

Warnings and Foreshadowing Dangers

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

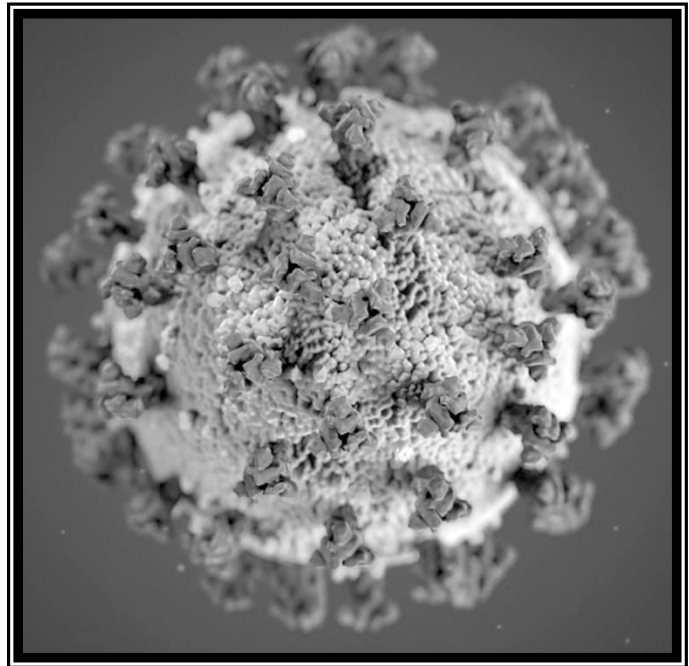
A study of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings pertaining to warnings and foreshadowing dangers is sobering, as well as, highly motivating. Shoghi Effendi chose to emphasize the *motivating nature* of the selections we are about to study when he wrote: "I can do no better, eager as I am to extend to every one of you any assistance in my power that may enable you to discharge more effectively your divinely appointed, continually multiplying duties, than to direct your special attention, at this decisive hour, to these immortal passages, gleaned in part from the great mass of Bahá'u'lláh's unpublished and untranslated writings."¹

One particular paragraph of these immortal passages compiled by Shoghi Effendi pertains to the foreshadowing dangers of retributive consequences facing a disbelieving humanity. In another paragraph he compiled selections from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings that warn the believers about the consequences of worldly attachments during trying times, and guides us to two divine perspectives to help deal with the current and upcoming events and conditions. The subject matter compiled from these two paragraphs is the focus of this study.

Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá, the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice have all emphasized that the calamitous event or events facing mankind are unforeseen, unavoidable, and inescapable. To spend time speculating, planning, or retreating is fruitless and counterproductive. Bahá'u'lláh assured us of their true value when He wrote: "*In the beginning of every Revelation adversities have prevailed, which later on have been turned into great prosperity.*" And again: "*My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy.*"² The best approach to the looming unforeseen calamity foretold in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings was expressed long ago by the Prophet Isaiah when He wrote: "*Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty.*"³ The "rock" suggesting absolute Faith; and the "dust" representing the wisdom of the heart. Faith in God — a wise and firm faith in God — that He knows what He is doing and that whatever occurs is best, and in fact, most glorious in its eventual outcome, is our rock-like sanctuary.

Bahá'u'lláh's Writings are replete with counsel in ways to avoid attachment to worldly events. He repeatedly stresses steadfastness in faith and firmness in the Covenant. These are best strengthened by

(Coronavirus)



"Let not the happenings of the world sadden you. I swear by God! The sea of joy yearneth to attain your presence...." — Bahá'u'lláh

¹ Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 75

² Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic, p. 75

³ *Isaiah*, 2:10

observing the Bahá'í spiritual disciplines, which include: daily prayer; recitation of the Greatest Name ninety-five times a day; reading the sacred verses both morning and evening; teaching the Cause; living the Bahá'í life; serving the Cause; observing the fast; and other requirements conveyed in the Sacred Writings.

