

# Excerpts from Letters to Individuals

Shoghi Effendi

Original English



## Excerpts from Letters to Individuals

Over three hundred letters to individuals residing in the British Isles have been studied and passages selected which are of permanent value.

These excerpts were taken from the letters of no more than twenty believers of whom only seven corresponded regularly with the Guardian.

They have been arranged chronologically; for details of the subject matter the reader must turn to the Index.

Almost all these passages are answers given by the Guardian to questions asked in personal letters to him. It is possible therefore to catch a glimpse of the changing problems facing the Bahá'í community and these frequently reflected conditions in the country as a whole. This is particularly significant in the years immediately following the Second World War for as the Guardian, in a letter written on his behalf by his secretary, wrote of the British believers,

"... he feels the greatest sympathy for them, and considers that when their present achievements are assessed in the future, people will give them a double measure of praise for having done so much when they were least fit to do it."

### Letter of 28 September 1925

[From the Guardian]

...I wish you, my dearest friend, to make once again a supreme effort to come to a full understanding with the friends outside... Extend to them your generous and helping hand, approach them with a spirit of selflessness and cordiality and the result, I am confident will be indeed marvellous. My heart rejoices at the news of the growth of harmony among the friends and I feel paralysed in my work when I hear to the contrary. I am impressing on the friends in ... the absolute necessity of cultivating understanding and friendliness and consolidating the foundation of the National Assembly. For upon these National Assemblies will the Edifice of the Universal House of Justice be raised.



ORIGINAL

## Letter of 28 October 1925

Shoghi Effendi is much interested to hear of your literary work. He fully agrees with you that different people must be approached in different ways and that valuable work for the Bahá'í Cause can be done within the Christian Churches by promoting the "Christianity of Christ". 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that when people become true Christians, they will find themselves Bahá'ís. One or two of the best Bahá'ís I know were very earnest, sincere, devoted Christians and accepted the Bahá'í teachings with very little difficulty and without any intervening period of religious scepticism, as an amplification and fulfilment of the teachings and prophesyings of Christ and the prophets.

## Letter of 28 December 1925

He is very sorry that such undesirable things are every now and then cropping up in ... and discouraging you in your work, keeping you from devoting all your spare time in teaching the Cause and spreading its principles. He does not wish you, however, to lose heart from such things. As the Cause grows its difficulties will increase and its problems will become more numerous. The friends, especially the older ones, should therefore try and stand unmoved by them. In fact the more their difficulties will increase the more they have to take courage and try to solve them. The Master has often said that sorrows are like furrows, the deeper they go the more productive the land becomes. If this problem of ... should be settled other problems will arise. Are the friends to become discouraged or are they to follow the footsteps of the Master and consider them more as chances to show their tenacity of belief and spirit of sacrifice? In short, Shoghi Effendi wishes you to keep on teaching the principles of the Cause no matter what problems may arise.

[From the Guardian:]

...Let not anxieties and disappointments overwhelm you or oppress your generous and sensitive heart. Turn to Him in prayer and remember that I am joining you in your supplications for guidance and strength. Be patient in tribulation and never relax in your efforts to promote the Divine Teachings.

## Letter of 28 March 1926

It must have been very distasteful to you to read some of the off-hand and ungrammatical translations that more out of necessity than choice won circulation and were even published. Furthermore, it was always the expressed wish and desire of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to have proper and adequate translations that would not only convey the true spirit of the original but also possess some literary merit. And for this he emphasised the necessity of a board of translators. Such a board it has unfortunately been impossible to form as yet.

Meanwhile Shoghi Effendi, realising the urgent necessity of the translation of some of the important writings, has translated some of the passages.

## Letter of 16 October 1926

We should, however, be careful, as you mention in your letter, not to make this system develop into a hard and fast creed or form. The Cause is pure and free from such things and it ought to be the task of the friends to keep it broad and progressive. Man is always apt to fall into the habit of doing a thing in a certain way, and thereby become captive to prescribed forms. It should therefore be the duty of the assemblies everywhere to see that, though certain temporary measures are taken to further the Cause, they do not crystallise into hard and fast creeds.

## Letter of 6 April 1928

[From the Guardian]

I feel that regarding such interpretations (of verses from the Scriptures) no one has the right to impose his view or opinion and require his listeners to believe in his particular interpretation of the sacred and prophetic writings. I have no objection to your interpretations and inferences so long as they are represented as your own personal observations and reflections. It would be unnecessary and confusing to state authoritatively and officially a dogmatic Bahá'í interpretation to be universally accepted and taught by believers. Such matters I feel should be left to the personal judgement and insight of individual teachers....

## Letter of 12 December 1929

Ever since its inception (the "Bahá'í World") Shoghi Effendi has cherished the hope of making it a work that would prove interesting and illuminating to the reader. Destined mainly for the non-Bahá'ís, he has tried to attract through its pages the attention of educated and enlightened people and especially leaders in every country, with a view to acquaint them with the broad and fundamental principles of the Faith and to win their consideration of the Movement as a growing force for good and for peace throughout the entire world. It is therefore with lively satisfaction that he has seen the publication grow yearly in importance and this feeling has been lately enhanced very much by the words of interest or appreciation which he has received from many quarters and leading men, among which was a remarkably encouraging letter from Sir Herbert Samuel. Indeed Shoghi Effendi has made it a point to send copies to as many leading men as possible and copies of last year's issue were presented to the Emperor of Japan, the Sháh of Persia and Queen Marie of Rumania.

## Letter of 9 February 1930

The subject you had raised with regard to the date of the publication of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh is interesting as it is important. If I remember correctly the same issue was raised as an open challenge in India by some spokesman of the Ahmadiyya sect. The earliest published writings of Bahá'u'lláh date from the nineties of the last century. Over forty years ago the Aqdas, a volume of general Tablets including Tarazát, Ishráqát, and others were published in Ishqábád (Russia) and Bombay respectively and copies of these though rare are still procurable. Simultaneously with these, if not earlier, some of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh were

published by the Oriental Department of the Imperial Russian University at St. Petersburg under the supervision of its director Baron Rosen (and more particulars about these could be found in the books of E. G. Browne) and these of course are not undated like some of those published in Bombay.

The main bulk of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh however are to be found in manuscript form written by noted scribes after the fashion of orientals. These scribes did not leave all their manuscripts undated and Jinábí Zain, a very noted Bahá'í scribe, always dated his copies of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh at the end of the volume in what E. G. Browne calls 'colophenes' and the description of some of these colophenes could be found in the works of the Cambridge Professor.

The son of the above-mentioned scribe is still living in Haifa and does very much the same work as his father. He claims that as early as 1868 his father used to write copies of the Íqán for the Bahá'ís in Persia as a source of livelihood, and that after 1885 when he went to 'Akká to join Bahá'u'lláh's party his entire work and time was devoted to copying the sacred writings for sale among Bahá'ís. These copies are to be found all throughout the East and are almost invariably dated.

### Letter of 9 June 1930

Concerning the accounts of visits to Haifa, published by the friends during the Master's life-time, Shoghi Effendi is very reluctant to attribute to them much authority. Most of these are personal impressions and are to be valued only as such. Bahá'u'lláh definitely states that only His actual writings are to be relied upon. Such reports may be interesting but not authoritative, no matter who the reporter may be...

### Letter of 22 October 1930

...If those heroic deeds have made such an impression upon you, would not the reading of the narrative arouse the friends to greater sacrifices and stimulate them to more intensive service? It was not mere physical torture that the friends in Persia had to endure but also moral persecution for they were cursed and vilified by all the people, especially when they ceased to defend themselves ... the Master used to say sometimes that the western friends will be severely persecuted but theirs will be primarily moral....

