

**“Towards an Ever-Advancing Civilisation”
Bahá’í Summer Schools 2019–20
New Zealand**

**Quotations for Study
in Morning Workshops**

As referred to in Dr Firaydoun Javaheri’s talks



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Videos of Dr Javaheri’s talks can be found here:

<https://sites.google.com/bahai.org.nz/deepeningtalks/summer-schools>

(Please note, the talk on Constructive Resilience is not available on video)

Document notes

This document contains many **quotations** from the Bahá'í Sacred Writings and other Bahá'í texts, such as letters of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. These quotations appear in indented paragraphs, which each have a number for convenient reference during workshop discussions. Source references are given below the quotations.

Paragraphs of **explanatory text** are not indented and not numbered. Some of these explanatory paragraphs have quotations embedded in them, or summaries of points from the Bahá'í writings, with the relevant sources given in brackets within the paragraph.

Some references give a number such as “¶1”. In these references, “¶” means “paragraph”.

Promoting the Well-being of Humankind

“The purpose of Divine Revelation”, asserts Bahá’u’lláh, “is to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly...”. (*Kitáb-i-Iqán*)

¹ 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.

Tablet of the World, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 96

² Address yourselves to the promotion of the well-being and tranquility of the children of men. Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that haply the dissensions that divide it may, through the power of the Most Great Name (of God), be blotted out from its face, and all mankind become the upraisers of one Order, and the inhabitants of one City.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, CLVI

“Cleave tenaciously”, He calls on us again, “unto that which will lead to the well-being and tranquility of all mankind...” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 67)

³ No matter how far the material world advances, it cannot establish the happiness of mankind. Only when material and spiritual civilization are linked and coordinated will happiness be assured

Promulgation of Universal Peace. One of His talks in 1912.

⁴ ... in material civilization good and evil advance together and maintain the same pace.

Promulgation of Universal Peace, #44.14.

⁵ It will take some effort on the part of man to attain to that condition, but he must work for it, strive for it. We can attain to it by thinking and caring less for material things and more for the spiritual. The further we go from the one, the nearer we are to the other. The choice is ours.

Report of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words as quoted in J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, 5th rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 89

Bahá’u’lláh says that if it be God’s pleasure, God Himself can render the Cause victorious through the power of a single word of His. Should it be His intention, individuals of indomitable strength can appear to achieve victory. However, due to God’s loving providence, it has been ordained that complete victory should be achieved through speech and utterance, by the endeavours of His ordinary servants across the planet. (Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 197).

Bahá’u’lláh, in an emphatic promise of ultimate success (*Gleanings*, p. 80) also states that God will “provide all the means by which” His purpose “can be established”

⁶ “... Every single letter proceeding from Our mouth”, Bahá’u’lláh says, “is endowed with such regenerative power as to enable it to bring into existence a new creation — a creation the magnitude of which is inscrutable to all save God.”

Cited by Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 80.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

⁷ Today the benefits of universal peace are recognized amongst the people, and likewise, the harmful effects of war are clear and manifest to all. But in this matter, knowledge alone is far from sufficient: A power of implementation is needed to establish it throughout the world.... It is our firm belief that the power of implementation in this great endeavour is the penetrating influence of the Word of God and the confirmations of the Holy Spirit.

Quoted by the Universal House of Justice, letter of 18 January 2019 to the Bahá’ís of the world

The following is an excerpt from the message of the Universal House of Justice dated 2 March 2013 to the Bahá’ís of Iran:

⁸ The conviction of the Bahá’í community that humanity, having passed through earlier stages of social evolution, stands at the threshold of its collective maturity; its belief that the principle of the oneness of humankind, the hallmark of the age of maturity, implies a change in the very structure of society; its dedication to a learning process that, animated by this principle, explores the workings of a new set of relationships among the individual, the community and the institutions of society, the three protagonists in the advancement of civilization; its confidence that a revised conception of power, freed from the notion of dominance with the accompanying ideas of contest, contention, division and superiority, underlies the desired set of relationships; its commitment to a vision of a world that, benefitting from humanity’s rich cultural diversity, abides no lines of separation — these all constitute essential elements of the framework that shapes the Bahá’í approach ...

⁹ Indeed, the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh has been and will continue to be the inviolable guarantor of the invincibility of the Cause and its divinely-ordained institutions and the means of the fulfilment of Bahá’u’lláh’s Words

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 245.