Let us, then, proceed with attentiveness and seek to obtain a true understanding of the purpose and role of the worsening calamitous conditions pursuing the peoples of the world, that we may live free of terror, fear, and confusion, and find true peace and contentment in the decree of God. That perhaps He might speak of us as he spoke of those heroic dawn-breakers of the Faith, saying: *“Instead of complaining, they rendered thanks unto God, and amidst the darkness of their anguish they revealed naught but radiant acquiescence to His will.”*¹

And may our understanding of God's Way inspire dedicated service to the Cause and to humanity, that our efforts may hasten, however modestly, the coming of God's Kingdom on earth and the eventual peace and tranquility of its people.

OBJECTIVE: *A look to the horizon...*

Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The objective of this study is to become aware of, and understand, the warnings and foreshadowing dangers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh.

THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the water of life...*

Facilitator

Review the following study process with the participants. Then study the numbered quotations that follow, one at a time as described below.

1. **READING: *A drink from the cup of guidance...***
 - A. **Read the quotation** out loud in its entirety.
2. **CONFIRMING MEANING: *A spray from the fountain of light...***

To better understand certain words used in the quotation, take turns with the following:

 - A. Each participant **choose a word** from the quotation and **state it** for the whole group to hear. (Like a fun game – pick a word!) Then...
 - B. Read out loud the sentence that contains the **word** you selected, **while substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition, or synonym from the boxes below the quotation.
 - C. Repeat A and B above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words.
 - D. **Read the quotation** out loud again in its entirety.
3. **FINDING VALUE: *Gem-like discoveries...***

In the tradition of the “talking circle” ask the participants to take turns sharing, one at a time, in a round, **WHAT WAS PERSONALLY MOST MEANINGFUL FROM THE QUOTATION AND WHY.** (Remember show and tell?) Remind the participants that *whatever* is shared should be considered as a valid perspective, and that in this *exploratory study* there are no right or wrong perceptions and no lesser or greater understandings. All are therefore asked to avoid comments, corrections, or judgments on the perceived insights of others. This is not a time for questions and answers, it is an exercise for the purpose of bonding hearts by sharing and receiving personal heartfelt perspectives without discussion.

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 235

QUOTATIONS: *Within the meadows of Thy nearness...*

FORESHADOWING DANGERS FACING MANKIND

1. *Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day. Its tribulation is continually deepening. From the moment the Súriy-i-Ra'ís (Tablet to Ra'ís) was revealed until the present day, neither hath the world been tranquillized, nor have the hearts of its peoples been at rest. At one time it hath been agitated by contentions and disputes, at another it hath been convulsed by wars, and fallen a victim to inveterate diseases. Its sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness, inasmuch as the true Physician is debarred from administering the remedy, whilst unskilled practitioners are regarded with favor, and are accorded full freedom to act. ...The dust of sedition hath clouded the hearts of men, and blinded their eyes. Erelong, they will perceive the consequences of what their hands have wrought in the Day of God. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Informed, as bidden by One Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty.*

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 39-40)

accorded: with agreed upon consent given
afflicted: caused pain, suffering, and distress
agitated: excitedly stirred to trouble and disturbance
All-Informed: One solely and completely informed and knowledgeable
bidden: ordered or commanded
calamity: misfortune, loss, or misery
consequences: things necessarily caused by the effects
contentions: passionate struggles over differences
convulsed: violently agitated and disturbed — physically, socially, and politically
debarred: prevented and excluded
deepening: becoming more grave in nature and effect
disease: figuratively — harmful development
disputes: persistent and irritating verbal controversies

erelong: before long
favor: special rights and privileges
inveterate: of so long in existence as to be practically unchangeable or indestructible
Physician: One producing the remedy or cure [the Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh]
sedition: inciting resistance or rebellion
sickness: figuratively — spiritual or moral weakness, corruption, or disorder
Súriy-i-Ra'ís: Tablet addressed to `Ali Pasha, the Ottoman Prime Minister. It was revealed in August 1868, and exposes unsparingly the abuse of civil power the minister had perpetrated.
tribulation: instance of great misery, distress, and suffering
utter: absolute or total
victim: one tricked, injured, destroyed, or sacrificed
wrought: worked or performed

