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## Citadel of Faith

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## First American Pioneer to Africa

Rejoice at departure of first pioneer to Africa; urge acceleration of historic process now set in motion. Time is short, tasks ahead manifold, pressing, momentous. Praying ardently for increasing response and 99 befitting discharge of mighty supplementary task shouldered by valorous community.

[October 19, 1951]

## Message to 1951 State Conventions

Advise assembled friends to focus attention on vital, pressing, paramount needs of National Fund at this critical juncture. Hour is ripe to recall unnumbered tribulations, sacrifices heroically endured by the dawn-breakers, culminating in Bahá'u'lláh's afflictive imprisonment in Síyáh Chál, Centennial of which is now approaching. Urge deepening realization of sacredness, preeminent importance of twin purposes which individual resolves serve. Appeal for immediate, unanimous, sustained, decisive response, safeguard thereby American Community's share in tribute to memory of Founder of Faith on occasion of forthcoming Jubilee of Birth of glorious Mission. Praying for befitting answer to heartfelt plea.

[November 4, 1951]

## The Last and Irretrievable Chance

The brief interval separating the hard-pressed, valiantly struggling, resistlessly expanding American Bahá'í Community from the anticipated consummation of the second, fate-laden collective enterprise launched so auspiciously by its national elected representatives is speedily drawing to a close. The sixteen months that still lie ahead constitute in view of the tasks that still remain to be achieved, and the sacrifices still to be made, a period at once critical and challenging. This memorable period commemorates, if we pause and call to mind the stirring events

and bloody episodes linking the Dispensation of the Báb with the dawning Mission of the Founder of our Faith, the centenary of what may be truly regarded as the darkest, the most tragic, the most heroic, period in the annals of a hundred-year-old Revelation. This period, moreover, affords the last and irretrievable chance to a ceaselessly striving, repeatedly victorious community of setting the seal of triumph upon a momentous undertaking, on whose fate hinges the launching of yet another glorious Crusade, the consummation of which <sup>100</sup> will mark the successful conclusion of the initial epoch in the unfoldment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan—an evolution that must continue to blossom and fructify in the course of successive epochs of the Formative Ages of the Faith, and yield its fairest fruit in the Golden Age that is yet to come.

## A PERIOD OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The historic significance of this period cannot indeed be overestimated. For it was a hundred years ago that a Faith, which had already been oppressed by a staggering weight of untold tribulations; which had sustained shattering blows in Mázindarán, Nayríz, Tíhrán and Zanján, and indeed throughout every province in the land of its birth; which had lost its greatest exponents through the tragic martyrdom of most of the Letters of the Living, and particularly of the valiant Mullá Husayn and of the erudite Vahíd and which had been afflicted with the supreme calamity of losing its Divine Founder; was being subjected to still more painful ordeals—ordeals which robbed it of both the heroic Hujjat and of the far-famed Táhirih; which caused it to pass through a reign of terror, and to experience a blood-bath of unprecedented severity, which inflicted on it one of the greatest humiliations it has ever suffered through the attempted assassination of the sovereign himself, and which unloosed a veritable deluge of barbarous atrocities in Tíhrán, Mázindarán, Nayríz and Shírás before which paled the horrors of the siege of Zanján, and which swept no less a figure than Bahá'u'lláh Himself—the last remaining pillar of a Faith that had been so rudely shaken, so ruthlessly denuded of its chief buttresses—into the subterranean dungeon of Tíhrán, an imprisonment that was soon followed by His cruel banishment, in the depths of an exceptionally severe winter, from His native land to 'Iráq. To these tribulations He Himself has referred as “afflictions” that “rained” upon Him, whilst the blood shed by His companions and lovers He characterized as the blood which “impregnated” the earth with the “wondrous revelation” of God's “might.”

Nor should the momentous character of the unique event, that may be regarded as the climax and consummation of this tragic period, be overlooked or underestimated, inasmuch as its centenary synchronizes with the termination of the sixteen-month interval separating the American Bahá'í Community from the conclusion of its present Plan. <sup>101</sup> This unique event, the centenary of which is to be befittingly celebrated, not only in the American continent but throughout the

Bahá'í world, and is destined to be regarded as the culmination of the Second Seven Year Plan, is none other than the “Year Nine,” anticipated 2,000 years ago as the “third woe” by St. John the Divine, alluded to by both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim—the twin luminaries that heralded the advent of the Faith of the Báb—specifically mentioned and extolled by the Herald of the Bahá'í Dispensation in His Writings, and eulogized by both the Founder of our Faith and the Center of His Covenant. In that year, the year “after Hin” (68), mentioned by Shaykh Ahmad, the year that witnessed the birth of the Mission of the promised “Qayyúm,” specifically referred to by Siyyid Kázim, the “requisite number” in the words of Bahá'u'lláh “of pure, of wholly consecrated and sanctified souls” had been “most secretly consummated.” In that year, as testified by the pen of the Báb, the “realities of the created things” were “made manifest,” “a new creation was born” and the seed of His Faith revealed its “ultimate perfection.” In that year, as borne witness by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, a hitherto “embryonic Faith” was born. In that year, while the Blessed Beauty lay in chains and fetters, in that dark and pestilential pit, “the breezes of the All-Glorious,” as He Himself described it, “were wafted” over Him. There, whilst His neck was weighted down by the Qará-Guhar, His feet in stocks, breathing the fetid air of the Síyáh-Chál, He dreamed His dream and heard, “on every side,” “exalted words,” and His “tongue recited” words that “no man could bear to hear.”

