

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

7 July 1976

[To an individual]

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice received your letter of May 15 conveying your thoughts on the need for Bahá'ís to become involved as may be necessary in political affairs and to participate in activities aimed at the eradication of injustice. The sincerity which prompted you to write such a letter and to candidly express your sentiments deeply touched the Universal House of Justice. We have been asked to convey its comments to you.

You ask if silence on the part of Bahá'ís will not allow chaos and human humiliation to be a permanent feature on earth, and state that shunning of politics by the Bahá'ís can but weaken the freedom fighters of the world. When viewing the conditions of our society we see a world beset by ills and groaning under the burden of suffering. This suffering, Bahá'u'lláh has Himself testified, is because the "body" of the world, "though created whole and perfect, has been afflicted, through divers causes, with grave ills and maladies," and "its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of unskilled physicians who have spurred on the steed of their worldly desires and have erred grievously." Bahá'u'lláh's statement in this passage concludes with the assertion that the "sovereign remedy" lies in turning and submitting to the "skilled," the "all-powerful," and "inspired Physician. This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error."

This Divine Physician has assured us in His writings that God is All-Seeing and All-Knowing and has willed to establish in this Day and among men His everlasting Kingdom. "The whole earth," Bahá'u'lláh has stated, "is now in a state of pregnancy. The day is approaching when it will have yielded its noblest fruits, when from it will have sprung forth the loftiest trees, the most enchanting blossoms, the most heavenly blessings." In order to achieve this purpose God sent us the spirit and message of the New Day through two successive Manifestations, both of Whom the generality of mankind have rejected, and have, alas, preferred to continue in their own blindness and perversity. Commenting on such a world spectacle, Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead." "After a time," He further wrote, "all the governments on earth will change. Oppression will envelop the world. And following a universal convulsion, the sun of justice will rise from the horizon of the unseen realm."

When we turn to His other writings to learn more of His warning that this "present-day order" is to be "rolled up," we read statements and predictions such as these: "The time for the destruction of the world and its people hath arrived." "The hour is approaching when the most great convulsion will have appeared." "The promised day is come, the day when tormenting trials will have surged above your heads, and beneath your feet, saying: 'Taste ye what your hands have wrought!'" "Soon shall the blasts of His chastisement beat upon you and the dust of hell enshroud you." "And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake." "The day is approaching when its [civilization's] flame will devour the cities, when the Tongue of Grandeur will proclaim: 'The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Praised!'" "The day is approaching when the wrathful anger of the Almighty will have taken hold of them. He, verily, is the Omnipotent, the All-Subduing, the Most Powerful. He shall cleanse the earth from the defilement of their corruption, and shall give it for an heritage unto such of His servants as are nigh unto Him."

From the above it becomes clear that the Hand of Providence is at work, and is engaged in fulfilling God's purpose for mankind in this Age. "God's purpose," Shoghi Effendi assures us, "is

none other than to usher in, in ways He alone can bring about, and the full significance of which He alone can fathom, the Great, the Golden Age of a long-divided, a long-afflicted humanity. Its present state, indeed even its immediate future, is dark, distressingly dark. Its distant future, however, is radiant, gloriously radiant—so radiant that no eye can visualize it.”

Let us consider the First World War, which Shoghi Effendi has described in his writings as “the first stage in a titanic convulsion long predicted by Bahá’u’lláh.” Although it ended outwardly in a Treaty of Peace, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked: “Peace, Peace, the lips of potentates and peoples unceasingly proclaim, whereas the fire of unquenched hatreds still smolders in their hearts.” And then in 1920, He wrote: “The ills from which the world now suffers will multiply; the gloom which envelops it will deepen.” And again: “another war, fiercer than the last, will assuredly break out.” After this Second World War broke out in 1939, Shoghi Effendi called it a “tempest, unprecedented in its violence,” and the “great and mighty wind of God invading the remotest and fairest regions of the earth.” After the termination of this War and the creation of the United Nations, the Guardian wrote in 1948, anticipating “still more violent convulsions” and referred to the “wings of yet another conflict” destined to “darken the international horizon.” And finally in his last *Riḍván* Message of April 1957, he left for posterity the following analysis of world conditions in the light of the prophecies and predictions recorded in the writings of the Faith:

Indeed, as we gaze in retrospect beyond the immediate past, and survey, in however cursory a manner, the vicissitudes afflicting an increasingly tormented society, and recall the strains and stresses to which the fabric of a dying Order has been increasingly subjected, we cannot but marvel at the sharp contrast presented, on the one hand, by the accumulated evidences of the orderly unfoldment, and the uninterrupted multiplication of the agencies, of an Administrative Order designed to be the harbinger of a world civilization, and, on the other, by the ominous manifestations of acute political conflict, of social unrest, of racial animosity, of class antagonism, of immorality and of irreligion, proclaiming, in no uncertain terms, the corruption and obsolescence of the institutions of a bankrupt Order.

Against the background of these afflictive disturbances—the turmoil and tribulations of a travailing age—we may well ponder the portentous prophecies uttered well-nigh four score years ago, by the Author of our Faith, as well as the dire predictions made by Him Who is the unerring Interpreter of His teachings, all foreshadowing a universal commotion, of a scope and intensity unparalleled in the annals of mankind.

