

# Spiritual Assembly Elections

A study guide on some aspects of Spiritual Assembly elections.  
Written for and approved by the National Spiritual Assembly of  
the Bahá'ís of New Zealand, B.E. 150.

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the Local and National Assemblies by exercising great care in  
the elections, so as to secure the return of the wisest and  
most suitable members." 52 (Shoghi Effendi)*

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conscientiously"19 (Shoghi Effendi)*

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## Introduction

This study guide quotes extensively from the Bahá'í writings as these are the primary source of guidance and understanding. It should ideally be used in study groups where each participant will refer to these writings, and then share his or her thoughts in the process of Bahá'í consultation. This will enable all present to gradually refine and deepen their understanding.

'There is no limit to the study of the Cause. The more we read the Writings, the more truths we can find in them, the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous.' So, although individual insights can be enlightening and helpful, they can also be misleading. The friends must therefore learn to listen to the views of others without being overawed or allowing their faith to be shaken, and to express their own views without pressing them on their fellow Bahá'ís.<sup>1</sup>

To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form.<sup>2</sup>

...consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.<sup>3</sup>

## Bahá'í Administration:

Bahá'í Administration has its origin in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, but a World Order, of which the Bahá'í Administrative Order is the "nucleus" and "pattern",<sup>4</sup> has long been anticipated. For instance in the Old Testament it is written:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.<sup>5</sup>

The institutions and principles of Bahá'u'lláh's "new World Order", His "unique" and "wondrous System"<sup>6</sup>, were developed

and extended into the future by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, most particularly in His Will and Testament.

### **The Significance of the Administrative Order**

The Administrative Order ... may be considered as the framework of the Will [of 'Abdu'l-Bahá]... It will ... demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind.<sup>7</sup>

...the Spirit breathed by Bahá'u'lláh upon the world ... can never permeate and exercise an abiding influence upon mankind unless and until it incarnates itself in a visible Order, which would bear His name, wholly identify itself with His principles, and function in conformity with His laws.<sup>8</sup>

### **Voting in Bahá'í Elections: Democracy in Bahá'í Administration**

...this Administrative Order cannot be said to have been modeled after any of these recognized systems of government [democracy, autocracy, aristocracy], it nevertheless embodies, reconciles and assimilates within its framework such wholesome elements as are to be found in each one of them.<sup>9</sup>

One of the elements of the democratic system of government Shoghi Effendi was referring to as being embodied in Bahá'í Administration is voting in an election. Voting in a Bahá'í election thus becomes a religious and spiritual act.

Voting is a sacred responsibility...<sup>10</sup>

### **The Importance of Bahá'í Elections**

'Abdu'l-Bahá defined certain behaviours and attitudes which members of a Spiritual Assembly should possess and defined a conditional relationship between their acquiring these and the quality of that Assembly's functioning. For example:

The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly... The second condition: they must, when coming together, turn their faces to the Kingdom on high and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion... The honoured members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another...<sup>11</sup>

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold.<sup>12</sup>

The Universal House of Justice has explained that:

...National and Local Spiritual Assemblies can receive divine guidance if they consult in the manner and spirit described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá...<sup>13</sup>

So, in a sense it may be said that the role of Assembly members is to fulfil conditions of attitude and behaviour so that the institution of the Assembly can receive divine guidance. With this perspective it becomes apparent why the responsibility of these members, as well as the responsibility of the voter in choosing them, is so great.

It is also possible for the electorate to be divinely guided in its choice. Here again the standard on which guidance is conditional is very high.