2. *The world is in travail, and its agitation waxeth day by day. Its face is turned towards waywardness and unbelief. Such shall be its plight, that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly. Its perversity will long continue. And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake. Then, and only then, will the Divine Standard be unfurled, and the Nightingale of Paradise warble its melody.*

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 118-19)

agitation: disturbances and troubles
disclose: make known or expose
Divine: God's
limbs: direct translation from the Arabic: "by it tremble the *world statutes*". Statues are anything fixed or established by law, decree, or authority, e.g., fixed rules and laws of organizations, agencies, and institutions.
meet: justly adapted to the situation
Nightingale of Paradise: figuratively — the Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh
perversity: deviation from the right, proper, or true intended purpose

plight: dangerous, difficult, and unfortunate condition
quake: tremble (be affected with fear and doubt) and shake with disturbances and troubles
seemly: proper for the circumstances
Standard: figuratively — model, example, or sign of authority or victory
travail: agony and torment
unfurled: unfolded, expanded, opened, or spread
waxeth: are increasing in size, strength, and intensity
waywardness: following one's own impulsive, undisciplined, and unruly inclinations

3. *“O ye that are bereft of understanding! A severe trial pursueth you, and will suddenly overtake you. Bestir yourselves, that haply it may pass and inflict no harm upon you.” “O ye peoples of the world! Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity is following you, and that grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not the deeds ye have committed have been blotted from My sight.” “O heedless ones! Though the wonders of My mercy have encompassed all created things, both visible and invisible, and though the revelations of My grace and bounty have permeated every atom of the universe, yet the rod with which I can chastise the wicked is grievous, and the fierceness of Mine anger against them terrible.” ... “Soon will the cry, ‘Yea, yea, here am I, here am I’ be heard from every land. For there hath never been, nor can there ever be, any other refuge to fly to for anyone.”*
 (Bahá’u’lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 81-82)

bereft: lacking or deprived
bestir: arise to brisk and vigorous action
bounty: generously bestowed gifts or favors
calamity: misfortune, loss, or misery
chastise: punish to correct or purify from fault or excess
encompassed: surrounded and included
fly: move and disappear
grace: divine influence that makes you morally pure and strong; special favors of affection
grievous: characterized by overwhelming pain, suffering, and sorrow
haply: perhaps; it may be that

heedless: careless, thoughtless, and inattentive
mercy: kindness and compassion toward the condemned, the distressed, and the unfortunate
overtake: come upon
permeated: spread throughout and penetrated
pursueth: continues to follow
refuge: shelter or protection from danger or distress
retribution: deserved punishment
rod: figuratively — chastisement
trial: test of faith, patience, or stamina by being subject to affliction and temptation

4. *“The days are approaching their end, and yet the peoples of the earth are seen sunk in grievous heedlessness, and lost in manifest error.” “Great, great is the Cause! The hour is approaching when the most great convulsion will have appeared. I swear by Him Who is the Truth! It shall cause separation to afflict everyone, even those who circle around Me.” “Say: O concourse of the heedless! I swear by God! 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!’” “The time for the destruction of the world and its people hath arrived. He Who is the Pre-Existent is come, that He may bestow everlasting life, and grant eternal preservation, and confer that which is conducive to true living.” “The day is approaching when its (civilization’s) flame will devour the cities, when the Tongue of Grandeur will proclaim: ‘The Kingdom is God’s, the Almighty, the All-Praised!’”*
 (Bahá’u’lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 81)

bestow: give the gift of
concourse: those gathered together
conducive: tending to promote and lead
confer: graciously grant
convulsion: violent physical, social, or political agitation and disturbance
destruction: tearing down and ending
devour: use up or destroy
everlasting: eternally enduring
flame: figuratively — sudden or violent outburst of passion, anger, or zeal
grievous: a seriously harmful and dangerous condition [of]

heedless: careless, thoughtless, and inattentive
heedlessness: carelessness, thoughtlessness, and inattentiveness
manifest: known or evident
Pre-Existent: One Who was, before all that is
preservation: safety from injury, harm, or destruction
separation: division or withdrawal
sunk: brought down
tormenting: severely painful and distressing
trial: tests of faith, patience, or stamina by being subject to afflictions and temptations
wrought: worked or performed