There, as He Himself has recorded, under the impact of this dream, He experienced the onrushing force of His newly revealed Mission, that “flowed” even as “a mighty torrent” from His “head” to His “breast,” whereupon “every limb” of His body “would be set afire.” There, in a vision, the “Most Great Spirit,” as He Himself has again testified, appeared to Him, in the guise of a “Maiden” “calling” with “a most wondrous, a most sweet voice” above His Head, whilst “suspended in the air” before Him and, “pointing with her finger” unto His head, imparted “tidings which rejoiced” His “soul.” There appeared above the horizon of that dungeon in the city of Tíhrán, the rim of the Orb of His Faith, whose dawning light had, nine years previously, broken upon the city of Shíráz—an Orb which, after suffering an eclipse of ten years, was destined to burst forth, with its resplendent

102 rays, upon the city of Baghdád, to mount its zenith in Adrianople, and to set eventually in the prison-fortress of ‘Akká.

Such is the year we are steadily approaching. Such is the year with which the fortunes of the Second Seven Year Plan have been linked. As the tribulations, humiliations and trials inflicted on the Cause of God in Persia, a century ago, moved inexorably towards a climax, so must the present austerity period, inaugurated a hundred years later, in the continent of America, to reflect the privations and sacrifices endured so stoically by the dawn-breakers of the Heroic Age of the Faith witness, as it approaches its culmination, a self-abnegation on the part of the champion-builders of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, laboring in the present Formative Age of His Faith, which, at its best, can be regarded as but a faint

reflection of the self-sacrifice so gloriously evinced by their spiritual forbears.

## **OBJECTIVES OF SECOND SEVEN YEAR PLAN LARGELY ATTAINED**

The objectives of the Second Seven Year Plan, the concluding phase of which has synchronized with this period of nation-wide austerity, have, it must be recognized, been in the main, attained. The pillars which must needs add their strength in supporting the future House of Justice have, according to the schedule laid down, been successively erected in the Dominion of Canada and in Latin America. The European Teaching Campaign—the second outstanding enterprise launched, beyond the confines of the North American continent, in pursuance of the Mandate, issued by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Bahá’u’lláh’s valiant “Apostles”—has not only achieved its original aims, but exceeded all expectations through the formation of a local spiritual assembly in the capital city of each of the ten goal countries included within its scope. The interior ornamentation of the Mother Temple of the West has, before its appointed time, been completed. Other tasks, no less vital, still remain to be carried, in the course of a fast shrinking period, to a successful conclusion. The landscaping of the area surrounding a structure whose foundations and exterior and interior ornamentation have demanded, for so many years, so much effort and such constant sacrifice, must, under no circumstances, and while there is yet time, be neglected, lest failure to achieve this final task mar the beauty of the approaches of a national shrine which provide so suitable 103 a setting for an edifice at once so sacred and noble. The responsibilities solemnly undertaken to consolidate and multiply the administrative institutions throughout all the states of the Union—a task that has of late been allowed to fall into abeyance, and has been eclipsed by the spectacular success attending the shining exploits of the American Bahá’í Community in foreign fields—must be speedily and seriously reconsidered, for upon the constant broadening and the steady reinforcement of this internal administrative structure, which provides the essential base for future operations in all the continents of the globe, must depend the vigor, the rapidity and the soundness of the future crusades which must needs be launched in the service, and for the glory of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, and in obedience to the stirring summons issued by the Center of His Covenant in some of His most weighty Tablets. Above all, the accumulating deficit which has lately again thrown its somber shadow on an otherwise resplendent record of service, must, through a renewed display of self-abnegation, which, though not commensurate with the sacrifice of so many souls immolated on the altar of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, may at least faintly reflect its poignant heroism, be obliterated, once and for all, from the record of a splendid stewardship to His Faith.

There can be no doubt—and I am the first to proudly acknowledge it—that, ever since the launching of the Second Seven Year Plan, and in consequence of

unexpected developments both in the Holy Land and elsewhere, the American Bahá'í Community, ever ready to bear the brunt of responsibility, under the stress of unforeseen circumstances, has considerably widened the scope of its original undertakings and augmented the weight shouldered by its stalwart members. At the World Center of the Faith, in response to the urgent call for action, necessitated by the imperative needs of the rising Sepulcher of the Báb, the formation of the Bahá'í International Council, and the establishment of the State of Israel, as well as in the continent of Africa, where the appointed, the chief trustees of a divinely conceived, world-encompassing Plan could not well remain unmoved by the sight of the first attempts being made to introduce systematically the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and to implant its banner amongst its tribes and races, the American Bahá'í Community have assumed responsibilities well exceeding the original duties they had undertaken to discharge. This twofold opportunity that providentially presented itself to them, to contribute <sup>104</sup> to the rise and consolidation of the World Center of their Faith, and to the spiritual re-awakening of a long-neglected continent, must, however, be exploited to the fullest extent, if the early completion of the most sacred edifice, next to the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world, is to be assured, and if the executors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Plan are to retain untarnished the primacy conferred upon them by its Author.

