

Publishing memo from Universal House of Justice

Memorandum on Bahá'í Publishing—Riqván 1971

The following principles and observations are called to the attention of National Spiritual Assemblies and all those concerned with the production of Bahá'í publications:

REVIEWING

Obligatory

At this early stage of the Cause all works by Bahá'ís which deal with the Faith, whether in the form of books, pamphlets, translations, poems, songs, radio and television scripts, films, recordings, etc. must be approved before submission for publication, whether to a Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í publisher. In the case of material for purely local consumption the competent authority is the Local Spiritual Assembly, otherwise the National Spiritual Assembly (through its Reviewing Committee) is the approving authority.

A temporary measure

That this measure is both obligatory and temporary is borne out by the following statements of the Guardian:

"They must supervise, in these days when the Cause is still in its infancy, all Bahá'í publications and translations, and provide in general for a dignified and accurate presentation of all Bahá'í literature and its distribution to the general public." (*Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 38-39)

"...The administration of the Cause ... should guard against such rigidity as would clog and fetter the liberating forces released by His Revelation. ...The present restrictions imposed on the publication of Bahá'í literature will be definitely abolished; ..." (*The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 9)

Purpose of review

The purpose of review is to protect the Faith from misrepresentation and to ensure dignity and accuracy in its presentation. In general the function of a reviewing committee is to say whether the work submitted gives an acceptable presentation of the Cause or not. Reviewers may win the gratitude and good will of authors by calling attention to such things as occasional grammatical or spelling errors, but approval should not be refused on such grounds; all such details are editorial matters for agreement between author and publisher.

Translations

As regards English, the beloved Guardian's translations are obviously the most authentic and should be used. If, for some particular reason, a Bahá'í author when quoting a passage of the Sacred Text which has been rendered into English by the Guardian, wishes to use a translation other than that made by the beloved Guardian, his re-

quest may be referred to the Universal House of Justice. Passages from the Sacred Text not translated by Shoghi Effendi, but already in English and published with approval, may be used. If an author wishes to make his own translation of a passage not already translated by Shoghi Effendi the new translation may be submitted to the Universal House of Justice for approval.

With the exception of certain oriental languages such as Turkish, Arabic and Urdu, which are related to the original Persian or Arabic, new translations of the Sacred Text into languages other than English must be made from the Guardian's English translation where it exists. When there is no translation into English by Shoghi Effendi of a particular passage, the National Spiritual Assembly concerned should seek the advice of the Universal House of Justice. When translations already exist, which are not made from the Guardian's English text, but have been published and approved, they may be used.

Reviewing Committees

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

Approval of works already reviewed elsewhere

While a National Spiritual Assembly intending to publish Bahá'í literature is encouraged to accept the review of another National Spiritual Assembly, it is not required to do so and has the right to review any work prior to authorizing its publication or republication by its own Publishing Trust or publisher in its area of jurisdiction. This does not apply to works by the Hands of the Cause, which are reviewed in the Holy Land.

A National Spiritual Assembly which receives for approval a manuscript from outside its area of jurisdiction should inquire whether it has already been submitted for review elsewhere, and in the case of its having been refused approval, the reasons for such refusal.

BAHÁ'Í PUBLISHERS

Bahá'í publishers may not publish any work about the Faith until it has been approved by the National Spiritual Assembly of the country where it is to be published.

Approval of a work imposes no obligation upon any Bahá'í publisher to publish it.

Whatever "house styles" Publishing Trusts and other Bahá'í publishers may adopt, transliteration

of Oriental terms into languages using the Roman alphabet must at present be according to the system chosen by the Guardian and described in volumes of "The Bahá'í World."

Cables

Cables in English should be printed exactly as received, without interpolation.

Editing

Bahá'í publishers, when accepting a work for publication, will make their own arrangements with the author on all such matters as accuracy of quotations, documentation, grammar and spelling, dates and even the re-writing of passages, which the publisher may consider need improving, or he may ask the author to write additional material or to delete part of the original manuscript. Although such matters are entirely between the author and publisher, any addition, deletion or changes which affect the meaning must be submitted for review with the relative context.