### Letter of 30 November 1930

He (the Guardian) is enclosing extracts from Lord Curzon's "Persia and the Persian Question" giving a detailed and faithful description of the state of Persia in the middle of the 19th century. He thinks that references to the extracts ... will be of great value in showing to the reader the contrast between the decadent state of the government and the people at that time and the heroism and nobility of character displayed by the early disciples of the Báb... Shoghi Effendi is also sending you ... the Master's words concerning the situation which led to the defensive action which the early disciples of the Báb were compelled to take in Mázindarán, Nayríz and Zanján. From these words it is evident that a systematic campaign of plunder and massacre had been initiated by the central government. Bahá'u'lláh, Who Himself was an active figure in those

days and was regarded one of the leading exponents of the Faith of the Báb, states clearly His views in the Íqán that His conception of the sovereignty of the Promised Qá'im was purely a spiritual one, and not a material or political one... His view of the sovereignty of the Qá'im confirms the various evidences given in the text of the narrative itself of the views held by those who actually participated in these events such as Hujjat, Quddús, Mullá Husayn. The very fact that these disciples were ready and willing to emerge from the fort and return to their homes after receiving the assurance that they would be no more molested is itself an evidence that they were not contemplating any action against the authorities.

Shoghi Effendi is also sending you an account of the doctrines of Shí'ah Islám from which the Movement originally sprang. It will help you to connect the origin of the Movement with the tenets and beliefs held by the Shí'ahs of Persia. The Báb declared Himself at the beginning of His mission to be the "Báb" by which He meant to be the gate or forerunner of "Him Whom God will make manifest", that is to say Bahá'u'lláh, Whose advent the Shí'ahs also expected in the person of "the return of Imám Husayn". The Sunnis also believe in a similar twofold manifestation, the first they call "the Mihdí", the second "the Return of Christ". By the term Báb, the Báb meant to be the forerunner of the second manifestation rather than, as some have maintained, the gate of the Qá'im. When He declared Himself to be the Báb, the people understood by the term that He was an intermediary between the absent Qá'im and His followers, though He Himself never meant to be such a person. All He claimed to be was that He was the Qá'im Himself and in addition to this station, that of the Báb, namely the gate or forerunner of "Him Whom God will make manifest".

There are many authorised traditions from Muḥammad stating clearly (as explained in the Íqán) that the promised Qá'im would bring a new Book and new Laws. In other words abrogating the law of Islám.

Shoghi Effendi feels that the Unity of the Bahá'í revelation as one complete whole embracing the Faith of the Báb should be emphasised... The Faith of the Báb should not be divorced from that of Bahá'u'lláh. Though the teachings of the Bayán have been abrogated and superseded by the laws of Aqdas, yet due to the fact that the Báb considered Himself as the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh we should regard His dispensation together with that of Bahá'u'lláh as forming one entity, the former being an introductory to the advent of the latter. Just as the advent of John the Baptist — who according to various authorities was Himself the originator of laws which abrogated the teachings current among the Jews — forms part of the Christian revelation, the advent of the Báb likewise forms an integral part of the Bahá'í Faith. That is why Shoghi Effendi feels justified to call Nabíl's narrative a narrative of the early days of the Bahá'í revelation.

Shoghi Effendi feels that it should be explained that forbidding self defence by Bahá'u'lláh should not be taken too literally. To put it as bluntly as this, he fears that the question might be misunderstood. Bahá'u'lláh could surely have not meant that a Bahá'í should not attempt to defend his life against any irresponsible assailant who might attack him for any purpose whatever, whether religious or not. Every reasonable person would feel under such circumstances justified in protecting his life....

Regarding Nabíl: He was born on the 18th day of the month of Safar of the year 1247 A. H. in the village of Zarand in Persia. He was thirteen years old when the Báb declared Himself. Though

still young he himself was preparing to leave for Şhayḫ Tabarsí and join the companions of Mullá Ḥusayn when the news of the treachery and massacre of the besieged companions reached him. He met Bahá'u'lláh in Kirmansháh and Tīhrán before the latter's banishment to 'Iráq. He was a close companion of the Báb's amanuensis Mírzá Aḥmad. He subsequently met Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád, Adrianople and 'Akká and was commissioned by Bahá'u'lláh to journey several times to Persia in order to promote the Cause and encourage the scattered and persecuted believers. He was present in 'Akká when Bahá'u'lláh passed away in 1892 and soon after was so overcome with grief that he drowned himself in the sea. His body was found along the shore and was buried in the cemetery of 'Akká. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is reported to have been struck with deep sorrow at the manner of his death. He states in his narration that he met the maternal uncle of the Báb, Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí who had visited his nephew in the Castle of Çihríq and had recently returned to Tīhrán. He started writing his narrative in 1305 A.H. four years before the passing of Bahá'u'lláh. It took him about a year and half to write it. His chief informants were Mírzá Aḥmad the amanuensis of the Báb and Mírzá Músá the brother of Bahá'u'lláh. Parts of his narrative were read in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and approved by Him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also went over sections of his narrative....

Shoghi Effendi has found in the papers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá a complete set of the Báb's Tablets to the 18 Letters of the Living, all written in His own hand-writing and bearing His seal. In addition to these there are two other Tablets both written by Himself in exquisite hand-writing, the one addressed to the 19th Letter who was Himself and the other to "Him whom God will make manifest", i.e. Bahá'u'lláh. This last one has three seals and is written on blue paper....

Regarding the question raised in your letter.... The Bahá'ís in Persia avoid political posts and positions, abstain from any interference in matters pertaining to the policy of the state, but fill the more important administrative posts that have no political character. They feel that in this manner they can best serve the interest of their country and prove by their action their integrity and attachment to Persia....

Shoghi Effendi is enclosing an extremely interesting account given by a certain Dr. Cormick, an English physician long resident in Tabríz of his meeting with the Báb. He is apparently the only Westerner who has met the Báb and recorded his impressions... Shoghi Effendi thinks of adding it to his notes.

### Letter of 30 April 1931

...You could also in a quiet way speak to persons whom you think are ready for such a message and would appreciate the light when they see it. Try to form around you a group of Bahá'ís who are well versed in the teachings and who are ready to assist you in serving the Cause. In short try to form an assembly of pure and competent souls. Meanwhile you could write, for the Cause is in great need of first class literature and you are gifted along that line.

The Cause surely needs sacrifices, in fact it is only through sacrifice that it can progress, but such determined activity should be coupled with wisdom and caution if it is not going to be a temporary flare. Intimate talk and personal contact has proven the surest and quietest way for establishing a group....

### Letter of 7 November 1931

The present social and economic problems that are facing the British people are surely occupying their whole attention, but they should also operate as a reminder and draw them closer to spiritual matters. The people have to be made conscious of the fact that without a complete change in our outlook and a total reform of the guiding principles of our life, such as the Cause advocates, our social and economic problems cannot be solved nor our conditions ameliorated. Nothing short of the full message of Bahá'u'lláh can end the sufferings that are befalling humanity.

### Letter of 2 January 1932

It is strange how much suffering man has to put up with while on this earth. Our consolation should be however that it is part of a divine plan whose worth we cannot yet fathom...

...Shoghi Effendi wishes ... to encourage those who are talented to give expression to the wonderful spirit that animates them. We need poets and writers for the Cause.... Some of the poems are written by very youthful persons yet they ring so true and give expression to such thoughts that one should halt and admire. In Persia the Cause has given birth to poets that even non-Bahá'ís consider them as great. We hope before long we will have similar persons arise in the West.

### Letter of 10 January 1932

In Persia the Cause gave birth to many poets of national standing. Let us hope that the west will follow suit and produce similar talents.

### Letter of 23 February 1932

The exact date in which the Hidden Words was written you can find on the opening page of Mrs. J. E. Stannard's translation published in Cairo. She gives a line in the Master's own handwriting giving the date as 1274 A.H. (1857-8 A.D.). It is generally believed that the Hidden Words was dictated by Bahá'u'lláh to His secretary as He strolled on the banks of the river in Baghdád — in sections rather than all at one time.

As to the date of the Íqán, I think it can be calculated from the actual text and I have it in my papers as 1278 A.H., i.e. 1861 A.D. You will find that in the text itself. It was written in answer to questions put by a distinguished Bábí.

### Letter of 16 May 1932

Even though outwardly the number of the friends has not been increasing so rapidly, yet the spirit has not remained idle. The leaven of spirituality has been working, and when the time will come it will manifest itself in a sudden awakening. All that we need is a little more courage, perseverance and patience. There are many important men that are attentively watching the



progress of the Faith but are reluctant to come forward and extend a helping hand. In time they will, and then we shall see the Cause of God spread by leaps and bounds...

