

The Promised Day is Come

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Seventy years ago, in 1941, Shoghi Effendi wrote a lengthy letter to the Baha'is published as the book, *The Promised Day is Come*. It explained the reason for the disastrous condition of the world as World War II was unfolding. While the war was seemingly the result of political and economic conditions, it was in reality the result of humanity not responding to Bahá'u'lláh. The Guardian also explained the two-fold process of destruction and renewal by which mankind will be led to the Most Great Peace. The progression of this worldwide process now, seventy years after this momentous book was published will be discussed briefly with some focus on Japan.

1941年にバハイ信教の守護者ショージ・エフェンデイはバハイ信奉者らにあてて長い書簡を書いている。それは「約束された日の到来」という題名の本として発行されているが、その書簡の中で、守護者は、当時の世界の混乱状態は、人類が神の呼びかけに応えなかった結果であると説明している。また、人類は「破壊」と「再生」という二つの過程を通して「最大平和」に導かれることも説明している。書簡が書かれてから70年経った現時点における、この地球規模の過程の現状について、日本に焦点をあてて考察する。

God's Promise to Mankind Fulfilled

Three members of the greater Sapporo area Baha'i Community took part in an on-line study program with the Wilmette Institute of *The Promised Day is Come* by Shoghi Effendi during 2011 based on Peter Khan's *The Promised Day is Come Study Guide* (1967). One of the requirements of the course was to give a presentation of the topic to members of the Baha'i community. This was done at the annual Association of Baha'i Studies Conference in Yamaguchi, Japan, September 23-25, 2011. As the theme of the conference was destruction and renewal the subject of Shoghi Effendi's book seemed very timely.

Before embarking on the two major themes of *The Promised Day is Come* background information will be offered concerning the title of the book. Since approximately 5000 years ago, over the millennia, Krishna, Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and the Bab have all promised the coming of a Divine Being who will bring everlasting peace to mankind as shown in the summary below (Woolson, 1988). Baha'is believe those promises have been fulfilled with the coming of

Bahá'u'lláh.

Hinduism: The Tenth Avatar, Kalki, "The Divine Being " Who will re-establish righteousness upon earth.

Judaism: "The Lord of Hosts (the Messiah) who will bring God's Message for the establishment of permanent universal peace, justice, and co-operation among the nations.

Zoroasterianism: The World-Savior, Shah –Bahram, "who would...usher in an era of blessedness and peace."

Buddhism: Maitreya (The Fifth Buddha) in that new era, " the higher life will He make known in all fullness and all its purity."

Christianity: The Return of the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, identified with a great renewal. "a new heaven and new earth," and " a Divine universal civilization—the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth."

Islam: The "Great Announcement" the "Lord" who "shall come" with a Divine Message for ushering in an age "wherein the lights of unity will enlighten the world ," " a day unto which mankind shall be gathered together," and when " God will make us all one."

In 1844 the Bab addressed all the kings of the earth in the *Qayyúm-i-Asmá* (1982) and then Bahá'u'lláh, years later, while in exile and as a prisoner, addressed Tablets to them between 1868 and 1873, collectively through the *Súriy-i-Mulúk* (Tablet of the Kings)¹ and to some of them individually². He declared His station as the Mouthpiece of God for

¹ Portions of these Tablets can be found in *The Promised Day is Come*, and *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. All of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets to the kings and religious leaders can be found in their entirety in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*.

² Direct recipients of the Divine Summons were the leading secular and religious rulers of His day; Napoleon III, "the most powerful ruler on the European continent; Pope Pius IX, the supreme head of the highest church in Christendom; the omnipotent Czar of the vast Russian Empire, Alexander II; Queen Victoria, whose sovereignty extended over the greatest political combination the world has witnessed; William I, the conqueror of Napoleon III, King of Prussia and the newly acclaimed monarch of a unified Germany; Francis Joseph, the autocratic king-emperor of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the heir of the far-famed Holy Roman Empire; the tyrannical Abdu'l - Aziz, the embodiment of the concentrated power

this day. Bahá'u'lláh also announced His station as the long awaited Promised One to the religious leaders not only of Islam and Christianity but also to those of Judaism and Zoroastrianism and other religions. Except for Queen Victoria of England, all the kings and religious leaders ignored the Messages of the Twin Manifestations, did nothing to stop Their suffering, some directly persecuted and imprisoned Them, and one ordered the martyrdom the Bab.

