

Apartado 31-120  
Guadalajara, Sept. 24. 1977  
Mexico

Universal House of Justice,  
Box No. 155,  
Haifa, Israel

Dear Friends,

As this century is coming towards its end, I have been preoccupied these last few Years with some aspects of our Faith on which I would like to ask for your guidance.

Shoghi Effendi wrote: TO DISSOCIATE THE ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE CAUSE FROM THE PURELY SPIRITUAL AND HUMANITARIAN TEACHINGS WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO A MUTILATION OF THE BODY OF THE CAUSE. (1)

(1)

I have the impression that is to a large extent what we have been doing for the greater part of this century, for the following reasons.

The early believers, coming from the middle and wealthy classes of the West, were primarily interested in the spiritual and biblical aspects of our Faith, with little or no understanding of the implications of our administrative principles.

Furthermore, their contacts and audiences, mostly of the same background and orientation, had the same interest, and their main concern was the transfer of loyalty from Christ to Baha'u'llah.

In spite of the Guardian's World Order letters this momentum has been carried forward, partly because most of our Western teachers and pioneers are women, for whom the spiritual love aspects of our Faith are more natural and familiar than the social justice aspects, which are apt to be beyond their range of experience.

Then there is another protective reason. If we would have stressed the social justice aspects of our teachings, with little skill or preparation, we would have edged ourselves into political discussions, which were to be avoided, or, worse still, we could have been accused as Socialists or Communists, which we are not, and which could have caused unnecessary persecutions, and in some countries incarceration or deportation.

Since 1912, when Abdu'l-Baha spoke to Western audiences, with a capacity limited to certain aspects of our teachings, the world has changed. (Incidentally the talk Abdu'l-Baha gave to the Socialist Club in Montreal was never

published, nor have we any record of Abdu'l-Baha's interview with Sam Gompers, then President of the American Federation of Labor, in Mrs. Parson's house in Washington).

We no longer teach the Faith primarily to the Western World and their Allies, representing 25% of the World's population, though they receive 87% of its income, according to Pearson's Economic Report to the United Nations. The remaining 75% of this earth's inhabitants would welcome hearing about a Faith, which proclaims a law that:

POVERTY SHALL DISAPPEAR and says IT IS IMPORTANT TO LIMIT RICHES? AS IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO LIMIT POVERTY. EITHER EXTREME IS NO GOOD. THERE MUST BE SPECIAL LAWS MADE, DEALING WITH THESE EXTREMES OF RICHES AND WANT...THE GOVERNMENT... SHOULD GIVE EQUAL JUSTICE TO ALL. (2)

THE ESSENCE OF THE BAHAI ECONOMIC TEACHINGS is this, THAT IMMENSE RICHES FAR BEYOND WHAT IS NECESSARY SHOULD NOT BE ACCUMULATED. (3)

RULES AND LAWS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO REGULATE THE EXCESSIVE FORTUNES OF CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS... (4)

A WORLD LEGISLATURE? WHOSE MEMBERS WILL... ULTIMATELY CONTROL THE ENTIRE RESOURCES... AND WILL ENACT SUCH LAWS... TO SATISFY THE NEEDS ...OF ALL PEOPLES. (5)

THE FURY OF CONSERVATIVE FORCES, THE OPPOSITION OF VESTED INTERESTS... MUST BE RESOLUTELY RESISTED, AND COMPLETELY OVERCOME. (6)

These are the type of quotations and type of approach which would, I believe, attract the majority of the people, but they are hidden in our writings, and our teachers shy away from them.

It is true that all the Leftist movements, which significantly started around 1844 and already encompass more than half of this earth's population, have been struggling, often in a blundering way, to achieve this same end, namely social justice. We must admit that they have succeeded to some extent. I wonder if the time has come to recognize the relationship and similarity which exists between their and our aims.

I am inclined to believe that a decision is desirable for the following reasons.

In the "Seven lights of Unity" Abdu'l-Baha foretells the political unification of the World and, therefore, the lesser peace before the end of this century. The third light, "Unity of Freedom," could imply that the political unification of the world will be achieved at the expense of civil rights, which would suggest at first a totalitarian type of world government.