### Letter of 10 August 1932

Your touching words of condolence and sympathy in connection with the sudden removal of the Greatest Holy Leaf from our midst have greatly comforted (the Guardian's) aching heart and relieved the burden of sorrow that lies so heavily upon him.

In this great calamity which has seized the entire body of the followers of the Faith in both East and West our Guardian's loss is the greatest and the most cruel. His sole comfort, at this terrible hour, is to see the friends united and working together for the realisation of our departed Khánum's dearest wishes.

### Letter of 15 March 1933

He deeply appreciates your sincere, well-expressed reference to the Tribute he has written to the dearly beloved Greatest Holy Leaf.

You cannot imagine to what an extent our dear Guardian has, in this loss, been deprived for ever of the sustaining influence and kindness that this Most Exalted Leaf used to shower daily upon him. In this beautiful Tribute we can trace the life of this beautiful soul, witness with anguish all the sufferings and deprivations that she has endured. Now we should, all of us, try in turn to follow her saintly path and direct all our energy to serve the Cause which has been so dear to her.

### Letter of 6 May 1933

What the Faith needs, even more than teachers, is books that expound the true significance of its principles in the light of modern thought and social problems.

### Letter of 29 May 1933

He was deeply touched by the strong attachment of the friends to one who, besides being the beloved daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, exemplified perhaps more than any one the true spirit that animates His Teachings. His (the Guardian's) sincere hope is that your love for our departed Greatest Holy Leaf will attain such depth and intensity as to enable you to follow in her footsteps and to carry out with increasing devotion and vigour all that she cherished so much during the entire course of her earthly life. The memory of her saintly life will undoubtedly sustain and feed your energies and will provide you with that spiritual potency of which we are all in such a great need.



### Letter of 17 October 1933

How much the Faith is in need of able and devoted souls like you who are ready to suffer every possible deprivation for its sake. If every believer was ready to contribute his share, however humble and small, and through any means, whether intellectual or material, the Faith would have undoubtedly made a tremendous progress in the world....

### Letter of 12 November 1933

You use the expression "till time ends". This is misleading, for there is no end to time. The Guardian suggests that you should either use the term used in the Íqán "till the end that has no end", or express it in such a manner that would give the idea that time has no end....

Jehovah is a title of God, whereas Bahá'u'lláh is the title of the Manifestation of God.

... you count the period of the Christian Dispensation as having lasted for 1844 years. As in the Bahá'í teachings Muḥammad is considered as an independent prophet of God, you have to consider His Dispensation as having begun in 622 A.D. The Christian Dispensation must, therefore, end in 622 A.D. and from that date till 1844 is the era of Muḥammad. 1260 is the calculation based on the lunar system. In other words, it is the Hegira year or A.H. You should either specify this fact, or base your calculation on the solar year, in which case it will be less than 1260, as there is a difference of one year in every 33 years.

... you should point out that, only so far as it is recorded in the Gospel, Jesus gave two material ordinances only. Our knowledge of Jesus' life and teachings is rather fragmentary and so it would be more correct if you specify that these ordinances are only those recorded in the Gospel, and they may not be the only ones. There may be other teachings and ordinances too, of which no record is left.

...Muhammadanism is not only the last of the world religions, but a fuller Revelation than any one preceding it. The Qur'án is not only more authoritative than any previous religious gospel, but it contains also much more; ordinances, teachings and precepts, which taken together constitute a fuller Revelation of God's purpose and law to mankind than Christianity, Judaism or any other previous Dispensation. This view is in complete accord with the Bahá'í philosophy of progressive revelation, and should be thoroughly accepted and taught by every loyal ... Bahá'í.

### Letter of 1 December 1933

One more European is reported to have seen Bahá'u'lláh from a distance, but Professor Browne was the only Westerner who actually met Him.

### Letter of 4 June 1934

You should, nevertheless, persevere in your efforts until your immediate objective has been fully attained. God cannot, indeed, withdraw from so devoted and so capable a Bahá'í like you all the guidance and assistance you need for the effective discharge of your responsibilities and

obligations to the Cause. Be, therefore, confident in Bahá'u'lláh's help. His Spirit will lead you, and will feed your soul with that spiritual sustenance whereby you will be able to overcome the obstacles which seem to so hopelessly beset your path.

### Letter of 10 November 1934

When you quote the Báb, or anyone of His disciples you should make it clear that the words attributed to them are by no means their exact words. They constitute the substance of their message, and thus are not as definite as the quoted words of Bahá'u'lláh or the Master. So, the Guardian suggests that you should either omit the quotation marks, or to specify that the passages quoted are not the exact words used by the Báb and His disciples. In the future edition of Nabíl's Narrative a similar explanation will have to be inserted in the "Dawn Breakers".

You state that the Christian Dispensation "was six hundred and twenty-two years old at the time of the Hegira". The Guardian suggests that the words "at the time of the Hegira" be omitted as they may give the impression that the Revelation of Christ extended beyond the date of the Hegira.

### Letter of 8 February 1935

Religious conservatism, particularly in England, constitutes indeed a serious obstacle which the friends have to meet when spreading the Message, and not until such an obstacle has been completely removed can the Cause effectively spread and establish itself in the West. This religious conservatism is in many respects far more dangerous and more difficult to wipe out than the religious apathy which is so rapidly invading all classes of society.

In view of that, it is, at least for the present, more advantageous to teach the Message in an indirect way, so as to gradually attract and confirm those who have the spiritual capacity of appreciating the Cause in its fullness.

### Letter of 29 May 1935

As to your question concerning the meaning of physical suffering and its relation to mental and spiritual healing. Physical pain is a necessary accompaniment of all human existence, and as such is unavoidable. As long as there will be life on earth, there will be also suffering, in various forms and degrees. But suffering, although an inescapable reality, can nevertheless be utilised as a means for the attainment of happiness. This is the interpretation given to it by all the prophets and saints who, in the midst of severe tests and trials, felt happy and joyous and experienced what is best and holiest in life. Suffering is both a reminder and a guide. It stimulates us better to adapt ourselves to our environmental conditions, and thus leads the way to self improvement. In every suffering one can find a meaning and a wisdom. But it is not always easy to find the secret of that wisdom. It is sometimes only when all our suffering has passed that we become aware of its usefulness. What man considers to be evil turns often to be a cause of infinite blessings. And this is due to his desire to know more than he can. God's wisdom is, indeed, inscrutable to us all, and it is no use pushing too far trying to discover that which shall always remain a mystery to our mind.

In connection with your question relative to the Bahá'í solution of sex problems. On the question of sex the Bahá'ís are, in most of their fundamental views, in full agreement with the upholders of traditional morality. Bahá'u'lláh, like all the other Prophets and Messengers of God, preaches abstinence, and condemns, in vehement language, all forms of sexual laxity, unbridled licence and lust. The Bahá'í standard of sex morality is thus very high, but it is by no means unreasonably rigid. While free love is condemned, yet marriage is considered as a holy act which every human being should be encouraged, though not forced, to perform. Sex instinct, like all other human instincts, is not necessarily evil. It is a power which, if properly directed, can bring joy and satisfaction to the individual. If misused or abused it brings, of course, incalculable harm not only to the individual but also to the society in which he lives. While the Bahá'ís condemn asceticism and all extreme forms of self-mortification they at the same time view with disfavour the current theories of sex ethics which cannot but bring ruin to human society. In the Bahá'í Cause marriage has been encouraged, but made somewhat difficult, conditioned as it is upon the consent of the four parents. Divorce, on the other hand, has been made relatively easy, and the sociologists are just beginning to realise the importance of this law...

### Letter of 6 April 1936

He (the Guardian) is of the opinion, however, that while the secondary aspects of Bahá'í Administration should be left out, a comprehensive statement as to its origin and significance in the Bahá'í Dispensation is of vital importance in any work of the Cause, especially if it is written by a believer. The main thing is to properly present the subject so that the reader may be able to grasp it.

