

Potential Calamities and Ensuring Sustainability of Communities

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By Shoghi Effendi, Universal House of Justice

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EXCERPTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI AND ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

He does not feel that fear—for ourselves or for others—solves any problem, or enables us to better meet it if it ever does arise. We do not know what the future holds exactly, or how soon we may all pass through another ordeal worse than the last one.

But what we do know is that all we can do as Bahá'ís is to teach and to exemplify the Faith. We cannot bear the burden of suffering of others, and we should not try to. All men are in God's hands, and ... we know there is another life beyond this that can hold great hope and happiness for the soul...

No matter what happens, nothing is as important as our feeling of trust in God, our inner peacefulness and faith that all, in the end, in spite of the severity of the ordeals we may pass through, will come out as Bahá'u'lláh has promised.

He urges you to put these dark thoughts from your mind, and remember that if God, the Creator of all men, can bear to see them suffer so, it is not for us to question His wisdom. He can compensate the innocent, in His own way, for the afflictions they bear.

(30 September 1950 to an individual believer)

[1]

He is quite serious in stating that he believes that even in the large cities, such as New

York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, Baltimore, etc., the Cause would not suffer if the membership were reduced to fifteen. The Bahá'ís, who have been struggling for practically fifty years to attract people to the Faith in these immense cities, have been wholly unsuccessful, when one considers the slight numerical increase in the voting lists. He therefore feels that they had better go out and teach in towns and villages. They will be safer, in case war should break out, and they will be better off, spiritually, away from these centres of intense materialism, where so much time is wasted on trivialities and non-essentials.

It is this sense of urgency in arising, dispersing and teaching that should be conveyed to the believers at the Summer Schools.

(23 May 1954 to a Bahá'í committee)

[2]

He has been told that some of the friends are disturbed over reports brought back by the pilgrims concerning the dangers facing America in the future whenever another world conflagration breaks out.

He does not feel that the Bahá'ís should waste time dwelling on the dark side of things. Any intelligent person can understand from the experiences of the last world war, and keeping abreast of what modern science has developed in the way of weapons for any future war, that big cities all over the world are going to be in tremendous danger. This is what the Guardian has said to the pilgrims.

Entirely aside from this, he has urged the Bahá'ís, for the sake of serving the Faith, to go out from these centres of intense materialism, where life nowadays is so hurried and grinding and, dispersing to towns and villages, carry the Message far and wide throughout the cities of the American Union. He strongly believes that the field outside the big cities is more fertile, that the Bahá'ís in the end will be happier for having made this move, and that, in case of an outbreak of war, it stands to reason they will be safer, just the way any other person living in the country, or away from the big industrial areas, is safer.

It is remarks such as these that the pilgrims have carried back in their notes. He sees no cause for alarm, but he certainly believes that the Bahá'ís should weigh these thoughts, and take action for the sake of spreading the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and for their own ultimate happiness as well. Indeed the two things go together.

(20 June 1954 to a National Spiritual Assembly)

[3]

From letters written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to individual believers

The House of Justice prays for the believers and for the peoples of the world, and states that although there is every reason to expect that the world will experience travails and testing as never before, it does not know what form these upheavals will take, when exactly they will come, how severe they will be, nor how long they will last. The important aspect for the Bahá'ís is that their attitude and actions in response to the pending catastrophe be correct. We all know that the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is the world's only salvation, that our duty is to actively teach receptive souls, and to do our utmost to help in the consolidation of the institutions of the Faith....

(30 November 1981)

[4]

As for preparations which anticipate a crisis and seek to prepare for its tests, there is nothing in the Writings concerning this, nor has the House of Justice issued any warnings. You are free to study the symptoms of worldwide disorder, and to take such steps as your judgment and conscience may dictate. The House of Justice advises that it is for each individual to do what he judges best in making financial provision for his future; such an individual may wish to avail himself of expert advice before making a decision. There can be no universal guideline, nor can one be sure of any outcome in the current troubled state of the world.

(9 February 1984)

[5]

As to the rumours about the destruction of larger cities in the United States by 1992, there is no foundation in any of the Writings or those of the Guardian for such statements. Shoghi Effendi did indicate that in any future war larger cities (not only in America) would obviously be vulnerable, but no such precise details as you report can be found in our authentic literature.

(2 June 1986)

[6]

In letters to other believers who have asked questions similar to yours, the House of Justice has emphasized that the friends should not occupy their time and energies in speculation on this question. Rather, the friends are encouraged to concentrate every ounce of energy on the winning of the goals of the new Six Year Plan, confident in the knowledge that whatever may happen in the world, however calamitous it may

outwardly appear, will promote God's unalterable purpose for the unification of mankind.

(8 June 1986)

[7]

...the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the interpretations of the Centre of His Covenant, the messages of Shoghi Effendi, and the continuing guidance of the Universal House of Justice contain a vast breadth of advice to the believers with regard to different aspects of their collective and individual lives on this planet. If the friends study the Writings carefully, heed the commandments and exhortations, and follow the advice which is available in abundance, their fears of what may come to pass will be diminished and their apprehension about what they should do if the worst happens will be eased.

(7 March 1988)

[8]

The House of Justice feels that the believers should not become preoccupied with fruitless speculations about the timing and form of the calamities which are occurring during this period of history. These calamities have the dual purpose of chastening humanity for its failure to recognise the Manifestation for this day and of cleansing the hearts of men through suffering and thus preparing them to accept the claims of Bahá'u'lláh.

Shoghi Effendi pointed out the direct connection between the suffering in the world and the lamentable spiritual condition of mankind at the present time, in the following passage from a letter written on his behalf:

There is nothing in the teachings to tell us exactly how much longer the present turbulent state of the world is going to endure; but we do know that humanity must suffer until it becomes spiritually awakened, and that the Most Great Peace will come, as promised by Bahá'u'lláh.

(From a letter dated 26 February 1946, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

In the following passage, the Guardian called attention to the supreme importance of service to the Cause as a direct and powerful means of mitigating the severity of the ordeal through which mankind is now passing:

...he is constantly pointing out to the Bahá'ís that their direct Bahá'í work—teaching, perfecting the administration, propagating the Cause of God is their job and of immediate importance, because it is, so to speak, spiritually organic. What they are doing will release forces which will

combat the terrible disintegration of society which we witness today in every field, political, economic, or otherwise....

(From a letter dated 5 July 1947, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

(14 July 1988)

[9]

The House of Justice feels that you should not concern yourself unduly about the possibility of impending economic breakdown. The entire world is traversing a period of adversity in which calamities have been and are occurring. These calamities will continue to happen until mankind has been schooled by hardship to recognize and accept the Manifestation of God for this day. Bahá'ís should not become preoccupied with fruitless speculations on this matter but should concentrate their energy and attention on the work of the Cause. Their optimistic outlook, their unshakeable conviction that human-kind is evolving to a new stage in its history characterized by world unity and peace, and their wholehearted commitment to the welfare of humanity will doubtless attract to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh thoughtful people who yearn for a way out of difficulties with which they are surrounded.

(25 June 1989)

[10]