That primacy will be demonstrated and re-emphasized as the representatives of this privileged community take their place, and assume their functions, at each of the four Intercontinental Bahá'í Teaching Conferences which are to be convened in the course of, and which must signalize, the world-wide celebrations of the Centenary of the Year Nine. Playing a preponderating role, as the custodians of a Divine Plan, in the global crusade which all the Bahá'í national spiritual assemblies, without exception, must, in various degrees and combinations, launch on the morrow of the forthcoming Centenary, and during the entire course of the ten-year interval separating them from the Most Great Jubilee, they must, upon the consummation of their present Plan, deliberate, together with their ally the Canadian National Assembly, and their associates, the newly formed National Spiritual Assemblies of Central and South America, on the occasion of the convocation of the approaching All-American Teaching Conference, on ways and means whereby they can best contribute to the establishment of the Faith, not only throughout the Americas and their neighboring islands, but in the chief sovereign states and dependencies of the remaining continents of the globe.

## **SCOPE OF THIRD SEVEN YEAR PLAN WIDENED**

For unlike the First and Second Seven Year Plans, inaugurated by the American Bahá'í Community, the scope of the Third Seven Year Plan, the termination of which will mark the conclusion of the first epoch in the evolution of the Master Plan

designed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, will embrace all the continents of the earth, and will bring the central body directing these widely ramified operations into direct contact with all the national assemblies of the Bahá'í world, which, in varying degrees, will have to contribute their share to the world establishment of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, as prophesied by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and envisioned by Daniel—a consummation that, God willing, will be befittingly celebrated on the occasion of the Most Great Jubilee <sup>105</sup> commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the formal assumption by Bahá'u'lláh of His Prophetic Office.

The vision now disclosed to the eyes of this community is indeed enthralling. The tasks which, if that vision is to be fulfilled, must be valiantly shouldered by its members are staggering. The time during which so herculean a task is to be performed is alarmingly brief. The period during which so gigantic an operation must be set in motion, prosecuted and consummated, coincides with the critical, and perhaps the darkest and most tragic, stage in human affairs. The opportunities presenting themselves to them are now close at hand. The invisible battalions of the Concourse on High are mustered, in serried ranks, ready to rush their reinforcements to the aid of the vanguard of Bahá'u'lláh's crusaders in the hour of their greatest need, and in anticipation of that Most Great, that Wondrous Jubilee in the joyfulness of which both heaven and earth will partake. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Founder of this community and the Author of the Plan which constitutes its birthright, to Whose last wishes its members so marvelously responded; the Báb, the Centenary of Whose Revelation this same community so magnificently celebrated, and to the building of whose Sepulcher it has given so fervent a support; Bahá'u'lláh Himself, to the glory of Whose Name so stately an edifice it has raised, will amply bless and repay its members if they but persevere on the long road they have so steadfastly trodden, and pursue, with undimmed vision, with unrelaxing resolve and unshakable faith, their onward march towards their chosen goal.

That this community, so young in years, yet withal so rich in exploits, may, in the months immediately ahead, as well as in the years immediately following this coming Jubilee, maintain, untarnished and unimpaired, its record of service to our beloved Faith, that it may further embellish, through still nobler feats, its annals, is the dearest wish of my heart, and the object of my constant supplications at the Holy Threshold.

[November 23, 1951]

## **Funds for International Center**

Deeply touched by reconsecration and readiness to sacrifice. Praying for fulfilment of your hopes. Advise allocate substantial portion of <sup>106</sup> budget to meet continual needs arising at International Center of Faith.

[May 3, 1952]

## Forty-Fifth Annual Convention: U.S. Tasks in World Crusade

My soul is uplifted in joy and thanksgiving at the triumphant conclusion of the Second Seven Year Plan immortalized by the brilliant victories simultaneously won by the vanguard of the hosts of Bahá'u'lláh in Latin America, in Europe and in Africa—victories befittingly crowned through the consummation of a fifty year old enterprise, the completion of the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of the western world. The signal success that has attended the second collective enterprise undertaken in the course of American Bahá'í history climaxes a term of stewardship to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, of almost three score years' duration—a period which has enriched the annals of the concluding epoch of the Heroic, and shed luster on the first thirty years of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation. So fecund a period has been marked by teaching activities unexcelled throughout the western world and has been distinguished by administrative exploits unparalleled in the annals of any Bahá'í national community whether in the East or in the West. I am impelled, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Most Great Festival, coinciding with a triple celebration—the dedication of the Mother Temple of the West, the launching of a World Spiritual Crusade and the commemoration of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission—to pay warmest tribute to the preeminent share which the American Bahá'í Community has had in the course of over half a century in proclaiming His Revelation, in shielding His Cause, in championing His Covenant, in erecting the administrative machinery of His embryonic World Order, in expounding His teachings, in translating and disseminating His Holy Word, in dispatching the messengers of His Glad Tidings, in awakening royalty to His Call, in succoring His oppressed followers, in routing His enemies, in upholding His Law, in asserting the independence of His Faith, in multiplying the financial resources of its nascent institutions and, last but not least, in rearing its greatest House of Worship—the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of the western world. 107

The hour is now ripe for this greatly gifted, richly blessed community to arise and reaffirm, through the launching of yet another enterprise, its primacy, enhance its spiritual heritage, plumb greater depths of consecration and capture loftier heights in the course of its strenuous and ceaseless labors for the exaltation of God's Cause.