### Letter of 21 November 1936

With reference to the absolute pacifists, or conscientious objectors to war; their attitude, judged from the Bahá'í standpoint, is quite anti-social and due to its exaltation of the individual conscience leads inevitably to disorder and chaos in society. Extreme pacifists are thus very close to the anarchists, in the sense that both these groups lay an undue emphasis on the rights and merits of the individual. The Bahá'í conception of social life is essentially based on the principle of the subordination of the individual will to that of society. It neither suppresses the individual nor does it exalt him to the point of making him an anti-social creature, a menace to society. As in everything it follows the 'golden mean'. The only way that society can function is for the minority to follow the will of the majority.

The other main objection to the conscientious objectors is that their method of establishing peace is too negative. Non-co-operation is too passive a philosophy to become an effective way for social reconstruction. Their refusal to bear arms can never establish peace. There should be first a spiritual revitalisation which nothing, except the Cause of God, can effectively bring to every man's heart.

### Letter of 3 February 1937

Do not feel discouraged if your labours do not always yield an abundant fruitage. For a quick and rapidly-won success is not always the best and the most lasting. The harder you strive to

attain your goal, the greater will be the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh, and the more certain you can feel to attain success. Be cheerful, therefore, and exert yourself with full faith and confidence. For Bahá'u'lláh has promised His Divine assistance to every one who arises with a pure and detached heart to spread His Holy Word, even though he may be bereft of every human knowledge and capacity, and notwithstanding the forces of darkness and of opposition which may be arrayed against him. The goal is clear, the path safe and certain, and the assurances of Bahá'u'lláh as to the eventual success of our efforts quite emphatic. Let us keep firm, and wholeheartedly carry on the great work which He has entrusted into our hands.

### Letter of 31 March 1938

With reference to your question as to whether individuals can help each other by accepting to suffer for each other's sake. Surely such sacrifice for our fellow humans can have helpful results. This law of sacrifice operates in our own lives, as well as in the lives of the Divine Manifestations.

### Letter of 18 April 1940

In these stormy days his thoughts are often with you and our dear English believers, and his prayers continue to be offered on your behalf, that you may all be protected and remain safe, so that when this great ordeal of war which is threatening to engulf the whole world will have passed, you may all be able to continue serving our beloved Cause, and this time through more effective means and on a larger scale than ever before.

The immediate future, as clearly predicted by the Master, must necessarily be very dark for the Cause as well as for the whole world, but the promises He has repeatedly given us of a glorious future for the Faith and for mankind as a whole are of such character as should assuredly sustain and strengthen us amidst the trials and tribulations of the days ahead.

### Letter of 2 June 1941

There can be no doubt that after the present suffering of humanity many souls, who at present show only a mild interest in the Faith, will turn to it as the sole road which can lead them out of the valley of blindness and misery to the "green pastures" promised by their Lord...

### Letter of 1 August 1941

Wherever the Cause is being spread, as it grows in strength, people increasingly will take sides both for and against it. Therefore he (the Guardian) is not surprised to learn that you are finding yourself in the position, sometimes being upheld and sometimes being attacked! It is a great bounty from God that you have had a training in this world which so admirably suits you for a champion of His Faith and an exponent of His doctrines....

### Letter of 19 October 1941

The English Bahá'ís are being tested in both faith and character very severely, and the Guardian is deeply gratified to see the manner in which they are responding, a manner that proclaims to all who witness it that these souls are true Bahá'ís.

The Master longed so to see the believers perfect their faith in living. Now is the supreme hour of test applied, not only to the whole world, but to the Bahá'ís too; how they act, to the degree they adhere to the spirit and the letter of their Faith, will point the way to watching humanity and demonstrate the worth of being a follower of Bahá'u'lláh ... the good news you convey of the spirit and devotion of the English friends greatly pleases Shoghi Effendi.

His hope and prayer is that during these times of danger, stress, and misery, the Bahá'ís will seek out amidst their fellow-countrymen those jewel-like souls that belong to Bahá'u'lláh and bring them the blessing and comfort of His Faith.

### Letter of 30 October 1941

He (the Guardian) feels that the great point is to confirm people of true capacity and ability — from whatever social stratum they may be, because the Cause needs now, and will ever increasingly need, souls of great ability who can bring it before the public at large, administer its ever-growing affairs, and contribute to its advancement in every field.

As the Guardian's thoughts are very often with the English friends, and he feels deeply conscious of both their trials and the wonderful Bahá'í spirit in which they are meeting them, he feels they have almost a special right to call on him, and he welcomes their letters and any news of them he receives. So you must feel free to turn to him whenever you feel the necessity of doing so....

### Letter of 14 March 1942

He also approves of the idea of advertising the name "Bahá'í" as widely as possible, as we can never tell at what future date the remembrance of that word may aid some soul to seek and find the Faith.

At present people are too engulfed in hopes, events, desires, and various partizanships, to realise that there is no way out for humanity except to accept the Divine Plan for this Day, and put its healing principles and laws into practice. But gradually their eyes will be opened, and it is for this time that the friends must labour to bring the knowledge of the Cause before as wide a public as possible. September 1942

He (the Guardian) fully realises how much strain you are subjected to, but he also feels that in so far as is compatible with your health you should persevere in all your Bahá'í activities, as your services could ill be spared in any field at this time.

## Letter of 25 September 1942

There is an answer in the teachings for everything; unfortunately the majority of the Bahá'ís, however intensely devoted and sincere they may be, lack for the most part the necessary scholarship and wisdom to reply to and refute the claims and attacks of people with some education and standing....

It is hard to foresee at present the way in which humanity is going to become spiritualised. At present it seems, the increased sufferings yet to be borne, combined with a far wider diffusion of the Divine Message, will bring about unbelievable changes in the days to come....

## Letter of 5 May 1943

Unless and until the believers really come to realise they are one spiritual family, knit together by a bond more lasting than mere physical ties can ever be, they will not be able to create that warm community atmosphere which alone can attract the hearts of humanity, frozen for lack of real love and feeling. May 1943

If, however, you find your health affected by keeping the Fast the Guardian would advise you to consult a physician, and if he tells you you are unable to fast then of course, you should abstain from doing so.

## Letter of 26 May 1943

He (the Guardian) feels that Bahá'í children like you have a lot of wonderful work to do for others in the future. But you don't even have to wait until you grow up, you can help your dear Mother teach the Cause to others right now, and also tell your playmates about it. The Guardian is going to pray that you may grow up to be a shining light in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

## Letter of 6 August 1943

The Master reflects the qualities of the Manifestations as if He were a mirror. He reflects not only those of Bahá'u'lláh but also of Christ as He is the exemplar of the spirit of the Prophet....

...These matters are left to the discretion of the N.S.A. The principle the Guardian has stated ... the addition of further regulations and rulings to those already laid down in the bye-laws he strongly discourages; he feels it is better, as far as possible, to settle problems as they arise rather than create too much red tape and hem in the spirit of the Cause into a rigid form.

## Letter of 17 October 1944

There is a difference between character and faith; it is often very hard to accept this fact and put up with it, but the fact remains that a person may believe in and love the Cause — even to being ready to die for it — and yet not have a good personal character, or possess traits at variance with the teachings. We should try to change, to let the Power of God help recreate us and make us true Bahá'ís in deed as well as in belief. But sometimes the process is slow, sometimes it

never happens because the individual does not try hard enough. But these things cause us suffering and are a test to us in our fellow-believers, most especially if we love them and have been their teacher!

The Guardian would advise you to leave your friend to himself, to associate with him, his wife and sister-in-law with love and forbearance in every way possible, but not to agonise over the past or let it cloud your Bahá'í life. You have given him the greatest gift in the world: the Faith. Now he must be responsible for his own soul. Your prayers and example can no doubt reach and help him.

It is true the Bahá'ís should try and live a normal healthy life. But we cannot for a moment overlook the abnormal state of the world. If there had not been believers ready to give their health, comfort, pleasure — everything, for the Cause in these dark days, the work would not have gone on. What are these sacrifices compared to keeping a beacon of the Light of Bahá'u'lláh burning in dark London all these war years?

The Guardian is very glad to hear you are so active, both in teaching and administrative work, and he will pray that Bahá'u'lláh may bless and guide you and enable you to serve the Cause in an ever increasing measure. He will also pray for your personal happiness....

