

Bahá'í Funds and Contributions¹

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I. Importance of Giving

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

(Shoghi Effendi, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 13, September 1926, p. 1) [1]

And as the progress and extension of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of local as well as national Spiritual Assemblies, a *Bahá'í Fund* be established, to be placed under the exclusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. All donations and contributions should be offered to the Treasurer of the Assembly, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Cause, throughout that locality or country. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh, who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund. The members of the Spiritual Assembly will at their own discretion expend it to promote the Teaching Campaign, to help the needy, to establish educational Bahá'í institutions, to extend in every way possible their sphere of service. I cherish the hope that all the friends, realizing the necessity of this measure, will bestir themselves and contribute, however modestly at first, towards the speedy establishment and the increase of that Fund.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 12 March 1923 to the Bahá'ís of the West, published in *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922–1932* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 41–42) [2]

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

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 6 May 1923 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 49) [3]

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

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 26 November 1923 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 53–54) [4]

It is for the National Assembly ... to exercise its judgement as to what extent the resources at their disposal enable them to aid financially the individual undertakings of the friends. Should the response of the friends and Assemblies to the appeals made on behalf of the National Fund be prompt, sustained, and generous, the National Assembly will, I am certain, justify its sympathy, good-will and genuine co-operation with every individual Bahá'í enterprise. I would, however, at this early stage of our work, strongly urge, nay entreat, the friends not to dissipate their efforts, but to seek, after frank, mature, and continuous deliberation, to arrive at a common conclusion as to the most urgent requirements and needs of the hour, and having unified their views to strive to uphold and enforce them with promptitude, whole-heartedness, and understanding.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 16 January 1925 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 76–77) [5]

That the work of the National Spiritual Assemblies may be efficiently conducted, it is incumbent upon their members to seek if feasible the establishment of an adequate and permanent centre for their activities which would be widely and officially advertised and be recognized as the headquarters of their Secretariat. To it all communications from individual friends and Local Assemblies within its province, from the Holy Land and from foreign countries should be directly addressed. It would be its first duty to keep in close and constant touch, without exception, discrimination or favour, with the various localities and isolated believers in its jurisdiction, and diligently and promptly distribute to them as well as to the friends abroad any matter of common concern and general interest.

That this cherished aim may materialize and the standard of efficiency be maintained, the institution of the National Fund is of paramount importance. I would unceasingly urge the individual believers as well as the Local Assemblies throughout India and Burma to arise with heart and soul and generously and regularly contribute toward the upkeep and the extension of a Fund upon which will greatly depend the success of their endeavours.

I am personally instructing the ... Assembly, whose past services, moral as well as financial, to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in India and elsewhere are graven upon my heart, to concentrate their energies upon, and uphold with their resources the twin institutions of the National Spiritual Assembly and the National Fund. I trust that these may soon be enabled to shoulder the burden that is now weighing upon the self-sacrificing friends of

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 25 March 1925 to a National Spiritual Assembly) [6]

As to material sacrifices towards the welfare of the Cause, he wishes you to understand that the general interests of the Cause take precedence over the interests of the particular individuals. For instance contributions to the welfare of individuals are secondary to contributions towards the National and Local Funds and that of the Temple.

This is a general instruction. Of course helping the individuals in case one is able to help, is also desirable and merits appreciation.

(24 November 1925 to two believers) [7]

In connection with the institution of the National Fund and the budgetary system set forth in the minutes of the National Spiritual Assembly, I feel urged to remind you of the necessity of ever bearing in mind the cardinal principle that all contributions to the Fund are to be purely and strictly voluntary in character. It should be made clear and evident to every one that any form of compulsion, however slight and indirect, strikes at the very root of the principle underlying the

formation of the Fund ever since its inception. While appeals of a general character, carefully-worded and moving and dignified in tone are welcome under all circumstances, it should be left entirely to the discretion of every conscientious believer to decide upon the nature, the amount, and purpose of his or her contribution for the propagation of the Cause.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 10 January 1926 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 101) [8]

