

Participant Handouts

*A Sense
of Partnership:*
**The Individual
and the Local
Spiritual Assembly**

An Assembly Development Module Workshop

The Individual and the Local Spiritual Assembly

OVERVIEW FOR PARTICIPANTS

Purpose

- ★ To improve the way in which individual Bahá'ís, both elected and electors, relate to the Assembly

This workshop is targeted to individuals, rather than Assemblies. Its purpose is to improve the way in which individual Bahá'ís, both elected and electors, relate to the Assembly. Its focus is on acquiring a vision of the relationship intended by Bahá'u'lláh between individuals and Assemblies and on identifying ways in which individuals can personally support the growth and maturation of Assemblies.

What you will find inside your handouts:

- ★ Quotations and worksheets for the various segments of the workshop
- ★ An evaluation form to be filled out by you
- ★ An evaluation form to be filled out by the Assembly within two months after the workshop

If you would like to have information on additional workshops or other Assembly development resources, ask your Assembly Development representative or contact the Office of Assembly Development at (847) 733-3490, by mail at 1233 Central Street, Evanston, IL 60201, or by e-mail at OAD@usbnc.org.

Note: If time is short for any exercise, focus on the quotations in bold

The Call to a New State of Mind

“... a sense of partnership based on appreciation of each other’s distinctive sphere of action. . . .”

“The evolution of local and national Bahá’í Assemblies at this time calls for a new state of mind on the part of their members as well as on the part of those who elect them, for the Bahá’í community is engaged in an immense historical process that is entering a critical stage. Bahá’u’lláh has given to the world institutions to operate in an Order designed to canalize* the forces of a new civilization.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1996.

“The appearance of a united, firmly based and self-sustaining community . . . requires a level of internal interaction between the Assembly and the body of the believers based on a commonly recognized commitment to service, and in which a sense of partnership based on appreciation of each other’s distinctive sphere of action is fully recognized and unfailingly upheld, and no semblance of a dichotomy between the two appears. In such a community leadership is that expression of service by which the Spiritual Assembly invites and encourages the use of the manifold talents and abilities with which the community is endowed, and stimulates and guides the diverse elements of the community towards goals and strategies by which the effects of a coherent force for progress can be realized.

“The maintenance of a climate of love and unity depends largely upon the feeling among the individuals composing the community that the Assembly is a part of themselves, that their cooperative interactions with that divinely ordained body allow them a fair latitude for initiative and that the quality of their relationships with both the institution and their fellow believers encourages a spirit of enterprise invigorated by an awareness of the revolutionizing purpose of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, by a consciousness of the high privilege of their being associated with efforts to realize that purpose, and by a consequent, ever-present sense of joy.”

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated May 19, 1994, to a National Spiritual Assembly.

“An expansion of thought and action in certain aspects of our work would enhance our possibilities for success in meeting our . . . commitments.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1990.

“The burgeoning influence of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation seemed . . . to have assumed the character of an onrushing

***Canalize:** to channel into a particular direction; provide an outlet for

“Change is an evolutionary process requiring patience with one’s self and others. . . .”

wind blowing through the archaic structure of the old order, felling mighty pillars and clearing the ground for new conceptions of social organization. . . . Even the Community of the Most Great Name itself is experiencing the rigorous effects of this quickening wind as it ventilates the modes of thought of us all, renewing, clarifying, and amplifying our perspectives as to the purpose of the Order of Bahá’u’lláh in the wake of humanity’s suffering and turmoil.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1992.

“But, O my brother, when a true seeker determines to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge. . . .”

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitab-i-Iqán*, p. 192.

“Present-day conceptions of what is natural and appropriate in relationships – among human beings themselves, between human beings and nature, between the individual and society, and between the members of society and its institutions – reflect levels of understanding arrived at by the human race during earlier and less mature stages in its development. If humanity is indeed coming of age, if all the inhabitants of the planet constitute a single people, if justice is to be the ruling principle of social organization – then existing conceptions that were born out of ignorance of these emerging realities have to be recast.