#### Letter of 27 November 1944

The work in England has, indeed, progressed slowly from the standpoint of enlarging the Faith's membership and establishing new centres and assemblies. On the other hand, however, the British Bahá'ís have consolidated the administration and thus prepared the way for intensified teaching activities when conditions make life easier for the people in that country. They have also built up a very helpful institution in the Publishing Trust, one calculated to impress the public and aid greatly in their own and other countries' teaching programmes. The Faith there needs more active, devoted, young believers like yourself.

#### Letter of 27 January 1945

He was very happy to hear of the marked progress the Cause has made in ... and that you have not only a number of new believers but also are actively conducting fireside classes and hold public meetings. All these are evidences of progress, and you should feel happy and encouraged about them.

The believers, as we all know, should endeavour to set such an example in their personal lives and conduct that others will feel impelled to embrace a Faith which reforms human character. However, unfortunately, not everyone achieves easily and rapidly the victory over self. What every believer, new or old, should realise is that the Cause has the spiritual power to re-create us if we make the effort to let that power influence us, and the greatest help in this respect is prayer. We must supplicate Bahá'u'lláh to assist us to overcome the failings in our own characters, and also exert our own will-power in mastering ourselves.

He will certainly pray for the work of the beloved Cause there and especially that new souls may be attracted and embrace the Faith. He will also pray that the believers may, for the sake of God,



draw close to each other and not permit each other's short-comings to be a source of disunity and consequently a means of depriving thirsty souls of this life-giving Message! The world is full of evil and dark forces and the friends must not permit these forces to get hold of them by thinking and feeling negatively towards each other.... Undated

His (the Guardian's) burden is truly so heavy — no doubt in the future people will see his life in its proper perspective and be able to appreciate what he has done, to all intents and purposes entirely alone, for the Cause.

### Letter of 10 May 1945

Many of the most valuable, enkindled and erudite teachers the Cause has possessed were formerly members of the clergy, Islámic or Christian.

### Letter of 7 July 1945

What England needs is a higher percentage of people able to meet and attract the public on a large scale, and he hopes you will, in the course of giving the Message to every soul that yearns for it, make a special effort to confirm people who in their turn will be able to arise and broadcast the teachings.

The efforts of the friends are, of course, needed to accomplish the objectives of the Six Year Teaching Plan, and they should be encouraged to do their part, even though they may imagine themselves incapable of discharging such duties!

The Tablet of Visitation is a compilation of words of Bahá'u'lláh, revealed at different times for those who were far from Him, made by Nabíl, at the Master's instruction, after the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh....

### Letter of 3 March 1946

A city like London needs a really impressive, central and suitable room which will, on its own merits, create a favourable impression, and he hopes the friends will bear this in mind, and at the earliest possible date get quarters that are not in a basement.

As to attracting the youth; there must be a great number of serious-minded people coming back to civilian life. Of course youth attracts youth, and if once an active nucleus of young Bahá'ís could be formed, and conduct their own meetings no doubt they would soon get others interested.

### Letter of 4 March 1946

He (the Guardian) was very sorry to hear that ... has left the Cause, and suggests that you point out to her, and to any other of the friends who are confused and upset over this matter, that the Manifestation of God only gives us teachings and instructions designed for our good and protection, and that if each person reserves the right to obey his own conscience, the logical

conclusion is we don't need any spiritual authority to guide and protect us, the authority of our own consciences is sufficient!

What 'Abdu'l-Bahá always pointed out in this matter is that these psychic powers were not to be used in this world, and that, indeed, it was dangerous to cultivate them here. They should be left dormant, and not exploited, even when we do so with the sincere belief we are helping others. We do not understand their nature and have no way of being sure of what is true and what is false in such matters.

If children are inclined to be psychic they should not be blamed for it too harshly, they should not be encouraged to strengthen their powers in this direction.

People who do not feel they can obey or accept the Teachings on a subject cannot be considered Bahá'ís, voting or otherwise. If a time comes when they feel ready to surrender their opinions to One we believe divinely guided, they should be joyously welcomed back into the Faith.

P.S. These friends you mention are being upset over this question should realise that if they reserve the right to disregard the Teachings on one subject, they must give the same right to other Bahá'ís, and obviously there can be no unity or strength in a Faith composed of individuals who only believe in part and not all of it. We must never prefer our wills to the Will of God.

#### Letter of 19 March 1946

The Bahá'ís should refrain from signing petitions designed to bring pressure on the Government which may have any political character whatsoever. There are so many other people who can carry on progressive types of activity, but only the Bahá'ís can do the work of Bahá'u'lláh...

#### Letter of 21 May 1946

Keeping the Fast is enjoined upon all Bahá'ís, regardless of nationality; it has a very salutary effect both physically and spiritually, and the friends should realise Bahá'u'lláh never would have instituted it if it were detrimental to the health. The Master referred to the Fast in talks to pilgrims, and some Tablets, but most material on this subject is not yet translated.

#### Letter of 20 November 1946

The Master unceasingly emphasised the importance of unity among the friends, and, if anything, it is of even greater importance in this present chaotic state of the world than it was in His days. The people are longing for an example — proof that harmony and love can actually exist in a community — and it is one of the primary duties of the Bahá'ís to demonstrate these great principles in their relations with each other.

### Letter of 15 February 1947

Philosophy, as you will study it and later teach it, is certainly not one of the sciences that begins and ends in words. Fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-splitting is meant, not a sound branch of learning like philosophy.

We have no historical proof of the truth of the Master's statement regarding the Greek philosophers visiting the Holy Land, etc. but such proof may come to light through research in the future.

As regards your own studies: he would advise you not to devote too much of your time to the abstract side of philosophy, but rather to approach it from a more historical angle. As to correlating philosophy with the Bahá'í teachings; this is a tremendous work which scholars in the future can undertake. We must remember that not only are all the teachings not yet translated into English, but they are not even all collected yet. Many important Tablets may still come to light which are at present owned privately.

### Letter of 18 February 1947

He (the Guardian) wishes he more often got such glad news in one letter! It seems that at last the Cause in England is really getting into its stride, and that the British community of believers are beginning to show forth the fruits of the many blessings showered on them — for England was one of the first countries of the West to hear the Divine Message, and was blessed by two visits from the Centre of the Covenant! Surely the older Bahá'ís must be astonished to see new centres springing up in a matter of months after years of an almost static condition! It shows that wherever and whenever the friends arise to serve, the mysterious power latent in this Divine Cause rushes in to bless and reinforce their labours far beyond their fondest hopes.

He is very happy to hear you are established as a pioneer, with a business of your own, and you may be sure he will pray for your material as well as spiritual success in this goal town....

### Letter of 27 September 1947

There is no objection to children who are as yet unable to memorise a whole prayer learning certain sentences only.

He (the Guardian) does not feel that the friends should make a practice of saying grace or of teaching it to children. This is not part of the Bahá'í Faith, but a Christian practice, and as the Cause embraces members of all religions we should be careful not to introduce into it the customs of our previous beliefs. Bahá'u'lláh has given us the obligatory prayers, also prayers before sleeping, for travellers, etc., we should not introduce a new set of prayers He has not specified, when He has given us already so many for so many occasions....

### Letter of 27 September 1947

He (the Guardian) does not feel you should permit your speech impediment to give you a sense of inferiority. Moses stammered! And what you are and what you believe as a Bahá'í give you a tremendous advantage over others. This does not mean that you should not make every effort to overcome it, and go to doctors for advice and assistance. He also assures you he will pray that you may overcome this difficulty entirely, also that wherever you are the way will open for you to teach and serve the Faith.

### Letter of 13 October 1947

Regarding your own condition: he (the Guardian) strongly urges you not to dwell on yourself. Each one of us, if we look into our failures, is sure to feel unworthy and despondent, and this feeling only frustrates our constructive efforts and wastes time. The thing for us to focus on is the glory of the Cause and the Power of Bahá'u'lláh which can make of a mere drop a surging sea! You certainly have no right to feel negative; you have embraced this glorious Faith and arisen with devotion to serve it, and your labours are greatly appreciated by both the Guardian and your fellow-Bahá'ís. With something as positive as the Faith and all it teaches behind you, you should be a veritable lion of confidence, and he will pray that you may become so.