Let us recall His ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] explicit and often-repeated assurances that every Assembly elected in that rarefied atmosphere of selflessness and detachment is, in truth, appointed of God...<sup>14</sup>

## **Prayer is Essential in Bahá'í Elections**

...the elector ... is called upon to vote for none but those whom prayer and reflection have inspired him to uphold.<sup>15</sup>

The electors ... must prayerfully and devotedly and after meditation and reflection elect...<sup>16</sup>

On the election day the friends must wholeheartedly participate in the elections, in unity and amity, turning their hearts to God, detached from all things but Him, seeking His guidance and supplicating His aid and bounty.<sup>17</sup>

## **Understanding is Essential in Bahá'í Elections**

Prayer by itself though is not enough, what is also needed is an understanding<sup>18,19</sup> of the personal qualities best fitting people to be members of Spiritual Assemblies and delegates to National Convention,<sup>20</sup> and an understanding of how prejudices and personal likes and dislikes may prevent voters from recognising these qualities. Shoghi Effendi asks voters to:

...consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.<sup>21</sup> (Emphasis added)

### **What are "...passion ... prejudice..." and "...material consideration..."?**

Passion may be defined as: "any emotion or feeling, as love, desire, anger, hate, fear, grief, joy, hope etc. especially when of a powerful or compelling nature."<sup>22</sup> Although not written about Bahá'í elections the following passages may be helpful in understanding the distorting effect that passion has on judgment:

He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth.<sup>23</sup>

...we must reach a spiritual plane where God comes first and great human passions are unable to turn us away from Him. All the time we see people who either through the force of hate or the passionate attachment they have to another person, sacrifice principle or bar themselves from the Path of God.<sup>24</sup>

Prejudice may be defined as: "an opinion or feeling formed beforehand without knowledge, reason or thought".<sup>25</sup> This opinion or feeling may be favourable or unfavourable. Prejudice always involves injustice. Bahá'u'lláh links being just with being able to see matters as they really are.

#### O SON OF SPIRIT!

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behoveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.<sup>26</sup>

Passion, prejudice and materialism are rife in the world and their influence is not straight away overcome on becoming a Bahá'í. Inevitably then, they effect the outcome of some Bahá'í elections. Amongst the most likely to receive negative prejudice in New Zealand society are Maori and women.

In endeavouring to overcome the effect of these prejudices it would, however, be a mistake for voters to let considerations of race or gender influence their choice because this would itself involve a deviation from principle.<sup>27,28</sup>

The following two quotations from Shoghi Effendi are sometimes thought to be asking voters to consider race in their voting:

The Assembly should be representative of the choicest and most varied and capable elements in every Bahá'í community.<sup>29</sup>

...establish Assemblies in which at least the majority of the believers will be Maoris, if not all.<sup>30</sup>

But this is a misunderstanding. Voters are asked to, "consider ... the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities..."<sup>31</sup> Here the word "qualities" is used in the specific sense of meaning "qualification".<sup>32</sup> Race is not a qualification.<sup>33</sup> The first quotation above may be understood as an expression of the ideal where Bahá'í communities contain a diversity of choice, capable people from whom the most qualified will be elected to service. In the second quotation Shoghi Effendi is referring to the establishment of Spiritual Assemblies in localities where Maori are the predominant people.<sup>34</sup>

In trying to recognise the "qualities" which fit people to be delegates to National Convention and members of Spiritual Assemblies voters will have to confront and overcome their prejudices.

#### **Questions for consultation:**

What are some prejudices of race and gender?

How can voters recognise these in themselves?

How can they overcome them?

It may be that the envisioned diversity in those who are elected will progressively arise as larger proportions of Bahá'í membership come from diverse groups, as these people find refuge in the Cause and become its supporters, and as voting progressively becomes free from "... passion ... prejudice", and "...material consideration ..."

No country in the world can legitimately claim to be free from a heritage of discrimination against some minority within its midst. Through their acceptance of the claim of Bahá'u'lláh, and their participation in Bahá'í community life, the members of these minority groups will, in due course, be able to assume their rightful place as full participants in the process of building the World Order.<sup>35</sup>

Shoghi Effendi also calls upon the voter to consider who to choose, "...irrespective of any material consideration..." Something is material if it pertains, "...to the physical rather

than the spiritual or intellectual aspect of things."<sup>36</sup>

This attempt to define "material" has in part implied that the opposite of "material" is that which is "spiritual" or "intellectual". But the meanings and implications of the words "spiritual" and "intellectual" in the Bahá'í writings are different from those of everyday non-Bahá'í usage.