The violent derangement of the world’s equilibrium; the trembling that will seize the limbs of mankind; the radical transformation of human society; the rolling up of the present-day Order; the fundamental changes affecting the structure of government; the weakening of the pillars of religion; the rise of dictatorships; the spread of tyranny; the fall of monarchies; the decline of ecclesiastical institutions; the increase of anarchy and chaos; the extension and consolidation of the Movement of the Left; the fanning into flame of the smoldering fire of racial strife; the development of infernal engines of war; the burning of cities; the contamination of the atmosphere of the earth—these stand out as the signs and portents that must either herald or accompany the retributive calamity which, as decreed by Him Who is the Judge and Redeemer of mankind, must, sooner or later, afflict a society which, for the most part, and for over a century, has turned a deaf ear to the Voice of God’s Messenger in this day—a calamity which must purge the human race of the dross of its age-long corruptions, and weld its component parts into a firmly knit world-embracing Fellowship ...

Thus we see how the Divine Physician is both the “Judge” of mankind and its “Redeemer.”

This same Physician, addressing His followers, “the beloved of the one true God,” wrote: “Forbear ye from concerning yourselves with the affairs of this world and all that pertaineth unto it, or from meddling with the activities of those who are its outward leaders. The one true God, exalted be His glory, hath bestowed the government of the earth upon the kings. To none is given

the right to act in any manner that would run counter to the considered views of them who are in authority.”

In another Tablet He laid on His followers the obligation to “behave towards the government of the country in which they reside with loyalty, honesty and truthfulness.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reaffirmed the same principles. When in America He explained: “The essence of the Bahá’í spirit is that, in order to establish a better social order and economic condition, there must be allegiance to the laws and principles of government.” And in a Tablet He referred to the “irrefutable command that the Blessed Perfection hath given” in His Tablets, namely, “that the believers must obey the kings with the utmost sincerity and fidelity, and He hath forbidden them [the believers] to interfere at all with political problems. He hath even prohibited the believers from discussing political affairs.”

And finally in His last Will and Testament He wrote: “We must obey and be the well-wishers of the government of the land ...”

We have also been asked to share with you at this juncture the following two extracts from letters written by the Universal House of Justice, and it is hoped these will help you in appreciating the significant and vital role Bahá’ís can and must play in the world today:

We are told by Shoghi Effendi that two great processes are at work in the world: the great Plan of God, tumultuous in its progress, working through mankind as a whole, tearing down barriers to world unity and forging humankind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and experience. This process will produce in God’s due time, the Lesser Peace, the political unification of the world. Mankind at that time can be likened to a body that is unified but without life. The second process, the task of breathing life into this unified body—of creating true unity and spirituality culminating in the Most Great Peace—is that of the Bahá’ís, who are laboring consciously, with detailed instructions and continuing divine guidance, to erect the fabric of the Kingdom of God on earth, into which they call their fellowmen, thus conferring upon them eternal life.

The working out of God’s Major Plan proceeds mysteriously in ways directed by Him alone, but the Minor Plan that He has given us to execute, as our part in His grand design for the redemption of mankind, is clearly delineated. It is to this work that we must devote all our energies, for there is no one else to do it....

—

... Bahá’ís are often accused of holding aloof from the “real problems” of their fellowmen. But when we hear this accusation let us not forget that those who make it are usually idealistic materialists to whom material good is the only “real” good, whereas we know that the working of the material world is merely a reflection of spiritual conditions and until the spiritual conditions can be changed there can be no lasting change for the better in material affairs.

We should also remember that most people have no clear concept of the sort of world they wish to build, nor how to go about building it. Even those who are concerned to improve conditions are therefore reduced to combating every apparent evil that takes their attention. Willingness to fight against evils, whether in the form of conditions or embodied in evil men, has thus become for most people the touchstone by which they judge a person’s moral worth. Bahá’ís, on the other hand, know the goal they are working towards and know what they must do, step by step, to attain it. Their whole energy is directed towards the building of the good, a good which has such a positive strength that in the face of it the multitude of evils—which are in essence negative—will fade away and be no more. To enter into the quixotic tournament of demolishing one by one the evils in the world is, to a Bahá’í, a vain waste of

time and effort. His whole life is directed towards proclaiming the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, reviving the spiritual life of his fellowmen, uniting them in a divinely-created World Order, and then, as the Order grows in strength and influence, he will see the power of that Message transforming the whole human society and progressively solving the problems and removing the injustices which have so long bedeviled the world.

You have asked whether it is possible to have a World Federation when not all countries have attained their independence. The answer is in the negative. Both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi likened the emergence of the American Republic and the unification of the "diversified and loosely related elements" of its "divided" community into one national entity, to the unity of the world and the incorporation of its federated units into "one coherent system." Just as the American Constitution does not allow one state to be more autonomous than another, so must the nations of the world enjoy equal status in any form of World Federation. Indeed one of the "candles" of unity anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá is "unity in freedom."

Yet another question is whether it is morally right to remain silent when equality is being abused. The beloved Guardian has given us the following guidelines in letters written on his behalf. "Much as the friends must guard against in any way ever seeming to identify themselves or the Cause with any political party, they must also guard against the other extreme of never taking part with other progressive groups, in conferences or committees designed to promote some activity in entire accord with our teachings—such as, for instance, better race relations."

The Universal House of Justice hopes that you and your Bahá'í coworkers in that land will steep yourselves in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, endeavor to follow in your personal lives the noble standards set by Him, attract the multitudes to the radiance of His glorious Faith, and enable them to warm their hearts and ignite their souls with the flames of that undying Fire which "blazeth and rageth in the world of creation."

We have been asked by the Universal House of Justice to assure you of its prayers on your behalf in the Holy Shrines.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat