

Compilation on the Subject of Youth

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I.

Extracts From The Writings Of Bahá'u'lláh

1. Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord of the beginning and of the end, and adorn his heart with His love. The manifestation of such a grace is greater than the creation of the heavens and of the earth. Blessed are the steadfast and well is it with those who are firm.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

II.

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

2. It is incumbent upon the youth to walk in the footsteps of Hakim¹ and to be trained in his ways, for such important souls as he and his like have now ascended to the Kingdom of Abhá. The youth must grow and develop and take the place of their fathers, that this abundant grace, in the posterity of each one of the loved ones of God who bore great agonies, may day by day increase, until in the end it shall yield its fruit on earth and in Heaven.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

3. Wherefore, O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned. Open your lips in praise. Adduce convincing arguments and proofs. Lead those who thirst to the fountain of life; grant ye true health to the ailing. Be ye apprentices of God; be ye physicians directed by God, and heal ye the sick among humankind. Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends. Make the despairing to be filled with hope. Waken them that slumber; make the heedless mindful.

1 One of the distinguished believers of Qazvin

Such are the fruits of this earthly life. Such is the station of resplendent glory. Upon you be Bahá'u'l-Abhá.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

4. O Lord! Make this youth radiant and confer Thy bounty upon this poor creature. Bestow upon him knowledge, grant him added strength at the break of every morn and guard him within the shelter of Thy protection so that he may be freed from error, may devote himself to the service of Thy Cause, may guide the wayward, lead the hapless, free the captives and awaken the heedless, that all may be blessed with Thy remembrance and praise. Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

III.

From Letters Written by Shoghi Effendi

5. What you have undertaken to achieve, under the guidance and instruction, of that valiant and indefatigable servant of the Abhá Threshold, my well-beloved brother Dr. Bagdadi, is highly praiseworthy and of supreme importance. Never flinch in your great enterprise. Deepen your knowledge of the Cause. Strive to extend the sphere of your activities and seek to understand and promote the harmony that must exist between true science and Divine Revelation. I will never fail to pray for you. I have great hopes in the ultimate triumph of the task before you.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 23 January 1924 written on his behalf to the Bahá'í Youth of Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.)

6. The Bahá'í youth must be taught how to teach the Cause of God. Their knowledge of the fundamentals of the Faith must be deepened and the standard of their education in science and literature enhanced. They must become thoroughly familiar with the language used and the example set by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His public addresses throughout the West. They must also be acquainted with those essential prerequisites of teaching as recorded in the Holy Books and Tablets.

(9 June 1925 to the Spiritual Assembly of the East- translated from the Persian)

7. I strongly urge you to devote, while you are pursuing your studies, as much time as you possibly can to a thorough study of the history and Teachings of our Beloved Cause. This is the prerequisite of a future successful career of service to the Bahá'í Faith in which I hope and pray you will distinguish yourself in the days to come.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 18 May 1926 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

8. The youthful and eager workers for the Cause ... occupy a warm place in my heart. I will remember their hopes, their plans, their activities in my hours of prayer at the Holy Shrine. I urge them to study profoundly the revealed utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and the discourses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and not to rely unduly on the representation and interpretation of the Teachings given by Bahá'í speakers and teachers. May the Almighty sustain you and guide you in your work.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 20 March 1929 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

9. The work in which you are engaged is dear and near to my heart and constitutes one of the most vital aspects of the manifold activities of our beloved Faith. The highest standards of purity, of integrity, of detachment and sacrifice must be maintained by the members of your group in order to enable you to play a decisive part in the spread and consolidation of the Faith. A tremendous responsibility has been laid upon you, and nothing short of a pure, a virtuous, an active and truly exemplary life can enable you to fulfil your high destiny. I will pray that you may be guided and

strengthened to render the most effective service to the Cause and by your example lend a fresh impetus to the onward march of its new-born institutions.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 6 September 1934 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada Youth Council)

IV.

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

10. If the younger Bahá'í generation, in whom Shoghi Effendi has great hopes, take the pain of studying the Cause deeply and thoroughly, read its history, find its underlying principles and become both well informed and energetic, they surely can achieve a great deal. It is upon their shoulders that the Master has laid the tremendous work of teaching. They are the ones to raise the call of the Kingdom and arouse the people from slumber. If they fail the Cause is doomed to stagnation....

(26 April 1923 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India and Burma)

11. His hope, as well as that of the friends, is that you should increase both in number and spirituality. The future of this Cause, which is so dear to us all, depends upon the energy and devotion of the rising generation. It is you who before long will be called to shoulder its responsibilities and undertake its spread. To do that, however, you ought to be well equipped. You ought to have your intellectual as well as spiritual side equally developed....

(28 December 1925 to the Bahá'í Youth of Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.)

12. We had heard through various channels the wonderful way your children had grown to speak about the Cause in public. Shoghi Effendi's hope is that they will, the three of them, become able and devoted speakers on the Cause and subjects akin to it. To do this properly they will need a firm foundation of scientific and literary training which fortunately they are obtaining. It is just as important for the Bahá'í young boys and girls to become properly educated in colleges of high standing as it is to be spiritually developed.

