

Studying the Writings of the Guardian

by Universal House of Justice

George Ronald

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From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

1. Concerning the general letter ['The Goal of a New World Order', 28 November 1931 (in 'The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh'. pp. 29-51)] he has sent lately to the Western friends, to which you refer in your letter: Shoghi Effendi thinks that the friends should spread the message it conveys to the public. It should undoubtedly be done in a very judicious way lest the people think that we have entered the arena of politics with rather drastic programs of reform. But we should at the same time show the lead that the teachings take towards the realization of the international ideal. The primary importance of the Cause among the existing religions of the world is that, whereas the others have no coherent program upon which they are united, the Movement is rich with the very spirit and teachings the world needs for solving its present international problems. It is a wonderful chance for the Cause to absorb the interest of the intelligent elements in the public.

(14 January 1932, to an individual believer)

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2. Concerning the institution of the Guardianship and its true position in the Administrative Order of the Cause, the Guardian would urge you to make a careful

study of the subject in his last general letter addressed to the West and published under the title of 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh'. In the last part of this important treatise you will find an adequate and authoritative analysis of the origins, nature and function of that institution, and of its unique significance in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. You should also recommend your fellow-believers to better acquaint themselves with the contents of that same letter, so that their vision of the Cause and their understanding of its present-day administration may acquire in strength and in depth.

(2 May 1934, to two believers)

3. The Guardian would strongly urge each and every member of the National Spiritual Assembly to carefully peruse, and to quietly ponder upon the outer meaning and upon the inner spirit as well, of all his communications on the subject of the origin, nature and present-day functioning of the administrative order of the Faith. A compilation of these letters has been lately published in the States under the title 'Bahá'í Administration', and a complete knowledge of that book seems to be quite essential to the right handling of the administrative problems facing your National Spiritual Assembly at present.

(9 May 1934, to a National Spiritual Assembly)

4. Shoghi Effendi was also pleased to learn of the response which his last general communication ['The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh' (in 'The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh', pp. 97-161)] addressed to the friends in the West has awakened in your community. It is his hope that the believers will, through their careful and continued study of this important communication, acquire a new vision of the Cause, and will be stimulated to redouble their efforts for the expansion and consolidation of their work for the Faith.

(11 May 1934, to an individual believer)

5. In connection with your teaching work; what the Guardian wishes you to particularly emphasize in all your talks is the supreme necessity for all individuals and nations in this day to adopt in its entirety the social program given by Bahá'u'lláh for the reconstruction of the religious, economic and political life of mankind. He wishes you to explain and analyze the elements that help in raising this Divine World Order in the light of the present-day events and conditions in the

world. Special stress, he feels, should be laid on the impending necessity of establishing a super-national, and sovereign world-state, as the one described by Bahá'u'lláh. With the world becoming increasingly subject to tumults and convulsions never experienced before, the realization of such a necessity is entering into the consciousness of not only the wise and learned, but of the common people as well. The believers should, therefore, seize this opportunity and make a supreme effort to present, in a convincing and eloquent language, those social and humanitarian teachings of the Faith which we believe to constitute the sole panacea for the innumerable ills afflicting our present-day world.

Concerning the essential qualifications of a Bahá'í teacher; these have been repeatedly stated by the Guardian in both his general and private communications to the friends. Besides many others, there are two most essential qualifications: first is unqualified devotion and loyalty to everything the Cause stands for; next is thorough knowledge and comprehension of the Teachings.

(15 November 1935, to two individuals)

6. These standards of Bahá'í conduct, which he himself has set forth in his last general epistle, 'The Advent of Divine Justice', and which it should be the paramount duty of every loyal and conscientious believer to endeavour to uphold and promote, deserve serious study and meditation ...

The principles and methods laid down by the Guardian in his 'The Advent of Divine Justice' on the vital subject of Bahá'í ethics should indeed prove of valuable inspiration and guidance to all the students and friends attending the Summer School classes, and thus prepare them to better appreciate the privileges, and more adequately discharge the responsibilities, of their citizenship in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

(20 May 1939, to an individual believer)

7. He feels that you will benefit greatly by the history of the Cause as outlined in 'God Passes By', and he hopes you will master the subjects and facts it contains and help to bring them to the attention of the Bahá'ís, as there is a need in the Cause to see our Holy Faith in its proper perspective, and he feels you can be of great help in this connection.

(August 1944, to an individual believer)

8. He is pleased to hear that the friends are intensively studying ‘God Passes By’, as it is most essential for them to gain not only a fuller knowledge of their Faith’s history but also to see how persistently it has been attacked by enemies who once held high positions in its ranks. Indeed he hopes a perusal of this book will help not only friends and observers of the Cause to see Ahmad Sohrab in his proper colours, but also believers who are not familiar with the defections of those who were far more highly placed and who turned against the Faith in the days of Bahá’u’lláh and the Master.

(16 October 1944, to participants at Louhelen Summer School, August 1944)

9. The Guardian feels that a sound knowledge of history, including religious history, and also of social and economic subjects, is of great help in teaching the Cause to intelligent people; as to what subjects within the Faith you should concentrate on he feels that the young Bahá’ís should gain a mastery of such books as the ‘Gleanings’, ‘The Dawn-Breakers’, ‘God Passes By’, the ‘Íqán’, ‘Some Answered Questions’ and the more important Tablets. All aspects of the Faith should be deeply studied - and in England they need to know more about the Administration.