¹⁰ ... will unify, consolidate, organize and guide the affairs of the Faith throughout the world. ... Through it the hopes of the people of Baha will be fulfilled, through it the pillars of the Faith on this earth will be firmly established ...

Shoghi Effendi, letter of 27 November 1929 to the Bahá’ís of Persia

¹¹ Say, verily any one follower of this Faith can, by the leave of God, prevail over all who dwell in heaven and earth and in whatever lieth between them.

Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 197

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, explaining that the descent of Divine assistance is “wholly dependent on action” repeats this promise. (*Memories of Nine Years in Akka*; Youness Afroukhteh, trans. R. Masrour):

¹² By the life of El-Baha! Verily, the perfect and divine power will breathe in you with bounties from the Holy Spirit and enable you to accomplish a thing the like of which hath never been seen by the eye of existence.

Bahá’í World Faith, p. 404

¹³ The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation. Storms of human strife are powerless to undermine its basis, nor will men’s fanciful theories succeed in damaging its structure.

Bahá’u’lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 109

¹⁴ Should they cast Him into a fire kindled on the continent, He will assuredly rear His head in the midmost heart of the ocean...and if they cast Him into a darksome pit, they will find Him seated on earth's loftiest heights...

The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, Tablet to Pope Pius IX, para. 116

¹⁵ The resistless march of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, ... propelled by the stimulating influences which the unwisdom of its enemies and the force latent within itself, both engender, resolves itself into a series of rhythmic pulsations, precipitated, on the one hand, through the explosive outbursts of its foes, and the vibrations of Divine Power, on the other, which speed it, with ever-increasing momentum, along that predestined course traced for it by the Hand of the Almighty.

Shoghi Effendi, *Selected Letters and Cables to America 1936-42*, p. 51

¹⁶ The successful carrying out of our various Plans is the greatest sign we can give of our faith and inner assurance, and the best way we can help our fellowmen out of their confusion and difficulties.

From a letter written to an individual on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 225.

In a letter to a National Spiritual Assembly dated 22 March 2019, the Universal House of Justice, says that sharing the message of Bahá'u'lláh “in a multitude of meaningful conversations about human nature and the advancement of society” and that “to present the Faith effectively and invite a ready soul to embrace the Faith in a variety of settings, such as devotional gatherings, firesides, or home visits...whether in the course of their daily interactions with friends and colleagues or as part of a teaching team visiting neighbors or in efforts to help a receptive population take charge of its spiritual and material development” is, “the sacred obligation of every believer”. (Letter of 22 March 2019 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.)

¹⁷ Sincerity is the foundation-stone of faith. That is, a religious individual must disregard his personal desires and seek in whatever way he can wholeheartedly to serve the public interest;

¹⁸ ...it is impossible for a human being to turn aside from his own selfish advantages and sacrifice his own good for the good of the community except through true religious faith. For self-love is kneaded into the very clay of man, and it is not possible that, without any hope of a substantial reward, he should neglect his own present material good. That individual, however, who puts his faith in God and believes in the words of God—because he is promised and certain of a plentiful reward in the next life, and because worldly benefits as compared to the abiding joy and glory of future planes of existence are nothing to him — will for the sake of God abandon his own peace and profit and will freely consecrate his heart and soul to the common good.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 96

Bahá'u'lláh tells us “All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.” (*Gleanings*, p. 214) And “That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race.” (*Gleanings* p. 249-50)

Bahá'u'lláh also says: “Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches.” (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*)

¹⁹ “... the honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he

has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight”.

The Secret of Divine Civilization, para. 5

²⁰ “What greater destiny can you hope to seek except that which Bahá’u’lláh has traced for every one of His loyal believers, namely to consecrate one’s all to the service and glorification of His Faith?”

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 30, 1939.

Lights of Guidance, 3rd Edit. p. 118.

He says there is no greater destiny for any one other than serving the Cause and consecrating one’s all, not as one can afford, and as time permits — but to be able to consecrate, to offer “one’s all”.

²¹ ... It is part of the Preciousness of this great work being done in the teaching field that it should be done through real sacrifices and not without heartaches attending it. There is a tendency in the American outlook on life at present to believe that suffering is produced by clumsiness and is not only avoidable but not a good thing, and not essential. While there is some truth in this attitude, we as Bahá’ís cannot but believe that suffering is often an essential part of our service. The Prophets suffered bitterly, so did all the Saints and Martyrs, and often ‘fed on the fragments of those broken hearts’, as Bahá’u’lláh says in one of His beautiful prayers.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 4, 1949.

Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 579

²² ... Do not feel discouraged if your labours do not always yield an abundant fruitage. For a quick and rapidly won success is not always the best and the most lasting. The harder you strive to attain your goal, the greater will be the confirmations of Bahá’u’lláh, and the more certain you can feel to attain success. Be cheerful, therefore, and exert yourself with full faith and confidence. For Bahá’u’lláh has promised His Divine assistance to everyone who arises with a pure and detached heart to spread His holy Word, even though he may be bereft of every human knowledge and capacity, and notwithstanding the forces of darkness and of opposition which may be arrayed against him. The goal is clear, the path safe and certain, and the assurances of Bahá’u’lláh as to the eventual success of our efforts quite emphatic. Let us keep firm, and whole-heartedly carry on the great work which He has entrusted into our hands.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 3, 1937.

Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 579

²³ Dear and valued co-workers: As the difficulties and problems facing the valiant and high-minded supporters and upholders of the Faith in Australia and New Zealand multiply, my thoughts and prayers turn increasingly towards them, in loving admiration for the work they have performed and will continue to perform in the future. Adversity, in whatever form, will, I feel confident, now that they have laid an unassailable basis for the Faith, in their hearts and through their institutions, serve to heighten the ardour of their devotion, and reinforce the foundation of their spiritual community life. They should persevere, redouble their efforts, close their ranks, intensify their individual as well as collective teaching activities, and defend even more tenaciously and courageously the tenets, claims and institutions of their Faith. Measureless blessings will crown their exertions if they persevere, and face heroically the challenge, the problems, and the perplexities of the present hour. Your true brother, Shoghi.

Shoghi Effendi, *Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand*, p. 44

²⁴ The world of humanity is in need of great improvement, for it is a material jungle wherein trees without fruit flourish and useless weeds abound. If at all there is a tree that beareth fruit it is overshadowed by the fruitless ones, and if a flower groweth in this jungle it is hidden and concealed. The world of mankind is in need of expert gardeners who may convert these forests into delectable rose gardens, may substitute for these barren trees ones that yield fruit, and may replace these useless weeds with roses and fragrant herbs. Thus active souls and vigilant people rest neither by day nor by night; they strive to be closely linked to the divine Kingdom and thereby become the manifestations of infinite bounty and ideal gardeners for these forests. Thus the world of humanity will be wholly transformed and the merciful bounties become manifest.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, No. 224

²⁵ The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; ... The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. ... We call upon the manifestations of the power of God — the sovereigns and rulers on earth — to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.

Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 129

Constructive Resilience

²⁶ Fearful, envious, thoroughly angered, the Mullás were beginning to perceive the seriousness of their position.

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 11.

The House of Justice has explained that the clergy recognised in Bahá'u'lláh the Voice of a coming society of justice and enlightenment in which they themselves would have no place, and this is the fundamental reason why He was so desperately opposed by them. (Message to the Bahá'ís of Iran, 26 November 2003)

In a 2007 letter written on its behalf to the friends in Iran, the Universal House of Justice: "...with that same constructive resilience that characterized" the actions of the early believers when responding "to the duplicity of their detractors".

Expressing its joy at the operation of the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education, known as BIHE, the House of Justice said: "...Perhaps the most compelling and clear example of your constructive resilience is evident currently in your earnest striving for knowledge, in your commitment to the loftiest values of faith and reason which the Cause inculcates, and in your perseverance in pursuit of higher education". The House of Justice attributed this success to the friends' being "well aware of [their] mission".

In 2016, on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the imprisonment of the Yárán, the House of Justice, in a message to the believers in that land, said:

²⁷ You of course know full well that the purpose of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is to bring about a civilization that is neither of the East nor of the West, a civilization based on coherence between the material and the spiritual needs of humankind. You also know that recognizing Him marks the commencement of a commitment to dedicate one's personal and family life to contributing to the establishment of that civilization. You are well aware that the fulfilment of this goal is facilitated through the activities and the maturation of the three protagonists in the advancement of civilization: the individual, the community, and the institutions. Even as every living and active organism seeks to maintain its integrity and compensate for the loss of a part, when the darkness of injustice resulted in the closure of the Bahá'í administrative institutions in your land, you—both as a community and as individuals, the other two protagonists—sustained by the creative power of the Covenant, succeeded in compensating for this temporary loss. (refers to the banning of the Yaran).