Approval notice

Although no Bahá'í work may be published without approval, it is not mandatory to print an approval notice in any publication.

BAHÁ'Í AUTHORS

Bahá'í authors should welcome review of their works, and can greatly assist promptness in review by supplying a sufficient number of copies of the manuscript for each member of the Reviewing Committee to have one.

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

Faith for languages employing the Roman alphabet.

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

SALE AND DISTRIBUTION OF BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE

1. Bahá'í publications reviewed and published in one country may be sold or offered for sale anywhere in the world. This includes the right of the publisher or the author to promote the sale of the publication in any legitimate manner including the right to advise the Bahá'ís in any country of its contents, price and availability. It does not include the right to insist that National Assemblies, their Publishing Trusts or Publishing Committees stock, promote or advertise the publication or offer it for sale. If any National Spiritual Assembly feels that a book would be damaging to the Faith in its country, it may represent this fact to the publisher and author and ask them not to promote it in that particular country.

It is hoped that there will be great cooperation among those publishing Bahá'í literature, and Publishing Trusts are encouraged to supply the believers, the book trade and libraries, all Bahá'í publications from any country.

2. Believers should not be prevented from purchasing Bahá'í books reviewed and published in other countries.

3. National Spiritual Assemblies are not obliged to furnish mailing lists of believers to publishers, but publishers may compile their own mailing lists and use them for the announcement and promotion of sale of their Bahá'í books and literature.

4. Five copies of every new book and every new edition (not reprints) should be sent to the World Centre.

Friends should seek advice in business ventures

The National Spiritual Assembly has become concerned in recent years about the entangled disputes in which Bahá'ís become involved when their business ventures go awry. Therefore, it offers the friends the following counsel:

The cases that have been brought to the National Assembly's attention invariably involve Bahá'ís who had the best of intentions when they initially made plans to start a business or made a business deal of some sort with another Bahá'í or group of Bahá'ís.

Feeling that they could trust their Bahá'í partners, many believers have neglected to seek the advice of an attorney and have entered into the venture on the basis of oral agreements or inadequately written statements that later were misunderstood or misinterpreted. Consequently, when differences arose, there was no real way to resolve the problem, since the parties often could not agree on what the original terms of the venture

were.

The National Spiritual Assembly cannot stress strongly enough the importance of establishing all business dealings on a firm legal foundation, whether or not they involve other Bahá'ís. This applies equally to loan transactions.

The National Assembly also has noted that the friends, in their eagerness to gain large and quick returns on their investments, sometimes enter into speculative business ventures without legal counsel. When these ventures fail, as they sometimes do, the friends feel cheated. The believers must understand that speculation entails risks, and should be prepared to take the risks along with the rewards.

Another factor to be considered is Bahá'í ethical standards. Shoghi Effendi's discussion of rectitude of conduct in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 18-24, is recommended for all individuals who are considering a business venture.

Taking the precaution of seeking competent legal advice, having a realistic understanding of the risks involved, and trying to keep one's dealings in line with Bahá'í ethical standards not only saves everyone from considerable grief later on, but prevents either the Local Spiritual Assembly or the National Spiritual Assembly from having to spend its energies trying to resolve disputes that could have been avoided in the first place. It should also be understood that the institutions of the Faith are limited in their ability to resolve financial disputes, since final authority in the U.S. for resolving such disputes rests with the civil courts.

The extension of loans by Assemblies and individuals can also cause problems. Individuals who are habitually unemployed or who are in the habit of borrowing from others often take advantage of the generosity of Bahá'ís, who lend them money or give them hospitality, sometimes at considerable sacrifice.