The mental as well as the spiritual side of the youth has to be developed before he can serve the Cause efficiently.

(28 November 1926 to an individual believer)

13. He was greatly pleased and highly encouraged with your slow but progressive work among members of the faculty and the student body in State College. It is high time for the Bahá'ís to try and reach the thinking and educated youth of the country upon whom so much of the future depends, especially the stupendous task of applying the spirit and letter of the Bahá'í teachings to the requirements of the time—a work for which generations of preparation might be necessary.

(13 June 1928 to an individual believer)

14. He was deeply interested in your work among the university students and hopes that it will bear much fruit. The youth is open-minded, unhampered by prejudice and ready to accept any message that satisfies his spiritual longings as well as intellectual demands. The work should, however, be both intensive and extensive. It is not sufficient that you should address many student bodies; persons have to be found to follow up that work, pick those who are interested to know more and ground them in the teachings. This task undoubtedly pertains to the teaching committee which should always be on the alert, see where there is a receptive group and send teachers to bring them into the Cause.

(20 June 1931 to an individual believer)

15. Being a Bahá'í you are certainly aware of the fact that Bahá'u'lláh considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not

only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the programme of the Bahá'í youth all over the world.

And no doubt the best means through which this educational development can be attained is by joining the different associations and gatherings which intend to promote the ideals of this new international civilization. Although the Guardian prefers that Bahá'ís should join those associations which are within the orbit of Bahá'í activities, he nevertheless approves and even encourages any person who would like to join any non-Bahá'í movements, provided that these movements will not promote any ideal or principle which will harm and check the advance of the Cause.

(9 July 1931 to an individual believer)

16. The prevailing distress in America and Europe should awaken the youth to the futility of concentrating their whole life on purely material pursuits. They should learn the lesson that spiritual considerations should be the dominating factors of our life, that our guiding purpose should be to enhance our moral life and seek what is eternal and abiding.

Should the different nations continue to go wrong and be guided by the selfish desire of personal aggrandizement, you will be the group that will suffer most. Our present policies bear their fruits only in the future and it is the youth of the present that are the men and women of the future.

(2 November 1931 to an individual believer)

17. Shoghi Effendi was delighted to see the result of the work achieved, which proved the deep interest the young Bahá'ís are showing in the progress of the Faith. The message of Bahá'u'lláh which contains the only true and lasting solution of the social and spiritual problems that confront society at present, is entrusted to their care. It is they who should, with a spirit of complete detachment and consecration, raise the banner of the Faith and enlist the support of strong and devoted souls.

Through such conferences Shoghi Effendi hopes you will develop your knowledge of modern problems and at the same time help those non-Bahá'ís who come to help, to see the light brought by Bahá'u'lláh to the world. People who come so close to our doors and perhaps enter our home should not be left to go without carrying away some of the delights we are enjoying. They are also seeking souls earnestly desiring to attain their spiritual and social ideals. To approach them may need tact and care and may entail much difficulty, but such is our duty we are called to carry through.

Shoghi Effendi hopes that the success of this last summer will encourage you to hold more conferences in the future, thus arousing the youth to true service and spreading the Message far and wide. He will remember you all in his prayers and ask for you divine guidance and assistance....

[Postscript in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi:]

I am delighted with your letter enclosing the splendid report on International relations. I am particularly gratified to learn of the active part played by the Bahá'í youth and of their harmonious co-operation with the older and more experienced believers. I would warn them to be on their guard lest the impression be given to the outside world that the Bahá'ís are political in their aims and pursuits or interfere in matters that pertain to the political activities of their respective governments. The Cause, still in its state of infancy, should be adequately protected from this particular danger....

(13 November 1931 to an individual believer)

18. The youth should be encouraged to train themselves in public speaking while they are still pursuing their studies in schools or colleges.

(7 December 1931 to an individual believer, published in "Bahá'í News" 64 (July 1932), p 4)

19. The account of your work among the foreign students made Shoghi Effendi very happy. Not only will these young people get a good impression of American families and hospitality, but the spiritual training you try to give them will make their education so much more complete and worthwhile. This is beside the fact that in their heart is planted the seeds of the Bahá'í teachings which in time will germinate and bring forth wondrous fruits. All these young people when they return home will carry the Message with them and even though they do not become confirmed believers, they will remain friends always ready to render a service to the Bahá'í teachers they

happen to meet. Shoghi Effendi hopes you will carry on that work but at the same time try to make them true Bahá'ís—in spirit as well as in faith.

(4 February 1932 to an individual believer)

20. The present condition of the world—its economic instability, social dissensions, political dissatisfaction and international distrust—should awaken the youth from their slumber and make them inquire what the future is going to bring. It is surely they who will suffer most if some calamity sweep over the world. They should therefore open their eyes to the existing conditions, study the evil forces that are at play and then with a concerted effort arise and bring about the necessary reforms—reforms that shall contain within their scope the spiritual as well as social and political phases of human life.

