What follows is a response, in abbreviated form, to each of the points the UHJ has made regarding its own establishment in "Letters of The Universal House of Justice Regarding its own Establishment", part two of "The establishment of the UHJ", a booklet compiled by the House's Research Department. Numbers following "Disp" will refer to pages in "The Dispensation of BA" (at least the copy that I have), and any other numbers in parēntheses will refer to the compilation. BA stands for Bahá'u'lláh, AB for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, SE for Shoghi Effendi, UHJ for Universal House of Justice, and B for Bahá'í.

I probably make some mistakes--both technical and philosophical--but since I consider this letter to be part of a process of consultation, I trust to the process itself to clarify things. I can make mistakes. Can you?

I also repeat myself quite a bit. This is in part due to the fact that I have worked on this over a period of time, and do not always remember what I have and have not said. This is not a work of scholarship--please do not expect it to be. To edit out all unnecessary repitition would take too much time. Some repitition is necessary, however, because I feel that the UHJ makes some of the same mistakes over and over again--and, if I let them slip by at any point, things can become very confusing indeed.

There is, I believe, a certain kind of "Catch-22" at the heart of the problems facing the UHJ--or perhaps various Catch-22's, all hinging on the fact that the World Order is now deprived of what SE called an "essential" institution, the Guardianship. It is, in other words, an impossible situation: bodies without one or more essential organs simply cannot continue to function. And yet, quite naturally, the UHJ cannot--or at least probably will not--accept such a possibility. The result, I feel, is that the arguments which the UHJ offers to justify its own position become quite slippery indeed and exasperatingly difficult to pin down, for they have to refrain from what they in fact cannot refrain from: intepreting the writings i.e. usurping the function of the other essential organ of the World Order. But what else can they̅ do̅? If a body is deprived of an essential organ, either some other organs take over its essential functions, or the body dies. But there is another level to the B Catch-22: the UHJ is expressly forbidden, and explicity recognizes that it is forbidden, to infringe upon the domain of the Guardianship i.e. it cannot take over the essential functions the Guardianship. But it must--for interpretation is an essential function in the organic "embryo" of the World Order, and without this function, the embryo must die. But it can't--for interpretation is the sole prerogative of the Guardian, but there is not now, and, according to the UHJ, there can never be again, another Guardian. And so the UHJ must interpret--or reinterpret--but it can't. It must. It can't. In other words, it finds itself in a catch-22. After all, 1000 years is a long time for anything to survive without one of its essential organs, is it not?

One more thing: I usually speak of "the" UHJ. This simply makes things easier. However, one of the issues I raise is the question of whether or not the present UHJ is in fact the same UHJ envisaged in the Writings. I think that it is not. Therefore, "the UHJ" should normally be understood as meaning "the body which claims to be the UHJ as envisaged in the Writings."

At first glance, it might indeed appear that the UHJ is justified in believing that certain phrases from the Will of AB apply to the present situatation in a very surprising--and, in the opinion of the UHJ, a very fortunate--way i.e. that the ending of the line of the Guardians is a problem which causes difference, a question that is obscure, and/or a matter that is not expressly recorded in the Book, and therefore something upon which the House can "deliberate"; and that whatever the House decides on the matter "has the same effect as the Text itself" (14). The UHJ, in other words, seems to believe that AB has left some kind of *loophole* in his Will, that allows the World Order of BA to continue under the Headship of the UHJ; this, in spite of the absence of the institution of the Guardianship, which had been envisaged by the appointed Interpreters of the Writings as forming an integral part of the then-yet-to-be-established World Order of BA: "The pillars that sustain its authority and buttress its structure are the twin institutions of the Guardianship and of the UHJ" (Disp. 65). I intend to demonstrate, however, that there is in fact no loophole, but only a catch-22, from which there is no escape. I could be wrong, of course! But we shall have to see about that. Let reason meet reason, and let the sparks of consultation fly. Unity cannot be established at the expense of truth, after all.

①

THE CENTRE OF THE COVENANT

> Bahá'u'lláh, the Revealer of God's Word in this Day, the Source of Authority, the Fountainhead of Justice, the Creator of a new World Order, the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, the Inspirer and Founder of a world Civilization, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Unifier and Redeemer of all mankind, has proclaimed the advent of God's Kingdom on earth, has formulated its laws and ordinances, enunciated its principles, and ordained its institutions. To direct and canalize the forces released by His Revelation He instituted His Covenant, whose power has preserved the integrity of His Faith, maintained its unity and stimulated its world-wide expansion throughout the successive ministries of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi.

"a new World Order"--the meaning of this was in "clear and unambiguous language" authoritatively interpreted by SE in "The Dispensation of BA" (Disp). No one can alter that interpretation, as "his interpretation is a statement of truth which cannot be varied" (41).

"its institutions"--"The pillars that sustain its authority and buttress its structure are the twin institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice" (Disp 65)

②

> It continues to fulfil its life-giving purpose through the agency of the Universal House of Justice whose fundamental object, as one of the twin successors of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is to ensure the continuity of that divinely appointed authority which flows from the Source of the Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings.....

"fundamental object...flexibility of teachings"--this is a quote from the Dispensation of BA (56), the immediate context of which is in terms of both institutions working together, and which clearly states that these two institutions are both "essential" and "inseparable". If the Guardianship was considered by the infallible Interpreter to be essential to the structure and functioning of the World Order of BA, then it must be considered essential--that is, the World Order cannot do without it. And "inseparable" means incapable of being separated. The UHJ and the Guardianship, in other words, cannot be separated. In spite of this, the UHJ admits to legislating in "the absence of the Guardian". This is impossible for the UHJ as SE and AB envisaged it.

What their writings imply about the possibility of a UHJ without a Guardian, we can never know, for only another Guardian could have told us, and there are no more Guardians. No one but a Guardian could interpret the Writings--and the ability of the UHJ to "make deductions" in the absence of the ongoing interpretative context which the Guardianship would have provided is by no means clear. But what *is* clear is that whatever powers of deduction the UHJ *might* have in the absence of a Guardian, the UHJ *cannot* legislate or pronounce upon the meaning of the World Order without a Guardian, or upon its own sphere of jurisdiction, which really amounts to the same thing.

(3)

THE FOUNDATION OF THE
UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

> The provenance, the authority, the duties, the sphere of action of the Universal House of Justice all derive from the revealed Word of Bahá'u'lláh which, together with the interpretations and expositions of the Centre of the Covenant and of the Guardian of the Cause — who, after 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is the sole authority in the interpretation of Bahá'í Scripture — constitute the binding terms of reference of the Universal House of Justice and are its bedrock foundation. The authority of these texts is absolute and immutable until such time as Almighty God shall reveal His new Manifestation to Whom will belong all authority and power.

"the terms of reference" to which the UHJ here refers, do not, according to the UHJ itself, refer to a UHJ without a Guardian, for this body seems to claim that this is a "matter not expressly revealed in the Book" and upon which it can therefore legislate. The Word and the extension of the Word--Its Interpreters--never provided for a UHJ without some divinely appointed Interpreter of the Writings to be on hand, be it in the person of AB, SE, or future Guardians. If we accept AB and SE as the interpreters of BA, then we have to admit that the absence of any such Interpreter simply was not envisaged by BA. And if the Writings somehow make room for such a possibility--if BA did in fact envisage such a possibility--then only a Guardian could authoritatively tell us so, for only a Guardian could authoritatively interpret the Writings. And for any World Order based on unauthorized interpretations of the Writings, authority is obviously lacking. How, then, can the UHJ claim that a House without its appointed Head is "derived from the revealed Word of BA"?

The sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ was to be determined by the Interpreters. Since this body did not come into existence until after the death of the first and last Guardian, it is obvious that the Guardianship did not have the opportunity to fulfill its essential function in that regard, for, given the nature of time, things change and new challenges arise, which necessitate constant, or at least periodic review and redefinition of the UHJ's sphere of jurisdiction. As AB himself says in his Will with regard to the effects of time,

> "the House of Justice enacteth today a certain law and enforceth it, and a hundred years hence, circumstances having profoundly changed and the conditions having altered, another House of Justice will then have power, according to the exigencies of the time, to alter that law".

Given that SE has said that "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" (51)--given this, are we really to believe that an Interpreter would not be needed in the future to provide the interpretative context in which future Houses of Justice could legislate "according to the exigencies of the time"? The Dispensation was to last 1000 years--that is a long time indeed to go without anyone who can "state whether a matter [is] or [is] not already covered by the Sacred Texts and therefore whether it [is] within the authority of the UHJ to legislate upon it" (47). In fact, this is impossible in the World Order as envisaged by AB and SE, and it is therefore impossible in the World Order of BA, for AB and SE were the appointed interpreters of the meaning and nature of that World Order, and their statements are statements of truth which cannot be varied.

Yes, the UHJ had the right to legislate upon matters not expressly revealed in the Book (though *in context* it appears that this meant only subsidiary laws and ordinances--not the nature of the World Order itself); it was not, however, given the authority *to decide for itself* which matters were or were not expressly revealed. That was to be the prerogative of the Interpreter, for obvious reasons.

Whether or not the significance of the absence of a Guardian *is* a matter "not expressly revealed in the Book" has now become a matter of individual interpretation, for no one--not even the UHJ--has the right to present their interpretation as authoritative. That was to be the prerogative of the Guardianship--to interpret both the writings of AB and BA *and* the writings of previous Guardians, for, as SE said, "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" (51). Obviously, with the passage of time, the role of the Guardianship to authoritatively interpret the Writings and thus avoid schism would still be essential. Essential means *essential*. This function has been totally withdrawn from the World Order of BA.

In my opinion--as I interpret theWritings--the significance of the loss of the Guardian has in fact been expressly revealed in the Writings, and does not represent anything upon which the UHJ can now legislate:

> "Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of BA would be mutilated....Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn"

(4)

> There being no successor to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, the Universal House of Justice is the Head of the Faith and its supreme institution, to which all must turn, and on it rests the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God.....
>
> *(The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, pp.3-4)*

Quite simply, *where is this written* in the "bedrock foundation" and "terms of reference of the Universal House of Justice" i.e. in the Book? Where does it say, that, in the absence of any authorized Interpreter, the UHJ becomes the Head of the Faith? Is that what "twin successors" *implies*? But only a Guardian could tell us that, and there is no Guardian. And even if the UHJ thinks that that is what "twin successors" implies, where is the authoritative interpretation to back it up?

True, decisions of "the UHJ" were supposed to be obeyed by the believers. But the same men who said that, also made the Guardian--and the Guardians appointed to succeed him--the head and voting member of that body, and the definer of that body's sphere of action, and the one who could expel members of that body, and the one who had the obligation to insist upon reconsideration of any enactment of that body which he considered to contradict the spirit of the Teachings. In other words, decisions could be made by the UHJ--as envisaged in the Writings--only within the interpretative framework provided by an Interpreter. And it is simply logical too, to assume this, for decisions are based upon understanding, and understanding is a result of interpretation. If there is no infallible interpretation of how the Writings would apply to any matter that might come up over the period of 1000 years, then there is no infallible understanding of and no infallible legislation upon the same.

The only kind of assurance of infallibility which the UHJ can offer today is one totally divorced from the context in which it was originally given--in the the Will of AB and SE's interetations of the Will, both of which are considered to be infallible interpretations of BA's Will. It is the assurance of an almost magical kind of infallibility, which is no longer part of the system of more understandable checks and balances which interaction with the Guardian could have provided. There is now no final authority to which questions of interpretation--such as what to make of a World Order without a Guardian--can be brought; we are asked, instead, to rely on the magical infallibility of a body deprived of its appointed head.

One more comment on this page. These quotes are taken from the constitution of the UHJ. What is a constitution? Well, the dictionary says it is a document upon which is recorded "the system of fundamental laws and

principles that prescribes the nature, functions, and limits of a government or other institution". The constitution of the UHJ is, in other words, a document which defines the "sphere of jurisdiction" of the same, is it not? But the power to define this sphere was to be the sole prerogative of the Guardian. Such a document, in other words, could not be written--or rather, could not be established as authoritative--without the consent of the Guardian. It may be true, as the UHJ points out, that SE gave a lot of advice about many things regarding the sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ. But, obviously, this is not the same thing as writing, or approving, the *constitution* of the UHJ. Many things could have come up in the 10 years or so after his death until the founding of the UHJ which would cause him to make amendments to statements he had previously made. And over a period of 1000 years, this would almost certainly be the case, would it not?

But we are missing the even more fundamental point here--the fundamental Catch-22: the present constitution represents the definition of the sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ in the absence of a Guardian; but one thing which was indeed clearly stated in the Writings--and to which even the UHJ assents--is that only the Guardian can define the sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ. But there is no Guardian to define the sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ in the absence of a Guardian--nor, obviously, could there be. The World Order of BA as envisaged by the Guardian has, it seems, snuffed itself out. Is there really any way out of this Catch-22? Could anyone but a Guardian even offer one? I think not.

(5)

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

We are glad that you have brought to our attention the questions perplexing some of the believers. It is much better for these questions to be put freely and openly than to have them, unexpressed, burdening the hearts of devoted believers. Once one grasps certain basic principles of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh such uncertainties are easily dispelled. This is not to say that the Cause of God contains no mysteries. Mysteries there are indeed, but they are not of a kind to shake one's faith once the essential tenets of the Cause and the indisputable facts of any situation are clearly understood.

The questions put by the various believers fall into three groups. The first group centres upon the following queries: Why were steps taken to elect a Universal House of Justice with the foreknowledge that there would be no Guardian? Was the time ripe for such an action? Could not the International Bahá'í Council have carried out the work?

Can "such uncertainties" be "easily dispelled"? I certainly do not think so, for at the heart of such uncertainties there lies the Catch-22 referred to above. One can *feel* as though one's uncertainties have been dispelled, but one must be careful not to confuse a general *feeling* of confidence and faith in God with real *understanding* of these particular issues. The *feeling* may be valid--but the notion that it is based on the resolution of a certain *conceptual* Catch-22 may *not* be. The problem lies not in faith in general--but in the attachment of faith to certain doctrines of infallibility and interpretation which, it certainly appears to me, have snuffed themselves out.

"Mysteries"--this is something to which the UHJ returns quite often. Unfortunately for that body, the Catch-22 does not lie within the sphere of mystery--it lies within texts the language of which is purported to be, and indeed is, quite "clear and unambiguous" and "inexcusable to either misconceive or ignore" (Disp 55-56).

At times the UHJ echoes language the Guardian used to speak of the impossibility of knowing *right now* everything there is to know about a Dispensation destined to last 1000 years. However, the UHJ only echoes part of that language, leaving out SE's complementary emphasis on the things which are already clearly defined. And so the UHJ says things like,

> "however great may be our inability to understand the mystery and the implications of the passing of SE" (52), and,"no one of this generation can claim to have embraced the vastness of His Cause nor to have comprehended the manifold mysteries and potentialities it contains" (41), "Mysteries there are indeed, but they are not of a kind to shake one's faith" (34), "the full meaning of the Will and Testament of AB, as well as an understanding of the implications of the World Order ushered in by that remarkable Document, can be revealed only gradually to men's eyes" (42), "in his very silence there is a wisdom and a sign of his infallible guidance" (45), "In past dispensations many errors arose because the believers...were overanxious to encompass the Divine Message within the framework of their limited understanding, to define doctrines where definition was beyond their power, to explain mysteries which only the wisdom and experience of a later age would make comprehensible, to argue that something was true because it appeared desirable and necessary" (50), "If some of the statements of the UHJ are not detailed the friends should realize that the cause of this is not secretiveness , but rather the determination of this body to refrain from interpreting the teachings" (50), "we stand too close to the beginnings of the System ordained by BA to be able fully to understand its potentialities of the interrelationships of its component parts" (60), etc.

The Guardian, on the other hand, says,

> "To define with with *accuracy* and *minuteness* the features, and to *analyze exhaustively* the nature of the relationships which, on the one hand, *bind together* these *two fundamental organs* of the Will of AB and connect, on the other, each of them to the Author of the Faith and the Center of His Covenenant is a task which future generations will no doubt adequately fulfill. My present intention is to elaborate certain *salient features* of this scheme which, however close we may stand to its colossal structure, are *already so clearly defined that we find it inexcusable to either misconceive or ignore*. It should be stated, at the very outset, *in clear and unambiguous language*, that these twin institutions of the Administrative Order of BA should be regarded as divine in origin, *esential in their functions* and complementary in their aim and purpose....*Acting in conjunction with each other* these *two inseparable institutions* administer its affairs, coordinate its activities, promote its interests, execute its laws and defend it subsidiary institutions. Severally, each operates within a *clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction* ....*Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship; the World Order of BA would be mutilated...Severed from the no les essential institution of the UHJ this same System... would be paralyzed*"(Disp 55-56, emphasis mine)

That is, whereas the Guardian obviously recognizes that not everything can be known about the World Order at the present time, there are, he says, certain things which in fact can be known--certain salient features which are in fact already clearly defined and impossible to misconstrue. There are, in other words, independently of whatever else might come to be understood in future generations, supposed to be *two* interacting pillars in the World Order of BA. And both of these institutions are essential and inseparable--you need both of them and you cannot have one without the other.

In other words, it is not in the details which future generations were to work out that the Catch-22 exists--it is in the already clearly defined aspects of the interrelationship between the salient features described in clear and unambiguous language that the Catch-22 is to be found. And I don't believe that God expects anyone to intellectually assent to a Catch-22, or even to try to understand it: Catch-22's are self-extinguishing. They can be identified--but not *understood*. The intellect which attempts to "understand" a Catch-22, or make peace with it in some way, will, it seems to me, also snuff itself out, or will continue to spin around and around forever.

And the fact that SE speaks of future generations taking care of more detailed analysis to me implies that *future* guidance from *future* Guardians would also clearly be essential--that there are many details which are not yet "clearly defined" (as opposed to some other things which are in fact clearly defined), some of which must surely involve questions of the exact nature of the sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ, mustn't they? The lack of *complete* understanding of which SE writes, then, is no "mystery" behind which one can hide the Catch-22; rather, the mystery reinforces the Catch-22: the Guardianship will be necessary in the future too, and yet there can be no future Guardians. Note too, that he speaks of relationships between the two fundamental organs. But how are we to understand this today? In terms of a relationship between one organ and no organ?

