

57 STATEMENTS OF FACT RELATED TO THE CONTINUING GUARDIANSHIP

Prefactory Note: In the fall of 1996, the newsgroup known as soc.religion.bahai and run by members of the sans-Guardian Bahá'í Faith carried a number of postings dealing with the Lesser Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. Franklin Schlatter, the secretary for the Mother Bahá'í Council of the United States, managed to get two postings onto the newsgroup, the first of which are the nineteen syllogisms located elsewhere on this Home Page. The first posting challenged other newsgroup participants to provide counter-syllogisms, but the challenge was not taken up by anyone. Instead, others resorted to name-calling and advised the newsgroup to avoid what Schlatter had written. On 11 September, Schlatter's second posting to the newsgroup was briefly disseminated and then it disappeared, apparently because the statements of fact were more factual than the moderators could countenance!

Some weeks later the moderators of the social.religion.bahai newsgroup provided additional credence to such a position when they changed the charter of the newsgroup so that Orthodox Bahá'ís were precluded from providing to the newsgroup their perspective on the continuing Guardianship of the Faith.

What is given here is the posting that appeared and then, within 24 hours, disappeared from the social.religion.bahai newsgroup.

When an individual has been identified as a "Covenant-breaker" it becomes very easy for those who maintain that they are within the Covenant to resort to such emotional, opinion-molding devices as name-calling, guilt by association, stereotyping, smokescreens, and glittering generalities. And whether the person be a loyal follower of the sans-Guardian Universal House of Justice or an accused Covenant-breaker, what gets lost in all the dialogue is that what, in fact, is happening is that we are experiencing a difference in interpretation of the writings, and only the Guardian of the Faith has the mandate from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to resolve such differences. Thus, emotional appeals and/or condemnations become counter-productive in whatever dialogue is developed.

I wonder, therefore: Is it possible for us to communicate our

views without resorting to name-calling and to reach some kind of agreement regarding our disagreements--and especially our differences in interpretation?

If communication (not necessarily "association") is possible, it is clear that those engaged in the dialogue need to establish specific points of agreement and disagreement. As an initial step in this process I'd like for the members of this newsgroup to determine for themselves the veracity or falsehood of each statement in the list of statements that follows. (Call it a true-false test if you will, for all each of us has to do is to identify whether each statement is true or false.) Once you have completed this survey, I'd like to suggest that you add your own *specific* facts to the list and share them via the newsgroup. In this way, progress toward common understandings might be achieved.

1. In His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not set any age limitations on the one appointed as Guardian of the Faith.
2. In the third part of the Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not refer to the Aghsan at all.
3. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not say that the appointment of the Guardian's successor is to be done by means of a will and testament.
4. In the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá it says that it is "incumbent" upon the Guardian to appoint his successor "in his own life-time" so "that differences not appear after his passing."
5. The English translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will says that if the Guardian's lineage is not "matched with a goodly character, then must he, (the guardian of the Cause of God) choose another branch to succeed him."
6. In the English translation of the Will and Testament that Shoghi Effendi provided the believers, the "b" in the word "branch" is in the lower case in the passage that is cited in statement #5.
7. The Will and Testament says that the Hands of the Faith "must

elect from their own number nine persons that shall at all times be occupied in the important service in the work of the guardian of the Cause of God."

8. The Will and Testament says these nine Hands (see #7) "must give their assent to the choice of the one whom the guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor."

9. During Shoghi Effendi's lifetime the Hands of the Faith did not elect from their own number the nine Hands who, according to the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, were to "give their assent to the choice of the one whom the guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor."

10. Shoghi Effendi gave his interpretation regarding the provision in the Will which calls for nine Hands to give their assent to the Guardian's successor, when in the "Bahá'í News" of February 1955 he is quoted as saying: "The statement in the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not imply that the Hands of the Cause of God have been given the authority to overrule the Guardian. 'Abdu'l-Bahá could not have provided for a conflict of authority in the Faith."

11. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that the Hands of the Faith are under the Guardian, that they are to obey his command, and that the Guardian must "continually urge" the Hands "to strive and endeavor to the utmost of their ability to diffuse the sweet savors of God, and to guide all the peoples of the world..."

12. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that the "guardian of the Cause of God" is the "sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body"--meaning the Universal House of Justice.

13. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will provides the Guardian with the power to expel a member of the Universal House of Justice from that body if the member should "commit a sin injurious to the common weal."

14. The Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not specifically give the power to expel a member of the Universal House of Justice to any other person, persons, or institution except the Guardian.

15. The Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not give the Universal House of Justice the power to countermand the Guardian's appointment of his successor, or even to investigate the processes by which the Guardian

chooses his successor.

16. At the time when 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that the Guardian "is its sacred head" the democratic element of the Universal House of Justice had not been elected, so the provision of the Guardian being the "sacred head" was not then in effect, and, thus, the provision, as written, deals with a future relationship between the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice.

17. Because the Hands of the Faith during Shoghi Effendi's ministry did not elect nine Hands "from their own number" who "shall at all times be occupied in the important services in the work of the guardian of the Cause of God," that provision of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá relating to the Hands' assent to the Guardian's choice of a successor was not in effect prior to Shoghi Effendi's passing.

18. In Shoghi Effendi's January 9, 1951, cablegram to the National Assemblies of the East and West, announcing the formation of the International Bahá'í Council, the first word is "Proclaim."

19. In that January 9, 1951, cablegram Shoghi Effendi said that his "historic decision" to establish the International Bahá'í Council at that time was the "most significant milestone in the evolution of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the course of the last thirty years".

20. In his January 9, 1951, cablegram Shoghi Effendi identified the stages through which the International Bahá'í Council would evolve.

21. At no point in his January 9, 1951, cablegram does Shoghi Effendi use the word "dissolve" in his description of the stages through which the International Bahá'í council was to evolve.

22. In a message from the Hands in the Western Hemisphere in May of 1960, page four, they wrote: "All the other Hands of the Faith [except Mason Remey] were entirely united that the International Council as an 'appointed' institution becomes dissolved when it becomes 'elective.'"

23. In a cablegram of March 2, 1951, Shoghi Effendi welcomed the assistance of the newly-formed International Bahá'í Council, and identified Mason Remey as its President.

24. In none of Shoghi Effendi's messages is there to be found the word "temporary" to describe the position of President on the International Bahá'í Council.
25. In their message from the Hands in the Western Hemisphere in May of 1960, Hands of the Cause Grossman, True, and Sears write: "...the 'appointed' phase of which Mr. Remey was the temporary President, would no longer even exist with the same identity after it was democratically elected..."
26. Shoghi Effendi wrote: "That Bahá'u'lláh in His Book of Aqdas, and later 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will--a document which confirms, supplements and correlates the provisions of the Aqdas--have set forth in their entirety those essential elements for the constitution of the world Bahá'í Commonwealth, no one who has read them will deny."
27. In his "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh" Shoghi Effendi identifies two components of the Universal House of Justice, "the democratic election by the representatives of the faithful" and the "hereditary authority" exercised by the Guardian of the Faith.
28. In his January 9, 1951, cablegram Shoghi Effendi stated that its evolution into a Bahá'í Court was an "essential step."
29. In his cablegram of October 8, 1952, launching the world-embracing ten-year crusade, Shoghi Effendi set for a goal "The establishment of a Bahá'í Court in the Holy Land, preliminary to the emergence of the Universal House of Justice."
30. The establishment of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 was not a part of Shoghi Effendi's ten-year crusade goals.
31. In November of 1954 Shoghi Effendi stated that the raising of the Archives Building on Mount Carmel would "herald the construction, in the course of successive epochs of the Formative Age of the Faith, of several other structures, which will serve as the administrative seats of such divinely appointed institutions as the Guardianship, the Hands of the Cause, and the Universal House of Justice."
32. In November of 1957 Shoghi Effendi died.

33. In a message of the Hands of the Faith of November 25, 1957, the Hands wrote: "The first effect of the realization that no successor to Shoghi Effendi could have been appointed by him was to plunge the Hands of the Cause into the very abyss of despair."

34. In the message of November 25, 1957, from the Hands they stated that Shoghi Effendi "in his mysterious insight into the present and future needs of the Bahá'í Community, called into being the International Bahá'í Council and the company of twenty-seven Hands with their Auxiliary Boards, whom in his final communication to the Bahá'ís, he designated "Chief Stewards of the Embryonic World Commonwealth of Bahá'u'lláh."

35. In a resolution adopted by the Hands in 1957 the Hands made the following decision: "We nominate and appoint from our own number to act on our behalf as the Custodians of the Bahá'í World Faith... [named here are nine Hands] to exercise--subject to such directions and decisions as may be given from time to time by us as the Chief Stewards of the Bahá'í World Faith--all such functions, rights and powers in succession to the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, His Eminence the late Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, as are necessary to serve the interests of the Bahá'í World Faith, and this until such time as the Universal House of Justice, upon being duly established and elected in conformity with the Sacred Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, may otherwise determine."

36. Between 1957-1960 Mason Remey maintained a diary known as his "Daily Observations" in which he repeatedly noted that the other Hands of the Cause showed by their attitude that they did not want another Guardian.

37. In his "Daily Observations" Mason Remey records that he attempted to get the other Hands to reconsider their position that the Guardianship of the Faith had ended.

38. At Ridván 1960 Mason Remey issued a proclamation, stating that he was the second Guardian on the basis of his having been identified by Shoghi Effendi as the President, or head, of the International Bahá'í Council, the embryonic Universal House of Justice.

39. Following Mason Remey's proclamation, the other Hands of the Faith labelled Mason Remey and his followers as Covenant Breakers.

40. The French National Spiritual Assembly in 1960 voted to accept Mason Remey as the second Guardian of the Faith.
41. The Hands of the Faith as reported in the "Bahá'í News" of July 1960 "sent Hand of the Cause 'Abu'l Qasim Faizi to France as their representative, with specific instructions to dissolve the National Assembly and call for a new election."
42. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has no provision within it which states that the Hands of the Cause have authority over National Spiritual Assemblies.
43. The Hands of the Faith, not the Guardian of the Cause, set the election of the Universal House of Justice for 1963.
44. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has no provision within it for the Hands of the Cause to determine the election of a Universal House of Justice.
45. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has no provision within it for the Hands of the Faith to consult with the Universal House of Justice.
46. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not give the Hands a position of authority over the Universal House of Justice.
47. Shoghi Effendi interpreted the meaning of the expression "This is the day which will not be followed by night" in the "Bahá'í News" of June, 1950 when he wrote:

"Once the mind and heart have grasped the fact that God guides men through a Mouthpiece, a human being, a Prophet, infallible and unerring, it is only a logical projection of this acceptance to also accept the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardians. The Guardians are the evidence of the maturity of mankind in the sense that at long last men have progressed to the point of having one world, and of needing one world management for human affairs. In the spiritual realm they have also reached the point where God could leave, in human hands (i.e. the Guardians'), guided directly by the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh, as the Master states in His Will, the affairs of His Faith for this

Dispensation. This is what is meant by 'this is the day which will not be followed by night'. In this Dispensation, divine guidance flows on to us in this world after the Prophet's ascension, through, first the Master, and then the Guardians. If a person can accept Bahá'u'lláh's function, it should not present any difficulty to them to also accept what He has ordained in a divinely guided individual in matters pertaining to the Faith."

48. Prior to Shoghi Effendi's passing the accepted definition of a Covenant Breaker was as given by John Ferraby in "All Things Made New" (printed in 1960), p. 251: "These Covenant-breakers profess to accept the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh but they turn away from the Centre of the Cause--in the day of the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdul-Bahá, and in our day, the Guardian..."

49. Following Shoghi Effendi's passing and the assumption of control of the Faith by the Hands and then by the sans-Guardian Universal House of Justice,, the definition of a Covenant Breaker--as given in John Ferraby's "All Things Made New", printed in 1975--became "These Covenant-breakers profess to accept the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh but they turn away from the central authority in the Cause to which all must turn and thereby they deny what they profess to accept." (p. 252)

50. The qualifications for a believer during Shoghi Effendi's ministry were spelled out by Shoghi Effendi in 1925 and included the proviso: "loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will."

51. The changes in the sans-Guardian Faith now make it impossible for the followers of the sans-Guardian Universal House of Justice to adhere to every clause of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

52. Shoghi Effendi wrote in "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh" that the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Aqdas are "inseparable parts of one complete unit". (p. 4)

53. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not specifically give the Universal House of Justice the power to change the provisions of the Will and Testament.

54. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá establishes that the

Huquq, the fixed money offering, is to be "offered through the guardian of the Cause of God."

55. The sans-Guardian Universal House of Justice, to adapt to what it considers new conditions in the Faith, has taken control of the Huquq.

56. The Huquq is not identified in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the "endowments dedicated to charity" that the sans-Guardian Universal House of Justice on 7 December 1969 makes reference to when claiming that the possibility of a break in the line of Guardians is shown in that passage taken from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

57. Within the declaration statement to which Orthodox Bahá'ís subscribe when they join the Faith are the following: "That 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the eldest Son of Bahá'u'lláh, is the appointed Center of His Covenant with the Bahá'ís, the sole Interpreter of His Holy Word, the perfect Exemplar of the Faith and the Author of a divinely-conceived Will and Testament whose immutable provisions constitute the Charter of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh for as long as His Dispensation shall endure." -and- "That Shoghi Effendi was the first Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, appointed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament, the designated Interpreter of the revealed Word of Bahá'u'lláh, the permanent and sacred head of the Universal House of Justice described in that Testament and the one towards whom all Bahá'ís were enjoined to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination in matters of the Faith."

I see all the statements in the preceding series as true. Where do we differ?

Sincerely, Franklin D. Schlatter
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