(13 March 1932 to an individual believer, published in "Bahá'í News" 68 (November 1932), p. 3)

21. What impressed him most in the account of your services was the statement that the old and the young Bahá'ís are firmly united and co-operating in bearing the burdens of the Faith in that locality. Nothing will attract God's blessings and grace more than the unity of the friends, and nothing is more destructive of their highest purpose than divisions and misunderstandings. Cling therefore to unity if you desire to succeed and abide by the will of your Lord Bahá'u'lláh; for that is the true objective of His Mission in this world.

(11 October 1932 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of West Englewood, New Jersey, U.S.A.)

22. Surely in this very critical period of human history when old institutions are beginning to crumble down or being considerably modified, there is a certain amount of maladjustments and unfortunate happenings; but such a condition is not permanent. The Cause and its institutions will gradually take their place and with its virile spirit secure the full obedience of its followers and of the people of the world as a whole. So we need not be too pessimistic as to the future or take passing conditions too seriously. The young people who are living between these two eras, and seeing the destruction of old institutions are therefore apt to discard all respect for them and in fact view with contempt any person that may still cherish the old. Hence we see the loose morality prevalent among them. This condition is not true only of America and Europe but also of the East, and I dare say in the East more than in the West.

Even though the Bahá'í Youth should feel with the condition in which they see their non-Bahá'í friends and not indict them for it, they should not let themselves be carried by the wave of world events as they are being carried. Whereas they see before them only a world that is crumbling down we are also seeing a new world being built up. Whereas they experience the destruction of old institutions that commanded their respect, we are beholding the dawn of a new era with its strict commands and new social bonds. Their materialistic outlook shows them the futility of all things while our faith in a regenerated and spiritualized man makes us look to the future and build for it. To make them follow our ways we should sympathize with their plight but should not follow their ways. We should take our stand on a higher plane of moral and spiritual life and, setting for them the true example, urge them up to our level. The young people should read what Bahá'u'lláh and the Master say on such matters and follow them conscientiously. That is if they desire to be true to the teachings and establish them throughout the world.

[Postscript in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi:]

The activities, hopes and ideals of the Bahá'í Youth in America, as well as in all other parts of the world are close and dear to my heart. Upon them rests the supreme and challenging responsibility to promote the interests of the Cause of God in the days to come, to co-ordinate its world-wide activities, to extend its scope, to safeguard its integrity, to exalt its virtues, define its purpose, and translate its ideals and aims into memorable and abiding achievements. Theirs is a mighty task, at once holy, stupendous and enthralling. May the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh protect, inspire and sustain them in the prosecution of their divinely-appointed task!

(26 October 1932 to an individual believer, published in "Bahá'í News" 443 (February 1968), p. 8)

23. The Movement is in need of young people, who have been spiritually awakened, to arise and stem the tide of a material civilization that has brought mankind to the verge of ruin. Should the forces, now playing havoc with society, be let loose, should we neglect our duty to check them and bring

them under our control, no man dare imagine what the future will bring.

It is upon the young people that the greatest suffering will fall. They should, therefore, mobilize their ranks, and, with one accord, arise and consummate their task and establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

(Published in "Herald of the South" Vol. 4, No. 5, (January - March 1933), p. 11; also published in "The Bahá'í World, Vol. 5, (1932 -1934) (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1936), pp.370-72)

24. Life is not easy for the young people of this generation. They enter life with a heart full of hope, but find before themselves nothing but failures, and see in the future nothing but darkness. What they need is the light manifested by Bahá'u'lláh, for that brightens their soul and stimulates their vigour in facing difficulties.

(12 March 1933 to an individual believer)

25. As regards the attitude of her group towards the administration, they will come to understand these things, for before long they will see that without a proper administrative body the ideas of the Cause will never be put into practice, nor will the future progress of the Faith be ensured. In dealing with the young people one has to use tact and reason out the different problems with them.

(22 April 1933 to an individual believer)

26. It is always gratifying to learn of the splendid effects which the teachings of the Cause inevitably bring in the hearts and minds of young Bahá'í men and women and to witness their eagerness to mould and shape their entire living according to the divine teachings bequeathed to the world by Bahá'u'lláh. For the Bahá'í youth constitute the main active element in the Cause. Theirs is the duty not only to study and to spread the Teachings but to put them into actual practice. It is hoped that you will increasingly mirror forth the beauty and the power of the principles of the Faith and will become shining examples to every Bahá'í whose sole aim in life is to scale the heights which Bahá'u'lláh has summoned His followers to attain.

(5 August 1933 to two believers)

27. It is on young and active Bahá'ís, like you, that the Guardian centres all his hopes for the future progress and expansion of the Cause, and it is on their shoulders that he lays all the responsibility for the upkeep of the spirit of selfless service among their fellow-believers. Without that spirit no work can be successfully achieved. With it triumph, though hardly won, is but inevitable. You should, therefore, try all your best to carry aflame within you the torch of faith, for through it you will surely find guidance, strength and eventual success.