The word 'spiritual' when used in a non-Bahá'í context has connotations which could mislead the individual. To be spiritual is not to hold one's head in the clouds and walk in the air, or become careless of the affairs of this world.

The Bahá'í concept of spirituality is very simple. When the soul draws near to Bahá'u'lláh it becomes spiritual. A true Bahá'í whose heart is closely linked with Bahá'u'lláh will grow in spirituality. He will become so enamoured of Him that he will obey His teachings wholeheartedly and serve His Cause with the utmost devotion.<sup>37</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh has stated quite clearly in His Writings the essential requisites for our spiritual growth, and these are stressed again and again by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His talks and Tablets. One can summarise them briefly in this way: The recital each day of one of the Obligatory Prayers with pure-hearted devotion. The regular reading of the Sacred Scriptures, specifically at least each morning and evening, with reverence, attention and thought. Prayerful meditation on the teachings, so that we may understand them more deeply, fulfil them more faithfully, and convey them more accurately to others. Striving each day to bring our behaviour more into accordance with the high standards that are set forth in the Teachings. Teaching the Cause of God. Selfless service in the work of the Cause and in the carrying on of our trade or profession.

These points, expressed in other words, have already been conveyed to the friends in Europe by the Counsellors, but the House of Justice wishes to stress them, because they represent the path towards the attainment of true spirituality that has been laid down by the Manifestation of God for this age.<sup>38</sup>

What the Bahá'í writings have to say about the human intellect, or the faculty of understanding, is also different. This needs to be recognised to avoid confusing material learning with spiritual understanding. It is the heart which receives the latter.

The temple of man is like unto a mirror, his soul is as the sun, and his mental faculties even as the rays that emanate from that source of light.<sup>39</sup>

God's greatest gift to man is that of intellect, or understanding.<sup>40</sup>

...[the gift of understanding] giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation.<sup>41</sup>

Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth.<sup>42</sup>

The essence of understanding is to testify to one's poverty, and submit to the Will of the Lord, the Sovereign, the Gracious, the All-Powerful.<sup>43</sup>

...implore God to open to your hearts the portals of true understanding that ye may be apprised of that of which no one is apprised.<sup>44</sup>

...he [a true seeker] 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, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy.<sup>45</sup>

...the knowledge of God and His Manifestations, the power to discover the mysteries of life, to comprehend religious truth, and to understand the reality of man is not dependent upon academic education. This knowledge is bestowed upon the individual by God. And it is the heart of man which receives it and becomes the wellspring of enlightenment, power and understanding.

Bahá'u'lláh has clearly stated that the prerequisite for becoming the repository of such knowledge and understanding is detachment from this world...

True understanding is the act of perceiving the inner meaning and significance of a truth...<sup>46</sup>

### **Question for consultation:**

How might voting be influenced by "passion... prejudice, and ... material consideration"?

Some questions we might ask ourselves are: Do we vote for someone simply because we have a personal attachment to them? Do we vote for someone only because he or she appears to have a high social or professional status in the world? Do we vote for someone only because he is a dynamic speaker, or because he inspires or amuses us on the platform? Do we look only at those who are in the limelight or do we seek for the ... qualities [...] of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.] as evinced in less visible services to the Cause of God?<sup>47</sup>

### The Qualities

I feel that reference to personalities before the election would give rise to misunderstanding and differences. What the friends should do is to get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals. We should refrain from influencing the opinion of others, of canvassing for any particular individual, but should stress the necessity of getting fully acquainted with the qualifications of membership ... and of learning more about one another through direct, personal experience rather than through the reports and opinions of our friends.<sup>48</sup>