When a dispute does arise, the friends should call to mind these words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"Endeavor ye as much as possible that differences may not arise in the affairs; let not every insignificant matter become the cause of disagreement. If such conditions exist the end will be complete dispersion. The believers and maid-servants of the Merciful must all consider how to produce harmony, so that the unity of the human world may be realized, not that every wholly unimportant subject become conducive to differences of opinion.

"It is my hope that the friends and the maid-servants of America become united on all subjects and not disagree at all. If they agree upon a subject, even though it be wrong, it is better than to disagree and be in the right, for this difference will produce the demolition of the divine foundation. Though one of the parties may be in the right and they disagree that will be the cause of a thousand wrongs, but if they agree and both parties are in the wrong, as it is in unity the truth will be revealed and the wrong made right." (Bahá'í World Faith, p. 411)

Cohabitation defined in light of Bahá'í Teachings

Cohabitation can be defined as the sharing of a common residence by members of the opposite sex who are unmarried or otherwise unrelated by immediate family ties.

In many quarters it has become commonplace for couples to live together without having consecrated and formalized their union by spiritual and legal means.

The Bahá'í Faith views such relationships as immoral, and affirms that marriage is the only relationship through which physical intimacy between a couple should occur.

Cohabitation also assumes other forms. Bahá'í youth, for example, have been known to share a common residence on teaching projects or when traveling. Even when properly chaperoned, such arrangements can create the impression of immorality.

Certainly it would be unacceptable for Bahá'í youth to share the same residence without chaperones; and when they attend weekend events in numbers, arrangements should be made so that the men are housed in one area or building and the women in another. In such cases Assemblies or District Teaching Committees sponsoring the event should give careful consideration to the housing accommodations and advise the youth accordingly.

Another example of cohabitation is the sharing of a residence by individuals of the opposite sex who are of considerably different ages. In such cases the Local Assembly must determine if an impression of immorality or wrongdoing is being fostered and, if so, instruct the believers involved to make other arrangements.

An instance that is seldom considered but to which Bahá'ís should nonetheless be attentive is the common practice of men and women visiting each other alone in their respective homes, apartments, or dormitory rooms. Such visits often

create the appearance of promiscuity, especially when they extend late into the evening. Bahá'ís should avoid placing themselves in such situations, even when there is not the least trace of promiscuity.

The guiding principle that applies in all such cases is that the conduct of Bahá'ís must be completely beyond reproach and must stand in sharp contrast to the current practices of society, whose values are thoroughly confused and stray so far from the Divine Standard.

The friends must realize that the Bahá'í world is raising up the standards of morality from the depths to which they have fallen and that a chaste and holy life, as the beloved Guardian explained, "can tolerate no compromise with the theories, the standards, the habits, and the excesses of a decadent age." (For further references on living a chaste and holy life, please see *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 24-28, and "The Dynamic Force of Example," pp. 93-98)

Bahá'í gatherings no place for sales

In recent months it has come to the attention of the National Spiritual Assembly that Bahá'ís sometimes take advantage of Feasts, firesides, other Bahá'í gatherings, and Bahá'í mailing lists to promote products which they sell or services in which they are engaged for a living. This cannot be permitted, even if the stated purpose is to give part of the proceeds to the Fund, as this may place undue pressure on other believers.

Local Spiritual Assemblies must be alert to any tendency among the members of their communities to use Bahá'í meetings and/or mailing lists to promote products or services for personal gain.

If such practices take place, the Local Spiritual Assembly having jurisdiction over the matter must request that they be discontinued at once.

Fasting one of pillars that sustains Law of God

"Prayer and fasting is the cause of awakening and mindfulness and conducive to protection and preservation from tests."—Abdu'l-Bahá, in *Bahá'í World Faith*

"As regards fasting, it constitutes, together with the obligatory prayers, the two pillars that sustain the revealed Law of God. They act as stimulants to the soul, strengthen, revive, and purify it, and thus insure its steady development.