(1 September 1933 to an individual believer)

28. I need not tell you what great hopes he cherishes for the future role which young Bahá'ís will be inevitably called upon to play in the teaching as well as in the administrative fields of Bahá'í activity. It is on them that he centres his essential and vital hopes for the effective and wide spread of the Message, and for the strengthening of the basis of the nascent Bahá'í administrative institutions which are gradually taking shape amidst storms of an unprecedented severity, and under extremely tragic circumstances.

His brotherly advice to you, and to all loyal and ardent young believers like you, is that you should deepen your knowledge of the history and of the tenets of the Faith, not merely by means of careful and thorough study, but also through active, whole-hearted and continued participation in all the activities, whether administrative or otherwise, of your community. The Bahá'í community life provides you with an indispensable laboratory, where you can translate into living and constructive action the principles which you imbibe from the Teachings. By becoming a real part of that living organism you can catch the real spirit which runs throughout the Bahá'í Teachings. To study the principles, and to try to live according to them, are, therefore, the two essential mediums through which you can ensure the development and progress of your inner spiritual life and of your outer existence as well. May Bahá'u'lláh enable you to attain this high station, and may He keep the torch of faith for ever burning in your heart!

(2 November 1933 to an individual believer)

29. He would advise you, however, to devote some more of your time to active teaching in public. To

that end he would urge you to attend, if possible, all the sessions and meetings at the Geyserville Summer School, that you may not only deepen your knowledge of the Teachings, but also acquire the necessary training for expounding them to the public. The ambition of every young Bahá'í should be, indeed, to become a well-informed and competent teacher. For this very purpose the institution of [the] Bahá'í Summer School has been established, and its importance so strongly and repeatedly emphasized by the Guardian.

(21 June 1935 to an individual believer)

30. The problem with which you are faced is one which concerns and seriously puzzles many of our present-day youth. How to attain spirituality is, indeed, a question to which every young man and woman must sooner or later try to find a satisfactory answer. It is precisely because no such satisfactory reply has been given or found, that modern youth finds itself bewildered, and is being consequently carried away by the materialistic forces that are so powerfully undermining the foundation of man's moral and spiritual life.

Indeed, the chief reason for the evils now rampant in society is a lack of spirituality. The materialistic civilization of our age has so much absorbed the energy and interest of mankind, that people in general no longer feel the necessity of raising themselves above the forces and conditions of their daily material existence. There is not sufficient demand for things that we should call spiritual to differentiate them from the needs and requirements of our physical existence. The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual its causes. The spirit of the age, taken on the whole, is irreligious. Man's outlook upon life is too crude and materialistic to enable him to elevate himself into the higher realms of the spirit.

It is this condition, so sadly morbid, into which society has fallen, that religion seeks to improve and transform. For the core of religious faith is that mystic feeling that unites man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer. And this is the reason why Bahá'u'lláh has so much stressed the importance of worship. It is not sufficient for a believer to merely accept and observe the teachings. He should, in addition, cultivate the sense of spirituality, which he can acquire chiefly by the means of prayer. The Bahá'í Faith, like all other Divine religions, is thus fundamentally mystic in character. Its chief goal is the development of the individual and society, through the acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers. It is the soul of man that has first to be fed. And this spiritual nourishment prayer can best provide. Laws and institutions, as viewed by Bahá'u'lláh, can become really effective only when our inner spiritual life has been perfected and transformed. Otherwise religion will degenerate into a mere organization, and become a dead thing.

The believers, particularly the young ones, should therefore fully realize the necessity of praying. For prayer is absolutely indispensable to their inner spiritual development, and this, already stated, is the very foundation and purpose of the Religion of God.

(8 December 1935 to an individual believer, published in "Bahá'í News" 102 (August 1936) p. 3)

31. ...the Guardian fully realizes the difficulties that stand in the way of co operation between the young and old believers. This is a problem that confronts the Cause almost everywhere, especially in those communities where the number of young and old Bahá'ís is nearly the same. The solution, as in all such cases, is to be found through intelligent and mutual compromise. The old believers have to give up something of their old conceptions and ways of working in order to better adapt themselves to the changing social conditions and circumstances. The young too must learn to act with wisdom, tact and moderation, and to take advantage and benefit from the age-long experiences of their older fellow-believers. The old and the young have each something specific to contribute to the progress and welfare of the Bahá'í community. The energy of youth should be tempered and guided by the wisdom of old age.

As to the attitude of resentment which the young believers are inclined to assume regarding certain precepts of the Cause, such as obligatory prayers: there can and should be no compromise whatever in such matters that are specifically enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh. We should neither have any feeling of shame when observing such laws and precepts, nor should we overestimate their value and significance. Just as the friends have no difficulty in recognizing the value of the specific

prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, such as the Tablets of fasting and healing, so also they should recognize that the obligatory prayers are by their very nature of greater effectiveness and are endowed with a greater power than the non-obligatory ones, and as such are essential.