The Ten Year Plan, constituting the third and final stage of the initial epoch in the evolution of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Master Plan, which, God willing, will raise to greater heights the fame of the stalwart American Bahá'í Community, and seat it upon "the throne of an everlasting dominion," envisaged by the Author of the Tablets of this same Plan, involves:

First, the opening of the following virgin territories, eleven in Africa: Cape Verde Islands, Canary Islands, French Somaliland, French Togoland, Mauritius, Northern Territories Protectorate, Portuguese Guinea, Reunion Island, Spanish Guinea, St.

Helena and St. Thomas Island; eight in Asia: Caroline Islands, Dutch New Guinea, Hainan Island, Kazakhstan, Macao Island, Sakhalin Island, Tibet and Tonga Islands; six in Europe: Andorra, Azores, Balearic Islands, Lofoten Islands, Spitzbergen and Ukraine; and four in America: Aleutian Islands, Falkland Islands, Key West and Kodiak Island.

Second, the consolidation of the Faith in the following territories, six in Asia: China, Formosa, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, Philippine Islands; two in Africa: Liberia and South Africa; twelve in Europe: the ten goal countries, Finland and France; three in America: the Hawaiian Islands, Alaska and Puerto Rico.

Third, the extension of assistance to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'ís of Central and South America, as well as to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Italy and Switzerland in forming twenty national spiritual assemblies in the republics of Latin America and two in Europe, namely in Italy and Switzerland; the extension of assistance for the establishment of a national Hazíratu'l-Quds in the capital of each of the aforementioned countries as well as of national Bahá'í endowments in these same countries.

Fourth, the establishment of ten national spiritual assemblies in the following European countries: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal, France and Finland.

Fifth, the establishment of a national spiritual assembly in Japan and one in the South Pacific Islands. 108

Sixth, the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.

Seventh, the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South and West Africa.

Eighth, the incorporation of each of the fourteen above-mentioned national spiritual assemblies.

Ninth, the establishment of national Bahá'í endowments by these same national spiritual assemblies.

Tenth, the establishment of a national Hazíratu'l-Quds in the capital city of each of the eleven of the aforementioned countries, as well as one in Anchorage, one in Suva, and one in Johannesburg.

Eleventh, the erection of the first dependency of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the western world.

Twelfth, the extension of assistance for the purchase of land for four future Temples, two in Europe: in Stockholm and Rome; one in Central America, in Panama City; and one in Africa, in Johannesburg.

Thirteenth, the completion of the landscaping of the grounds of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Wilmette.

Fourteenth, the raising to one hundred of the number of incorporated local assemblies within the American Union.

Fifteenth, the raising to three hundred of the number of local spiritual assemblies in that same country.

Sixteenth, the incorporation of spiritual assemblies in the leading cities of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Spain and Portugal, as well as of the Spiritual Assemblies of Paris, of Helsingfors, of Tokyo, of Suva and of Johannesburg.

Seventeenth, the quadrupling of the number of local spiritual assemblies and the trebling of the number of localities in the aforementioned countries.

Eighteenth, the translation of Bahá'í literature into ten languages in Europe, (Basque, Estonian, Flemish, Lapp, Maltese, Piedmontese, Romani, Romansch, Yiddish and Ziryen; ten in America: Aguaruna, Arawak, Blackfoot, Cherokee, Iroquois, Lengua, Mataco, Maya, Mexican and Yahgan.

Nineteenth, the conversion to the Faith of members of the leading Indian tribes.

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Twentieth, the conversion to the Faith of representatives of the Basque and Gypsy races.

Twenty-first, the establishment of summer schools in each of the Scandinavian and Benelux countries, as well as those of the Iberian Peninsula.

Twenty-second, the proclamation of the Faith through the press and radio throughout the United States of America.

Twenty-third, the establishment of a Bahá'í Publishing Trust in Wilmette, Illinois.

Twenty-fourth, the formation of an Asian teaching committee designed to stimulate and coordinate the teaching activities initiated by the Plan.

May this community—the spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers of the Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Faith, the chief repository of the immortal Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, the foremost executors of the Mandate issued by the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, the champion-builders of a divinely conceived Administrative Order, the standard-bearers of the all-conquering army of the Lord of Hosts, the torchbearers of a future divinely inspired world civilization—arise, in the course of the momentous decade separating the Great from the Most Great Jubilee to secure, as befits its rank, the lion's share in the prosecution of a global crusade designed to diffuse the light of God's revelation over the surface of the entire planet.