There is, unfortunately, no way that one can force his own good upon a man. The element of free will is there and all we believers — and even the Manifestation of God Himself — can do is to offer the truth to mankind. If the people of the world persist, as they seem to be doing, in their blind materialism, they must bear the consequences in a prolongation of their present condition, and even a worsening of it. Our duty as Bahá'ís is to build up such a love and unity within our own ranks that the people will be attracted by this example to the Cause. We also must teach all we can and strengthen the Bahá'í community in the Administration. But more we cannot do to avert the great sufferings which seemingly still lie ahead of the world in its present evil state.

### Letter of 14 October 1947

Summer School is, indeed, a wonderful experience, for at the present time it is the only institution that affords the Bahá'ís of England an opportunity of all living together, for however short a time, as a community, and this and the spirit it engenders, has a very inspiring affect.

### Letter of 19 October 1947

He (the Guardian) does not feel that it is desirable to lay down any conditions for giving to the Bahá'í Fund. This is an entirely personal matter, and each believer must act according to his own judgment and the needs of the Faith. In times of crisis, whether in the affairs of the Cause or in one's own family, people naturally behave differently from under normal circumstances. But decisions in these matters must rest with each individual Bahá'í.

Generally speaking the secretary of an assembly must be careful to convey exactly what the majority decision or advice of the body was. There can surely be no objection to his putting it in

proper terms and clarifying the matter according to the decision or instruction of the assembly. But he should of course not introduce his personal views unless endorsed by the assembly.

The nature of assembly minutes is a matter for the body itself to decide. Naturally all important subjects brought up and notes must be recorded, but how detailed the record must be is for the members themselves to decide.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said we must sacrifice the important for the most important. The most important thing now for the English Bahá'ís is to accomplish their Plan. The sacrifice of other activities, cultural or otherwise, is not of very much importance compared to their goal. They can always return, when they have more time, to such pursuits. To serve any great Cause or purpose requires sacrifice....

Bahá'u'lláh is not the intermediary between other Manifestations and God. Each has His own relation to the Primal Source. But in the sense that Bahá'u'lláh is the greatest Manifestation to yet appear, the One who consummates the Revelation of Moses, He was the One Moses conversed with in the Burning Bush. In other words, Bahá'u'lláh identifies the glory of the God-Head on that occasion with Himself. No distinction can be made amongst the Prophets in the sense that They all proceed from one Source, and are of one essence. But Their stations and functions in this world are different.

#### Letter of 4 March 1948

It is not surprising, in view of the gloom overhanging the entire world, and in conjunction with their run-down, exhausted state due to war conditions and present circumstances of life in England, that the British Bahá'ís should sometimes reflect the state of their countrymen! It is a pity, and they should certainly try, as believers, to be cheerful and radiant; but he (the Guardian) feels the greatest sympathy for them, and considers that when their present achievements are assessed in future, people will give them a double measure of praise for having done so much when they were least fit to do it. The spirit of determination, and their perseverance, are truly outstanding.

Just because some people have lost their vision of the Cause, or never had a proper grasp of its implications before entering it, and leave the fold, should not cause undue discouragement. There are bound to be such cases, and although every moral support should be given them, if they still wish to withdraw, they fall off — as you said — like withered leaves from the Tree of the Faith, and do it no real harm.

He likes to be provided with facts by the friends, when they ask his advice, for although his decisions are guided by God, he is not, like the Prophet, omniscient at will, in spite of the fact that he often senses a situation or condition without having any detailed knowledge of it....

#### Letter of 26 March 1948

One of the greatest problems in the Cause is the relation of the believers to each other; for their immaturity (shared with the rest of humanity) and imperfections retard the work, create complications, and discourage each other. And yet we must put up with these things and try

and combat them through love, patience and forgiveness individually, and proper administrative action collectively.

### Letter of 8 April 1948

We Bahá'ís firmly believe that it is possible, if we have the right spirit, to make our stumbling blocks stepping-stones to progress. You have already, through at last facing yourself and acknowledging that you have both failed and erred in managing your life so far, set your feet on the right path. But now this new and spiritual condition in you is going to be proved — and the proving, the testing, will surely consist of the way you determine to take your punishment.

Life is based on laws: physical, man-made, and spiritual. As you have broken the laws of the society in which you live, you will have to stand up like a man and take your punishment. The spirit in which you do this is the most important thing, and constitutes a great opportunity for you. He (the Guardian) advises you to turn your face towards the future, to realise that when you are set free you have loving and helpful friends to go to, an upright job awaiting you, and you can also become active in serving our glorious Faith. So really everything lies before you. But at present, until your sentence is up, you must live within yourself in a way not to spoil the new future awaiting you. You must not become bitter — for after all you are only reaping what you planted. Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, through no crime of their own, spent the better part of their lives in exile and imprisoned, but they never became embittered although they were the victims of injustice. You, on the other hand, are the victim of injustice which you have inflicted on yourself — therefore you certainly have no right to be bitter towards the world.

He urges you to grasp firmly the teachings of our Faith, the love of your family and many Bahá'í friends, to put the past behind entirely, realising that it can do you no more harm; on the contrary, through changing you and making you spiritually aware, this very past can be a means of enriching your life in the future! He will certainly ardently pray for your happiness, your victory over yourself, and that you may become an exemplary and active Bahá'í.

### Letter of 9 June 1948

“Reciting” the Greatest Name means to repeat it over and over, silently or out loud...

The chairman of the local assembly is, if present, the logical and appropriate person to take charge of the consultation period between the assembly and the community members at the Nineteen Day Feast.

### Letter of 23 June 1948

He (the Guardian) encouraged him to face manfully the future, accept the legitimate sanction of society as punishment for his admittedly anti-social conduct, and realise that his very suffering, humiliation and punishment can — if he will let it — be the means of freeing him from many of his past weaknesses and mistakes, and making him a worthy member of society. He should look to the future, for there is in his power, with Bahá'u'lláh's help, to shape into a worthy and constructive way of life...

The English Bahá'ís did gloriously succeed after all! Hitching one's wagon to a star, however impractical it may seem, does bring results, for man, with God to help him, does possess strengths far beyond the mere materialist's ken!

As regards your question about p. 41, Kitáb-i-Íqán; to say that, after 622 A.D., Christendom was Islám in disguise is a little misleading. The Sun of Truth, after the advent of Muḥammad, no longer shone from the Christian horizon. Islám was, from then until the Báb's advent, the Path of Truth.

We should never insist on teaching those who are not really ready for the Cause. If a man is not hungry, you cannot make him eat. Among the Theosophists there are, no doubt, many receptive souls, but those who are satisfied should be just associated with in a friendly way, but let alone. Once a seeker comes to accept the concept of progressive religion, and accepts Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation for this day, the reincarnation concept will fade away in the light of truth; we should try and avoid controversial issues in the beginning if possible.

Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl was a very excellent and erudite Bahá'í teacher. Although he did err sometimes, yet in identifying Abraham with Zoroaster, he is not confusing the Prophet Abraham with the Prophet Zoroaster, as the name of Zoroaster was supposed to have been "Abram".

### Letter of 20 September 1948

He (the Guardian) is very happy indeed to see the change in your attitude and to hear that you are now not only a recognised member of our Faith, but a prospective Bahá'í pioneer!

It is quite natural for anyone, observing the present state of the world, to feel very depressed and apprehensive of the future. Any intelligent person must be wondering what you are wondering. It is indeed hard to see what lies ahead of us in the near future — but we, as Bahá'ís, unlike most people, have absolute assurance that the distant future is serene and bright. We do not know if there will be another Great War; what we do know is this: that unless people become spiritually awakened in time, great suffering, maybe in the form of war, will come upon them, for humanity must be unified, must be redeemed. If men refuse absolutely to take the easier road of faith, of seeking out God's Manifestation for this age and accepting Him, then they will bring upon themselves a fresh crisis in human affairs and very great affliction. What we, as Bahá'ís, must do is our duty; we cannot do other people's duty for them, alas, but we can fulfil our own sacred responsibilities by serving our fellow-men, living a Bahá'í life, teaching the Faith, and strengthening its budding world order.