(4 May 1946, to an individual believer)

From Communications Written by and on behalf of the Universal House of Justice

10. The beloved Guardian wrote, “To strive to obtain a more adequate understanding of the significance of Bahá’u’lláh’s stupendous Revelation must, it is my unalterable conviction, remain the first obligation and the object of the constant endeavour of each one of its loyal adherents,” a statement which places the obligation of deepening in the Cause firmly on every believer. It is therefore upon the nature of deepening, rather than upon the desirability of pursuing it, that we wish to comment.

A detailed and exact knowledge of the present structure of Bahá’í Administration, or of the By-laws of National and Local Spiritual Assemblies, or of the many and varied applications of Bahá’í law under the diverse conditions prevailing around the world, while valuable in itself, cannot be regarded as the sort of knowledge primarily intended by deepening. Rather is suggested a clearer apprehension of the purpose of God for man, and particularly of His immediate purpose as revealed and directed by Bahá’u’lláh, a purpose as far removed from current concepts of human well-being and happiness as is possible. We should constantly be on our guard lest the glitter and tinsel of an affluent society should lead us to think that such superficial adjustments

to the modern world as are envisioned by humanitarian movements or are publicly proclaimed as the policy of enlightened statesmanship - such as an extension to all members of the human race of the benefits of a high standard of living, of education, medical care, technical knowledge - will of themselves fulfill the glorious mission of Bahá'u'lláh. Far otherwise. These are the things which shall be added unto us once we seek the Kingdom of God, and are not themselves the objectives for which the Báb gave His life, Bahá'u'lláh endured such sufferings as none before Him had ever endured, the Master and after Him the Guardian bore their trials and afflictions with such superhuman fortitude. Far deeper and more fundamental was their vision, penetrating to the very purpose of human life. We cannot do better, in this respect, than call to the attention of the friends certain themes pursued by Shoghi Effendi in his trenchant statement 'The Goal of a New World Order'. "The principle of the Oneness of Mankind" he writes, "implies an organic change in the structure of present day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced." Referring to the "... epoch-making changes that constitute the greatest landmarks in the history of human civilization," he states that "... they cannot appear, when viewed in their proper perspective, except as subsidiary adjustments prelude that transformation of unparalleled majesty and scope which humanity is in this age bound to undergo". In a later document he refers to the civilization to be established by Bahá'u'lláh as one "... with a fullness of life such as the world has never seen nor can as yet conceive".

Dearly-loved Friends. This is the theme we must pursue in our efforts to deepen in the Cause. What is Bahá'u'lláh's purpose for the human race? For what ends did He submit to the appalling cruelties and indignities heaped upon Him? What does He mean by 'a new race of men'? What are the profound changes which He will bring about? The answers are to be found in the Sacred Writings of our Faith and in their interpretation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and our beloved Guardian. Let the friends immerse themselves in this ocean, let them organize regular study classes for its constant consideration, and as reinforcement to their effort, let them remember conscientiously the requirements of daily prayer and reading of the Word of God enjoined upon all Bahá'ís by Bahá'u'lláh.

(From the Ridván 1967 Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, published in *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968*, 1st rev. ed. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, pp. 113-115.)

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11. As to the writings of the beloved Guardian and the pronouncements of the Universal House of Justice, though they are not regarded as sacred texts nor are of the same station as the Writings of the Central Figures of the Faith, nevertheless ... , they are

authoritative statements of guidance and direction for the friends.

(From a letter dated 19 December 1984 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

12. Concerning your request for advice about a systematic deepening plan, you are referred to 'The Advent of Divine Justice' (page 41) and 'Citadel of Faith' (pages 76-77). There, the beloved Guardian outlined areas of study which aim to deepen the spiritual life of the believers and prepare them for teaching and service to the Faith.

(From a letter dated 18 July 1984 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

13. ...it is one of the important duties of the Bahá'í institutions ... , to educate Bahá'ís in the Covenant, and to encourage them to study carefully the writings of the beloved Guardian which provide lasting guidance for the establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

(From a letter dated 24 December 1984 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

14. ESSENTIAL THAT YOUTH THROUGH PROLONGED SYSTEMATIC STUDY WRITINGS BELOVED GUARDIAN ACQUIRE PROFOUND UNDERSTANDING OPERATION OF FORCES OF DECLINE AND GROWTH CREATING UNIVERSAL FERMENT IN WORLD TODAY AND LEADING MANKIND FORWARD TO GLORIOUS DESTINY.

(From a telex dated 4 August 1987 from the Universal House of Justice to the participants of the Youth Conference in Manchester, U.K.)

15. The collected messages of Shoghi Effendi to the American community published in such well-read and familiar titles as 'Bahá'í Administration', 'The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh', 'The Advent of Divine Justice', 'Messages to America', 'The Promised Day is Come' and 'Citadel of Faith', form part of the primary literature of the Faith.

(From a letter dated 1 October 1987 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Bahá'í Publishing Trust)
