, one may make contributions to the Continental Bahá'í Fund, as well as to the Local, National and International Funds, earmarked for this purpose.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996]
to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Four Year Plan*, no. 3.30

TRAINING INSTITUTES DEVELOP HUMAN RESOURCES

As an agency of the National Spiritual Assembly, the training institute should be charged with the task of developing human resources in all or part of a country. The requirements of expansion and consolidation in the country or region will dictate the complexity of its organization. In some instances, the institute may consist of a group of dedicated believers with a well-defined programme and some administrative arrangement that enables it to offer regular training courses. In many cases, in addition to a group of teachers associated with it, the institute will require part- and full-time staff, for whom assistance from the funds of the Faith may be necessary. The institute needs access to some physical facilities in which it can conduct courses and, at some stage of its development, may require a building of its own. Irrespective of whether or not an institute has its own physical facilities, its teachers must offer courses both at a central location and in the villages and towns so that an appreciable number of believers can enter its programmes. The complexity and number of courses offered by an institute, as well as the size of its staff and the pool of teachers from which it draws, may call for the appointment of a board to direct its affairs. When the region under the influence of an institute is large, it may have branches serving specific areas, each with its own administration.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 December 1995 to the Conference of the Continental Board of Counsellors, *Four Year Plan*, no. 1.16

INSTITUTES REQUIRE CAREFUL BOOKKEEPING

The addition of this new dimension to the work of institutes is being carried out with great care. Since development-related activities often involve funds from non-Bahá'í sources, a financial system has to be in place to meticulously track various lines of expenditure. Further, once an institute becomes engaged in development, it needs to interact with government agencies and organizations of civil society, often entering into collaborative relationships with them. All of this demands a degree of maturity that is achieved only through consistent effort and experience. In those places where the work is moving in this direction, the profile of an institution capable of pursuing a highly complex set of activities is beginning to emerge, and an exciting vision of a dynamic centre of learning is taking shape.

—The Universal House of Justice, in *Training Institutes*, p. 33

Holy Properties

SHRINE OF THE BÁB

The national and local Funds, on which the prosperity and unfoldment of a rising Administrative System must ultimately depend, should be assured of an ever-increasing measure of support, whilst the contributions of the believers for the raising of the superstructure of the Báb's Holy Sepulchre, constituting a sacred and added responsibility at this present critical hour, should be constantly borne in mind and steadily maintained.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923–1957*, p. 93

ELEVEN TEMPLE FUNDS

Eleven Temple Funds have been inaugurated, amounting to almost a quarter of a million dollars, for the purchase of land for future Bahá'í Temples in the Western Hemisphere, in the European, the African, the Asiatic and the Australian continents, followed by the purchase of a four-acre plot, commanding an extensive view of the Pacific Ocean and the greater portion of Greater Sydney area, and by the selection of appropriate sites outside the Cities of Frankfurt and of Panama City.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 65

*The House of Worship
and Its Dependencies*

Establish a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

O friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His co-sharers and partners in the servitude of the Lord of Hosts! Verily the greatest affair and the most important matter today is to establish a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and to found a Temple from which the voice of praises may rise to the Kingdom of the majestic Lord. Blessings be upon you for having thought to do so and intending to erect such an edifice, advancing all in devoting your wealth in this great purpose and in this splendid work. You will soon see the angels of confirmation following after you and the hosts of reinforcement crowding before you.

When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is accomplished, when the lights are emanating therefrom, the righteous ones are presenting themselves therein, the prayers are performed with supplication towards the mysterious Kingdom, the voice of glorification is raised to the Lord, the Supreme, then the believers shall rejoice, the hearts shall be dilated and overflow with the love of the All-living and Self-existent God. The people shall hasten to worship in that heavenly Temple, the fragrances of God will be elevated, the divine teachings will be established in the hearts like the establishment of the Spirit in mankind; the people will then stand firm in the Cause of your Lord, the Merciful. Praise and greetings be upon you.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 415

The hour has struck—soon the vibrations will be felt on this material plane; for as Abdul Baha so beautifully puts it—“Does not the dawn of a new day arouse the sleeping ones from their couches of negligence and awaken all those who are not dead?”

Speaking of the temple of the future, Abdul Baha says—“Every country has a hundred thousand gigantic temples, but what results have they yielded? The important point is this—from a temple of worship must go forth not only the spiritual but the material needs. Verily, the founding of this temple will mark the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is the evident standard waving in the center of the great continent of America.

“The doors will be open to all sects—no differentiation; and by God's help this temple will prove to be to the body of human society what the soul is to the body of man. For when these colleges for the study of higher sciences, the hospital, the orphanage and the hospice are built, its doors will be opened to all nations, races and religions, with no line of demarkation [*sic*] and its charities will be dispensed without regard to race or color. Its gates will be flung wide to mankind; prejudice toward none, love for all. The central building will be dedicated to prayer and worship and thus for the first time religion will become harmonized with science and science will be the handmaid of religion—both showering their spiritual gifts on all humanity. In this way the people will be lifted out of the quagmires of slothfulness and bigotry.”

All of which would seem to verify the prediction of the great world thinkers of our time, one of whom says: “Abdul Baha will surely unite the East and West, for he treads the mystic way with practical feet.”

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Abdul-Baha on Divine Philosophy*, p. 14

I cannot refrain, however, from giving expression to my gratification and appreciation of the substantial and continued support already accorded, and in particular during the

Sacred Trust

past year by the believers in the United States and Canada, under the wise and judicious direction of their elected national representatives, to the Plan of Unified Action, whose declared purpose is to insure, ere the present Bahá'í year comes to a close, the raising of the funds required for the building of the first Unit of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. The vigilance and fidelity with which the National Assembly of the United States and Canada has observed its pledge in connection with the limitation of the current administrative expenses of the Cause, and the zeal and ready response manifested by local Assemblies and individual believers to curtail their local and personal expenditures in order to concentrate on the Temple Fund, are worthy of the highest praise, and will deservedly attract the manifold blessings of a loving and bountiful Master. Much indeed has been accomplished during this past year of concentrated and consecrated self-sacrifice for so glorious a purpose. Much more still remains unachieved if we are to vindicate, in the eyes of an expectant world, the honorable name, the inexhaustible and miraculous vitality of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 154

From the beginning of His stupendous mission, Bahá'u'lláh urged upon the attention of nations the necessity of ordering human affairs in such a way as to bring into being a world unified in all the essential aspects of its life. In unnumbered verses and tablets He repeatedly and variously declared the “progress of the world” and the “development of nations” as being among the ordinances of God for this day.* The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal of His Revelation, implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth. The indispensability of this coherence is unmistakably illustrated in His ordination of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the spiritual center of every Bahá'í community round which must flourish dependencies dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific advancement of mankind.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 20 October 1983 to the Bahá'ís of the World, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*, no. 379.2

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

O Concourse of creation! O people! Construct edifices in the most beautiful fashion possible, in every city, in every land, in the name of the Lord of Religions. Adorn them with that which beseemeth them. Then commemorate the Lord, the Merciful, the Clement, in spirit and fragrance.