In a letter dated 4 February 2018 to a believer in the West, the House of Justice praises the "the unwavering resolve of the Bahá'ís in Iran" and describes their endeavours as follows:

²⁸ For almost two centuries, and particularly the last four decades of relentless oppression, the Bahá'ís in Iran have remained forward-looking, dynamic, vibrant, and committed to serving Iranian society. They have refused to allow apprehension and anxiety to take hold or let any calamity perturb their hearts. They have drawn on the highest reservoirs of solidarity and collaboration and responded to oppression with constructive resilience, eschewing despair, surrender, resentment, and hate and transcending mere survival, to transform conditions of ignorance and prejudice and win the respect and collaboration of their fair-minded countrymen.

“What ‘oppression’ is more grievous”, Bahá’u’lláh asks, “than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it?” (*The Kitab-i-Iqan*, p. 31)

The capacity to internalise the Faith’s Teachings, as explained in a letter dated 30 August 1984 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, is essential in this regard. The House of Justice says:

²⁹ The Manifestation of God describes the reality which is conducive to the happiness, health and development of mankind. His Teachings serve as a compass to help us find our way in the new world. They outline not only what is good for mankind but also the steps to be taken to secure individual freedom and well-being.

Compilations, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 520.

The beloved Guardian in 1947 wrote this to a Local Assembly:

³⁰ ... The world is at present in an exceedingly dark condition spiritually; ... we must constantly be on our guard, whether as individuals or as an Assembly or Community, lest through us these destructive, negative forces enter into our midst. In other words we must beware lest the darkness of society become reflected in our acts and attitudes, perhaps all unconsciously... the deep sense that we are a new organism, the dawn-breakers of a New World Order, must constantly animate our Bahá’í lives, and we must pray to be protected from the contamination of society....

From a letter dated 5 February 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a Local Spiritual Assembly, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. II, no. 1314

Shoghi Effendi told us in a letter dated 8 May 1948, written on his behalf:

³¹ The Guardian feels very strongly that everywhere, throughout the entire Bahá’í world, the believers have got to master and follow the principles of their divinely laid down Administrative Order. They will never solve their problems by departing from the correct procedure.... The Bahá’ís are far from perfect, as individuals or when they serve on elected bodies, but the system of Bahá’u’lláh is perfect and gradually the believers will mature and the system will work better.

Dawn of a New Day, p. 129

The beloved Guardian also writes on the implications of such a realisation, saying:

³² The individual believers in every land and clime must, with all their powers, and with the utmost sincerity, arise to assist their local and national representatives; obey and respect the decisions issuing from these high official Bahá’í quarters; and bring their own views, thoughts, and personal inclinations under the shadow of the will and resolutions of the body of their representatives.

Letter to Iran dated January 1929

Bahá’u’lláh’s advice to one of the believers is profoundly relevant in this respect:

³³ Sharp must be thy sight, O Dhabíh, and adamant thy soul and brass-like thy feet, if thou wishest to be unshaken by the assaults of the selfish desires that whisper in men’s breasts. This is the firm injunction which the Pen of the Most Great Name hath, by virtue of the Will of the Ancient King, been moved to reveal.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* CXV

‘Abdu’l-Bahá likewise says:

³⁴ The beloved of the Lord must stand fixed as the mountains, firm as impregnable walls. Unmoved must they remain by even the direst adversities, ungrieved by the worst of disasters. Let them cling to the hem of Almighty God and put their faith in the Beauty of the Most High; let them lean on the unfailing help that cometh from the Ancient Kingdom, and depend on the care and protection of the generous Lord. ... Let them rise up to serve their Lord and do all in their power to scatter His breathings of holiness far and wide. Let them be a mighty fortress to defend His Faith, an impregnable citadel for the hosts of the Ancient Beauty. Let them faithfully guard the edifice of the Cause of God from every side; let them become the bright stars of His luminous skies.