(6)

THE BASIS FOR ELECTION

> At the time of our beloved Shoghi Effendi's death it was evident, from the circumstances and from the explicit requirements of the Holy Texts, that it had been impossible for him to appoint a successor in accordance with the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This situation, in which the Guardian died without being able to appoint a successor, presented an obscure question not covered by the explicit Holy Text, and had to be referred to the Universal House of Justice. The friends should clearly understand that before the election of the Universal House of Justice there was no knowledge that there would be no Guardian. There could not have been any such foreknowledge, whatever opinions individual believers may have held. Neither Hands of the Cause of God, nor the International Bahá'í Council, nor any other existing body could make a decision upon this all-important matter. Only the House of Justice had authority to pronounce upon it. This was one urgent reason for calling the election of the Universal House of Justice as soon as possible.

"This situation, in which the Guardian died without being able to appoint a successor, presented an obscure question not covered by the explicit Holy text, and had to be referred to the UHJ". Is this true?

In my opinion--as I interpret theWritings--the significance of the loss of the Guardian has in fact been expressly revealed in the Writings, and does not represent anything upon which the UHJ can now pronounce:

"Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of BA would be mutilated....Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a longe, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn"

Yes, the UHJ had the right to legislate upon matters not expressly revealed in the Book (though *in context* it appears that this meant only subsidiary laws and ordinances not found in the Book--not the nature of the World Order itself); it was not, however, given the authority *to decide for itself* which matters were or were not expressly revealed. That was to be the prerogative of the Interpreter, for obvious reasons. Since there is no Interpreter, no one can perform the essential function of determining the UHJ's sphere of jurisdiction *now*.

The present constitution of the UHJ was written by the UHJ itself--by *a* UHJ, that is (for to say *the* UHJ kind of begs the question of whether the present UHJ is in fact the same UHJ referred to in the Writings). This constitution represents the definition of the sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ in the absence of a Guardian. But one thing which was indeed clearly stated in the Writings--and to which even the UHJ assents--is that only the Guardian could define the sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ. But there is no Guardian to define the sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ in the absence of a Guardian--nor, obviously, could there be. No Guardian--no constitution. But the UHJ needs a constitution. But it can't write it in the absence of the Guardian. But there is no Guardian. Spin, spin, spin. Catch-22.

"Only the House of Justice had authority to pronounce upon it"--It did? Who says? It seems to me that only a Guardian could have had the *authority* to pronounce upon the question of the apparent ending of the line of Guardians, for this is a question that deals quite directly with the basic structure, with the very meaning of the concept "World Order of BA". Only a Guardian could pronounce upon a question so basic to the very structure and Pattern by which the UHJ is itself defined. If the UHJ could in fact have pronounced upon something like this--upon something so intimately involved with the very meaning of the concept of "World Order", a concept found in the Book--then what becomes of the "clearly defined" spheres of the Guardianship and the UHJ, spheres which the UHJ suggests are impossible to confuse or infringe upon? Yes, the question of what to do in case a Guardian died without being able to appoint a successor is, strictly speaking, a matter not expressly revealed in the Book. *But is it a question falling within the domain of the UHJ?*

Obviously, there is a problem of interpretation here, for, to me, it seems that the Writings limit the powers of the UHJ to legislating upon laws and ordinances that bear upon daily transactions, and it seems to me that the Writings forbid the UHJ from something like pronouncing upon the structure of the World Order itself, for that, as I see it, is within the inviolable domain of the Guardianship, for it is, essentially, a question of interpreting the Will of AB, which is itself an interpretation of the Will of BA. Thus, to me, it seems that "matters not expressly revealed" must be--or at least can be--interpreted as referring to matters which do not touch upon something as central to the very structure of the World Order as the question of the successorship itself. And without the Guardian to provide the necessary interpretative context, I find it even less likely that "matters not expressly revealed" can be interpreted in the way the UHJ has interpreted it i.e. as essentially "anything whatsoever not mentioned in the writings". AB says

> "matters of major importance which constitute the foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice" (47)

Is the question of the inability of the guardian to appoint a successor a question of "law"? If it isn't, can the UHJ pronounce upon it? If it is, are we to believe that it is not a matter of major importance?

Yes, AB says,

> "Unto the most Holy Book everyone must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the UHJ. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself" (14).

Strong words, but what do they *mean*? In the overall context of the Will, for example, "UHJ" refers to the elected body of which AB says "the guardian of the Cause is its sacred head"; and, in context, when AB says, for example, "Unto this body all things must be referred", he follows immediately with the sentence, "It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text"--"ordinances" and "regulations"...not questions of Headship of the Faith in the absence of a Guardian.

OK, let's assume for the moment that whatever the UHJ has said about the absence of the guardian "has the same effect as the Text itself" (14). But who can now interpret what this "additional Text," as it were, *means*? No--it just doesn't work, because the whole Pattern has been broken--the whole System of two living, interacting pillars has been mutilated. The Guardianship has essential functions which simply cannot be performed now--and the loss of essential functions for an "organic" World Order can only mean its death. It just can't work now.

Not *everything* which happens to not have been included in the Book can be legislated upon by the UHJ, for questions of interpretation necessarily involve going beyond what has been explicitly revealed, even if, strictly speaking, interpretation involves at least starting from something which has been explicitly revealed. The Will and Testament of AB is just such an example, is it not? And SE's further elaborations on the Will also demonstrate that, in interpreting the Will of BA, both he and AB pronounced upon or declared or established things that were not quite explicit in the Book, did they not? And there may be "obscure" questions that involve intepretation too. And there may be problems which "cause difference" that are essentially problems of interpretation.

And so, is the inability of the Guardian to appoint a successor the *kind* of "obscure question not covered by the explicit Holy Text" which would fall within the domain of the UHJ, or is it the kind of obscure question which only a Guardian could pronounce upon? In other words, how would the words "obscure question" and "matters not explicitly revealed" apply in the present sitituation? But only a Guardian could answer that kind of question. As the UHJ says,

> "In other words, he [the Guardian] had the authority to state whether a matter was or was not already covered by the Sacred Texts and therefore whether it was within the authority of the UHJ to legislate upon it. No other person, apart from the Guardian, has the right or authority to make such definitions" (47)

But note what the UHJ has in fact done. The UHJ has said that,

> "this situation, in which the Guardian died without being able to appoint a successor, presented an obscure question not covered by the explicit Holy Text, and had to be referred to the UHJ" (34).

But *who* decided whether this matter was or was not already covered by the Sacred Texts? Obviously, it was not the Guardian who decided. But, as the UHJ has said, only a Guardian *could* make that kind of decision. But there obviously was no Guardian who could make the decision. So the UHJ made the decision itself. But did it have the authority to do so? It certainly would seem that it did not.

Maybe this particular question was not "covered" in the Writings because it was unthinkable for the men who wrote them. After all, SE said that in the absence of the Guardianship, the World Order would basically end--he doesn't seem to leave much room for doubt about that, with his words "mutilated", "totally withdrawn", "completely lacking", "essential", "inseparable"....does he? If we can take him at his word--and his words are remarkably unambiguous i.e. they leave very little to the interpretative imagination--then it would seem that the absence of the Guardian in the World Order is "not expressly revealed" in the same way that, say, the absence of the Book is not revealed, or the absence of a House of Justice is not revealed--for such absences form no part of the B understanding of the World Order at all. Such absences are simply not part of the B Faith as it has developed under BA's successors.

What about the fact that the Guardianship has ended, you ask? What are Bs expected to do now? Throw it all away? Isn't there some way for the thing to continue? This, however, is a question that Bs must answer. For me, the correct answer was to turn in my B card. For most "leaders of religion, exponents of political theories, [and] governors of human institutions" (50), I expect that, if they are given the chance to really study the matter, the answer would be, "very interesting, some truth there, but obviously flawed". But most importantly, for "bewildered followers of bankrupt and broken creeds", I think the B Faith--at least as it is embodied in a "mutilated" Administrative Order--has nothing to offer in the end but further disillusionment. If you, the members of the UHJ disagree, then please confront the issues involved more straightforwardly than your predecessors did.

The whole problem is rather slippery. But I think it is slippery because there is a catch-22 at the heart of it, a fundamental squeeze on the notion of infallibility which puts intense intellectual pressure on anyone who would try to find an escape from the Catch-22, who would try to salvage the notion of infallibility. Consider the straightforward exposition and bold confidence with which the Guardian proclaimed his vision of the World Order. All that has simply ceased to be relevant: *things have changed* --and they have changed profoundly. Things that were clear, that could indeed be pointed out in the Writings, things that were truly "embedded in the Writings" and could be expressed in such "clear and unambiguous language" that it was in fact rather "inexcusable to either misconceive or ignore" (Disp 55)--these things simply failed to materialize as planned.

(7) Following the passing of Shoghi Effendi the international administration of the Faith was carried on by the Hands of the Cause of God with the complete agreement and loyalty of the national spiritual assemblies and the body of the believers. This was in accordance with the Guardian's designation of the Hands as the "Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth."

From the very outset of their custodianship of the Cause of God the Hands realised that since they had no certainty of Divine guidance such as is incontrovertibly assured to the Guardian and to the Universal House of Justice, their one safe course was to follow with undeviating firmness, the instructions and policies of Shoghi Effendi.

The Hands were appointed by the Guardian to do his bidding. It is debatable, is it not, whether they could even exist without the Guardian. I think they could not. Even the metaphorical integrity of the thing would have to go: hands without a head? Even if SE left a few years worth of detailed plans, he obviously didn't leave them any guidance on what to do in case he died. And that, after all, was the important issue of the moment; that is what the Hands were taking into their own hands, so to speak. Even if they followed his plans to the letter, this is not quite the same as following *him* --for he could have changed his mind about some of those things in the next few years had he lived, could he not? The hands had, in other words, some guidance as to what he wanted at some moment in the past--but they did not know what he wanted at the present moment, after his passing. Even the guidance they had from the past was reduced to words on paper and in memory--he was no longer there for them to be able to check out their understanding of those words with him in person. There was some room for misunderstanding in such circumstances.

"complete agreement"?? Are you sure? This sounds remarkably like political speeches I hear on T.V. all the time: "the American people think....the American people believe...the American people support me on this".... But what about the people who do not think or believe that, who do not support him or her--and there are *always* people who do not agree (sometimes the ones who do not agree are even in the majority!)--what about them? Are they not Americans too?

Throughout religious history, orthodox institutions have always found a very convenient way of maintaining "unity" and "complete agreement"--they simply ex-communicate those who disagree with them and brand them "heretics" and "unbelievers". Very neat. Far too neat, in my opinion.

(8)

> The entire history of religion shows no comparable record of such strict self-discipline, such absolute loyalty, and such complete self-abnegation by the leaders of religion finding themselves suddenly deprived of their divinely inspired guide. The debt of gratitude which mankind for generations, nay, ages to come, owes to this handful of grief-stricken, steadfast, heroic souls is beyond estimation.

Typically inflated language. I'm not sure that the UHJ should imitate its Founder in this regard. BA was breaking boundaries, toppling orthodoxies, opening people's minds, turning certainties into uncertainties and uncertainties into certainties and wine into water and water into wine--and so, maybe such absolutist language was appropriate for such purposes. Even AB was doing much the same thing (almost). But for the UHJ to imitate this style--and yet at the same time try to cling tenaciously to the written word and notions of "statements of truth which cannot be varied"--this, I think, leads to meaningless hyperbole and to fundamentalism. I'm not sure, but it seems to me that the followers of Christ also showed quite a bit of self-discipline, loyalty, and self-abnegation--and they were facing *crucifixion*, perhaps even their own. Whether this is indeed not "comparable" to what the Hands did is something I perhaps cannot know. But it sure *seems* comparable to me.

(9)

> The Guardian had given the Bahá'í world explicit and detailed plans covering the period until Ridvan 1963, the end of the Ten Year Crusade. From that point onward, unless the Faith were to be endangered, further Divine guidance was essential. This was the second pressing reason for the calling of the election of the Universal House of Justice. The rightness of the time was further confirmed by references in Shoghi Effendi's letters to the Ten Year Crusade's being followed by other plans under the direction of the Universal House of Justice. One such reference is the following passage from a letter addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles on February 25, 1951, concerning its Two Year Plan which immediately preceded the Ten Year Crusade:
>
> > "On the success of this enterprise, unprecedented in its scope, unique in its character, and immense in its spiritual potentialities, must depend the initiation, at a later period in the Formative Age of the Faith, of undertakings embracing within their range all national assemblies functioning throughout the Bahá'í world, undertakings constituting in themselves a prelude to the launching of worldwide enterprises destined to be embarked upon, in future epochs of that same age, by the Universal House of Justice, that will symbolize the unity and coordinate and unify the activities of these national assemblies."

See comment to #7.

And, again, as always, if we are to respect the integrity of the Writings and not, like Biblical literalists, go chopping them up to find what we want to find there, we must remember that the UHJ which SE and AB were speaking of as "apex" and "symbol of unity" etc. was always assumed to have a Guardian as

its head. Even the House of Justice referred to by BA--without reference to Guardian as head--must nevertheless be interpreted as being intended to have the Guardian as head, for that is what the Book's infallible Interpreters have said. And whether or not their writings allowed for a UHJ, or a World Order, without an Interpreter is a matter of interpretation of those writings. But there is no Interpreter. And the UHJ cannot pronounce upon the issue, for it is a question of interpretation of the Teachings. The Writings and their Interpreters define the sphere of action of the UHJ--it cannot itself take on this function.

(10)

> Having been in charge of the Cause of God for six years, the Hands, with absolute faith in the Holy Writings, called upon the believers to elect the Universal House of Justice, and even went so far as to ask that they themselves be not voted for. The sole, sad instance of anyone succumbing to the allurements of power was the pitiful attempt of Charles Mason Remey to usurp the Guardianship.

This is indeed admirable on the part of the Hands. Noble intentions, and noble actions, however, do not necessarily imply anything about the truth value or validity of the institutions they support. There are many spiritual Roman Catholics. Does that necessarily imply anything about the infallibility of the Pope, or about the Trinity, or the Transubstantiation?

As far as Remey is concerned, I don't know very much about him, though I believe he still has followers somewhere, doesn't he? I have met Bs who have met people who I think called themselves "Orthodox Bs", or something like that. Contrary to what the UHJ of Haifa proclaims, there does in fact appear to be division within the ranks of the followers of BA. And I can certainly sympathize with Remey's resistance to accepting a World Order without a Guardian--for he, it seems, did in fact realize that a World Order without a Guardian would indeed "be mutilated".

(11)

> The following excerpts from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá state clearly and emphatically the principles with which the friends are already familiar from the Will and Testament of the Master and the various letters of Shoghi Effendi, and explain the basis for the election of the Universal House of Justice. This Tablet was sent to Persia by the beloved Guardian himself, in the early years of his ministry, for circulation among the believers.
>
> > ".... for 'Abdu'l-Bahá is in a tempest of dangers and infinitely abhors differences of opinion.... Praise be to God, there are no grounds for differences.
> >
> > "The Báb, the Exhalted One, is the Morn of Truth, the splendour of Whose light shineth through all regions. He is also the Harbinger of the Most Great Light, the Abhá Luminary. The Blessed Beauty is the One promised by the sacred books of the past, the revelation of the Source of light that shone upon Mount Sinai, Whose fire glowed in the midst of the Burning Bush. We are, one and all, servants of Their threshold, and stand each as a lowly keeper at Their door.

"My purpose is this, that ere the expiration of a thousand years, no one has the right to utter a single word, even to claim the station of Guardianship. The Most Holy Book is the Book to which all peoples shall refer, and in it the Laws of God have been revealed. Laws not mentioned in the Book should be referred to the decision of the Universal House of Justice. There will be no grounds for difference...Beware, beware lest anyone create a rift or stir up sedition. Should there be differences of opinion, the Supreme House of Justice would immediately resolve the problems. Whatever will be its decision, by majority vote, shall be the real truth, inasmuch as that House is under the protection, unerring guidance, and care of the one true Lord. He shall guard it from error and will protect it under the wing of His sanctity and infallibility. He who opposes it is cast out and will eventually be of the defeated.

"The Supreme House of Justice should be elected according to the system followed in the election of the parliaments of Europe. And when the countries would be guided the Houses of Justice of the various countries would elect the Supreme House of Justice.

"At whatever time all the beloved of God in each county appoint their delegates, and these in turn elect their representatives, and these representatives elect a body, that body shall be regarded as the Supreme House of Justice.

"The establishment of that House is not dependent upon the conversion of all the nations of the world. For example, if conditions were favourable and no disturbances would be caused, the friends in Persia would elect their representatives, and likewise the friends in America, in India, and other areas would also elect their representatives, and these would elect a House of Justice. That House of Justice would be the Supreme House of Justice. That is all."

(Persian and Arabic Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol.III, pp. 499-501)

Whether these excerpts *explain* anything is not exactly clear. The *problem* is that we no longer have anyone to Interpret how such passages apply *now*. And these passages are in fact open to interpretation, and are not in fact 100% self-explanatory. They are also, of course, taken out of context--like all excerpts.

For example, when AB says that no one can claim the station of Guardianship "ere the expiration of a thousand years", I assume he is *not* referring to *SE*. Of course, the context out of which these passages have been taken makes this clear. But once you have introduced the context, you are also committed to recognize that the Will and Testament consisted of a pattern of interrelated institutions--and that this *whole pattern* was AB's interpretation of "World Order of BA". When that pattern changes, when one of its two pillars has been entirely removed or at least broken off, then the meaning of the pattern as a whole comes into question. And, certainly, one

cannot then start taking other pieces in the pattern and assuming that nothing must change in our interpretation of *them*.