“Movement in this direction has barely begun.”

International Community’s Office of Public Information, in *Prosperity of Humankind*, section III.

“. . . change, ever more rapid change, is a constant characteristic of life at this time. . . .”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1990.

“Change is an evolutionary process requiring patience with one’s self and others, loving education and the passage of time as the believers deepen their knowledge of the principles of the Faith, gradually discard long-held traditional attitudes and progressively conform their lives to the unifying teachings of the Cause.”

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated July 25, 1984, in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, p. 634.

A Vision of Partnership

Focus questions

- ★ How are individuals and institutions intended to interact?
- ★ What happens when individual initiative occurs in partnership with institutions?
- ★ What individual actions can bring forth these “profound possibilities”?

“Individual initiative, personal ability and resourcefulness, though indispensable, are, unless supported and enriched by the collective experiences and wisdom of the group, utterly incapable of achieving such a tremendous task [safeguarding and fostering the interests of the Cause].”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 30, 1933, *Unlocking the Power of Action*, #18.

“Even though individuals may strive to be guided in their actions by their personal understanding of the Divine Texts, and much can be accomplished thereby, such actions, untempered by the overall direction provided by authorized institutions, are incapable of attaining the thrust necessary for the unencumbered advancement of civilization.”

The Universal House of Justice, letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 19 May 1994.

“There is no task more urgently necessary than the assurance of perfect harmony and fellowship among the friends, especially between the Local Assemblies and individual believers. The Local Assemblies should inspire confidence in the individual believers, and these in their turn should express their readiness to fully abide by the decisions and directions of the Local Assembly. The two must learn to cooperate, and to realize that only through such a cooperation can the institutions of the Cause effectively and permanently function.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, October 28, 1935, *Unlocking the Power of Action*, #19.

“The successful exercise of authority in the Bahá’í community implies the recognition of separate but mutually reinforcing rights and responsibilities between the institutions and the friends in general, a recognition that in turn welcomes the need for cooperation between these two interactive forces of society. As was stated in advice given by Shoghi Effendi: ‘The individuals and assemblies must learn to cooperate, and to cooperate intelligently, if they desire to adequately discharge their duties and obligations towards the Faith. And no such cooperation is possible without mutual confidence and trust.’”

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated May 19, 1994 to a National Spiritual Assembly.

A Vision of Partnership, continued

“Thus there is a balance of freedom between the institution, whether national or local, and the individuals who sustain its existence.”

“The community of the Greatest Name must increasingly become renowned for its social cohesion, and for the spirit of trust and confidence which distinguishes the relationship between believers and their institutions.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 1996 letter to the Bahá'ís of North America.

“Within this framework of freedom a pattern is set for institutional and individual behavior which depends for its efficacy not so much on the force of law, which admittedly must be respected, as on the recognition of a mutuality of benefits, and on the spirit of cooperation maintained by the willingness, the courage, the sense of responsibility, and the initiative of individuals – these being expressions of their devotion and submission to the will of God. Thus there is a balance of freedom between the institution, whether national or local, and the individuals who sustain its existence.

“Consider, for example, the Local Spiritual Assembly, the methods of its formation and the role of individuals in electing it. The voter elects with the understanding that he is free to choose without any interference whomever his conscience prompts him to select, and he freely accepts the authority of the outcome. In the act of voting, the individual subscribes to a covenant by which the orderliness of society is upheld. The Assembly has the responsibility to guide, direct and decide on community affairs and the right to be obeyed and supported by members of the community. The individual has the responsibility to establish and maintain the Assembly through election, the offering of advice, moral support and material assistance; and he has the right to be heard by it, to receive its guidance and assistance, and to appeal from any Assembly decision which he conscientiously feels is unjust or detrimental to the interests of the community.”

The Universal House of Justice, December 29, 1988 to the Bahá'ís of the United States.

“The course set forth by Bahá'u'lláh . . . is the double task of simultaneously building an ideal society and perfecting the behavior of individuals. For this dual and reciprocal transformation He has not only revealed laws principles and truths attuned to the needs of this age, but has established the very nucleus and pattern of those institutions which are to evolve into the structure of the divinely purposed world society.”