The National Fund must be firmly established, generously supported and universally and continuously upheld, for it is the prerequisite of future progress and achievement. The "News Letter" should be extended, widely distributed and utilized as a means to supply information, coordinate activities and secure the support of all the believers to the institutions of the Cause. I strongly urge you to ensure the success of these two primary and essential organs of our work.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 25 May 1926 written on his behalf to an individual believer) [9]

In times of disappointment, stress and anxiety, which we must inevitably encounter, we should remember the sufferings of our departed Master. Your work, your energy, your vigilance and care, your loving-kindness are assets that I greatly value and prize. Keep on, persevere, redouble in your efforts, repeat and rewrite the admonitions and instructions of our Beloved in your communications with individuals and Assemblies until they sink in their hearts and minds. This was truly our Beloved's way and method and none better can we ever pursue. Your present pioneer work will surely be remembered and extolled by future generations. My prayers will always be offered for you. In matters of contribution we should not use any compulsion whatsoever and ascertain clearly the desire of the donor. We should appeal to but not coerce the friends.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 9 July 1926 written on his behalf to an individual believer) [10]

As Bahá'ís we should follow the prophet's method. We know that the Cause will ultimately conquer and its ranks be fully united. We know that the Master's promises will ultimately be realized, therefore why be discouraged by trivial oppositions we see on our way. We should rather add to our zeal and persist in our prayers and endeavours. Shoghi Effendi has taken the available measures, and, by letter as well as cable, has urged the ... friends to give a moral and material support to the National fund. It always takes time for a people to change from one administration to another. Up to the present they have been accustomed to think of the Local Assemblies as next only to the Centre of the Cause, and it will take some time and training before they can admit another superior. The same problem existed in America and for some time the work of the National body seemed to be paralysed but through personal contact and Shoghi Effendi's incessant reminding that problem has been solved and now we see the National Assembly considered as the only body to undertake matters that are beyond the purely local jurisdiction of the Local Assemblies.

(7 September 1926 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Dawn of a New Day* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, [1970]), pp. 13-14) [11]

I have urged them to support consistently and whole-heartedly the very essential and vital institutions of the National Fund and the National Assembly. It must be made clear to them all that continuous support to these twin institutions is the corner-stone of all future achievements, the mainspring from which all future blessings will flow.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to the above letter) [12]

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

True, we cannot fail to realize at the present stage of our work the extremely limited number of contributors qualified to lend financial support to such a vast, such an elaborate and costly enterprise. We are fully aware of the many issues and varied Bahá'í activities that are unavoidably held in abeyance pending the successful conclusion of the Plan of Unified Action. We are only too conscious of the pressing need of some sort of befitting and concrete embodiment of the spirit animating the Cause that would stand in the heart of the American Continent both as a witness and as a rallying centre to the manifold activities of a fast growing Faith. But spurred by these reflections may we not bestir ourselves and resolve as we have never resolved before to hasten by every means in our power the consummation of this all-absorbing yet so meritorious a task? I beseech you, dear friends, not to allow considerations of number, or the consciousness of the limitation of our resources, or even the experience of inevitable set-backs which every mighty undertaking is bound to encounter, to blur your vision, to dim your hopes, or to paralyse your efforts in the prosecution of your divinely appointed task. Neither, do I entreat you, to suffer the

least deviation into the paths of expediency and compromise to obstruct those channels of vivifying grace that can alone provide the inspiration and strength vital not only to the successful conduct of its material construction, but to the fulfilment of its high destiny.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 25 October 1929 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, published in *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 182–84) [13]

You asked concerning some plans whereby funds could be gathered for the Temple. Shoghi Effendi believes that the best and noblest method is to have free donations that are made spontaneously and with the sense of making some sacrifice in furthering the Cause. It is with sacrifice that this Temple is to be built. This is the truly worthy method. This principle therefore excludes any method whereby the help of non-Bahá'ís is included. A Bahá'í Temple should be built by the Bahá'ís alone; it is not an ordinary humanitarian activity in which the help of any person could be solicited. Anyhow Shoghi Effendi has fully explained these matters to the National Spiritual Assembly and you could easily refer to them as to further light on the subject.

(14 April 1932 to a Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 64, July 1932, p. 4) [14]

Even though Shoghi Effendi would urge every believer to sacrifice as much as possible for the sake of contributing towards the fund of the National Assembly, yet he would discourage the friends to incur debts for that purpose. We are asked to give what we have, not what we do not possess, especially if such an act causes suffering to others. In such matters we should use judgement and wisdom and take into our confidence other devoted Bahá'ís.

(4 May 1932 to an individual believer) [15]

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated May 8th 1932 telling him of some incidents that transpired during the Convention this year, especially when funds were collected for the Temple. He was very glad to learn of the wonderful spirit that prevailed in those gatherings; for it is only through such a spirit of devotion and sacrifice that the Cause can prosper and its message embrace the whole world.

It was also wonderful to see the interest shown by the public in the general gatherings that formed part of the Convention programme. Shoghi Effendi hopes that as the Temple is gradually completed this interest will increase and they will try to share in the spirit that motivates the friends and, accepting the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, arise to serve it, and dedicate their life to its spread.

Such gatherings for collection of funds are permissible if it is done with a true spirit of sacrifice, not when the audience is especially aroused to a frenzy and mob psychology is used to induce them to pay. Shoghi Effendi has repeatedly stated that no pressure should be used upon the friends, and psychological pressure falls under that category. But there is much difference between such gatherings, often used by religious bodies, and a true quiet, prayerful atmosphere when a person is of his own accord aroused to make some sacrifice. The distinction is very delicate, but it is for the chairman to use his power to see that one desirable form is not corrupted into the other. All the activities of the Cause should be carried through in a dignified manner. Shoghi Effendi is sure that the funds gathered at the last Convention were not due to the play of mob psychology but to the prayerful attitude of the friends and their desire to make further sacrifice.

(28 May 1932 to an individual believer, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 67, October 1932, p. 5) [16]

Your donations to the Temple as well as the remarkable manner in which you are assisting the believers in their efforts to widen the scope of their publicity work are real and abiding

contributions you have made to the Faith. And although at present you are unable to contribute financially as much as you did in former years you should not feel discouraged, much less disappointed. For the best way in which you can effectively support the Temple cause is not through material means but by the moral help which is your primary obligation to extend to those who are in charge of the building of that sacred and unique Edifice. It is devotion, sincerity and genuine enthusiasm which in the long run can ensure the completion of our beloved Temple. Material considerations, though essential, are not the most vital by any means. Had it been otherwise the Temple would have never reached the stage of progress which it has already so well attained. For the resources of the community are limited, and have been severely affected during the last two years by an unprecedented and world-wide economic crisis. But despite all these material obstacles the Temple has made a steady progress and this alone is sufficient to convince every unbiased observer of the divine potency animating the Faith—a potency before which all material difficulties must inevitably wane.

(30 December 1933 to two believers)

[17]

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

(25 September 1934 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 88, November 1934, pp. 1-2)

[18]

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

(29 July 1935 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 95, October 1935, p. 1)

[19]

As the activities of the American Bahá'í community expand, and its world-wide prestige correspondingly increases, the institution of the national Fund, the bedrock on which all other institutions must necessarily rest and be established, acquires added importance, and should be increasingly supported by the entire body of the believers, both in their individual capacities, and through their collective efforts, whether organized as groups or as Local Assemblies. The supply of funds, in support of the national Treasury, constitutes, at the present time, the life-blood of these nascent institutions which you are labouring to erect. Its importance cannot surely be overestimated. Untold blessings shall no doubt crown every effort directed to that end. I am eagerly and prayerfully awaiting the news of an unprecedented expansion in so vital an organ of the Administrative Order of our Faith.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to the above letter)

[20]

With regard to your question concerning contributions to the Temple fund: the friends should certainly be encouraged and even urged to support financially this, as well as other national institutions of the Cause. But they should, under no circumstances, be required to do so.

