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Arohanui: Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand

by Shoghi Effendi

Edition 1, (September 2006)

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Dedicated to the memory of Shoghi Effendi in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand.

“AROHANUI”

The word “Arohanui” is a Maori word and, as with many Polynesian words, there is no direct translation into English. The literal meaning is “big love”, or “much love” or “great love”. And, like most words in most languages, it has several meanings. In naming this book, “Arohanui: Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand”, “Arohanui” is used in its more expressive meaning, “enfolding love”, or “that love which binds a community together”, or “that love which creates bonds of mutual trust and loyalty”, or “that love which builds and carries forward culture or civilization”.

Arohanui: Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand
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> "You are destined to achieve great things for our beloved Cause and my constant prayer is that your vision may be clear, your purpose unshaken, your zeal undiminished, your hopes undimmed. Let not obstacles and disappointments, which are inevitable, dishearten you and whenever you are faced with trials recall our Beloved's innumerable sufferings."

From a letter to the first New Zealand Bahá'í
dated August 12th, 1926.

The letters in this compilation were written by various secretaries of the Guardian at his specific direction. Spelling and other inconsistencies are a reflection of the fact that different secretaries were used. Those passages actually written by the Guardian himself are printed in italics.

The messages are numbered sequentially for the convenience of the reader and as an aid to indexing. The numbers appear before the date of each letter.

Part I

Letters to Individuals, before April 21st, 1926.

These were written prior to the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in New Zealand.

(1) June 22nd, 1923

My dear Bahá'í sister,

Your beautiful letter of April 3rd written to the Beloved Guardian of the Cause of God, our dear Shoghi Effendi, was received.[+E1] He was much impressed and charmed with the spirit of your letter, which indicated deep devotion to and absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit of the Beloved Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

He instructed me with a heart overflowing with love to answer your letter, conveying to you his high estimation for the beauty of the faith of the New Zealand friends, and deep appreciation towards the splendid services of our dear Mr and Mrs Dunn,[+E2] who are so wonderfully blessed and assisted by the power of the Holy Ghost. He loves you all and prays for your happiness and spiritual growth.

It is true that your group is now still small, but he assures you that your group will before long grow larger and larger day by day. It has been always the case with the growth of every religion. Some pure soul or souls go to some land and sow the seeds of the heavenly teachings in the hearts of few who are most pure and so most receptive. The seeds will germinate and grow in them. The fruits of these seeds appear in the regeneration of the lives of these primary adherents. These primary adherents share the bounties they have received with other souls, who through them obtain new life and light and in turn illumine other people.

The primary adherents are the stars of great magnitude in every land in the firmament of the Kingdom of God. They are the chosen people. They are like candles which, through their sacrificial efforts, are weeping their lives away in order to give light to the world and establish the purpose of their Lord and Saviour, which purpose is the salvation of mankind. His Holiness, Jesus Christ! see how small the group of His disciples was! No matter how few the number of the disciples was, yet

they through His power illumined the world. Our Era is similar to that, but through the development of humanity it is greater, and through the evils of the material civilization and negligence of mankind our sacrifices must be greater. Divine light must make itself manifest in our daily life deeds.

In the early days of the appearance of our Saviour, virtue was to save ourselves. When we are once established in our faith, then virtue is to save others. The three mottoes of education hold true in our case too. First grow, then become and then contribute. We have developed; we have established ourselves, and now it is time to contribute to others. We have inexhaustible capital. The candles of our spiritual lives constantly weep away their lives in shedding light to the world, but they never become exhausted. For there is connection between our lives and that of Bahá'u'lláh and our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

It cannot be described how much we long to see our dear New Zealand brethren and sisters. We hope the day will come when they can come to us and we to them. Meanwhile, we are praying at the Holy Threshold of our beloved Master for your success and happiness. We hope you will pray for us too. The effect of the prayers of the pure hearts is tremendously great.

Our dear Shoghi Effendi wants you not to look at your own capacity, but at the power of the Holy Ghost of God. He sends you all his loving greeting and tender affection.

With warm wishes and Bahá'í love, I remain,

Your humble brother in His love,

Azizullah S. Bahadur

(2) May 8th, 1925

Alláh-u-abhá

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Shoghi Effendi was very pleased to receive this morning your letter of 28th April, but we were very sorry to hear you have been ill and hope your health will soon be completely restored.[+E3] It was nice that you saw Shoghi's sister and Soheil's brother in London.

I forget whether I gave you the address of Mr and Mrs King, c/o Messrs Hayman and King, 202 Old Christchurch Rd. Bournemouth. They are very kind-hearted Bahá'ís and will be delighted to see any of you if you call. Both of them work in the business and you are most likely to see them if you call there. They live above the shop.

I gave you Sister Challis's address at West Moors (Ferndown Lodge). You can get there by 'bus from Bournemouth Sq. or Lansdowne, which will drop you right at Sister Challis's door (She keeps a nursing home) or you can go by train from West Bournemouth to West Moors station which is within 5 minutes' walk of Ferndown Lodge. I hope you will be able to see her.

As I write, the Greatest Holy Leaf is on a visit to the Shrine of the Master. It is over a year, I think, since she has been able to visit the shrine and until now she has not seen the new Gardens, in the laying out of which Shoghi Effendi has taken such a deep interest. The Gardens are looking lovely now and it is easy to imagine how delighted she will be. One day during the feast of Ridván she and the Holy Mother were able to visit Bahjí and the Garden of Ridván.

I have quite recovered from my pleurisy now and am steadily regaining my strength.

Shoghi Effendi is still tired. I hope he will soon be able to take a rest.

All the friends here join in loving greetings and best wishes to yourself, your son and daughter, Miss Stevenson and Effie Baker.[+E4] With warmest greetings.

Your brother in the service of the Beloved,
J. E. Esslemont

[From the Guardian:]

My dear precious sister in 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

I was so glad to hear from you directly and learn of your improved health and meeting with the English Bahá'ís. I need not assure you of my ardent prayers for your happiness, good health and continued success in the service of the Cause. I hope and pray you will be enabled by the guiding spirit of the Master not only to stimulate the interest of your friends and relations in this Cause but to make of some of them earnest and whole-hearted believers and supporters of the Faith.

Shoghi

(3) May 9th, 1925

Alláh-u-abhá

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Greatest Holy Leaf and Shoghi Effendi have asked me to answer on their behalf your kind letters of Apr. 2nd from Port Said and April 14th from London.

We were sorry to hear that Mrs Blundell got a chill on the steamer and was laid up for a few days after her arrival in London. We hope that by this time she is all right again. We had a note from her from Bournemouth.

You will be glad to hear that the Greatest Holy Leaf and the Holy Mother were able to motor to Bahjí and Ridván one day during the Feast of Ridván, and that yesterday the Greatest Holy Leaf motored to the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and saw the new Gardens in which Shoghi Effendi has been taking so much interest.

Yesterday a Dutchman arrived here from Port Said, the first Dutch Bahá'í, so far as we know. He has been a sincere and earnest truth-seeker for years. About 9 months ago he left his home at the Hague and walked on foot through Belgium, France and Italy. Then he felt some inward urge to go to Egypt, and travelled thither by a Dutch Cargo Steamer. When the steamer arrived at Port Said Mahmood Effendi, one of the Port Said Bahá'ís came on board and was introduced to Mesdag (the Dutchman). They struck up a friendship at once and after 2 days Mesdag went to live in Mahmood's house. There he met Martha Root, Mr Schopflocher and various other Bahá'ís, read my book and became thoroughly interested and seems now already a firm believer. He has already, since his arrival yesterday morning, translated our 8-page folder into Dutch and we hope he will be able to do much to make the Cause known in Holland and win adherents there.

I have quite recovered from my pleurisy now and am feeling almost as vigorous as before the attack. Azizullah Bahadur is now in Stuttgart. There is as yet no improvement in his hand, but he is having skilled treatment now and we hope it will be successful. He seems to be having a very happy time with the German friends.

Shoghi Effendi is much in need of rest, but fairly well. He and all the members of the Holy Family join in loving greetings and heartfelt prayers for your welfare. We hope you will have a fine time in England and return to New Zealand refreshed and reinvigorated physically and spiritually to take up your work for the Kingdom there with new enthusiasm and devotion. We pray that you may always be guided and strengthened by the Divine Confirmations.

With love also to Effie Baker and all the other friends,

Your brother in the service of the Beloved,

J. E. Esslemont

[From the Guardian:]

My precious Bahá'í sister:--

I wish to assure you personally of my appreciation of your devotion to the Cause, and your earnest efforts to promote it as well as my fervent prayers for your spiritual advancement, success and happiness. I will always remember you most tenderly in my hours of visit at the three holy Shrines and beseech for you and the New Zealand friends the blessings of our loving and almighty Master.

You true brother,

Shoghi

(4) May 21st, 1925

Alláh-u-abhá

Dear Bahá'í Brother,

Shoghi Effendi has asked me to reply to your kind letter of 11th April. He is delighted to hear that you propose starting a Bahá'í Magazine for Australia and New Zealand and suggests as a suitable title "The Herald of the South". Every 19 days a letter will be sent from Haifa to Mr and Mrs Hyde Dunn giving the news of the Cause. Owing to the restricted facilities for multiplying copies which are at present available here, I fear it will not be possible to send another copy to you, but doubtless you can arrange with Mr and Mrs Hyde Dunn to have their copy passed on to you for the magazine. We are glad to hear that notwithstanding the absence of the Blundells and Margaret Stevenson, the friends in New Zealand are remaining united and active. We hope that when the pilgrims return the faith and enthusiasm of the believers will be greatly deepened and strengthened and that many new believers may be attracted. I had a long letter from Effie Baker yesterday. She is very devoted and whole-hearted and will be a valuable worker for the Cause, I think, and a great help to Father and Mother Dunn. When she wrote, Margaret Stevenson had gone to Scotland and Mrs and Miss Blundell were in Bournemouth. Effie Baker hopes to make a return visit to Haifa on her way back to Australia.

Shoghi Effendi assures you of his prayers on behalf of your mother, yourself and all the Australasian friends and his hopes that the proposed Magazine may greatly help the spread of the Glad Tidings in Australia and New Zealand.

With warmest greetings and best wishes,

Yours sincerely in the Master's service,

J. E. Esslemont

[From the Guardian:]

My dear fellow-worker:

Your charming letter truly gladdened my heart. I will follow the development of your magazine with keen interest and assure you of my desire to help and promote its interests to the fullest possible extent. I am enclosing the photographs of the shrine and gardens recently laid out in the close neighbourhood of the Shrines of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I assure you of my love, appreciation and fervent prayers.

Yours,
Shoghi

(5) May 28th, 1925

Alláh-u-abhá.

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Shoghi Effendi asks me to thank you on his behalf for your letter of 14th May. He received the letter of Mrs. Amy Thornton all right. I remember answering it for him some weeks ago, so you can set your mind at rest on that score.

The recovery of your Bahá'í ring and stones was very remarkable. It reminds me of a somewhat similar occurrence in Bournemouth. One of our Bahá'í friends had her Bahá'í ring stolen, and nothing was heard or seen of it for some months. Mr King, another of our group, has an antique shop in Bournemouth and one day his partner (a non-Bahá'í) bought a ring from a man who said it was his wife's, but as they had become very badly off she wanted to sell it. When Mr King saw the ring he recognized it as a Bahá'í ring and knowing that this friend had lost her ring, he sent it to me. It turned out to be her ring and she was delighted to recover it. The curious thing is that out of the dozens of jewellers and antique shops in Bournemouth to which the ring might have been taken for sale, it should be taken to the one where there was a Bahá'í who recognized it.

I hope that before you leave Scotland you may be able to go to Aberdeen and see my home people. They would be delighted to see you. My father's address is Fairford, Cults, (about 3 miles from Aberdeen, by car or train). He is 86 years of age and rather frail. My sister looks after him. My two married brothers are Peter Esslemont, 21, Louisville Avenue (Business: John E. Esslemont, 16 King Street) and W.D.E., 12 Wellbrae Terr., Mannofield. Both of their houses are near the Mannofield Car Line.

We were very glad to hear of your meetings with the friends at London and West Moors.

Many thanks for your letter to myself and the excellent snapshots enclosed. I am glad you have fallen in love with Sister Challis and hope you will see her again before you leave. I had a delightful letter yesterday from Miss Kilford of West Moors, whom I regard as a Bahá'í grand-daughter, as she was brought into the Cause by Sister Challis who calls me her Bahá'í father!

We hope Shoghi Effendi will get away soon for a much needed rest. The Greatest Holy Leaf was rather seriously ill last week, but is a good deal better again, although very feeble and frail.

I have been advised by the Drs to leave Haifa for the summer months, as my breathing has lately been troublesome and they think the moist heat during the summer here would be bad for me. On the same day on which this decision was arrived at, I received a cordial invitation to go to a place in the Black Forest for my summer vacation. The Drs considered this place would be ideal for me and that the sooner I got away the better, so I leave in 3 days time. My address will be c/o Frau Victoria von Sigsfeld, Husli, Finsterlingen, bei St Blaisien, Baden, Germany. I hope to return to Haifa in the latter part of Sept. to resume my work here.

Shoghi Effendi, the members of the Holy Household and the friends here join in loving greetings and best wishes.

Your brother in the service of the Beloved,
J. E. Esslemont

Mrs Schopflocher arrived here last night after a very successful tour in Russia, Persia and Iraq.

[From the Guardian:]

My dear co-worker:

I was very glad indeed to learn about your experiences and visit to the friends and your firm determination to labour unceasingly in the Divine Vineyard. I will continue to pray for you that all your relatives and friends may recognise and be illumined with the resplendent Light of this Divine Revelation. Never feel

disheartened and trust me ever your affectionate, grateful and true brother in the service of the Cause.

