

## ANSWERS TO UNASSAILABLE FOUNDATION

### 1. What is meant by the “ornament” and “vesture” in this context?

By ornament (ie a beautiful object) and a vesture (ie clothing/dress) is meant the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, which is the instrument He has established as the guarantor for the establishment of a world civilisation.

### 2. What are the “virtues” with which the Bahá'í community has been endowed?

The most important virtue is unity. The second is diversity. The Bahá'í community, despite 150 years of trials and tests, has remained united and has become the single most diverse, yet unified body of people on earth. The other great virtue is that the Bahá'í community has an Administrative Order which allows it to work with unity of vision and action in all its undertakings. And this Administrative Order itself has many new virtues and characteristics which are new and unique and which cannot be found in any of the known systems of human governance.

### 3. What has been the cause of strife and malice and mischief amongst the people in the past?

The main cause of fights and hatreds and disunity among the people in the past has been the different interpretations of the texts of the Holy Books by the religious leaders, who each, according to their own limited understanding, held on to their own particular version of “the Truth” and then gathered some people around them and created sects. These sects would then fight each other, each one believing that they were right. The main reason behind this, was of course, that there was no firm Covenant established by the Prophets for the believers to follow. Because of the immaturity of the people and the conditions in past times, such a firm Covenant could not have been established any way. The other reason for the hatreds being perpetuated, was that most of the people had no education or schooling and were totally ignorant. They, therefore, could not investigate the truth for themselves and all of their ideas and beliefs were just based on what the priests told them, a lot of which were superstitions and dogmas and rituals. And as these dogmas and rituals developed differently among different denominations, this again became a cause of strife and prejudice between people. The other cause of war and bloodshed has been the rule of dictators and totalitarian regimes who forcefully came to power, because there was no way of stopping them. Among the injustices which led to mischief and malice between people included the unjust distribution of wealth and the large gap between the rich and the poor. Dominant people enslaved the weak; men enslaved women, etc

### 4. Name at least 15 essential prerequisites of sustainable peace, concord, understanding and unity, which Bahá'u'lláh has incorporated into this most mighty Revelation.

1. **“...This Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Bahá'u'lláh has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances (Universal House of Justice). Therein lies the secret of its strength.”** Shoghi Effendi, WOB. For further details see answer to question 11: “What is different with the institutions which the Bahá'ís are building?”
2. Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed the Oneness of God, which means that for the first time in history, people can recognise that there is only one Source of inspiration for every one and that all are the children of one God.

3. He has also proclaimed the oneness of religion, which removes all of the age-old barriers which were erected between religions, each claiming that their own religion was the unique way to God.
4. He has also proclaimed the oneness of humanity, which naturally eliminates all forms of racial, ethnic and national prejudices which caused and are still causing so much suffering and hatred throughout the ages and in our own century.
5. Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed the equality of men and women, which straightaway eliminates the prejudices held against one half of the human race for so long, as being an inferior race.
6. Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed independent investigation of truth. This means that people will no longer believe in something just because their parents or priests tell them to, but have the duty to base their faith on personal search.
7. Bahá'u'lláh has abolished the institution of priesthood, which naturally removes a huge barrier to strife and division, and removes the “mediator” between man and God.
8. Bahá'u'lláh advocates universal education for both boys and girls, which means every one can actually read everything and decide for themselves what to do and what not to do, and will not blindly follow some “guru” who claims he has the truth.
9. Bahá'u'lláh advocates the adoption of a universal auxiliary language to be taught in all the schools of the world, so that wherever one may go, it will be as though one is entering one’s own home. Diversity of language has been and still is, a huge barrier between people, and misunderstandings have always created divisions and wars. In the Bahá’í world, the prejudices of language will be removed, as people will actually be able to communicate with each other effectively.
10. Power in the Bahá’í Faith is not invested in individuals, but rather in democratically elected bodies, which get frequently re-elected. This means that power-seeking individuals will never be allowed to take charge of things and gather a following around them. This has been a great source of wars and hatreds in the past, where ambitious individuals have tried to rule over the masses.
11. Also in the system of elections, all the negative elements found in, for example, current democracies, are totally absent. For example, there is no electioneering or propaganda in the Bahá’í system. In fact, the voters are told that if the odour of personal ambition is smelt from any one, then that person should definitely not be voted for. This in itself stops the rise to power of dictators and demagogues, which has been the cause of so much suffering in the world. The atmosphere in which the elections are conducted, is equally as important as the mechanics of Bahá’í Administration. The elections are performed in a prayerful and spiritual atmosphere and the outcome is regarded as an expression of the will of God. “An election thus conducted portrays an aspect of that organic unity of the inner and outer realities of human life which is necessary to the construction of a mature society in this new Age.” (Universal House of Justice, Individual Rights and Freedoms in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p.10)
12. Bahá'u'lláh has established a new system of consultation, decision-making and conflict management. Decisions arrived at by unanimous or majority vote are wholeheartedly adhered to by every one, even if they are wrong, in order to maintain unity. Consultation is carried out in a spiritual atmosphere of prayer and reflection. ***“They should consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High, and as beholding Him Who is the Unseen”*** (*Kitab-i-Aqdas, parag 30*) Ideas put forward do not belong to one person, but to the whole group. Diversity of opinion and frank and open expression of

one's views are encouraged. *“The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions.”* (‘Abdu'l-Bahá)

13. Bahá'u'lláh advocates the establishment of a world government and world tribunal, where all the disputes of the nations are settled once and for all, and so a huge cause of strife and war will be removed, as every one abides by the decisions of this world government. (cf the Lesser Peace)
14. Bahá'u'lláh teaches collective security by total and multilateral disarmament, which straightaway removes the means by which people have shed each other's blood, especially during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
15. One of the functions of the world government will be to make sure that the resources of the planet are equitably distributed between people, thus eliminating abject poverty and gross accumulation of wealth. When every one has enough to live comfortably, then they don't rebel against each other.
16. Bahá'u'lláh has enjoined: *“Consort ye with the followers of all religions in a spirit of amity and concord.”* This creates a new dynamic in the relationship of the followers of religions with each other, in that they are no longer supposed to shun each other, but become friends with each other.
17. Bahá'u'lláh teaches the harmony of science and religion as the two most potent forces in human life, representing the organic unity between material and spiritual realities. This removes the artificial barriers historically constructed between religion and science, faith and reason. (This organic unity of the inner and outer aspects of life is embodied in all the institutions of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Cf the Institution of the House of Worship, definition of faith, etc)
18. The **supreme safeguard** of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh which will guarantee the rule of justice and maintenance of unity in the world is that He has established the Institution of the Universal House of Justice and assured His guidance to it: *“God will, verily, inspire them with whatsoever He willeth”*. Through this Institution, He has ensured **flexibility** and **progressiveness** in the entire System.

##### 5. How does this passage anticipate the evolution of successorship in the Bahá'í System?

First of all this passage, as in all the other passages of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, anticipates and prefigures historical events and the experience of humanity. Here Bahá'u'lláh has clearly established the Branches (a term referred to the male descendents of Bahá'u'lláh, ie 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi) as the centres of the Cause after Himself (1892-1957), and after them, the Universal House of Justice (since 1963). He then saw the possibility of a gap between the termination of the institution of the Branches and the establishment of the House of Justice (1957-1963). The institution that filled the gap was that of the Hands of the Cause of God (“the people of Baha” “who speak not except by His leave and judge not save in accordance with what God hath decreed in this Tablet”).

In summary:

Bahá'u'lláh's passing: 1892

'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry (The Most Great Branch): 1892-1921

Shoghi Effendi's ministry (The distinguished Branch): 1921-1957

Hands of the Cause of God: 1957-1963

Universal House of Justice: 1963

##### 6. How does this passage relate to the 4 pillars of the unity of God as symbolised the Most Great Name?

The four pillars are: the Deity, Prophethood (Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb), the Branches (Centre of the Covenant 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi the Guardian with the

function of interpretation), and the Universal House of Justice (function of legislation and implementation of the Divine Law)

**7. What is meant by an institution?**

An institution is an organised body for promotion of a public object, such as the Church, or the secular government.

**8. Why are the people so sceptical of institutions?**

Because all institutions, whether religious or secular, have become so corrupt with fraudulent, hypocritical and power-seeking individuals that they rarely deliver what they promise and preach. There are many examples from both history and the present time. Look at the atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion in the Dark Ages, for example, in Europe, when one third of the population of Europe was destroyed by the Church. Look at the corruption in the old Soviet empire, which eventually led to its collapse.

**9. Why do most institutions become corrupted?**

Because they do not have proper directions of governance; also because they are man-made and therefore, by their very nature defective, with no safeguards to protect them from corruption.

**10. Why do we need to have institutions in society?**

If there were no institutions, there would be chaos. *“Regard the world as a human body”*, says Bahá'u'lláh. A human body needs organs that govern and co-ordinate its functions at all levels, in the form of the nervous system, which has branches all over the over body. Any civilised society will, therefore, need organised bodies (ie institutions) to harmonise and co-ordinate its activities, so that order could be established.

**11. What is different with the institutions which the Bahá'ís are building?**

The major and fundamental difference between Bahá'í institutions and all the others we have known up to now, is that the Bahá'í institutions are divine in origin and not at all man-made. So they are designed by the All-Knowing Architect, who has given detailed instructions on how to build the building and how it should function. Bahá'u'lláh has also created unassailable safeguards so corruption would not creep into the system.

**12. What does Jesus Christ say in the Gospel regarding the matter of succession and the future Christian administration?**

Christ actually says very little about succession, and absolutely nothing on future Christian administration. His only statement on the succession was to Peter, His foremost disciple: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18)

**13. Why did Christianity split into several denominations?**

Because there was varying interpretations of the meaning of the Gospels and no real directions as to the future organisation of the Church. So different religious leaders based their own interpretations on vague statements in the Gospels and each held his own view to be right and they could not come to a proper agreement. Therefore, the religion split into several denominations, a process that continues till today.

**14. What did Muhammad say in the Qur'an regarding the matter of succession and the future Islamic administration?**

Again, there is nothing in the Qur'an regarding the most important matter of succession which became the greatest cause of schism in Islam after the passing of the Prophet. However, there are some more specific laws regarding the administration and social structure that Islam should take, such as the laws of marriage, divorce, etc

**15. What are the most distinguishing features of the System brought by Bahá'u'lláh?**

The most distinguishing feature is that all the laws, regulations, principles, institutions which the Bahá'í system has, are ordained by Bahá'u'lláh Himself either directly in the Kitab-i-Aqdas and the Tablets that complement it, or by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Writings. The other equally important feature is that Bahá'u'lláh clearly appointed His successors in both the Kitab-i-Aqdas and in an unprecedented Will which He left for every one to see. In these Writings, He appointed the Branches ('Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi) and the Universal House of Justice as His successors. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá left His Will and Testament in which He appointed the Guardian and the House of Justice as His twin successors. There are therefore no misunderstandings for any one regarding any of the institutions present in the System of Bahá'u'lláh.

**16. What is the Bahá'í Administrative Order founded upon?**

It's founded upon the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, particularly the Most Holy Book, the Book of Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

**17. What is concretely so different with the institutions of the Bahá'í Faith?**

The nature, origin and validity of the institutions of the Faith are all unique in the world's religious and secular history. Some of these features have been discussed above. The other very important feature is the elasticity and flexibility incorporated into the system, in that Bahá'u'lláh has given the House of Justice the right to legislate on laws not outwardly revealed in the Writings according to the needs of the time, and then, after the lapse of a period of time, when the conditions and needs of the time change, then House of Justice has the power to abrogate those same laws. This is in addition to the progressive application of the laws, which is another feature of flexibility and progressiveness inherent in the system.