"The ordinance of fasting is, as is the case with these three prayers, a spiritual and vital obligation enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh upon every believer who has attained the age of fifteen. In the *Aqdas* He thus writes: 'We have commanded you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity; this is ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. He has exempted from this those who are weak from illness or age, as a bounty from His Presence, and He is the Forgiving, the Generous.' And in another passage He says: 'We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period, and at its close have designated for you Naw-Rúz as a feast ... The traveler, the ailing, those who are with child or giving suck, are not bound by the fast ... Abstain from food and drink, from sunrise to sundown, and beware lest desire deprive you of

this grace that is appointed in the Book.'

"Also in the 'Questions and Answers' that form an appendix to the *Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh reveals the following: 'Verily, I say that God has appointed a good station for fasting and prayer. But during good health its benefit is evident, and when one is ill, it is not permissible to fulfill them.' Concerning the age of maturity, He reveals in the appendix of that same book: 'The age of maturity is in the fifteenth year; women and men are alike in this respect ...'

"The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of that same month, involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires."—Shoghi Effendi, through his secretary, in *Bahá'í News*, March 1936

House of Justice sets standard for children's proper behavior

In response to an inquiry about standards of behavior for children at community gatherings such as the Nineteen Day Feast and Bahá'í Holy Day observances, the Universal House of Justice, in a letter dated October 14, 1982, to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, said that "... children should be trained to understand the spiritual significance of the gatherings of the followers of the Blessed Beauty, and to appreciate the honor and bounty of being able to take part in them, whatever their outward form may be.

"It is realized that some Bahá'í observances are lengthy and it is difficult for very small children to remain quiet for so long. In such cases one or other of the parents may have to miss part of the meeting in order to care for the child.

"The Spiritual Assembly can also perhaps help the parents by providing for a children's observance, suited to their capacities, in a separate room during part of the community's observance. Attendance at the whole of the adult celebration thus becomes a sign of growing maturity and a distinction to be earned by good behavior.

"In any case, the House of Justice points out that parents are responsible for their children and should make them behave when they attend Bahá'í meetings. If children persist in creating a disturbance they should be taken out of the meeting. This is not merely necessary to ensure the properly dignified conduct of Bahá'í meetings but is an aspect of the training of children in courtesy, consideration for others, reverence, and obedience to their parents."

National Assembly must secure parental consent from outside country

In increasing instances, Bahá'ís or their prospective non-Bahá'í mates wishing to marry have parents who reside in places outside the continental United States.

The verification of parental consent under these circumstances must be ascertained through the National Spiritual Assemblies, since for obvious reasons a Local Spiritual Assembly would not normally be able to verify such consent. This is true even when the parents reside in a sensitive area.

Two approaches are open to those concerned: By direct request of their offspring, the parents can communicate their consent to the National Spiritual Assembly within whose jurisdiction they live. That National Assembly would then inform the National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S., which, in turn, would relay the information to the Local Assembly concerned.

Alternately, the couple could request that the National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S. communicate their request for parental consent through the National Spiritual Assembly of the country in which the parent or parents reside.

In this instance, detailed information should be given to the National Assembly, such as the full names and addresses of the parents, whether they are Bahá'ís, the name and religion of the prospective mate, and any other particulars the applicant wishes the parents to consider.

This second approach is more effective in countries where the Bahá'ís have difficulty in communicating freely with the outside, such as Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. It also is effective if the parents are not Bahá'ís.

Should a Local Assembly receive written permission directly from parents living abroad, the National Spiritual Assembly must be consulted

for verification before the marriage can take place.

Individuals, or Local Assemblies acting on behalf of individuals, may contact the National Spiritual Assembly concerning consent. Local Assemblies should not write directly to National Spiritual Assemblies in other countries.

Pilgrimage plans deserve great care, seriousness

It has become a matter of concern to the National Spiritual Assembly that often the majority of individuals assigned to a pilgrimage schedule will cancel at the last minute, making it difficult and sometimes impossible for the U.S. to fill its quota of 20 pilgrims per group.