In your own letter of Nov. 26, 1974, addressed to all National Spiritual Assemblies you foreshadow "the worldwide opposition which is to come". Since I cannot visualize any existing church, or combination of churches, mustering "world-wide opposition" against us, this would leave the only other alternative, a communist type world superstate.

Did Baha'u'llah refer to this period when he said: THESE GREAT OPPRESSIONS THAT HAVE BEFALLEN THE WORLD ARE PREPARING IT FOR THE ADVENT OF THE MOST GREAT JUSTICE.? (7)

Here is another quotation of Abdu'l-Baha's which ties us to the end of this century. IN THE FUTURE THERE WILL BE NO VERY RICH NOR EXTREMELY POOR. THERE WILL BE ANEQUILIBRIUM OF INTERESTS\* AND A CONDITION WILL BE ESTABLISHED WHICH WILL MAKE BOTH RICH AND POOR COMFORTABLE AND CONTENT. THIS WILL BE THE OUTCOME OF THE... 20th CENTURY WHICH WILL BE REALIZED UNIVERSALLY. (8)

In an unpublished Tablet Baha'u'llah wrote: A GREAT CHANGE WILL SWEEP OVER THE WORLD; FIRST A WAVE OF OPPRESSION, THEN WILL COME THE MOST GREAT JUSTICE; THEN THE MOST GREAT PEACE.

For years we have been speaking about Divine love, progressive revelation, universal peace and disarmament, but not about social justice.

In the following statement of Shoghi Effendi: THIS MOST GREAT JUSTICE IS INDEED THE JUSTICE UPON WHICH THE STRUCTURE OF THE MOST GREAT PEACE CAN ALONE? AND MUST EVENTUALLY REST, (9) I find the closest definition of the Baha'i concept of justice, which is very different from the biblical concept of justice - current in the Western and Islamic world. The old concept assumes that when a man steals a bicycle and is brought before a judge in a court of justice, he is dealt with according to law. While this concept is still valid according to our Writings, Baha'u'llah has brought to the World a new conception of justice, a new dimension in mankind's moral and spiritual experience, which will, I believe, be one of the main functions of our future Houses of Justice.

It is only to the extent that we grasp this concept, apply it in an organically tied world community, and convey its meaning by word and example to the non-Baha'i world, can we hope to grow out of our embryonic state.

Over a year ago I was on a six weeks teaching tour in Spain and Portugal. The chairman of the National Youth Committee told me in Madrid, that the Youth of Spain do not want to listen to religious talks, since they are interested only in social justice. The editor of a paper in Oviedo, Asturia, said grouchingly after hearing that I belonged to one of those Nordamerican religious sects, that he is very busy and can spare me only five minutes. When I told him that my subject the previous evening was "Social Justice through a Collective Conscience" his face changed from boredom to interest, and he kept on questioning me for about thirty minutes.

After the closing of the National Convention in Lisbon, Sunday at 5 p.m., I was allowed to give a thirty minute outline of my above unorthodox approach. About sixty of the friends stayed another hour to question me. Mr. Imani, the Board member, told us that the best Baha'i teachers in Europe are former Italian Ex-Communists, since they can correlate our teachings with social justice. An N S A member of Portugal, Mrs. Ana Costa, told me with tears in her eyes that her three children are Communists, though somewhat disenchanted. If she would have known and been able to explain the implications of our Administrative Order, in which social justice is enshrined, her children, she said, would be Baha'is today.

Although my talks were taped, the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain has asked me for a book on this subject, since we have no literature, not even a pamphlet, which stresses that the primary contribution of Baha'ullah for this age is social justice and that ITS MESSAGE IS APPLICABLE NOT ONLY TO THE INDIVIDUAL, BUT CONCERNS ITSELF PRIMARILY WITH THE NATURE OF THOSE ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT MUST BIND ALL THE STATES AND NATIONS AS MEMBERS OF ONE HUMAN FAMILY. (10)

THE PURPOSE OF JUSTICE IS THE APPEARANCE OF UNITY  
AMONG MEN. (11)

I did not intend to denigrate our teaching method or literature. Nothing more suitable was possible up to now. But a great part of the world has changed, and is ready to see a new profile of our faith. It is no longer interested in brotherhood or peace without justice. Ours is the only religion that teaches social justice and the technique to bring it about.