**18. What is the guarantee that a degenerate evolution into a dictatorial, centralised superpower will not take place in the Bahá'í model of civilisation?**

The greatest guarantee is the existence of the Universal House of Justice, which Bahá'u'lláh has Himself established and promised His unfailing and infallible protection to it. *“God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth.”* What the establishment of the House of Justice means is that Bahá'u'lláh has endowed a global community, a microcosm of humanity itself, with the capacity to think and act as one soul in one body. (cf organic growth and maturation of embryonic Bahá'í institutions, progressive decentralisation, and subsequent increasing responsibilities given to local and national institutions).

The others are all enshrined in the nature of the Bahá'í administration: elections, the lack of propaganda and electioneering, the qualities of the electorate, the atmosphere of the elections, the principles of consultation pervading all the institutions, etc. One also has to remember that humanity is evolving into maturity, such that individuals will not even want to accept leadership except for service to the human race. And even then, power will not be invested in ambitious, power-seeking individuals.

**19. One of the commonly asked questions from the Bahá'ís is: "How many Bahá'ís are there in the world?" How would you answer this question in a wise way by widening the vision of the people?**

All great movements and civilisations have started off very small, with one individual. And at the beginning of every great movement or religion, it was ignored or dismissed or persecuted. But then gradually it grew until it began to exert lasting and great influence on the world. It's the same with the Bahá'í Faith. It is like a living organism, which is growing slowly, but healthily throughout the world. At the moment it's only in its embryonic stage, and beginning to emerge from obscurity. Despite this, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the Bahá'í Faith is the second most widespread religion on earth after Christianity, and that's a pretty tall order, considering that Christianity did not even reach the ends of Europe until 1000 years after its inception. There are at the moment around 6 million Bahá'ís around the world, representing the cross section of the human race, with members from every imaginable race, nation, tribe, religion and class. This in itself forms a critical mass, just like in a nuclear reaction, which can exert incredible influence, although one would not think so by looking at the sheer size of the mass.

**20. How come the Bahá'í Faith has not attracted more people to itself after 150 years?**

One of the reasons is that in the Bahá'í faith, aggressive proselytising and preaching as is common in previous religions, is forbidden. Also forceful conversion of people is also forbidden, as again was the case in past times. As we all know, this is how religions spread widely in the past. Examples: Christian and Islamic Faiths. The Bahá'ís believe in independent investigation of truth and it is in this spirit that they use every legitimate method such as travelling to live in areas where there are no Bahá'ís, personal friendships, and the media to share these wonderful teachings with the people. The other reason is that the Bahá'í Faith does not offer people the kind of comfortable individualist salvation formulae mixed with a whole lot of rituals and superstitions that so many people seem to want to engage in. To be a Bahá'í means that one does not ask: "What's in it for me? What can I get out of this religion?" Instead, a Bahá'í will ask: "What do I have to offer? In what way can I better the condition of the people?" Just as Christ said: "Whoever believes in Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me." Of course, individual salvation and reform go hand-in-hand with social salvation and reform. In Bahá'u'lláh's teachings both individual and social happiness are found. The other reason why there aren't more Bahá'ís around yet, is that over the last couple of centuries, religion has lost more and more of its relevance in the affairs of humanity, and there has been a greater and greater gap created between science and religion, due to the organised religions being corrupted in themselves and out of touch with reality. The result has been the terrible spread of cancerous materialism, where people no longer feel that their spirit also needs to be fed, or to look for solutions to the world's problems from a spiritual perspective, although this spiritual sickness is of course the source of all the troubles. Therefore, they do not pay attention to the claims and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, which constitute the remedy for both personal and social problems in the world. However, we do believe that as the man-made formulae and theories – such as communism and capitalism - which currently "govern" our world, continue to deteriorate and crumble, with all the suffering that it will bring in its wake, more and more people will become disillusioned with them, and they will then search for new solutions. It is then that you will see great numbers becoming Bahá'ís.