Letter from the Universal House of Justice, dated July 2, 1996, to a National Spiritual Assembly.

A Vision of Partnership, continued

“The equilibrium of responsibilities implied by all this presupposes maturity on the part of all concerned.”

“A Bahá’í community which is consistent in its fundamental life-giving, life-sustaining activities will at its heart be serene and confident; it will resonate with spiritual dynamism, will exert irresistible influence, will set a new course in social evolution, enabling it to win the respect and eventually the allegiance of admirers and critics alike. These *profound possibilities reside in the will of the individual to take initiative, to act in accordance with the guidance offered by Bahá’í institutions, and to maintain such action regardless of the myriad distractions posed by the disintegration of a society adrift in a sea of materialism.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the world, 1984, in *A Wider Horizon*, p. 27.

“The equilibrium of responsibilities implied by all this presupposes maturity on the part of all concerned.”

The Universal House of Justice, December 29, 1988 to Bahá’ís of the United States.

Helping Assemblies in the Process of Maturation

Focus questions

- ★ How is immaturity of Assemblies different from imperfection?
- ★ What are specific ways that individuals can help Assemblies in their process of maturation?

“Local Spiritual Assemblies are at the present newly born institutions, struggling for the most part to establish themselves both in the Bahá’í community and in the world. They are as yet only embryos of the majestic institutions ordained by Bahá’u’lláh in His Writings.”

Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, p. 223.

“The friends are called upon to give their wholehearted support and cooperation to the Local Spiritual Assembly, first by voting for the membership and then by energetically pursuing its plans and programmes, by turning to it in time of trouble or difficulty, by praying for its success and taking delight in its rise to influence and honour. This great prize, this gift of God within each community must be cherished, nurtured, loved, assisted, obeyed and prayed for.”

The Universal House of Justice, Naw-Ruz 1974, in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, p. 265.

“. . . the individual believers are bound to support and sustain their spiritual assembly, for the preservation of the unity of the Faith and the strengthening of its as yet embryonic World Order. . . .”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 29 July 1942, in *The Local Spiritual Assembly*, p. 27.

“Bahá’u’lláh has given to the world institutions to operate in an Order designed to canalize the forces of a new civilization. Progress towards that glorious realization requires a great and continuous expansion of the Bahá’í community, so that adequate scope is provided for the maturation of these institutions. This is a matter of immediate importance to Bahá’u’lláh’s avowed supporters in all lands.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1996.

“The friends must be patient with each other and must realize that the Cause is still in its infancy and its institutions are not yet functioning perfectly. The greater the patience, the loving understanding and the forbearance the believers show towards each other and their shortcomings, the greater will be the progress of the whole Bahá’í Community at large.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 27, 1943, *Issues Concerning Community Functioning*, section 1.1.

“The Administrative Order of Bahá’u’lláh is in the process of growth and unfoldment. . . . Those who from time to time express

Helping Assemblies in the Process of Maturation, continued

“Bahá’í Administration . . . is designed to enable the believers to build Bahá’u’lláh’s new World Order in the midst of their imperfections. . . .”

their dissatisfaction with the current structure of the Administrative Order would be better advised to turn their attention to a thorough study of the principles upon which it is based, as expounded by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, and to concentrate their efforts on putting into practice the spirit and letter of these texts. Virtually every problem which is blamed on a deficiency of structure is, in fact, traceable to a defect in the manner in which the individual believers understand and implement the administrative principles of the Faith.”

Letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly, sent by the Canadian National Assembly to its Local Spiritual Assemblies April 19, 1996.