[April 29, 1953]

## **Intending Pioneers Urged to Scatter**

Strongly urge intending pioneers to scatter as widely as possible, settle even territories, islands not specifically assigned to United States. Prompt opening of virgin territories is highly meritorious, extremely urgent, vital prerequisite to insure triumphant conclusion of opening phase of Global Crusade, prerogative of chief executors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Plan. May enrolled pioneers arise and confirm primacy of American Bahá'í Community playing preponderating role in initial stage of spiritual conquest of unopened territories and islands of the planet. 110

[May 13, 1953]

## **A Turning Point in American Bahá'í History**

My soul is thrilled and my heart is filled with gratitude as I contemplate—looking back upon six decades of eventful American Bahá'í history—the chain of magnificent achievements which, from the dawn of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the West until the present day, have signalized the birth, marked the rise and distinguished the unfoldment of the glorious mission of the American Bahá'í Community. Of all Bahá'í communities in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, with the sole exception of its venerable sister community in Bahá'u'lláh's native land, it alone may well claim to have released forces, and set in motion events, which stand unparalleled in the annals of the Faith; while in the course of the last fifty years, comprising the concluding years of the Heroic and the opening epochs of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, it can confidently boast of a record of stewardship which, for its scope, effectiveness and splendor, is unmatched by that of any other community in the entire Bahá'í world.

The first to awaken to the call of the New Day in the western world; the first to spontaneously arise to befittingly erect the Mother Temple of the West; the first to grasp the implications, evolve the pattern and lay the basis of the structure of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in the entire Bahá'í world; the first to openly and systematically proclaim the fundamental principles of the Faith, to adopt effectual measures for its defense, to invite the attention of royalty to its teachings, to devise an adequate machinery for the translation, the publication and the dissemination of its literature and to provide the means for the creation of its subsidiary institutions; the first to champion the cause of the oppressed and to generously contribute to the alleviation of the sufferings of the needy and persecuted among the followers of Bahá'u'lláh; the first to inaugurate collective enterprises for the propagation of His Cause; the first to assert its independence in the West; the first to lay an unassailable foundation for the erection of auxiliary institutions designed to multiply its financial resources; and, more recently, the first to achieve, as befits its primacy, the initial task devolving upon it in pursuance of the newly launched World Spiritual 111 Crusade, this community has abundantly merited, by the quality of its deeds and the magnitude of its exploits, the distinctive titles of the cradle of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, of the vanguard of His world-conquering

host, of the standard-bearers of the oneness of mankind, of the chief trustees of the Plan devised by the Center of the Covenant and of the torch-bearers of an as yet unborn world civilization.

## **RECENT SERVICES DESERVING MENTION**

The services rendered by this same community in recent years, in its capacity as the chief executors of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan, in the course of the second stage of the initial epoch in its evolution, are of such importance and significance as to deserve particular mention at this time. In the North American continent, throughout the republics of Latin America, in the ten goal countries of Europe, on the shores and in the heart of the African continent, the members of this community have, in conformity with the provisions of the Second Seven Year Plan, performed feats of such noble and enduring heroism as to enhance immensely their prestige, demonstrate unmistakably the caliber of their faith and qualify them to assume a preponderating share in the prosecution of the Ten Year Plan whose operations are to extend over the entire surface of the globe.

In the multiplication and consolidation of Bahá’í administrative institutions and their auxiliary agencies throughout Central America, the Antilles and every South American republic—a task supplementing the initial enterprise undertaken, in pursuance of the first Seven Year Plan, in connection with the introduction of the Faith into the republics of Latin America; in the even more rapid development of nascent institutions of the Faith in Scandinavia, in the Benelux countries, in Switzerland, in the Italian and Iberian Peninsulas; in the laying of the administrative basis of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh in the capital and in some of the major cities of each of the ten European sovereign states included within the scope of the Plan; in the convocation of a series of historic teaching conferences in the north and in the heart of the European continent—heralding the convocation of the recently held, epoch-making Intercontinental Teaching Conferences; in the translation, the publication and dissemination of Bahá’í literature in various European languages; in the still more dramatic evolution 112 of the Faith in the African continent, culminating in the convocation of the first Intercontinental Teaching Conference of the Holy Year in the heart of Africa; in the tremendous sacrifices spontaneously and repeatedly made to broaden and reinforce the foundations of the Faith in the North American continent, to sustain the campaigns undertaken in Latin America, Europe and Africa, and to meet the many demands of the Bahá’í Temple, rapidly nearing completion in Wilmette; in the successive emergence of three national spiritual assemblies in the Western Hemisphere—an outstanding contribution to the evolution and consolidation of the structure of the world Administrative Order of the Faith; in the completion of the interior ornamentation of the first *Mashriqu’l-Adhikár* of the West, the provision of its accessories and the initiation of the landscaping of its grounds; in the support

extended to the development of the institutions of the World Center of the Faith; in the role played by its representatives, whether as Hands of the Cause or members of the International Bahá'í Council; in the financial aid unhesitatingly given to hasten the construction, and insure the completion, of the superstructure of the Báb's Sepulcher on Mt. Carmel—above all, in the share its national elected representatives have assumed in providing the means for the convocation of the second Intercontinental Teaching Conference of the Holy Year; in commemorating worthily the dedication to public worship of the Mother Temple of the West, on the occasion of its Jubilee; in befittingly inaugurating the launching of the World Spiritual Crusade, and in celebrating the climax of the Holy Year marking the centenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission—in all these the American Bahá'í Community has fully deserved the praise and gratitude of posterity, has merited the applause of the Concourse on High and earned a full measure of the divine blessings and of the celestial sustenance of which it will stand in such great need in the course of the prosecution of still mightier and more glorious enterprises in the days to come.