Undoubtedly, some people cancel their pilgrimages because of unforeseen difficulties; therefore, the National Assembly's concern is principally about applicants who are forced to cancel because from the beginning they failed to make adequate plans.

Because of the large number of applications, a long waiting list for pilgrimage exists. Among those who wait are individuals with the means to

go should the opportunity arise. Hence, it is quite unfair for those individuals to be delayed indefinitely because others who have been scheduled have made no plans to undertake the pilgrimage and then simply cancel their invitations at the last minute when there is virtually no time in which to invite others to replace them.

Pilgrimage is a matter to be approached with due seriousness and high regard. We ask the friends to study the statements on pilgrimage that are available to them. We urge them to undertake this important activity with great preparation and to notify the National Spiritual Assembly well in advance should cancellation become necessary.

No couple considered engaged, married without proper consent

The National Spiritual Assembly wishes to remind the friends that a couple is not considered to be engaged to be married until the consent of all living parents has been obtained by the proper Bahá'í institutions.

Accordingly, a couple should not make marriage plans, and certainly should not set a date for a ceremony, send invitations, and so on until the consent of all natural parents is obtained.

By delaying these plans, the couple will not only show proper respect for Bahá'í law but will also avoid placing a parent in the awkward position of withholding consent once wedding plans have been made.

Further, in cases in which a parent resides in another country, it can take time for the National Spiritual Assembly to confirm consent through the National Assembly of the other country. (See the article elsewhere in this issue of the *Bahá'í National Review*)

At this time, Western believers are not bound by the 95-day engagement period set forth in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*; however, it would be wise not to prolong the engagement period indefinitely.

Friends should exercise care when traveling in Missoula, Montana, area

Bahá'ís traveling in the area of Missoula, Montana, should know that the Covenant-breakers in that area have a telephone listing as "Bahá'í Center." The telephone number of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Missoula is 406-549-2568.

The National Spiritual Assembly asks that the friends use caution in trying to contact the believers in that area, lest they mistakenly contact Covenant-breakers.

Intercalary Days a time of joy, fellowship and giving for the believers

The Báb showed the importance of the new Age which He came to announce by starting a new calendar. Bahá'u'lláh upheld this new measurement of time for the world of today and tomorrow.

The Bahá'í year has 19 months, and each month has 19 days. This comes to 361 days. However, the earth takes 365 1/4 days in its journey around the sun. That means there are four days (five in "leap years," that is, every fourth year) that must be added or put into the calendar. This is the meaning of the word "intercalary" (pronounced in-TER-kah-la-ry). The Intercalary Days are between the 18th Bahá'í month (February 7-25) and the 19th Bahá'í month (March 2-20).

The Intercalary Days, called "Ayyám-i-Há," have been named by Bahá'u'lláh as days to be specially devoted to hospitality, to the giving of presents, to visiting and looking after the sick and the poor. These days and activities are both a joyous time of fellowship and service to others, as well as a time of preparation for the spiritual experience of the Fast that follows immediately after the close of Ayyám-i-Há.

First comes the happy expression of Bahá'í love and brotherhood carried out in acts of kindness toward others, and then comes the time of the Fast when we Bahá'ís seek our full ration of spiritual food through special remembrance of God.—Based on a letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of India, in *Bahá'í News* (U.S. Supplement), p. 2, February 1967

Questions, answers about preparing a Bahá'í will

Why is it important for Bahá'ís to have a will?

In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* Bahá'u'lláh enjoins all Bahá'ís to write a testament (*Synopsis and Codification*, p. 46). By adhering to this divine directive, Bahá'ís will be assured that their property will be properly and easily disposed of following death, thereby saving family and friends many hardships and difficulties.

Wills are especially essential for Bahá'ís who desire to leave a share of their property to the Faith or who wish to make a particular disposition of their Bahá'í literature, files, and records. Bahá'ís may also utilize their wills to make known their wishes that their children receive Bahá'í training.

How does one go about writing a will?