“. . . Bahá’ís recognize that individuals do not become wholly virtuous on accepting the Faith. It takes time for them to grow spiritually out of their personal imperfections and out of the structural and behavioral assumptions of the societies in which they have been raised, which color their view of the world. The institutions of the Cause . . . are still in their embryonic stage and not infrequently fall short of the ideal for which they are striving. . . . Again and again Shoghi Effendi, in his letters, called upon the Bahá’ís to be patient and forbearing, both with one another and with their Assemblies. . . . Bahá’í Administration has provisions to cope with such human frailties and is designed to enable the believers to build Bahá’u’lláh’s new World Order in the midst of their imperfections, but without conflicts which would destroy the entire edifice.”

Letter from the Universal House of Justice, dated July 2, 1996, to a National Spiritual Assembly.

“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. . . .”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer dated November 1, 1950, in *Issues Concerning Community Functioning*, 1.1.

Turning to the Assembly

Guided by principles found in the quotations which follow, place these items into the category of “Should be taken to the Assembly for consultation” or “May be taken to the Assembly for consultation” by checking the appropriate box

Possible issues to bring before the LSA	May be	Should be
1. Decisions in one’s personal life		
2. Where or whether to go pioneering		
3. How to handle a problem of disunity		
4. Decisions in one’s professional life		
5. Family difficulties		
6. Publication of a book or pamphlet about the Faith		
7. Concern about wrong-doing on the part of a believer		
8. An idea for approaching a prominent person about the Faith		
9. Representing the Faith to another group		
10. Deciding who to marry		
11. Using the media		
12. A legal action mentioning the Faith		

“ . . . all matters without any exception whatsoever, regarding the interests of the Cause in . . . locality, individually or collectively, should be referred exclusively to the Spiritual Assembly in that locality, which shall decide upon it, unless it be a matter of national interest, in which case it shall be referred to the national body.”

Shoghi Effendi, Bahá’í Administration, p. 23.

“When a believer has a problem concerning which he must make a decision, he has several courses open to him. If it is a matter that affects the interests of the Faith he should consult with the appropriate Assembly or committee, but individuals have many problems which are purely personal and there is no obligation upon them to take such problems to the institutions of the Faith; indeed, when the needs of the teaching work are of such urgency it is better if the friends will not burden their Assemblies with personal problems that they can solve by themselves.”

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated March 19, 1973, in Consultation, #47, p. 22.

“A Bahá’í who has a problem may wish to make his own decision upon it after prayer and after weighing all the aspects of

Turning to the Assembly, continued

“When a believer has a problem concerning which he must make a decision, he has several courses open to him.”

it in his own mind; he may prefer to seek the counsel of individual friends or of professional counselors such as his doctor or lawyer so that he can consider such advice when making his decision; or in a case where several people are involved, such as a family situation, he may want to gather together those who are affected so that they may arrive at a collective decision. There is also no objection whatever to a Bahá'í asking a group of people to consult together on a problem facing him.”

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated March 19, 1973, in *Consultation*, #47, p. 22.

“Some of the friends have suggested that the emergence of the Faith from obscurity indicates the timeliness of ceasing observance in the Bahá'í community of certain restraints; particularly are they concerned about the temporary necessity of review before publishing.

“That the Faith has emerged from obscurity on a global scale is certain. . . . but that it marks the attainment of the community's anticipated maturity is entirely doubtful.

“. . . So, far from adopting a carefree attitude, the community must be conscious of the necessity to present a correct view of itself and an accurate understanding of its purpose to a largely skeptical public. A greater effort, a greater care must now be exercised to ensure its protection against the malice of the ignorant and the unwisdom of its friends.

“. . . From this perspective we must all consider the latent danger to the Cause of ill-advised actions and exaggerated expectations; and particularly must we all be concerned about the effects of words, especially those put in print. It is here that Bahá'í authors and publishers need to be attentive and exert rigorous discipline upon themselves, as well as abide by the requirements of review at this early stage in the development of the Faith.”

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated December 29, 1988 to the American believers.

“The believers should learn to turn more often to their assemblies for advice and help and at an earlier date, and the Assemblies, on the other hand, should act with more vigilance and a greater sense of community responsibility towards every situation that may damage the prestige of the Faith in the eyes of the public.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi dated March 13, 1944, in *The Local Spiritual Assembly*.

A Brief Compilation on Criticism

Instructions

1. Read the quotations
2. Identify principles guiding when and how to express criticism
3. Make up a list of criticism do's and don'ts

Extracts from letters written on behalf of the Guardian to individual believers. Provided by the Universal House of Justice as an attachment to its letter of July 2, 1996.

“At such a time when the political world is chaotic and society seems to be on the verge of death, as a result of the activities of societies that contain only half-truths, the friends of God should be united and act as one single organism. The greater their unity the surer they can be of winning the day. And this unity cannot be achieved save through obedience to the Assemblies. It is true these are still immature and may at times act unwisely. But supporting them will help more their advance towards an administration that is truly representative of the Cause, than by criticizing them and ignoring their advice. Bahá'u'lláh has not only advocated certain principles, but has also provided a mechanism whereby that ideal can be established and perpetuated. Both of these phases are essential for the realization of His goal of world unity.”

(February 27, 1933)

“The Bahá'ís are fully entitled to address criticisms to their Assemblies; they can freely air their views about policies or individual members of elected bodies to the Assembly, Local or National, but then they must whole-heartedly accept the advice or decision of the Assembly, according to the principles already laid down for such matters in Bahá'í administration.”

(May 13, 1945)

“The Guardian . . . noted with keen interest the various suggestions you had offered the National Spiritual Assembly in its last meeting. . . .

“The spirit of frank and constructive criticism behind your suggestions must have surely impressed them, and awakened them to a fresh and deeper realization of the unique responsibilities which they have to shoulder in this day.”

(August 19, 1938)

“. . . you had asked whether the believers have the right to openly express their criticism of any Assembly action or policy; it is not only the right, but the vital responsibility of every local and intelligent member of the Community to offer fully and frankly, but with due respect and consideration to the authority of the Assembly, any suggestion, recommendation or criticism he conscientiously feels he should in order to improve and remedy certain existing conditions or trends in his local Community, and

“... if we seek to never criticize but rather encourage, others will do likewise, and we can really help the Cause through our example and spiritual strength.”

it is the duty of the Assembly also to give careful consideration to any such views submitted to them by any one of the believers. The best occasion chosen for this purpose is the Nineteen Day Feast, which, besides its social and spiritual aspects, fulfills various administrative needs and requirements of the Community, chief among them being the need for open and constructive criticism and deliberation regarding the state of affairs within the local Bahá'í community.

“But again it should be stressed that all criticisms and discussions of a negative character which may result in undermining the authority of the Assembly as a body should be strictly avoided. For otherwise the order of the Cause itself will be endangered, and confusion and discord will reign in the Community.”

(December 13, 1939)

“The Guardian believes that a great deal of the difficulties from which the believers in . . . feel themselves to be suffering are caused by their neither correctly understanding nor putting into practice the administration. They seem – many of them – to be prone to continually challenging and criticizing the decisions of their Assemblies. If the Bahá'ís undermine the very bodies which are, however immaturely, seeking to co-ordinate Bahá'í activities and administer Bahá'í affairs, if they continually criticize their acts and challenge or belittle their decisions, they not only prevent any real rapid progress in the Faith's development from taking place, but they repel outsiders who quite rightly may ask how we ever expect to unite the whole world when we are so disunited among ourselves!”

(October 26, 1943)

“There is only one remedy for this: to study the administration, to obey the Assemblies, and each believer seek to perfect his own character as a Bahá'í. We can never exert the influence over others which we can exert over ourselves. If we are better, if we show love, patience, and understanding of the weaknesses of others; if we seek to never criticize but rather encourage, others will do likewise, and we can really help the Cause through our example and spiritual strength. The Bahá'ís everywhere, when the administration is first established, find it very difficult to adjust themselves. They have to learn to obey, even when the Assembly may be wrong, for the sake of unity.

A Brief Compilation on Criticism, continued

“Vicious criticism is indeed a calamity. But its root is lack of faith in the system of Bahá’u’lláh. . . .”