(4 January 1936 to an individual believer)

32. What can control youth and save it from the pitfalls of the crass materialism of the age is the power of a genuine, constructive and living Faith such as the one revealed to the world by Bahá'u'lláh. Religion, as in the past, is still the world's sole hope, but not that form of religion which our ecclesiastical leaders strive vainly to preach. Divorced from true religion, morals lose their effectiveness and cease to guide and control man's individual and social life. But when true religion is combined with true ethics, then moral progress becomes a possibility and not a mere ideal. The need of our modern youth is for such a type of ethics founded on pure religious faith. Not until these two are rightly combined and brought into full action can there be any hope for the future of the race.

(17 April 1936 to an individual believer, published in "Bahá'í News" 104 (December 1936), p. 1)

33. The obligation to teach is essentially the responsibility of young believers. Their whole training should therefore be directed in such a way as to make them competent teachers. It is for this very purpose that Bahá'í summer schools, which constitute the very basis upon which the Bahá'í universities of the future will be established, should be widely attended by young believers.

(15 May 1936 to Bahá'í Youth Groups United States)

34. Regarding your question in connection with Bahá'í youth activity: The chief purpose underlying all such activities undertaken by our Bahá'í youth throughout the world is to stimulate enthusiasm, promote instruction and foster the development of the spirit of solidarity and co-operation among young Bahá'í men and women, in order to enable them at a later age to collaborate intelligently and harmoniously with their fellow-believers of whatever class, age or origin. Such activities should be undertaken within the framework of the Administrative Order. They should neither be overemphasized nor curtailed. The formation of youth committees is a means to achieve the end stated above, and is not an end in itself.

(8 November 1937 to an individual believer)

35. It is his fervent hope and his heart's ardent prayer that you may increasingly deepen in your faith, and steadily gain in your understanding and appreciation of the Teachings, and display such earnestness and perseverance in your Bahá'í studies as to gradually acquire the full knowledge, training and experience necessary for active and effective service to the Faith in the future.

Although still young in age, you should endeavour from now, through close association with your fellow-believers, and through your faithful application to your Bahá'í studies, to prepare yourself for that day when you will be called upon, as a grown-up and responsible member of the Community, to take full part in the activities of the Cause, and thus prove yourself worthy of being a member of this world-wide Fellowship created by Bahá'u'lláh.

The Guardian was truly pleased to note that you have already started reading some Bahá'í books, and would specially advise you to endeavour [to] commit to memory certain passages from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, and in particular, some of His prayers. This training would undoubtedly be of tremendous help to you in your future studies of the Cause, and would also serve to considerably deepen and enrich your own spiritual life at present.

(10 April 1939 to an individual believer)

36. He feels the importance of young believers taking an active part in every field of service cannot be overestimated, for they must carry on the great work of reconstruction into the future, which will be in dire need of spiritual example and leadership.

(16 March 1941 to an individual believer)

37. Indeed it is very important for the Faith, to extend the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh amongst the youth, as it is through their activities, that the Cause of our Beloved Master will in future spread all over the American continent. They have upon their shoulders all the responsibilities for the progress of

the Movement; it is our duty to rear their spiritual feelings, enlighten their hearts with the light of guidance which has been shed before us by the Master.

(2 November 1932 to two believers, published in "Bahá'í News, 143 (May 1941), p. 8)

38. The responsibility of young believers is very great, as they must not only fit themselves to inherit the work of the older Bahá'ís and carry on the affairs of the Cause in general, but the world which lies ahead of them—as promised by Bahá'u'lláh—will be a world chastened by its sufferings, ready to listen to His Divine Message at last, and consequently a very high character will be expected of the exponents of such a religion. To deepen their knowledge, to perfect themselves in the Bahá'í standards of virtue and upright conduct, should be the paramount duty of every young Bahá'í.

(6 June 1941 to the Bahá'í Youth of Bombay, India)

39. The tasks which will face the present generation of Bahá'í Youth—and are indeed already beginning to face them—are stupendous. They cannot but expect to find themselves most severely tested in the days to come—tested as to their characters, their faith, the strength of their convictions, and their complete adherence to the Laws of Bahá'u'lláh.

Shoghi Effendi's greatest hope, and his prayer, is that they may so distinguish themselves in the eyes of their fellow-countrymen that it will become increasingly evident what a Bahá'í is and what he stands for. How wonderful it would be to witness the time when the actions and words of the Bahá'ís will have become so well known that people will say: "Ah! That must be a Bahá'í—they are like that!" and mean it as a compliment.

(19 October 1941 to the Bahá'í Youth at Louhelen Bahá'í School, Youth Session)

40. The winds of test and trial have blown upon our Faith more than once, and he strongly feels that old believers like yourself should do everything in their power to protect the younger Bahá'ís, to strengthen their faith, deepen them in the Covenant, and enable them to take full refuge in the Will and Testament of the beloved Master, that impregnable fortress He built for our safety when He Himself should have gone from our sight.