It is essential that Bahá'ís seek the assistance of a competent attorney in drafting and executing their wills. It is not wise, without competent legal assistance, to write a "do-it-yourself" will using the forms and books available in many stores.

In many areas of the country State Bar Associations have free referral services to assist one in finding a lawyer who can meet his needs. In most cases the cost of obtaining the services of an attorney will not be great, especially when viewed in the light of the money to be saved later by the estate in taxes and problems avoided because of careful planning. Only through the use of an attorney can one be certain that one's precise wishes will be carried out in the best manner.

It should be noted that Spiritual Assemblies should never try to help Bahá'ís on writing wills, but instead should insist that Bahá'ís consult an attorney. (In every state in the U.S. it is contrary to civil law for lay persons to assist others in drafting and executing wills because doing so may constitute the unauthorized practice of law.)

There is no standard will form for Bahá'ís.

Should a will be reviewed and changed periodically?

It is important to review a will at regular intervals, but especially after the birth or death of a family member or after a major change in property holdings or life circumstances. Often any necessary changes can be made easily and inexpensively by merely adding an amendment to the will (called a codicil). Again, a lawyer should be consulted before modifying a will in any way.

May Bahá'ís donate their bodies for medical science or their organs for transplants?

"There is nothing in the Teachings against leaving our bodies to medical science. The only thing we should stipulate is that we do not wish to be cremated, as it is against our Bahá'í Laws.

"As many people make arrangements to leave their bodies to medical science for investigation he suggests that you inquire, either through some lawyer friend or through some hospital, how you can do this and then make the necessary provision in your will, stipulating that you wish your body to be of service to mankind in death, and that, being a Bahá'í you request that your remains not be cremated and not be taken more than an hour's

journey from the place you die.

"The spirit has no more connection with the body after it departs, but as the body was once the temple of the spirit, we Bahá'ís are taught that it must be treated with respect." (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer)

Where should wills be stored?

The executed (signed) copy of the will should be retained by the believer and kept in a safe place, but one where it can be found easily after his death. It might be wise to give a copy to the executor. If a Bahá'í wishes, it is permissible to give an unexecuted (unsigned) copy of the will to either a local Spiritual Assembly or to the National Spiritual Assembly to be retained on file. This is especially desirable if the Bahá'í Faith is listed as a beneficiary. But if a copy is given to a Bahá'í institution, kindly inform it when the will it retains on file has been modified or revoked.

If a Bahá'í wishes to leave funds or property to the Bahá'í Faith, how should he go about it?

One of the primary objectives of a Bahá'í will is, of course, to meet personal obligations and responsibilities, but after providing for those with whom he has close ties, a Bahá'í may wish to give serious consideration to the needs of the Faith. There are many ways in which the Faith can be made a beneficiary in a will such as outright gifts, a residual gift or a gift that would not take effect for some years. These possibilities should be thoroughly explored with an attorney who can advise how best to proceed. Also, the Office of the Treasurer stands ready to answer questions in this regard.

To make a testamentary gift to the National Spiritual Assembly, describe the beneficiary in these terms: "The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, whose headquarters are located in the Village of Wilmette, Cook County, Illinois."

Gifts of real property should be made to a local community only if the local Assembly is incorporated.

Requests may be made to the Universal House of Justice as follows:

"If the bequest is money, it should be made payable to the Bahá'í International Fund; other personal property may be bequeathed directly to the Universal House of Justice. However, since the Universal House of Justice is not incorporated, a devise of real estate should be sold and the proceeds given to the Universal House of Justice, or the property transferred to a corporation (e.g. an incorporated Assembly), for the benefit of the Universal House of Justice." (Letter from the Universal House of Justice dated December 11, 1975)

May a Bahá'í name a Bahá'í institution or one of its officers as executor?

The National Spiritual Assembly strongly feels that Bahá'í institutions and their officers should not be named as executor of an estate.

It should be noted in passing that in Iran it was

often the case that estates were administered by local Spiritual Assemblies. This is not possible in the U.S.; hence the Persian believers should be prepared to make other arrangements.

