

Opposition

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi

Original English



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Compilation

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I. From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

— 1 —

Behold how in this Dispensation the worthless and foolish have fondly imagined that by such instruments as massacre, plunder and banishment they can extinguish the Lamp which the Hand of Divine power hath lit, or eclipse the Day Star of everlasting splendor. How utterly unaware they seem to be of the truth that such adversity is the oil that feedeth the flame of this Lamp! Such is God's transforming power. He changeth whatsoever He willeth; He verily hath power over all things...

'Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh' #29, p. 72

— 2 —

Pay thou no heed to the humiliation to which the loved ones of God have in this Day been subjected. This humiliation is the pride and glory of all temporal honor and worldly elevation. What greater honor can be imagined than the honor conferred by the Tongue of the Ancient of Days when He calleth to remembrance His loved ones in His Most Great Prison? The day is approaching when the intervening clouds will have been completely dissipated, when the light of the words, "All honor belongeth unto God and unto them that love Him," will have appeared, as manifest as the sun, above the horizon of the Will of the Almighty. ... Ere long the world and all



that is therein shall be as a thing forgotten, and all honor shall belong to the loved ones of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful.

'Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh' #140, p. 305

— 3 —

Say: O people of God! Beware lest the powers of the earth alarm you, or the might of the nations weaken you, or the tumult of the people of discord deter you, or the exponents of earthly glory sadden you. Be ye as a mountain in the Cause of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Unconstrained.

Bahá'u'lláh, cited in Shoghi Effendi's, *'The Advent of Divine Justice'*, p. 82

— 4 —

Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, lest the strong ones of the earth rob you of your strength, or they who rule the world fill you with fear. Put your trust in God, and commit your affairs to His keeping. He, verily, will, through the power of truth, render you victorious, and He, verily, is powerful to do what He willeth, and in His grasp are the reins of omnipotent might.

Bahá'u'lláh, cited in Shoghi Effendi's, *'The Advent of Divine Justice'*, p. 82

— 5 —

It is incumbent upon all men, each according to his ability, to refute the arguments of those that have attacked the Faith of God. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Powerful, the Almighty. He that wisheth to promote the Cause of the one true God, let him promote it through his pen and tongue, rather than have recourse to sword or violence. We have, on a previous occasion, revealed this injunction, and We now confirm it, if ye be of them that comprehend. By the righteousness of Him Who, in this Day, crieth within the inmost heart of all created things: "God, there is none other God besides Me!" If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honored in the world to come that the Concourse on high would envy his glory. No pen can depict the loftiness of his station, neither can any tongue describe its splendour. For whosoever standeth firm and steadfast in this holy, this glorious, and exalted Revelation, such power shall be given him as to enable him to face and withstand all that is in heaven and on earth. Of this God is Himself a witness.

'Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh' #154, p. 329

— 6 —

When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God's Faith. Happy are they who in the days of world-encompassing trials have stood fast in the Cause and refused to swerve from its truth.



II. From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

— 7 —

...The darkness of error that has enveloped the East and West is, in this most great cycle, battling with the light of Divine Guidance. Its swords and its spears are very sharp and pointed; its army keenly bloodthirsty.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Shoghi Effendi's, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 6

— 8 —

This day the powers of all the leaders of religion are directed towards the dispersion of the congregation of the All-Merciful, and the shattering of the Divine Edifice. The hosts of the world, whether material, cultural or political are from every side launching their assault, for the Cause is great, very great. Its greatness is, in this day, clear and manifest to men's eyes.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Shoghi Effendi's, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 6

— 9 —

...How great, how very great is the Cause! How very fierce the onslaught of all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Ere long shall the clamor of the multitude throughout Africa, throughout America, the cry of the European and of the Turk, the groaning of India and China, be heard from far and near. One and all, they shall arise with all their power to resist His Cause. Then shall the knights of the Lord, assisted by His grace from on high, strengthened by faith, aided by the power of understanding, and reinforced by the legions of the Covenant, arise and make manifest the truth of the verse: "Behold the confusion that hath befallen the tribes of the defeated!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Shoghi Effendi's, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 17

— 10 —

The prestige of the Faith of God has immensely increased. Its greatness is now manifest. The day is approaching when it will have cast a tremendous tumult in men's hearts. Rejoice, therefore, O denizens of America, rejoice with exceeding gladness!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Shoghi Effendi's, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 79

