

Address to the Baha'is of Los Angeles, California

July 12, 1954

by Mrs. Amelia Collins

To Emma Jones, 1954

This is my blessing. I look around and see so many new faces, and that's the most wonderful thing today. I hardly know where to begin. I come so recently from Haifa and our beloved Guardian is very much concerned. I don't want to make that the most prominent note, but I think we all together here we consider what we can do to relieve our beloved Guardian's anxiety and to make him happy. He turned to Mr. Remy and me shortly before we left there, and said, "I have said all I can to the friends at this point. I have urged them; long have encouraged them; I have now every pilgrim who has come and have sent back messages urging them of this very, very vital day and grave crises facing us, and now I want to see what the two hands of the Cause can do." So please don't let the Guardian down and don't let the Hands down.

There is really nothing I can say that you are not familiar with, but the Guardian continually tells us that we do not study the Teachings enough. We do not consider his letters as seriously as we should. He feels with many of the believers that they hear his letters read at the nineteen day Feast, and this, perhaps, is the only time they see his letters of communication, but this is not enough. He feels the same way about our Teachings. We do not read through enough; we do not pray enough, we do not meditate enough.

I have heard since I got back to this country and met with a few of the friends that there is a feeling of panic about the situation ahead of us. That is too bad, and I hope that it will never reach the Guardian. Why should any of us be in panic? With our background as Christians, we know that we were warned of the day that was coming as early as the Disciples. They asked Jesus when these calamities were coming and He pointed out to them where they could read about it. Then we were blessed with Abdul-Baha's interpretation of these things. He gave a blueprint so clear and definite. Then our beloved Guardian came into the picture and from his first letter of 1926 or 1927 he pointed out so clear what our work was ahead of us and also the calamities that were coming. Very definitely he quoted Baha'u'llah and he has carried us right along very courageously, very firmly, very lovingly, but he hasn't minced words at all. Now we find ourselves in a panic, and this must not be. If I can just assure you of the Guardian's loving care and his solicitude and his longing to have us all arise--every single believer--and that doesn't mean leaving the community entirely. First, he says every believer in America has a part to play in this. It doesn't matter whether it's a large part or a small part. Are we going to arise and fill our mission now? Fulfill it? Are we going to sit back and think that it's too much for us to do? All along the line we will find something to do, but we have to be prepared. We have to now stand as Baha'is before the suffering humanity that will come before us at any time. It's here now, but humanity is not conscious of it, but when that time does come they must see so clearly that we are definitely different from the rest of humanity. This we must keep before us at every moment at this present time.

Shoghi Effendi has spoken so much about the cities. I found this among my notes and papers that were taken some time ago in Haifa. At this particular evening Shoghi Effendi said, "This is the time for the scattering mentioned by Abdul-Baha. Go to the country. "Now, that doesn't mean that we

are going out to the farm, by any means. "Build isolated believers into Groups. Build Groups into Assemblies. When an Assembly of fifteen has come into existence, move to the country again. Disperse." It is not necessary to pick large goal cities; it is easier to teach in smaller cities, even villages. Shoghi Effendi had a great deal to say about that. He speaks of the materialistic situation in all the cities. They are dead, he says, It is absolutely impossible for a teacher to teach in any of the cities today. They must get out and teach. If Baha'is now I don't want you to misunderstand me there, because these are the things that seem to come up-ever one, Shoghi Effendi considers a teacher according to his capacity. He doesn't mean that every one is to get out of the cities. It is going to be a very great and difficult task. He says at the moment it's impossible, but that will not last because- we are going to have a calamity that will bring humanity to it's knees. Then we are going to have our opportunity to teach in the cities. If Baha'is in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Milwaukee, and so forth, left the cities and went to new areas, think of what would be accomplished in one year! When we read the report that there are 250 or 300 believers in a community and we don't have the results that we should, it's because of the environment. Everything around the cities today makes it impossible to make many Baha'is. I have been thrilled at what has happened here, but even so, we should bring in new friends in the masses, and that will come, too. The Guardian will guarantee that the Administrative Order will not be hurt by arising and serving, there will be others to take the place.

Shoghi Effendi is not as happy as he should be about America. I would not say this. I don't like to say these things, but Shoghi Effendi says. "Use powerful language; stir the friends; say what I have said." Everywhere in the Teachings Shoghi Effendi continually spoke of the cities, so I think we should try to keep that in mind. Definitely that from our cities we are to scatter. Not where we have or are going to endanger an Assembly that we labored for years to bring to gether. I can't believe, now Shoghi Effendi I'm not using his words right at this moment, and I told the Assembly that yesterday, but that does not make sense, and I do feel that the Guardian would support this, but after all it's my own thought. He has agonized so. His suffering just terrible to see. When he came in and had had the report from the Convention and heard how many Assemblies had gone back to Group status, and the virgin States that were lost, and then, of course, he began to speak a great deal about the home front. So we must keep that in mind. We can move many who couldn't get far away, who could live in one place, it seems to me, just as well as another. Of course, everything when we stir ourselves and make great changes-and I can speak of that personally-, isn't easy, but we are not supposed to have an easy time, the Baha'is. They are supposed to have the harder the time-the better for them. If only the believers could get together, all of you, and put your cards on the table and say, "Well, this is the time we can go to this place and fill in where there are not fifteen." Not to endanger any of the tiny communities. Right from the Los Angeles community, it seems to me, that is what should be done the very first thing, and it should be done right away. Don't think anything about it but get together, have that kind of a meeting and each one come with the thought that he has something to offer in making a change, in filling in where the need is great.