Shoghi

(6) November 4th, 1925

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Shoghi Effendi received your kind letter and wishes me to acknowledge its receipt. He hopes that on your return to New Zealand you will obtain divine assistance in your services to the Cause. That land has been newly opened to the Bahá'í Movement. The work of the friends therefore, interesting and useful as it may be, is hard and most exacting to one's patience and energy. It needs great perseverance to obtain a hearing among the people and draw their attention to this Blessed Cause. But once that that has been obtained and the way smoothed then progress becomes increasingly great and the fruits of your labours appreciated.

Shoghi Effendi is very glad that you have enjoyed your trip to England. The Friends there though they are few in number, are full of love and affection, one cannot but feel at home among them.

Shoghi Effendi thanks Miss Nora Lee for the kind contribution she has made to the Cause. It will be spent for the progress of this movement so dear to the heart of us all. Enclosed there will be a receipt for that amount.

Shoghi Effendi and the other members of the family send you their best Bahá'í love and greeting and wish you success in your services to the Cause.

Your brother in His Name,
Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dearest fellow-worker:

My prayers accompany you wherever you go. I wish you to be happy, confident and active. Rest assured of my great admiration of your zeal and steadfast labours, of my confidence in the success of your splendid pioneer services and of my eagerness to hear from you about the progress of your work.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(7) December 5th, 1925

To the publisher of the Bahá'í Magazine, "The Herald of the South".

My dear friend and fellow-worker:

I have just heard the welcome news of the publication of the first issue of the Bahá'í Journal, recently established by the friends of Australia and New Zealand. I rejoice in this new and notable Bahá'í enterprise, particularly as it is undertaken by my dearly-beloved and self-sacrificing brothers and sisters in a land which holds so great a promise for the future.

I have followed the progress of the activities of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand with keen interest and ever-increasing confidence, and with a deep sense of pride and gratitude. I most heartily welcome this newly-added link in the chain of the many services, so lovingly and spontaneously rendered by the pioneers of the Cause in these lands. I assure you of my steadfast prayers for the speedy expansion and consolidation of this youngest of all Bahá'í Magazines, and of my earnest endeavours to enable it attain a standard worthy of the bearer of such a noble Message.

It should be the object and purpose of its author and publisher to open its pages to the consideration and review of matters that are strictly Bahá'í in character, as well as to the treatment of topics of a humanitarian, ethical and religious nature; that its readers, while witnessing to the liberal and broad-minded attitude of the Bahá'í Cause, may receive from it their full share of inspiration which only a clear and direct statement of the Divine Message can impart.

Go forth, on thy noble errand, O thou Herald of the South! Join thy voice, however feeble, to those of thy sister-journals who, in various parts of the world, are raising with one accord the call of this new Day of God. Persevere in thy labours, endeavour to reach every circle and every home, that the light

thou bearest may in the fulness of time illuminate with its healing rays the uttermost corners of that distant and troubled continent.

Your well-wisher,
Shoghi

(8) March 4th, 1926

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Your letter to Shoghi Effendi and the enclosed one to Ruhi with the postal order for £10 have been received and read with keen interest and pleasure.

We are all very happy to know that you have had such a pleasant journey back home and that you had the opportunity of delivering the message on so many occasions. We hope and pray that the seed you have sown has fallen on fertile soil and that in time it will grow and bear abundant fruit.

We hope that now through your sustained zeal and effort new life will be infused into your small Bahá'í group, and that it will in the near future grow sufficiently in number to enable you to form an assembly the first to be established in that land. We shall pray at the Holy Threshold for your guidance and the success of your work.

The Greatest Holy Leaf and the Holy Mother remember you well, and they and the other members of the family send their loving greetings to you.

You will be interested to know that the new pilgrim house is being completed, and it will be all ready in a month time for the new pilgrims that will come.

We still have our dear sister Effie Baker with us, and we all love her so; she is so sweet and helpful.

We have just now two American lady friends with us, Auntie Victoria Bedekian and Mrs R. Kehler--very fine Bahá'ís they are and we are expecting some more soon.

I always remember the happy day I spent with you and Effy in London and shall look forward to the pleasure of meeting you again some day--perhaps here in Haifa or in New Zealand, who knows?

I am back at home now for the present, and I am trying to help Shoghi Effendi a little in his enormous task.

He is keeping in good health I am glad to say in spite of his many activities and heavy and manifold responsibilities.

To you he sends his brotherly love and the assurance of his prayers for your welfare and happiness.

With all good wishes and loving greetings,

Your sister in His Service,

Ruh-Anguiz Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

My dear and precious Bahá'í sister:

I cannot but add a few words personally expressing my deep appreciation of your persistent, self-sacrificing services to the Cause. I have devoted your gift towards the Fund for the Western Pilgrim House and I wish to assure you that when I visit the Holy Shrines I tenderly supplicate for you Divine Guidance and strength in your labours for our beloved Cause.

Your true Brother,

Shoghi

(9) April 3rd, 1926

Dear Spiritual Sister:--

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated January 24, 1926.

He hopes that after this long vacation you have had you are ready to begin spreading the Cause in New Zealand with even greater energy than before. The people there seem to be broad in their outlook, receptive to any idea which helps the human family from decreasing its burden.

Shoghi Effendi was most chagrined to hear of the sudden death of your son[1] and wishes me to extend to you his deepest love and sympathy.

There is no special news here except that we have removed to the new pilgrim house. Miss Baker is well and very busy entertaining the friends and arranging the new home.

Shoghi Effendi as well as the other members of the family are well and send you their love and greetings. They earnestly pray for your success and hope to hear, before long, the news of your many victories in the field of services to the Cause.

Please convey my loving greetings to your son and daughter.

Yours most sincerely,
Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear fellow-worker:

I wish to express in person my deep sympathy in the heavy loss you have sustained. May the Beloved Comforter strengthen you and sustain you in your bereavement. The memory of your visit to the Holy Land is still fresh and vivid in my mind and I pray and supplicate at the holy Shrines that your labours in the Cause may yield an abundant harvest.

---

[1] Rev. Oscar Blundell

Your sympathising brother,
Shoghi

Part II

Letters to Individuals, April 21st, 1926--April 21st, 1934.

The first combined National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand was formed in 1934.

(10) August 12th, 1926

My very dear Spiritual Sister:

Shoghi Effendi has been in receipt of your interesting letter dated June 7, 1926. It is a great pity that your health has more or less handicapped you in your service to the Cause. We, however, hope that this weakness will soon vanish and your health and strength be fully restored.

The case of the teacher who has been in Palestine is one really to be lamented. All such persons instead of procuring their information from the very source, when they are so near to it, they go to the Missionaries who are undoubtedly biased. They are immediately told that the Cause is nothing more than a sect of Islam; a Movement that may do immense good to the Muḥammadan world, but far from ranking with Christianity or satisfying its needs. Then they refer this ignorant and innocent person to books such as Brown's. It is their fault for having gone to the wrong source for proper information, but once they have gone it is not their mistake to have been misled. We have heard of many such instances and there is absolutely no remedy except to leave them until they find the truth for themselves. We can only pray for their guidance.

Shoghi Effendi always prays for you as well as the other Auckland friends, so that through your combined efforts the Cause may prosper there, and obtain a strong position in the life of the people. I am not the least familiar with the social conditions there, but I am sure there is a ready field for active service.

Yours in His Name,
Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear fellow-worker:

I rejoice to learn that your dear sons are realizing gradually the significance of this unique and mighty Cause, and my

constant and fervent prayer is that you may witness erelong the fruition of their slow yet sure spiritual evolution. Persevere in your labours for I entertain and cherish the brightest hopes for the future awakening of promising New-Zealand. I shall ever remember the memorable visit of the first New-Zealand believers to the Holy Land. Please assure them of my undying affection.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(11) August 12th, 1926

My dear Spiritual Sister:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated June 7, 1926. It was most interesting to go over your circular letter and read the many points of interest. I was especially struck by the literature you have sent to Lord and Lady Allenby. If they have at all seen them I am sure they were much impressed, for they knew the Master so well. They were surely very astonished to see a group of Bahá'ís formed in such a distant land.

I am very ashamed of myself not to have yet answered your letter of some months ago. It was mainly because Shoghi Effendi wrote you and acknowledged the receipt of your contribution for the pilgrim house that I have been so neglectful. I took Miss Baker's advice on the matter and together we went down-town and bought a set of straw chairs. We thought that would be most appreciated by the friends while sitting in the veranda of the new Pilgrim House.

I remember a prayer, which you wrote, has been asked by a certain friend to be read daily. I believe sometimes the friends through their zeal and ardour do things that are not asked in the Cause. We have only one prayer that we have to say daily. No one in the world has the power, given to him by Bahá'u'lláh to add another to that daily prayer. If we should admit this the life of the friends will soon be spent in mere prayer, which is not the aim of the Cause. The healing prayer and such ones are only for occasional use when the need arises.

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to extend to you his hearty greetings and assure you of his prayers.

Yours in His Name,

Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear fellow-worker:

Your letters are always a source of inspiring joy and stimulating encouragement to me. You are destined to achieve great things for our beloved Cause and my constant prayer is that your vision may be clear, your purpose unshaken, your zeal undiminished, your hopes undimmed. Let not obstacles and disappointments, which are inevitable, dishearten you and whenever you are faced with trials recall our Beloved's innumerable sufferings. You certainly occupy a warm and abiding place in my heart.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(12) August 25th, 1926

Dear Spiritual Sister:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated June 14th 1926, and also thank, through you, the Auckland friends for their kind contribution.

He wishes me to assure you and them of his earnest prayers. He hopes that through your constant endeavours the Cause will progress rapidly in that city and make the spirit of the movement permeate throughout the land. Though your number is still comparatively small yet through divine guidance and the Master's ever wakeful spirit you will soon add many to your group and make of it a power for goodness which will attract all attention.

With best wishes and kindest greetings I remain,

Yours ever sincerely,

Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear fellow-worker:

I am touched by this expression of the loyalty and devotion of the Auckland Bahá'ís whose welfare, and spiritual advancement are the object of my earnest and constant prayer. I shall devote it to further the interests of the Cause in ways that are dearest and nearest to my heart. I shall supplicate the Almighty that strength and wisdom may be given you to face and overcome the obstacles and trials that you will inevitably encounter in future. The end is glorious if we only persevere.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(13) September 18th, 1926

Dear Spiritual Brother:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated July 18, 1926. He was very glad to learn of the encouraging prospects you have for your "Herald of the South". He hopes that it will daily progress and add to its importance in drawing the attention of the people there. A good periodical fully representative of the spirit and teachings of the Cause is the greatest help the Movement can have in establishing itself in a country. So though difficulties may be found at the outset, we should bear them patiently and await that the future should give us our reward.

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to extend to you his loving greetings and assure you, as well as your mother and Mr Brewer, of his constant prayers. He hopes that through your combined efforts the Herald of the South will soon realise its aim and purpose.

Yours in His Service,
Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear and precious co-worker:

Your welcome letter has cheered my heart and I look forward with confidence and joy to the harvest which you are destined to reap in the not distant future. I shall be so pleased and grateful if you would send me regularly a copy of your Bahá'í periodical which I trust and pray will grow from strength to strength and contribute its destined share to the progress and consolidation of the Cause of God. Be assured of my prayers for your happiness, welfare and spiritual advancement.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(14) October 23rd, 1926

Dear Spiritual Sister:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 11–9-26. He was most gratified to learn that the Cause is becoming more and more known and appreciated by the people in New Zealand. This is as important as the actual increase of the number of the friends, for it means that the principles are gradually permeating the thoughts of the people and making them more ready and receptive to the full identification of their beliefs with the precepts of the Cause.

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to assure you of his prayers for you as well as for the other friends in New Zealand. He hopes that they will increase both in number as well as in spiritual understanding and insight. The reports that we occasionally receive from there are most encouraging and hopeful. It seems that the people there due to their breadth of mind and lack of traditional draw-backs show better prospect than many other places.

With deepest loving greetings,

Yours in His Name,

Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear co-worker:

Your letter rejoiced my heart. I request you to persevere and renew your splendid efforts for the consolidation of the work already achieved. I have great hopes in the 'Herald of the South' and trust that the Editor will be guided and strengthened in his noble undertaking. I shall be obliged if you send me copies of any newspapers that may publish anything on the Cause as I am preparing a collection of them in the Holy Land. Please assure the friends in New-Zealand of my continued prayers at the holy Shrines for the success of their pioneer work.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(15) November 3rd, 1926

Dear Spiritual Sister:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated September 13th 1926. He was most gratified to read the nice and encouraging news it contained.[+E5] He hopes that the "Herald of the South" will daily increase in importance and now that it is coming out in printed form, obtain a great number of readers. You should try from the very start to maintain a high standard for its articles. They should be broad in view, clear in style and scholarly in their development of the different subjects. In short the 'public' should be taught to consider it as a paper fully worthwhile to read and meditate upon. Shoghi Effendi will remember in his prayers all those who are working in this noble field of service.

Shoghi Effendi desires that you should extend his loving greetings to all the friends in Auckland. He hopes that through their endeavours and the Master's invisible guiding hand they will succeed to raise the standard of the Cause in that land to such heights that it will arouse the interest of all the seeking souls and in due time win their support.

The members of the Master's family are well and send you their loving greetings.

Yours in His Service,
Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear co-worker:

I shall pray from all my heart for the steady development and the growing influence of the "Herald of the South". May its voice grow in strength and power, and may its pages increasingly reflect the dynamic spirit of the Faith and mirror forth the ever-expanding activities of the friends in Australasia as well as in distant lands. Persevere in your efforts, let not obstacles damp your zeal and determination and rest assured that the Power of

God which is reinforcing your efforts will in the end triumph and enable you to fulfil your cherished desire.