Teach your children what hath been revealed through the Supreme Pen. Instruct them in what hath descended from the Heaven of greatness and power. Let them memorize the Tablets of the Merciful and chant them with melodious voices in galleries built in the Temple of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. The prayers of the Lord should be chanted in a manner to attract the hearts and souls. Blessed is he who listeneth unto the River of Life.

—Bahá'u'lláh, in *Bahá'í Year Book, 1925–1926*, p. 59

* Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 129–30.

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual temple, shall be erected in America! I entreat God to assist the confirmed believers in accomplishing this great service and with entire zeal to rear this mighty structure which shall be renowned throughout the world. The support of God will be with those believers in that district that they may be successful in their undertaking, for the Cause is great and great; because this is the first Mashrak-el-Azcar [*sic*] in that country and from it the praise of God shall ascend to the Kingdom of Mystery and the tumult of His exaltation and greetings from the whole world shall be heard!

Whosoever arises for the service of this building shall be assisted with a 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!

—Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, 1:96

. . . Of all the institutions that stand associated with His Holy Name, surely none save the institution of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár can most adequately provide the essentials of Bahá’í worship and service, both so vital to the regeneration of the world. Therein lies the secret of the loftiness, of the potency, of the unique position of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár as one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Bahá’u’lláh.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’i Administration*, p. 186

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

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 69

Sacred Trust

Whatever assistance, financial or moral, extended by Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers, to those who have been responsible for such a highly valuable and representative production will, it should be remembered, be directly utilized to advance the interests and reinforce the funds that are being raised in behalf of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, and will indirectly serve to exert a most powerful stimulus in removing the malicious misrepresentations and unfortunate misunderstandings that have so long and so grievously clouded the luminous Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 157

. . . That the work of the National Spiritual Assemblies may be efficiently conducted it is incumbent, upon their members to seek if feasible the establishment of an adequate and permanent centre for their activities which would be widely and officially advertised and be recognized as the headquarters of their Secretariat. To it all communications from the individual friends and Local Assemblies within its province, from the Holy Land and from foreign countries should be directly addressed. It would be its first duty to keep in close and constant touch, without exception, discrimination or favour, with the various localities and isolated believers in its jurisdiction, and diligently and promptly distribute to them as well as to the friends abroad any matters of common concern and general interest.

That this cherished aim may materialize and the standard of efficiency be maintained, the institution of the National Fund is of paramount importance. I would unceasingly urge the individual believers as well as the Local Assemblies throughout India and Burma to arise with heart and soul and generously and regularly contribute toward the upkeep and the extension of a Fund upon which will greatly depend the success of their endeavours.

I am personally instructing the . . . Assembly, whose past services, moral as well as financial, to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in India and elsewhere are graven upon my heart, to concentrate their energies upon, and uphold with their resources the twin institutions of the National Spiritual Assembly and the National Fund. I trust that these may soon be enabled to shoulder the burden that is now weighing up on the self-sacrificing friends.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 25 March 1925 to the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of India, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1217

. . . The National Fund must be firmly established, generously supported and universally and continuously upheld, for it is the prerequisite of future progress and achievement. The “News Letter” should be extended, widely distributed and utilized as a means to supply information, co-ordinate activities and secure the support of all the believers to the institutions of the Cause. I strongly urge you to ensure the success of these two primary and essential organs of our work.

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter dated 25 May 1926 written on his behalf to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1220

You asked concerning some plans whereby funds could be gathered for the Temple. Shoghi Effendi believes that the best and noblest method is to have free donations that are made spontaneously and with the sense of making some sacrifice in furthering the

Cause. It is with sacrifice that this Temple is to be built. This is the truly worthy method. This principle therefore excludes any method whereby the help of non-Bahá'ís is included. A Bahá'í Temple should be built by the Bahá'ís alone; it is not an ordinary humanitarian activity in which the help of any person could be solicited. Anyhow Shoghi Effendi has fully explained these matters to the National Spiritual Assembly and you could easily refer to them as to further light on the subject.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 14 April 1932 to the Spiritual Assembly of Kenosha, Wisconsin, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1225

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and Its Dependencies

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is one of the most vital institutions in the world, and it hath many subsidiary branches. Although it is a House of Worship, it is also connected with a hospital, a drug dispensary, a traveler's hospice, a school for orphans, and a university for advanced studies. Every Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is connected with these five things. My hope is that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will now be established in America, and that gradually the hospital, the school, the university, the dispensary and the hospice, all functioning according to the most efficient and orderly procedures, will follow. Make these matters known to the beloved of the Lord, so that they will understand how very great is the importance of this "Dawning-Point of the Remembrance of God." The Temple is not only a place for worship; rather, in every respect it is complete and whole.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 64.1

Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual temple, shall be erected in America! I entreat God to assist the confirmed believers in accomplishing this great service and with entire zeal to rear this mighty structure which shall be renowned throughout the world. The support of God will be with those believers in that district that they may be successful in their undertaking, for the Cause is great and great; because this is the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in that country and from it the praise of God shall ascend to the Kingdom of Mystery and the tumult of His exaltation and greetings from the whole world shall be heard!

Whosoever arises for the service of this building shall be assisted with a 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!

The contribution that thou hast made to the Temple is beloved. The Temple is the most great foundation of the world of humanity and it hath many branches. Although the Temple is the place of worship, with it is connected a hospital, pharmacy, pilgrims' house, school for the orphans, and a university for the study of high sciences. Every Temple is connected with these five things. I hope that now in America they will build a Temple and gradually add to it the hospital, school, university, pharmacy and pilgrims' house with the utmost efficiency and thoroughness. Thou shouldst make known to the believers these details, so that they may realize how important the Temple is. The Temple is not only a place for worship; nay, it is perfect in every way.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 416

Sacred Trust

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 186

I cannot refrain, however, from giving expression to my gratification and appreciation of the substantial and continued support already accorded, and in particular during the past year by the believers in the United States and Canada, under the wise and judicious direction of their elected national representatives, to the Plan of Unified Action, whose declared purpose is to insure, ere the present Bahá'í year comes to a close, the raising of the funds required for the building of the first Unit of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. The vigilance and fidelity with which the National Assembly of the United States and Canada has observed its pledge in connection with the limitation of the current administrative expenses of the Cause, and the zeal and ready response manifested by local Assemblies and individual believers to curtail their local and personal expenditures in order to concentrate on the Temple Fund, are worthy of the highest praise, and will deservedly attract the manifold blessings of a loving and bountiful Master. Much indeed has been accomplished during this past year of concentrated and consecrated self-sacrifice for so glorious a purpose. Much more still remains unachieved if we are to vindicate, in the eyes of an expectant world, the honorable name, the inexhaustible and miraculous vitality of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 154

Last but not least, the internal ornamentation of the Mother Temple of the West has been terminated, and design adopted, funds allocated by the Temple Trustees for the landscaping of its immediate surroundings, constituting the final step for its approaching Jubilee. Appeal American Bahá'í community standing on threshold of concluding year of second Seven Year Plan, traversing the last stage of the austerity period, confronted by the approaching centenary of the darkest, bloodiest episode in Bahá'í history, associated with the nationwide holocaust of Ṭáhirih's martyrdom, and with Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál in Ṭihrán, to arise and scale still loftier heights of self-sacrifice and efface the deficit in the National Fund. Address in particular fervent plea to brace itself to play a preponderating role in the impending world crusade, which a world community, utilizing the agencies of a divinely-appointed world administrative order, is preparing to launch, amidst the deepening shadows of a world crisis for the execution of 'Abdu'l-Baha's world-encircling plan and the subsequent unfoldment of a world civilization, and the ultimate attainment of the supreme objective, the illumination and redemption of a whole world.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 28

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

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

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 26 June 1936 to an individual,
Lights of Guidance, no. 411

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 Bahá'í community reaches the stage of building its own Mashriqu'l-Adhkár,

Sacred Trust

for even the first local centre that a Bahá'í 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 Bahá'u'lláh, and then the grass roots stirring of the believers wishing to apply these teachings to the daily life of their community.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 May 1984,
Lights of Guidance, no. 1884

Benevolent Associations

Giving to Charity

O SON OF MAN!

Bestow My wealth upon My poor, that in heaven thou mayest draw from stores of unfading splendor and treasures of imperishable glory. But by My life! To offer up thy soul is a more glorious thing couldst thou but see with Mine eye.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 57

The beginning of magnanimity is when man expendeth his wealth on himself, on his family and on the poor among his brethren in his Faith.

The essence of wealth is love for Me; whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things, and he that loveth Me not is indeed of the poor and needy. This is that which the Finger of Glory and Splendour hath revealed.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 156

I have seen the good effects of your own philanthropy in America, in various universities, peace gatherings, and associations for the promotion of learning, as I traveled from city to city. Wherefore do I pray on your behalf that you shall ever be encompassed by the bounties and blessings of heaven, and shall perform many philanthropic deeds in East and West. Thus may you gleam as a lighted taper in the Kingdom of God, may attain honor and everlasting life, and shine out as a bright star on the horizon of eternity.

—‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 79.4

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 Bahá'í Community, as distinguished from the purely personal interests of its members. The demands of the Cause transcend those of the individual, and should therefore be given precedence. But these two phases of Bahá'í social life, though not of equal importance, are by no means contradictory. Both of them are essential, and should be fostered, but each according to its own degree of importance. It is the responsibility of Bahá'í Assemblies to decide when individual interests should be subordinated to those affecting the collective welfare of the community. But, as already stated, the 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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 26 June 1936 to an individual,
Lights of Guidance, no. 411

Regarding the question you raised: in the first place every believer is free to follow the dictates of his own conscience as regards the manner in which he should spend his own money. Secondly, we must always bear in mind that there are so few Bahá'ís in the world, relative to the world's population, and so many people in need, that even if all of us gave all we had, it would not alleviate more than an infinitesimal amount of suffering. This does not mean we must not help the needy, we should; but our contributions to the Faith are the surest way of lifting once and for all time the burden of hunger and misery from mankind, for it is only through the System of Bahá'u'lláh—Divine in

Sacred Trust

origin—that the world can be gotten on its feet and want, fear, hunger, war, etc., be eliminated. Non-Bahá'ís cannot contribute to our work or do it for us; so really our first obligation is to support our own teaching work, as this will lead to the healing of the nations.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8 December 1947 to an individual, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1240

The third principle concerns contributions made to charity by Bahá'ís 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 Bahá'í Writings—but they must weigh their responsibilities very carefully and remember that in a highly organized country like the United Kingdom the poor are helped by a multitude of agencies, both governmental and private, whereas only the Bahá'ís 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 Bahá'í is, of course, free to contribute to charity from his own resources if he wishes, but as a Bahá'í he should bear in mind the needs of the Bahá'í Fund, which only believers can support.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 March 1973 to a Local Spiritual Assembly, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 412

There are mighty agencies in this world, governments, foundations, institutions of many kinds with tremendous financial resources which are working to improve the material lot of human beings. Anything we Bahá'ís 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, and also because of our refusal to become involved in politics, Bahá'ís are often accused of holding aloof from the “real problems” of their fellowmen. 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 combating 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. Bahá'ís, 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 Bahá'í, a vain waste of time and effort. His whole life is directed towards proclaiming the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, reviving the spiritual life of his fellowmen, uniting them in a divinely created World Order, and then, as the 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 bedeviled the world.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 November 1974
to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Italy,
Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986, no. 151.5–151.7

In one of His Tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that “if a person is incapable of earning a living, is stricken by dire poverty or becometh helpless, then it is incumbent on the wealthy or the Deputies to provide him with a monthly allowance for his subsistence. . . . By ‘Deputies’ is meant the representatives of the people, that is to say the members of the House of Justice.”

—*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, n56

Associate Thou with the Poor

As to thee: Associate thou with the poor and be united with the weak souls and hold intercourse with the needy, with a compassionate heart and great love. Because thereby is ordained for thee an eternal glory in the Kingdom of God. Invite thou the people to the Exalted World, to the Supreme Horizon and to the Kingdom of EL-ABHA!

There is no harm in thy loneliness in those regions; for verily, the hosts of confirmation are thy help, thy Glorious Lord is thy protector and the angels of the Kingdom are thy fellow-speakers. Glad-tidings be unto thee for this! Blessed art thou for this!

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, 1:61

Be a Helper

O SON OF MAN!

Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 56

O SON OF MAN!

Bestow My wealth upon My poor, that in heaven thou mayest draw from stores of unfading splendor and treasures of imperishable glory. But by My life! To offer up thy soul is a more glorious thing couldst thou but see with Mine eye.

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 57

Life in this mortal world will quickly come to an end, and this earthly glory, wealth, comfort and happiness will soon vanish and be no more. Summon ye the people to God

Sacred Trust

and call the souls to the manners and conduct of the Supreme Concourse. To the orphans be ye kind fathers, and to the unfortunate a refuge and shelter. To the poor be a treasure of wealth, and to the sick a remedy and healing. Be a helper of every oppressed one, the protector of every destitute one, be ye ever mindful to serve any soul of mankind.

—Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 216

Regarding your question concerning helping the poor: The Bahá’ís 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 is to aid to build up the divine institutions inaugurated in this day by Bahá’u’lláh 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 Bahá’í Fund, and also be kind and generous to the needy.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11 March 1942 to an individual, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 420

Believers Must Not Forget Building New World Order

Bahá’u’lláh 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 Bahá’í 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.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 29 March 1945 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 2016

Professional Services

Honoraria Not Preferable

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 April 1966 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 2023

Reimbursement of Expenses

It is the duty and privilege of individual believers to serve the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and they have no general right to be reimbursed by the Fund for expenditures that they incur in this way.

Obviously it is only courteous for an administrative body to offer to reimburse a believer for expenses incurred in a project that it asks him to undertake, and it may wish to offer financial assistance to friends who are spontaneously rendering services that it knows they cannot well afford. In offering such assistance or reimbursement the Assembly or Committee will undoubtedly wish to keep the expenditure within reasonable limits, but for this purpose each project should be assessed on its own merits and it is in general undesirable to lay down specific amounts for travel and accommodation as a guideline.

We understand that in certain cases a believer may prefer to claim his expenses from the Fund and then return the equivalent as a contribution or follow some other acceptable course in order to obtain the tax benefit that such a procedure might confer. This is of course quite permissible and you will know best how to handle such matters in accordance with the legal requirements. . . .

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2 April 1974 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 10.34

Fees for Professional Expertise Acceptable

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

You will need to be certain that the human and other resources exist to ensure the success of such services, because failure to live up the expectations awakened by your stated objectives can bring disrepute upon the community. As your proposals in this respect have largely to do with the public, the financial arrangements must be able to withstand rigorous public scrutiny. In general, your steps in these matters will need to be measured and gradual, each one building on the success of the previous one.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 April 1993 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 22

Sacred Trust

Offering Consulting Services within the Bahá'í Community

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

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

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3 May 1993 to an individual

Rules for Offering Services to Bahá'ís

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

1. Developing financial service entities. If you decide that it is feasible to proceed with offering basic banking services for the friends, you should make it abundantly clear that they are entirely free to accept or ignore such services. No measure of pressure of any kind should be put on them to comply with your plans. Anyone accepting the services should feel equally free to withdraw his involvement at any time.

2. Creating a network of fee-for-service companies. There can be no doubt that the ability of the Bahá'í community to give tangible expression to its principles will enhance its expansion and consolidation while at the same time providing valuable services to humanity. Your approach should be guided by the understanding that all the teachings of our Faith are a gift from God to which all people are entitled; and our first obligation as Bahá'ís is to present them as effectively as we can without regard for material reward. In a word, the principles of the Faith are not a commodity for sale.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 April 1993 to a National Spiritual Assembly, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 21

America's Role and Responsibility

Spiritual Descendants of the Dawn-Breakers

The community of the organized promoters of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the American continent—the spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers of an heroic Age . . . must, in turn, usher in, not by their death but through living sacrifice, that promised World Order . . . the world civilization, of which the Faith itself is the sole begetter . . . this community . . . is now busily engaged in laying the foundations and in fostering the growth of those institutions which are to herald the approach of the Age destined to witness the birth and rise of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

. . . What other community, it can confidently be asked, has been instrumental in fixing the pattern, and in imparting the original impulse, to those administrative institutions that constitute the vanguard of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh? What other community has been capable of demonstrating, with such consistency, the resourcefulness, the discipline, the iron determination, the zeal and perseverance, the devotion and fidelity, so indispensable to the erection and the continued extension of the framework within which those nascent institutions can alone multiply and mature? What other community has proved itself to be fired by so noble a vision, or willing to rise to such heights of self-sacrifice, or ready to achieve so great a measure of solidarity, as to be able to raise, in so short a time and in the course of such crucial years, an edifice that can well deserve to be regarded as the greatest contribution ever made by the West to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh? What other community can justifiably lay claim to have succeeded, through the unsupported efforts of one of its humble members, in securing the spontaneous allegiance of Royalty to its Cause, and in winning such marvelous and written testimonies to its truth? What other community has shown the foresight, the organizing ability, the enthusiastic eagerness, that have been responsible for the establishment and multiplication, throughout its territory, of those initial schools which, as time goes by, will, on the one hand, evolve into powerful centers of Bahá'í learning, and, on the other, provide a fertile recruiting ground for the enrichment and consolidation of its teaching force? What other community has produced pioneers combining to such a degree the essential qualities of audacity, of consecration, of tenacity, of self-renunciation, and unstinted devotion, that have prompted them to abandon their homes, and forsake their all, and scatter over the surface of the globe, and hoist in its uttermost corners the triumphant banner of Bahá'u'lláh? Who else but the members of this community have won the eternal distinction of being the first to raise the call of *Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá* in such highly important and widely scattered centers and territories as the hearts of both the British and French empires, Germany, the Far East, the Balkan States, the Scandinavian countries, Latin America, the Islands of the Pacific, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and now more recently the Baltic States? Who else but those same pioneers have shown themselves ready to undertake the labor, to exercise the patience, and to provide the funds, required for the translation and publication, in no less than forty languages, of their sacred literature, the dissemination of which is an essential prerequisite to any effectively organized campaign of teaching? What other community can lay claim to have had a decisive share in the worldwide efforts that have been exerted for the safeguarding and the extension of the immediate surroundings of its holy shrines, as well as for the preliminary acquisition of the future sites of its international institutions at its world center? What other community can to its eternal

Sacred Trust

credit claim to have been the first to frame its national and local constitutions, thereby laying down the fundamental lines of the twin charters designed to regulate the activities, define the functions, and safeguard the rights, of its institutions? What other community can boast of having simultaneously acquired and legally secured the basis of its national endowments, thus paving the way for a similar action on the part of its local communities? What other community has achieved the supreme distinction of having obtained, long before any of its sister communities had envisaged such a possibility, the necessary documents assuring the recognition, by both the federal and state authorities, of its Spiritual Assemblies and national endowments? And finally what other community has had the privilege, and been granted the means, to succor the needy, to plead the cause of the downtrodden, and to intervene so energetically for the safeguarding of Bahá'í edifices and institutions in countries such as Persia, Egypt, 'Iráq, Russia, and Germany, where, at various times, its fellow-believers have had to suffer the rigors of both religious and racial persecution?

Such a matchless and brilliant record of service, extending over a period of well-nigh twenty years, and so closely interwoven with the interest and fortunes of such a large section of the worldwide Bahá'í community, deserves to rank as a memorable chapter in the history of the Formative Period of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Reinforced and enriched as it is by the memory of the American believers' earlier achievements, such a record is in itself convincing testimony to their ability to befittingly shoulder the responsibilities which any task may impose upon them in the future.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 7–10

HEROIC DEEDS OF SERVICE

We look to the members of the Bahá'í community in the United States to perform, during the Four Year Plan, heroic deeds of service to the Cause, which will astonish and inspire their fellow-believers throughout the world.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996] to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in North America, *Four Year Plan*, no. 7.3

THE MASTER'S LAST TABLET TO AMERICA

O ye friends of God!

'Abdu'l-Bahá is day and night thinking of you and mentioning you, for the friends of God are dear to Him. Every morning at dawn I supplicate the Kingdom of God and ask that you may be filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit, so that you may become brilliant candles, shine with the light of guidance and dispel the darkness of error. Rest assured that the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom will continuously reach you.

Through the power of the divine springtime, the downpour of the celestial clouds and the heat of the Sun of Reality, the tree of life is just beginning to grow. Before long, it will produce buds, bring forth leaves and fruits, and cast its shade over the East and the West. This Tree of Life is the Book of the Covenant.

—Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 429

AMERICANS SET PATTERN FOR ADMINISTRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

As the activities of the American Bahá'í community expand, and its world-wide prestige correspondingly increases, the institution of the national Fund, the bedrock on which all other institutions must necessarily rest and be established, acquires added importance, and should be increasingly supported by the entire body of the believers, both in their individual capacities, and through their collective efforts, whether organized as groups or as Local Assemblies. The supply of funds, in support of the national Treasury, constitutes, at the present time, the life-blood of these nascent institutions which you are labouring to erect. Its importance cannot surely be overestimated.

Untold blessings shall no doubt crown every effort directed to that end. I am eagerly and prayerfully awaiting the news of an unprecedented expansion in so vital an organ of the Administrative Order of our Faith.

—Shoghi Effendi, postscript to a letter written on his behalf dated 29 July 1935
to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada,
Compilation of Compilations, 1: no. 1231

Your National Spiritual Assembly is, at this very time, taking urgent steps to acquaint each one of you with the serious condition of your National Fund, and we are sure that, as soon as you know of this situation, you will respond with the generosity and self-sacrifice that are characteristic of the American Bahá'í community.

The crisis in your National Fund has, in its turn, precipitated a crisis in the international funds of the Cause, because your National Spiritual Assembly has been unable to send more than a small proportion of the \$600,000 which it had decided to contribute to the International Fund. The inability of your National Assembly to transmit this contribution to the Holy Land has caused us to drastically reduce expenditures in the international work of the Cause, as explained in the letter to the friends throughout the world, which is enclosed.

As the United States' own mass teaching progresses, your National Fund will have to be expended increasingly on vital deepening and consolidation projects, for it is important that the new believers who are entering the community in such large numbers be rapidly integrated into the life of the whole. The administration of the Cause in the United States is entering a completely new phase, of high promise, challenging problems and golden opportunities. You are the cradle of the Administration, and in this development too you can become a pattern for the entire Bahá'í world. The essential requirement at this time is complete unity and whole-hearted support for your National Spiritual Assembly, both in action and in funds.

Once again, the progress of the Cause throughout the world hangs largely on the response and single-minded devotion of the American followers of Bahá'u'lláh. That they may arise with characteristic youthful fervor and trust in Almighty God is our ardent prayer at the Sacred Threshold.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 29 December 1970
to the Believers in the Cradle of the Bahá'í Administrative Order,
Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968–1973, pp. 60–61

Sacred Trust

MISSION EXTENDS INTO GOLDEN AGE

As members of the North American Bahá'í community, you enter the Four Year Plan with a brilliant record of progress in fulfilling the mandate issued by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. In the eight decades since you received this mandate, your prodigious exertions have carried the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to all parts of your continent, and throughout the length and breadth of the planet. You have played a critical role in the establishment of the framework of the Administrative Order and in the sustained proclamation of the Faith. These Tablets launched you on a worldwide enterprise which you, and the generations to succeed you, are called upon to continue during the vast period of time stretching throughout the Formative Age and into the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996] to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in North America, *Four Year Plan*, no. 7.2

CHAMPION BUILDERS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S WORLD ORDER

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

—Shoghi Effendi, quoted in the Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 1992, *Promoting Entry by Troops*, no. 47

Now is the time for the dearly-loved members of this community, renowned as the champion builders of Bahá'u'lláh's rising World Order, to consecrate an increasing measure of the material resources with which they have been so richly blessed to the pressing needs of the Cause of God. In doing so, their sacrifices will attract an even greater measure of divine blessings, and will bring them abiding satisfaction.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 14 July 1989, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 9

RESOURCES IN AMERICA GREATEST

An appreciable proportion of the members of the Faith in your area have resources far beyond those of the dear friends in other parts of the world who labour under conditions of economic deprivation. Without being subjected to pressure or solicitation, they should be assisted to realize the degree of their responsibility to contribute substantially to meeting the international needs of the Faith.

At this time when the calls on the Bahá'í Fund at all levels of its activity far exceed the amount available, good judgement is specially required in the disposition of the financial resources of the Faith. Two extremes are to be avoided: one, where attention is focused entirely on meeting international needs, and the development of the homefront is hamstrung; and at the other extreme, where the local and national needs are ac-

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

corded unduly high priority, including the acquisition of expensive Bahá'í Centres, and international responsibilities are neglected. Through your wise guidance to the Bahá'í community, and through the continuing development of a world-minded consciousness in the believers, the right balance can be found and maintained.

