



Local Spiritual Assembly

THE LOCAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
OF THE BAHÁ'IS OF BAGUIO CITY

05 May 2019 LSA Deliberation on FAULT vs. CRIME

fault (n.)

late 13c., *faute*, "deficiency," from Old French *faute*, earlier *falte*, "opening, gap; failure, flaw, blemish; lack, deficiency" (12c.), from Vulgar Latin **fallita* "a shortcoming, falling," from Latin *falsus* "deceptive, feigned, spurious," past participle of *fallere* "deceive, disappoint" (see [fail](#) (v.)).

fault (v.)

"find fault with," mid-15c. from [fault](#) (n.). Earlier it was used in an intransitive sense of "be deficient" (late 14c., Scottish). Related: *Faulted*; *faulter*; *faulting*.

crime (n.)

mid-13c., "sinfulness, infraction of the laws of God," from Old French *crimne* "crime, mortal sin" (12c., Modern French *crime*), from Latin *crimen* (genitive *criminis*) "charge, indictment, accusation; crime, fault, offense," perhaps from *cernere* "to decide, to sift" (from PIE root **krei-* "to sieve," thus "discriminate, distinguish").

But Klein (citing Brugmann) rejects this and suggests **cri-men*, which originally would have been "cry of distress" (Tucker also suggests a root in "cry" words and refers to English *plaint*, *plaintiff*, etc.).

Meaning "offense punishable by law, act or omission which the law punishes in the name of the state" is from late 14c. Sense of "any great wickedness or wrongdoing" is from 1510s. The Latin word is glossed in Old English by *facen*, which also meant "deceit, fraud, treachery." *Crime wave* first attested 1893, American English.

In one of His Tablets, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to some of the spiritual and social implications of the violation of the laws of morality and, concerning the penalty here described, He indicates that the aim of this law is to make clear to all that such an action is shameful in the eyes of God and that, in the event that the offence can be established and the fine imposed, the principal purpose is the exposure of the offenders—that they are shamed and disgraced in the eyes of society. He affirms that such exposure is in itself the greatest punishment. (Bahá’u’lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 200)

Some people are like bloodthirsty wolves: if they see no punishment forthcoming, they will kill men merely for pleasure and diversion. One of the tyrants of Persia killed his tutor merely for the sake of making merry, for mere fun and sport. The famous Mutavakkil, the Abbasid, having summoned his ministers, councillors and functionaries to his presence, let loose a box full of scorpions in the assembly and forbade anyone to move. When the scorpions stung those present, he burst forth into boisterous laughter. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 270-271)

308. Dealing with Bahá’ís Who Act in Ways Detrimental to the Cause

"The question of dealing with those who call themselves Bahá’ís but who act in ways which we believe to be detrimental to the interests of the Cause is a very difficult one. If we think we can help matters by a frank and friendly talk with the individual concerned, refraining from judging or condemning, but pointing out in as kind a manner as possible the way in which, as it seems to us, the sort of conduct in question is harmful to the Cause or of a nature forbidden by the teachings, then it seems well to try that method before resorting to the

more formidable method of bringing the matter before the Spiritual Assembly. But if that fails or if we feel that it is hopeless to try and deal with the matter in that way, while at the same time the case is so serious that the interests of the Cause require that it should be firmly dealt with, then the proper course is to bring the matter before the Spiritual Assembly... and have it frankly and fully discussed, calling such evidence as is necessary for the elucidation of the matter. After full consideration, the Spiritual Assembly should take such action as it deems advisable, and it is incumbent upon all members of the group to be loyal to whatever decision is arrived at by the Spiritual Assembly. There is, of course the right of appeal from the Local to the National Assembly, and from that to Shoghi Effendi,* but the matter ought to be dealt with, in the first instance, by the Local Spiritual Assembly.

"...When a difficulty is brought out into the daylight and freely discussed by a duly authorized and responsible group of people who are sincerely desirous of finding the best solution and are free from prejudice or personal motive, then there is a good chance of overcoming it, but discussion of the faults of others behind their backs by unauthorized people who have no authority to take action in the matter, is surely one of the most fertile causes—probably THE most fertile cause—of disunity, and the importance of putting an end to this practice should be impressed on all Bahá'ís." - (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, followed by an extract from the Guardian's postscript, February 11, 1925) *(Now the Universal House of Justice)

311. To Be Forbearing, Patient, Merciful, Rather than Succumbing to Backbiting and Criticism

"Abdu'l-Bahá does not permit adverse criticism of individuals by name in discussion among the friends, even if the one criticizing believes that he is doing so to protect the interests of the Cause. If the situation is of such gravity as to endanger the interests of the Faith, the complaint, as your National Spiritual Assembly has indicated, should be submitted to the Local Spiritual Assembly, or as you state to a representative of the institution of the Counsellors, for consideration and action. In such cases, of course, the name of the person or persons involved will have to be mentioned.

Such passages as the following extract from one of the letters written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary will also be helpful:

"Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being "perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect" and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy.... On no subject are the Bahá'í teachings more emphatic than on the necessity to abstain from fault-finding and backbiting, while being ever eager to discover and root out our own faults and overcome our own failings." - (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 23, 1975)

312. Backbiting—The Most Great Sin

"...Thou hast written regarding aims. How blessed are these aims, especially the prevention of backbiting! I hope that you may become confirmed therein, because the worst human quality and the most great sin is backbiting; more especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of backbiting could be shut eternally and each one of the believers of God unsealed his tongue in the praise of the other, then the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh would be spread, the hearts illuminated, the spirits glorified and the human world would attain to everlasting felicity.

"I hope that the believers of God will shun completely backbiting, each one praising the other cordially and believe that backbiting is the cause of Divine wrath, to such an extent that if a person backbites to the extent of one word, he may become dishonored among all the people, because the most hateful characteristic of man is fault-finding. One must expose the praiseworthy qualities of the souls and not their evil attributes. The friends must overlook their shortcomings and faults and speak only of their virtues and not their defects.

"It is related that His Holiness Christ—May my life be a sacrifice to Him!—one day, accompanied by His apostles, passed by the corpse of a dead animal. One of them said: 'How putrid has this animal become!' The other exclaimed: 'How it is deformed!' A third cried out: 'What a stench! How cadaverous looking!' But His Holiness Christ said: 'Look at its teeth! How white they are!' Consider, that He did not look at all at the defects of that animal; nay, rather, He searched well until He found the beautiful white teeth. He observed only the whiteness of the teeth and overlooked entirely the deformity of the body, the dissolution of its organs and the bad odour.

"This is the attribute of the children of the Kingdom. This is the conduct and the manner of the real Bahais (Bahá'ís). I hope that all the believers will attain to this lofty station."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Tablet to Dr. M. G. Skinner, August 12, 1913: Star of the West, Vol. IV, No. 11, p. 192)