Shoghi

(16) January 11th, 1927

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Our beloved Guardian has asked me to write to you for him. He is very pleased with your letter of Dec. 8th which reached him on Jan. 10th and he is very glad to hear of your activities in New Zealand. He will pray earnestly that your sincere efforts to make Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation widely known will bring forth much fruit and have a great result. In the newer countries minds are more open, and the people more ready and willing to receive this Great Message.

With regard to the Queen of Rumania's 3 articles--he will see that you receive them correctly. He considers the last one in which she acknowledges Muḥammad as a true Prophet of God to have great importance for the East and especially in Persia. This evening, I personally have had a most interesting conversation with Dr. Habíb of Kermanshah[+E6] who is now on a visit to Shoghi Effendi with his wife and little girl. He was telling us of the continued fanaticism of the Moslems of Persia--and how during two periods of the year especially, the fanatical Mullahs preach against the Bahá'ís from their pulpits--saying to the ignorant "No matter what evil things you have done during your life, or what sins you have committed, if you kill a Bahá'í who is an enemy of Islam, or even if you take his property or severely injure him, all your own sins will be wiped out and forgiven for the sake of this good deed of destroying an enemy of the Faith!!"--in this way they incite the people to deeds of violence and persecution. He said that the Bahá'í teachings are spreading rapidly amongst the more educated classes--but it is difficult to teach the very poor and ignorant fanatical people--tho' when they do become Believers, they are very strong and faithful. The 2 periods of particular danger for the Bahá'ís in Persia are the fast month and the period of Moharram[+E7]--which lasts for 8 weeks.

Shoghi Effendi is very interested to hear of the engagement of your son to a Bahá'í young lady--and he prays that in future they may do a great work for the "Cause". He hopes so much that you will recover your full health and strength, and he will pray especially for that. It is good to know that Esperanto is increasingly studied in New Zealand.

He will certainly pray for Miss Palter[2] and her Mother as you ask him to do--and also for your dear son and your two daughters. Please accept all best wishes from myself and Believe me

Yours in His Service,

Ethel J. Rosenberg

[From the Guardian:]

My dear and able co-worker:

I have read the issues of the "Herald" with deep joy and thankfulness. I will continue to pray at the holy shrines that the invincible power of Bahá'u'lláh may add to your present opportunities, extend the sphere of the Journal, and enable you, individually and collectively, to mirror forth the beauty and the power of this Divine Revelation.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

[2] Miss Palter was the fiancee of Bertram Dewing. The name is possibly mis-spelled, and may be "Miss Patton". (Department of the Secretariat, Universal House of Justice. August 16th, 1979)

(17) January 30th, 1927

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to thank you for the M.O. for £1--which he has safely received, sent for the help of the sufferers in Persia.

He is himself sending this money to the Nat. Assembly in Teheran, and has requested them to send him the receipt for it--When he receives their receipt he will forward it to you, and urges you to give it to the friend who sent the money. The Persian friends will be very much pleased at receiving this kind remembrance and help from far distant New Zealand!

With love and warm Bahá'í greetings from the holy household and the friends here, to the dear friends in Auckland.

In the Master's Service,

Sincerely Yours,

Ethel J. Rosenberg

[From the Guardian:]

My dear co-worker:

I am deeply touched by this further evidence of the love and devotion of the New-Zealand Bahá'ís and I will gladly forward their contribution of our friend to the Teheran Assembly to be sent by them to the sufferers in Jahrum. I will ardently pray for every one of you that the Beloved may guide your steps and lead you to glorious victory. I urge you to communicate regularly and frequently with the Bahá'í newsletter editor through Mr Horace Holley and report to him the progress of your activities. It is so essential and valuable.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(18) May 13th, 1927

My dear Bahá'í Sister,

I take pleasure in thanking you on behalf of my dear Guardian for your letter of April 5th.

As a far away outpost of the Bahá'í Faith in New Zealand, he is always delighted to hear from Auckland and especially yourself and your promising Assembly there. You own a warm spot in his heart and he is looking forward to the day when through the efforts of the Auckland Assembly, centres will be established in every town in New Zealand. A firm faith and a golden heart is yours, there still remains to turn other hearts into gold.

Miss Butler is well and often thinks of you. Assuring you of our Guardian's prayers and the love and best wishes of the family who always remember you.

Ever yours in His Service,
Soheil Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear and precious co-worker:

You should exercise your judgement and tact in delivering the message. You should make an effort to understand the character and mind of the seeker before you speak to him on the Cause. I will pray that you may be inspired and guided to follow the path of moderation and may become an exemplary herald of His message in that far-away land.

Your well-wisher,
Shoghi

(19) June 4th, 1929

Dear Spiritual Sister:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of Feb. 14th. He always feels great pleasure to obtain some news from the friends of that distant land and he hopes and prays that through God's blessings and your constant endeavours the Cause will develop in New Zealand and bring into its fold many sincere and devoted souls.

The news that we daily obtain from the different parts of the world bring in wonderful news of the progress of the Movement. The world is gradually appreciating the significance of this Movement which has been for so long misunderstood and denounced.

Yours ever sincerely,
Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear Spiritual Sister:

I wish to assure you in person of my prayers for you as well as the dear and unforgettable friends in Auckland who assuredly occupy a warm and abiding place in my heart. I eagerly await the news of the progress of their work, and trust and pray that the Almighty may guide their steps, and help them to surmount every obstacle.

Shoghi

(20) October 4th, 1930

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated April 6th 1930 written from London. He was very happy to learn that wherever you have been you have received wonderful reception from the friends. Surely, it is only through such acts of hospitality that the true spirit of the Cause is manifested.

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to assure you of his prayers and extend to you his hope that wherever you go you will feel the divine help and guidance. He hopes that in America you will experience the true spirit of love that animates the friends there and that you will give them Shoghi Effendi's greetings.

Yours ever sincerely,
Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear and precious co-worker:

I was much pleased to hear from you and to learn of your experiences. I trust that the same welcome and loving-kindness will be extended to you by the American friends. You are often in my thoughts, and I will continue to pray for your spiritual as well as material welfare and advancement. Convey, when you write to your Mother, my loving and affectionate greetings.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(21) May 18th, 1931

My dear Bahá'í Sister:

I thank you on behalf of the Guardian for your letter of April 16th.

He was very glad to know that you are now on your way to England by way of America and he hopes that you will find the occasion and the means of visiting the friends and making permanent connections with them. Bertram will of course be delighted to meet you and we hope he is successful in his work there.

I suppose you have all the London addresses as the friends there would be delighted to meet you. Of course if you do decide to visit Haifa on your way back, Shoghi Effendi wishes me to assure you of a most hearty welcome.

With his loving greetings to you all and to the young couple in England and with much love from all here.

Sincerely yours,
Soheil Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear co-worker:

I was so pleased to hear from you and of your plans. I do hope you will be able to visit the Holy Land where you would be most welcome in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home. I will pray for the success of your efforts from the depths of my heart when I visit the holy shrines. May the Beloved enable you to render distinguished services to His Cause and remove every obstacle from your path.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(22) December 17th, 1931

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated Dec. 2nd 1931. He is very sorry that you cannot on your way to New Zealand, break your journey and come over for a short visit to Haifa. But these are such difficult days that we should not be astonished and discouraged if our plans fail. He hopes however that on your way you will meet the friends, especially those in Port Said, for we have no centers in Haifa and Colombo.

He was also very sorry to hear that Bertram has to give up his studies and return home. Shoghi Effendi hopes that this period he spent in America would be itself an education that would help him in his work in serving the Cause. His activities with the young people there should have made him very experienced and have deepened his understanding of the Faith.

I believe Mrs Dunn is planning to come this spring for a visit to Haifa. Perhaps you will meet her before she starts, Shoghi Effendi is eagerly waiting to see this noble soul who introduced the Cause into Australia and has been so self-sacrificing in her services.

Shoghi Effendi hopes that on returning home you will start again to serve the Cause and attract new souls. The world is in great distress and its only salvation is in the spirit and teachings of the Blessed Beauty. Let us not, we who are the trustees of that divine message, fail in accomplishing our task and fulfilling our purpose.

Assuring you of Shoghi Effendi's best wishes I remain

Yours ever sincerely,

Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-worker:

I am wiring the friends in Port-Said to meet you on your arrival and I very much regret your inability to come to Haifa and visit the holy shrines. I will continue to pray for you, for your son-in-law and for your dear and promising son for whose future work in the Cause I cherish the brightest hopes. I will also remember in my prayers the friends in far-away Australia and New Zealand and will supplicate for them all the Master's richest blessings and unfailing guidance.

Shoghi

(23) April 29th, 1933

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to thank you[+E8] for your kind letter of March 16th 1933, as well as the enclosed article which has been translated by Mr. Paul into the Maori language.

The Guardian has already written Mr. Paul and expressed to him his deep appreciation for the service he has rendered to the Faith, but especially to his own people who through the means of such literature will be acquainted with the teachings and will receive the light of guidance brought to the world by Bahá'u'lláh.

I believe the Guardian has already intimated his approval of this pamphlet and the desire that the friends in Australia publish and circulate it among the Maoris.

As regards the passages in the sacred writings indicating the wrath of God; Shoghi Effendi says that the Divinity has many attributes: He is loving and merciful but also just. Just as reward and punishment, according to Bahá'u'lláh, are the pillars upon which society rests, so mercy and justice may be considered as their counterpart in the world to come. Should we disobey God and work against His commands He will view our acts in the light of justice and punish us for it. That punishment may not be in the form of fire, as some believe, but in the form of spiritual deprivation and degradation. This is why we read so often in the prayers statements such as "God do not deal with us with justice, but rather through thy infinite mercy." The wrath of God is in the administration of His justice, both in this world and in the world to come. A God that is only loving or only just is not a perfect God. The divinity has to possess both of these aspects as every father ought to express both in his attitude towards his children. If we ponder a while, we will see that our welfare can be insured only when both of these divine attributes are equally emphasised and practiced.

In closing may I express the Guardian's loving greetings and best wishes for the progress of your work in serving the Cause.

Yours ever sincerely,
Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

May the Almighty bless your efforts, deepen your understanding of the essentials and distinguishing features of His Faith, guide your steps, and aid and assist you to extend the range of your activities and services.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(24) September 1st, 1933

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Shoghi Effendi has directed me to address you these few lines, acknowledging the receipt of your welcome letter of July 20th, 33, which he has read with deepest interest. He was gratified to learn that you have newly embraced the Cause and that you are earnestly endeavouring to spread it through every possible means. It is on young and active Bahá'ís, like you, that the Guardian centers 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.

The Guardian is fully conscious of the difficulties that impede the progress of the Faith in your community. Chief among these, you mention the lack of courage and of initiative on the part of the believers, and a feeling of inferiority complex which prevents them from addressing the public. It is precisely these weaknesses that he wishes the friends to overcome, for these do not only paralyze their efforts but actually serve to quench the flame of faith in their hearts. Not until all the friends come to realize that every one of them is able, in his own measure, to deliver the Message, can they ever hope to reach the goal that has been set before them by a loving and wise Master. It is no use waiting for some able and eloquent teacher to take all the responsibility for the spread of the Cause. For such a thing is not only contrary to the spirit of the Teachings but to the explicit text of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, both of whom place the obligation of teaching not on any particular class, as in former ecclesiastical organizations, but on every faithful

and loyal follower of the Cause. The teaching of the Word is thus made universal and compulsory. How long then shall we wait to carry out this command, the full wisdom of which only future generations will be able to appreciate? We have no special teachers in the Cause. Everyone is a potential teacher. He has only to use what God has given him and thus prove that he is faithful to his trust.

Visiting teachers, who are, at least in a general way, supposed to be more competent and able than the rest, are undoubtedly of a great help. But these can never replace the mass of individual believers and fulfil what must be inevitably accomplished through the collective effort and wisdom of the community at large. What visiting teachers are supposed to do is to give the final touch to the work that has been done, to consolidate rather than supplement individual efforts and thereby direct them in a constructive and suitable channel. Their task is to encourage and inspire individual believers, and to broaden and deepen their vision of the task that is to be done. And this, not by virtue of any inherent spiritual right, but in the spirit of simple and whole-hearted cooperation.

It is in this light that Shoghi Effendi views the whole problem of teaching not only in New Zealand but in all the Bahá'í world. He would, therefore, encourage you to take a leading part in the carrying out of his wishes on this point, to take yourself an active interest in teaching, not only private but also public, and in this way stimulate the friends to follow your example. It is then, and only then, that there can be a need for a qualified and competent visiting teacher in order to bring to full fruition individual teaching efforts.

Assuring you of our Guardian's fervent prayers on your behalf, so that you may be increasingly blessed in your efforts for the spread of the Message.

Yours in His Service,
H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Beloved guide your steps, cheer your heart, deepen your understanding of the distinguishing features of His Faith and enable you to render the sacred Threshold unique and inestimable services,

Your true brother,
Shoghi

Part III

Letters to Individuals, May 1934–1957.

The first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand was formed in 1957.

(25) June 13th, 1934

Dear Bahá'í Brother,

The Guardian has duly received and deeply enjoyed reading your letters dated November 30th, December 27th, 1933 and February 4th, 1934. He is sorry that unforeseen circumstances have caused such a long delay in acknowledging their receipt. He hopes, however, that the matters you have submitted for his consideration have not suffered as a result.

Since your last letter to him, he has heard of the gratifying news of the formation of your N.S.A.[3] This historic step in the development of the Administration in Australia and New Zealand is, he feels, bound to react favourably on the further expansion and consolidation of the Faith in these far-off lands. He is fervently supplicating Bahá'u'lláh that the newly-elected members of the N.S.A.,[4] upon whom has been placed such a tremendous responsibility, be assisted in the discharge of their sacred obligations and duties to the Faith.

Yours in His Service,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-worker:

The splendid reports you have sent me have been incorporated in the manuscript and sent to the Bahá'í World Committee in America. The formation of the national assembly of Australia and New Zealand will no doubt furnish you with new and refreshing material for your next report in 1936. I will pray for your success and deeply value the manifold and constant services you are rendering the Cause of God.

Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

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[3] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand

[4] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand

(26) December 22nd, 1934

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Guardian was profoundly grieved to learn of the passing away of your dear mother, and has directed me to convey to you and to the bereaved members of your family, his heartfelt condolences and sympathy for this severe loss which you have sustained.

Mrs Blundell's departure is, indeed, a loss not only to her family, but also to the community of her fellow-believers in New Zealand. For in her they have come to lose one of their oldest and most distinguished co-workers.

The Guardian well remembers her pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and has always cherished the hope that she would once more be enabled to visit the shrines. But alas, her departed soul has taken its flight from this world, leaving her friends and relatives in a state of profoundest grief. Their only consolation now is the realization that through her painstaking and sustained labours for the Cause in Auckland Mrs Blundell has left an abiding monument to her memory, and one which will continue for many years to come to inspire and strengthen them all in their collective endeavours for the establishment of the Faith in New Zealand.

Shoghi Effendi is fervently praying for the soul of our departed sister, and is entreating Bahá'u'lláh to give her her full share of divine blessings in the other world.

May I also assure you of his ardent supplications for you, and for all the friends in Auckland.

Yours in His Service,
H. Rabbani

(27) January 21st, 1935

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Shoghi Effendi has just been in receipt of your kind letter of the fourteenth of December last, and has read its contents with deep interest and gratification. It made him so happy, indeed, to learn that you are pursuing your activities for the Faith with such steadfastness and self-sacrifice, and also that through your beautiful and loving spirit those members of your family who have not yet embraced the Faith are being gradually attracted to it. He is ardently entreating Bahá'u'lláh that through your inspiration and guidance their interest in the Teachings may wax stronger and lead them to eventually espouse His Cause.

With reference to the suggestion made by Mr Alexander[5] for taking a record of the Guardian's voice, he wishes me to inform you that although he fully appreciates the spirit in which this and similar suggestions are made to him he is, nevertheless, extremely reluctant that the believers should give any prominence to his writings, specially in the meetings which, he is firmly convinced, should be chiefly devoted to the reading and study of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master.

In closing will you kindly convey his greetings and appreciation to all the friends in Auckland, and particularly to the members of your family who, he hopes, will be assisted and sustained in their labours for the spread of the Message.

Yours in His Service,
H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-worker:

I am deeply grateful for the services you are so devotedly rendering and the efforts you are so diligently exerting for the

[5] Dick Alexander was the fiance of Miss Vera Dewing. (Department of the Secretariat, Universal House of Justice. August 16th, 1979)

promotion of our beloved Faith. I will continue to pray for you and your dear co-workers from the depths of my heart.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(28) February 5th, 1935

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Guardian has just received your kind message of the second of January last, and wishes me to thank you for it.

It comforted him greatly to learn that, despite the severe loss which you have sustained through the passing away of your mother, you are still engaged as actively as before in the work which you have set your heart to accomplish for the Cause in Auckland. The agonies of her earthly separation from you, difficult though they may be to bear, will assuredly be transmuted through the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh into a peaceful and abiding joy. In serving a Cause for which your mother sacrificed so much you will no doubt come to find the very purpose of your life, and the true secret of happiness in this, as well as in the next world.

The Guardian is fervently praying for you and for your brother, that you both may be strengthened and guided in your services to the Cause, and in this way continue and enrich still further the noble heritage which your mother has left for the Faith in New-Zealand.

With loving Bahá'í greetings to you and to all the friends in Auckland.

Yours in His Service,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Dear co-worker:

I wish to assure you in person of my heartfelt sympathy in the loss you have sustained, and of my loving and ardent prayers for the departed soul. The work with which her name will for ever be associated will confer upon her imperishable glory, and her example will serve to stimulate the rising generation to follow in her footsteps, and carry on the work she has so nobly initiated.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(29) May 20th, 1936

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Many thanks indeed from the Guardian for your welcome message of April 17th just received. He would certainly be delighted to meet you in Haifa next year, and hopes that your visit to the Holy Shrines will give you a fresh vigour and a renewed determination to carry on your work for the Cause. He specially cherishes the hope that your trip to England will be of great benefit to you, and also to our English believers. They will be only too happy to welcome you in their midst, and will thoroughly appreciate any assistance which you may give them during your sojourn in England.

The Guardian has learned with deep gratification of the news of the teaching work carried on by the Auckland believers. He wishes you to kindly assure them all of his best wishes and fervent prayers for the success of their labours. May Bahá'u'lláh bless, guide and strengthen them in every step they are taking for the spread of His Faith and the consolidation of its institutions in this far-off land.

Assuring you too of his special prayers on your behalf at the Holy Shrines, and with warmest greetings,

Yours in His Service,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Assuring you of a most hearty welcome, and wishing you good-health, happiness and success,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(30) September 30th, 1936

Beloved Bahá'í Sister,

Your welcome letter dated August 17th has been received and read with deepest appreciation by the Guardian.

May I again express his sincere hope that your long-cherished desire to visit the Holy Shrines may be fulfilled very soon, and that through this pilgrimage you may attain a renewed zeal and vigour, as well as a new vision of the task you are called upon to accomplish for the Faith in New-Zealand.

In closing let me assure you and your fellow-workers in Auckland of his profound appreciation of your determination to press forward the work in the teaching field. He is ardently praying for the guidance and success of your labours.

With warmest greetings,

Yours in His Service,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Beloved fulfil your heart's desire, and enable you to promote effectively the sacred and manifold interests of our beloved and glorious Faith,

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi

(31) December 7th, 1936

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Guardian is in receipt of your letter of the fifth November, and exceedingly regrets that, owing to certain family difficulties, you have found it necessary to cancel your trip to the Holy Land. He is specially grieved to learn of the many cares and sorrows with which your daughter has been so sadly afflicted of late, and wishes me to hasten to convey to you his most loving sympathy, as well as the assurance of his prayers for the removal of the family troubles with which you are beset. He fervently hopes that these afflictive trials confronting you and your beloved daughter will all serve to quicken your spiritual energies, and that the outcome of it all will be to open before you new horizons of service, and fresh fields for teaching the Message. May Bahá'u'lláh give you patience to courageously withstand these tests, and full guidance to use them as a means to more active, concentrated and selfless service to His Cause. Do assure, therefore, your daughter not to feel disheartened, but to confidently endeavour to overcome her domestic sorrows and cares.

In closing may I express the Guardian's hope that, as soon as your family problems are solved, you may be able to undertake your long-cherished pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines. He is ardently praying for the materialization of your hopes and plans in this connection.

It is a pleasure to learn of the successful visit of Mr Schopflocher[6] to Auckland, and of the warm welcome he has been accorded by you and the friends. This is a true evidence of the strong ties of fellowship so closely uniting the friends throughout the world, and of the deep affection which the believers in New-Zealand cherish for their fellow-believers in every region and clime.

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[6] Fred Schopflocher was appointed Hand of the Cause of God in Canada on February 29th, 1952.

With renewed and warmest greetings to you and to the friends in Auckland,

Yours in the Guardian's Service,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Assuring you of my loving and ardent prayers for the removal of every obstacle from your path, and for the speedy realization of your dearest hopes,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(32) November 8th, 1937

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Many thanks for your letter of September 16th addressed to our beloved Guardian. He is most pleased indeed to hear of Miss Holloway's interest in the Cause and appreciates keenly your efforts for bringing about her full confirmation in the Faith. He is, at your suggestion, writing her directly and giving her the addresses of some individuals and centers in South Africa. He hopes that through contact with the friends her interest in the Teachings will be considerably increased and she will be stimulated to help in spreading their knowledge throughout South Africa.

The Guardian wishes you to keep in closest touch with her through correspondence, and to send her suitable literature on the Cause, and to endeavour to make her join actively the Faith.

Again with many thanks for introducing this lady who indeed seems to be a most promising worker, and with loving greetings to all the friends in Auckland.

Yours ever in His Service,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Beloved bless you and aid you to surmount all obstacles that may stand in your path, and aid you to lend a fresh impetus to the work that has been so splendidly initiated.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(33) May 17th, 1938

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Guardian is in receipt of your letter of the 19th ins., and is indeed pleased to know that your visit to Cairo has been so happy and successful, and that the friends have extended to you such a warm hospitality all through your stay.[+E9]

He hopes this letter will find you well, and enjoying your visit to your relatives and fellow-believers in England.

With loving remembrances, and renewed thanks for your message,

Yours in His Service,
H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Beloved fulfil your heart's desire in the service of His Faith, and enable you to promote effectively the interests of its new-born institutions.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

(34) December 20th, 1938

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Your very cordial message of the 17th November addressed to our beloved Guardian has duly reached him, and he has noted with keen appreciation indeed the desire you had expressed of visiting the Holy Shrines on your way back to New-Zealand.

As you must have surely read in the newspapers, however, the general situation in Palestine is at present so gravely disturbed as to make it quite impossible for you to undertake this trip in the next few months, and in view of this the Guardian would advise that you postpone your visit until the November of next year, by which time, it is hoped, the situation throughout the country will have sufficiently improved to permit you to undertake this long-cherished pilgrimage. The Guardian, needless to say, would be also most delighted to meet you, and to hear from you directly of the news of the Cause in New-Zealand, and to discuss certain matters which the N.S.A.[7] has asked you to present to him for his instructions.

Regarding your question whether there is any special ceremony which the believers should perform when they wish to "name" a baby; the Teachings do not provide for any ceremony whatever on such occasions. We have no "baptismal service" in the Cause, such as the Christians have. There would be no objection, however, for the friends to come together on such happy occasions, provided they do not hold an official public ceremony, and provided also they strictly avoid uniformity and rigidity in all such practices. No rule whatsoever that would tend to be rigid and uniform should be allowed in such secondary matters, particularly as there are no specific instructions in the Teachings regarding them.

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[7] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand

With the warmest good wishes of the Guardian to you and to the friends, and assuring you again of his hearty welcome to visit the Holy Shrines during next autumn, and with greetings,

Yours in His Service,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-worker:

I shall indeed grieve if the situation in Palestine should prevent our meeting and prevent your pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines. I pray that this may not be the case. I am so eager to meet you, and express in person my deep and abiding sense of appreciation of the splendid and historic services you have rendered. I will continue to pray for you from the depths of my heart.

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi

(35) March 20th, 1939

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

I am directed by our beloved Guardian to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated February 25th, informing him of the date of your departure from England, and your inability to defer your visit to Haifa till next November. He regrets indeed that you should find it impossible to extend your stay in Europe and come to Palestine in autumn, as the situation here is now so tense and dangerous that there seems very little hope of any real amelioration in security conditions to take place by next May. General conditions throughout the country are, at present, even worse than a month ago, and the tension is daily increasing.

In case, however, security is reestablished by the time you reach Port-Said, you would be welcome to visit the Shrines, but the Guardian would be still away.

Wishing you again a successful and happy return home, and with the renewed assurance of the Guardian's prayers for your welfare, protection and guidance,

Yours most sincerely,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-worker:

I deeply regret that the situation in Palestine has not yet improved as I realize how eager you are to visit the Holy Shrines. If however when you reach Port-Said it will at all be possible for you to visit the Shrine, you will be most welcome, I assure you. May the Almighty fulfil the dearest hope of your heart,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(36) August 3rd, 1941

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Shoghi Effendi has instructed me to answer your letter to him of May 10th, which just came.

He was, as already expressed in the cable he sent you, greatly impressed by the statement in the Quarterly on the true Bahá'í attitude at the present time. It displayed a correctness of viewpoint, a courage, and a loyalty to Bahá'u'lláh which has led him to disseminate it far and wide: in the American News Letter, in the two Haifa News Letters, English and Persian, etc. It was indeed a timely and most noble contribution to the Faith.

The friends in both Australia and New Zealand seem to have developed a most outstanding soundness in their relation to the teachings. This leads Shoghi Effendi to believe that they will make great contributions to the unfoldment of the world-wide aspects of the Faith.

His prayers are always with you, and he most deeply appreciates the splendid services you are rendering the Cause, and will pray that the way will open for you to do even greater work and in an ever widening field.

Please assure all the dear friends of Auckland of his loving remembrance and his prayers for their work.

With Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-worker:

I cannot refrain from adding a few words in person to assure you of my lively appreciation of your constancy and of the distinctive services you are so ably and devotedly rendering our beloved Faith. That you may be able to extend their range is my fervent and constant prayer. Persevere, and be confident and happy.

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi

(37) December 19th, 1947

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

Your letter to our beloved Guardian, dated Dec. 12th has been received, and he has instructed me to answer it on his behalf. The previous letter you mention cannot have reached him, as he always replies to letters from the friends.

Your book[+E10] touches on a very important subject, and he regrets that he cannot read it himself. His work is so pressing and multiplying so fast that he invariably refuses to go over the manuscripts the friends send him as he simply cannot attend to such things as well as all his other work. You should send it to the Reviewing Com. in the U.S.A. and ask their advice. Perhaps an outside publisher would be interested in it? The Bahá'í funds have such heavy demands made on them at present that even essential literature must often wait to be published, unfortunately.

He fully appreciates the fact that the believers locally, in different parts of the world, often feel that their political party is in many ways striving to accomplish ideals akin to our Bahá'í aims--but the fact remains that the only way for the Bahá'ís to preserve their international character, their unity and integrity, is for them individually to sacrifice these desired political affiliations for the universal good and protection of the Faith. There is no political party in existence with whose platform we wholly agree, and we must abstain from membership in such parties. Likewise people who join the Faith must have the courage and conviction to leave their political affiliations behind.