Bahá'u'lláh directed His Messages to the sovereigns and religious leaders because, for the most part, they held absolute civil and ecclesiastical authority over their subjects and followers and the masses (Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, p.19). Some details of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to the Kings, known as *Súriy-i-Mulúk* are as follows (Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, pp. 20-24). He describes the Bab as *"the Remembrance of God"*; announces that His own call is *"the Voice of God"*; calls on the kings *"to examine Our Cause"*; and to *"follow...that which I speak unto you"*; He urges them to *"make amends for that which escaped you"*; He urges them to *"be vigilant"*, *"tread the path of justice"*, *"compose your differences, and reduce your armaments"*; *"rule with justice"*, *"safeguard the rights of the down-trodden, and punish the wrong-doers"*. He warns them *"if ye pay no heed unto the counsels...Divine chastisement shall assail you from every direction."* He reproves them that *"though aware of most of Our afflictions ye...failed to stay the hand of the aggressor."* He prophesies His *"triumph upon earth"* when *"God will have exalted His Cause"*. In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (p. 49) He tells the kings that *"The Most great Law hath been revealed"*, that *"He who is the King of Kings hath appeared,"* and *"Ye are but vassals O kings of the earth."* Bahá'u'lláh also declares *"It is not Our wish to lay hands on your kingdoms. Our mission is to seize and possess the hearts of men"* (cited in Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, pp. 25-26) The leaders of religions were addressed and warned in a similar way (Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, p.74).

The Threat

With the rejection of His Message Bahá'u'lláh announced *"From two ranks amongst men power has been seized: kings and ecclesiastics"* (cited in Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, p.20, p. 71). In the Tablets to those who rejected Him He predicted their personal downfall and the downfall of their kingdoms and dynasties. The French monarch, Napoleon III, a ruler who had repudiated and insulted Bahá'u'lláh was the first to lose his

vested in the Sultanate and the Caliphate; and the notorious Nasiri d-Din Shah, the despotic ruler of Persia and the mightiest potentate of Shi'ih Islam.

throne. The following are a list of falls of the monarchies that took place between 1870 and 1958 (Sears 2007, pp. 171-172):

The fall of the French Monarchy (1870)
Assassination of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Aziz (1876)
Assassination of Nasirid-Din Shah (1896)
Overthrow of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid (1909)
Fall of the Portuguese Monarchy (1910)
Fall of the Chinese Monarchy (1911)
Fall of the Russian Monarchy (1917)
Fall of the German Monarchy (1918)
Fall of the Austrian Monarchy (1918)
Fall of the Hungarian Monarchy (1918)
Fall of the Turkish Monarchy (1922)
Fall of the Qajar Dynasty (1925)
Fall of the Spanish Monarchy (1931)
Fall of the Albanian Monarchy (1938)
Fall of the Serbian Monarchy (1941)
Fall of the Italian Monarchy (1946)
Fall of the Bulgarian Monarchy (1946)
Fall of the Romanian Monarchy (1947)
Fall of the Egyptian Monarchy (1952)
Fall of the Iraqi Monarchy (1958)
Fall of the Yemenite Monarchy (1962)

Later Bahá'u'lláh addressed all mankind with this warning (cited in Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, p.1):

"The time for the destruction of the world and its people hath arrived." "The hour is approaching, when the most great convulsion will have appeared." "The promised day is come, the day when tormenting trials will have surged above your heads, and beneath your feet, saying: 'Taste ye what your hands have wrought!'... "He shall cleanse the earth from the defilement of their corruption, and shall give it for an heritage unto such of His servants as are nigh unto Him."

In 1941 Shoghi Effendi explained that the cause of World War II was primarily a judgment of God pronounced against the peoples of the earth who for a century had refused to recognize the One Whose advent had been promised to all religions. A publication *The Century of Light* offers

interesting insight (The Universal House of Justice, 2001, p. 70): "At a relatively early point in the Second World War, the Guardian set that conflict in a perspective for Baha'is that was very different from the one generally prevailing. The war should be regarded, he said, 'as the direct continuation' of the conflagration ignited in 1914. It would come to be seen as the 'essential pre-requisite to world unification.' " Since World War II the process of destruction has continued, not only of monarchies and colonial empires but also of totalitarian and corrupt governments. Aiding this process of disintegration are the three false gods of Nationalism, Racialism and Communism (Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, p.113), the weakened pillars of religion (Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, p.114), and "crass materialism" (Shoghi Effendi, 1947/1980, p.124). The *Century of Light* offers a discerning comment about the deleterious effects of materialism (pp. 89-90):

Whether as world-view or simple appetite, materialism's effect is to leach out of human motivation—and even interest—the spiritual impulses that distinguish the rational soul. "For self-love," 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said, "is kneaded into the very clay of man, and it is not possible that, without any hope of a substantial reward, he should neglect his own present material good.' In the absence of conviction about the spiritual nature of reality and the fulfillment it alone offers, it is not surprising to find at the very heart of the current crisis of civilization a cult of individualism that increasingly admits of no restraint and that elevates acquisition and personal advancement to the status of major cultural values. The resulting atomization of society has marked a new stage in the process of disintegration about which the writings of Shoghi Effendi speak so urgently.