The electors ... must prayerfully and devotedly and after meditation and reflection elect faithful, sincere, experienced, capable and competent souls who are worthy of membership...<sup>49</sup> (Emphasis added)

...consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.<sup>50</sup> (Emphasis added)

The strength and progress of the Bahá'í Community depend upon the election of pure, faithful and active souls...<sup>51</sup> (Emphasis added)

Meantime we must do all we can to strengthen and support the Local and National Assemblies by exercising great care in the elections, so as to secure the return of the wisest and most suitable members...<sup>52</sup> (Emphasis added)

...familiarize themselves with the character and abilities of those who are active in the community so that, when the time for an election comes, they will already have some idea of the people from among whom they must make their choice.<sup>53</sup> (Emphasis added)

### **Questions for consultation:**

What do each of these qualities mean and how might they be recognised ?

What does it mean to "... best combine the necessary qualities..."?

### **Other Abilities**

It is sometimes thought to be important to have people with financial, secretarial or managerial abilities as members of Spiritual Assemblies. But the Universal House of Justice directs our attention back from these thoughts to the qualifications of membership given by Shoghi Effendi:

It is also expected that, through training and experience in the process and spirit of Bahá'í elections, the members of the electorate will have raised their consciousness of their responsibility to vote for only those who satisfy the requirements that the Guardian has outlined...

It should also be realized that those dedicated souls who are elected have the responsibility to call upon capable and expert individuals to serve on appointed bodies on which authority can be devolved by the Assembly.<sup>54</sup>

Spiritual Assemblies properly operate and have their effect by divine and mysterious processes.

These Spiritual Assemblies are aided by the Spirit of God. Their defender is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Over them He spreadeth His Wings. What bounty is there greater than this?... These Spiritual Assemblies are shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions... They, indeed, are the potent sources of the progress of man, at all times and under all conditions.<sup>55</sup>

## **Changes in Spiritual Assembly Membership**

Periodic changes in Spiritual Assembly membership are desirable as "...new blood always adds to the energy of the group..."<sup>56</sup> and, "... brings a fresh outlook into the discussions of any assembly..."<sup>57</sup> The selection of any new members however, depends entirely upon the prayerful decision of the electorate, and any discussion should occur, "...without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals."<sup>58</sup>

### **Electioneering**

Nomination and electioneering are accepted parts of most non-Bahá'í elections, and it is well known amongst the Bahá'ís that these practices have no part in the Bahá'í electoral process. However electioneering may still occur in Bahá'í elections.

If an individual ostentatiously places himself in the public eye with the seeming purpose of getting people to vote for him, the members of the electorate regard this as self-conceit and are affronted by it; they learn to distinguish between someone who is well known as an unintentional result of active public service and someone who makes an exhibition of himself merely to attract votes..<sup>59</sup>

### **One Approach**

To befittingly discharge the "sacred responsibility" of voting is not an easy task. It increasingly requires effort on the part of the voter. What follows is a system which some people have found helpful as a way of focusing their attention on the "qualities" they should be looking for. It may not be helpful to every voter and could be modified.

Before the election day: (1) Pray. (2) Study and reflect. (3) Give each person a score for each "quality" (eg. 1-5). (4) Add up each person's total score. (5) Consider again a number of the highest scoring people. (6) Pray and reflect again on who, "best combine[s] the necessary qualities..." (7) Choose who to vote for.

(8) Repeat this part of the process several times over a period of days, weeks or months.

At the election meeting: (1) Pray. (2) Be open to further thoughts ("Let us recall His ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] explicit and often-repeated assurances that every Assembly elected in that rarefied atmosphere of selflessness and detachment is, in truth, appointed of God...")<sup>60</sup> (3) Vote.