There is no reason why this should cause enmity as they are not joining another party, but a universal Faith striving for the advancement of the entire human race. He thinks there is very little possibility of any politician joining the Faith. The sacrifice of such individuals' personal ambitions is too great a one for them to make. The condition of the world today is such that it is obvious no political solution to its problems is going to be found.

We Bahá'ís must therefore concentrate on Bahá'u'lláh's World Order--the true solution.

He assures you he will pray your teaching labours may be very successful. He will also pray for your dear mother's welfare.

With warmest greetings,

R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your welfare and success in the service of our beloved Faith,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(38) November 23rd, 1949

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of October 28 has been received, and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

First, let me say how very deeply he appreciates the services you have been rendering our glorious Faith in Australia, and particularly Perth, during the past two years. Your trip has been of real assistance to the teaching work, and it pleased him greatly.

Regarding Mr. ...: it was with the approval of the Guardian that his name was removed from the voting list. It is very bad for the Cause to have a member of the Community, actively, in the public eye, teaching the Faith, and at the same time showing dishonest characteristics. We cannot possibly say that because a person also has many virtues, faults as grave as lying and dishonourable conduct regarding money, can be overlooked! This means that we tolerate as representatives of our Faith people who flagrantly disobey its laws and fundamental teachings. This does not mean there is no hope for Mr. ...; let him change his conduct, if he really loves the Cause, and then a way will be opened for him to again be active. But the change must be real and obvious; mere protestations will serve no purpose.

He urges you to continue your services in the teaching field in New Zealand, and also to write to the friends in Australia who are disturbed about Mr. ..., and strengthen their faith and determination.

With warmest greetings,

R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Almighty, Whose Cause you serve with such zeal and devotion, reward you for your labours, and graciously assist you to win great victories for His Faith and its institutions,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(39) December 18th, 1949

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

Your letter of November 1st was received, and, although our beloved Guardian is so busy at present on the Shrine work here that his mail is piling up alarmingly, he does want to send you a word of appreciation for your fine, constructive spirit and the services you are rendering the Faith.

Vicious criticism is indeed a calamity. But its root is lack of faith in the system of Bahá'u'lláh (i.e. the administrative order) and lack of obedience to Him--for He has forbidden it. If the Bahá'ís would follow the Bahá'í laws in voting, in electing, in serving, and in abiding by assembly decisions, all this waste of strength thru criticizing others could be diverted into cooperation and achieving the Plan. Keep on trying to point this out to them!

With Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Assuring you of my loving prayers for the success of every effort you exert for the promotion of our beloved Faith, and the realization of every desire you cherish for its progress,

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi

(40) June 11th, 1952

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your two letters of May 25th have been received, and the beloved Guardian thanks you for them, and for the loving sympathy which you express.

He hopes that you will make every effort to attend the New Delhi Conference, as it will be a very historic occasion, and the more Bahá'ís from Australia and New Zealand that are present, the better.

You should get in touch with the Indian National Spiritual Assembly as regards accommodation etc.

This has been a very tiring winter for the beloved Guardian. He has had so many pilgrims, and so many problems locally, and an ever-increasing amount of work, so I will make this letter brief.

He assures you your services are deeply appreciated, and that he will remember you in his prayers.

With warm Bahá'í greetings,

R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you, and enable you to promote the best interests of His Faith,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(41) January 6th, 1955

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of December 21st with enclosure has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He is happy to know that the New Zealand Hazíratu'l-Quds is being made attractive for the many activities that will take place in this Center, and he hopes it will become the means of the greatest unity and loving cooperation among the friends.

He assures all the friends in New Zealand of his deep appreciation of their devoted services.

With warm Bahá'í greetings,

R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you, and enable you to promote, at all times, the vital interests of His Faith,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

Part IV

Letters to Bahá'í Institutions.

These letters are presented chronologically and show the development of the institutions--Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Auckland, the National Spiritual Assembly, the Regional Teaching Committee.

(42) March 31st, 1926

Dear Spiritual Sister:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated Feb. 18th 1926. He well appreciates the whole-hearted contributions the friends, the world over, have made to safeguard the neighbourhood of the shrines. We all hope that this spirit of quick response and action will permeate all the different activities of the Cause.

Shoghi Effendi as well as the other members of the family send you, and through you, the Australian and New Zealand friends their best love and greetings. They all await the good news of the progress of the Movement in Australasia.

With loving greetings I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

Ruhi Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

My dear fellow-worker,

I fully appreciate the self-sacrificing efforts of the New-Zealand Bahá'ís and am glad to inform them that the surroundings of the Shrines on Mt Carmel are secure. May the Beloved reward them a hundredfold! Convey my love and gratitude to them all.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(43) May 14th, 1926

My dear Bahá'í sister,

I thank you on behalf of Shoghi Effendi for your letter of Mar. 8th and for the second copy of the draft that you had sent enclosed.

He has already received and cashed the first draft and has sent you the receipt for it.

He appreciates very much indeed the help of the New Zealand friends and I am sure they would all be very glad to know that the surroundings of the holy Shrines on Mt Carmel have already been safeguarded. This is such a relief to Shoghi Effendi and all the friends who feared lest the approaches should fall into the hands of speculators and interested men.

With heartfelt greetings to the friends in New Zealand. I am

Yours ever in His Service,

Soheil Afnan

[From the Guardian:]

Dear fellow-worker:

I wish to reassure you in person of my continued prayers for you as well as for those friends who in the distant city of Auckland are labouring for the advancement of the Cause in New Zealand. Please convey to them my brotherly greetings and very best wishes. I can never forget them and they are ever near to me.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(44) January 7th, 1935

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Guardian has duly received your beautiful message of 2nd of December, and he wishes me to thank you for it, as well as for the enclosed copy of the Auckland Assembly's circular letter which he has delivered to the spiritual assembly of Haifa for their perusal.

He also wishes me to ask you to kindly inform Mrs Blundell of the receipt of the twenty five copies of the Maori pamphlet which she had lately mailed to him. These, together with those she had sent previously, have all been placed in his own library, and a few copies have also been placed in the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí for the information of the general public.

In closing the Guardian wishes me to renew to you the expressions of his abiding and genuine appreciation of your labours for the Cause in Auckland, and particularly in connection with your duties as secretary of the local assembly. He is praying from the very depths of his heart for your progress and success in this important field of Bahá'í service.

With heartiest greetings to you and all the friends.

Yours in His Service,

H. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Dearly beloved co-worker:

I wish to assure you of my deepest appreciation of your constant and manifold services to the Faith, and particularly of the share you have had in consolidating its administrative institutions in both Australia and New Zealand, whether local or national. My prayers will continue to be offered from the bottom of my heart for you and for your dear co-workers. Persevere and never feel disheartened.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(45) September 26th, 1935

Beloved Bahá'í co-worker,

...In connection with the N.S.A.'s[8] decision regarding the appointment of Mrs. Axford and Mr. Inman to keep records of Australian and New-Zealand activities for the "Bahá'í World"; the Guardian wishes you to assure your fellow-members in the assembly that he fully endorses their choice. He also wishes you to impress the newly-appointed correspondents with the vital importance of their task, and to urge them to acquit themselves of it with thoroughness, efficiency and vigour....

(Extract from "Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand 1923–1957". p. 10. Published by The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia Incorporated, 1970.)

[8] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand

(46) April 26th, 1936

Beloved Bahá'í Sister,

I am directed by the Guardian to thank you for your letter of the 30th March informing him of the date of Miss Kitty Carpenter's arrival in Port-Said. You can be sure that the friends will be most delighted to meet her, and to render her journey to Haifa as safe and comfortable as possible.

The Guardian himself is eagerly looking forward to the pleasure of meeting her, and cherishes the hope that through this pilgrimage she may receive a renewed stimulus to better work for the promotion of the Faith upon her return home....

(Extract, ibid., p. 13)

(47) June 10th, 1936

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

...The Guardian would also advise that the local assemblies take a similar step, and obtain official recognition from the authorities. In case the Auckland assembly has been registered in the government, will you be so kind as to send him photostatic reproductions of any registration papers or documents that the Auckland friends may have obtained from the authorities, as he wishes to have them published in the next "Bahá'í World"....

(Extract, ibid., p. 14)

(48) November 17th, 1936

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

On behalf of the Guardian I acknowledge with deepest thanks the receipt of your letter of the 17th October, and wish also to thank your Assembly for forwarding to him the photostatic reproduction of the registration certificate of the Assembly of Auckland....

(Extract, ibid., p. 18)

(49) January 31st, 1938

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Guardian wishes me to express his loving thanks for your letter of the third instant, enclosing the half-yearly reports of the Perth and Auckland Spiritual Assemblies, all of which he has been delighted to read.

He wishes you to write the Auckland Assembly assuring them of his approval of the request they have made on behalf of Miss Kitty Carpenter for permission to visit Haifa. He has every hope that through this pilgrimage she will be greatly refreshed and strengthened spiritually, and will upon her return home impart to the friends in New-Zealand some measure of the inspiration she will gain through close contact with the Holy Shrines....

(Extract, ibid., p. 24)

(50) November 2nd, 1938

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

...The Guardian wishes me to express his gratification at the news of the enrolment of three new members in the Sydney Bahá'í group, and of two others in the Auckland community. He will pray that these new believers may continue deepening in their faith, and in their understanding of the Teachings, and that each of them may arise and lend every assistance in his power to the further expansion and firmer consolidation of the Faith in that far-off continent....

(Extract, ibid., p. 28)

(51) March 22nd, 1939

Dear Bahá'í Brothers and Sisters,

The Guardian wishes me to gratefully acknowledge the receipt of your card conveying to him your Assembly's greetings for Naw-Rúz, and to assure you how deeply he feels appreciative of the renewed expressions of love which you had felt prompted to transmit to him on such a happy and blessed occasion.

He immeasurably values indeed your sentiments, and wishes me to take this opportunity of assuring your Assembly, and all the members of the Auckland Bahá'í Community, of his ardent prayers for the further extension of the Faith, and its firmer consolidation in your centre, and for the spiritual advancement and welfare of each and every member of your group. May this new Bahá'í Year we have just entered witness a fresh intensification of the spirit of service in the heart of each one of you, and lead you to scale still nobler heights of service and sacrifice in your stewardship to the Cause.

Reciprocating your kind greetings and with all good wishes for a happy Naw-Rúz.

Yours in His Service,
H. Rabbani

(52) April 19th, 1941

Dear Bahá'í friends,

...He was very sorry to learn that Miss Stevenson has passed on. He will pray for her joy and advancement in the Worlds beyond. She had the great honour and blessing of being the first New-Zealand believer and her reward must be great....

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-workers:

...The passing of yet another staunch and indefatigable worker, Miss Stevenson, constitutes yet another loss to the believers in that continent. The work which that exemplary pioneer has achieved however is imperishable. Kindly assure her relatives of my deepfelt sympathy.

Sh.

(Extract, ibid., pp. 38, 39)

(53) April 25th, 1941

Dear Bahá'í friends:

Shoghi Effendi has instructed me to answer your Naw-Rúz greetings of the year 98.

He deeply appreciated your thought in sending him a message at such a time. The loving remembrance of the friends is dear to his heart in these heavy and sad times.

He assures you that the friends of Australia and New Zealand are often in his thoughts and prayers, and he is so pleased with the continued evidences of their devotion and services to the Cause of God.

With Bahá'í greetings,

Yours in His Service,

R. Rabbani

(54) April 18th, 1942

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

...He was delighted to learn that the New Zealand members were able to make the trip to Australia, and that such a highly satisfactory N.S.A. meeting was held, in such a spirit of love and harmony. No doubt this experience will prove of great value, not only to the National Assembly, but also to the work of the Cause in the days to come....

(Extract, ibid., p. 45)

(55) May 12th, 1944

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letters dated March 1st, 25th and March 21st--Bahá'í Naw-Rúz greeting--have been received, and the Guardian has instructed me to answer them on his behalf.

He was very pleased indeed to hear that the Cause in New Zealand is not only steadily progressing but that it is winning such good friends as Rev. Chandler. Also the preparations you are making for the Centenary should serve to not only publicise the Faith, but bring the believers closer to liberal-minded fellow-citizens.

He himself is at present frightfully busy with local preparations for the Centenary and with cables and correspondence--but he wishes you all to know that his thoughts will be with you on this glorious day of the 100th anniversary of the Báb's declaration, and he will pray for all the New Zealand Bahá'ís in the Holy Shrines.

With most loving greetings and best wishes from the Guardian for the success of all your plans.

Yours with Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

P.S. He appreciated very much your sending Naw-Rúz greetings.

[From the Guardian:]

May the Beloved bless your efforts, guide your steps, sustain you in your devoted endeavours, and enable you to promote effectively the best interests of His Faith.

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi

(56) December 18th, 1949

Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Auckland, N.Z.

Dear Bahá'í friends:

Your letter of October 25th was received and our Guardian was delighted to hear the details of this property you have purchased, and which he trusts will grow to be a very important Bahá'í endowment. He will be pleased to receive the pictures of it.

He felt that no name could be more befitting than that of dear father Dunn. May the spirit this wonderful soul exemplified stream forth from your school and quicken those Islands.

With Bahá'í greetings,

R. Rabbani

P.S. Since writing this letter yours of Nov. 29 has been received. He will certainly pray for the success of your Summer School sessions so soon to begin and for the speedy development of the new school property you have just purchased.

[From the Guardian:]

May the Almighty bless bountifully your meritorious labours, guide and sustain you, at all times and under all circumstances, aid you to overcome every obstacle that confronts you and enable you to lend a tremendous impetus, in the days to come, to the progress of your historic work in that promising and far-away Island.