They have to sacrifice their personalities, to a certain extent, in order that the community life may grow and develop as a whole. These things are difficult – but we must realize that they will lead us to a very much greater, more perfect, way of life when the Faith is properly established according to the administration.”

(October 26, 1943)

“Vicious criticism is indeed a calamity. But its root is lack of faith in the system of Bahá’u’lláh (i. e. the administrative order), and lack of obedience to Him – for He has forbidden it! If the Bahá’ís would follow the Bahá’í laws in voting, in electing, in serving and in abiding by Assembly decisions, all this waste of strength through criticizing others could be diverted into co-operation and achieving the Plan.”

(December 18, 1949)

Principles of Criticism

From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice dated July 2, 1996:

“While constructive criticism is encouraged, destructive criticism . . . prevents the rapid growth of the Faith. . . .”

“From this guidance the following principles can be clearly derived: The importance of unity as both the goal of Bahá’u’lláh’s Message and the means for its establishment. Bahá’u’lláh ‘has not only advocated certain principles, but has also provided a mechanism whereby that ideal can be established and perpetuated’, adherence to both of which by the friends is essential for ‘the realization of His goal of world unity’.

“Bahá’ís are ‘fully entitled to address criticisms to their Assemblies and offer their recommendations. When Bahá’ís have addressed their criticisms, suggestions and advice to their Assemblies, including their views ‘about policies or individual members of elected bodies’, they must ‘whole-heartedly accept the advice or decision of the Assembly’.

“There is a clear distinction between, on the one hand, the prohibition of backbiting which would include adverse comments about individuals or institutions made to other individuals privately or publicly, and, on the other hand, the encouragement to unburden oneself of one’s concerns to a Spiritual Assembly, Local or National (or now, also, to confide in a Counsellor or Auxiliary Board member). Thus, although one of the principal functions of the Nineteen Day Feast is to provide a forum for ‘open and constructive criticism and deliberation regarding the state of affairs within the local Bahá’í community’, complaints about the actions of an individual member of an Assembly should be made directly and confidentially to the Assembly itself, not made to other individuals or even raised at a Nineteen Day Feast.

“While constructive criticism is encouraged, destructive criticizing the decisions’ of the Assemblies, prevents the rapid growth of the Faith and repels those who are yet outside the community. Indeed ‘all criticisms and discussions of a negative character which may result in undermining the authority of the Assembly as a body should be strictly avoided. For otherwise the order of the Cause itself will be endangered, and confusion and discord will reign in the community.’ ‘Vicious criticism is indeed a calamity’, the root of which is ‘lack of faith in the system of Bahá’u’lláh’ and failure to follow the ‘Bahá’í laws in voting, in electing, in serving, and in abiding by Assembly decisions.’ ”

Additional Quotations from the Facilitator’s Guide

From “Turning to the Assembly”

“. . . he feels that you should turn to your Local Assembly, in the strictest confidence, and seek their aid and advice. These bodies have the sacred obligation to help, advise, protect and guide the believers in every way within their power when appealed to – indeed they were established just for the purpose of keeping order and unity and obedience to the law of God amongst the believers.

“You should go to them as a child would to its parents . . .”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, September 28, 1941, in *The Local Spiritual Assembly*, p. 16.

“It is incumbent upon every one not to take any step without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and they must assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding and be submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered and well arranged. Otherwise every person will act independently and after his own judgment, will follow his own desire, and do harm to the Cause.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 21.

From “Sharing Critical Thought with Assemblies in a Positive Way”

“Because the Most Great Peace is the object of our longing, a primary effort of the Bahá’í community is to reduce the incidence of conflict and contention, which are categorically forbidden in the Most Holy Book. Does this mean that one may not express critical thought? Absolutely not. How can there be the candor called for in consultation if there is no critical thought? How is the individual to exercise his responsibilities to the Cause, if he is not allowed the freedom to express his views? Has Shoghi Effendi not stated that ‘at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views?’”

The Universal House of Justice, December 29, 1988, in *Rights and Responsibilities: The Complementary Roles of the Individual and Institutions*, p. 15.