### **ADDED RESPONSIBILITIES IN PROPAGATING THE DIVINE PLAN**

The stage is now set, and the hour propitious, for a deployment of forces, and for the revelation of the indomitable spirit animating this community, on a scale and to a degree unprecedented in the entire course of American Bahá'í history. To the Antilles and the seventeen republics of Central and of South America—the scene of the initial <sup>113</sup> exploits of a community inaugurating the opening phase of its world-girding mission—to the ten sovereign states of Europe which, at a subsequent stage in the unfoldment of that mission, the members of this community enthusiastically and determinedly arose to open up and conquer; to the African territories which, in addition to their allocated task under the Second Seven Year Plan, they spontaneously endeavored to win to the all-conquering Cause of Bahá'u'lláh—to these numerous islands and archipelagos, bordering the American, the European and African continents; dependencies extensive, well-nigh inaccessible, and remote from the base of their operations throughout the Asiatic continent; lastly, the South Pacific area, the home of the one remaining race not as yet adequately represented in the Bahá'í world community, occupying spiritually so strategic a position owing to its proximity to the Bahá'í communities already firmly entrenched in South America, in the Indian subcontinent and in Australasia, at once challenging the resources of no less than eight national spiritual assemblies, and the theater destined to witness the noblest and the most resounding victories which the chosen executors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan have been called upon to win in the service of the Cause of God—all these have now, in accordance with the requirements of an irresistibly unfolding Plan, been added, completing thereby the full circle of the world-wide obligations devolving upon a community invested with spiritual primacy by the Author of the immortal Tablets constituting the Charter of

the Master Plan of the appointed Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant.

“The moment this Divine Message,” He Who penned these Tablets and conferred this primacy has most significantly affirmed, “is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa and of Australasia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion.” Then, and only then, will, as He Himself has so remarkably prophesied, “the whole earth” “resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness.”

Now, indeed, is the time, after the lapse of two score years; following the triumphant conclusion of two successive historic Plans, marking the opening stages of the first epoch in the unfoldment of that same Master Plan; on the morrow of the brilliant celebrations climaxing the world-wide festivities of a memorable Holy Year; and while a <sup>114</sup> triumphant community, in the first flush of enthusiasm, has just garnered the first fruits of its campaigns in four continents of the globe and is laden with its freshly won trophies, for this community to bestir itself, and, assuming its rightful preponderating share in the conduct of a newly launched World Spiritual Crusade, to demonstrate, through a supreme and sustained effort embracing the entire surface of the planet, its ability to safeguard that primacy, to enrich immeasurably the record of its stewardship and to bring to a majestic conclusion the opening epoch in the evolution of a Plan destined to reveal the full measure of its potentialities, not only throughout the successive epochs of the Formative Age of the Faith, but in the course of the vast reaches of time stretching into the Golden, the last Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

## **A LASTING INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND NATION**

This decade-long global Crusade must mark a veritable turning point in American Bahá'í history. It must prove itself to be, as it develops, a force so pervasive and revolutionary in its character as to leave a lasting imprint not only on the destinies of the American Bahá'í Community but on the fortunes of the American nation as well. It must, even as a baptismal fire, so purge its members from self as to enable them to scale heights never as yet attained. It must, in its initial stages, witness a dispersal, combined with a consecration, reminiscent of the dawn of the Heroic Age in Bahá'u'lláh's native land. It must, as it gathers momentum, awaken the select and gather the spiritually hungry amongst the peoples of the world, as well as create an awareness of the Faith not only among the political leaders of present-day society but also among the thoughtful, the erudite in other spheres of human activity. It must, as it approaches its climax, carry the torch of the Faith to regions so remote, so backward, so inhospitable that neither the light of Christianity or Islám has, after the revolution of centuries, as yet penetrated. It must, as it approaches its conclusion, pave the way for the laying, on an

unassailable foundation, of the structural basis of an Administrative Order whose fabric must, in the course of successive crusades, be laboriously erected throughout the entire globe and which must assemble beneath its sheltering shadow peoples of every race, tongue, creed, color and nation.

Seconded by the neighboring fully fledged Canadian Bahá'í Community 115 flourishing beyond the northern frontier of its homeland; supported by the newly emerged Latin American communities established in the Antilles and in each of the central and southern republics of the Western Hemisphere; ably aided by its sister community vigorously functioning in the heart of a far-flung empire, and destined to lend its inestimable assistance in the spiritual conquest of the numerous and widely scattered dependencies of the British Crown; reinforced by the oldest and youngest national Bahá'í communities on the European mainland which are to play a prominent part in the eastern and southern regions, and across the frontiers of Europe, along the shores and in the islands of the Mediterranean; assisted by its venerable sister community in the cradle of the Faith and by the second oldest national community in the Bahá'í world actively engaged in the propagation of the Faith in the Asiatic continent; confident of the help of its Egyptian and Indian sister communities, whose destiny is closely linked with the African continent and southeast Asia respectively, and, lastly, assured of the unfailing cooperation of yet another national community in the Antipodes which, owing to its geographical position, is bound to assume a notable share in the introduction of the Faith in the islands of the South Pacific Ocean, the American Bahá'í Community must, as befits its rank as the chief executor of the Divine Plan, play a dominant and decisive role in the direction and control of the manifold operations involved in the prosecution of the North American, the Latin American, the European, the African, the Asian and the South Pacific campaigns of this World Crusade, and insure, by every means at its disposal and in conjunction with its junior partners, its ultimate and total success.