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi

(57) June 28th, 1950

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand.

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

...As Mrs Axford requested Mrs Thomas to write about her Bahá'í life there is every reason to respect her wishes. This in no way precludes the New Zealand Community from writing about her services and life and keeping this record in the National archives. The Guardian feels the Auckland Assembly should be consulted, as her, (Mrs Axford's), home community, by Mrs Thomas. He hopes this In Memoriam article, about so dear and tireless a servant of the Faith, will produce a spirit of love and co-operation amongst all concerned....

The acquisition of the site for the New Zealand Summer School was a great step forward in the progress of the Faith there, and he was very pleased about it. He was also delighted to hear of the formation of the Devonport Assembly, and he hopes next year there will be still more....

(Extract, ibid., p. 83)

(58) November 1st, 1950

Secretary,
Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Auckland, New Zealand

Dear Bahá'í Brother,

Your letter on behalf of the Assembly, (as well as your personal note) dated July 6, have been received, but due to the pressure of work piled up during the long and serious illness of Mr Maxwell the Guardian's correspondence has piled up unanswered for some time.

He is very pleased to hear the Cause is making progress in New Zealand and the friends unitedly serving, which is the most important thing of all.

He was also pleased to hear the Summer School property will be gradually developed and serve the friends and the Community at large in other ways. He thanks you for the plan of it sent under separate cover.

He sends his loving greetings to all the members of the Assembly, and also would like to wish you success with your book.

With Bahá'í love,
R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to win great victories for His Faith and its God-given institutions,

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi

(59) March 1st, 1951

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand.

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

...I would like to add that the Guardian does not consider that it is advisable for New Zealand to be separated in the near future from Australia, and come under the jurisdiction of an independent National Assembly. He considers that the present arrangement is the best one until such time as there are more assemblies flourishing in New Zealand, and he would consider the basis for a National Assembly strong enough there to support such an institution....

(Extract, ibid., p. 91)

(60) June 16th, 1954

Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand.

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

...He was very happy to see that Mrs Dunn was able to attend the New Zealand Bahá'í Summer School. For a woman of her age, this was surely a remarkable achievement, and must have been a great inspiration to the New Zealand friends, coming as she did so freshly from the last Intercontinental Teaching Conference held in New Delhi....

He attaches great importance to teaching the aboriginal Australians, and also in converting more Maoris to the Faith, and hopes that the Bahá'ís will devote some attention to contacting both of these minority groups....

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-workers:

...The multiplication of Bahá'í isolated centres, groups and local assemblies, in both Australia and New Zealand--a process that has been steadily and rapidly developing since the inauguration of the Ten-Year Plan, is likewise of paramount importance in the years immediately ahead. The development of these institutions, particularly in New Zealand, will no doubt hasten the emergence of an independent National Spiritual Assembly in that territory, and will lend a tremendous impetus to the onward march of the Faith in those regions....

The purchase of a building in Auckland destined to serve as the National Hazíratu'l-Quds of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand, is yet another objective on which attention should be immediately focused--in anticipation of the erection of yet another pillar of the future House of Justice in that remote part of the world....

(Extract, ibid., pp. 118, 119, 121, 122)

(61) July 24, 1955

Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

...The news of the purchase of the Hazíratu'l-Quds in Auckland was most welcome. The acquisition of this building is really one of the pre-requisites for the formation of the National Assembly of New Zealand; he hopes that the impetus this has given to the work of the Faith there, combined with the devotion of the Bahá'ís will speed the formation of local Assemblies, which alone constitute the necessary firm foundation for the National Body, a Body which will be one of the direct pillars supporting the International House of Justice. He urges, therefore, your Assembly to give all the teaching help it can to New Zealand; and to encourage the believers there to do their utmost to achieve their goals....

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-workers:

...The purchase of the Hazíratu'l-Quds in Auckland, as the future headquarters of the New Zealand National Spiritual Assembly, is another accomplishment that merits the highest praise....

...The establishment of Bahá'í endowments in the Dominion of New Zealand is yet another responsibility devolving upon their elected national representatives, a responsibility which should be discharged prior to the emergence of an independent national assembly in that distant and promising island.

Whilst these immediate goals are being steadily and resolutely pursued, attention should, likewise, be particularly directed to the vital need for the constant multiplication of isolated centres, groups and local assemblies, as well as to the necessity of increasing, to an unprecedented degree, the number of the avowed adherents of the Faith who can directly and effectively contribute to the broadening of its foundations and the expansion

of its nascent institutions. Particularly in the Dominion of New Zealand, where a pillar of the future Universal House of Justice will soon be erected, must a fresh impetus be lent to this vital process which can alone reinforce the foundations on which this projected institution must ultimately rest....

(Extract, ibid., pp. 123, 125, 126, 127)

(62) June 13th, 1956

Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand.

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

...As regards the question the Auckland Assembly has asked about vivisection, there is nothing on this subject in the Bahá'í teachings. At a future date such matters will no doubt be taken up by the International House of Justice....

He is delighted to hear that the New Zealand friends are so eagerly carrying on their work in preparation for their National Assembly next year. Their coming of age, so to speak, will be a source of pride to all their fellow National Assemblies, and they will form a welcome addition to the pillars which must ultimately sustain the International House of Justice....

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-workers:

...Particular attention should be devoted to the urgent needs of the New Zealand Bahá'í community, through the formulation of a plan which will enable it to swell the number of its administrative institutions, enlarging and reinforcing thereby the foundations on which its forthcoming National Assembly must ultimately rest....

(Extract, ibid., pp. 130, 131, 133)

(63) September 5th, 1956

Secretary, Regional Teaching Committee for New Zealand.

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

Your letter of August 3rd with enclosure has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was happy to see this report of the activities of the Bahá'ís in New Zealand, and will be pleased to receive a copy of your News Letter regularly.

The Guardian wishes your Committee and the believers there to know that he has high hopes for their future achievements in that far-off land, where they are now on the threshold of that historic event, the election of their own National Spiritual Assembly. He deeply values their devotion, and the eager and fervent character of their services.

With warm Bahá'í greetings,

R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success and spiritual advancement,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(64) April 4th, 1957

Message from the Guardian at the inception of the New Zealand National Spiritual Assembly.

I share with the assembled delegates, gathered to elect, on this historic occasion, the second National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Antipodes, the feelings of profound satisfaction and gratitude to Bahá'u'lláh evoked by this epoch-making event in the evolution of His Faith in that far off region of the globe. I am deeply conscious of the decisive share which the Australian Bahá'í Community, labouring during more than three decades, for the spread of the light of this glorious revelation among the highly progressive people of that distant continent, has had in the laying of the foundations of the Administrative Order and the erection of yet another pillar of the future Universal House of Justice in this remote Dominion.

The emergence of this independent Bahá'í Community, no matter how limited its numerical strength and modest its resources, must be regarded as a highly significant development in the rise and establishment of the Bahá'í Faith in the Pacific Area, and should synchronise with the formulation, on the part of the National Spiritual Assembly now being elected in that Island, of a subsidiary Six-Year-Plan, designed to reinforce substantially the numerical strength of the Community; to multiply its Centres, as well as its Local Spiritual Assemblies; to incorporate the solidly grounded amongst them; to inaugurate a National Fund; to obtain recognition for both the Bahá'í marriage certificate and the Bahá'í Holy Days; to lend an unprecedented impetus to the conversion of the Maoris, and to ensure their active participation in the conduct of Bahá'í Administrative Institutions; to extend the scope of the work already initiated in the South Island; to incorporate the newly formed National Spiritual Assembly, and to select and acquire a site for the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of that Dominion.

I call upon the members of the Australian National Spiritual Assembly, as well as the members of the Australian Bahá'í Community, to continue to lend their valued support to this newly pledged sister Community, and to enable it, through the extension of material assistance as well as the dispatch of visiting teachers and pioneers, to contribute, in an ever increasing measure, to the furtherance of the magnificent and colossal campaign now being so vigorously conducted in the North, in the South, and in the heart of the Pacific Ocean.

May the outpourings of the Holy Spirit continue to energise this small yet resolute forward marching, dedicated community, and may the outcome of the collective efforts of its members contribute decisively to the triumphant consummation of the World Crusade on which the entire body of the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have so confidently embarked.

Shoghi

(65) May 20th, 1957

Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand.

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Our beloved Guardian has instructed me to write you on his behalf and inform you that the Hand of the Cause, Mr Varqá, will shortly be forwarding to your assembly the equivalent of five hundred English pounds, as the Guardian's contribution to your newly established National Fund.

He hopes that in the formulation of your plans, particular attention will be given to the all-important teaching work, the foundation of all the activities of the Faith and the most urgent task facing the friends in this critical period the world is passing through.

You may be sure he will pray for your success, With Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbani

(66) June 27th, 1957

Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand.

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

I am instructed by our beloved Guardian to write you on his behalf and assure you he was most happy to receive your letter dated May 4.

He rejoices with the New Zealand Bahá'ís in the formation of their historic National Assembly. They are now firmly launched on the course of their own destiny, and undoubtedly the Faith will go forward very much faster. They have an advantage not shared by many of their fellow National Assemblies, of exclusively administering the affairs of the Faith in a small area, which means that they can function much more efficiently. When one remembers the many years that the New Zealand and Australian believers toiled to carry on the work in those two countries, with the sea in between, and inadequate funds to provide transportation, which necessitated so much of the National Assembly's work being carried on by correspondence, one can appreciate the advantages you now enjoy.

The formation of a new National Body in any case is an organic thing, and a new and lively flow of life will go out into all the members of the Community from this Assembly.

As regards the question you asked him about the site for the Temple, this need not be a large piece of land at this time--three or four acres would be sufficient for the site if you find suitable land is expensive. If the worst comes to the worst, when the time comes to build the Temple, the site can be changed. In Uganda some years ago, they purchased a Temple site, and later, a large piece of land for their endowment. With the Guardian's permission, they exchanged the two as the Endowment's position was better for the Temple. So you see, it need not be too rigid. The point is to get a Temple site as soon as possible. He feels

it should be in the outskirts of Auckland, within easy motoring distance, so that the friends can attend services there. Naturally the closer to the city, the better.

As you formulate your plans and carry them out for the work entrusted to you during the next six years, he wishes you to particularly bear in mind the need of teaching the Maoris. These original discoverers of New Zealand are of a very fine race, and they are a people long admired for their noble qualities; and special effort should be made, not only to contact the Maoris in the cities and draw them into the Faith, but to go to their towns and live amongst them and establish Assemblies in which at least the majority of the believers will be Maoris, if not all. This would be indeed a worthy achievement.

The beloved Guardian assures you all of his prayers for the success of the historic work you are now undertaking, and he feels sure you will achieve your goals.

With warmest Bahá'í greetings,

Rúhíyyih

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-workers:

The emergence of the New Zealand National Spiritual Assembly, as a result of the convocation of the first Bahá'í historic Convention held in that far-away and promising Dominion, will be hailed by posterity as an event of the greatest significance, marking the erection of another pillar designed to support, in the South Pacific area, the future Universal House of Justice. My heart overflows with happiness and is filled with gratitude as I contemplate the splendid progress achieved, in recent years, in that far-off island, and note the loyalty and devotion with which the members of this valiant community, now standing on the threshold of unprecedented achievements, have discharged their manifold and sacred responsibilities.

The six brief years that now lie ahead must witness a swift expansion in the scope of Bahá'í activities throughout the length

and breadth of that Dominion, as well as a steady consolidation of the foundations of the institutions that have been so painstakingly laid. The Six-Year Plan upon which the New Zealand believers have now so auspiciously embarked must be diligently prosecuted and brought to a triumphant conclusion. All must participate, whether young or old, veterans as well as newly enrolled believers, all must contribute their share to the ultimate success of this mighty collective enterprise, however limited their means, however modest their abilities, however restricted the range of their previous experiences.

The increase in the number of the avowed adherents of the Faith; the multiplication of isolated centres, groups, and local assemblies; the incorporation of the newly formed National Spiritual Assembly as well as all firmly grounded local assemblies; the recognition of the Bahá'í marriage certificate by the civil authorities, and of the Bahá'í Holy Days by the Superintendent of schools in that island; the rapid conversion of the Maoris and their close association with the white believers in the administration of the affairs of the community; the consolidation of the work energetically initiated in the South Island; the selection and purchase of the site for the Mother Temple of New Zealand--these stand out as the foremost objectives of the Plan now demanding of its high minded determined prosecutors, the utmost consecration, unrelaxing vigilance and the noblest self-sacrifice.

The tasks, challenging the spirit and resources of this community, whose numerical strength is as yet so limited, whose material resources are so circumscribed, whose past experiences have, in many respects, been confined to a narrow range, are truly formidable. The alloted time, during which so stupendous an undertaking is to be consummated, is short. The obstacles confronting its members are varied and manifold. Yet the sustaining grace promised to all those who will arise, with single-mindedness, courage, dedication and high resolve to aid

in the attainment of these noble objectives, is of such potency that no earthly power can resist the ultimate fulfilment of so glorious a task, or even delay its eventual fruition.

I appeal most earnestly to all those who, in both the teaching and administrative fields, are committed to carry out so magnificent an enterprise, as well as to those who, in an unofficial capacity, are called upon to further, by every means in their power, the interests of this epoch-making Plan, to dedicate themselves, at this hour to the arduous, yet infinitely precious task they have shouldered, and to devote, in the days and years that lie ahead, every ounce of their energy to the systematic prosecution of a Plan, on which the immediate destinies of the entire New Zealand Bahá'í community directly depend; and which can alone provide the stepping-stone to the still more brilliant achievements destined to ennoble the annals of the Faith in that remote island of the globe.

Shoghi

(67) July 19th, 1957

Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia.