To accept willingly the rupture of one after another strand of the moral fabric that guides and disciplines individual life in any social system, is a self-defeating approach to reality. If leaders of thought were to be candid in their assessment of the evidence readily available, it is here that one would find the root cause of such apparently unrelated problems as the pollution of the environment, economic dislocation, ethnic violence, spreading public apathy, the massive increase in crime, and epidemics that ravage whole populations. However important the application of legal, sociological or technological expertise to such issues undoubtedly is, it would be unrealistic to imagine

that efforts of this kind will produce any significant recovery without a fundamental change of moral consciousness and behavior. 13

The Promise

Shoghi Effendi tells us that the purpose of all this destruction is to usher in "the Golden Age of a long-divided, a long-afflicted humanity. "Its present state is...distressingly dark. Its distant future, however, is radiant,-- gloriously radiant so radiant that no eye can visualize it" (Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, p.116). Before humanity can achieve the Golden Age it must experience the judgment of God, what Shoghi Effendi refers to as The Most Great Justice (1941/1980, p.5).

This judgment of God, as viewed by those who have recognized Bahá'u'lláh as His Mouthpiece and His greatest Messenger on earth, is both a retributory calamity and an act of holy and supreme discipline. It is at once a visitation from God and a cleansing process for all mankind. Its fires punish the perversity of the human race, and weld its component parts into one organic, indivisible, world-embracing community ... "God, the Vigilant, the Just, the Loving, the All-Wise Ordainer, can in this supreme Dispensation, neither allow the sins of an unregenerate humanity, whether of omission or of commission, to go unpunished, nor will He be willing to abandon His children to their fate, and refuse them that culminating and blissful stage in their long, their slow and painful evolution through the ages, which is at once their inalienable right and their true destiny. (Shoghi Effendi, 1941/1980, pp. 4-5)

The Most Great Justice is a prerequisite to The Most Great Peace that will bring on the glorious World Civilization that has been promised by all the Manifestations of God. Shoghi Effendi (1941/1980) quotes Baha'u'llah as follows:

"The whole earth, ... is now in a state of pregnancy. The day is approaching when it will have yielded its noblest fruits, when from it will have sprung forth the loftiest trees, the most enchanting blossoms, the most heavenly blessings." "These great oppressions," He [Bahá'u'lláh], moreover, foreshadowing humanity's golden age, has written, "are preparing it for the advent of the Most Great Justice." This Most Great Justice is

indeed the justice upon which the structure of the Most Great Peace can alone, and must eventually, rest, while the Most Great Peace will, in turn usher in that Most Great, that World Civilization which shall remain for ever associated with Him Who beareth the Most Great Name." (pp. 5-6)

Kingship in the Future

After the sovereigns refused to heed Bahá'u'lláh's Call He pronounced that power had been seized from both kings and ecclesiastics. However this did not mean that there would be no more kings. The Blessed Beauty tells us many things about kings and kingship in the future (1941/1980, p.72): "The rank of sovereigns is divinely ordained," "A just king enjoyeth nearer access to God than anyone." In the *Bishárát (Glad-Tidings) Baha'u'llah (1988, p. 28)* tells us "The majesty of kingship is one of the signs of God. *We do not wish that the countries of the world should be deprived thereof.* And in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas (paragraph 84)*, He states, "*How great the blessedness that awaiteth the king who will arise to aid My Cause in My Kingdom, who will detach himself from all else but Me! Such a king is numbered with the Companions of the Crimson Ark—the Ark which God hath prepared for the people of Bahá. All must glorify his name, must reverence his station, and aid him to unlock the cities with the keys of My Name, the Omnipotent Protector of all that inhabit the visible and invisible kingdoms. Such a king is the very eye of mankind, the luminous ornament on the brow of creation, the fountainhead of blessings unto the whole world. Offer up, O people of Bahá, your substance, nay your very lives, for his assistance.*"

A Brief Glance of the World in 2011-2012

Economically there is still great disparity between the rich and the poor although there is a growing middle class in most countries of the world. There is a great deal of economic insecurity internationally because most governments are deeply in debt for a variety of reasons. Politically, on an international basis, more nations are working together for peace and the powerful nations seem less eager to solve disagreements by war. The United Nations has done much to solve problems between nations but is still often ineffective because of built-in weaknesses. As more of the world's population is educated, citizens of countries where there are totalitarian regimes are willing to stand up and fight for a just form of government. But in some counties that are still so totalitarian the

populations have no way to resist their governments. In nations where there are true democracies there is a lot of partisan politics because leaders are more interested in establishing status for themselves and their friends than in doing what is best for the citizens of their country. As for the religions of the world, they have lost their power to guide and influence their believers. Environmental degradation and global warming are gaining greater awareness but the will to take the drastic actions necessary is not politically popular among powerful governments and their industries so effective action has not happened.