How should a Bahá'í assure that he will receive a Bahá'í burial?

Often a will is not read or even located until after the burial. It is therefore best if burial instructions are kept separately from the will. They should be retained where they can be quickly and easily located.

It might be prudent to inform close family members or friends of their location or perhaps

furnish a copy to a local Spiritual Assembly or to carry a copy on one's person. It should be noted that burial instructions are usually not legally binding. Hence, believers should explain their wishes to close family members who are not Bahá'ís. If there are any questions about burial instructions, an attorney should be consulted.

In light of the Bahá'í burial laws, believers would be well advised not to purchase burial plots far in advance of death, but instead should make provision for funds to be readily available to purchase a plot following their death.

Guidelines for membership in non-Bahá'í groups

The National Spiritual Assembly frequently receives requests for lists of organizations that Bahá'ís may or may not join. Since there are thousands of organizations, it is manifestly impossible for the National Spiritual Assembly to be familiar with the aims and purposes of all of them, their membership obligations and requirements. However, there are a few general guidelines that individual Bahá'ís should consider before joining any organization. When in doubt they should consult their local Spiritual Assembly or even the National Spiritual Assembly.

The Guardian did not elaborate on what is meant by "secret organizations," but the term certainly applies to all those organizations whose aims and objectives are not available to everyone who wishes to know them and whose membership is not open to all persons without regard to race or religion. Furthermore, the organization must not engage in partisan politics, neither should it be one that would not be acceptable anywhere in the world. It is largely because the Free Masons en-

gage in politics in some countries and are not acceptable in certain countries that the Guardian singled out Masonry for special mention, even though the general aims and purposes of the organization are of a very high order.

As for fraternities or sororities, membership in these is permissible provided membership does not exclude persons because of race, religion or social position.

Membership in the League of Women Voters is permissible unless and until it becomes involved in partisan politics. Discussion of political issues in itself is not forbidden to Bahá'ís but they cannot support any particular party.

The chief criteria for membership in any organization are: Are its aims or objectives compatible with the Bahá'í laws and principles? Is membership open to persons of all racial and religious backgrounds? Is it free from partisan politics?

If any Bahá'í is in doubt about a particular organization, he can consult the administrative institutions. In doing so he should supply all possible information so that a decision can be based on facts.

Assembly should use due care in seeking professional help

As Assemblies attempt to work with members of their community with personal problems, they frequently find it necessary or desirable to seek the help of a professional such as a psychiatrist, doctor or lawyer. Often, and understandably, the Assembly solicits the aid of a professional who also is a Bahá'í. In such cases, the Assembly should offer to pay for the services rendered and be careful not to impose on that Bahá'í.

If the professional should offer his or her services to Bahá'í institutions without charge as a contribution to the Cause, the offer may be accepted with gratitude. It is unreasonable, however, to expect Bahá'ís who are professionals to offer the services without charge in every case.

It should also be noted that many mental health professionals base their counseling work on principles that are contrary to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore, before advising a community member to seek such help, it is often wise for the Assembly to first investigate the mental health resources available in its community to find those that are most nearly compatible with the teachings of the Faith.

Only National Assembly may issue Bahá'í credentials to friends from other countries

The National Spiritual Assembly wishes to remind the friends that only the National Spiritual Assembly may issue Bahá'í credentials to believers who enter the U.S. from other countries.

This is especially true of Bahá'ís from Iran. Until the National Assembly can confirm that an Iranian believer is a Bahá'í in good standing, he or she is not to be extended the privileges of Bahá'í membership, including attending Feasts and serving on Bahá'í institutions.

Obviously, in light of the present situation in Iran, the checking of credentials is sometimes a slow process and the National Assembly is aware that delays may cause inconvenience and hardship. But the current crisis demands this extra measure of caution. It is hoped that all of the friends will be careful to check credentials and will give the National Assembly their fullest support in upholding this policy.