(26 October 1941 to an individual believer)

41. If ever it could be said that a religion belonged to the youth, then surely the Bahá'í Faith today is that religion. The whole world is suffering, it is sunk in misery, crushed beneath its heavy problems. The task of healing its ills and building up its future devolves mainly upon the youth. They are the generation who, after the war, will have to solve the terrible difficulties created by the war and all that brought it about. And they will not be able to upbuild the future except by the laws and principles laid down by Bahá'u'lláh. So their task is very great and their responsibility very grave.

(8 May 1942 to the Bahá'í Youth of Peoria, Illinois, U.S.A.)

42. Young men such as yourself[s,] so surprisingly dedicated to a movement which the uninitiated might associate with mature people of a philosophical bent of mind, so free from the current dissipated habits of most young people, are in a position to capture the attention and respect of both young and old alike. This Cause, although it embraces with equal esteem people of all ages, has a special message and mission for the youth of your generation. It is their charter for their future, their hope, their guarantee of better days to come. Therefore the Guardian is especially happy that the young Bahá'ís are active in the pioneer work....

(16 June 1942 to an individual believer)

43. The Cause needs more Bahá'í scholars, people who not only are devoted to it and believe in it and are anxious to tell others about it, but also who have a deep grasp of the Teachings and their significance, and who can correlate its beliefs with the current thoughts and problems of the people of the world.

The Cause has the remedy for all the world's ills. The reason why more people don't accept it is because the Bahá'ís are not always capable of presenting it to them in a way that meets the immediate needs of their minds. Young Bahá'ís like yourself must prepare themselves to really bring the Message to their generation, who need it so desperately and who can understand the language it speaks so well. He would advise you among other books to study the Talks of 'Abdu'l-

Bahá, as His method of approaching the mind of the public cannot be surpassed... He also advises you to develop yourself as a public speaker so you will be increasingly able to teach the Cause...

(21 October 1943 to an individual believer)

44. The Guardian hopes that along with whatever other studies you take up, you will continually study the teachings and endeavour to acquire a profound knowledge of them. The importance of young Bahá'ís becoming thoroughly steeped in every branch of the teachings cannot be overemphasized, as they have great teaching tasks ahead of them to accomplish.

(22 January 1944 to an individual believer)

45. The Guardian has always advised young people to study deeply such subjects as History, Economics and Sociology as they are all related to the teachings and aid in understanding the Faith....

The greatest need of youth today is character training. Prayer is only one factor in this; they must learn to live up to the ethical teachings of the Faith....

He feels that teaching the Faith to the youth is of the utmost importance in these days, as they will not only become the workers of the future but will be able to widely spread the Message among their own generation. He approves of your devoting as much time to this work as feasible, in conjunction with the valuable services you are so tirelessly rendering the teaching work in various cities and towns.

(12 March 1944 to an individual believer)

46. ...concerning what studies you should specialize in with a view to teaching in the future: He would suggest either History, Economics or Sociology, as these are not only fields in which Bahá'ís take a great interest but also cover subjects which our teachings cast an entirely new light upon....

(13 March 1944 to an individual believer.)

47. ...if the believers are going to accomplish their duty and present the Divine solution to mankind, they must prepare themselves for the great tasks that lie ahead. This particularly applies to Bahá'í youth. Young men and women in the Faith must be deep and thoughtful scholars of its teachings, so that they can teach in a way that will convince people that all the problems facing them have a remedy. They must grasp the Administration, so that they can wisely and efficiently administer the ever-growing affairs of the Cause; and they must exemplify the Bahá'í way of living....

(12 May 1944 to an individual believer, published in "Bahá'í News" 175 June 1945), p. 3)

48. He hopes that you will develop into Bahá'ís in character as well as in belief. The whole purpose of Bahá'u'lláh is that we should become a new kind of people, people who are upright, kind, intelligent, truthful, and honest and who live according to His great laws laid down for this new epoch in man's development. To call ourselves Bahá'ís is not enough, our inmost being must become ennobled and enlightened through living a Bahá'í life.

(25 August 1944 to the Louhelen School, Youth Session)

49. Aside from teaching the Cause, the greatest service the Bahá'í Youth can render is to exemplify in their lives the teachings and especially to be promoters—within the Bahá'í communities and in the world at large—of love and harmony, qualities so sadly lacking in these days of hatred, suspicion, vindictiveness and prejudice.

(15 October 1944 to the Louhelen School, Youth Session)

50. The youth are indeed those to whom the Cause should perforce offer its greatest appeal, as it holds alone the promise for their future security. Without that which Bahá'u'lláh has given to humanity the outlook for the future of the world would appear truly hopeless, for the evil forces in men's nature seem to have gained the ascendancy, and only a spiritual force, direct from God, can enable the good side of human nature to again assume command of men's lives.

(15 June 1945 to an individual believer)

51. By all means persevere and associate in a friendly spirit with other groups of young people, particularly of a different race or minority nationality, for such association will demonstrate your complete conviction of the oneness of mankind and attract others to the Faith, both young and old

alike.