Note that the UHJ has said that "this situation, in which the Guardian died without being able to appoint a successor, presented an obscure question not covered by the explicit Holy Text, and had to be referred to the UHJ". Apart from this assertion simply not being true, in my opinion (see #3), we find even in the "excerpts" above the usual context which limits such *apparently* (if read out of context) unlimited power to pronounce upon *anything* not expressly revealed in the Book: "Laws not mentioned in the Book should be referred to the decision of the UHJ". It could be interpreted that when AB speaks of the inerrancy of the UHJ's decisions, he is doing so only in regard to *laws*. For example, if people disagreed about a tax raise, and SE stated that this had not already been covered by the Book, then the UHJ would indeed have had the right to legislate upon it, and its decision would indeed have been binding, and its domain of infallibility would not be in danger of infringing upon that of the Guardian.

However, is *this* situation--the inability of the Guardian to appoint his successor--a question of "law"? Or is it a question of fundamentally re-interpreting the very pattern and nucleus of the World Order of BA, of shifting the very nature of the institutions as they were defined by SE? In the World Order of BA as interpreted by SE, the UHJ could indeed abrogate *laws* it made itself--in consultation with the Guardian--but it was not given the right to establish its own *constitution*, its own sphere of jurisdiction, nor to redefine or amend it. Perhaps it could propose changes to its constitution--but it was the Guardian and the Guardian alone who had the authority to approve such changes. Laws, then, the UHJ could make and unmake--once the Guardian had determined the matter under question to be within the House's sphere of jurisdiction. Its constitution, however--it could not. Yet, in the absence of a Guardian, any constitution of the UHJ must necessarily pronounce upon the meaning of the World Order of BA in light of his absence. But to pronounce upon whether the Writings allowed for another Guardian, or whether they did not--this is to interpret the Writings. This is to infringe upon the domain of the Guardian. And yet, the UHJ apparently has no choice. But it cannot do what it apparently must do. Spin, spin, spin. Catch-22.

Note that the Guardian was prevented from fulfilling his duty to appoint a successor not by the Writings per se, but by reality--he didn't have any children. But he, too, was under the protection of BA. Thus, reality put an end to an "essential" institution which was under the protection of BA. Before 1957, I imagine that most, if not all, Bs would have assumed that such protection would ensure that a successor would be provided. But such was not the case.

What about the "no less essential institution of the UHJ" (no less--but certainly no *more* essential?) ? It is under the protection of the Lord--like SE. Does this therefore imply that it must be able to carry out the functions the Writings designed it to carry out? Well, it might *seem* so. But so it would have seemed with regard to the Guardianship, too--before 1957. But it simply wasn't so. Reality decided otherwise.

AB said,

> "It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing" (WTAB, 12).

"incumbent" means "imposed as an obligation or duty; required; obligatory". Thus AB made it SE's duty to appoint a successor. This was an obligatory function of a Guardian. According to the UHJ, however,

> "it was evident, from the circumstances and from the explicit requirements of the Holy Texts, that it had been impossible for him to appoint a successor in accordance with the provisions of the Will and Testament of AB" (34)

Thus, the Guardian was not able to fulfill an obligation placed upon him by AB, though he was every bit as much under Divine protection as the UHJ, and because of this the institution of the Guardianship has ceased to fulfill those duties assigned to it as its exclusive prerogatives.

In spite of this, the UHJ continues to quote texts referring to its *own* divine protection, as if that provided some kind of necessary reassurance that it is indeed able to function in the absence of the Guardian, that it--unlike its twin pillar--must still be able to fulfill those obligations placed upon it by AB, because it is under protection from on high. But, as we have seen in the Guardian's case, this is not necessarily so. And, as I hope I have indeed been able to demonstrate, the UHJ likewise is unable to fulfill its duty. It must have a constitution, but it can not write it without the Guardian. But it must have it. But it can't. The Guardian had to appoint a successor. But he couldn't. But he had to. But he couldn't. Spin, spin, spin. Catch-22.

And note, furthermore, that the passages the UHJ quotes in support of the idea that the ending of the line of the Guardians was "provided for", namely, the passages regarding "endowments dedicated to charity"--that these passages not only may be interpreted as providing for the end of the Guardianship, but they *also* seem to provide for a Covenant that can survive without a *UHJ* too: "otherwise" [i.e. if there is no Guardian, and no UHJ] "the endowments should be referred to the people of Bahá" (57). Thus, in the

Writings of BA--if the UHJ wants to feel free to use them apart from the interpretations imposed upon them later by the Book's Interpreters--there seems to be a Covenant that does not depend on either of the "essential" institutions mentioned by AB and SE! This is quite remarkable.

"Essential" means, "constituting or part of the essence of something; basic or indispensable". Heart, brain, and kidney, for example, are essential organs. Hydrogen forms part of the essence of water, for example. Take heart, brain, or kidney out of a body--and the body dies. Take hydrogen out of water, and you no longer have water, but oxygen.

The UHJ cites passages which it interprets as providing for the ending of the Guardianship. Yet SE, the infallible interpreter of the Writings, claims that the Guardianship and the UHJ were both essential organs in the overall body of the Cause. The UHJ's interpretations, however, are not binding. And so this does not touch upon the question of whether the writings themselves constradict themselves. Now, assuming the Writings do not contradict each other, what are we to make of all this? Are the Guardianship and the UHJ essential to the World Order of BA, or are they not?

If what both what SE and BA said must be harmonized (and if we do not consider it unlawful or unreasonable to return to the "faint glimmerings" found in BA which SE has already elaborated upon and authoritatively interpreted) we must admit the possibility that the World Order of BA is now indeed "mutilated," with the "necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives...totally withdrawn"--or else SE would have been wrong; but, surprisingly enough, the Covenant, it seems, can go on without that World Order at all! At least, so the passages regarding "endowments dedicated to charity" would seem to imply (and SE does not limit the concept of "Covenant" in the same way he limits the concept of "World Order"--does he?--so that to interpret "Covenant" more broadly would not be going against any kind of ex cathedra interpretations made later. Or would it? I am not sure.)

~~It~~ should also be pointed out that the words "After Him the decision rests with the Branches, and after them with the House of Justice--should it be established in the world by then" could mean something very different than what the UHJ seems to be suggesting. If someone says to his friend, "let John take care of the arrangements, and when he goes, let his children take care of them, and when they go, let the lawyers take care of it--if lawyers have been found by then", the lawyers referred to are probably assumed to have been found *by the children* -- that is, at some point in time before their passing. In other words, "by then" could be interpreted to mean "at some point before the passing of the Guardian", and the House referred to in this passage could therefore be interpreted as "a House established at some point in the lifetime of a Guardian".

This is what "by then" normally means, is it not? That is, "by then" means at some point before the moment referred to i.e. in this case, before the moment referred to by "after them"--that is, before the moment of their passing. If I arrive at a party late, and find that my date had already gone home, I would tell you what happened by saying, "I got there at eight, but she had gone *by then*"--that is, at some point before eight. Or how about the phrase, "by then--say, eight o'clock--it was too late, she had already gone"? "by then" would still mean at some point before eight o'clock.

The UHJ, however, says: "The passing of SE in 1957 precipitated the very situation provided for in this passage, in that the line of Agshán ended before the House of Justice had been elected" (57). Now, this is one interpretation of the passage. And, if nothing more is inferred here, then all is well. But if the UHJ would like this passage to also somehow "provide for" the possibility that the UHJ could be established after the passing of the Branches, that is, after the "by then" moment referred to, then I think it has made a mistake. This passage, per se, does not necessarily imply anything of the kind. It could, in fact, allow for quite the opposite inference, namely, that, if the UHJ has not been established by *then*, then it never will be, and all things must be referred to the people of Bahá. It does not necessarily imply this--but it doesn't necessarily imply what the UHJ seems to be suggesting either. The point is, this passage just doesn't do what the UHJ wants it to do.

And note that it is not I who insist on getting pedantic. It is the UHJ itself which makes such tedious explication of passages necessary, for it interprets passages--or hopes that people will make certain interpretations of passages--and yet claims that it refrains from interpreting the Writings. To bring to light, then, all the pre-suppositions and possible variation of interpretation involved in its selection of passages is indeed a tedious business. But even more importantly, it is the way in which the UHJ uses such passages that requires pedantic response. For, remember, the UHJ must somehow get around all the "clear and unambiguous language" in the Writings of SE--language that makes it very hard indeed to understand the present situation. To get around the clear and unambiguous language of SE and AB, they thus have to go back to apparently more open-ended passages found in the earlier writings--passages which, they seem to be implying, when seen with hindsight almost miraculously provide for events as they have in fact transpired. At least I think this is what they are doing. Is it?

If it is, then the only kind of response to this, is to get equally pedantic--equally nitpicky about what words really mean, and how they can be interpreted. The UHJ repeats again and again in isolation such words as "clearly defined" and "can and will never"--as if the *implication of these words for the questions being addressed* was self-evident, and not open to interpretation. Hence the need to really delve into things like "context", and

dictionary definitions of words, and interpretation, and catch-22. Otherwise, the incredibly vague and indirect, but nevertheless highly *suggestive* manner in which the UHJ has dealt with these issues will force people either to keep spinning around and around, with their intellects impaled on the Catch-22 driven into (or provided for in?) the heart of the World Order of BA, or merely give up and toss the faith away--or prostrate themselves before the UHJ in what I feel would be a mis-directed resignation.

How, then, the UHJ expects the passages regarding "endowments dedicated to charity" to help justify its own position is, as I hope I have demonstrated, far from clear. If the "immutability" of the Covenant somehow does guarantee the existence of the UHJ, these passages, however, certainly do not seem to do so--quite the contrary. Neither can these passages necessarily provide assurance that the World Order of BA can avoid being considered "mutilated" in the absence of the Guardian--for that would contradict what SE has said. These passages do not, therefore, necessarily imply that the ending of the Guardianship has been "provided for" in quite the sense that the UHJ seems to intend, namely, that if the Guardianship ends, things are still all right with the World Order. These passages *do* seem to indicate, however, that the Cause of God can in some sense continue in the absence of both the UHJ and the Guardian. Whether literally "infallible guidance" can continue is another question.

(12)

> The friends should realise that there is nothing in the Texts to indicate that the election of the Universal House of Justice could be called only by the Guardian. On the contrary, 'Abdu'l-Bahá envisaged the calling of its election in His own lifetime. At a time described by the Guardian as "the darkest moments of His (the Master's) life, under 'Abdu'l-Hamíd's regime, when He stood to be deported to the most inhospitable regions of Northern Africa," and when even His life was threatened, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Hájí Mírzá Taqí Afnán, the cousin of the Báb and chief builder of the 'Ishqábád Temple, commanding him to arrange for the election of the Universal House of Justice should the threats against the Master materialize. The second part of the Master's Will is also relevant to such a situation and should be studied by the friends.

That the Guardian was not the only one who could call the election of the UHJ to me seems correct. I do not remember anything from SE's writings to contradict this, and clearly, if AB was thinking of calling the election in his own lifetime, then the election could be called by the Center as well as by the Guardian. Whether the UHJ, once elected, could have existed without *some* Interpreter, however, seems to be another question; and the answer seems to be. No--for at the very least the necessary guidance to define its sphere of legislative action would be lacking. So, even if AB had been killed, and the UHJ elected in his absence, there would still have been an Interpreter around--namely, SE--and the first part of the Will in which the Guardian was made head and voting member of that body would still be in effect, would it not?

The second part of AB's Will cannot, I think, be interpreted apart from the first part of the Will. In the first part of the Will SE is appointed AB's successor, and the separate domains of the Guardianship and the UHJ are outlined, thus making it clear, for example, that not quite literally "all" matters are appropriate for the UHJ to legislate upon--even if they are "obscure" or "cause difference" or are not "expressly revealed"--for matters of interpretation, which can also be obscure, can also cause difference, and are not all "expressly revealed in the Book", must be referred only to the Guardian. But, of course, with a Guardian as head and voting member of the UHJ, and functioning in his role as determiner of that body's sphere of jurisdiction, to refer all things to the UHJ would necessarily involve referring things to *him* too, wouldn't it?

True, AB says, "by this House is meant that UHJ which is to be elected from all countries". But we can not necessarily infer from this that he is saying that what he means by "UHJ" is *only* the *elected* body, and that this body can therefore be totally distinguished or divorced from the appointed institution of the *Guardianship*, and still continue to function. That would be to fly in the face of the whole *pattern* of the World Order he outlines.

But, anyway, what AB left ambiguous, SE made unambiguous--and in SE's interpretation of the Will, which must be considered an extension of the Will itself, I think it is clear that there is no room for a World Order without a Guardian. A Covenant, maybe. A "Major Plan", obviously. But *B World Order...?*

(13) THE QUESTION OF INFALLIBILITY

The second series of problems vexing some of the friends centres on the question of the infallibility of the Universal House of Justice and its ability to function without the presence of the Guardian. Particular difficulty has been experienced in understanding the implications of the following statement by the beloved Guardian:

> "Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written, has been invariably upheld by the Law of God. 'In all the Divine Dispensations,' He states, in a Tablet addressed to a follower of the Faith in Persia, 'the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright.' Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered. Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn."
>
> *(The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 59)*

> Let the friends who wish for a clearer understanding of this passage at the present time consider it in the light of the many other texts which deal with the same subject, for example the following passages gleaned from the letters of Shoghi Effendi:

What that "clearer understanding" of the first passage *is*, the UHJ does not say, of course, for that would be the kind of thing that only the Guardian could offer the believers, since only he could interpret the writings. But the UHJ certainly *suggests* that, properly interpreted, the other passages "gleaned from the letters of SE" are enought to "let the hearts of the friends be assured". But, again, what that proper interpretation *is*, the UHJ does not tell us. What they don't admit, is that this is one of the reasons why the Guardianship was necessary--otherwise, there can be no unity of understanding of scripture among the Bs.

(14)

> "They have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as Their chosen successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world."
>
> *(Letter dated 21st March 1930, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 20)*

What this contributes to understanding the present situation I do not see at all. Yes, the World Order was to consist of *two* institutions. But that's the point--is a World Order of only *one* institution the same as a World Order consisting of *two*?

Now, if the UHJ is saying that since the UHJ was considered a "successor" along with the Guardianship, it follows that it could fulfill its role of successor alone, without the Guardianship, then I must respond, that *maybe* this could follow--but it doesn't necessarily. The point, however, is that today there is no one with the *authority* to tell us definitively if it does, in fact, follow, for only another Guardian could tells us what SE meant.

And in my opinion, it in fact does *not* follow that the UHJ can function alone. I hope my reasons for this opinion are by now abundantly clear. Just because two institutions inherit the job of administering the affairs of some organization, it does not necessarily follow that one can function in the absence of the other. The Executive Branch of the U.S. government, for example, cannot function in the absence of the Legislative Branch, and vice versa. Why? Because their functions are complementary, their aims and objectives are one, the duties they perform are essential--they are, in other words, inseparable. This, of course, is true in the case of the twin institutions of the World Order of BA, too.

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> "It must be also clearly understood by every believer that the institution of Guardianship does not under any circumstances abrogate, or even in the slightest degree detract from, the powers granted to the Universal House of Justice by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and repeatedly and solemnly confirmed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will. It does not constitute in any manner a contradiction to the Will and Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, nor does it nullify any of His revealed instructions. It enhances the prestige of that exalted assembly, stabilizes its supreme position, safeguards its unity, assures the continuity of its labours, without presuming in the slightest to infringe upon the inviolability of its clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction. We stand indeed too close to so monumental a document to claim for ourselves a complete understanding of all its implications, or to presume to have grasped the manifold mysteries it undoubtedly contains."
>
> *(Letter dated 27th February 1929, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 8)*

What this quote contributes to understanding the present situation is even less clear to me. Yes, the Guardianship, as envisaged by SE, does not infringe upon the clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction of the UHJ. The Guardian determines whether a matter can or cannot be legislated upon, but the final vote of the House--after cosultation with him, and including his vote as member of that body--is binding. Thus, the "clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction" of the UHJ is the prerogative to enact subsidiary laws and ordinances not expressly revealed in the Book--it is not, as the UHJ seems to imply elsewhere (47), some kind of assurance that the role the Guardian was to play in this regard has in some way already been accomplished.

What this quote does, if anything, is to emphasize how *essential* the Guardianship was meant to be to the UHJ: the Guardianship was to enhance the prestige of the House, stabilize its position, safeguard its unity, etc. If the prestige of the House, its position, and its unity are in no way diminished or threatened today, in the absence of the Guardian, then what, pray tell, did the Guardian mean when he said that the Guardianship "enhances the prestige of that exalted assembly, stabilizes its supreme position, safeguards it unity, assures the continuity of its labours...."??! Surely the House's prestige must be at least a little more tarnished in the absence of the Gaurdian, its position a little less stable, its unity not quite as secure, the continuity of its labours not quite as assured...mustn't it? If nothing at all has been lost--if things are still fine--then were SE's words devoid of meaning or implications? Was he saying something like, "sure, the Guardianship stabilizes the position of the UHJ--but the UHJ's position would be stable without the Guardianship anyway i.e. the Guardianship is not really essential"???

But if something *has* been lost--then *please* tell the world, especially the B world, what it is. An *essential* institution has been lost, has it not?

"We stand too close...." Again, the reference to the mystery of it all. Well, again, what SE says is that we stand too close to understand *all* of its implications--not too close to understand certain *salient features* of the plan.

"does not...detract from the powers granted to the UHJ by BA": two institutions can still be truly "inseparable"--that is, incapable of functioning without each other--without actually *detracting* from each other, can they not?

Consider the following: might not the Guardianship and the UHJ be considered "*inseparable*" because they are both "*essential*" to the World Order? Even without getting into the ultimately meaningless details of whether or not the UHJ can function without the Guardian, isn't it plain that the World Order itself cannot? "Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of BA would be mutilated...." And isn't it plain that the World Order cannot function without the UHJ either? "Severed from the no less essential institution of the UHJ this same System of the Will of AB would be paralyzed....."

Aren't the Guardianship and the UHJ therefore "inseparable"--for without one, the World Order would be mutilated, and without the other, the World Order would be paralyzed. They are both--*both*--essential. Without a UHJ, the Guardianship would head a World Order that is paralyzed (and we are, of course, talking about paralyzed over time , not the few years the Guardian necessarily had to function alone); without a Guardian, the UHJ must head a World Order that is mutilated (even Head-less). They both need each other--because the World Order which they represent, together, needs both. Or rather, would have needed both.