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

...As regards the "Herald of the South" magazine, in view of the important work lying ahead of your Assembly, and the fact that this magazine is a drain on the limited resources of the Community, he thinks it would be quite all right to suspend publication until a future date when the financial situation permits such expenditures to be made with relative ease. He leaves, however, the final decision to your Assembly.

The Committee responsible for the publication of this magazine has certainly laboured valiantly throughout the years, and the publication will be missed by its readers. However, it is some years since the American Bahá'í Magazine was abandoned for similar reasons, and the Guardian feels that you can do so in Australia, and the funds be used to better advantage, at this time. However, now that you have found a printer in Sydney and appointed a new committee, he thinks you should continue it and give the new Plan a try....

The successful culmination of the long standing partnership of the Australian and New Zealand believers thru the emergence of the New Zealand N. S. A. is a source of great satisfaction to the Guardian, and no doubt to all the members of both communities. He feels sure this will mark a turning point in the work in the Antipodes and the neighbouring islands and give a new lease of life to the teaching work throughout that area. Both your Assembly and that of New Zealand have now emerged into your permanent form as pillars of the future International House of Justice. The bones of the skeleton of the World Order are growing strong, but only the teaching work can clothe them with flesh....

[From the Guardian:]

Dear and valued co-workers:

...Particularly commendable, and indeed exemplary, has been the share of the Australian believers in enabling the New-Zealand Bahá'í Community to make such rapid strides, in recent years, strides that have prepared it for the assumption of its sacred and vital function as an independent community, and which culminated in the formation of a body qualified to take its place, and assume the weighty responsibilities incumbent on it, as a distinct and separate member of the world-wide family of Bahá'í national and regional Spiritual Assemblies....

(Extract, ibid., pp. 135, 137, 138)

(68) August 30th, 1957

Secretary, Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the City of Auckland.

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

This is just a brief note, on behalf of the beloved Guardian, to acknowledge your letter of July 5th (8th Rahmat, 114) and tell you he appreciates your action in sending the cable to Írán, and assure you of his loving prayers for the rapid progress of the Faith in Auckland.

With warm Bahá'í greetings,

R. Rabbani

[From the Guardian:]

May the Almighty sustain you in your constant and meritorious endeavours, guide every step you take, and bless every effort you exert, for the promotion of the interests of His Faith,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

(69) September 9th, 1957

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand.

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

The Beloved Guardian is very anxious to secure information as to the native tribes which have been contacted by any of the Believers in your area; and of course if there are any Believers from these Tribes, that would be even more interesting.

Can you prepare a list showing the number of Tribes that have been contacted, and of these Tribes, the number who have become Believers. This would be very interesting information.

Can you secure it at an early date and send it on to the Beloved Guardian.

With loving Bahá'í Greetings, I am Faithfully yours, Leroy Ioas

Part V

Telegrams to New Zealand.

To Summer School care Bahá'í Assembly Postbox 1906 Auckland.

(70) January 22nd, 1949

ASSURE ATTENDANTS HEARTFELT LOVING PRAYERS SUCCESS SESSION REALIZATION DEAREST HOPES DEEPEST APPRECIATION. SHOGHI RABBANI To Auckland Assembly Box 1906 Auckland.

(71) December 29th, 1949

GRIEVED PASSING PRECIOUS PIONEER PROMOTER FAITH MRS AXFORD PRAYING FERVENTLY SHRINES PROGRESS SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM HER SERVICES UNFORGETTABLE. SHOGHI To Summer School Care Auckland Assembly Box 1906 Auckland.

(72) December 29th, 1949

ASSURE ATTENDANTS SUPPLICATING RICHEST BLESSINGS DELIBERATIONS SCHOOL. SHOGHI To New Zealand School Care NatBaha'i Sydney.

(73) December 30th, 1953

LOVING APPRECIATION ASSURANCE FERVENT PRAYERS. SHOGHI

Part VI

Statements on Various Subjects.

These statements extracted from letters to individuals are not found elsewhere in this compilation and are taken from letters written by the Guardian's secretaries at his specific direction. The arrangement is according to subject matter.

ALCOHOL (74)

You had asked in connection with the subject of prohibition. Of course in every country one must take into consideration the exact conditions as to whether by force of legislation people can be stopped from drinking, but as a principle the Bahá'í teachings are quite against drinking intoxicating liquors and from the Bahá'í point of view every thing that helps to stop drinking is welcome.

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 30th, 1925)

EVOLUTION (75)

We cannot prove man was always man for this is a fundamental doctrine, but it is based on the assertion that nothing can exceed its own potentialities, that everything, a stone, a tree, an animal and a human being existed in plan, potentially, from the very "beginning" of creation. We don't believe man has always had the form of man, but rather that from the outset he was going to evolve into the human form and species and not be a haphazard branch of the ape family.

You see our whole approach to each matter is based on the belief that God sends us divinely inspired Educators; what they tell us is fundamentally true, what science tells us today is true; tomorrow may be entirely changed to better explain a new set of facts.

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá says man breaks the laws of nature, He means we shape nature to meet our own needs, as no animal does. Animals adapt themselves to better fit in with and benefit from their environment. But men both surmount and change environment. Likewise when He says nature is devoid of memory He means memory as we have it, not the strange memory of inherited habits which animals so strikingly possess.

These various statements must be taken in conjunction with all the Bahá'í teachings; we cannot get a correct picture by concentrating on just one phrase.

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, June 7th, 1946

“HERALD OF THE SOUTH”--(76)

Persevere I shall pray from all my heart for the steady development and the growing influence of the “Herald of the South”. May its voice grow in strength and power, and may its pages increasingly reflect the dynamic spirit of the Faith and mirror forth the ever-expanding activities of the friends in Australasia as well as in distant lands. Persevere in your efforts, let not obstacles damp your zeal and determination and rest assured that the Power of God which is reinforcing your efforts will in the end triumph and enable you to fulfil your cherished desire.

(Extract, undated letter by Shoghi Effendi)

“HERALD OF THE SOUTH”--(77)

Effective teaching medium. ...Regarding the “Herald of the South” magazine, Shoghi Effendi very much appreciates the fact that in spite of the many difficulties that your Assembly had to overcome this review is being regularly published, and that its standard is gradually improving. He would call upon all the English-speaking friends to contribute, as often as they can, such articles for publication in that magazine as would serve to make it a more direct and effective teaching medium for the spread of the Cause throughout Australia and New-Zealand. He is advising the American N. S. A. to specially ask the cooperation of the American believers for that purpose, and hopes that the response they will make to this call will be such as to further encourage you in your splendid efforts for the publication of this national organ of the Faith....

(Extract, ibid., pp. 12, 13, dated April 15th, 1936)

“HERALD OF THE SOUTH”--(78)

Difficulties. ...The Guardian, while fully aware of the difficulties, both financial and otherwise which your N. S. A.[9] is facing in connection with the publication of the “Herald of the South”, feels nevertheless the urge to advise you to continue with this magazine and not to feel in the least discouraged if your efforts for meeting the expenses incurred for its printing and circulation, and for raising its literary standard, do not bring the expected results. He very deeply values the self-sacrificing and sustained efforts exerted by your Assembly in this connection. May Bahá’u’lláh richly reward you for all your meritorious endeavours....

(Extract, ibid., p. 16, dated September 23rd, 1936)

[9] The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Australia and New Zealand

“HERALD OF THE SOUTH”--(79)

Psychic practices.

...In connection with the article published in the October number of the “Herald of the South” entitled “Above the Mists”; the Guardian wishes the believers to disregard such subjects as psychic practices and phenomena, for these besides not being authenticated by the Writings of the Founders of the Faith, pertain mostly to the domain of conjectures. The magazines of the “Herald of the South” should be devoted to the study and presentation of those subjects that reflect the spirit of the Teachings, and which as such are worthy of consideration by the believers. As the national organ of the Australian and New-Zealand friends its main function is to assist in disseminating the knowledge of the Cause, and thus develop into an effective teaching medium. This is the goal which the editors should have constantly in mind, and which they should endeavour to attain through the best possible means they can devise at present....

(Extract, ibid., pp. 25, 26, dated March 30th, 1938)

PHILOSOPHERS (80)

We must not take many of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements as dogmatic finalities, for there are other points which when added to them round out the picture. For instance, when He calls Aristotle and Plato Philosophers of the East, He is obviously placing them in that category because He believes they belong more correctly to Eastern culture than to Central European and the New World cultures of the West. When He calls the philosophers of the West materialistic this does not for a moment mean He includes all Western philosophers for, as you truly point out, many of them have been very spiritual in their concepts....

Historians cannot be sure Socrates did not visit the Holy Land. But believing as we do that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had an intuitive knowledge quite different from our own, we accept His authority on this matter....

The Guardian hopes this will better enable you to understand our wonderful Faith--for a living religion it is, and not merely a philosophy!

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, June 7th, 1946)

SCOUTING (81)

As to the Scout movement, they afford a great disciplinary lesson to the young boys and girls provided they are not prepared directly for the army. In some towns here we have in some of the schools Scout troops who are also students of the Colleges and it has proved to be a great educational scheme for helping the development of the children but they are never taught to carry arms or even the use of firearms. And furthermore they are often taught the evils of war rather than encourage them to become in future active soldiers with imperialistic designs. This of course is my own personal view.

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 30th, 1925)

SOUL, MIND AND SPIRIT (82)

When studying at present, in English, the available Bahá'í writings on the subject of body, soul and spirit, one is handicapped by a certain lack of clarity because not all were translated by the same person, and also there are, as you know, still many Bahá'í writings untranslated. But there is no doubt that spirit and soul seem to have been interchanged in meaning sometimes; soul and mind have, likewise, been interchanged in meaning, no doubt due to difficulties arising from different translations. What the Bahá'ís do believe though is that we have three aspects of our humanness, so to speak, a body, a mind and an immortal identity--soul or spirit. We believe the mind forms a link between the soul and the body, and the two interact on each other.

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, June 7th, 1946)

Appendix: Notes

Note 1. (Letter No. 1)

Margaret Stevenson, the first New Zealand Bahá'í was born on November 30th, 1865. Her first intimation of the Bahá'í Faith was through reading "The Christian Commonwealth" and she admitted later that "she did not think any more about it". She received this journal from her sister who was in London studying music and had heard 'Abdu'l-Bahá address the congregation of St. John's, Westminster at the invitation of Canon Wilberforce. She was so impressed that when another discourse given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at City Temple, London was printed in "The Christian Commonwealth" dated March 27th, 1911, she sent a copy of the journal to Margaret in New Zealand. In 1912, Miss Dorothea Spinney arrived in Auckland from London and stayed with Margaret at her home, "Clunie", 3, Cowie Street, Parnell where she talked about the Bahá'í Cause and her own meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. To quote Margaret's own words: "As a child, I used to wish I had lived when Christ was on earth. As Miss Spinney spoke, I remembered my childhood wish, and the thought came to me that I too might have denied Him as so many others had done. It was this secret thought that made me seriously think of what I heard from Miss Spinney, and through God's grace and mercy I was enabled to grasp and believe in Bahá'u'lláh and His Message".[10] Margaret spoke to others of her belief and obtained literature from America, becoming a subscriber to "Star of the West". Eventually a study group was formed in Auckland and for ten years, Margaret's home was a venue for these classes. It was here that the first Bahá'í Feast in New Zealand took place in January, 1923.

In 1925, Margaret was one of a small group who journeyed from New Zealand to the Holy Land on pilgrimage, and after an inspiring nineteen days in Haifa, travelled on to England

[10] "The Bahá'í World, Vol. IX, 1940–1944", pp. 600–602. Bahá'í Publishing Committee, Wilmette, Illinois, 1945

where she met with the English Bahá'í community. The pilgrims arrived back in Auckland in December, 1925, bringing with them some dust from the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh which was placed in New Zealand soil at the Stevenson's home in a ceremony held on February 14th, 1926.

In such a geographically remote country, the early New Zealand believers had scant knowledge of Bahá'í administration and erroneously called themselves an Assembly as early as 1924. This was corrected with the receipt of a booklet on the subject and the first properly constituted Bahá'í Assembly in New Zealand was formed on April 21st, 1926, with Margaret Stevenson as its Secretary. A steadfast worker, Margaret was a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand which was elected in 1934, and served the Bahá'í Cause with faithfulness and efficiency until her passing to the Abhá Kingdom on February 11th, 1941.

Note 2. (Letter No. 1)

Born in London in 1855, Hyde Dunn was engaged in business in Britain and continental Europe before emigrating to the United States. In 1905, whilst at a tinsmith's shop in Seattle, he observed the shopkeeper in excited conversation with a man who had just returned from the Prison of Akká and the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; he overheard the quotation "Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country, but let him glory in this, that he loves his kind". Hyde Dunn later recalled that "The words reached me with dynamic force, its truth and power crystallised in my heart--a new consciousness awakened... That one glorious utterance magnetised my whole being, appealed as a new note, sent forth from God to His wandering creatures--a Message from the Supreme to the sons of men".[11] Recognising the Truth, Hyde Dunn interrupted the conversation, and accepted immediately the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. The year was 1905.

In 1912, he was present at a meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in San Francisco and declared it was the Master's "penetrating glance, his life giving words, he felt gave him the power that enabled him later to become the spiritual conqueror of a continent". Accompanied by his English born wife, Clara, he answered the call of the "Tablets of the Divine Plan" and on April 18th, 1920 reached Australia whence they travelled to New Zealand in 1922–3, not knowing there was already a believer there (Margaret Stevenson). With their arrival in Auckland, the Cause grew in that country and when Hyde Dunn left to return to Australia, Clara remained for a time to organise a study group in New Zealand.