A spirit of prejudice-free, loving comradeship with others is what will open the eyes of people more than any amount of words. Combined with such deeds you can teach the Faith easily.

(18 June 1945 to the Bahá'ís of Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A.)

52. He is always pleased to see enlightened and capable young people embrace the Cause, because the world of the near future naturally belongs to them and the heavy responsibilities of that future must needs fall on their shoulders. They cannot find a pattern to work by comparable to that which Bahá'u'lláh has given to the world in this age; the sanity, the justice, the perfect balance of His system can alone accomplish the next step in Man's evolution—the unification of the human race as one family inhabiting this planet.

(1 July 1945 to an individual believer)

53. He feels that one of the primary duties of your Committee is to encourage young Bahá'ís to prepare themselves for pioneer work, particularly in Latin America; as he has already informed the American believers, the tremendous tasks facing them in Europe—and indeed all over the world—cannot be embarked upon until they have finished the work begun in South America. In this field youthful Bahá'ís have already accomplished much, and he hopes others will arise and follow them.

Now that the war is over and so many young people are being released from the services and returning to a more normal life, the young Bahá'ís in every city should make a point of keeping in touch with local youth activities and clubs, and endeavouring to make their views known to as many young people in as many ways as possible. Above all they should set a high example to them; chastity, politeness, friendliness, hospitality, joyous optimism about the ultimate future happiness and well-being of mankind, should distinguish them and win over to them the love and admiration of their fellow youth. The thing which is most conspicuously lacking in modern life is a high standard of conduct and good character; the young Bahá'ís must demonstrate both, if they hope to seriously win over to the Faith members of their own generation, so sorely disillusioned and so contaminated by the laxity war gives rise to.

He assures you he will certainly pray for the success of your Committee's work, and for the Bahá'í youth in general, for whom he feels a strong affection and for whom he cherishes very high hopes.

(20 October 1945 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada National Youth Committee)

54. He was also very happy to see the Bahá'í youth are holding meetings and making every effort to mingle with other young people, through local clubs and groups, and thus bring the Cause to their notice.

As the beloved Master so constantly reiterated, example is the greatest teacher of all, and the Guardian feels that the Bahá'ís must, each and every one of them, contribute his share to the unity of the community he lives in, and show forth to his fellow believers, and to the world at large, that love for which the world is dying, the love of God. When non-Bahá'ís see us loving and united, our power will be irresistible; the perfection of our teachings, laws, and principles will then be seen as a practical reality.

(23 October 1945 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Dayton, Ohio)

55. The Guardian has urged, over and over again, the paramount necessity for Bahá'í Youth to exemplify the Teachings, most particularly the moral aspect of them. If they are not distinguished for their high conduct they cannot expect other young people to take the Cause very seriously.

He heartily agrees with you that unless we practise the Teachings we cannot possibly expect the Faith to grow, because the fundamental purpose of all religions—including our own—is to bring man nearer to God, and to change his character, which is of the utmost importance. Too much emphasis is often laid on the social and economic aspects of the Teachings; but the moral aspect cannot be over-emphasized.

(6 September 1946 to an individual believer)

56. He feels that the youth, in particular, must constantly and determinedly strive to exemplify a Bahá'í life. In the world around us we see moral decay, promiscuity, indecency, vulgarity, bad manners—the Bahá'í young people must be the opposite of these things, and, by their chastity, their

uprightness, their decency, their consideration and good manners, attract others, old and young, to the Faith. The world is tired of words; it wants example, and it is up to the Bahá'í youth to furnish it.

(19 September 1946 to the Green Acre Bahá'í Summer School)

57. They now have a golden opportunity to arise and fulfil their own cherished plans before it is too late.... More believers must arise, and, putting their trust in Bahá'u'lláh, do their duty to the Faith they believe in and love so dearly. The youth in particular should be encouraged to enter this field of service, for the spread of the Cause is their only hope for a stable world in which to live and establish families of their own.

(12 October 1946 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles)

58. He appreciates very much the devoted and determined spirit with which you are facing the future and all the Bahá'í responsibility it will bring to you increasingly. The part of youth is very great; you have the opportunity to really determine to exemplify in word and deed the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and to show your generation that the New World Order He has brought is a tangible reality in the lives of His followers.

(12 March 1946 to Louhelen School, Senior Youth Session, published in "Bahá'í News" 190 (December 1946), p. 1)

59. In fact the youth work everywhere in the Bahá'í world is dear to his heart, and he attaches great importance to it. The young people, who will inevitably grow up to shoulder all the work of the Cause, are really its hope, and should be one of the most active factors in its propagation. Through their courageous adherence to the high moral and ethical standards set by Bahá'u'lláh, and through gaining a mastery of His many, diversified, and profound teachings, they can shape, to a great extent, the development and aid in the rapid expansion of their beloved Faith in the various countries in which they labour. They should be made to realize their responsibility is heavy and their privilege very precious.