Name	Unquestioned Loyalty	Selfless Devotion	Well-trained Mind	Recognised Ability	Mature Experience	Score
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

### After the Election

One's vote should be kept confidential. It is not permissible to make any reference whatsoever to individual names.<sup>61</sup>

Once Assembly elections are over, the results should be conscientiously and unquestionably accepted by the entire body of the believers, not necessarily because they represent the voice of truth or the will of Bahá'u'lláh, but for the supreme purpose of maintaining unity and harmony in the Community.<sup>62</sup>

Inevitably, in any form of election, worthy individuals fail to be elected simply because they are not widely known. This is true in the system that uses nominations and electioneering as it will be in the Bahá'í system. However, this is not the point. Election to an Assembly, from a Bahá'í point of view, is not a right that people are entitled to, or an honour to which they should aspire; it is a duty and responsibility to which they may be called...

It is also expected that, through training and experience in the process and spirit of Bahá'í elections, the members of the electorate will have raised their consciousness of their responsibility to vote for only those who satisfy the requirements that the Guardian has outlined. They will, therefore, see it as their continuing duty to familiarize themselves with the character and abilities of those who are active in the community so that, when the time for an election comes, they will already have some idea of the people from among whom they must make their choice.<sup>63</sup>

The friends are called upon to give their whole-hearted 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.<sup>64</sup>

The duties of those whom the friends have freely and conscientiously elected as their representatives are no less vital and binding than the obligations of those who have chosen them. Their function is not to dictate, but to consult, and consult not only among themselves, but as much as possible with the friends whom they represent. They must regard themselves in no other light but that of chosen instruments for a more efficient and dignified presentation of the Cause of God. They should never be led to suppose that they are the central ornaments of the body of the Cause, intrinsically superior to others in capacity or merit, and sole promoters of its teachings and principles. They should approach their task with extreme humility, and endeavour, by their open-mindedness, their high sense of justice and duty, their candour, their modesty, their entire devotion to the welfare and interests of the friends, the Cause, and humanity, to win, not only the confidence and the genuine support and respect of those whom they serve, but also their esteem and real affection. They must, at all times, avoid the spirit of exclusiveness, the atmosphere of secrecy, free themselves from a domineering attitude, and banish all forms of prejudice and passion from their deliberations. They should, within the limits of wise discretion, take the friends into their confidence, acquaint them with their plans, share with them their problems and anxieties, and seek their advice and counsel."<sup>65</sup>

## References and Notes:

1. The Universal House of Justice, including in a quotation from Shoghi Effendi, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p89.
2. Shoghi Effendi, quoted in *Wellspring of Guidance*, pp88-89.
3. Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'i Consultation*, Universal House of Justice Compilation, p1.
4. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p144.
5. *Isaiah 9:6-7*, King James Version.
6. Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p146.
7. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p144
8. ibid., p19.
9. ibid., p154.
10. Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America 1932-1946*, p3.
11. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp87-88.
12. ibid., p87.
13. *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973*, pp43-44.
14. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'i Administration*, p65.
15. ibid., p136.
16. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 30 January, 1923, *Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on The Spiritual Character of Bahá'i Elections*, p7.
17. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 27 February, 1923, ibid.
18. The importance of understanding is mentioned in many passages of the Bahá'i writings. For example, "Know though that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favours vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favours ... is the gift of understanding... This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, XCV.)
19. "It is the duty of the friends individually to become more intelligent voters and vote only after studying the situation conscientiously." (Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 16 March 1933, written on his behalf to an individual, *Lights of Guidance*, 2nd. Ed. #64, p19.)
20. "In regard to your question about qualifications of delegates and Assembly members: the qualifications which he [the Guardian] outlines are really applicable to anyone we elect to a Bahá'i office, whatever its nature." (Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles dated 24 October, 1947, *Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on The Spiritual Character of Bahá'i Elections*, p3.)
21. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'i Administration*, p88.
22. *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*.
23. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, CXXV.
24. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to an individual, dated 4 October, 1950, *Unfolding Destiny*, pp457-458.
25. *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*.
26. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Part 1 - From the Arabic, #2.
27. "Through compromise we will never be able to establish our Faith or win others' hearts to it. This involves often great personal sacrifice, but we know that, when we do the right thing, God gives us strength to carry it out, and we attract His blessing." (Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, dated 7 May, 1957, *The Bahá'i Life*, Universal House of Justice compilation, p22.)
28. "While Bahá'ís should be educated to offer every possible opportunity to members of minority groups to serve the Faith, we are enjoined by the beloved Guardian to bear in mind that 'The strength and progress of the Bahá'i Community depends upon the election of pure, faithful and active souls..." (The Universal House of Justice, from a letter to a National Spiritual Assembly, dated 25 January, 1972.)
29. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter to an individual, dated 11 August, 1933, *Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on The Spiritual Character of Bahá'i Elections*, p3.

30. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, *Arohanui, Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand*, #66, p74.
31. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p88.
32. This can be deduced from considering the following two quotations together:
1. "What the friends should do is to get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership." (Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p47. Emphasis added)
  2. "...consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognised ability and mature experience." (Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p88. Emphasis added)
33. Discrimination on the basis of race for the purpose of encouraging and stimulating minority peoples is a Bahá'í principle. It is embodied in the Bahá'í electoral process; "So great and vital is this principle that in such circumstances, as when an equal number of ballots have been cast in an election, or where the qualifications for any office are balanced as between the various races, faiths or nationalities within the community, priority should unhesitatingly be accorded the party representing the minority." (Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp29-30.) This principle is applied after the voting and not incorporated in it.
34. "...special effort should be made, not only to contact the Maoris in the cities and draw them into the Faith, but to go to their towns and live amongst them and establish Assemblies in which at least the majority of the believers will be Maoris, if not all." (Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf, *Arohanui, Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand*, #66, p74.)
35. The Universal House of Justice, from a letter written on its behalf to an individual, dated 13 May, 1992.
36. *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*.
37. Adib Taherzadeh, then member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe, from a letter to the Bahá'ís of Ireland, undated (Circa 1982).
38. The Universal House of Justice, from a letter written on its behalf to the Bahá'ís of Europe (date unknown). Reproduced in *Bahá'í Canada*, 8:5, July 1986.
39. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp346-347.
40. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p41.
41. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, XCV.
42. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoting in *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p33.
43. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp155-156.
44. ibid., p188.
45. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, CXXV.
46. Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Vol. 3*, pp94-96.
47. Eunice Braun, *The March of the Institutions*, p12.
48. Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p47.
49. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 27 February, 1923, *Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on The Spiritual Character of Bahá'í Elections*, p7.
50. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p88.
51. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter to the friends in Persia, dated 9 April, 1932, *Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on The Spiritual Character of Bahá'í Elections*, p3.
52. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf dated 4 March, 1925, to an individual.
53. The Universal House of Justice, quoted in a letter from the International Teaching Centre to all Continental Counsellors, dated 19 December, 1988.
54. Ibid.
55. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in *God Passes By*, p332.
56. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to an individual, dated 27 April, 1932, *Lights of Guidance* 2nd. Ed. #63, p19.
57. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to an individual, dated 21 May, 1946, *Lights of Guidance* 1st. Ed. #109, p35.
58. Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p47.

59. The Universal House of Justice, quoted in a letter from the International Teaching Centre to all Continental Counsellors, dated 19 December, 1988.
60. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p65.
61. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter to the friends in Persia, dated 16 January, 1932, *Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on The Spiritual Character of Bahá'í Elections*, p2.
62. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to an individual, dated 10 July, 1939, *Lights of Guidance*, 2nd. Ed. #46, pp12-13.
63. The Universal House of Justice, quoted in a letter from the International Teaching Centre to all Continental Counsellors, dated 19 December, 1988.
64. The Universal House of Justice, from the message dated Naw-Rúz 1974, to the Bahá'ís of the World.
65. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p64.