Known affectionately among Bahá'ís as "Mother" and "Father" Dunn, they carried the Message of Bahá'u'lláh from New South Wales to Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, across the

[11] "The Bahá'í World, Vol. IX, 1940–1944", pp. 593–596. Bahá'í Publishing Committee, Wilmette, Illinois, 1945

desert to Perth and to tropical Queensland and became the spiritual parents of Australia. After "Mother" Dunn returned from a lone pilgrimage to the Holy Land, "Father" was elected a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand in 1934. After his passing on February 17th, 1941, "Mother" Dunn's dedication to the Bahá'í Faith continued unabated and in 1952 she was elevated to the station of Hand of the Cause of God by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith: "Father" Dunn was subsequently elevated to the same station posthumously.

Despite her advanced years, "Mother" Dunn returned to New Zealand in 1957 as representative of the Guardian at the formation of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand. In March, 1958, at the request of the Guardian, she placed plaster from the Castle of Máh-Kú in the foundations of the Australasian Bahá'í House of Worship in Sydney during the Australian Inter-Continental Conference. Until her passing to the Abhá Kingdom in 1960 at the age of 91 years, "Mother" Dunn retained her memory of many Bahá'í prayers and was reciting these at the time of her death.

Note 3. (Letter No. 2)

The Blundell family: Mrs Sarah Blundell was born at Burwell, Cambridgeshire, England in 1850, a year sacred in Bahá'í history as that of the Báb's martyrdom, and was destined to become one of the pioneers of the Bahá'í Cause in New Zealand. She received her early religious training from her "Non-Conformist" father, a man whose strong convictions led him to withdraw his seven year old daughter from religious instruction classes at her boarding school. The feeling of isolation which followed caused her to think for herself and she had the rare distinction of being one of the first women to enter the Cambridge University Examinations in an age prejudiced against the education of women.

In 1886, with her husband and seven children, she arrived in New Zealand where she endured hardship and difficulties in a strange country. She persisted in her unfettered search for truth and rejected several dogmas until, with an open mind and a prepared heart, she read in "The Christian Commonwealth" of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to London in 1911 and sent overseas for additional literature. When Mr and Mrs Dunn arrived in Auckland in 1922–3, Mrs Blundell invited them to her home, "Lymbury", Ridings Road, Remuera to meet a group of twenty people whom she thought might be interested. This was the first Bahá'í meeting held in New Zealand and shortly afterwards Mrs Blundell accepted the Bahá'í Faith.

On hearing from Martha Root that Shoghi Effendi and the Ladies of the Household were eager to welcome the New Zealand friends, Sarah Blundell arranged to make the journey to the Holy Land in 1925 visit the Holy Family, and the Shrines of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and to meet in person many other Bahá'ís--this was "a crowning gift to one whose spiritual path had been travelled alone."[12] She returned to New Zealand

[12] "The Bahá'í World, Vol. VI, 1934–1936", pp. 496–498. Bahá'í Publishing Committee, New York, 1937

after first going home to England to see her relatives and, at the Guardian's suggestion, make personal contact with the English Bahá'í community. She continued to work unsparingly in New Zealand to serve the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh until her passing at the age of eighty-four years on December 20th, 1934.

One of her daughters, Ethel Blundell who accepted the Bahá'í Faith in 1925, was a delegate to the first Bahá'í Convention and was elected as a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand in May, 1934.

Mrs Blundell's son, Hugh, was also destined to serve the Bahá'í Cause. Although not at that time a Bahá'í, Hugh accompanied his mother and sister on their pilgrimage to Haifa in 1925 and accepted the Faith the following year. A tireless worker for the Cause, he was New Zealand's first Auxiliary Board Member and passed to the Abhá Kingdom on October 16th, 1976 in his ninety-second year.

Note 4. (Letter No. 2)

Effie Baker became disenchanted with the Church and, having an open and enquiring attitude, was one of a committee formed in Melbourne responsible for arranging speakers to address the "New Thought" organisation. This led her to attend a public meeting at which Hyde Dunn spoke on the Bahá'í Faith and, recognising the truth of the Message, Effie Baker accepted the Faith the same evening and so became the first woman believer in Australia. She accompanied Martha Root on the latter's lecture tour of New Zealand and, learning of the New Zealand Bahá'ís projected journey to the Holy Land in 1925, Effie sold her home and joined the pilgrims.

After the bounty of visiting the Shrines and meeting with the Guardian and the Greatest Holy Leaf, Effie acceded to Shoghi Effendi's request and accompanied the New Zealand friends to London so as to contact the British Bahá'í community. She planned to return to Australia and assist the Dunns, and had accepted an invitation from the Ladies of the Holy Family to stop over in Haifa on her homeward journey, but on arriving there in June, she found Shoghi Effendi was away from the Holy Land and so decided to wait until he returned. Her offer to serve was accepted and she remained at the World Centre of the Bahá'í Faith in Israel for the next eleven years where she assumed the duties of hostess, welcoming the friends to the Pilgrim House, using her artistry and talent to photograph events in Haifa for the Guardian. In 1930, when the need arose to secure photographs of places in Persia associated with the early history of the Bahá'í Faith, Effie undertook arduous journeys by road through Syria and Iraq, undeterred by danger from hostile bandits. This intrepid worker now embarked on an exacting and fruitful period of direct service to the Guardian, often using cars supplied by the Persian believers, at times travelling on horseback, mule or donkey to all but a few sites where it was too dangerous for a westerner

to venture. The unique photographic record she obtained was immortalised by being selected by the Guardian for inclusion in Nabil's "The Dawnbreakers".

In 1936, Effie returned to her homeland, Australia, where she looked after the National Archives over a long period. Her last years were spent in a small flat in the Hazíratu'l-Quds in Sydney at the invitation of the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand who had been requested by the Guardian to take care of her until her passing on January 2nd, 1968.

Note 5. (Letter No. 15)

Mrs Amy Dewing and her son Bertram were among New Zealand's earliest Bahá'ís; Mrs Dewing came from an orthodox Church of England background and viewed with disapproval her son's questioning attitude which led him to describe himself as a Rationalist. They heard of and accepted the Truth of the Bahá'í Cause after meeting with "Mother" and "Father" Dunn in Devonport, Auckland and, in 1926, both of them served as members of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Auckland. Amy Dewing, as one of a small and persevering group of New Zealand believers, was active in spreading the Message as was her son through whose efforts a Bahá'í magazine was published in Australia and New Zealand to promote the teachings. Prior to her passing in 1957, Amy Dewing witnessed the emergence of the New Zealand community as an independent entity.

Having travelled extensively overseas, Bertram Dewing eventually settled in Auckland. A tireless worker for the Faith, he was a member of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Devonport in 1951 and in 1958 was elected to the second National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand. He pioneered to Hokianga in the same year and a decade later assisted in spreading the Faith to New Plymouth where he worked for the Cause with unabated zeal until he passed to the Abhá Kingdom in 1972 at the age of seventy.

Note 6. (Letter No. 16)

Dr Habíb, whose older brother attained martyrdom, was born in 1888 at Kermánsháh, Persia and was given the name Mu'ayyad (meaning 'confirmed') by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. At the age of twenty-one, when en route to Beirut to begin his medical studies at the American University, he spent a month in the Holy Land with 'Abdu'l-Bahá who took a personal interest in his progress. Thereafter he returned each summer to serve the Cause, extending hospitality to visitors and pilgrims, recording daily events, acquiring spiritual knowledge from outstanding Bahá'í scholars and being entrusted with the receipt and dispatch of Tablets. Referring to Habíb's student days, 'Abdu'l-Bahá extolled the young man's influence, detachment and sanctity, saying "the fragrance of Beirut" perfumed His nostrils.

After graduating from the University of Beirut in 1914, Dr Habíb operated a dispensary at Abú-Sínán, a Druse village northeast of Akká where the Master had temporarily settled the Bahá'ís: this period of close contact with the Holy Family and daily lessons from 'Abdu'l-Bahá he was later to describe as the "most precious segment of his life". In a Tablet to Dr Habíb's father, 'Abdu'l-Bahá described this dedicated young Bahá'í as "A lamp enkindled with the love of God".

In 1915, responding to the Master's specific instructions, Dr Habíb returned to his birthplace to practice his profession and teach the Faith to which he was so deeply devoted, and was for forty years a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Kermánsháh, also serving for a period on the National Spiritual Assembly. His published works include two volumes of reminiscences based on the principles of the Covenant and the history of the Cause, whilst his much loved poem entitled "Hold Thou my Hand, O 'Abdu'l-Bahá" is widely sung at gatherings of the Bahá'ís in Írán. Dr Habíb Mu'ayyad passed to the Abhá Kingdom on October 29th, 1971.

Note 7. (Letter No. 16)

The Moslem calendar dates from Muḥammad's emigration or Hijrah from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D. The Moslem year begins with the month of Muharram of which the first ten days are observed by Shí'ah Moslems as part of their mourning period for the Imáms. The tenth day is called Ashura and commemorates the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, the grand-son of Muḥammad, who was cut down by thirty-three strokes of swords and lances and decapitated: his clothes were torn from him and his naked body trampled by horses hooves.

Note 8. (Letter No. 23)

Mrs Emily Axford was born in Huddersfield, England on October 19th, 1870 and was an infant teacher before her marriage. In 1907, the family emigrated to New Zealand where her husband practiced medicine in Te Aroha until his passing in 1912, after which Mrs Axford moved to Auckland so as to educate her three children. Having rejected conventional Christianity, she was attracted by the New England Transcendental Movement until she became aware of the Bahá'í Faith through her friendship with Sarah Blundell and was enrolled as a member in 1923. Three years later, Mrs Axford was elected Chairman of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Auckland and for many years conducted classes in public speaking to help the friends overcome their shyness and reticence so that they might teach the Faith effectively. Emily was one of three New Zealand delegates who attended the National Convention held in Sydney during 1934 and the following year was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand. She continued to work staunchly for the Faith, being appointed in 1946 to the Regional Teaching Committee responsible for formulating teaching plans throughout New Zealand. The following year, she assumed the delicate task of conducting negotiations with the immigration authorities so that Bahá'ís from Persia might be permitted to enter New Zealand as University students, and was actively engaged in this work up to the time of her passing on December 26th, 1949.

Note 9. (Letter No. 33)

Born in 1900, Miss Kitty Carpenter became a Bahá'í in 1936 since when many members of the Carpenter-Hancock family of which she is a member have followed her and joined the Faith. An adventurous and enquiring soul, she undertook her first pilgrimage to Haifa in 1938, arriving there shortly after the marriage of Shoghi Effendi and, after living for two years in Australia, she returned to New Zealand where she embarked on a life of service to the Cause. Towards the end of the Second World War, she willingly made available her premises (a counter lunch-shop) in Anzac Avenue as a venue for the Auckland Bahá'í community and, in the 1950's, responded to the call by travel teaching in Mangakino and Whangarei. She served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand during 1958 and, two years later, moved from Christchurch to Hamilton to aid in establishing an assembly there. 1964 saw her travel teaching in Invercargill and the following year she was appointed to the National Teaching Committee. Responding to the need for the believers to establish another assembly, Kitty finally made her home in Tauranga where she is an active and much loved exponent of the Cause.

Note 10. (Letter No. 37)

This refers to a book on Islám written by Bertram Dewing which was never published.

Individual Addressees

Letters addressed to individuals by letter number. Only letters presented in their entirety are indicated.

1. Margaret Stevenson
2. Sarah Blundell
3. Margaret Stevenson
4. Bertram Dewing
5. Margaret Stevenson
6. Margaret Stevenson
7. Bertram Dewing
8. Margaret Stevenson
9. Sarah Blundell
10. Sarah Blundell
11. Margaret Stevenson
12. Evelyn Watkin
13. Bertram Dewing
14. Sarah Blundell
15. Amy Dewing
16. Amy Dewing
17. Evelyn Watkin
18. Margaret Stevenson
19. ...[13]
20. Bertram Dewing
21. Amy Dewing
22. Amy Dewing
23. Emily Axford
24. Eleanor Leighton
25. Bertram Dewing
26. Ethel Blundell
27. Amy Dewing
28. Ethel Blundell

[13] Unable to identify. Department of the Secretariat, Universal House of Justice, August, 1979

29. Emily Axford
30. Emily Axford
31. Emily Axford
32. Emily Axford
33. Kitty Carpenter
34. Emily Axford
35. Emily Axford
36. Emily Axford
37. Bertram Dewing
38. Kitty Carpenter
39. Bertram Dewing
40. Kitty Carpenter
41. Kitty Carpenter

Institution Addressees

Letters addressed to institutions by letter number

42. E. Axford, Auckland Bahá'í Group
43. E. Axford, Chairman, Auckland Spiritual Assembly
44. M. Stevenson, Secretary, Auckland Spiritual Assembly
45. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
46. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
47. H. M. Brooks, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
48. H. M. Brooks, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
49. H. M. Brooks, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
50. H. M. Brooks, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
51. Auckland Spiritual Assembly
52. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
53. Auckland Spiritual Assembly
54. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
55. D. Dive, Secretary, Auckland Spiritual Assembly
56. Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Auckland, New Zealand
57. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
58. E. B. Dewing, Secretary, Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Auckland, New Zealand
59. M. G. Bolton, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
60. J. Heggie, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand

61. J. Heggie, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
62. J. Heggie, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand
63. Secretary, Regional Teaching Committee for New Zealand
64. The Guardian's message to the first Bahá'í Convention in New Zealand, sent to Mrs Clara Dunn; she was asked to read it on behalf of the Guardian at the Convention and then give it to the New Zealand National Spiritual Assembly
65. Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand
66. Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand
67. N. P. L. Walker, Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia
68. Secretary, Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the City of Auckland
69. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand

END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AROHANUI: LETTERS FROM SHOGHI EFFENDI TO NEW ZEALAND

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