As to the idea of "giving what one can afford": this does by no means put a limit or even exclude the possibility of self-sacrifice. There can be no limit to one's contributions to the national fund. The more one can give the better it is, especially when such offerings necessitate

the sacrifice of other wants and desires on the part of the donor. The harder the sacrifice the more meritorious will it be, of course, in the sight of God. For after all it is not so much the quantity of one's offerings that matters, but rather the measure of deprivation that such offerings entail. It is the spirit, not the mere fact of contributing, that we should always take into account when we stress the necessity for a universal and whole-hearted support of the various funds of the Cause.

(31 December 1935 to an individual believer, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 250, December 1951, p. 1) [21]

Above all he wishes through you to reiterate his wish, already expressed in his recent cable to the National Spiritual Assembly, that the National Fund, which undoubtedly constitutes the bedrock upon which all the activities of the Cause ultimately rest, should receive the continued and whole-hearted support of all the believers. Both the Local Assemblies and the individual believers should realize that unless they contribute regularly and generously to that Fund the progress of the Faith in India and Burma will not only be considerably retarded, but will inevitably come to a standstill. There should be a continual flow of funds to the national treasury of the National Spiritual Assembly, if that body wishes to properly administer the manifold and ever-increasing activities of the Faith. Every Bahá'í, no matter how poor, must realize what a grave responsibility he has to shoulder in this connection, and should have confidence that his spiritual progress as a believer in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh will largely depend upon the measure in which he proves, in deeds, his readiness to support materially the divine institutions of His Faith.

(17 July 1937 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 68) [22]

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

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 30 January 1938 written on his behalf to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America 1932-1946* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Committee 1947), p. 11) [23]

Regarding the state of the National Fund, which you have reported is suffering from a general slackness in contributions from both individual believers and the Local Assemblies and groups: It is only evident that unless the flow of donations is regularly maintained by means of generous and continual support by all the believers, individually and collectively, the National Fund will never be able to meet the needs and requirements of the Cause, particularly in these days when the national activities of the American believers are assuming such wide and increasing proportions.

(3 February 1941 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 143, May 1941, p. 3) [24]

Indeed the splendid spirit that animates the American believers these days is a great source of joy and inspiration of the Guardian, and as the good news comes in of new victories won and new sacrifices made, one can see his spirits rise and a wave of new strength sweep over him—tired and over-burdened as he so often is.

In this connection the letter you so thoughtfully enclosed from that dear Bahá'í who gave the difference in the price of a cheap or expensive coffin to the Fund of the Cause, greatly touched him. Such sacrifices prove the caliber of the friends and insure the very foundations of the Faith.

(4 May 1941 to the treasurer of a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 144, June 1941, pp. 2-3) [25]

Conscious of the state of the National Fund, and realizing the urgency of the task facing its administrators, I have felt the urge to devote the offering of the American believers to the International Fund to the work which is now vitally facing and challenging the friends in the teaching field. Much as I appreciated the spirit prompting you and your fellow-members to make this monthly contribution to the Cause at its World Centre, I felt that it was my duty to consecrate this offering, while the Seven Year Plan is still operating, to that vital aspect of teaching upon which its success must ultimately depend. May the friends, in view of the vastness of the field that stretches before them, and the potentialities of their labours within it, and of the glowing promise of future blessings which such a labour must yield, rise to still greater heights of self-sacrifice and evince nobler manifestations of solidarity in the face of the critical situation that so insistently demands their support.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 26 October 1941 to the treasurer of a National Spiritual Assembly published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 149, December 1941, p. 2) [26]

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

(26 October 1945 to an individual believer) [27]

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

(19 October 1947 to an individual believer, published in *Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'í Community of the British Isles* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981), pp. 447–48) [28]

Regarding the question you raised: in the first place every believer is free to follow the dictates of his own conscience as regards the manner in which he should spend his own money. Secondly, we must always bear in mind that there are so few Bahá'ís in the world, relative to the world's population, and so many people in need, that even if all of us gave all we had, it would not alleviate more than an infinitesimal amount of suffering. This does *not* mean we must not help the needy, we should; but our contributions to the Faith are the surest way of lifting once and for all time the burden of hunger and misery from mankind, for it is only through the System of Bahá'u'lláh—Divine in origin—that the world can be gotten on its feet and want, fear, hunger, war, etc., be eliminated. Non-Bahá'ís cannot contribute to our work or do it for us; so really our first obligation is to support our own teaching work, as this will lead to the healing of the nations.