Within its own sphere, extending to every continent of the globe, embracing no less than twenty-nine virgin territories and islands, the members of this stalwart and preeminent community are called upon, among other things and within the relatively brief span of a single decade, to create nuclei, around which will crystallize future assemblies, in no less than eleven territories and islands of Africa, eight of Asia, six of Europe, four of America; to inaugurate the establishment of the future dependencies of the Mother Temple of the West, and to terminate the landscaping of its grounds; to consolidate and broaden the basis of the Administrative Order already laid in twenty-three territories and islands distributed in four continents of the globe and 116 situated in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; to assist in the erection of no less than thirty-six pillars, twenty in Latin America, twelve in Europe, two in Asia, one in the North American continent and one in Africa, designed to help in sustaining the weight of the crowning unit of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, and in the establishment of national Bahá'í

headquarters, of national endowments, and of national incorporations in all of these continents; to lend its aid for the acquisition of land in anticipation of the erection of four Temples, two in Europe, one in Africa and one in Central America; to lend an impetus to the progress of the Faith in its homeland through raising to three hundred the number of local spiritual assemblies and to one hundred the number of incorporated assemblies, as well as through the founding of a Bahá'í Publishing Trust and the proclamation of the Faith through the press and radio; to enroll in the ranks of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh members of the Indian, of the Basque and Gypsy races; to assume responsibility for the translation and publication of Bahá'í literature in twenty languages, ten in the Americas and ten in Europe; and to contribute to the consolidation of the Faith in eight of the European goal countries through the establishment of local incorporations, as well as through the quadrupling of the number of local assemblies and the trebling of the number of local Bahá'í centers in each one of them.

While this colossal task, which in its magnitude and potentialities transcends any previous collective enterprise launched in the course of American Bahá'í history, is being energetically carried out, it should be constantly borne in mind—and this applies to all communities without exception participating in this World Crusade—that the twofold task of extension and consolidation must be supplemented by continuous and strenuous efforts to increase speedily not only the number of the avowed followers of the Faith in both the virgin and opened territories and islands included within the scope of the Ten Year Plan, but also to swell the ranks of its active supporters who will consecrate their time, resources and energy to the effectual spread of its teachings and the multiplication and consolidation of its administrative institutions.

The movement of pioneers, the opening of virgin territories, the initiation of Houses of Worship and of administrative headquarters, the incorporation of local and national elective bodies, the multiplication of assemblies, groups and isolated centers, the increase in the <sup>117</sup> number of races represented in the world Bahá'í fellowship, the translation, publication and dissemination of Bahá'í literature, the consolidation of administrative agencies and the creation of auxiliary bodies designed to support them, however valuable, essential and meritorious, will in the long run amount to little and fail to achieve their supreme purpose if not supplemented by the equally vital task—which is one that primarily concerns continually and challenges each single individual believer whatever his rank, capacity or origin—of winning to the Faith fresh recruits to the slowly yet steadily advancing army of the Lord of Hosts, whose reinforcing strength is so essential to the safeguarding of the victories which the band of heroic Bahá'í conquerors are winning in the course of their several campaigns in all the continents of the globe.

Such a steady flow of reinforcements is absolutely vital and is of extreme urgency, for nothing short of the vitalizing influx of new blood that will reanimate the world Bahá'í community can safeguard the prizes which, at so great a sacrifice

involving the expenditure of so much time, effort and treasure, are now being won in virgin territories by Bahá'u'lláh's valiant Knights, whose privilege is to constitute the spearhead of the onrushing battalions which, in diverse theaters and in circumstances often adverse and extremely challenging, are vying with each other for the spiritual conquest of the unsundered territories and islands on the surface of the globe.

This flow, moreover, will presage and hasten the advent of the day which, as prophesied by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, will witness the entry by troops of peoples of diverse nations and races into the Bahá'í world—a day which, viewed in its proper perspective, will be the prelude to that long-awaited hour when a mass conversion on the part of these same nations and races, and as a direct result of a chain of events, momentous and possibly catastrophic in nature, and which cannot as yet be even dimly visualized, will suddenly revolutionize the fortunes of the Faith, derange the equilibrium of the world, and reinforce a thousandfold the numerical strength as well as the material power and the spiritual authority of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

## **MOST VITAL OBJECTIVE IN THE CRUSADE'S OPENING YEAR**

Of all the objectives enumerated in my message to the representatives of this community, assembled on the occasion of the celebration <sup>118</sup> of the climax of the Holy Year, of the convocation of the second Intercontinental Teaching Conference, of the inauguration of the Mother Temple of the West and of the launching of the World Spiritual Crusade, the most vital, urgent and meritorious, in this the opening year of the initial phase of this world-embracing enterprise, is, without doubt, the settlement of pioneers in all the virgin territories and islands assigned to this community in all the continents of the globe, with the exception of the few which, owing to present political obstacles, cannot as yet be opened to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. This process already so auspiciously inaugurated, which, in the course of the first eight months of the Holy Year has gathered such splendid momentum, and which bids fair to astonish, stimulate and inspire the entire Bahá'í world, must, during the concluding months of this same year and the one succeeding it, be so accelerated as to insure the attainment of this paramount objective before the lapse of two years from the official launching of this World Crusade.