(26 December 1946 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles National Youth Committee)

60. In the years that lie ahead, in order to accomplish the tremendous tasks entrusted to our care by the Master, young people like yourself will be required to carry the work forward and fill the places left vacant by the older generation of believers; indeed they must do more than that, they must create new places and functions for themselves.

What the Cause really needs most at present is capable teachers, wise, deeply grounded in the Faith. He hopes you will fit yourself to be one of these.

(5 February 1947 to an individual believer)

61. As regards your future: he feels that if you specialize in the Social Sciences this would be also of assistance to you in teaching the Cause. And he would also suggest that, if feasible when you decide on a place to study, or to establish yourself permanently, you could render the Cause a great service by going somewhere where there is a weak Assembly or a group only and helping in developing the Faith there.

(24 June 1947 to an individual believer)

62. He is very happy to hear of the formation of the new youth groups you mention, as this will not only greatly stimulate the Bahá'í youth and enable them to attract new young people to the Faith, but will also do the general work of the Cause in these cities a great deal of good. He urges your Committee to make every effort to establish youth groups wherever there are Spiritual Assemblies, and circumstances permit.

(25 September 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles National Youth Committee)

63. There are two kinds of Bahá'ís, one might say: those whose religion is Bahá'í and those who live for the Faith. Needless to say, if one can belong to the latter category, if one can be in the vanguard of heroes, martyrs and saints, it is more praiseworthy in the sight of God. He hopes you will attain to this high station.

But, as you must earn your living, he advises you to consult with your teachers at the University, and see in what field they believe you might excel and be able to find employment. This is a detail which he cannot advise you about. In principle it is good if the young Bahá'ís seek careers which

would enable them to find employment abroad, as then they can render valuable pioneer services.
(16 April 1950 to an individual believer)

64. He urges you to make up your minds to do great, great deeds for the Faith; the condition of the world is steadily growing worse, and your generation must provide the saints, heroes, martyrs and administrators of future years. With dedication and will-power you can rise to great heights!

(2 October 1951 to the Louhelen School, Youth Session, published in "Bahá'í News" 253 (March 1952), p. 1)

65. He urges you all to devote particular attention to the contact with racial minorities. In a country which has such a large element of prejudice against its coloured citizens as the United States, it is of the greatest importance that the Bahá'ís—and more especially the youth—should demonstrate actively our complete lack of prejudice and, indeed, our prejudice in favour of minorities.

We cannot very well prosecute a teaching campaign successfully in Africa if we do not in our home communities demonstrate to the fullest extent our love for the people who spring from the African population!

(11 November 1951 to the Louhelen School)

66. He, therefore, urges you to seriously consider the type of profession or trade that might ensure you a post in a pioneer field in Africa, or the Pacific Islands, or Asia, in which you could earn your living while serving the Cause as well. It is a great challenge, and a great opportunity offered your generation...

(5 August 1952 to the Louhelen school, youth session)

67. On the shoulders of the youth today rests the future of the Faith. Therefore they should be well educated and trained not only in the Teachings of the Faith, but also in secular matters.

(24 May 1954 to an individual believer)

68. Your niece's profession in training and educating children is one that will give her a rich reward, because she is aiding in the development of the characters of the youth of today, who will become the ones who will guide humanity tomorrow. If they could be guided both materially and spiritually then it would be a great victory, because after the world goes through its present travail, spiritual values will predominate, and those youth who have the benefit of both material and spiritual education will be the true leaders of society.

(22 May 1955 to an individual believer)

69. He hopes that the Bahá'í youth in Germany will be encouraged to take a more active part in administrative affairs and in the teaching work. They must always realize that they are the future of the Cause, and they should gain from experience as teachers and administrators from the older friends, in preparation for the time when the burden of the work will fall on their shoulders.

(21 June 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria)

70. The beloved Guardian feels that sufficient attention is not being paid to the matter of contacting minorities in the United States. A great impetus could be lent to the work in the European countries, in certain far-eastern areas, and in Latin America if the Bahá'ís residing in the big cities and university towns would make a determined and sufficient effort to extend friendship and hospitality to students and nationals from countries where the Bahá'ís are struggling so hard to establish the Faith. They would not only have the possibility of making more local believers, but they might also increase the membership of communities abroad, by sending back Bahá'ís from the United States. This has happened already a number of times with Chinese and Japanese friends, etc., to the great advantage of the Cause.

(19 July 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States)

71. The Divine Confirmations are descending in torrents on those who arise to teach. At this critical time in the history of the Faith, teaching is the one Bahá'í service that is confirmed.

The Guardian hopes that you will therefore arise with renewed effort to take your part in this great Crusade that is now sweeping the world. America has been called upon by the Master to play the preponderating role in this great World Crusade which is moving forward with increasing momentum. If more Bahá'ís are not confirmed in the United States, then America may be deprived

Youth

of its great Spiritual Destiny. The Guardian is looking to the Youth of America to raise the Banner of the Faith to ever higher and more glorious heights. The Youth should become severed from all things of the world and filled with the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit, arise to spread the Message and quicken the hearts.

(8 August 1957 to the Bahá'í Youth of Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.)