And, finally, Shoghi Effendi gives us this insight into how to respond to the confusions in the world today:

³⁵ All humanity is disturbed and suffering and confused; we cannot expect to not be disturbed and not to suffer—but we don’t have to be confused. On the contrary, confidence and assurance, hope and optimism are our prerogative. The successful carrying out of our various Plans is the greatest sign we can give of our faith and inner assurance, and the best way we can help our fellowmen out of their confusion and difficulties.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá’í Community*, p. 224

Non-Involvement in Partisan Politics

In a document prepared by Shoghi Effendi for the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine, he writes:

³⁶ The Bahá'í Faith is entirely non-political ... Our aim is the establishment of universal peace in this world and our desire to see justice prevail in every domain of human society, including the domain of politics.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says unity in the world will progressively be achieved in the various realms of social existence such as “unity of thought in world undertakings”, “unity of races”, “unity in the political realm”, and the “unity of nations”.

Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996, 2009 printing; no. 15.7

The command of Bahá'u'lláh Who calls upon us to:

³⁷ ... associate with all the peoples and kindreds of the earth with joy and radiance, inasmuch as consorting with people hath promoted and will continue to promote unity and concord, which in turn are conducive to the maintenance of order in the world and to the regeneration of nations.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 36

‘Abdu’l-Bahá further states:

³⁸ That which is conducive to association and attraction and unity among the sons of men is the means of the life of the world of humanity, and whatever causeth division, repulsion and remoteness leadeth to the death of humankind.

Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, para. 225.19

Shut your eyes to estrangement, then fix your gaze upon unity.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh p. 67

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s counsel: “The supreme need of humanity is cooperation and reciprocity. The stronger the ties of fellowship and solidarity amongst men, the greater will be the power of constructiveness and accomplishment in all the planes of human activity.”

The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, pp. 478–479.

Bahá'u'lláh’s assertion: “So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.” (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh no. 132.3)

The House has “elaborated a framework within which Bahá'ís may participate in constructive social activities and interactions without deviating a hair’s breadth from the law of Bahá'u'lláh”. (Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 23 December 2013.)

Shoghi Effendi, in an appendix to a letter dated 8 October 1927 written on his behalf, states in his own handwriting:

³⁹ I entirely agree with you that non-interference in politics does not imply non-association on the part of the friends with the outside world. I hope you will impress the friends with the necessity of maintaining close, but not too intimate, relationships with the authorities, the foreign representatives, and the leaders of public thought in the capital. They should be on their guard, however, lest too close an association should lead, imperceptibly, to compromise on the

principles which we cherish and uphold. They must mix with all classes of society without associating themselves with their policies and schemes.

In a letter dated 22 February 2018 to a National Spiritual Assembly, we read:

⁴⁰ With the growth of the Faith and its increasing involvement in the life of society, Bahá'ís are finding themselves drawn into activities which bring them into close association with political figures or parties. This should not in itself cause them concern, provided that they are able to avoid being drawn into identification with, or support of, the partisan aspects of the policy being pursued by a politician or group. Indeed, it provides an opportunity for the believers to learn about the implications that the Bahá'í principles related to non-involvement in partisan political activities hold for their engagement in the life of society.

In another letter, addressed to a National Assembly in March 2018, the House of Justice says that the friends

⁴¹ ... should strive to more deeply understand that the aim of the Bahá'í Faith is the establishment of a just and peaceful future for all peoples and the endeavours of the Bahá'í communities throughout the world are directed towards that aim. The principle of non-involvement in politics, far from being an obstacle to social change, is an element of the overall approach set forth in the Bahá'í writings for the Bahá'í community to implement effective remedies for and address the root causes of the ills afflicting society.

The House of Justice says:

⁴² For a Bahá'í, having noble aims does not justify the use of means that are at variance with the principles of the Faith. Further, the teachings of the Faith cannot be subordinated to any perceived advantage to the Cause that may accrue.

From a letter dated 22 Feb 2018 to a National Spiritual Assembly.

The House of Justice writes to an individual believer:

⁴³ The House of Justice noted with appreciation your concern for safeguarding the interests of the Cause. In response to your questions, it should be noted that non-involvement in politics is one of the principles of the Bahá'í Faith and cannot be disregarded by any individual or institution.

⁴⁴ ... You ask whether collaboration with, support for, and approval of political parties that are in opposition to a government are considered a form of involvement in politics. This is indeed the case. The House of Justice, in the same... [2 March] message, reminds the community of the Greatest Name that the believers must learn how, on the one hand, to participate in civil activities and a wide range of endeavours for the spiritual and social transformation of humanity and, on the other, to strictly abstain, by word and deed, from involvement in partisan politics. Collaboration with movements, organizations, groups, and individuals, whose goals are compatible with the ideals of the Faith and whose approaches are in line with the Bahá'í community's approach, can assist with this learning. However, the believers should never compromise the fundamental principles of the Faith or deviate from their own path for any reason. At the same time they should learn from occasional mistakes, modify and correct their actions, avoid criticizing one another, and preserve the unity of the community at all times.

24 December 2013

From the Universal House of Justice on the subject of partisan politics:

⁴⁵ That Bahá'ís need to scrupulously uphold the principle of non-involvement in politics is emphatically enunciated by Shoghi Effendi. Bahá'ís are to “refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations ... and the schemes and programs of parties and factions”, is the instruction of the beloved Guardian. He further emphasizes that the friends are to “rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world.” It follows that Bahá'ís should not become entangled in partisan issues or participate in programmes tied to the divisive agendas of any group or faction; should not take positions on the political decisions of governments, including disputes among governments of different nations; should refrain from becoming involved in debates surrounding any political controversy; and should not react, orally or otherwise, in a manner that could be taken as evidence of support for a partisan political stance. It is not for a Bahá'í, in offering social commentary, to vilify specific individuals, organizations, or governments or to make attacks on them. Indeed, the Guardian specifically cautioned the friends against referring to political figures in their public remarks, whether in criticism or support.

⁴⁶ Involvement in public discourse and social action may require that Bahá'ís become associated with the development of public policy or become involved in related discussions, some of which may be political in nature. While refraining from discussion of policies pertaining to political relations between nations or partisan political affairs within a country, Bahá'ís do their best to contribute to the formulation and implementation of policies that address certain social concerns, such as safeguarding the rights of women, protecting the environment, and eliminating the extremes of wealth and poverty. One way to criticize the social and political order of the day without siding with or opposing an existing regime is to offer a deeper analysis on the level of political theory rather than practical politics. Another approach would be to contribute to scientific inquiry and shed light on differing viewpoints to seek common understanding and effective solutions without succumbing to partisan advocacy and obfuscation.

From a letter dated 22 February 2018 to a National Spiritual Assembly.

The secretary of the beloved Guardian wrote on his behalf:

⁴⁷ The Guardian wishes me to draw the attention of the friends through you that they should be very careful in their public utterances not to mention any political figures — either side with them or denounce them. This is the first fact to bear in mind. Otherwise they will involve the friends in political matters, which is infinitely dangerous for the Cause.

From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 12, 1933

And again, in his World Order letters, we read:

⁴⁸ Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster.

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 64

The House of Justice says:

⁴⁹ ... the approach adopted by the Bahá'í community of non-involvement in political activity should not be understood to imply some fundamental objection to politics in its true sense; indeed, humanity organizes itself through its political affairs. Bahá'ís respect those who, out of a sincere desire to serve their countries, choose to pursue political aspirations or to engage in political activity.

From a letter dated 22 Feb 2018 to a National Spiritual Assembly

The Universal House of Justice says:

⁵⁰ ... the Bahá'ís would find themselves arousing antagonism instead of love. If they took one stand in one country, they would be bound to change the views of the people in other countries about the aims and purposes of the Faith. By becoming involved in political disputes, the Bahá'ís instead of changing the world or helping it, would themselves be lost and destroyed.

From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies in Africa, February 8, 1970. *Lights of Guidance*, p. 444

The House of Justice in the same 1970 letter says:

⁵¹ The world situation is so confused and moral issues which were once clear have become so mixed up with selfish and battling factions, that the best way Bahá'ís can serve the highest interests of their country and the cause of true salvation for the world, is to sacrifice their political pursuits and affiliations and wholeheartedly and fully support the divine system of Bahá'u'lláh.

From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies in Africa, February 8, 1970. *Lights of Guidance*, p. 444

We should also remember what Shoghi Effendi says:

⁵² We must expect these things: It is becoming evident that the world is not yet through with its labour, the New Age not yet fully born, real Peace not yet right around the corner. We must have no illusions about how much depends on us and our success or failure. All humanity is disturbed and suffering and confused; we cannot expect to not be disturbed and not to suffer—but we don't have to be confused. On the contrary, confidence and assurance, hope and optimism are our prerogative. The successful carrying out of our various Plans is the greatest sign we can give of our faith and inner assurance, and the best way we can help our fellowmen out of their confusion and difficulties.

From a letter written to an individual on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 225

In a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, dated 18 January 2019:

⁵³ A heart that has embraced love for the whole of humanity will certainly be pained when confronted by the suffering that so many endure because of disunity. But the friends of God cannot shut themselves off from the increasing turmoil of the society that surrounds them; they must guard themselves, too, from becoming enmeshed in its conflicts or falling into its adversarial methods. No matter how bleak conditions may appear at any given time, no matter how dismal the immediate prospects for bringing about unity, there is no cause for despair. The distressing state of the world can only spur us to redouble our commitment to constructive action. “These are not days of prosperity and triumph” cautions Bahá'u'lláh. “The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills. Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine which the almighty hand of the unerring Physician hath prepared.”

Our Love for the Universal House of Justice

The beloved Guardian noted in *God Passes By*:

⁵⁴ The Shah's edict, equivalent to an order for the immediate expulsion of Bahá'u'lláh from Persian territory, opens a new and glorious chapter in the history of the first Bahá'í century. Viewed in its proper perspective it will be even recognized to have ushered in one of the most eventful and momentous epochs in the world's religious history. It coincides with the inauguration of a ministry extending over a period of almost forty years -- a ministry which, by virtue of its creative power, its cleansing force, its healing influences, and the irresistible operation of the world-directing, world-shaping forces it released, stands unparalleled in the religious annals of the entire human race.

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 106

⁵⁵ My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures

Kitáb-i-Aqdas, ¶15

⁵⁶ When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who has branched from this Ancient Root.

Kitáb-i-Aqdas, ¶121

“... Inasmuch as for each day there is a new problem and for every problem an expedient solution, such affairs should be referred to the House of Justice that the members thereof may act according to the needs and requirements of the time”. (*Aqdas*, ¶91) And in Tablets that He revealed following the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* are found further references to the Universal House of Justice:

⁵⁷ It is incumbent upon the Trustees of the House of Justice to take counsel together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them. God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth, and He, verily, is the Provider, the Omniscient.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 68

⁵⁸ The men of God's House of Justice have been charged with the affairs of the people. They, in truth, are the Trustees of God among His servants and the daysprings of authority in His countries.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 26

⁵⁹ Unto the Most Holy Book everyone must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself. ...

Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 19.

⁶⁰ ...the Universal House of Justice...will be under the protection and the unerring guidance of God. If that House of Justice shall decide unanimously, or by a majority, upon any question not mentioned in the Book, that decision and command will be guarded from mistake.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 172

⁶¹ The sacred and youthful Branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of the Exalted One (the Báb) (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God.

Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 11

Regarding the House of Justice, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

⁶² The Universal House of Justice is under the shadow of the Most Great Infallibility and the Blessed Beauty preserves it from error: should it occur to anyone’s heart that a decision of the House of Justice is inapt, he has indeed erred. ...the Universal House of Justice is divinely ordained and operates under divine infallibility. Whoso believes that the House of Justice has erred has indeed ascribed this error to the Blessed Beauty. ...

(Unpublished)

As for the precise role of the House of Justice, Shoghi Effendi says:

⁶³ The Universal House of Justice will unify, consolidate, organize and guide the affairs of the Faith throughout the world. ... Through it the hopes of the people of Bahá will be fulfilled, through it the pillars of the Faith on this earth will be firmly established ...

Letter to the Bahá’ís of Persia, dated 27 November 1929

The House of Justice is not omniscient, yet its decisions are binding. (May 20, 2007) It guides this process which really is nothing less than the organic unfoldment of the Faith, determining broadly what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, with unity maintained at all times. (On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 20 April 1997)

In 1922, the beloved Guardian referred to the House of Justice as follows:

⁶⁴ When this most great Edifice shall be reared on such an immovable foundation, God’s purpose, wisdom, universal truths, mysteries and realities of the Kingdom, which the mystic Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh has deposited within the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, shall gradually be revealed and made manifest.

Letter dated 19 December 1922—translated from the Persian

In the following excerpt from the Constitution of the House of Justice, we read:

⁶⁵ To direct and canalize the forces released by His Revelation He [Bahá’u’lláh] instituted His Covenant, whose power has preserved the integrity of His Faith, maintained its unity and stimulated its world-wide expansion throughout the successive ministries of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. It continues to fulfil its life-giving purpose through the agency of the Universal House of Justice whose fundamental object, as one of the twin successors of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of the Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings.