Here I have something that I jotted down once again. Shoghi Effendi says "The great cities are doomed. They must have this lesson, that they can only learn in this way. This is the only way that humanity can become amalgamated, the only way that they will be welded." Shoghi Effendi likened it to the

bringing forth of a child. He says that the mother suffers birth pangs but she knows the result. Humanity will suffer birth pangs, but only the Baha'is know the results. They know that a new World Order will be born out of this.

Shoghi Effendi spoke much of our simpler lives. That we just must throw away the things that we think today are essential. If we will analyze them, we will find that they are not so important. He spoke of reading too. Much of our reading should be ~~ixix~~ eliminated. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Our newspapers and our magazines must be thrown in the wastebasket, because there is not time today. We need every moment we have to study the Teachings.

He spoke of America of being the most disturbed Nation on the earth, and so we are the most blessed, because we are the ones who are really going to rise up humanity to a feeling of hope. He says that life in the great cities fascinates too much. The Baha'is, now he speaks of humanity generally, but he says we become involved in it too; that we, too, reflect this atmosphere. We must purify ourselves and realize that we just can't be mediocre. It isn't enough to just be different from the rest of humanity, but we must be outstandingly different. He said that ultimately it was only the spirituality that would count. It would be between the Individual and God, that he could not create the spirit. Shoghi Effendi needs the tools and when he has the tools he will advise, he will direct, he will use them, but he has to have the proper tools and it is our responsibility to develop those tools. I don't like to repeat so many of these things because I know the returning pilgrims have brought you so much, but I wanted to tell you that this is the Guardian's heart, very much, but at the same time his love is so great, and as his longing is heart-rending to see when he speaks of what he hopes the friend will do, how they will arise in this day, because he wants them to fulfill their mission. He wants each one to really benefit by what we have in our Baha'i Faith today. That is the way the Guardian looks upon all this. We don't have to go about anything with any doubt or misgiving, because we have had the blueprint from the very beginning. We have the Charter and we have the Guardian, an incomparable Guardian, who is standing right by. Baha'u'llah has given us such marvelous promises, that we shouldn't be the least fearful. I only hope that I will never hear- in connection with anyone- the word panic because that is not in the Baha'i vocabulary.

Q. How has the Guardian approached things in the time of turmoil? Many of the friends feel-why work so hard if they are batting their heads against a stone wall?

A. The Guardian has set such a wonderful example. The Guardian is creating all the time. Four years ago when I first went over there, he talked a great deal about the conditions in the world, not the Baha'i conditions, but the conditions in the world. He said. "So many times I'm criticised here for having gone ahead with the developments when the country is in such turmoil, and in such sore need of finances. I directed the E.T.C. to go ~~XXXXXX~~ ahead; go to Europe, and have had all their goal countries where they worked. What would have happened if I had said to myself, 'Now I'll just have to wait until things settle a little, until things clear, then we'll start this work.' He does that with everything, with the developments there. We know that we may have very many great upheavals and disturbance there, too, but Shoghi Effendi is ordering things right along. The developments are going along and people comment all the time, "But why does Shoghi Effendi do this?" It was the same with our Temple. All the work that had to be done on it during the war, but you see we didn't stop. It is God's plan that all ~~these~~ these things will unfold, but we have to do

our part; and that is what the Guardian does. He never ceases. His labors are so remarkable. We know that if he was not in the Hands of God the way he is, he couldn't accomplish what he's doing. No human frame could stand it, but that is our example. We have to labor unceasingly this day and it should be our only thought. We hear about needing amusement, and needing this and needing that, but this is the day such as the world has never had, and the little handful of Baha'is are the ones who are to do this terrific, terrific task. They have Baha'u'llah in back of them, - but they have to do their part. We all have to just start trying and giving every minute of our time, our thoughts, and our prayers to this big task that is right here now.

In back of it have a pure heart. I couldn't help but recall the Guardian's expression of love and admiration every time he would speak of Marian Jack. Letters had to be sent to her occasionally-and to see the satisfaction on his face, his smile, that is priceless-was always called forth when he spoke of Marian Jack. So, you see, we are not left without a pattern in any phase of our work. We have Marian Jack, a pattern, for one to go out. Shoghi Effendi said she was very, very humble, but she was absolutely dedicated. That is what the Baha'is need today as they have never needed it. We have had all these years to prepare ourselves with all the literature of "The Promised Day is Come, Advent of Divine Justice," Abdul-Baha's Tablets, and we all have failed to study as much as we should. Let us just start right away and give every minute of our time to these books, and there we will see what is before us and not get panicky about it. I don't suppose any one of you in this room is ~~panicky~~ panicky- but at the same time I have heard quite a little about it in Chicago and different places and it made a great impression upon me. I just couldn't see the reason for panic.

Shoghi Effendi said to me not to forget "to give my deepest love to all the friends everywhere."

Taken from typed copy of notes as given by tape recording.
July 19, 1954
Mildred Bates
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