He urges you, just as you have surmounted the crisis in your own life, through faith and courage, to now go out and serve the Cause with that same faith and courage. We must leave to God the final reckoning with His creatures today — but meantime we must give them His Message.

### Letter of 17 October 1948

The Cause in England seems, in spite of financial handicaps, to be going forward in Seven League boots. He (the Guardian) is truly proud of the British believers, and this is more than he



could say in the past, when the work for years seemed to be stagnating! Those days are now passed forever, he feels sure.

### Letter of 23 December 1948

He (the Guardian) is very glad to see you are now living the life of an active Bahá'í and keeping in close touch with dear ... who is a fine friend to have, with his devotion to the Cause and his optimism.

The Guardian urges you not to be discouraged by any setbacks you may have. Life is a process of trials and testings, and these are — contrary to what we are prone to thinking — good for us, and give us stamina, and teach us to rely on God. Knowing He will help us, we can help ourselves more.

He does not know how, in the present very chaotic state of the world, you could find just the kind of job you want of driving abroad. Positions are difficult to obtain and travel so complicated. Unless you can migrate out to Africa or Australia, in some regular government scheme, he would urge you to persevere in Great Britain and do the best you can. He urges you, in the next job you have, to pray whenever you feel the conditions at work are too much for you. You will find you are helped and strengthened and once you get established in some position you may work yourself up, or go on with good references to a better employment later on....

### Letter of 8 January 1949

The only people who are truly free of the “dross of self” are the Prophets, for to be free of one's ego is a hall-mark of perfection. We humans are never going to become perfect, for perfection belongs to a realm we are not destined to enter. However, we must constantly mount higher, seek to be more perfect.

The ego is the animal in us, the heritage of the flesh which is full of selfish desires. By obeying the laws of God, seeking to live the life laid down in our teachings, and prayer and struggle, we can subdue our egos. We call people “saints” who have achieved the highest degree of mastery over their egos.

There is no contradiction between Gleanings p. 66 and p.11. In one place He says the mirror will never be free from dross, in the other place He says it will be “so cleared as to be able” etc. It is a relative thing; perfection will never be reached, but great and ever greater, progress can be made.

The word “Guardian” in the Seven Valleys has no connection with the Bahá'í Guardianship.

The Qur'án should be to some extent studied by the Bahá'ís but they certainly need not seek to acquire a mastery over it, which would take years, unless they really want to. All Divine Revelation seems to have been thrown out in flashes. The Prophets never composed treatises.

That is why in the Qur'án and our own Writings different subjects are so often included in one Tablet. It pulsates, so to speak. That is why it is "Revelation".

Life is a constant struggle, not only against forces around us, but above all against our own ego. We can never afford to rest on our own oars, for if we do, we soon see ourselves carried down stream again. Many of those who drift away from the Cause do so for the reason that they had ceased to go on developing. They became complacent or indifferent, and consequently ceased to draw the spiritual strength and vitality from the Cause which they should have. Sometimes, of course, people fail because of a test they just do not meet, and often our severest tests come from each other. Certainly the believer should try to avert such things, and if they happen, remedy them through love. Generally speaking nine-tenths of the friends' troubles are because they don't do the Bahá'í thing, in relation to each other, to the administrative bodies or in their personal lives.

No doubt to the degree we Bahá'ís the world over strive to spread the Cause and live up to its teachings, there will be some mitigation of the suffering of the peoples of the world. But it seems apparent that the great failure to respond to Bahá'u'lláh's instructions, appeals and warnings issued in the 19th century, has now sent the world along a path, or released forces, which must culminate in a still more violent upheaval and agony. The thing is out of hand, so to speak, and it is too late to avert catastrophic trials.

You should never be too depressed about your dissatisfaction concerning not finding a job you like, a place in the world that fits you. If you analyse it this general sense of mis-fit is one of the curses of your generation, one of the products of the world's disequilibrium and chaos. It is not confined to your life, it is pretty general.

### Letter of 20 March 1949

He (the Guardian) fully realises that some decisions are very hard to take in life, and he urges you in this case to do two things: in the first place, are you quite sure two years voice-training will really carry you where you hope it will? In other words, he presumes that your teacher's opinion has been backed up by the opinion of other professionals? It would be a great pity to, in any way, sacrifice your service to the Cause for a career which in the end might not prove a substantial one. And in the second place he advises you to remain in ... and continue your studies (once you are quite assured about the outcome), providing the Plan does not reach such a critical point that it is imperative for you to go as a pioneer in order to really help save the situation. If this need arises in such urgency, he certainly feels you should temporarily give up your singing lessons, for, of course, no sacrifice is too great for the Cause. What we put into serving it we know serves a useful and worthy purpose, whereas the outcome of our struggles in life is never assured completely, and is certainly insignificant compared to the Faith's importance.

### Letter of 22 July 1949

The work on the Shrine — now beginning to rise visibly at the corners — and the spread of the Faith which brings many communications from new places, and many problems too, keeps us all busy as never before, especially the Guardian. But to see the course going ahead so fast fills

our hearts with gratitude and the work involved seems a small contribution to make to such a Holy Cause.

As regards to the question you asked me to put to the Guardian about the Aqdas and the House of Justice elections: as most of the laws of the Aqdas cannot at present be enforced anywhere he has not deemed it necessary or wise to translate and promulgate them. You can orally translate them for any of the believers anxious to know exactly what they are. The National Assemblies (or Houses of Justice) will elect directly the International House of Justice, but just what form this election will take must be decided in the future when the proper time comes. Neither the Master nor the Guardian have made any pronouncements about punishments stipulated in the Aqdas.

### Letter of 25 July 1949

There are no quotations from the Qur'án to support the Master's statement that European thinkers acknowledge the influence of Islám in shaping the thought of Europe. In the "Gleanings", page 95 (third printing Jan. 1943) Bahá'u'lláh says: — "Of old it has been revealed: Love of one's country is an element of the Faith of God!" Here Bahá'u'lláh is quoting not the Qur'án but an Islámic tradition, and it is this statement which the Guardian has used as the basis of his argument in the "Promised Day" that nationhood grew out of the direct influence of Muḥammad's teachings, and was one of the great contributions to mankind's evolution of Islám. The building up of nations came after Muḥammad, and was a step forward in the direction of a unified world which the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh has provided for.

### Letter of 22 October 1949

We must not only be patient with others, infinitely patient!, but also with our own poor selves, remembering that even the Prophets of God sometimes got tired and cried out in despair!

The end of the Plan is in view, and a long last push will, he sincerely hopes and believes, bring success and a breathing space.

Regarding your questions: it is not the City State, but the National State which Muḥammad's teachings fostered. Christ had nothing to do with the City State concept in any direct manner.

The 100 years respite is only the phrase used by the Guardian to convey the idea that for a 100 years or so the Cause had not been recognised. It draws no parallel between this century and the last one, nor does it imply a repetition of events.

The Hidden Words have no sequence. They are jewel-like thoughts sent out of the mind of the Manifestation of God to admonish and counsel men. Unfortunately Bahá'u'lláh was never asked, and never, as far as we know, stated, what the force was mentioned by Him in the "Epistle". There is nothing in the "Mysterious Forces of Civilization" implying that these great conquerors were not blood thirsty.

A healthy social life and Bahá'í work can go hand in hand, but not always in times of crisis, such as these days the Cause is passing through — and the world — when great sacrifice can alone meet the demands of the situation.

He urges you to persevere and add up your accomplishments, rather than to dwell on the dark side of things. Everyone's life has both a dark and bright side. The Master said: turn your back to the darkness and your face to Me.

### Letter of 18 February 1950

He (the Guardian) feels that if you consider it too much of a strain to keep the Fast you should not do so. Bahá'u'lláh has exempted people who are travellers at the time; if you could keep it the days you are not travelling, and thus partake of its bounty, it would be advisable, but it is not essential.