O ye beloved of God! When the winds blow severely, rains fall fiercely, the lightning flashes, the thunder roars, the bolt descends and storms of trial become severe, grieve not; for after this storm, verily, the divine spring will arrive, the hills and fields will become verdant, the expanses of grain will joyfully wave, the earth will become covered with blossoms, the trees will be clothed with green garments and adorned with blossoms and fruits. Thus blessings become manifest in all countries. These favours are results of those storms and hurricanes. Therefore, O ye beloved of God, be not grieved when people stand against you, persecute you, afflict and trouble you and say all manner of evil against you. The darkness will pass away and the light of the manifest signs will appear, the veil will be withdrawn and the Light of Reality will shine forth from the unseen [Kingdom] of El-Abhá. This we inform you before it occurs, so that when the hosts of people arise against you for my love, be not disturbed or troubled; nay rather, be firm as a mountain, for this persecution and reviling of the people upon you is a pre-ordained matter. Blessed is the soul who is firm in the path!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás', vol. I, p. 12

...a large multitude of people will arise against you, showing oppression, expressing contumely and derision, shunning your society, and heaping upon you ridicule. However, the Heavenly Father will illumine you to such an extent that, like unto the rays of the sun, you shall scatter the dark clouds of superstition, shine gloriously in the midst of Heaven and illumine the face of the earth. You must make firm the feet at the time when these trials transpire, and demonstrate forbearance and patience. You must withstand them with the utmost love and kindness; consider their oppression and persecution as the caprice of children, and do not give any importance to whatever they do. For at the end the illumination of the Kingdom will overwhelm the darkness of the world and the exaltation and grandeur of your station will become apparent and manifest...

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet to an individual believer, 'Bahá'í News' 10, September 1910, p. 1



III. From the Writings of Shoghi Effendi:

I am however assured and sustained by the conviction, never dimmed in my mind, that whatsoever comes to pass in the Cause of God, however disquieting in its immediate effects, is fraught with infinite Wisdom and tends ultimately to promote its interests in the world. Indeed, our experiences of the distant past, as well as of recent events, are too numerous and varied to permit of any misgiving or doubt as to the truth of this basic principle — a principle which throughout the vicissitudes of our sacred mission in this world we must never disregard or forget.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 23 December 1922 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, '*Bahá'í Administration*' p. 27

— 14 —

That the Cause of God should in the days to come witness many a challenging hour and pass through critical stages in preparation for the glories of its promised ascendancy in the New World has been time and again undeniably affirmed by our departed Master, and is abundantly proved to us all by its heroic past and turbulent history....

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 23 February 1924 to the Bahá'ís of America, '*Bahá'í Administration*', p. 60

— 15 —

We cannot believe that as the Movement grows in strength, in authority and in influence, the perplexities and the sufferings it has had to contend with in the past will correspondingly decrease and vanish. Nay, as it grows from strength to strength, the fanatical defendants of the strongholds of Orthodoxy, whatever be their denomination, realizing the penetrating influence of this growing Faith, will arise and strain every nerve to extinguish its light and discredit its name. For has not our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent forth His glowing prophecy from behind the prison walls of the citadel of 'Akká — words so significant in their forecast of the coming world turmoil, yet so rich in their promise of eventual victory...

Dearly-beloved friends, upon us devolves the supreme obligation to stand by His side, to fight His battles and to win His victory. May we prove ourselves worthy of this trust.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 12 February 1927 to the Bahá'ís of the West, '*Bahá'í Administration*', p. 123

— 16 —

Viewed in the light of past experience, the inevitable result of such futile attempts, however persistent and malicious they may be, is to contribute to a wider and deeper recognition by believers and unbelievers alike of the distinguishing features of the Faith proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. These challenging criticisms, whether or not dictated by malice, cannot but serve to galvanize the souls of its ardent supporters, and to consolidate the ranks of its faithful promoters. They will purge the Faith from those pernicious elements whose continued association with the believers tends to discredit the fair name of the Cause, and to tarnish the purity of its spirit. We should welcome, therefore, not only the open attacks which its avowed enemies persistently launch against it, but should also view as a blessing in disguise every storm of mischief with which they who apostatize their faith or claim to be its faithful exponents assail it from time to time. Instead of undermining the Faith, such assaults, both from within and from without, reinforce its foundations, and excite the intensity of its flame. Designed to becloud its radiance, they proclaim to all the world the exalted character of its precepts, the completeness of its unity, the uniqueness of its position, and the pervasiveness of its influence.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 21 March 1930 to the Bahá'ís of the West, *'The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh'*, p. 15

— 17 —

For let every earnest upholder of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh realize that the storms which this struggling Faith of God must needs encounter, as the process of the disintegration of society advances, shall be fiercer than any which it has already experienced. Let him be aware that so soon as the full measure of the stupendous claim of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh comes to be recognized by those time-honoured and powerful strongholds of orthodoxy, whose deliberate aim is to maintain their stranglehold over the thoughts and consciences of men, that this infant Faith will have to contend with enemies more powerful and more insidious than the cruellest torture-mongers and the most fanatical clerics who have afflicted it in the past. What foes may not in the course of the convulsions that shall seize a dying civilization be brought into existence, who will reinforce the indignities which have already been heaped upon it!

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 21 March 1930 to the Bahá'ís of the West, *'The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh'*, p. 17

— 18 —

We have only to refer to the warnings uttered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in order to realize the extent and character of the forces that are destined to contest with God's holy Faith.... Stupendous as is the struggle which His words foreshadow, they also testify to the complete victory which the upholders of the Greatest Name are destined eventually to achieve. Peoples, nations, adherents of divers faiths, will jointly and successively arise to shatter its unity, to sap its force, and to degrade its holy name. They will assail not only the spirit which it inculcates, but the administration which is the channel, the instrument, the embodiment of that spirit. For as the authority with which Bahá'u'lláh has invested the future Bahá'í Commonwealth becomes more and more apparent, the fiercer shall be the challenge which from every quarter will be thrown at the verities it enshrines.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 21 March 1930 to the Bahá'ís of the West, *'The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh'*, p. 17

— 19 —

Fierce as may seem the onslaught of the forces of darkness that may still afflict this Cause, desperate and prolonged as may be that struggle, severe as may be the disappointments it may still experience, the ascendancy it will eventually obtain will be such as no other Faith has ever in its history achieved.... Who knows but that triumphs, unsurpassed in splendour, are not in store for the mass of Bahá'u'lláh's toiling followers? Surely, we stand too near the colossal edifice His hand has reared to be able, at the present stage of the evolution of His Revelation, to claim to be able even to conceive the full measure of its promised glory. Its past history, stained by the blood of countless martyrs, may well inspire us with the thought that, whatever may yet befall this Cause, however formidable the forces that may still assail it, however numerous the reverses it

will inevitably suffer, its onward march can never be stayed, and that it will continue to advance until the very last promise, enshrined within the words of Bahá'u'lláh, shall have been completely redeemed.

From the Epilogue to *'The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation'*, trans. and ed. by Shoghi Effendi, p. 667

— 20 —

The separation that has set in between the institutions of the Bahá'í Faith and the Islámic ecclesiastical organizations that oppose it — a movement that has originated in Egypt and is now spreading steadily throughout the Middle East, and will in time communicate its influence to the West — imposes upon every loyal upholder of the Cause the obligation of refraining from any word or action that might prejudice the position which our enemies have, in recent years and of their own accord, proclaimed and established.... Our adversaries in the East have initiated the struggle. Our future opponents in the West will, in their turn, arise and carry it a stage further. Ours is the duty, in anticipation of this inevitable contest, to uphold unequivocally and with undivided loyalty the integrity of our Faith and demonstrate the distinguishing features of its divinely appointed institutions.

In the hand writing of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter 15 June 1935 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *'Bahá'í News'* 95, October 1935, p. 2

— 21 —

That the forces of irreligion, of a purely materialistic philosophy, of unconcealed paganism have been unloosed, are now spreading, and, by consolidating themselves, are beginning to invade some of the most powerful Christian institutions of the western world, no unbiased observer can fail to admit. That these institutions are becoming increasingly restive, that a few among them are already dimly aware of the pervasive influence of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, that they will, as their inherent strength deteriorates and their discipline relaxes, regard with deepening dismay the rise of His New World Order, and will gradually determine to assail it, that such an opposition will in turn accelerate their decline, few, if any, among those who are attentively watching the progress of His Faith would be inclined to question.

From a letter 11 March 1936 to the Bahá'ís of the West, *'The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh'*, p. 180

— 22 —

Fierce and manifold will be the assaults with which governments, races, classes and religions, jealous of its rising prestige and fearful of its consolidating strength, will seek to silence its voice and sap its foundations. Unmoved by the relative obscurity that surrounds it at the present time, and undaunted by the forces that will be arrayed against it in the future, this community, I cannot but feel confident, will, no matter how afflictive the agonies of a travailing age, pursue its

destiny, undeflected in its course, undimmed in its serenity, unyielding in its resolve, unshaken in its convictions.

In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter 5 July 1938 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, '*Messages to America*', p. 14

— 23 —

The resistless march of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh ... propelled by the stimulating influences which the unwisdom of its enemies and the force latent within itself both engender, resolves itself into a series of rhythmic pulsations, precipitated, on the one hand, through the explosive outbursts of its foes, and the vibrations of Divine Power, on the other, which speed it, with ever-increasing momentum, along that predestined course traced for it by the Hand of the Almighty.

In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter 12 August 1941 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, '*Messages to America*', p. 51

— 24 —

How can the beginnings of a world upheaval, unleashing forces that are so gravely deranging the social, the religious, the political, and the economic equilibrium of organized society, throwing into chaos and confusion political systems, racial doctrines, social conceptions, cultural standards, religious associations, and trade relationships — how can such agitations, on a scale so vast, so unprecedented, fail to produce any repercussions on the institutions of a Faith of such tender age whose teachings have a direct and vital bearing on each of these spheres of human life and conduct? Little wonder, therefore, if they who are holding aloft the banner of so pervasive a Faith, so challenging a Cause, find themselves affected by the impact of these world-shaking forces. Little wonder if they find that in the midst of this whirlpool of contending passions their freedom has been curtailed, their tenets contemned, their institutions assaulted, their motives maligned, their authority jeopardized, their claim rejected.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 25 December 1938 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, '*The Advent of Divine Justice*', p. 2

— 25 —

Let not, however, the invincible army of Bahá'u'lláh, who in the West, and at one of its potential storm-centres is to fight, in His name and for His sake, one of its fiercest and most glorious battles, be afraid of any criticism that might be directed against it. Let it not be deterred by any condemnation with which the tongue of the slanderer may seek to debase its motives. Let it not recoil before the threatening advance of the forces of fanaticism, of orthodoxy, of corruption, and of prejudice that may be leagued against it. The voice of criticism is a voice that indirectly reinforces the proclamation of its Cause. Unpopularity but serves to throw into greater relief the

contrast between it and its adversaries, while ostracism is itself the magnetic power that must eventually win over to its camp the most vociferous and inveterate amongst its foes....

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 25 December 1938 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, *'The Advent of Divine Justice'*, p. 42

— 26 —

We can discover a no less distinct gradation in the character of the opposition it has had to encounter — ... an opposition which, now, through the rise of a divinely appointed Order in the Christian West, and its initial impact on civil and ecclesiastical institutions, bids fair to include among its supporters established governments and systems associated with the most ancient, the most deeply entrenched sacerdotal hierarchies in Christendom. We can, at the same time, recognize, through the haze of an ever-widening hostility, the progress, painful yet persistent, of certain communities within its pale through the stages of obscurity, of proscription, of emancipation, and of recognition — stages that must needs culminate in the course of succeeding centuries, in the establishment of the Faith, and the founding, in the plenitude of its power and authority, of the world-embracing Bahá'í Commonwealth....

Shoghi Effendi, *'God Passes By'* Foreword p. xvii

— 27 —

Nor should a survey of the outstanding features of so blessed and fruitful a ministry omit mention of the prophecies which the unerring pen of the appointed Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant has recorded. These foreshadow the fierceness of the onslaught that the resistless march of the Faith must provoke in the West, in India and in the Far East when it meets the time-honored sacerdotal orders of the Christian, the Buddhist and Hindu religions. They foreshadow the turmoil which its emancipation from the fetters of religious orthodoxy will cast in the American, the European, the Asiatic and African continents....

Shoghi Effendi, *'God Passes By'*, p. 315

— 28 —

Despite the blows leveled at its nascent strength, whether by the wielders of temporal and spiritual authority from without, or by black-hearted foes from within, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh had, far from breaking or bending, gone from strength to strength, from victory to victory. Indeed its history, if read aright, may be said to resolve itself into a series of pulsations, of alternating crises and triumphs, leading it ever nearer to its divinely appointed destiny....

Shoghi Effendi, *'God Passes By'*, p. 409

The tribulations attending the progressive unfoldment of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have indeed been such as to exceed in gravity those from which the religions of the past have suffered. Unlike those religions, however, these tribulations have failed utterly to impair its unity, or to create, even temporarily, a breach in the ranks of its adherents. It has not only survived these ordeals, but has emerged, purified and inviolate, endowed with greater capacity to face and surmount any crisis which its resistless march may engender in the future.