**21. What is the ultimate safeguard of this Revelation? Explain your answer.**

The ultimate safeguard is the Universal House of Justice, because it has the assurance of Divine guidance by Bahá'u'lláh Himself. In this way, the House of Justice has

conferred infallibility in all its decisions and because every one recognises this fact, they will accept wholeheartedly what the House of Justice says. In this way, the unity of the Cause is preserved.

**22. What is the current attitude toward power and authority? How does the Bahá'í view differ from this current conception?**

The prevalent attitude toward power and authority is that to become powerful and a leader is the highest station a human being could achieve – a person is considered successful if he makes it to the top such that he can exert his authority over others and becomes a leader that one looks up to. Often with this position come also a lot of money, wealth and fame. A lot of people then abuse this position once they've reached it, to further improve their own gain and become dictators, in a small or big way. The Bahá'í attitude is diametrically opposed to this view. For a Bahá'í the greatest station one can hope to achieve, is to become a servant of humanity, so as to serve others in a spirit of humility and selflessness. There are, moreover, no privileges attached to becoming, for example, a member of an institution – no fame, no money, no individual authority over others. Besides, only those people are elected who really don't want to be in a position of leadership, and those who do, are not elected!

**23. Compare and contrast the Bahá'í system of consultation with the methods of decision-making prevalent in the world today.**

The methods of decision-making prevalent today can best be seen in the governments of the world: there is either a dictatorship, where one individual makes all the decisions himself, despite what every one else may say; there is oligarchy, where a small group of selfish and power-thirsty people make decisions for every one else (such as in communism); there is at best a democracy, where decisions are reached again by a group of elected people after various political parties constantly clash with each other and fight with each other, because each party believes their opinion is right. Then the winning party will make decisions. There is then the president or prime minister who has the final word on any decisions reached at by the parliament. So much time and money and effort are wasted in the clash of the various parties. Look at the European countries, for example, whose system of government is a model for the world at the moment: you have the far right, national front party; the right, conservative party; the labour, left party; the far left, socialist party; the green, so-called environmental party, etc, etc, each of whom are trying to gain power and make decisions for every one else. There is little or no consultation, and every one tries hard to push their own opinion forward.

Well, the Bahá'í system of consultation and decision-making are diametrically opposed to even the best that the present or previous generations have come up with.

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains beautifully what this process of consultation entails. First of all, there has to be a prayerful atmosphere created. So the group turns to God and asks for guidance and assistance. Secondly, individuals put their opinions forward in a spirit of selflessness and humility, not as though that opinion was their own, but that it is a contribution towards finding the truth. Then that individual will not get hurt if someone else expresses an entirely opposite opinion. Decisions are reached only after frank and open consultation, and unanimously. There is also no one individual at the top who has to give his final word.

**24. What is the definition and purpose of consultation according to Abdu'l-Bahá? Memorise the quote.**

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains: “The shining spark of truth comes forth only after the clash of differing opinions” So the purpose of consultation is to attain the truth, and true consultation involves the interaction of different opinions.

**25. Why is the maturity of the world related to kingship?**

Because a mature individual will not be seeking a position of leadership, as it brings so much responsibility with it. Kings are by their very nature, single individuals with a great deal of responsibility for their people. A mature person will therefore not be willing to take on all of that responsibility alone. It is related to the spiritual evolution of mankind and the attitude toward leadership, power and authority that we talked about earlier.

**26. What is the “cup” with which we should become intoxicated?**

The cup of the love of God and recognition of the greatness of this Day and the great privilege we have to become promoters of true unity and spirituality.

**27. Some may interpret this quote to mean that Bahá'ís are not to accept positions of authority in society. Is this interpretation true or false? Explain your answer.**

False. It just means that a Bahá'í should not be fooled and blinded by the glitter and glamour of earthly power and sovereignty and imagine that he's attained his life's goal if he's in a position of great responsibility and honour. Rather he should look at it as a way of service to the human race, and if at one time, he had to make the choice between that great position and his Faith, then he will unhesitatingly leave the other and cling on to his Faith, as this is the source of joy and eternal life and not the earthly position.