(16)

> "From these statements it is made indubitably clear and evident that the Guardian of the Faith has been made the Interpreter of the Word and that the Universal House of Justice has been invested with the function of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings. The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and perogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgement on such laws and ordinances as Bahá'u'lláh has not expressly revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested."
>
> (*"The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh," pp. 60-61*)

"Neither can, nor will ever"--well, this is obviously referring to the institutions as they were envisaged by SE. There is no guarantee that if the overall pattern is changed, this same promise would still hold.

Again--"laws and ordinances", *not* the nature of the overall pattern by which the UHJ itself is defined. And, of course, as usual, the enactments of the House of Justice could not be overruled by the Guardian--and in that sense the Guardain does not infringe upon the House's domain--but the Guardian *was* supposed to be there to take part in the enactment process itself. There is no absolute distinction being made here between Guardianship and UHJ, any more than an absolute distinction can be made between any two truly essential organs--the two are, quite simply, and quite unequivocally, different--yes--but *inseparable*, too.

No where is any kind of magical infallibility conferred upon either institution, unrelated to any more understandable kind of system of checks and balances. It refers instead, to a certain kind of structure, consisting of two inseparable pillars, which in many ways do in fact check and balance each other: the Guardian can expell members, but the UHJ is elected by the people, not appointed by the Guardian; the Guardian must insist in consultation on reconsideration of any proposed enactment he considers wrong, but the final vote of the House is binding; the Guardian appoints his successor, but the House approves the appointment, etc.

If, as the present UHJ asserts, it is truly inconceivable that the House could--in the absence of the Guardian--go astray, then all these checks and balance were unnecessary, and not "essential". What I find truly inconceivable is that all these checks and balances so clearly and emphatically spelled out were somehow non-essential, that it just doesn't matter that they have all ceased to function, that things are just fine now.

As far as the "can, nor will ever"--well, SE also predicts other things, future Guardians for example, using the word "will". But his prediction, or the future as he envisaged it, simply did not turn out as he thought it would.

(17)

> "Each exercises, within the limitations imposed upon it, its powers, its authority, its rights and perogatives. These are neither contradictory, nor detract in the slightest degree from the position which each of these institutions occupies."
>
> *("The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh," p. 59)*

> "Though the Guardian of the Faith has been made the permanent head of so august a body he can never, even temporarily, assume the right of exclusive legislation. He cannot override the decision of the majority of his fellow members...."
>
> *("The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh," p. 60)*

Again, yes, the two organs were indeed meant to have their separate functions, just as the brain is supposed to think and the heart is supposed to pump blood. And the Guardian could not overrule the decision the House, it is true. But he was to be the head of the house. Take the brain away, and the heart ceases to pump; take the heart away and the brain ceases to think. This is what it means for two organs to be inseparable parts of one organic whole. And this is the metaphor SE used to describe the relationship between the Guardianship and the UHJ--organic, inseparable, essential, nucleus, pattern, embryo

(18) Above all, let the hearts of the friends be assured by these words of Bahá'u'lláh:

> "The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation. Storms of human strife are powerless to undermine its basis, nor will men's fanciful theories succeed in damaging its structure."
> *(Quoted on p. 109 of The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh)*

and these of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

> "Verily, God effecteth that which He pleaseth; naught can annul His Covenant; naught can obstruct His favor nor oppose His Cause! He doeth with His will that which pleaseth Him and He is powerful over all things!"
> *(Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. III, p. 598)*

"its structure": but the very pattern of that structure was to consist of two pillars. The structure of the World Order has indeed been altered--though not by human strife or fanciful theories. No. It was altered by reality.

"He doeth what He will"--indeed he does. And in religious history, this has usually meant wreaking havoc on orthodoxies of all kind, and subverting reliance on anything except love and unity. It has not usually meant supporting claims to literal infallibility, has it?

(19) It should be understood by the friends that before legislating upon any matter the Universal House of Justice studies carefully and exhaustively both the Sacred Texts and the writings of Shoghi Effendi on the subject. The interpretations written by the beloved Guardian cover a vast range of subjects and are equally as binding as the Text itself.

It is good that the UHJ should study the Book and the writings of its Interpreter before legislation. But it is not sufficient. It was to be the Guardian himself who decided whether a matter was or was not already covered by in the Text, who would provide the interpretation necessary to understand how that Text might apply under any given circumstance.

The interpretations of SE may indeed cover a vast range of subjects. But that is not sufficient. In a world in a state of constant change, indeed, in a state of accelerated change, there will be--and no doubt already have been--a myriad of subjects as not covered by his interpretations. What about a UHJ in the absence of any Guardian, for example?

(20) INTERPRETATION AND LEGISLATION

There is a profound difference between the interpretations of the Guardian and the elucidations of the House of Justice in exercise of its function to "deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure, and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book." The Guardian reveals what the Scripture means; his interpretation is a statement of truth which cannot be varied. Upon the Universal House of Justice, in the words of the Guardian, "has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in

The UHJ bases a great deal of its reassurance upon the alleged fact that the respective domains of the two institutions are clearly distinguished. In SE's version of things, perhaps they were. But now, they clearly cannot be.

If the question of what to do in the absence of the Guardian is indeed a matter that could be referred to a UHJ which is acting without a Guardian, then it becomes very difficult indeed to see the distinction between what was supposed to be the Guardian's prerogative and what the UHJ is in fact doing now. To define its own sphere of jurisdiction in the absence of the Guardian, is to usurp one of the functions of the Guardian. To describe the World Order of BA as consisting of nothing but elected councils and the people they appoint--essentially *one* salient feature that is-- instead of SE's twin-pillared "salient feature*s*" is to redefine the structure and meaning of "World Order"--it is, in other words, to usurp the Guardian's function of Interpreter. And to decide whether a matter has or has not in fact been covered in the Writings would have been--and clearly was intended to be--the prerogative of the Guardian.

And again, "all", as in "all problems" cannot mean quite literally "all", though out of context it appears to. As I have pointed out many times already, it obviously does not refer to interpretation of the Writings. This fact in itself shows that "all" does not literally mean "all".

But, isn't the difference between "interpretation" and "elucidation" exceedingly difficult to define? They are synonyms, after all. If the distinction is to be made on the basis of the objects to which interpretation is applied, then there is no problem. If the UHJ's elucidation is indeed confined to laws and ordinances bearing upon daily transactions, then fine. But if the House applies its powers of elucidation to defining the World Order in the absence of the Guardian, then this is quite plainly a case of interpreting the writings, just as SE did in "The Dispensation of BA". It has indeed infringed upon the domain of the Guardian. What the House *intends* to do is immaterial. It is what it actually *does* that matters.

An understanding of what to make of a World Order in the absence of the Guardian is absolutely essential to the UHJ, and so, understandably, it seeks to provide just such an understanding--yet it *cannot* pronounce upon this, for the World Order is, as that body itself admits, "embedded in the Teachings"--and something which is embedded in the Teachings can only be interpreted by the Guardian. The UHJ can only legislate upon laws and ordinances not revealed in the Book. It cannot pronounce upon the Pattern by which it itself is defined. It cannot--and yet, it feels it must. And so it *does* pronounce, though due to what I believe to be its *sincere* --but hopeless--attempt to refrain from interpreting the writings, the result is indirection, lack of straightforwardness, and, quite simply, confusion.

(21) Its pronouncements, which are susceptible of amendment or abrogation by the House of Justice itself, serve to supplement and apply the Law of God. Although not invested with the function of interpretation, the House of Justice is in a position to do everything necessary to establish the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh on this earth.

Note that in his Will and Testament, when AB speaks of the House's ability to amend or abrogate its own laws, he says, "And inasmuch as this House of Justice hath power to enact laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book and bear upon daily transactions, so also it hath power to repeal the same"--that is, as usual, we find the context to be "and bear upon daily transactions", *not* "that deal with the structure of the World Order itself", and *not* "contrary to the clear and unamiguous language of SE".

Is the House in the position to do *everything* necessary to establish the World Order of BA? Wasn't the Guardianship--that "essential" institution--also to play a role? And didn't the Guardianship have responsibilities that the UHJ could never perform? Aren't those responsibilities necessary too? If there was nothing pertaining to the Guardianship that 1000 years of a World Order couldn't do without, in what sense, then, could it be considered an "essential" institution? But if there were indeed some essential functions of the Guardianship, can the House then do *everything* that was considered necessary? No, I think not. And that is why SE said all those things he said about the dire consequences for a World Order "divorced from the institution of the Guardianship," is it not?

(22) Unity of doctrine is maintained by the existence of the authentic texts of Scripture and the voluminous interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, together with the absolute prohibition against anyone propounding "authoritative" or "inspired" interpretations or usurping the function of Guardian. Unity of administration is assured by the authority of the Universal House of Justice.

> "Such," in the words of Shoghi Effendi, "is the immutability of His revealed Word. Such is the elasticity which characterizes the functions of His appointed ministers. The first preserves the identity of His Faith, and guards the integrity of His law. The second enables it, even as a living organism, to expand and adapt itself to the needs and requirements of an ever-changing society."
>
> *(Letter dated 21st March 1930, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 23)*

"unity of doctrine" *is* maintained?--or *was intended to be* maintained? An Interpreter can indeed maintain unity of doctrine, because he interprets, and clarifies obscure and difficult questions--notice the present tense. In the absence of a living Interpreter, however, the age old problem of diversity of interpretation necessarily arises again, for interpretations--even

interpretations of interpretations -- always vary. And without someone to whom questions can be referred in the present, we are left with a body of writings, and no one to authoritatively state what they mean. And remember, the interpretations of SE have now become a body of writings that must be interpreted too. In fact, the UHJ, whenever it quotes him (for it quotes him assuming he means what they think he means), or explains what things he said can or cannot imply, is interpreting him. Are they not?

Now, it is interesting to consider what is implied by the fact that no one can propound any authoritative or inspired interpretation. For one thing, I think it clearly deprives any World Order without an Interpreter of any hope of any authoritative reassurance that such a World Order is indeed "embedded in the Teachings", does it not? For only an Interpreter could determine whether such an Interpreter-less System could be interpreted as representing the World Order of BA. But, of course, therein lies the Catch-22, does it not?

For another thing, the lack of any authoritative interpretation seems to me to open wide the doors to true consultation. In the absence of any kind of *doctrinal* allegiance to *written* "statements of truth which cannot be varied", the door to transcendance, to deepening, to understanding is opened wide.

However, if one party *clings* to *written* words they consider to be absolute statements of some kind--in spite of the fact that their interpretation of those words, and hence the meaning of those words for them, and hence the only importance those words can have for them, will itself continually change--the only thing that this can achieve in practice is the moment to moment *projection* of that party's momentary interpretation *onto* those words, and the end of any hope of their deepening, or changing their interpretation without crisis, or any hope of their reaching a kind of peace which truly passes *all* understanding. Actually, I believe that such hope is never lost--but it can be put off almost indefinitely, it seems.

Now, allegiance to a *living* Interpreter is obviously quite a different matter, is it not? For such an Interpreter can correct one's misinterpretations and can actively push one to deeper understanding and can answer questions. He can attach nuances to words via gesture and tone of voice. He can invite the kind of interpretation he wants us to have by looking into our eyes, smiling, frowning, shrugging his shoulders, via any number of "extra-linguistic" clues. Any kind of notion of uncompromising allegiance to *written* words, however--divorced from all living, breathing, warm-blooded context--can in reality only lead to uncompromising allegiance *to one's own interpretations of those words* --especially if one finds oneself confronted with someone who has *different* interpretations! See what I mean?

If someone claims infallibility, or even just some kind of access to infallibility (via what "their" scripture "says", for example), it is nearly impossible to really consult with that person--one could go to him for advice, as pupil to teacher, for example, but seek out truth *together* with that person....? Try talking to a fundamentalist Christian who holds to the inerrancy of the Bible, and you will see what I mean. Or try talking to Bahá'ís.....

"immutability" and "elasticity"--yes, in the finely tuned World Order described by SE. But where is the flexibility of interpretation now? Where, now, are "the means required to enable it to take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations" (Disp. 56)? A finely tuned automobile does not continue to function if you start yanking out the motor, or the carburator, or the radiator. The finely tuned System designed by AB and SE does not function either--if you start yanking out essential institutions.

(23)

> Every true believer, if he is to deepen in his understanding of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, must needs combine profound faith in the unfailing efficacy of His Message and His Covenant with the humility of recognizing that no one of this generation can claim to have embraced the vastness of His Cause nor to have comprehended the manifold mysteries and potentialities it contains. The words of Shoghi Effendi bear ample testimony to this fact:
>
> "How vast is the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh! How great the magnitude of His blessings showered upon humanity in this day! And yet, how poor, how inadequate our conception of their significance and glory! This generation stands too close to so colossal a Revelation to appreciate, in their full measure, the infinite possibilities of His Faith, the unprecedented character of His Cause, and the mysterious dispensations of His Providence."
>
> *(Letter dated 21st March 1930, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 24)*
>
> "We are called upon by our beloved Master in His Will and Testament not only to adopt it (Bahá'u'lláh's new World Order) unreservedly, but to unveil its merit to all the world. To attempt to estimate its full value and grasp its exact significance after so short a time since its inception would be premature and presumptuous on our part. We must trust to time, and the guidance of God's Universal House of Justice, to obtain a clearer and fuller understanding of its provisions and implications."
>
> *(Letter dated 23rd February 1924, Bahá'í Administration, p. 62)*

The "mystery" of it all again. But remember, when SE was writing these things, he clearly assumed that there would be future Guardians as well as a UHJ, working *together*. These, for him, were "salient features", "inexcusable to ignore or misconceive", "already clearly defined". When he spoke of the vastness of the Revelation, he obviously wasn't referring to things "already clearly defined". To think that these passages could be interpreted so as to

provide some possibility that what he defined in intentionally clear and unambiguous language could suddenly become "obscure"--isn't this to deny the clear and unambiguous guidance itself? And if such clear and unambiguous language could have been so far off the mark, then what store are we to put in words emphasizing the mystery of it all?

It would, I think, be more productive to take SE at his word--he said what he said, and that, within the B system, is that. To grab at straws, now--to try to salvage part of that overall Pattern by setting up the UHJ in isolation from all that was to surround it...this is to deny the Pattern itself. But the *Covenant*? The B *Faith*? What *is* that? Is it limited to the B "World Order"? Maybe it is. I am not sure. But, given the fact that endowments dedicated to charity could be referred to Bs even in the absence of both UHJ and Guardian, and the fact that such a concept as "Major Plan" exists within the B Faith itself, and the fact that some *Catch-22* (*not* some *loophole*) seems in some sense to be "provided for"....well, couldn't "Covenant" be given a wider interpretation? Again, maybe not. But, indeed, *today*, *who is to say*?

Remember, the Hands, when they decided to pursue the establishment of the UHJ in the absence of the Guardian were, as they themselves admit, acting in the absence of any infallible guidance. The present UHJ is the result of that action taken in the absence of infallible guidance. The possible implications of this, I think, are well worth pondering. Or maybe they are not. But *who* is to *say*?

"we are called upon...to adopt it (BA's new World Order)"-- OK, but *which version* of that new World Order? The twin-pillared one, or the single-pillared one? The one with two salient features--the Guardianship as Head and the UHJ--or the one with essentially only one salient feature--the UHJ as Head???

(24)

> "As to the order and the management of the spiritual affairs of the friends, that which is very important now is the consolidation of the spiritual assemblies in every centre, because, on these fortified and unshakable foundations, God's Supreme House of Justice shall be erected and firmly established in the days to come. When this most great Edifice shall be reared on such an immovable foundation, God's purpose, wisdom, universal truths, mysteries and realities of the Kingdom, which the mystic Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh has deposited within the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, shall gradually be revealed and made manifest."
>
> *(Letter in Persian, dated 19th December 1922)*

Note, it does not say that the UHJ itself will reveal the hidden mysteries of the Will by making any kind of *interpretative* pronouncements upon that Will. No, it simply says that *when* the UHJ is established, such mysteries will be gradually made manifest. This does not nessarily imply much of anything at all--it is wide open to interpretation, except, of course, to the interpretion that it *necessarily* implies something. And, as usual, the UHJ of which SE is speaking, is one he envisages as having a Guardian as head and voting member. This is so very easy to forget--but, I think it must not be

forgotten, if we are to respect the integrity of what SE has said...if we are to respect the integrity of his *guidance*. And this cannot necessarily be taken as some kind of assurance that this House would in fact be established, even if there were no Guardian. For one thing, by "this House" is meant not only "elected body" (as AB says in one part of his Will) but "elected body with Guardian as head" (as he says in another part of his Will)--and we are *not* told if this can be interpreted in any *other* way. Moreover, both AB and the Guardian also spoke of future Guardians, and how the meaning of that institution (the Guardianship) would also become clearer as time went on.

If we insist that these words imply necessary assurance in the one instance, we must also insist that they imply necessary assurance in the other instance as well--for both institutions were said to be under divine protection, but only one (if we are to believe what the present UHJ says) has in fact continued to function in any active sense i.e. has continued to function. This divine protection, then, turns out to be quite as inscrutable as anything else about the ways of God. Given that, where is the *certainty* which the UHJ seems determined to find in the passages referring to the UHJ?

And as far as "the guidance of God's Universal House of Justice" goes, to assume that this applies to the present UHJ is to beg the very question I and many others are asking. Is the present UHJ indeed *God's* UHJ? Is this UHJ the same House referred to in the writings? If it is, then where is its divinely appointed head? And *who is to say* it can function without that head? Not the body itself, for that would be to redefine itself, and only the head can define the body.

What kind of "guidance" could SE have been referring to? Administrative guidance, for one thing. Interpretative guidance? Well, *acting in conjunction* with the Guardian as its head, perhaps. Guidance regarding the very nature of the World Order in the absence of the Guardian? No. And, as you already know, I believe that this has already been addressed by the Guardian: "Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship...."