(8 December 1947 to an individual believer, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 210, August 1948, p. 3) [29]

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

(23 June 1950 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Messages to Canada* ([Toronto]: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 1965), p. 15) [30]

He suggests you give the sum you would spend on a world tour to the Cause in memory of your son. Bahá'u'lláh says that deeds of this nature aid the progress of the soul of the loved, departed one, in the world beyond. Your son died in suffering, in his youth. Perhaps to still have a part in the most constructive work of this world would bring him extra peace and joy.

(19 September 1951 to an individual believer) [31]

As to your question: the friends can give their contributions to the treasurer, or, if they wish to remain anonymous and give small sums, a receptacle can be provided. The Local Assembly can decide this matter.

(29 September 1951 to an individual believer) [32]

The Guardian feels sure that the contribution which has been made by your friend who has not been active in the Cause for a short time will be the means of stimulating her to renewed service. There is nothing that brings success in the Faith like service. Service is the magnet which draws the divine confirmations. Thus, when a person is active, they are blessed by the Holy Spirit. When they are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being, and thus they are deprived of its healing and quickening rays.

(12 July 1952 to an individual believer) [33]

Now is the time to build the World Centre of the Faith, and the friends are not only free, but encouraged to contribute directly to the International and Shrine of the Báb Funds.

Of course it has never been the Guardian's idea that in contributing to the International Funds, the friends would neglect their responsibilities to the Local and National Funds; but it certainly was not his intent that the friends must contribute first to the Local and then the National Funds, before contributing to the international activities of the Faith, which at this time are of paramount importance.

The general principle of contribution by the friends is unchanged, namely, that everyone is free to contribute to whatever funds they wish, and to the degree their conscience and feeling of sacrifice moves them. At this time, however, we must actively bear in mind the many instructions of the Guardian, that we must now build up the international activities of the Faith, and consequently, the International Funds.

(25 March 1953 to a National Spiritual Assembly) [34]

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

(20 June 1954 to a National Spiritual Assembly) [35]

The contribution which you have made to the International Fund in memory of Mrs. ... is greatly appreciated. This will be the means of much happiness to her, that her name will now be connected with the work at the World Centre.

(10 August 1956 to a Spiritual Assembly) [36]

The Guardian feels that now that the new National Assembly has been established, with headquarters in Kampala, the Assembly should establish its own Bank Account. When this is done the moneys you have received for the Kampala Temple should be turned over to them, for deposit in their account. This applies not only to the munificent contribution of Mr. ..., but also to past contributions which you have received, and any which you may receive in the future.

(10 June 1956 to a Hand of the Cause of God in Africa) [37]

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

(15 December 1956 to a National Spiritual Assembly) [38]

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

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 8 August 1957 written on his behalf to a National Spiritual Assembly) [39]

II. The Responsibility of Assemblies in Administering Bahá'í Funds

The financial questions that confront the Cause are all very pressing and important. They need a judicious administration and wise policy. We should study the needs of the Cause, find which field will give the greatest yield, and then appropriate the necessary funds. And such a task is surely most difficult and responsible.

(19 December 1929 to an individual believer) [40]

Regarding his special contribution to the Teaching Fund: he feels that this is a matter to be left entirely to the discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly. He believes that the continuous expenditure of a considerable sum to provide for travelling expenses of teachers who are in need constitutes in these days the chief obligation of the national fund. An effort should be made to facilitate, as much as possible, the extension of the teaching work by helping those who are financially unable to reach their destination, and once there to encourage them to settle and earn the means of their livelihood.