Two Great Processes at Work: The Major Plan and the Minor Plan

As we know from the Guardian's writings there are two great processes at work in the world today that are preparing for promised Most Great Peace. The Major Plan, the one that is entirely in God's hands, is the destruction of the barriers to world peace and unity and "forging humankind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and experience" (The Universal House of Justice, 1967). This will lead to the Lesser Peace, a political unity but this will lack a spiritual foundation that is essential to The Most Great Peace.

The second process, the Minor Plan, is in the hands of the Baha'is. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, then the beloved Guardian and the Universal House of Justice through their successive plans have given the worldwide Baha'i community the guidance to build the spiritual foundation for that future Divine Civilization, the long awaited Golden Age of mankind.

A Look at Japan in Light of God's Major and Minor Plans

When the Bab declared His mission to mankind in 1844, Japan was closed to foreigners. Perhaps if we think of God's plan for the unity of mankind it is obvious that the situation in Japan had to change. In that same year William II of the Netherlands sent a message to the emperor urging Japan to open its doors but the Japanese government rejected the request. Then in 1853 when Commodore Perry came with the Black Ships demanding that the country be opened to trade perhaps this was really one of the early phases of the hand of God at work, breaking down the barriers that stood in the way of Japan playing its role in the spiritualization of the planet. With the Meiji Restoration and modernization, Japanese leaders followed the examples of Western nations and invaded nearby countries in order to extend its sphere of influence for its protection and also for the

natural resources that could be obtained from those countries. The forces of nationalism and materialism are evident in these actions. When World War II ended Japan had the opportunity to reset its values and laws with a new constitution. Ideas that were called for in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings were established as laws in Japan. Some of these include a just government for all citizens, equality of men and women, and a policy of renouncing war. The monarchy did not disappear in Japan as it has in so many other countries because it was not guilty of the excesses and crimes that the European sovereigns perpetuated. The emperor remains a symbol of unity and dignity for the Japanese people. Today Japan is respected around the world for its economic development and its steadfast adherence to peaceful relations with all countries.

On March 11, 2011, Japan experienced the Great East Japan Disaster. Many people have wondered if God is angry at Japan. We will never know the answer to this but what we did see was in the aftermath was an outpouring of love and material support from people all over the world.

And what of God's Minor Plan for Japan, the role that the Japanese Baha'is must play in establishing the Most Great Peace? In 1922, just shortly after being appointed the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi told the Japanese Baha'i community what the Master related to him. In a letter dated January 26, 1922, the Guardian quoted 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Japan will turn ablaze! Japan is endowed with a most remarkable capacity for the spread of the Cause of God! Japan, with (another country whose name He stated but bade us to conceal for the present) will take the lead in the spiritual re-awakening of the peoples and nations that the world shall soon witness" (*Japan Will Turn Ablaze!*, 1992, pp. 73-74). In 1907, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Mr. Saichiro Fujita "One will encounter a little difficulty in the beginning of the establishment of the Cause of God in that country but later it will become very easy. For the inhabitants of Japan are intelligent, sagacious, and have the power of rapid assimilation" (*ibid.*, pp. 27-28). And in 1953 the Guardian's secretary wrote "the beloved Guardian has said that the future of Japan from every standpoint is very bright indeed. The Faith will spread rapidly in Japan, once the public becomes acquainted with its universal principles, and its dynamic spirit" (*ibid.*, p. 93).

In *each* of the above quotations and in many others that we find in *Japan Will Turn Ablaze!*, we get the feeling that the Faith will grow easily in Japan and soon, after some difficulties! We all wonder when this will happen. It will happen in God's good time, when the Japanese Baha'i community is ready to sustain the weight of entry by troops after

foundations have been laid within the hearts of the individual Baha'is of Japan, the institutions and the Baha'i communities. In order to reach that stage ceaseless endeavor on all levels will be needed. Bahá'u'lláh, the Master, Shoghi Effendi and The Universal House of Justice have all given us the guidance we need. It is now our job to internalize that guidance to the deepest levels of our beings and offer purely to the people of Japan the beauty of the Divine Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh for this age. Japan *will* turn ablaze! It is Japan's destiny!

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