Now, even if the words of AB and SE contained meanings of which they themselves were unaware--and I see no reason to think they did not (the provision of the Catch-22 was this very sort of thing, it seems to me)--this does not imply, however, that the *UHJ* can offer any guidance as to what those meanings might be. For, of course, as always, that is the prerogative of a Guardian--that was to be the *function of a Guardian, past or future*.

(25) Statements such as these indicate that the full meaning of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as well as an understanding of the implications of the World Order ushered in by that remarkable Document, can be revealed only gradually to men's eyes, and after the Universal House of Justice has come into being. The friends are called upon to trust to time and to await the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, which, as circumstances require, will make pronouncements that will resolve and clarify obscure matters.

"Mystery" again.

"Statements such as these indicate..." : in other words, statements such as these *mean*....; in other words, our interpretation of these statements *is*....

And the basic interpretation they are in fact making, of course, is that the *present* UHJ is *God's* UHJ, and that the *present* B World Order is the World Order *of BA*. But that is the question itself: *is* it? *Who* is to *say*? And remember, there are very striking, important, remarkable, *salient* reasons for wondering about this!

Just because the UHJ *wants* to refrain from interpreting the writings, it doesn't mean that they are in fact succeeding. I realize that they cannot avoid it. But they must. But they cannot. But they must. Catch-22.

Note that I am not saying the UHJ *as envisaged by SE* could never have talked about what certain passages might mean. Of course they could have, for a Guardian would have been there to confirm or correct any of their interpretations. The Pattern would have been whole, with its complementary parts and essential organs all in place. But without a Guardian.....

Even though AB says that "whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text"--he also says, in the *next* sentence, "...hath power to enact laws that are not expressly revealed in the Book and bear upon daily transactions...." Note that he doesn't say "not expressly revealed in the Book *or* bear upon daily transactions". No. He says, "*and* bear upon daily transactions". *Context*.

The Guardianship, after all, was intended to have a purpose--an essential purpose--in the World Order.
And the UHJ was supposed to do what it was supposed to do
And the Pattern was a single, interlocking whole.
And that, it seems, is that.

If the UHJ *could* do everything that was *necessary*, then the Guardianship simply was not essential. And if the UHJ cannot do everything that is necessary, then *there is something which is necessary which cannot be done*. And if something truly *necessary* is missing in a project, organization, or body, then the final objective cannot be reached, the organization cannot stand, and the body cannot function. Take oxygen away from the human body, the Presidency from the U.S. government, trees away from the paper-making process, and you see what I mean.

Forgive the somewhat tautological nature of my arguments, but it seems that some things that nobody is saying simply have to be said.

Yes, AB wrote the following:

> "It is incumbent upon these members (of the UHJ) to gather in a certain place and deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book".

> "By this House is meant the UHJ, that is, in all countries a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one."

But he also wrote:

> "By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved and the guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body. Should he not attend in person its deliberations, he must appoint one to represent him. Should any of the members commit a sin, injurious to the common weal, the guardian of the Cause of God hath at his own discretion the right to expel him"
>
> "He is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendents"
>
> "should the first-born of the guardian...not inherit of the spiritual within him (the guardian of the Cause of God) and his glorious lineage not be matched with a goodly character, then must he, (the guardian of the Cause of God) choose another branch to succeed him"

Note how important context is. Out of context, it could appear that only the first-born would succeed the Guardian. Out of context, it could appear that the UHJ could be separated from the Guardian. Out of context, it could appear that there must be secondary Houses in literally *all* countries before the UHJ could be elected. And note, too, that, *in* context, no provision is made for a UHJ *without* a Guardian.

And so, when the UHJ quotes words such as "can, and will never", and "clearly defined", "all problems", "obscure matters" etc. I would ask that they justify the use they make of those words by clarifying and making explicit the *context* in which they have found those words. I do not think, however, that the UHJ would then be able to make use of those words, if they admitted the context in which they found them. And the process of interpretation which they are in fact involved in would then also become apparent--and this is something the UHJ, apparently, does not want to recognize. I am not saying that this is something they are trying to hide--for that would imply willful intention to deceive. I am only saying that this is something the UHJ, apparently, does not want to *recognize*.

Whether the present situation is indeed an "obscure matter" is itself obscure--and therefore, only a Guardian could determine whether this has not already been covered in the Writings, and whether a UHJ--with a Guardian as head and voting member--could even pronounce upon it.

But, in all honesty, "Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of BA would be mutilated....."--what is obscure about this?

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THE AUTHORITY TO EXPEL

> The third group of queries raised by the friends concerns details of functioning of the Universal House of Justice in the absence of the Guardian, particularly the matter of expulsion of members of the House of Justice. Such questions will be clarified in the constitution of the House of Justice, the formulation of which is a goal of the Nine Year Plan. Meanwhile the friends are informed that any member committing a "sin injurious to the common weal" may be expelled from membership of the House of Justice by a majority vote of the House itself. Should any member, God forbid, be guilty of breaking the Covenant, the matter would be investigated by the Hands of the Cause of God, and the Covenant-breaker would be expelled by the decision of the Hands of the Cause of God residing in the Holy Land, subject to the approval of the House of Justice, as in the case of any other believer. The decision of the Hands in such a case would be announced to the Bahá'í world by the Universal House of Justice.

Do the writings themselves somewhere say that a member can be expelled by the majority vote of the House itself? If not, then isn't the House taking upon itself one of the functions of the Guardian: "Should any of the members commit a sin, injurious to the common weal, the guardian of the Cause of God hath at his own discretion the right to expel him". And if it can take on this function, why cannot it take on any other function? But if it can take on any other function, then what happens to the clearly defined domains which the UHJ depends so much upon in its attempts to reassure the believers that it "can, and will never" infringe upon the domain of the Guardian?

Can the Hands decide anything at all--anything definitive, that is--without the Guardian? "This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the guardian of the Cause of God"--*is*, or *was meant to be*?

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> We are certain that when you share this letter with the friends and they have these quotations from the Scriptures and the writings of the Guardian drawn to their attention, their doubts and misgivings will be dispelled and they will be able to devote their every effort to spreading the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, serenely confident in the power of His Covenant to overcome whatever tests an inscrutable Providence may shower upon it, thus demonstrating its ability to redeem a travailing world and to upraise the Standard of the Kingdom of God on earth.
>
> *(Letter dated 9 March 1965, Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968, pp. 44-56)*

"doubts and misgivings" about a UHJ without a Guardian--who, except a Guardian, could really dispell such doubts and misgivings? Certainly not the UHJ, which is itself the problem and whose definition is itself the question!

(28) THE GUARDIANSHIP AND THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

> ....You query the timing of the election of the Universal House of Justice in view of the Guardian's statement: "...given favourable circumstances under which the Bahá'ís of Persia and the adjoining countries under Soviet rule may be enabled to elect their national representatives.... the only remaining obstacle in the way of the definite formation of the International House of Justice will have been removed." On April 19, 1947 the Guardian, in a letter written on his behalf by his secretary, replied to the inquiry of an individual believer about this passage: "At the time he referred to Russia there were Bahá'ís there. Now the community has practically ceased to exist; therefore the formation of the International House of Justice cannot depend on a Russian national spiritual assembly, but other strong national spiritual assemblies will have to be built up before it can be established."

This is precisely the point I have made before: times change, and the guidance the Guardian gave in the past cannot always be applied to the present. Here he is doing precisely what he and future Guardians would have been expected to do--he is adapting his guidance to the changing times. *This was to be the Guardianship's role.*

SE's role as definitive Interpreter, however, has ceased to function--and only he or another Guardian could definitively re-evaluate and re-interpret what he has said in the past. But there is no longer any Guardian to perform this obviously vital function. The Hands may have had a lot of things written by SE which may indeed have provided some guidance--but, then again, maybe they didn't, for SE might have changed his mind about many of those things, even some very important things. And he certainly didn't leave them any guidance about what to do in case he died without leaving a successor; he only told them what the dire consequences would be which would follow such an event--"Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship....."

It is, I think, quite conceivable in fact that, had he foreseen his own death and the ending of the Guardianship, he would have said that the Hands should not try to establish the UHJ, for that House could not exist without a Guardian; he could have told them instead to provide for a different kind of administrative order. It is quite conceivable, I think.

And before you scoff, remember that something far more inconceivable did in fact happen--the institution of the Guardianship as a twin pillar acting in conjunction with a UHJ came to an end before it had even begun!

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> You suggest the possibility that, for the good of the Cause, certain information concerning the succession to Shoghi Effendi is being withheld from the believers. We assure you that nothing whatsoever is being withheld from the friends for whatever reason. There is no doubt at all that in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi was the authority designated to appoint his successor; but he had no children and all the surviving Aghsán had broken the Covenant. Thus as the Hands of the Cause stated in 1957, it is clear that there was no one he could have appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Will. To have made an

> appointment outside the clear and specific provisions of the Master's Will and Testament would obviously have been an impossible and unthinkable course of action for the Guardian, the divinely appointed upholder and defender of the Covenant. Moreover, that same Will had provided a clear means for the confirmation of the Guardian's appointment of his successor, as you are aware. The nine Hands to be elected by the body of the Hands were to give their assent by secret ballot to the Guardian's choice. In 1957 the entire body of the Hands, after fully investigating the matter, announced that Shoghi Effendi had appointed no successor and left no will. This is documented and established.

I am not sure I understand what the UHJ is trying to say at one point, when they speak of the method by which the Hands were to confirm the Guardian's appointment. What is the point they are trying to make? That since the Hands were given the right to approve the Guardian's appointment, they could also determine whether or not SE had in fact appointed a successor? I don't see how this follows. Indeed, as I have pointed out above, whether or not the Hands could even function at all without their Head is quite debatable.

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> The fact that Shoghi Effendi did not leave a will cannot be adduced as evidence of his failure to obey Bahá'u'lláh — rather should we acknowledge that in his very silence there is a wisdom and a sign of his infallible guidance. We should ponder deeply the writings that we have, and seek to understand the multitudinous significances that they contain. Do not forget that Shoghi Effendi said two things were necessary for a growing understanding of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: the passage of time and the guidance of the Universal House of Justice.

SE did not leave a will. BA has made it an obligation for all Bs to leave a will, has he not? Did he make any exceptions?

That SE had appointed no successor--if this is indeed true--cannot, perhaps, be "adduced as evidence of his failure to obey BA", for, as things turned out, apparently he *could* not. But that he did not leave a will...? SE has said, "No Guardian of the Faith, I feel it my solemn duty to place on record, can ever claim to be the perfect exemplar of the teachings of BA" (Disp 59). Now, to me at least, this implies that he could in fact fail to obey BA in at least some respects, otherwise he would in fact be "the perfect exemplar of the teachings of BA" that he explicitly denies being, would he not?

Again, "the guidance of the UHJ"--but *which* UHJ? The one forming part of a World Order of two "salient features" or the one forming part of a World Order of *one* salient fea*ture*? The one with a guardian as sacred head and voting member, or the one without him? And what *kind* of guidance? Administrative? Interpretative?

(31) SEPARATE SPHERES OF RESPONSIBILITY AND FUNCTION

> The infallibility of the Universal House of Justice, operating within its ordained sphere, has not been made dependent upon the presence in its membership of the Guardian of the Cause. Although in the realm of interpretation the Guardian's pronouncements are always binding, in the area of the Guardian's participation in legislation it is always the decision of the House itself which must prevail. This is supported by the words of the Guardian: "The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgment on such laws and ordinances as Bahá'u'lláh has not expressly revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested.
>
> "Though the Guardian of the Faith has been made the permanent head of so august a body he can never, even temporarily, assume the right of exclusive legislation. He cannot override the decision of the majority of his fellow members, but is bound to insist upon a reconsideration by them of any enactment he conscientiously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's revealed utterances."

I don't know whether some completely abstract (almost magical?) notion of the infallibility of the UHJ has or has not been made dependent upon the presence in its membership of the Guardian of the Cause. But what I do know is that the UHJ itself has been defined in those terms, and the assurances given the World regarding its infallibility were given in the context of the overall Pattern which included a Guardian.

True, the guardian could not override a decision of the UHJ--and *in that (somewhat strained) sense* the infallibility of the UHJ was, perhaps, not exactly "made dependent upon" the presence of the guardian (though the voting body to which we are referring here was to include the Guardian himself as voting member!). But the infallibility of the UHJ without the Guardian was not guaranteed either, was it? The very consultative proces undertaken to arrive at any decision was designed to include the guardian or someone appointed by him, as the passages quoted by the UHJ on this page themselves make clear. Products are guaranteed by the ingredients they contain and the process by which they are produced, are they not? The infallibility of the UHJ involved the ingredients of a living Guardian as head and voting member who would provide the interpretative context and define the sphere of the legislative action of the body as a whole and a consultative process involving that same Guardian.

For any decision not involving those ingredients or that process--does the guarantee still hold? And, if it does, doesn't it become a very different kind of guarantee, one claiming a kind of magical infallibility, an infallibility divorced from most of the more humanly understandable system of checks and balances once envisaged for it?

(32) THE SPHERE OF THE GUARDIAN

> However, quite apart from his function as a member and sacred head for life of the Universal House of Justice, the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, had the right and duty "to define the sphere of the legislative action" of the Universal House of Justice. In other words, he had the authority to state whether a matter was or was not already covered by the Sacred Texts and therefore whether it was within the authority of the Universal House of Justice to legislate upon it. No other person, apart from the Guardian, has the right or authority to make such definitions. The question therefore arises: In the absence of the Guardian, is the Universal House of Justice in danger of straying outside its proper sphere and thus falling into error? Here we must remember three things: First Shoghi Effendi, during the thirty-six years of his Guardianship, has already made inumerable such definitions, supplementing those made by 'Abdu'l-Baha and by Baha'u'llah Himself. As already announced to the friends, a careful study of the Writings and interpretations on any subject on which the House of Justice proposes to legislate always precedes its act of legislation. Second, the Universal House of Justice, itself assured of Divine guidance, is well aware of the absence of the Guardian and will approach all matters of legislation only when certain of its sphere of jurisdiction, a sphere which the Guardian has confidently described as "clearly defined." Third, we must not forget the Guardian's written statement about these two institutions: "Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other."

Three things are mentioned that the believers are to consider here.

Regarding the first: "innumerable" is simply not enough to cover even 5 years time, let alone 100, or 1000. The "exigencies of time" referred to by AB certainly would suggest that--and he was speaking about how "profoundly" things could change in 100 years. What about 200? 500? 1000? Whether or not the UHJ itself reviews those "innumerable" definitions, then, is--apart from usurping the function of the guardian himself--entirely besides the point. It is irrelevant.

Regarding the second: here, in the admitted "absence of the Guardian", the UHJ takes it upon itself to legislate only when "certain of its sphere of jurisdiction". How does this body *know* when it itself is certain? When that body itself decides that it is, that's how! But, as the passages from SE quoted at the beginning of this same paragraph make clear, that was the very role of the Guardian which the UHJ was not to usurp! And, as I have pointed out before, what the Guardian described as "clearly defined" was the two-pillared nature of the World Order and *some* of the salient features, and *basic* functions of the twin institutions--***not*** the "sphere of jurisdiction" of the UHJ *in the sense of* that body's somehow having *already been provided with authoritative determinations* as to whether or not any particular matter upon which the UHJ might be called upon to legislate over the next 1000 years is already covered by the Sacred Texts!!

Regarding the third: As they were envisaged by the Guardian, perhaps not. As the UHJ exists today is quite another matter. AB said about the Guardian, "after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendents". There is that same word "will" here too, is there not? This, of course, is assuming descendents in the first place. But I would say that when SE says "can, nor will ever," he too is assuming things--like the entire Pattern of two pillars acting in conjunction with each other, for example. Take away descendents, and where does that leave us with regard to understanding AB's statement? Answer--it no longer applies. Take away the Pattern, and where does that leave us with regard to understanding SE's statement? Answer--it no longer applies.

(33) As regards the need to have deductions made from the Writings to help in the formulation of the enactments of the House of Justice, there is the following text from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

> "Those matters of major importance which constitute the foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice. The wisdom of this is that the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place. Therefore the House of Justice will take action accordingly.
>
> "Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions. God forbid! The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.
>
> "Say, O People: Verily the Supreme House of Justice is under the wings of your Lord, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful, that is under His protection, His care, and His shelter; for He has commanded the firm believers to obey that blessed, sanctified, and all-subduing body, whose sovereignty is divinely ordained and of the Kingdom of Heaven and whose laws are inspired and spiritual.
>
> "Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice. In the religion of Islám, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text: although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified. These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence, and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances. All these were enforced. Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice. The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Bahá'í

> community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division, and dispersion. The oneness of the Word would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God would be shaken."

"deductions"--well, yes, the members of the UHJ were obviously expected to think things through. But, as these passages make clear, the things they were to make deductions about were "subsidiary laws", "thousands of laws which were unspecified". "matters of major importance", on the other hand, are already covered. The absence of the Guardian--is this a subsidiary law, or a matter of major impotance? A matter of major imprtance, certainly. Has it been covered in the Text? I should think anyone reading "The Dispensation of BA"--written by SE, an extension of the Word Itself--would have to say, Yes: "Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship....the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn."

Again, the protection vouchsafed to God's UHJ does not necessarily apply to the present UHJ--for that itself is the question being discussed, and to assume that it necessarily applies is to beg the question. And remember, the same protection was promised to SE and the Guardianship--and look what happened to that institution.

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COMPLEMENTARY AIMS OF INSTITUTIONS

> In the Order of Bahá'u'lláh there are certain functions which are reserved to certain institutions, and others which are shared in common, even though they may be more in the special province of one or the other. For example, although the Hands of the Cause of God have the specific functions of protection and propagation, and are specialized for these functions, it is also the duty of the Universal House of Justice and the spiritual assemblies to protect and teach the Cause–indeed teaching is a sacred obligation placed upon every believer by Bahá'u'lláh. Similarly, although after the Master authoritative interpretation was exclusively vested in the Guardian, and although legislation is exclusively the function of the Universal House of Justice, these two institutions are, in Shoghi Effendi's words, "complementary in their aim and purpose." "There common, their fundamental object is to ensure the continuity of that divinely appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings." Whereas the Universal House of Justice cannot undertake any function which exclusively appertained to the Guardian, it must continue to pursue the object which it shares in common with the Guardianship.

