

Bahá'í Activities in University

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Appendix A: Bahá'í Activities in Universities: A Compilation of Bahá'í Writings

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

(From a letter dated 13 June 1928 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

He was deeply interested in your work among the University students and hopes that it will bear much fruit. The youth is open-minded, unhampered by prejudice and ready to accept any message that satisfies his spiritual longings as well as intellectual demands. The work should, however, be both intensive and extensive. It is not sufficient that you should address many student bodies; persons have to be found to follow up that work, pick those who are interested to know more and ground them in the teachings.

(From a letter dated 20 June 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

He was very pleased to hear of the progress being made; and that it has been possible to give the Message to some of the "undergrads". It is important that the Faith should be conveyed with a sense of dignity at so important a university as Oxford; and better that the work should go forward slowly than that any mistakes should be made.

(From a letter dated 25 December 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Oxford)

As to teaching work in colleges and universities, this is very important, for students as a whole are open-minded and little influenced by tradition. They would easily enter the Cause if the subject is properly presented and their intellect and sentiments properly satisfied. This, however, should be attempted only by persons who have had university training and are, therefore, acquainted with the mind of the intelligent and educated youth.

(From a letter dated 3 February 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Some of the items were of great interest to him, especially the part which told of the contacts you have made with distinguished men and invited them to speak at your meetings. This is an effective way to make these take an active part in promoting the Faith and increasing their knowledge of its spirit and basic teachings.

(From a letter dated 6 May 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

The way we can hasten the development of this process [of guiding the nations and intellectual men and leaders of society to a gradual acceptance of His Message revealed through Bahá'u'lláh] is by doing our share in spreading the words of God far and wide. Even though we may not see any case of sudden conversion on the part of these intellectuals, yet they are bound to be influenced in their views and look to the Faith with greater admiration and more willing desire to be led by its precepts. Shoghi Effendi, therefore, wishes me to encourage you in your work, in sending appropriate literature to such men of learning.

(From a letter dated 7 May 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

The University training which you are receiving at present will be of immense help to present the message in intellectual circles. In these days when people are so sceptical about religion and look with so much contempt towards religious organizations and movements, there seems to be more need

than ever for our young Bahá'ís to be well-equipped intellectually, so that they may be in a position to present the Message in a befitting way, and in a manner that would convince every unbiased observer of the effectiveness and power of its teachings.

(From a letter dated 5 May 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

The Cause needs more Bahá'í scholars, people who not only are devoted to it and believe in it and are anxious to tell others about it, but also who have a deep grasp of the teachings and their significance, and who can correlate its beliefs with the current thoughts and problems of the people of the world. The Cause has a remedy for all the world's ills. The reason why more people don't accept it is because the Bahá'ís are not always capable of presenting it to them in a way that meets the immediate needs of their minds. Young Bahá'ís like yourself must prepare themselves to really bring the message to their generation who need it so desperately and who can understand the language it speaks so well.

(From a letter dated 21 October 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Having on his own initiative, and undaunted by any hindrances with which either friend or foe may, unwittingly or deliberately, obstruct his path, resolved to arise and respond to the call of teaching, let him carefully consider every avenue of approach which he might utilise in his personal attempts to capture the attention, maintain the interest and deepen the Faith of those whom he seeks to bring into the fold of his Faith. Let him survey the possibilities which the particular circumstances in which he lives offer him, evaluate their advantages, and proceed intelligently and systematically to utilise them for the achievement of the object he has in mind. Let him also attempt to devise such methods as association with clubs, exhibitions and societies, lectures on subjects akin to the teachings and ideals of his Cause such as temperance, morality, social welfare, religious and racial tolerance, economic co-operation, Islam, and Comparative religion, or participation in social, cultural, humanitarian, charitable and educational organizations and enterprises which, while safeguarding the integrity of his faith, will open up to him a multitude of ways and means whereby he can enlist successively the sympathy, the support, and ultimately the allegiance of those with whom he comes into contact.

(The Advent of Divine Justice [Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984] p. 51)

It is in intellectual circles such as this [a university circle] that the believers should endeavour to teach, confident that no matter how limited

their capacity may be, yet their efforts are continually guided and reinforced from on high. This spirit of confident hope, of cheerful courage, and of undaunted enthusiasm in itself, irrespective of any tangible results which it may produce, can alone insure the ultimate success of our teaching efforts.

(From a letter dated 31 October 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Young men and women in the Faith must be deep and thoughtful scholars of its teachings, so that they can teach in a way that will convince people that all the problems facing them have a remedy.

(From a letter dated 12 May 1944 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

It seems what we need now is a more profound and co-ordinated Bahá'í scholarship in order to attract such men as you are contacting. The world has - at least the thinking world - caught up by now with all the great and universal principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh over 70 years ago, and so of course it does not sound "new" to them. But we know that the deeper teachings, the capacity of His projected world order to re-create society, are new and dynamic. It is these we must learn to present intelligently and enticingly to such men!

(From a letter dated 3 July 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

When studying at school or university Bahá'í youth will often find themselves in the unusual and slightly embarrassing position of having a more profound insight into a subject than their instructors. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh throw light on so many aspects of human life and knowledge that a Bahá'í must learn, earlier than most, to weigh the information that is given to him rather than to accept it blindly. A Bahá'í has the advantage of the Divine Revelation for this age, which shines like a searchlight on so many problems that baffle modern thinkers; he must therefore develop the ability to learn every thing from those around him, showing proper humility before his teachers, but always relating what he hears to the Bahá'í teachings, for they will enable him to sort out the gold from the dross of human error.

(From a letter dated 10 June 1966 written by the Universal House of Justice to Bahá'í Youth in every Land)

The Bahá'í students are indeed in an excellent position to impart the fundamental verities of the Faith to their fellow students, and even further abroad, for undergraduates are expected to discuss with each other all the grave problems of the day, and the way is open for Bahá'ís to acquaint many of the future leaders of mankind with the history, tenets, and society-building power of the Faith.

(From a letter dated 11 January 1981 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í Society of Edinburgh University)

National Bahá'í Communities have organized and successfully conducted inter-religious conferences, peace seminars, symposiums on racism and other subjects on which we have a specific contribution to make, often achieving widespread publicity and the interest of highly placed leaders of society.

(From a letter dated Riván 1987 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World)

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