### Letter of 28 March 1950

The beloved Guardian, having been in touch with you by cable, and being more over-worked this year than ever, delayed answering. You know, from what you saw here, how inefficient — to under-state the matter — his servants are. The work at the Shrine has vastly increased and of necessity, for as the first part of the building will soon be finished, the grounds around it have been entirely remodelled to fit it better and show it off. All this he has been forced to superintend and plan personally. The attacks and status of the enemies you know about. So that in all he is very tired.

### Letter of 4 October 1950

We must never take one sentence in the Teachings and isolate it from the rest: it does not mean we must not love, but we must reach a spiritual plane where God comes first and great human passions are unable to turn us away from Him. All the time we see people who either through the force of hate or the passionate attachment they have to another person, sacrifice principle or bar themselves from the Path of God.

We know absence of light is darkness, but no one would assert darkness was not a fact. It exists even though it is only the absence of something else. So evil exists too, and we cannot close our eyes to it, even though it is a negative existence. We must seek to supplant it by good, and if we see an evil person is not influenceable by us, then we should shun his company for it is unhealthy.

We must love God, and in this state a general love for all men becomes possible. We cannot love each human being for himself, but our feeling towards humanity should be motivated by our love for the Father who created all men.

The Bahá'í Faith teaches man was always potentially man, even when passing through lower stages of evolution. Because he has more powers, and subtler powers than the animal, when he turns towards evil he becomes more vicious than an animal because of these very powers.

Many Theosophists accept Bahá'u'lláh as a Prophet, but we have no special relation to theosophy. It would seem that the Master had some special reason for not mentioning Bahá'u'lláh specifically in His talk to the Theosophists in Budapest. What it was we do not know, but we can assume His great tact and wisdom impelled Him not to on that occasion.

### Letter of 20 October 1950

He (the Guardian) feels that in as far as possible the African pioneers should seek to get a job which will take them to one of the countries chosen and ensure employment for them there. It does not seem wise or necessary for a Bahá'í to stress the fact he or she is going to teach. A person's religion is their own business, and they can talk about it privately as much as they like without neglecting their employer's work.

Also, he feels no rules can be laid down about how to teach. Usually one teaches those receptive souls one finds. The same should apply to the beginning of the work in Africa. Any direct teaching work with the more primitive tribes would have to be done after finding out the best and most tactful way of doing it. The first step is to get to Africa, and, in view of the cost involved, and the state of the Fund, the pioneers should make every effort to get sent out there or at least get employment after arriving, thus relieving the Bahá'í Fund as much as possible. If this fails, then of course all the expense will have to be paid by the Fund.

### Letter of 11 January 1951

You have voiced the same suffering, the sign of the same mystery, as has been voiced by almost all those who have been called upon to serve God. Even the Prophets of God, we know, suffered agony when the Spirit of God descended on Them and commanded Them to arise and preach. Look at Moses saying, "I am a stutterer!". Look at Muḥammad rolled in His rug in agony! The Guardian himself suffered terribly when he learned he was the one who had been made the Guardian.

So you see your sense of inadequacy, your realisation of your own unworthiness is not unique at all. Many, from the Highest to the humblest have had it. Now the wisdom of it is this: it is such seemingly weak instruments that demonstrate that God is the Power achieving the victories and not men. If you were a wealthy, prominent, strong individual who knew all about Africa and looked upon going out there as fun, any service you render, and victories you have, would be laid to your personality, not to the Cause of God! But because the reverse is true, your services will be a witness to the Power of Bahá'u'lláh and Truth of His Faith.

Rest assured, dear sister, you will ever-increasingly be sustained, and you will find joy and strength given to you, and God will reward you. You will pass through these dark hours triumphant. The first Bahá'í going on such an historic mission could not but suffer — but the compensation will be great....

### Letter of 10 February 1951

Whenever you see tremendous personal problems in your private lives, such as those the parents of ... have been called upon to face, you must remember that these afflictions are part of human life; and, according to our teachings one of their wisdoms is to teach us the impermanence of this world and the permanence of the spiritual bonds that we establish with God, His Prophet, and those who are alive in the faith of God. You must always remember that the Manifestations of God, Themselves, were not immune to suffering of the most human nature; and that from the hands of their relatives, they drank the bitterest potions, Bahá'u'lláh even being proffered poison by His half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá. Beside their afflictions, our afflictions, however terrible for us, must seem small in comparison.

Regarding your personal affairs, the Guardian will pray that your cherished hopes may be fulfilled; and that the way may open, if you both desire it, for you to serve together the Faith you are so deeply attached to. Never lose heart, and always remember that the power in this Cause is of a nature not understood or accessible to those who have not our faith in Bahá'u'lláh.

### Letter of 30 August 1951

The progress being made in Africa is truly miraculous, as if a special benediction from on High is being extended to this work... He (the Guardian) feels sure that the work in Uganda will now go forward rapidly. The news from Dar is wonderful too... The racial question all over Africa is very acute, but, while being wise and tactful, believers must realise that their standard is far from that of the white colonials. They have not gone there to uphold the white man's supremacy, but to give the Cause of God to, primarily, the black man whose home is Africa.

### Letter of 11 November 1951

Many times the young Bahá'ís these days seem to be living the lives of soldiers, and in a way the pioneers are the soldiers of Bahá'u'lláh, going out to plant the banner of His dominion in far corners of the earth!

### Letter of 5 October 1952

What the Master meant in the words you quoted is simply that joy gives one more freedom to create; if the Prophets, the Master Himself, and the Guardian, had less problems and worries, They could give forth a great deal more creatively to the Cause. When He said that "grow to be as a fruitful tree" he meant that, by lifting burdens from the Guardian and trying as much as possible to do our share of the work of the Faith, we would help Shoghi Effendi to develop his full powers as Guardian and, through the Covenant, the Cause would spread its shadow over all men. This we have seen happen in the last 30 years, but that does not mean we must not try to our utmost to help him by our lives and our services.

Teaching is an individual matter; one has to sense when it is right to go further in revealing the Source of our Message; no rules exist, really, for such things.

### Letter of 3 March 1955

As we almost never attain any spiritual goal without seeing the next goal we must attain still beyond our reach, he urges you, who have come so far already on the path of spirituality, not to fret about the distance you still have to cover! It is an indefinite journey, and, no doubt in the next world the soul is privileged to draw closer to God than is possible when bound on this physical plane.

### Letter of 6 March 1955

As regards the questions you have asked, as Bahá'u'lláh says categorically that God commanded Abraham to offer up Ismá'íl, as far as we are concerned, it is Ismá'íl who was the intended sacrifice.

In view of the great antiquity of Genesis, it is quite possible that at some period the names were changed, and the error was propagated.

Whatever happened, we Bahá'ís must follow the words in our own Scriptures as being the most authentic.

In the Tablet of the Holy Mariner, the Youth means Bahá'u'lláh, Himself.

### Letter of 12 January 1957

In the Bahá'í Teachings it is made quite clear that when one is ill, one should seek the best available medical advice. This naturally leaves a person free to choose what they consider good in medical opinion. If you and ... feel that she is improving under the care of your own doctor, and ... is willing to wait and be patient and see if she goes on making progress, there can surely be no objection to her doing this. There are a great many as you know mental diseases and troubles at present, and the one thing Bahá'ís must not do is take a defeatist attitude toward them. The power in the Faith is such that it can sustain us on a much higher level in spite of whatever our ailments might be than other people who are denied it. This however does not mean that we should ignore medical opinion and treatment. On the contrary, we should do our best to procure the opinion of specialists and competent doctors.

### Letter of 15 August 1957

You should not allow the remarks made by the Bahá'ís to hurt or depress you, but should forget the personalities, and arise to do all you can, yourself, to teach the Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh enjoins work on all. No one need ever be ashamed of his job.

### “Their Daily Sustenance”

In his last message to the British Bahá'í community as a whole the Guardian wrote:



May they, as they forge ahead along the high road leading to ultimate, total and complete victory, receive as their daily sustenance, a still fuller measure of the abounding grace, promised to the believers of an earlier generation by the Centre of the Covenant, the Author of the Divine Plan, Himself, on the occasion of His twice-repeated visit to their shores, and which has been unfailingly vouchsafed to themselves, in the course of over three decades, since the birth of the Formative Age of the Faith and the rise of its Administrative Order in their homeland.

Shoghi