> As you point out with many quotations, Shoghi Effendi repeatedly stressed the inseparability of these two institutions. Whereas he obviously envisaged their functioning together, it cannot logically be deduced from this that one is unable to function in the absence of the other. During the whole thirty-six years of his Guardianship Shoghi Effendi functioned without the Universal House of Justice. Now the Universal House of Justice must function without the Guardian, but the principle of inseparability remains. The Guardianship does not lose its significance nor position in the Order of Bahá'u'lláh merely because there is no living Guardian. We must guard against two extremes: one is to argue that because there is no Guardian all that was written about the Guardianship and its position in the Bahá'í World Order is a dead letter and was unimportant; the other is to be so overwhelmed by the significance of the Guardianship as to underestimate the strength of the Covenant, or to be tempted to compromise with the clear Texts in order to find somehow, in some way, a "Guardian."

Whether the UHJ can even exist without the Guardian is highly questionable, let alone whether or not it can "pursue the object which it shares in common with the Guardianship"--again, the UHJ speaks as if the two were not "inseparable".

The second paragraph is especially troublesome to me. Yes, SE repeatedly stressed the *inseparablitily* of the UHJ and the Guardianship. But--"it cannot logically be deduced from this that one is unable to function in the absence of the other"? It can't???? If I say two things are inseparable, can I not logically deduce from this that they cannot be separated?

Unlike the UHJ, the guardian clearly could function without the UHJ--he, as extension of the Word, helped to actually define that House. The House, however, as body defined by the Word and under the guidance of the Interpreter of the Word, the extension of the Word Itself, obviously could not function or even exist without the guardian.

The relationship of dependence is not reciprocal in this case.

For example, the founding fathers of the U.S.A. obviously functioned as founding fathers without Congress--*before* the Congress was designed *by them* and before it was established *by them* --but Congress could not even have existed without them. And *if* the founding fathers had made themselves head and voting members of that Congress--as AB made the Guardian head and voting member of the UHJ--then it is also clear that the Congress could not have functioned without them even after it had been established. It would be a different Congress if it did. *It would not be the Congress designed by the founders*.

Similarly, since SE helped to define and intended to found the UHJ, it is clear he could function without the UHJ. This is really absurdly obvious. But that the UHJ, as designed and defined by him, could somehow exist without him, this simply does not follow, for this House he himself defined in terms of interaction with a Guardian as sacred head and voting member.

Now the question of whether the Guardian*ship*, as institution, and not merely as SE the individual--that is, as one of twin pillars of the World Order--could exist without the UHJ, the answer would seem to be, No. For the Guardian*ship*--as defined by the Guardian--consisted of many duties which could only be fulfilled in connection with a UHJ. Duties not connected with the UHJ could, perhaps, continue to be performed in the absence of the UHJ. But whether this would be the continuance of the Guardianship is less clear. The continuance of a Guardian, and his successors, yes. But the Guardian*ship* as defined by SE in terms of the overall Pattern implicit in the Will of AB....? Maybe not.

But again, the relationship between the UHJ and the Guardianship is not exactly reciprocal here, for the very structure of the UHJ was defined in terms of Guardian as head. The Guardian himself, as individual, on the other hand, is simply that--an *individual*. He doesn't have component parts, in the way the UHJ should have. For this reason, and for the reasons already given above, the fact that the Guardian (although maybe not the Guardianship) could function without the UHJ simply does not in any way imply that the UHJ could function without the Guardian.

But this still does not touch the really fundamental issue. We have been talking about whether or not one or the other of the two "inseparable" institutions could in fact function without the other. Whether, in other words, they are in fact inseparable, or whether they are not. And, of course, they are. And they cannot be separated. Inseparable means inseparable, after all. But this is not the most important question.

The most important question is whether or not these two institutions are indeed "essential," that is, whether or not the *World Order of BA* could exist without either one of these two institutions. The answer is clearly, No:

> **"Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of BA would be mutilated.....Severed from the no less essential institution of the UHJ this same System of the Will of AB would be paralyzed..."**

And so, the answer to the question of whether the World Order of BA (not *necessarily* the Faith, or the Covenant, as I suggested above) could exist without either the UHJ or the Guardian or both is, in fact, No. *Isn't it?*

Regarding "The Guardianship does not lose its significance nor position in the Order of BA merely because there is no living Guardian". *Merely* because there is no living Guardian? *Merely*??? Do dead men perform functions, or act in conjunction with other institutions?

And what *is* the position of the Guardianship in "an Administrative Order whose salient features" consist of nothing but elected bodies, as it is described in the constitution of the UHJ? Where is the Guardianship in that Order? It has indeed quite literally lost its position, has it not? And the Guardians, who were to be seated in the UHJ, have quite literaly lost their positions, have they not?

One must, indeed, guard against extremes. But adherence to doctrines of infallibility makes that extremely difficult.

Again, general terms--or at least terms which could be more generally interpreted--like "Covenant" are flung around without attending to the question of what they might mean. But of course, the UHJ must refrain from meaning, from interpretation....

(35) HONESTY AND HUMILITY

> Service to the Cause of God requires absolute fidelity and integrity and unwavering faith in Him. No good but only evil can come from taking the responsibility for the future of God's Cause into our own hands and trying to force it into ways that we wish it to go regardless of the clear texts and our own limitations. It is His Cause. He has promised that its light will not fail. Our part is to cling tenaciously to the revealed Word and to the institutions that He has created to preserve His Covenant.

Well, obviously, I feel that the UHJ is doing exactly what it is advising other people not to do, though I do not feel that they realize this.

As far as tenacious clinging to the Word--that is, to a Person, OK. But to words and institutions based on words....? I do not think so.

The whole understanding of the World Order changed dramatically after SE's death. None of his work as Interpreter prepared the Bs for such a shock. In fact, everything he said and wrote as Interpreter actually laid the foundation for the shock--the vision he proclaimed of the meaning, structure, and unfoldment of the World Order suddenly came undone. The rug was pulled from beneath the World Order. The twin-pillared structure came tumbling down before it was even erected. And yet the House goes on quoting from SE and AB as if the meaning of their words were obvious, as if rather elaborate re-interpretation were not necessary, and as if the guidance which AB and SE once offered were still trustworthy. How can the House do this, given the fact that the guidance once offered by AB and SE gave people such a false impression of what the World Order meant, of what the World Order was going to be like? Even if they left some sort of loophole in the writings on purpose, which would allow for the World Order to continue in a way that no one else had foreseen, of what value can this be to people if the overall impression they received while reading the writings was so contrary to what in fact happened? In other words, if the interpretation to which a text lends itself is contrary to the facts, or if it does not illuminate the facts or prepare people for them, of what possible value is it?

If someone told me that the house I was going to buy had two pillars, and then, when I went to see it I found that it had only one pillar, what am I to think of that person? Is he a liar? Maybe, maybe not: he could have been misinformed himself. Is he infallible? Clearly not. Is his word reliable? Clearly not. Can I trust what he says to reflect reality in a way that I can understand? Absolutely not.

I imagine that before 1957 the B world almost unanimously assumed that there would be future guardians. And they assumed this because of things that AB and SE had said and written, did they not? Now, since there were in fact to be no future guardians, in what sense can what AB and SE said and wrote be considered "guidance"? Does guidance mislead people? Does it make them expect things that will never happen? And if it *does*, then why continue to *trust* it? Why continue to "cling tenaciously" to words that have already once mislead us? Might we not be just as profoundly mistaken about what we think the words mean today as people were before 1957?

And even if this is all some kind of "test", why assume that continued "clinging" is the way to pass the test? Maybe *letting go* of tenacious clinging to words is to pass the test.

If, as the Bs believe, the scriptures speak of the return of Elijah, and that John the Baptist was what that "return" really meant, mustn't we really let go of tenacious clinging to words? Isn't this the lesson? And if, as Bs believe, the gospels are the word of God, and Christ did not rise physically from the dead, yet Luke has Jesus saying after his resurrection, "a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have"--again, where is the room for clinging to words? And if, as Bs believe, SE was infallible, and yet he speaks of future guardians and the structure of the future World Order as including those guardians, *where* is the room for clinging to words written on paper?

When we say we cling to words, do we not really mean we cling to our interpretation of those words--to the interpretation we have of them at the moment? And if we say that we are merely clinging to the process of deepening in our understanding of those words--that is, to a process of continued re-intepretation--isn't this rather like not clinging at all? One may, however, "cling" to words in the sense of choosing a certain set of scriptures to deepen on, to transcend through, to continue investigation of; and one may cling to that choice for the sake of simplicity, or efficiency--but this is not what religious orthodoxy usually means when they speak of "clinging tenaciously" to their revealed word. One may also "cling" in the sense of denying that other scriptures are as worthy a vehicle for deepening, transcendance, or investigation; one may deny that other scriptures are "infallible", or "for today", or "equally valid", or "as complete", or "as pure", or "as up-to-date" as one's own.

What does the *UHJ* mean when it says Bs are to "cling tenaciously to the revealed Word"?

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It is precisely in this connection that the believers must recognize the importance of intellectual honesty and humility. In past dispensations many errors arose because the believers in God's Revelation were overanxious to encompass the Divine Message within the framework of their limited understanding, to define doctrines where definition was beyond their power, to explain mysteries which only the wisdom and experience of a later age would make comprehensible, to argue that something was true because it appeared desirable and necessary. Such compromises with essential truth, such intellectual pride, we must scrupulously avoid.

I wholeheartedly agree.

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If some of the statements of the Universal House of Justice are not detailed the friends should realize that the cause of this is not secretiveness, but rather the determination of this body to refrain from interpreting the teachings and to preserve the truth of the Guardian's statement that "Leaders of religion, exponents of political theories, governors of human institutions...need have no doubt or anxiety regarding the nature, the origin, or validity of the institutions which the adherents of the Faith are building up throughout the world. For these lie embedded in the Teachings themselves, unadulterated and unobscured by unwarranted inferences or unauthorized interpretations of His Word."

Frankly, I don't think non-Bs could be expected to believe the reassurances of the UHJ, based as they are upon premises such as "the Writings do not contradict each other," and "infallible guidance". And, "examined critically," I do not think the assurances of the UHJ hold up at all.

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THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN AUTHORITATIVE INTERPRETATION AND INDIVIDUAL UNDERSTANDING

A clear distinction is made in our Faith between authoritative interpretation and the interpretation or understanding that each individual arrives at for himself from his study of its teachings. While the former is confined to the Guardian, the latter, according to the guidance given to us by the Guardian himself, should by no means be suppressed. In fact such individual interpretation is considered the fruit of man's rational power and conducive to a better understanding of the teachings, provided that no disputes or arguments arise among the friends and the individual himself understands and makes it clear that his views are merely his own. Individual interpretations continually change as one grows in comprehension of the teachings. As Shoghi Effendi wrote: "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. There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for. They, therefore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their own. As the Cause is still in its early days we must be most careful lest we fall into this error and injure the Movement we so much adore. 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.

Quite an enlightened approach, I think.

(39) The Cause of God is organic, growing and developing like a living being. Time and again it has faced crises which have perplexed the believers, but each time the Cause, impelled by the immutable purpose of God, overcame the crisis and went on to greater heights.

Organic--precisely. Without one or more essential organs? Hardly.

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THE SAFEGUARD OF THE CAUSE

However great may be our inability to understand the mystery and the implications of the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the strong cord to which all must cling with assurance is the Covenant. The emphatic and vigorous language of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament is at this time, as at the time of His own passing, the safeguard of the Cause:

> "Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant." And again: "All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error."

The Universal House of Justice, which the Guardian said would be regarded by posterity as "the last refuge of a tottering civilization," is now, in the absence of the Guardian, the sole infallibly guided institution in the world to which all must turn, and on it rests the responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God in accordance with the revealed Word. There are statements from the Master and the Guardian indicating that the Universal House of Justice, in addition to being the highest legislative body of the Faith, is also the body to which all must turn, and is the "apex" of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, as well as the "supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth." The Guardian has in his writings specified for the House of Justice such fundamental functions as the formulation of future worldwide teaching plans, the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, and the guidance, organization, and unification of the affairs of the Cause throughout the world. Furthermore in God Passes

By the Guardian makes the following statement. "The Kitab-i-Aqdás...not only preserves for posterity the basic laws and ordinances on which the fabric of His future World Order must rest, but ordains, in addition to the function of interpretation which it confers upon His successor, the necessary institutions through which the integrity and unity of His Faith can alone be safeguarded." He has also, in "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh," written that the members of the Universal House of Justice "and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the Divine guidance which is at once the lifeblood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation."

As the Universal House of Justice has already announced, it cannot legislate to make possible the appointment of a successor to Shoghi Effendi, nor can it legislate to make possible the appointment of any more Hands of the Cause, but it must do everything within its power to ensure the performance of all those functions which it shares with these two mighty institutions. It must make provision for the proper discharge in future of the functions of protection and propagation, which the administrative bodies share with the Guardianship and the Hands of the Cause; it must, in the absence of the Guardian, receive and disburse the Ḥuqúqu'lláh, in accordance with the following statement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Disposition of the Ḥuqúq, wholly or partly, is permissible, but this should be done by permission of the authority in the Cause to whom all must turn." It must make provision in its constitution for the removal of any of its members who commits a sin "injurious to the common weal." Above all, it must with perfect faith in Bahá'u'lláh, proclaim His Cause and enforce His law so that the Most Great Peace shall be firmly established in this world and the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth shall be accomplished.

(Letter dated 27 May 1966; Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968, pp. 81-91)

"mystery" again

"the Covenant"--remember that the passage regarding "endowments dedicated to charity" seems to allow for a "Covenant" which includes neither the Guardianship nor any UHJ.

"the emphatic and vigorous language"--the UHJ is sidestepping the issue of meaning again. It quotes AB as if the words of AB were entirely self-explanatory, and as if interpretation were not necessary. I have already pointed out that the "all" in "all that is not expressly recorded therein" obviously cannot mean quite literally *all*. If it were to refer to

interpretation of the Writings, for example, then the distinction between the "clearly defined" spheres of the Guardianship and the House would be entirely erased, and the reassurances which the House bases upon those words "clearly defined" would be utterly meaningless (as I think they are anyway). Since "all" cannot literally mean "all", we are confronted with the problem of interpretation. Can this "all" include the question of a House without its appointed Head? Can it include the question of how the House can write its own constitution in the absence of a guardian? Can it include redefining the "salient features" of "the World Order of BA" i.e. redefining the meaning of "World Order"? I think not. It is a question of interpretation, is it not? There can be more than one possible interpretation of this "all", can there not?

Note that the House has, as usual, quoted those sections from the Will which appear to give the House unlimited powers. But what kind of powers is AB talking about? He says, "that which this body...doth carry"--i.e. what the House votes upon. And what was the House intended to vote upon? "laws" and "ordinances"--not questions of authority or the nature of the World Order. And what about the first part of the Will, where AB makes the guardian the Head of the UHJ? He doesn't repeat that in the second part of the Will, but need he do so? Are we to believe he suddenly provided for a House without its Head?

And what about SE's "clear and unambiguous" interpretation of this Will? In the Will, some things may not have been completely clear. For example, according to AB's Will, is the Guardianship essential? Can the House function without it? Well, maybe yes, maybe no--things are a little bit rough-hewn in the Will. But after SE interpreted the Will and called the guardianship "essential" and the twin pillars "inseparable", can the House, which considers his interpretations to be "statements of truth", try to suggest that the guardianship (i.e. a line of living Guardians) is no longer essential and that the twin pillars can in fact be separated? Note that if words as clear and unambiguous as "essential" and "inseparable" must now be somehow set aside, or their obvious implications somehow softened, then the question of interpretation becomes even more crucial. The House quotes the Will as if the words meant something obvious. But what about "essential" and "inseparable"--didn't they mean something obvious too?

And remember: whenever we read "UHJ" in the Will of AB or the writings of SE, and especially when we read of it in terms of "apex", or the institution to which all must turn, we simply cannot forget that the person assumed to be

sitting at the top of that institution was the Guardian himself. Thus, to turn to the UHJ would be to turn to the Guardian too. The basic structure of the World Order consists of two pillars, with a Guardian on top, as Head. There is no other vision of the World Order provided for. Any change in that vision necessarily involves re-interpretation of the concept "World Order". Yet no one can in any authoritative way re-interpret this concept except another guardian. But there is and can be no other guardian. Therefore, today there is a necessary function which cannot be performed in the absence of a guardian, thus vindicating SE's asserting that the guardianship was "essential" to the World Order.

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THE DISPENSATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

> Your recent letter, in which you share with us the questions that have occurred to some of the youth in studying "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh," has been carefully considered, and we feel that we should comment both on the particular passage you mention and on a related passage in the same work, because both bear on the relationship between the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice.
>
> The first passage concerns the Guardian's duty to insist upon a reconsideration by his fellow-members in the Universal House of Justice of any enactment which he believes conflicts with the meaning and departs from the spirit of the Sacred Writings. The second passage concerns the infallibility of the Universal House of Justice without the Guardian, namely Shoghi Effendi's statement that "Without such an institution [the Guardianship]...the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn."
>
> Some of the youth, you indicate, were puzzled as to how to reconcile the former of these two passages with such statements as that in the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which affirms that the Universal House of Justice is "freed from all error."
>
> Just as the Will and Testament ao 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not in any way contradict the Kitáb-i-Aqdas but, in the Guardian's words, "confirms, supplements, and correlates the provisions of the Aqdas," so the writings of the Guardian contradict neither the revealed Word nor the interpretations of the Master. In attempting to understand the Writings, therefore, one must first realize that there is and can be no real contradiction in them, and in the light of this we can confidently seek the unity of meaning which they contain.