It is surely evident to any observer of world events that human affairs are now volatile and subject to sudden and unforeseen changes. The friends have an opportunity to ensure that their resources are used for the enduring benefit of the Cause through their sacrificial and generous efforts to support its global activities, at this time when their financial circumstances are so favourable.

The supplications of the House of Justice will be offered at the Sacred Threshold on their behalf.

—On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 25 May 1999
to selected National Spiritual Assemblies

LION'S SHARE OF FUNDS

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

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

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

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 17 February 1964
to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

GREATER CAPACITY OF AMERICA

All men know that, verily, war is the destroyer of human foundations, and in every country of the world this is admitted and apparent. I find the United States of America an exceedingly progressive nation, the government just, the people in a state of readiness and the principle of equality established to an extraordinary degree. Therefore, it is my hope, that inasmuch as the standard of international peace must be upraised it may be upraised upon this continent, for this nation is more deserving and has greater

Sacred Trust

capacity for such an initial step than any other. If other nations should attempt to do this, the motive will be misunderstood. For instance, if Great Britain should declare for international peace, it will be said that it has been done to insure the safety of her colonies. If France should hoist the standard, other nations will declare some hidden diplomatic policy underlies the action; Russia would be suspected of national designs if the first step were taken by that people, and so on with all the European and eastern governments. But the United States of America could not be accused of any such selfish interest. Your government has, strictly speaking, no colonies to protect. You are not endeavoring to extend your domain nor have you need of territorial expansion. Therefore, if America takes the first step toward the establishing of world peace, it is certain to be ascribed to unselfishness and altruism. The world will say, "There is no other motive than altruism and service to humanity in this action by the United States." Therefore, it is my hope that you may stand forth as the first herald of peace and hoist this banner, for this banner will be hoisted. Raise it aloft, for you are the most qualified and deserving of nations. The other countries await this summons, expect this call to the standard of reconciliation, for the whole world is distressed because of the excessive burden and irreparable damage of war. Taxes are levied to meet its drain. Every year the burden increases, and the people have come to their end. Just now Europe is a battle-field of ammunition ready for a spark, and one spark will set aflame the whole world. Before these complications and cataclysmic events happen, take the step to prevent it.

— 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 121–22

The foundations of all the divine religions are peace and agreement, but misunderstandings and ignorance have developed. If these are caused to disappear, you will see that all the religious agencies will work for peace and promulgate the oneness of humankind. For the foundation of all is reality, and reality is not multiple or divisible. Moses founded it, Jesus raised its tent, and its brilliant light has shone forth in all the religions. Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed this one reality and spread the message of the Most Great Peace. Even in prison He rested not until He lighted this lamp in the East. Praise be to God! All who have accepted His teachings are lovers of peace, peacemakers ready to sacrifice their lives and expend their possessions for it. Now let this standard be upraised in the West, and many will respond to the call. America has become renowned for her discoveries, inventions and artistic skill, famous for equity of government and stupendous undertakings; now may she also become noted and celebrated as the herald and messenger of Universal Peace. Let this be her mission and undertaking, and may its blessed impetus spread to all countries. I pray for all of you that you may render this service to the world of humanity.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 122

To the matchless position achieved by so preeminent a president of the American Union, in a former period, at so critical a juncture in international affairs, must now be added the splendid initiative taken, in recent years by the American government, culminating in the birth of the successor of that League in San Francisco, and the establishment of its permanent seat in the city of New York. Nor can the preponderating influence exerted by this nation in the councils of the world, the prodigious economic and politi-

cal power that it wields, the prestige it enjoys, the wealth of which it disposes, the idealism that animates its people, her magnificent contribution, as a result of her unparalleled productive power, for the relief of human suffering and the rehabilitation of peoples and nations, be overlooked in a survey of the position which she holds, and which distinguishes her from her sister nations in both the new and old worlds.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 36

At this critical hour in the fortunes of humanity, our eyes turn with eagerness and hope to the Bahá'ís of all parts of North America, who constitute a reservoir of human and material resources unmatched elsewhere in the Bahá'í world.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riḍván 153 [1996] to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in North America, *Four Year Plan*, no. 7.17

STATION OF AMERICA

. . . Finally, this is true of humanity itself in the aggregate. When love is realized and the ideal spiritual bonds unite the hearts of men, the whole human race will be uplifted, the world will continually grow more spiritual and radiant and the happiness and tranquility of mankind be immeasurably increased. Warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreement and dissension pass away and universal peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree. This is the happiness and felicity of humankind. This is the illumination of man, the eternal glory and everlasting life; this is the divine bestowal. I desire this station for you, and I pray God that the people of America may achieve this great end in order that the virtue of this democracy may be insured and their names be glorified eternally. May the confirmations of God uphold them in all things and their memories become revered throughout the East and the West. May they become the servants of the Most High God, near and dear to Him in the oneness of the heavenly Kingdom.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 145

The body of the human world is sick. Its remedy and healing will be the oneness of the kingdom of humanity. Its life is the Most Great Peace. Its illumination and quickening is love. Its happiness is the attainment of spiritual perfections. It is my wish and hope that in the bounties and favors of the Blessed Perfection we may find a new life, acquire a new power and attain to a wonderful and supreme source of energy so that the Most Great Peace of divine intention shall be established upon the foundations of the unity of the world of men with God. May the love of God be spread from this city, from this meeting to all the surrounding countries. Nay, may America become the distributing center of spiritual enlightenment, and all the world receive this heavenly blessing! For America has developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations. While it is true that its people have attained a marvelous material civilization, I hope that spiritual forces may animate this great body and a corresponding spiritual civilization be established. May the inhabitants of this country become like angels of heaven with faces turned continually toward God. May all of them become the ser-

Sacred Trust

vants of the Omnipotent One. May they rise from present material attainments to such a height that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 19

ATTAINMENT OF SPIRITUAL AS WELL AS MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT

This is a beautiful city; the climate is pleasant; the views are charming. All the cities of America seem to be large and beautiful, and the people appear prosperous. The American continent gives signs and evidences of very great advancement; its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far-reaching, and it will lead all nations spiritually. The flag of freedom and banner of liberty have been unfurled here, but the prosperity and advancement of a city, the happiness and greatness of a country depend upon its hearing and obeying the call of God. The light of reality must shine therein and divine civilization be founded; then the radiance of the Kingdom will be diffused and heavenly influences surround. Material civilization is likened to the body, whereas divine civilization is the spirit in that body. A body not manifesting the spirit is dead; a fruitless tree is worthless. Jesus declares that there is spiritual capacity in some people, for all are not submerged in the sea of materialism. They seek the Divine Spirit; they turn to God; they long for the Kingdom. It is my hope that these revered people present may attain both material and spiritual progress. As they have advanced wonderfully in material degrees, so may they, likewise, advance in spiritual development until the body shall become refined and beautiful through the wealth of spiritual potentiality and efficiency.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 104