5. *We have fixed a time for you, O people! If ye fail, at the appointed hour, to turn towards God, He, verily, will lay violent hold on you, and will cause grievous afflictions to assail you from every direction. How severe indeed is the chastisement with which your Lord will then chastise you!*
(*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 214)

afflictions: state of pain, suffering, and distress
appointed: officially established and fixed
assail: violently attack
chastisement: punishment to correct or purify from fault or excess
fail: disappoint the expectations of trust

fixed: firmly set
grievous: characterized by overwhelming pain, suffering, and sorrow
violent: highly forceful
We: used by one in authority to denote himself

6. *After a time all the governments on earth will change. Oppression will envelop the world. And following a universal convulsion, the sun of justice will rise from the horizon of the unseen realm.*
(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Promised Day is Come*, pp. 116-17)

convulsion: violent physical, social, or political agitation and disturbance
envelop: completely cover
horizon: the greatest extent of perception
justice: that which is morally right, good, and true
oppression: overpowering spiritual and mental burdens (the modern term is “stress”); “*What ‘oppression’ is more grievous than that a soul* ☞

seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it?” (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 31) “...*this ‘oppression’ (which literally meaneth pressure)...*” (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 32)
universal: present everywhere and including all without exception

WARNINGS TO THE BELIEVERS

7. *Grieve thou not over those that have busied themselves with the things of this world, and have forgotten the remembrance of God, the Most Great. By Him Who is the Eternal Truth! The day is approaching when the wrathful anger of the Almighty will have taken hold of them. He, verily, is the Omnipotent, the All-Subduing, the Most Powerful. 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.*
(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 81)

cleanse: render free from sin and evil
corruption: destruction of integrity, virtue, and moral principle
defilements: things that corrupt, violate, or desecrate the sacred
grieve: distress, suffer, and sorrow
heritage: inheritance
nigh: near

Omnipotent: infinitely powerful and influential
remembrance: bringing to and keeping in mind
world: material existence; “*Know ye that by ‘the world’ is meant your unawareness of Him Who is your Maker, and your absorption in aught else but Him.*” (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 276)
wrathful: indignant and punishing

8. *Whatsoever occurreth in the world of being is light for His loved ones and fire for the people of sedition and strife. Even if all the losses of the world were to be sustained by one of the friends of God, he would still profit thereby, whereas true loss would be borne by such as are wayward, ignorant and contemptuous.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963—1990, Vol. I, pp. 153-54, #304)

borne: caused to put up with or endured
contemptuous: irreverent, disrespectful, disobedient, disorderly, and unruly
fire: a severe trial and ordeal
light: emanating spiritual knowledge and goodness
profit: benefit; gain

sedition: inciting resistance or rebellion
strife: striving or competing for superiority where there is conflict or disagreement
sustained: endured or withstood
wayward: following their own impulsive, undisciplined, and unruly inclinations

9. *“Say: O people of God! Beware lest the powers of the earth alarm you, or the might of the nations weaken you, or the tumult of the people of discord deter you, or the exponents of earthly glory sadden you. Be ye as a mountain in the Cause of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Unconstrained.” “Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, lest the strong ones of the earth rob you of your strength, or they who rule the world fill you with fear. Put your trust in God, and commit your affairs to His keeping. He, verily, will, through the power of truth, render you victorious, and He, verily, is powerful to do what He willeth, and in His grasp are the reins of omnipotent might.” “I swear by My life! Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall My loved ones. To this testifieth the Pen of God, the Most Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Best Beloved.” “Let not the happenings of the world sadden you. I swear by God! The sea of joy yearneth to attain your presence, for every good thing hath been created for you, and will, according to the needs of the times, be revealed unto you.”*