Constitution of the House of Justice

The duties and responsibilities of the House of Justice towards the Bahá’í community and humanity are all embedded in the Bahá’í Writings. They range from deciding and legislating on whatever is not explicitly mentioned in the Book (*The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 14), to promoting the Lesser Peace (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 88), to “administer[ing] its [the Faith’s] affairs, coordinat[ing] its activities, promot[ing] its interests, execut[ing] its laws and defend[ing] its subsidiary institutions.” (*The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 148). It establishes the Plans that constitute stages in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan, thereby unifying the efforts of National Assemblies. (*Messages of the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986*, ¶23.6a) It directs the evolution of Bahá’í administration, modifying or adding new elements. It gradually calls for the implementation

of the laws of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. It promotes learning in the field of social and economic development and will, in future, initiate great humanitarian projects. It is responsible to maintain the integrity and the flexibility of the Bahá'í teachings. (*World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 148)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

⁶⁶ At whatever time all the beloved of God in each country appoint their delegates, and these in turn elect their representatives, and these representatives elect a body, that body shall be regarded as the Supreme House of Justice whose sovereignty is divinely ordained and of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Cited in *Messages 1963-86* ¶ 23.13.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá states in His Will and Testament:

⁶⁷ It is incumbent upon these members to gather in a certain place and deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book. Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text itself.

Will and Testament p. 20.

He adds:

⁶⁸ “By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved,” “If that House of Justice shall decide unanimously, or by a majority, upon any question not mentioned in the Book, that decision and command will be guarded from mistake,”

He further elaborates on the nature of the House of Justice saying:

⁶⁹ Now the members of the House of Justice have not, individually, essential infallibility; but the body of the House of Justice is under the protection and unerring guidance of God: this is called conferred infallibility. Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions. God forbid! The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.”

Cited in *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 85-86

In a letter of 7 April 2008, addressed to the Bahá'ís in Iran, the House of Justice says:

⁷⁰ Infallibility is a profound spiritual concept inherent in the Bahá'í Writings. In meditating upon the relevant passages, the believers will naturally reach their own understanding of the subject. Individual opinions, however, should not be imposed on others, nor so promoted as to crystallize into doctrines not found in the explicit Text. When exchanging views about the Universal House of Justice—the body to which all things must be referred—the friends should exercise care lest they go to extremes, by either diminishing its station or assigning to it exaggerated attributes. What better admonition to heed in a matter of this nature than that given by the beloved Master, when some believers fell into disagreement about His own station:

⁷¹ These discussions will yield no result or benefit: we must set all such debates and controversies entirely aside — nay, we must consign them to oblivion and arise to accomplish that which is enjoined and required in this Day. These debates are mere words bereft of inner meaning; they are mere illusions and not reality.

⁷² That which is true and real is this: that we become united and agreed in our purpose and arise to flood this darksome world with light, to banish enmity and foreignness from among the children of men, to perfume and revive the world with the sanctified breezes of the character and conduct of the Abhá Beauty, to cast the light of divine guidance upon East and West, to raise the tabernacle of the love of God and gather all people under its sheltering shadow, to confer peace and composure upon every soul beneath the shade of the blessed Tree, to show forth such love as to astonish the enemy, to turn ravenous and bloodthirsty wolves into the gazelles of the meadows of the love of God, to cause the oppressor to taste the sweet savour of meekness, to teach them that kill the submission and acquiescence of those that suffer themselves to be killed, to spread abroad the verses of the one true God, to extol the virtues and perfections of the all-glorious Lord, to raise to the highest heaven the cry of “O Thou the Glory of Glories!”, and to cause the call of “The earth will shine with the light of her Lord!”¹ to reach the ears of the denizens of His Kingdom Bahá’u’lláh’s statement “It is incumbent upon all to be obedient unto them.”

Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p.27

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s explanation: “Whatsoever they decide is of God,” and that “whoso contendeth with them hath contended with God.” (*The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 11*)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

⁷³ My purpose is this, that ere the expiration of a thousand years, no one has the right to utter a single word, even to claim the station of Guardianship. . . . Beware, beware lest anyone create a rift or stir up sedition. Should there be differences of opinion, the Supreme House of Justice would immediately resolve the problems. Whatever will be its decision, by majority vote, shall be the real truth, inasmuch as that House is under the protection, unerring guidance and care of the one true Lord. He shall guard it from error and will protect it under the wing of His sanctity and infallibility. He who opposes it is cast out and will eventually be of the defeated

Cited in Messages of the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986, ¶ 23.11

¹ *Qur’án* 39:69.