(14 November 1936 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 105, February 1937, p. 1) [41]

With regard to your question concerning the National Bahá'í Fund: there is nothing in the Declaration of Trust or the By-Laws which prevents the allocation of any funds to any individual who is in dire financial need. But it should be emphasized and clearly understood by the friends that the national interests and requirements of the Cause take absolute precedence over individual and private needs. It is the duty of the National Spiritual Assembly to so dispose of the national Fund as not to allow the national interests of the Faith to be jeopardized by individual considerations that are obviously transient when compared to the lasting interests of the Cause of God. In rare and exceptional cases, when a believer has absolutely no other means of material sustenance, the National Spiritual Assembly may either contribute towards his expenses from the

national Fund, or make a special appeal to the body of the believers to that effect. It is for the family, the civil community and the Local Assembly to administer to such local and private needs of the individual. But in case none of these sources has the means to do so, the National Spiritual Assembly may, if it is convinced of the gravity, urgency and justice of the case, appropriate a part of its fund for that purpose.

(17 July 1937 to an individual believer) [42]

The Guardian can only outline to you the principle, which is that Bahá'í funds should not be invested in building up a place that has dear associations for a number of the friends, but is not going to really serve a large group of the believers....

The Guardian's point is that National Bodies, when creating national institutions, should use sound judgement, because of the financial investment involved. This is only reasonable.

(8 June 1952 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Messages to Canada*, p. 28) [43]

He urges your Assembly, in addition to expediting the Temple work as much as reasonably possible, to carefully supervise expenditures and prevent the architect from getting extravagant ideas. It is only through a wise economy, the elimination of non-essentials, concentration on essentials and a careful supervision, that the Guardian himself has been able to build the Shrine and the International Archives at the World Centre, and surround the Holy Places here by what appear in the eyes of the public to be lavish gardens, but are in reality the result of rigorous and economical planning. This will not only ensure that the budget of the Temple is adhered to, but will be a salutary example to the African Bahá'ís, who must not be led to believe that because the Bahá'ís of the world are building for them a Temple in the heart of their homelands, our resources are infinite and that the affairs of the Cause can be supported from abroad. The more they see that economy and intelligent supervision of the work is carried on in connection with their own Temple, the more they will be encouraged to feel some financial responsibility toward their National Body. Having very little themselves, it is a delicate matter, and as he already informed your Assembly, under no circumstances should a heavy budget be imposed upon such weak communities, and thus discourage them from the outset, or lead them to believe that like the Missions, our money comes from abroad.

(8 August 1957 to a National Spiritual Assembly) [44]

III. Who Can Contribute to the Fund?

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

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 27 February 1927 to the Bahá'ís of the East—
translated from the Persian) [45]

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

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 4 January 1929 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 31, April 1929, p. 6) [46]

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

(14 April 1934 to an individual believer) [47]

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

(12 July 1938 to an individual believer) [48]

You may not perhaps know that in connection with all National Assemblies the Guardian is advising that rules and regulations should not be multiplied and new statements on "procedure" issued; we should be elastic in details and rigid in principles; consequently he does not want your Assembly to issue statements of a binding nature unless absolutely necessary. In this connection he will answer your questions about sanctions: there is nothing to object to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of your letter of March 4th, but no. 3 is incorrect; it is only those who have been spiritually excommunicated by the Guardian with whom the believers are forbidden to associate, and not a person who is being punished by being deprived of his voting rights. As contributions to Bahá'í Funds are used to support the administration of the Faith, they should not be accepted from those who are deprived of their voting rights; but such believers should not be prevented from being buried in a Bahá'í Cemetery or receiving charity—which we even give to non-Bahá'ís...

(8 May 1947 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 123) [49]

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

(18 August 1949 to a National Spiritual Assembly) [50]

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

(5 July 1950 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Bahá'í News*, no. 236,
October 1950, p. 2)

[51]

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

(4 October 1950 to an individual believer)

[52]

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

(30 June 1952 to a National Spiritual Assembly)

[53]

As regards the question of accepting contributions from people whose voting rights are suspended, the Guardian says this is not permissible.

(21 June 1953 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in *Dawn of a New Day*, p.
156)

[54]

Notes

- 1 Extracts are taken from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi unless otherwise noted. ↩

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