I am greatly pleased with the city of New York. Its harbor entrance, its piers, buildings and broad avenues are magnificent and beautiful. Truly, it is a wonderful city. As New York has made such progress in material civilization, I hope that it may also advance spiritually in the Kingdom and Covenant of God so that the friends here may become the cause of the illumination of America, that this city may become the city of love and that the fragrances of God may be spread from this place to all parts of the world. I have come for this. I pray that you may be manifestations of the love of Bahá’u’lláh, that each one of you may become like a clear lamp of crystal from which the rays of the bounties of the Blessed Perfection may shine forth to all nations and peoples. This is my highest aspiration.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 3

AMERICAN CHARACTER

The friends in America are very good. All the people we have met here are kind and pleasant. They are polite and not antagonistic, although somewhat inquisitive. A small minority of them seem prejudiced, yet even these have their good points. The American people have a real love for advancement. They are not content to stand still. They are most energetic and progressive. When you see a tree growing and developing, be

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

hopeful of its outcome. It will blossom and bear fruit eventually. If you see dry wood or old trees, there is no hope whatever of fruitage.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 111

Indeed the splendid spirit that animates the American believers these days is a great source of joy and inspiration of the Guardian, and as the good news comes in of new victories won and new sacrifices made, one can see his spirits rise and a wave of new strength sweep over him—tired and over-burdened as he so often is.

In this connection the letter you so thoughtfully enclosed from that dear Bahá’í who gave the difference in the price of a cheap or expensive coffin to the Fund of the Cause, greatly touched him. Such sacrifices prove the caliber of the friends and insure the very foundations of the Faith.

—On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4 May 1941 to the Treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Compilation of Compilations*, 1: no. 1236

ALLIANCE OF EAST AND WEST

Tonight I am most happy in presenting myself before an audience such as this. I am an Oriental and have come into the West to meet the people of the Occident. Praise be to God! Upon the faces of those assembled here I perceive the light of God. This I consider an evidence of the possibility of uniting the East and the West, of establishing a perfect bond between Persia and America—one of the objects of this conference. For the Persians there is no government better fitted to contribute to the development of their natural resources and the helping of their national needs in a reciprocal alliance than the United States of America, and for the Americans there could be no better industrial outlet and market than the virgin commercial soil of Persia. The mineral wealth of Persia is still latent and untouched. It is my hope that the great American democracy may be instrumental in developing these hidden resources and that a bond of perfect amity and unity may be established between the American republic and the government of Persia. May this bond—whether material or spiritual—be well cemented. May the material civilization of America find complete efficacy and establishment in Persia, and may the spiritual civilization of Persia find acceptance and response in America.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 35

COMBINING SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL CIVILIZATION

In the western world material civilization has attained the highest point of development, but divine civilization was founded in the land of the East. The East must acquire material civilization from the West, and the West must receive spiritual civilization from the East. This will establish a mutual bond. When these two come together, the world of humanity will present a glorious aspect, and extraordinary progress will be achieved. This is clear and evident; no proof is needed. The degree of material civilization in the Occident cannot be denied; nor can anyone fail to confirm the spiritual civilization of the Orient, for all the divine foundations of human uplift have

Sacred Trust

appeared in the East. This, likewise, is clear and evident. Therefore, you must assist the East in order that it may attain material progress. The East must, likewise, promulgate the principles of spiritual civilization in the western world. By this commingling and union the human race will attain the highest degree of prosperity and development. Material civilization alone is not sufficient and will not prove productive. The physical happiness of material conditions was allotted to the animal. Consider how the animal has attained the fullest degree of physical felicity. A bird perches upon the loftiest branch and builds there its nest with consummate beauty and skill. All the grains and seeds of the meadows are its wealth and food; all the fresh water of mountain springs and rivers of the plain are for its enjoyment. Truly, this is the acme of material happiness, to which even a human creature cannot attain. This is the honor of the animal kingdom. But the honor of the human kingdom is the attainment of spiritual happiness in the human world, the acquisition of the knowledge and love of God. The honor allotted to man is the acquisition of the supreme virtues of the human world. This is his real happiness and felicity. But if material happiness and spiritual felicity be conjoined, it will be “delight upon delight,” as the Arabs say. We pray that God will unite the East and the West in order that these two civilizations may be exchanged and mutually enjoyed. I am sure it will come to pass, for this is the radiant century. This is an age for the outpouring of divine mercy upon the exigency of this new century—the unity of the East and the West. It will surely be accomplished.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 165–66

May this community, the leaven placed by the hands of Providence in the midst of a people belonging to a nation, likewise young, dynamic, richly endowed with material resources, and assured of a great material prosperity by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, play its part not only in lending a notable impetus to the world-wide propagation of the Faith it has espoused, but contribute, as its resources multiply and as it gains in stature, to the spiritualization and material progress of the nation of which it forms so vital a part.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 25 August 1939, *Messages to Canada*, p. 143

OUR INESCAPABLE RESPONSIBILITY

On the members of the American Bahá’í Community, the envied custodians of a Divine Plan, the principal builders and defenders of a mighty Order and the recognized champions of an unspeakably glorious and precious Faith, a peculiar and inescapable responsibility must necessarily rest. Through their courage, their self-abnegation, their fortitude and their perseverance; through the range and quality of their achievements, the depth of their consecration, their initiative and resourcefulness, their organizing ability, their readiness and capacity to lend their assistance to less privileged sister communities struggling against heavy odds; through their generous and sustained response to the enormous and ever-increasing financial needs of a world-encompassing, decade-long and admittedly strenuous enterprise, they must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, vindicate their right to the leadership of this World Crusade.

—Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 120

WESTERN BELIEVERS TO SACRIFICE COMFORT

The more we study the present condition of the world, the more deeply we become convinced that there just cannot be any way out of its problems except the way of God, as given by Him, through Bahá'u'lláh. The early Persian Bahá'ís gave their lives for the Cause; the Western believers have been spared this necessity, but their comfort, to some extent, they must sacrifice if they are going to discharge their moral obligation to tortured humanity, and bring to it the message of the Father. Once the friends start out to win the goals set in their Plan, they will find the Divine confirmation sustaining them and hastening its consummation.

—Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9 August 1945, *Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 177–78

GREAT SUCCESS DEPENDS ON GREAT EFFORT

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 15–16

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

The members of the North American Bahá'í Community, to whose care the immediate destinies of this fate-laden crusade have been entrusted, are standing at a new

Sacred Trust

crossroads. Behind them is an imperishable record, brief yet illustrious, of feats performed over the entire range of the Western Hemisphere. Before them stretches a vista alluring in its as yet hazy outlines, entrancing in its magnitude, reaching to the far horizons of as yet unconquered territories. They can look back, since that crusade was launched, upon a decade of modest beginnings, of toilsome labors, of richly deserved rewards. They now look forward to successive epochs reaching as far as the fringes of that Golden Age that is to be, glowing in the light of God-given promises, destined to be traversed at the cost of infinite toil and of heroic self-sacrifice.

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

—Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 20–21

Dependence upon Bahá'u'lláh

RELY UPON BAHÁ'U'LLÁH FOR SUCCESS

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

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

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

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

. . . a destined recompense and sure reward

of His ever-present care and their reliance upon Him in every aspect of their lives.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11 January 1971 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 13

In too many countries we have encountered a reluctance among the teachers of the Cause to include, in their presentation of the Teachings, support of the Fund as a natural part of Bahá'í life.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 18 November 1991, *Stewardship and Development*, p. 13

Every stratum of society must be brought within your embrace, as you vigorously advance toward the goal of entry by troops at this time when powerful spiritual forces are at work in the hearts of the people. Neither the affluent or the indigent should be excluded from your purview.

—The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Ridván 153 [1996] to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in North America, *Four Year Plan*, no. 7.16

Bibliography

Works of Bahá'u'lláh

- Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. Translated by Shoghi Effendi. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988.
- Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Translated by Shoghi Effendi. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983.
- The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*. Translated by Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939.
- Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993.
- Kitáb-i-Iqán: The Book of Certitude*. Translated by Shoghi Effendi. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983.
- Prayers and Meditations*. Translated by Shoghi Effendi. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987.
- Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh to the Kings and Leaders of the World*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1972.
- Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by Habib Taherzadeh et al. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988.

Works of the Báb

- Selections from the Writings of the Báb*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by Habib Taherzadeh et al. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976.

Works of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- Abdul-Baha on Divine Philosophy*. Boston: Tudor Press, 1918.
- 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London: Addresses and Notes of Conversations*. Compiled by Eric Hammond. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982.
- Foundations of World Unity: Compiled from Addresses and Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972.
- Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911*. 12th ed. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995.
- The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*. Compiled by Howard MacNutt. 2nd ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982.
- The Secret of Divine Civilization*. Translated by Marzieh Gail and Ali-Kuli Khan. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990.
- Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by a Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and Marzieh Gail. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997.
- Some Answered Questions*. Compiled and translated by Laura Clifford Barney. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981.
- Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*. 3 vols. New York: Bahá'í Publishing Society, 1909–16.

Sacred Trust

Tablets of the Divine Plan: Revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the North American Bahá'ís. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993.

A Traveler's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb. Translated by Edward G. Browne. New and corrected ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980.

Works of Shoghi Effendi

The Advent of Divine Justice. 1st ps ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990.

Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages, 1922–1932. 7th ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974.

Citadel of Faith: Messages to America, 1947–1957. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1965.

Dawn of a New Day. New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, [1970].

God Passes By. Rev. ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974.

Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand: 1923–1957. [Australia]: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia, 1970.

The Light of Divine Guidance: Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria. Langenhain, West Germany: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany, 1982.

The Light of Divine Guidance: Letters from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to Individual Believers, Groups, and Bahá'í Communities in Germany and Austria. Langenhain, West Germany: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany, 1985.

Messages to Canada. 2nd ed. Thornhill, Ont.: Bahá'í Canada Publications, 1999.

Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950–1957. Rev. ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971.

The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of the British Isles. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981.

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters. New ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991.

Works of the Universal House of Justice

The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1972.

The Four Year Plan: Messages of the Universal House of Justice. Riviera Beach, Fla.: Palabra Publications, 1996.

Issues Related to the Study of the Bahá'í Faith: Extracts from Letters Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1999.

Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age. Compiled by Geoffrey Marks. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996.

The Promise of World Peace: To the Peoples of the World. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985.

Compilations from the Bahá'í Writings

Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Bahá'í Scriptures.* Compiled by Horace Holley. 2nd ed. New York: Brentano's, 1923.

———. *Bahá'í World Faith: Selected Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.* 2nd ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976.

- Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. New ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991.
- Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi. *Youth: Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Australia: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1995.
- Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and The Universal House of Justice. *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and The Universal House of Justice*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Canada: Bahá'í Publications Canada, 1986.
- Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and Bahíyyih Khánum. *Bahíyyih Khánum: The Greatest Holy Leaf*. Compiled by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982.
- Bahá'í Funds: Contributions and Administration*. Compiled by The Universal House of Justice. Thornhill: Bahá'í Canada Publications, 1988.
- The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1990*. 2 vols. Australia: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991.
- Guidance for Baha'í Radio from the Baha'í World Centre from May, 1980 to December, 1989*. Compiled by Donald R. Witzel. Haifa: International Bahá'í Audio-Visual Centre, 1990.
- Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*. New ed. Compiled by Helen Hornby. New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994.
- The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963: An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992.
- Promoting Entry By Troops: A Statement and Compilation Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice*. Australia: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1993.
- Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. *A Special Measure of Love: The Importance and Nature of the Teaching Work among the Masses*. Compiled by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974.

Other Works

- Bahá'í International Community–OPI. *The Prosperity of Humankind*. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995.
- Balyuzi, H. M. *'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1971.
- . *The Báb: The Herald of the Day of Days*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1973.
- Developing Distinctive Bahá'ís Communities: Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies*. Wilmette, Ill.: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1998.
- Esslemont, J. E. *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era: An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith*. 5th ed. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980.
- Nabíl-i-A'ẓam [Muḥammad-i-Zarandí]. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*. Translated and edited by Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1932.
- Stewardship and Development*. Wilmette, Ill.: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1999.
- Taherzadeh, Adib. *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh: Adrianople 1863–68*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1977.

Sacred Trust

———. *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh: 'Akká, the Early Years 1868–77*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1983.

———. *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh: Mazra'ih and Bahjí 1877–92*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1987.

Training Institutes. Riviera Beach, Fla.: Palabra Publications, 1998.

Periodicals

Bahá'í News

Star of the West