(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 82)

affairs: personal, business, public, or professional matters
alarm: cause unreasonable or overmastering fear, resulting in hysteria [to]
beware: be on guard and cautious
Cause: advocated and supported truths [the Bahá'í Faith]
commit: obligate, pledge, and promise
deter: discourage, prevent, or turn
discord: disunity, causing active disagreement or conflict
exponents of: ones that champion, practice, or exemplify
glory: prosperity and achievement
happenings: events and occurrences
keeping: care, maintenance, and preservation
lest: for fear that
might: power, authority, and resources

mountain: “The beloved of God must be as firm as a mountain, and must not quiver under the most violent shock, nor grieve at the greatest calamities; but must be as a solid foundation.” (*Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá*, Vol. II, p. 372)
people of Bahá: followers of Bahá'u'lláh
powers: ones with authority, control, or influence
presence: immediate closeness
profiteth: is of use or advantage [to]
render you: cause you to become
sadden: cause unhappiness [upon]
trust: absolute and assured reliance
tumult: violent agitation and confusion of mind and emotion
weaken: cause loss of strength, spirit, or determination [in]
yearneth: eagerly, restlessly, and painfully longs

10. *O my servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain.*

(*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 329)

blissful: completely happy
contrary: incompatible, unfavorable, or opposite
delight: extreme pleasure and satisfaction
destined: chosen for the specific purpose
glorious: marked by great beauty and splendor
grace: special favors of affection; divine influence that makes one morally pure and strong
joy: feelings of pleasure and delight

manifested: made to happen
ordained: destined to be
plane: level of existence
sorrow not: have no uneasiness, or pain of mind and heart due to real or supposed loss
sustaining: upholding and maintaining
worlds: domains of existence; states of being or reality

APPLICATION: *Showing forth divine light...*

Facilitator

Read through #1 together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action in #2. (these are not shared) When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

1. IMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES: *Visions of radiant lights...*

Bahá'u'lláh wrote: “*It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....*” Imagine how the Bahá'í Teachings in this study class could be translated into reality and action. Take turns sharing the possibilities. Begin your statements with: “*One could....*” Suggest as many ideas as you want.

2. DECIDING ACTION: *Mirroring forth a beam of light...*

From your experience in this study class on *Warnings and Foreshadowing Dangers*, describe what *you* are inspired to put into reality and action. ***I will make conscious efforts to...*** _____

My next step will be... _____

CLOSING MEDITATION: *A heart song...*

A closing summary from Shoghi Effendi.

Friends and fellow-heirs of the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh:

A tempest, unprecedented in its violence, unpredictable in its course, catastrophic in its immediate effects, unimaginably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is at present sweeping the face of the earth. Its driving power is remorselessly gaining in range and momentum. Its cleansing force, however much undetected, is increasing with every passing day. Humanity, gripped in the clutches of its devastating power, is smitten by the evidences of its resistless fury. It can neither perceive its origin, nor probe its significance, nor discern its outcome. Bewildered, agonized and helpless, it watches this great and mighty wind of God invading the remotest and fairest regions of the earth, rocking its foundations, deranging its equilibrium, sundering its nations, disrupting the homes of its peoples, wasting its cities, driving into exile its kings, pulling down its bulwarks, uprooting its institutions, dimming its light, and harrowing up the souls of its inhabitants.

...Dear friends! The powerful operations of this titanic upheaval are comprehensible to none except such as have recognized the claims of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. Their followers know full well whence it comes, and what it will ultimately lead to. Though ignorant of how far it will reach, they clearly recognize its genesis, are aware of its direction, acknowledge its necessity, observe confidently its mysterious processes, ardently pray for the mitigation of its severity, intelligently labor to assuage its fury, and anticipate, with undimmed vision, the consummation of the fears and the hopes it must necessarily engender.

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. Mankind, in these fateful years, which at once signalize the passing of the first century of the Bahá'í Era and proclaim the opening of a new one, is, as ordained by Him Who is both the Judge and the Redeemer of the human race, being simultaneously called upon to give

account of its past actions, and is being purged and prepared for its future mission. It can neither escape the responsibilities of the past, nor shirk those of the future. 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 throughout the ages, which is at once their inalienable right and their true destiny....

“The whole earth,” Bahá’u’lláh, on the other hand, forecasting the bright future in store for a world now wrapt in darkness, emphatically asserts, *“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.”* *“The time is approaching when every created thing will have cast its burden. Glorified be God Who hath vouchsafed this grace that encompasseth all things, whether seen or unseen!”* *“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 forever associated with Him Who beareth the Most Great Name.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, pp. 3-6)