I did make a poor attempt to write a book on the courses I gave for the last three Summers at Green Acre and Bosch, but since the manuscript needed a lot of editing, it was rejected both in London and Wilmette.

From the response I received, also here in Mexico, I feel there is a crying need for this new type of approach. If I am wrong please tell me, and I shall go on pasture, or try and adjust my remaining years accordingly. If, however, the green light is given, there will be a lot to do between now and the year 2000, and I would add to it my little bit.

With affectionate Baha'i greetings

In His service,

Emeric Sala

References:

1. Guidance for Today and Tomorrow p.99
2. Abdu'l-Baha in "Baha'u'llah and the New Era" pp. 148-9
3. Star, vol. 10. No. 18 p. 329- 330
4. Some answered Questions P. 314
5. Shogh Effendi, W.O of B. P. 40
6. " " " A.D.J.. P. 35
7. Baha'u'llah. A.D.J.. P. 23
8. Promulgation of U.P. Vol.1 P. 128
9. From. Day is Come P. 4
10. W .O. of B.. P. 42
11. A.D.J.. P. 24

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Baha'i World Centre

Department of the Secretariat

23 October 1977

Mr Americ Sala  
Apartado 31-120  
Guadalajara 5  
Mexico

Dear Baha'i friend:

We have been instructed to acknowledge your letter of Sept. 24, 1977 and to convey the following to you.

The Universal House of Justice has noted the thoughts expressed in your letter and agrees that a book expounding the teachings of our Faith as they relate to social justice would be a useful addition to Baha'i literature. It hopes that your efforts in this direction may prove fruitful and we are requested to assure you of the prayers of the House of Justice on your behalf.

With loving Baha'i greetings,

Mrs Lorana Kerfoot

For Department of the Secretariat

Apartado 31-120  
Guadalajara, Dec 30, 77

Baha'i Publishing Committee,  
Wilmette, Ill.

Dear Friends,

I wish to refer to your letter of May 3, 1977  
in which you explained to me the reasons why you returned my  
MS "two worlds."

After giving a course at Bosch school, and  
realizing its need and the enthusiasm with which it was  
received, and the subsequent invitations to give talks in  
San Francisco and Pasadena, I decided to write to the Universal  
House of Justice on Sept. 24, as per encl. copy. I wanted  
to know if I am on the right or wrong track.

As the intent of the answer of Oct. 23rd, of  
which I enclose a copy, was not entirely clear to me, I wrote  
to Hand of the Cause, John A. Roberts, who incidentally after  
reading my manuscript ordered thirty copies.

Mr Roberts answered me on Dec. 13th in part as  
follows:

"The main purpose of this letter is to say to  
you, that I can't help but think you are not getting the full  
intent of the words of the Universal House of Justice in their  
letter to you of Oct. 23rd. I feel they are giving you every  
authority, in fact request, to proceed with your book on social  
justice. I have read and re-read that one paragraph several  
times and cannot see how there could be any doubt in your mind.  
I wonder if you had hoped that they would give you specific answers  
to some of the questions you raised in your letter to them, but  
don't believe that can be the case. I think they are giving you  
their blessing, promising you their prayers and inviting you to  
write that book."

"I personally would be delighted to have such a book  
because I agree with you it is a subject which we Baha'is really  
need to be informed about. I feel this especially in my own case,  
because I am giving summer school courses. I think especially of  
three last year in Ireland, Innsbruck, Cape Town, where social  
justice as you would explain it, would have added tremendous  
depth to the course. Since receiving your letter, I have gone over  
the notes of two these summer school courses and realize that there  
is a certain shallowness that a session or two on your book would  
have completely overcome. So please remember that I am looking forward  
to receiving your book and I think I will be able to put its contents  
to very good use."