National Assembly requests that believers take steps to preserve important papers

The National Spiritual Assembly is concerned that Bahá'í papers and books vital to future Bahá'í historians are being lost. It is imperative that those who possess such items take appropriate measures to ensure that they are not destroyed or lost to the Faith and to future Bahá'í historians.

Individuals can take one of two steps to preserve these materials. They can give their Bahá'í papers and books to the National Bahá'í Archives or to a local Bahá'í archives while they are still living, or they can make specific provisions in their wills that such items be given to a local Bahá'í archives or to the National Bahá'í Archives. Either measure will ensure their safety. Individuals are of course free to dispose of their papers and books as they desire; but if they wish to preserve them for the Faith, they need to take positive legal action now.

The National Spiritual Assembly also requests that Bahá'ís who inherit papers from early believers consult with the National Archives Committee before disposing of any acquired documents. The National Archives Committee is interested in correspondence among early Bahá'ís and in manuscripts and other materials that may be of significant historical value.

The National Bahá'í Archives Committee is located at the Bahá'í National Center, Wilmette, IL 60091.

National Assembly should have Local Assembly phone numbers

The staff at the Bahá'í National Center often finds it necessary to communicate with Local Spiritual Assemblies quickly about important matters. It is therefore vital that each Assembly furnish the National Spiritual Assembly with telephone numbers of Assembly members and where they can be reached during business hours.

If for any reason an Assembly officer, especially the secretary or chairman, should not be telephoned at his or her office or place of employment, the National Assembly should be informed of that fact and furnished with the business numbers of other Assembly members. The friends should not anticipate that the National Center staff will be able to place telephone calls after 5 p.m. Central Time.

Permission to visit Holy Land

Bahá'ís traveling to Israel for any reason, and particularly those who wish to visit the Bahá'í Shrines and Holy Places at the World Centre, must first have the permission of the Universal House of Justice. You may write or cable the Universal House of Justice directly to seek permission, or you may contact the National Spiritual Assembly, which will contact the House of Justice on your behalf. The address for the Universal House of Justice is Box 155, Haifa 31 000, Israel.

Tie vote for Assembly officers clarified by Supreme Body

As to whether it is permissible to vote off a tie vote in an election for an officer of an Assembly, in Article IV of the **Declaration of Trust and By-Laws of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States** it states that "The officers shall be elected by a majority vote of the entire membership of the Assembly taken by secret ballot."

Further, in a letter from the Universal House of Justice dated January 25, 1967, it is further stated that "With regard to the choosing of officers each is elected by majority vote of the Assembly. The situation resulting from a tied vote occurs only in an election decided by plurality vote."

It is therefore necessary to continue voting until an officer is elected by majority vote. When such a situation arises, the Assembly will do will to consult first upon the qualifications and functions of the office to be filled. It is left to the discretion of the Assembly as to whether or not to announce who the individuals are who are tied.

Overseas messages should be conveyed by National Assembly

From time to time a Local Spiritual Assembly may find it necessary to communicate with an individual or community in another country.

In those cases, it is important that the communication be conveyed through the National Spiritual Assembly to the other National Spiritual Assembly, rather than directly by the Local Spiritual Assembly.

While this procedure may seem cumbersome, it is necessary because the National Assembly has received guidelines from the Universal House of Justice about communicating with other national communities which often are vital to the safety of the believers in other countries.

Alaska and Hawaii have separate National Spiritual Assemblies. Therefore, all communication with those Bahá'í communities should also be channeled through the National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S.

On travel arrangements

When invitations are extended to others to appear at Bahá'í events, all matters regarding the arrangements for travel and accommodations need to be set forth clearly, understood, and agreed to by all parties.

Members of institutions such as the National Spiritual Assembly, the Continental Board of Counsellors, and the Auxiliary Board do not have unlimited travel budgets. Therefore, many invitations must be turned down for lack of resources unless those issuing the invitation are able to pay all or part of the expenses.