"unity of meaning"--if one seeks the unity of meaning of the Will and Testament of AB, for example, or SE's 'The Dispensation of BA', then one must obtain a vision of a whole system, whose interlocking parts are called essential and inseparable, and whose structure represents the infallible and invariable interpretation of what "World Order of BA" means. The "unity of meaning" does not provide for mystical loopholes which suddenly "provide for" the ending of the line of Guardians before it even began, or for a House which can define its own sphere of jurisdiction or claim Headship for itself or

re-interpret "World Order" by proclaiming a structure whose "salient features" consist of elected councils and the people appointed by those councils instead of SE's "twin pillars". "Contradiction" seems to have entered after reality stepped in and ended the Guardianship, and a UHJ elected years later tried to re-establish some kind of continuity of authority. Now, indeed, there are contradictions.

(42) The Guardian and the Universal House of Justice have certain duties and functions in common; each also operates within a separate and distinct sphere. As Shoghi Effendi explained, "...it is made indubitably clear and evident that the Guardian of the Faith has been made the Interpreter of the Word and that the Universal House of Justice has been invested with the function of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings. The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgment on such laws and ordinances as Bahá'u'lláh has not expressly revealed." He goes on to affirm, "Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested." It is impossible to conceive that two centers of authority, which the Master has stated "are both under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness the Exalted One," could conflict with one another, because both are vehicles of the same Divine Guidance.

Note: the House's function is to *legislate* "on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings," that is, to fill in gaps in the legal structure left behind by BA, to deal with "such laws and ordinances as BA has not expressly revealed"--*not* to deal with the absence of a guardian or the question of authority in a World Order divorced from the institution of the Guardianship! This is entirely outside its domain.

"Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other"--these words were written about the two institutions functioning in a certain relationship with each other, with various levels of checks and balances. These words can be *interpreted* as applying to a UHJ without a guardian--but they cannot be said to necessarily apply to such a House. And they most certainly cannot be offered as *authoritative* assurance that the present House cannot infringe upon the domain of the Guardianship, for that would be to offer as authoritative an *interpretation* of those words. My own interpretation of those words is that they do not in fact apply to a House without its appointed Interpreter, Head, and voting member.

To say that "it is impossible to conceive that two centers of authority...could conflict with one another, because both are vehicles of the same Divine Guidance", may or may not be valid if one already accepts the assertion that the present House is the same House referred to in the writings. If one does not accept that assertion, as I do not, then the assurance has no value whatsoever. How could a House which writes its own constitution and therefore most definitely defines its own sphere of jurisdiction be the same House as that which was promised never to infringe upon the domain of the Guardian? And where is the authoritative justification for the consequent re-interpretation of the structure, the "salient features" of the World Order of BA? It is and necessarily must be--in the absence of a guardian--non-existent.

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> The Universal House of Justice, beyond its function as the enactor of legislation, has been invested with the more general functions of protecting and administering the Cause, solving obscure questions and deciding upon matters that have caused difference. Nowhere is it stated that the infallibility of the Universal House of Justice is by virtue of the Guardian's membership or presence on that body. Indeed, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Shoghi Effendi in his "Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh" have both explicitly stated that the elected members of the Universal House of Justice in consultation are recipients of unfailing Divine Guidance. Furthermore the Guardian himself in "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh" asserted that "It must be also clearly understood by every believer that the institution of Guardianship does not under any circumstances abrogate, or even in the slightest degree detract from, the powers granted to the Universal House of Justice by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and repeatedly and solemnly confirmed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will. It does not constitute in any manner a contradiction to the Will and Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, nor does it nullify any of His revealed instructions."

Can the House perform these "more general functions" without its Head, voting member for life, and Interpreter? Who's to say? And are "obscure questions" and "matters that have caused difference" in fact examples of "more general functions"? Could they not be interpreted as being limited to questions and matters related to legislation, to laws and ordinances, to fine points in the legal structure? Who's to say? Can the House itself answer this question--i.e. can the House itself define its own sphere of legislative action? No, of course it can't.

AB and SE together gave us their interpretation of "World Order of BA". And that is *the only* authoritative interpretation of "World Order of BA" which exists. The World Order of BA consists of Interpreter and House with Interpreter as its Head. Every other interpretation is unauthorized. Whether or not the House can function without the Guardian--well, this misses the really important question: can the World Order of BA itself function without the Guardianship? Even if one does not believe that SE has

already said that it cannot (when he speaks of "divorced from the institution of the Guardianship...", for example), one must surely admit that only another Guardian could have answered the question, for only another Guardian could have authoritatively re-defined the structure of the World Order. Once the ending of the Guardianship has so profoundly altered the inter-relationships of the whole interlocking System described by AB and SE, it is pointless to go back and try to pick up the pieces. The pieces were understood in terms of the whole--if you take away the whole, you no longer have any pieces to pick up. Maybe the elected members of the House were to have been granted "unfailing Divine Guidance"; but the Guardian was also to have been that House's Head, and SE was to have had descendents who would succeed him, and "the pillars that sustain" the System's "authority and buttress its structure" were to have been "the twin institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice"..... So many things that were to have been--but are not.

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> While the specific responsibility of the Guardian is the interpretation of the Word, he is also invested with all the powers and prerogatives necessary to discharge his function as Guardian of the Cause, its Head and supreme protector. He is, furthermore, made the irremovable head and member for life of the supreme legislative body of the Faith. It is the head of the Universal House of Justice, and as a member of that body, that the Guardian takes
>
> part in the process of legislation. If the following passage, which gave rise to your query, is considered as referring to this last relationship, you will see that there is no contradiction between it and the other text: "Though the Guardian of the Faith has been made the permanent head of so august a body he can never, even temporarily, assume the right of exclusive legislation. He cannot override the decision of the majority of his fellow-members, but is bound to insist upon a reconsideration by them of any enactment he conscientuously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's revealed utterances."

Could not AB's affirmation that the UHJ is "freed from all error" have in fact been dependent on, or at least in part a result of, the assumed presence of the Guardian who had to "insist upon a reconsideration...of any enactment he conscientiously believes to confict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of BA's revealed utterances"? Yes, in the Will and Testament of AB, the final vote of the House was considered infallible, and the Guardian could not override any majority decision--*but he was still assumed to be there as a participant in the process, as voting member, and as unique provider of interpretative context*. The difference between the situation as envisioned by AB and the present situation is, I think, quite obvious, is it not? Can one seriously entertain the notion that assurances about infallibility which AB once gave under profoundly different circumstances are equally valid now? Can you upset the entire equilibrium of the System and then select certain reassuring passages as if to imply that nothing had happened, that all is well?

(45) Although the Guardian, in relation to his fellow-members within the Universal House of Justice, cannot override the decision of the majority, it is inconceivable that the other members would ignore any objection he raised in the course of consultation or pass legislation contrary to what he expressed as being in harmony with the spirit of the Cause. It is, after all, the final act of judgment delivered by the Universal House of Justice that is vouchsafed infallibility, not any views expressed in the process of enactment.

It can be seen, therefore, that there is no conflict between the Master's statements concerning the unfailing divine guidance conferred upon the Universal House of Justice and the above passage from "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh."

It may be inconceivable that the members of a UHJ that had a guardian would ignore that guardian's advice. But what about members of a UHJ without a guardian? Who is there, now, to insist upon reconsideration if and when the House departs from the spirit of the Teachings? And how are we to trust legislation passed in the absence of any such person? And if it is not necessary to have such a person--if an Interpreter is not necessary in the consultative process of the House--then why did AB appoint such a person to be head of the House? And, if it is somehow (magically?) impossible for the elected members to make any enactment that might "conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of BA's revealed utterances," why would AB oblige the guardian "to insist upon a reconsideration by them" of any such enactment? The whole thing comes to empty words and forms devoid of any real function--*if* one is determined to pretend that the World Order of today is the same World Order as described by AB and SE.

(46) It may help the friends to understand this relationship if they are aware of some of the processes that the Universal House of Justice follows when legislating. First, of course, it observes the greatest care in studying the Sacred Texts and the interpretations of the Guardian as well as considering the views of all the members. After long consultation the process of drafting a pronouncement is put into effect. During this process the whole matter may well be reconsidered. As a result of such reconsideration the final judgment may be significantly different from the conclusion earlier favoured, or possibly it may be decided not to legislate at all on that subject at that time. One can understand how great would be the attention paid to the views of the Guardian during the above process were he alive.

The UHJ says, "one can understand how great would be the attention paid to the views of the Guardian...were he alive". But, if the UHJ is infallible without the Guardian anyway, why is the Guardian's presence to be missed? Would he have made things easier, or more efficient, or more fun, or what? According to the UHJ he certainly would not have made things any more "infallible", would he? And if you have infallibility, what more could you ask for? The UHJ, it seems, simply cannot admit that anything truly "essential" has been lost in the World Order, or that "inseparable" means "incapable of being separated, parted, or disjoined".

(47) In considering the second passage we must once more hold fast to the principle that the teachings do not contradict themselves.

It is by assuming that the teachings do not contradict themselves that I have reached the conclusions that I have. Whether the teachings contradict reality, or not, is another matter. The UHJ, it seems to me, has put itself in an impossible bind: it wants to keep the "unity of meaning" of the writings (which clearly indicates a World Order of two, interacting, inseparable, essential pillars) and at the same time to assert that this unity of meaning is applicable to events as they have in fact transpired after the ending of the guardianship. I believe this cannot be done. Either one sticks to the unity of meaning of the writings, and admits that "divorced from the institution of the guardianship the World Order is mutilated"; or, one adjusts to reality and ceases to cling tenaciously to the words of the teachings.

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FUTURE GUARDIANS

Future Guardians are clearly envisaged and referred to in the Writings, but there is nowhere any promise or guarantee that the line of Guardians would endure forever; on the contrary there are clear indications that the line could be broken. Yet, in spite of this, there is a repeated insistence in the Writings on the indestructibility of the Covenant and the immutability of God's Purpose for this Day.

One of the most striking passages which envisage the possibility of such a break in the line of Guardians is in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas itself:

> "The endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. No one has the right to lay hold on them without leave from the Dawning-Place of Revelation. After Him the decision rests with the Aghsán (Branches), and after them with the House of Justice — should it be established in the world by then — so that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Sites exalted in this Cause, and for that which they have been commanded by God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful. Otherwise the endowments should be referred to the people of Bahá, who speak not without His leave and who pass no judgment but in accordance with that which God has ordained in this Tablet, they who are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth, so that they may spend them on that which has been decreed in the Holy Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful."

The passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 precipitated the very situation provided for in this passage, in that the line of Aghsán ended before the House of Justice had been elected. Although, as is seen, the ending of the line of Aghsán at some stage was provided for, we must never underestimate the grievous loss that the Faith has suffered. God's purpose for mankind remains unchanged,

> however, and the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh remains impregnable. Has not Bahá'u'lláh stated categorically, "The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, and enduring foundation." While 'Abdu'l-Bahá confirms: "Verily, God effecteth that which He pleaseth; naught can annul His Covenant; naught can obstruct His favour nor oppose His Cause!" "Everything is subject to corruption; but the Covenant of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions." "The tests of every dispensation are in direct proportion to the greatness of the Cause and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, has not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately severe...These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean,...this froth of the ocean shall not endure and shall soon disappear and vanish, while on the other hand the ocean of the Covenant shall eternally surge and roar." And Shoghi Effendi has clearly stated: "The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day." "...this priceless gem of Divine Revelation, now still in its embryonic state, shall evolve within the shell of His Law, and shall forge ahead, undivided and unimpaired, till it embraces the whole of mankind."

I have already dealt with this page in great detail. Suffice it to reiterate that what the UHJ is in fact doing here is *interpreting* the passage from BA in such a way as to justify its own establishment after the ending of the line of the Aghsan. It mentions this passage, however, at its own peril, for this same passage could be interpreted as not referring to a House elected after the ending of the Aghsan at all; and it could also be interpreted to affirm the possibility that "the Covenant" and "the immutability of God's Purpose" could do quite well without either Guardian *or* UHJ, thereby undermining the argument implied by the UHJ's repeated insistence upon this Covenant and this Purpose, namely, that the UHJ is necessary to the Covenant, or that the Guardianship is not necessary (in spite of what SE said) to the Covenant, or that the Guardianship is not necessary for the UHJ to function. I wish the UHJ would make its arguments more explicit, instead of merely suggesting them, and hiding behind the pretense of "refraining from interpreting the writings".

In other words, we need to know what the insistence upon the Covenant *means*. Does it mean that a UHJ is necessary? But why, then, isn't the Guardianship necessary, for it was also under divine protection and called "essential" and proclaimed as the fulfillment of "this is the Day which shall not be followed by a Night", etc. etc. Does it mean that the Will of God cannot be defeated even in the absence of both Guardian and UHJ? But, if this is so, how does the assurance of the inviolability of the Covenant have any relevance to the question of whether or not the present UHJ is the same House spoken of in the Writings? The fact that the Covenant would continue does not seem to say much of anything at all about this question.

So, OK, let's assume that "there is nowhere any promise or guarantee that the line of Guardians would endure forever" (though I don't think this is the case, as explained elsewhere); and that "there is a repeated insistence in the Writings on the indestructability of the Covenant and the immutability of God's Purpose for this Day".

So we have the following two statements:
1. line of Guardians not guaranteed to last forever
2. Covenant is impregnable

What follows from this? As usual, the UHJ does not really say. They only suggest that all is well and that the Faith is secure under their guidance.

To see how little is really being said here, consider how many question one could ask:

What about a "line" of Guardians that never even materialized? Was that provided for in the Writings?
Is the UHJ itself guaranteed to last forever?
If so, are its guarantees for a future any stronger or more explicit than the future role envisaged for the line of guardians?
And if it was not guaranteed to last forever, could it not have really ended before it even began, just as did the institution of a hereditary Guardianship?
What does "Covenant" mean? Couldn't it mean more than one thing?
Does it necessarily follow from these two statements that a UHJ could function without a Guardian?
etc.

The UHJ even goes on to quote SE: "The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day". I find it quite disconcerting that the UHJ would quote something like "*this* Administrative Order" from SE, all the while suggesting that *that* "Administrative Order" (i.e. SE's version of the World Order) is still intact, or that everything is fine, or--what *are* they suggesting, anyway???

The "Administrative Order" SE is referring to clearly and in no uncertain terms included a living, functioning Guardianship "acting in conjunction" with a UHJ. The Administrative Order of today is simply not the same Administrative Order described by SE, and *that* Administrative Order (the one described by SE) is what SE said BA meant by "World Order". It seems to me that the UHJ is simply throwing around reassuring phrases like "Covenant", "impregnable", and "bedrock", without paying any attention to what those phrases might mean, or did mean to the people who wrote them. But, of course, if the UHJ answers this question about the meaning of the Covenant, then it would be interpreting the Writings--and it does not want to do this. But it must. But it can't. And therein lies the Catch-22.

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TWO CENTRES OF AUTHORITY TO WHICH BELIEVERS MUST TURN

In the Bahá'í Faith there are two authoritative centres appointed to which the believers must turn, for in reality the Interpreter of the Word is an extension of that centre which is the Word itself. The Book is the record of the utterance of Bahá'u'lláh, while the divinely inspired Interpreter is the living Mouth of that Book it is he and he alone who can authoritatively state what the Book means. Thus one centre is the Book with its Interpreter, and the other is the Universal House of Justice guided by God to decide on whatever is not explicitly revealed in the Book. This pattern of centres and their relationships is apparent at every stage in the unfoldment of the Cause. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh tells the believers to refer after His passing to the Book, and to "Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root." In the Kitáb-i-Ahdí (the Book of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant), He makes it clear that this reference is to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In the Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh also ordains the institution of the Universal House of Justice, and confers upon it the powers necessary for it to discharge its ordained functions. The Master in His Will and Testament explicitly institutes the Guardianship, which Shoghi Effendi states was clearly anticipated in the verses of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, reaffirms and elucidates the authority of the Universal House of Justice, and refers the believers once again to the Book: "Unto the Most Holy Book everyone must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice," and at the very end of the Will He says: "All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error."

As the sphere of jurisdiction of the Universal House of Justice in matters of legislation extends to whatever is not explicitly revealed in the Sacred Text, it is clear that the Book itself is the highest authority and delimits the sphere of action of the House of Justice. Likewise, the Interpreter of the Book must also have the authority to define the sphere of the legislative action of the elected representatives of the Cause. The writings of the Guardian and the advice given by him over the thirty-six years of his Guardianship show the way in which he exercised this function in relation to the Universal House of Justice as well as to National and Local Spiritual Assemblies.

"This pattern of centres and their relationships is apparent at every stage in the unfoldment of the Cause"--is apparent, or *was* apparent?

"the Book with its Interpreter" and "the UHJ guided by God to decide on whatever is not explicitly revealed in the Book"--OK, but what about today? We have instead "the Book *without* its Interpreter" and "the UHJ without its Head", and all the very serious questions this raises. Who can answer these questions? No one. Infallible guidance on these matters has ended. What is meant by "UHJ"? Can the UHJ function without a Guardian? What happens to a World Order in case it no longer has a Guardian? These are questions that only a Guardian could answer--they are outside of the domain of the UHJ, whose sphere of action was also to be determined by a Guardian.

Notice that the UHJ never explicitly recognizes the rather spectacular nature of its claim, which in fact amounts to the assertion that--in spite of the shocking blow to SE's vision of the World Order which the death of the Guardian entailed--some divine, previously unforeseen loophole in the writings has been provided for, which basically lets things go on without the loss of anything truly "essential". This loophole is, of course, the idea that, since the UHJ can legislate upon matters not explicitly revealed in the Book, it can also lead the Faith in the absence of the Guardian, for the absence of the Guardian is not explicitly revealed in the Book. If this were true (and of course I think it is not), it would indeed be quite spectacular, would it not?

Thus, if we are to believe the UHJ, BA suggests the bare outlines of a World Order, AB establishes the System formally and in some detail, SE really nails down some of the concepts and makes some things "inexcusable to misconceive"--and then, suddenly, the very structure of the System is profoundly altered when one of its twin institutions ends before it even really began....but everything is still basically OK, because this is something not explicitly revealed in the Book, and so the surviving twin institution can legislate upon it. This is all really quite astounding. It is, I think, *too* astounding. Too astounding, that is, to provide any real kind of reassurance that the UHJ is infallible, or any reasonably sound basis for faith, or any convincing demonstration that "leaders of religion...need have no doubt or anxiety regarding the nature...of the institutions which the adherents of the Faith are building up throughout the world". It interprets as a loophole what is in reality a Catch-22.