Shoghi Effendi, *'God Passes By'*, p. 410

Whatever may befall this infant Faith of God in future decades or in succeeding centuries, whatever the sorrows, dangers and tribulations which the next stage in its world-wide development may engender, from whatever quarter the assaults to be launched by its present or future adversaries may be unleashed against it, however great the reverses and setbacks it may suffer, we, who have been privileged to apprehend, to the degree our finite minds can fathom, the significance of these marvelous phenomena associated with its rise and establishment, can harbor no doubt that what it has already achieved in the first hundred years of its life provides sufficient guarantee that it will continue to forge ahead, capturing loftier heights, tearing down every obstacle, opening up new horizons and winning still mightier victories until its glorious mission, stretching into the dim ranges of time that lie ahead, is totally fulfilled.

Shoghi Effendi, *'God Passes By'*, p. 412

No opportunity, in view of the necessity of ensuring the harmonious development of the Faith, should be ignored, which its potential enemies, whether ecclesiastical or otherwise, may offer, to set forth, in a restrained and unprovocative language, its aims and tenets, to defend its interests, to proclaim its universality, to assert the supernatural, the supranational and non-political character of its institutions, and its acceptance of the Divine origin of the Faiths which have preceded it...

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter 5 June 1947 to the Bahá'ís of the West, *'Citadel of Faith'*, p. 23

Indeed this fresh ordeal that has, in pursuance of the mysterious dispensations of Providence, afflicted the Faith at this unexpected hour, far from dealing a fatal blow to its institutions or existence, should be regarded as a blessing in disguise, not a "*calamity*" but a "*providence*" of God, not a devastating flood but a "*gentle rain*" on a "*green pasture*", a "*wick*" and "*oil*" unto the "*lamp*" of His Faith, a "*nurture*" for His Cause, "*water for that which has been planted in the hearts of men*", a "*crown set on the head*" of His Messenger for this Day.

In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter 20 August 1955 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, *'Citadel of Faith'*, p. 139



IV. From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

— 33 —

...when the very progress of the Cause on the one hand, and the corresponding decline in ecclesiastical organizations on the other will inevitably incite Christian ecclesiastical leaders to vehemently oppose and undermine the Faith, the believers will then have a real chance to defend and vindicate the Cause...

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 25 May 1938 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada

— 34 —

The matter of refuting attacks and criticisms directed against the Cause through the press is, he feels, one which devolves on the National Spiritual Assembly to consider. This body, whether directly or through the agency of its committees, should decide as to the advisability of answering any such attacks, and also should carefully examine and pass upon any statements which the friends wish to send to the press to this effect. Only through such supervision and control of all Bahá'í press activities can the friends hope to avoid confusion and misunderstanding in their own minds and in the mind of the general public whom they can reach through the press.

The Guardian would advise, therefore, that henceforth you seek the guidance and approval of the National Spiritual Assembly in all your attempts to refute the criticisms of the enemies of the Cause, as there are certain cases when it is an absolute loss of time and energy, and even perhaps positively harmful, to counteract such attacks, which often lead to interminable and fruitless controversies. The National Spiritual Assembly can best advise you as to what action to take in such matters.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 28 September 1938 to an individual believer

— 35 —

The friends ... should not feel bewildered, for they have the assurance of Bahá'u'lláh that whatever the nature and character of the forces of opposition facing His Cause, its eventual triumph is indubitably certain.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 30 August 1937 to an individual believer

— 36 —

We have every reason to hope and believe that in the future many of the truly enlightened clergy may seek the shelter of Bahá'u'lláh, just as we feel certain that we may also expect at some future date a keen antagonism to our Faith on the part of those who do not see in it the salvation of the world, but rather challenge to their own fame and position.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 6 July 1942 to a group of believers

— 37 —

It seems both strange and pitiful that the Church and clergy should always, in every age, be the most bitter opponents of the very Truth they are continually admonishing their followers to be prepared to receive! They have become so violently attached to the form that the substance itself eludes them! However, such denunciations as those your minister made publicly against you and the Bahá'í Faith can do no harm to the Cause at all; on the contrary they only serve to spread its name abroad and mark it as an independent religion.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 7 February 1945 to an individual believer

— 38 —

Although this may temporarily prove an embarrassment to your work, and a set-back, there is no doubt that it signalizes a step forward in the advance of the Faith; for we know that our beloved Faith must eventually clash with the entrenched orthodoxies of the past; and that this conflict cannot but lead to greater victories, and to ultimate emancipation, recognition and ascendancy.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 8 April 1951 to two believers

— 39 —

We are bound to meet with increasing opposition from Church-dominated countries, but our counter-moves must be carefully undertaken. He would like you to always consult him in matters which bring the Faith before government or Church bodies in cases of this kind.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 23 November 1951 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States