And besides, as explained elsewhere, I think that the question of a World Order without a Guardian has in fact been expressly revealed: "divorced from the institution of the guardianship the World Order of BA would be mutilated...and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn." Therefore, it does not even constitute a matter not expressly revealed in the Book.

Even if this were not quite so clearly revealed, wouldn't the basic Catch-22 still be clear? The Guardians were supposed to be the ones who determined whether something had been "explicitly revealed" or not. Only then could the UHJ proceed to legislate upon whatever it was that a Guardian had previously determined to be not already covered by the Book. In the absence of a Guardian, there is no one to define the sphere of legislative action of the UHJ in this way--there is no one to say whether something has or has not been explicitly revealed, and therefore whether the UHJ can or cannot legislate upon it. And, after all, 1000 years is a long time to go without such definition. Loophole? No. Catch-22? Yes.

(50) The fact that the Guardian has the authority to define the sphere of the legislative action of the Universal House of Justice does not carry with it the corollary that without such guidance the Universal House of Justice might stray beyond the limits of its proper authority; such a deduction would conflict with all the other texts referring to its infallibility, and specifically with the Guardian's own clear assertion that the Universal House of Justice never can or will infringe on the sacred and prescribed domain of the Guardianship. It should be remembered, however, that although National and Local Spiritual Assemblies can receive divine guidance if they consult in the manner and spirit described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, they do not share in the explicit guarantees of infallibility conferred upon the Universal House of Justice. Any careful student of the Cause can see with what care the Guardian, after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, guided these elected representatives of the believers in the painstaking erection of the Administrative Order and in the formulation of Local and National Bahá'í Constitutions.

Was the role of the Guardian in this regard totally inconsequential then? If the elected body of the House could never make any mistakes in determining their own sphere of jurisdiction, why was this made the Guardian's prerogative? But even if they could never make any mistakes in determining their own sphere of jurisdiction, they were still not given the right to make that determination. But in the absence of the Guardian, this is what they are in fact doing--they are deciding for themselves what their own limits are. And this necessarily involves interpreting the Writings.

the "Administrative Order"--once again the UHJ mentions this as if the Order being erected by SE were the same Order being proclaimed today. It simply is not.

(51) We hope that these elucidations will assist the friends in understanding these relationships more clearly, but we must all remember that we stand too close to the beginnings of the System ordained by Bahá'u'lláh to be able fully to understand its potentialities or the interrelationships of its component parts. As Shoghi Effendi's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer on 25 March 1930, "The contents of the Will of the Master are far too much for the present generation to comprehend. It needs at least a century of actual working before the treasures of wisdom hidden in it can be revealed..."

(Letter dated 7 December 1969; Messages from The Universal House of Justice: 1968-1973, pp. 37-44)

"mystery" again

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It seems to me that no provision for a UHJ acting "alone," i.e. in the absence of a living Guardian, has been made in the Will and Testament of AB or the writings of SE. It is, in that sense, a matter not expressly revealed in the Writings. It seems to me, however, that the Writings have expressly revealed that the UHJ cannot in fact function without a Guardian, and that "divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of BA would be mutilated." It is, in that sense, therefore, *not* a matter which has not been expressly revealed in the Writings.

In other words, the Writings simply do not speak of such an institution--they make no mention of a legislative body divorced from a living, hereditary Guardianship, a living Interpreter. On the contrary, a living Interpreter, and therefore an ongoing interpretation, was always part of the Pattern proclaimed to represent--to *be*-- the "World Order of BA".

And yet the UHJ seems to assume that this implies that it can therefore legislate or pronounce upon the question of the Guardian's absence and what that absence means (or does not mean) for the UHJ--simply because this matter is in *some* sense "not expressly revealed". It tends to do this, however, by sidestepping, or rather attempting to sidestep, the issue of interpretation.

Ostensibly, the UHJ is determined "to refrain from interpreting the teachings" (50), but it presents selected quotes from the Writings and suggests that tnese quotes are sufficient to answer the questions raised by the believers and to assure them that the UHJ is indeed the infallible source of guidance it claims to be. In this way they are in fact interpreting the Writings--by suggesting that the Writings be interpreted in a certain way--without explicitly recognizing that this is what they are doing.

But this does not actually get rid of the problems of interpretation--it merely represents a hopeless attempt to avoid them, a hopeless attempt to avoid infringing upon the domain of the Guardianship.

It is hopeless, because the World Order, as described in clear and unambiguous language by SE, was designed to function in a certain way. Two "essential" functions--and essential means *essential* i.e. something the

World Order cannot do without--were distributed between the two "inseparable" "pillars" of the System: the Guardianship would provide for the flexibility and continuity of interpretation over time, and the UHJ (with the guardian as Head and provider of the interpretative context necessary to define its sphere of legislative action) would provide for the flexibility and continuity of administration and legislation over time. Both functions are essential to the *continuance over time* of the World Order as it was envisaged by SE--the World Order simply cannot do without either one. And yet infallible interpretation has come to an abrupt and final end. But the UHJ cannot do without it. This is why the UHJ's attempt to refrain from interpreting the Writings is hopeless, because the UHJ needs--it absolutely requires--infallible interpretation. In the absence of the Interpreter, the UHJ is simply forced to interpret the Writings itself, whether it intends to or not.

And so the problem--the insoluble problem--of interpretation remains: what does "matters not expressly revealed" actually *mean*? For one thing, I believe that it is referring only to matters within the domain of the UHJ: that is, matters which the Guardian himself has--or, rather, would have--determined to be questions which the Writings have not already definitively addressed. But, in the absence of a Guardian, who can now *authoritatively* determine whether a matter has or has not already been addressed by the Writings? No one. Moreover, I feel that the very question of what to make of a World Order without a guardian is itself outside the domain of the UHJ--not only because it has, in my opinion, already been addressed by SE, but also because it is a question of interpretation of the teachings, of *interpretation* of the concept of "World Order of BA". This concept has already been defined by SE in such a way as to exclude the possibility that it could exist without the Guardianship; but even if this were not so, the UHJ simply could not re-define the salient features of the World Order, for this would be to re-interpret the concept, that is, to re-interpret the teachings. And can there really be any doubt that the present UHJ has in fact re-interpreted what "World Order of BA" *means*?

SE identifies the "Administrative Order" with the concept of "World Order":

> "To what else if not to the power and majesty which this Administrative Order...is destined to manifest, can these utterances of BA allude: 'The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order'"

The UHJ does the same: "This Administrative Order is the nucleus and pattern of the World Order adumbrated by BA" (from the Constitution of the UHJ). But is the "Administrative Order"--i.e. the interpretation of "World Order"--proclaimed by SE the same as the one proclaimed by the present

UHJ? In other words, does SE interpret "World Order" the same way that the UHJ does?

Let us compare the "salient features" of both to find out.

For SE, the "salient features" of the World Order consist of "twin pillars": "the institutions of the Guardianship and of the UHJ" (Disp 55). That is, a hereditary line of Interpreters on the one hand, and an elected legislative council on the other. However, for the UHJ, the "salient features" of the World Order are quite different: "This Administrative Order consists...of a series of elected councils...and devoted believers...under the guidance of the Head of that Faith." "There being no successor to SE as Guardian of the Cause of God, the UHJ is the Head of the Faith and its supreme institution" (from the UHJ's constitution).

In other words, for SE, the World Order was to consist of two supreme institutions: the Guardianship and the UHJ, with the Guardian as Head of the UHJ. For the UHJ, on the other hand, the World Order consists of one supreme institution: the UHJ, without a Guardian as Head. The difference is clear, is it not? These are two different interpretations of what "World Order of BA" *means*, are they not?

If someone asks you, "what does 'constitutional monarchy' mean?", you simply answer by speaking of a hereditary monarchy and a legislature, do you not? If someone else said that "constitutional monarchy" meant a legislature without a monarchy, you would say that he has a very different interpretation of the System than you do, would you not? Likewise, since SE, before his death in 1957, said that by "World Order" BA meant a system consisting of two supreme institutions, and then the UHJ, some years later, said that by "World Order" is meant a system consisting of only one supreme institution, mustn't we conclude that these are indeed two very different interpretations of "World Order"?

And that is precisely the problem facing the UHJ: it cannot interpret "World Order" at all, for interpretation is the exclusive prerogative of the Guardian. But the Guardianship ended before the UHJ even came into being, and "World Order" could no longer be understood in terms of two pillars acting in conjunction with each other. There was (apparently) only one functioning pillar left--the UHJ itself. What then was to become of the interpretation of "World Order" left by SE, "the statement of truth" which the UHJ itself has asserted "cannot be varied"?

In fact, I believe that there is no solution to this problem. It is a catch-22, from which there is no escape: the UHJ has committed itself to the doctrine of inerrancy and infallibility for both itself and SE's interpretations, and yet one of them must have made a mistake. The World Order described by the UHJ is simply not the World Order described by SE. And yet the UHJ maintains that SE was infallible and that the UHJ itself cannot interpret the writings with any authority, which, to me, implies that it is the UHJ which is

mistaken, for it is claiming to uphold an interpretation of the World Order (SE's interpretation) which it does not in fact uphold, and it is claiming to refrain from interpreting the Writings even though it cannot in fact avoid interpreting them i.e. it contradicts itself. And yet, the World Order described by SE simply failed to materialize, which would seem to imply that it was SE who was mistaken. Perhaps both are mistaken, in the sense that both claim to be, or to have been, infallible--yet SE's writings failed to coincide with reality, and the UHJ's statements fail to coincide with SE's writings, which represent reality for the UHJ. In other words, both contradict, or have contradicted, reality.

Herein lies the crux of the problem for the UHJ: it wants--it needs--to justify its position as infallible Head of the Faith i.e. it needs to justify its own authority, to assure believers that it is what it claims to be: a UHJ functioning infallibly in the absence of any Guardian. But it finds itself in the context of a World Order utterly deprived of the other essential pillar, its inseparable twin successor, the Guardian, who alone would be capable of providing authoritative justification of the authority of a UHJ deprived of its inseparable twin successor. But, of course, the Guardian is not there to pronounce upon his own absence, or to offer any guidance as to what to do now that his interpretation of the "World Order" has failed to materialize; and the UHJ itself cannot offer any new interpretations of what "World Order" means either. In other words, the UHJ finds itself in an impossible situation: it is Head of a Head-less Order; it is trying to function without the other essential organ of the embryonic system; it is trying to assure believers that the World Order is intact while at the same time trying to refrain from interpreting the teachings....

To me, the Writings seem to say that the consequences for a World Order "divorced from" the Guardianship are quite serious indeed; so serious, in fact, that the UHJ, "its elected representatives", would be totally "deprived of the necessary guidance" to define their "sphere of legislative action" (Disp 56). To me, therefore, it seems that the meaning of the absence of the guardian and the nature of the consequences for the World Order have been clearly and expressly revealed. (And, to me, "divorced from the institution of the Guardianship" means "in the absence of a hereditary line of Guardians" i.e. the present situation.) And so, to me, the fact that the UHJ was given the right to legislate upon "matters not expressly revealed in the Book" simply does not help explain the present situation--for what is needed in order to understand the UHJ's claims of infallibility in the absence of the Guardian is authoritative interpretation, not endless quoting of writings which themselves are in need of interpretation. But authoritative interpretation of the present situation simply does not exist. And without definitive, authoritative interpretation, as SE says, "the integrity of the Faith would be

imperilled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered" (Disp 56). And I keep saying "to me", because not only do I want to underscore the fact that it is my interpretations of things that I am talking about, but I also want to draw your attention to the fact that the whole thing necessarily involves questions of interpretation. Yet the World Order of BA is now deprived of any institution which could offer any kind of definitive interpretation about these matters.

The questions raised by the believers, the questions the UHJ has tried to answer in its letters, are essentially questions stemming from the concern about infallible guidance. Any Faith that has made infallibility a cornerstone of its authority, and has required of its followers an absolute submission to its authority, and has introduced notions of *written* "statements of truth which cannot be varied", and has made the Book itself the "unerring Balance" (the Book, that is, *without* its "living Mouth")--any such Faith is essentially fundamentalist, whether the actual doctrines it preaches are ones of unity or not. As originally envisaged, with a living Interpreter of the Book, who could have maintained both the authority *and* the *flexibility* of the essential function of interpretation, the B Faith could have been considered authority-based, but not really fundamentalist. But once the authoritative interpretation has become frozen in time--and it has become frozen in time, for no new interpretation can be considered authoritative--the complementary principles of living authority and flexibility are reduced to one ghostly shadow: the authority of written words. And this is an illusion, a ghostly parody of real, living, warm-blooded authority, for written words mean different things to different people: they wield, in other words, no true authority. The history of religious persecution of "heretics" gives ample witness to this fact, does it not?

One of the most basic points that SE made over and over again, in truly clear and unambiguous language, was that the B Faith was supposed to be different from other faiths because it--unlike other faiths--could claim an unbroken succession of infallible guidance starting from the Prophet Founder Himself. But the simple, historical fact is that this is no longer true: the chain of infallible guidance was broken in 1957, leaving behind only--and I repeat *only*--a set of writings which the followers of that Faith had to begin to interpret for themselves, and which the followers used in order to justify the authority of their own interpretations of those writings. In other words, the Bs found themselves very much in the same boat as, say, the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans, both of which claim for their own doctrines and institutions the same honor which the Bs claim for their own doctrines and institutions--the honor of being "embedded in the Teachings" (50). That is, the present B administration claims that its authority is based upon the teachings themselves, as if the teachings themselves--deprived of their living Mouth--could still speak and approve of what the believers have done:

as if the teachings "say" anything. The UHJ simply asserts that this is so--it simply asserts that the teachings support what the UHJ says, that they support the organization which the UHJ claims to head. And this is the same boat--the very same leaky boat--in which the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans are sailing: they too claim that the Bible "says" things which validate their own angle on truth.

But obviously--and it is obvious, is it not?--scriptures do not literally speak, at least not in any way that is not influenced by the interpretations which the believer *projects* onto them. To say that the scriptures "say" something, if taken as anything more than a figure of speech i.e. if made into an assertion that the scriptures are "statements of truth which cannot be varied"--this is, perhaps, the dark heart of fundamentalism: the role which one plays in interpreting the words of scripture is overlooked--perhaps even denied--and one instead appeals directly to the words themselves as if they could in some way objectively justify what in reality is one's own intepretation of them. Why has the UHJ done this? Why do we all--in one way or another--do this? This is something worth talking about.

I said that the Bs were in the same leaky boat as the Lutherans and the Catholics. However, I think that the side of the boat which the Bs find themselves on might in fact be somewhat leakier, at least somewhat leakier than the Catholics, at least in terms of the question of orthodox authority. The Catholics, as I understand them, grant tradition itself the status of Authority: they, in other words, still have their Interpreter. The Bs, however, state that "it is clear that the Book itself is the highest authority and delimits the sphere of action of the House of Justice" (59): they, in other words, make *written* words (the Book and the *written* interpretations provided by AB and SE) their "bedrock" and claim that those written words themselves provide all the intepretation needed in the World Order--as if the words "say" something, as if the words themselves somehow (magically?) do not need to be interpreted.

But is there really any question that the Book still needs to be interpreted? Before 1957, the Book was authoritatively interpreted to imply the future establishment of a B commonwealth whose basic, supporting structure was to consist of a hereditary line of Interpreters and a legislative body with the Interpreter as Head of both the body and the Faith. This, suddenly, can no longer be: reality conspired against the B plan, and ended the *line* of Guardians before it even began. But along with the line of Guardians also ended any possibility of any other authoritative interpretation of the Book. The only interpretation of the Book's teachings on "World Order" that the Bs had, in other words, simply failed to materialize, and any possibility of any other interpretation is simply impossible, given the B doctines of infallibility and the exclusivity of the Guardian's domain. *But some other interpretation is absolutely necessary*!

But any other interpretation is impossible! Necessary--but impossible: and this is why SE said all those things about the dire consequences for a World Order "divorced from the institution of the Guardianship", is it not? this is why SE called the twin institutions of the World Order "essential" and "inseparable", is it not?

Of course, the UHJ can have its own interpretion of these things. My interpretation is not authoritative. But neither is the House's--and that is precisely my point: without truly authoritative intepretation, who can answer the questions about what to do in the absence of a Guardian? Can the UHJ? How? Simply because the *House* says that the *Writings* say it can? But this is what the Pope says about the Bible, too; though, of course, according to Catholic tradition, the Pope has the right to say so, whereas, *according to the UHJ itself*, the House does not, for it claims that the House cannot interpret scripture, that it cannot say what scripture says! Or at least, if it says what scripture says, it cannot claim to be offering any *authoritative* interpretation--and this, it seems to me, must mean that they have to admit that they could be wrong. What else could it mean? After all, if they couldn't be wrong about what *they* say that the *Writings* say, then they are infallible, and infallible interpretation is as good as authoritative interpretation, is it not? But how, then, could the domain of the UHJ be distinguished from the domain of the Guardian? And if the two domains cannot be clearly distinguished, how can the UHJ even attempt to assure the believers that it could never even conceivably infringe upon the domain of the Guardian? No--the UHJ simply cannot with any authority say what the writings say. But it does in fact do so, for it must, for there is no other way to answer the questions put to it by the believers, no other way to justify its own position to the world. But it cannot. But it must. But it cannot. But it must..... Catch-22. That is why I said that the B side of the boat seems, at least in this regard (and perhaps only in this regard?), a bit leakier than the Catholic side.

Thus, the House lacks "the necessary guidance to define the sphere of [its] legislative action" (Disp 56), it lacks the interpretative support for its decisions, it lacks the authority to determine for itself whether or not a matter is "obscure" or "not expressly revealed" and whether or not it can therefore legislate upon it, it lacks the authority to re-interpret the concept of "World Order" even if this concept were obscure or not expressly revealed or did cause difference--it lacks, in other words, the essential institution of the Guardianship, its own Head, does it not?