While this goal is being vigorously pursued, close attention must be directed to the preliminary measures for the establishment of the first dependency of the Mother Temple of the West, as well as to the completion of the landscaping of its grounds, a double task that will, on the one hand, mark the termination of the fifty-year-old process of the construction of the central Bahá'í House of Worship, and proclaim, on the other, the commencement of another designed to culminate in the establishment in its plenitude of the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as

conceived by Bahá'u'lláh and envisaged by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Moreover, immediate consideration should be given to two other issues of prime importance, namely the purchase of land, which need not exceed for the present one acre, in anticipation of the construction of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of South Africa, and the prompt translation of a suitable Bahá'í pamphlet into the American and European languages allocated to your assembly, and its publication and wide dissemination among the peoples and tribes for whom it has been primarily designed.

The followers of the Most Great Name, citizens of the great republic of the West; constituting the majority and the oldest followers of His Faith in a continent wherein, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, “the splendors of His (Bahá'u'lláh's) Light shall be revealed” and “the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled,” addressed by Him in His <sup>119</sup> Tablets of the Divine Plan as the “Apostles” of His Father; the recipients of the overwhelming majority of these same Tablets constituting the Charter of that Plan; conquerors of most of the territories, whether sovereign states or dependencies, already included within the pale of the Faith; the champion-builders of a world administrative system which posterity will regard as the harbinger of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, must, if they wish to retain their primacy and enrich their heritage, insure that, ere the opening of the second phase of this World Crusade, the names of the first American Bahá'í conquerors to settle in virgin territories and islands will, as befits their primacy, be inscribed on the Scroll of Honor, now in process of preparation, and designed to be permanently deposited at the entrance door of the Inner Sanctuary of Bahá'u'lláh's Most Holy Tomb, that the limited area of land required for the erection of four future Bahá'í Temples, in Rome, Stockholm, Panama City and Johannesburg, will be bought, that the landscaping of the grounds of the Temple in Wilmette will be completed, and that the translation and the publication of the aforementioned pamphlet in the specified languages will be accomplished.

The two years that lie ahead, three months of which have already elapsed, will swiftly and imperceptibly draw to a close. Tasks even more onerous, equally weighty and requiring in a still greater measure the expenditure of effort and substance, lie ahead, which will brook no delay, which will carry the Faith to still higher levels of achievement and renown, which will enlarge, through the forging of fresh instruments, the framework of a steadily rising world Administrative Order, and which will eventually, if worthily discharged, seal the triumph of the most prodigious, the most sublime, the most sacred collective enterprise launched by the adherents of the Cause of God in both hemispheres since the early days of the Heroic Age of the Faith—an enterprise which in its vastness, organization and unifying power, has no parallel in the world's spiritual history.

## **AN APPEAL TO ALL ENGAGED IN THE CRUSADE**

To them, and indeed to the entire body of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, engaged in this global Crusade, I direct my appeal to arise and, in the course of these fast-fleeting years, in every phase of the campaigns that are to be fought in all the continents of the globe, prove <sup>120</sup> their worth as gallant warriors battling for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. Indeed, from this very hour until the eve of the Most Great Jubilee, each and every one of those enrolled in the Army of Light must seek no rest, must take no thought of self, must sacrifice to the uttermost, must allow nothing whatsoever to deflect him or her from meeting the pressing, the manifold, the paramount needs of this preeminent Crusade.

“Light as the spirit,” “pure as air,” “blazing as fire,” “unrestrained as the wind”—for such is Bahá'u'lláh's own admonition to His loved ones in His Tablets, and directed not to a select few but to the entire congregation of the faithful—let them scatter far and wide, proclaim the glory of God's Revelation in this Day, quicken the souls of men and ignite in their hearts the love of the One Who alone is their omnipotent and divinely appointed Redeemer.

Bracing the fearful cold of the Arctic regions and the enervating heat of the torrid zone; heedless of the hazards, the loneliness and the austerity of the deserts, the far-away islands and mountains wherein they will be called upon to dwell; undeterred by the clamor which the exponents of religious orthodoxy are sure to raise, or by the restrictive measures which political leaders may impose; undismayed by the smallness of their numbers and the multitude of their potential adversaries; armed with the efficacious weapons their own hands have slowly and laboriously forged in anticipation of this glorious and inevitable encounter with the organized forces of superstition, of corruption and of unbelief; placing their whole trust in the matchless potency of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, in the all-conquering power of His might and the infallibility of His glorious and oft-repeated promises, let them press forward, each according to his strength and resources, into the vast arena now lying before them, and which, God willing, will witness, in the years immediately lying ahead, such exhibitions of prowess and of heroic self-sacrifice as may well recall the superb feats achieved by that immortal band of God-intoxicated heroes who have so immeasurably enriched the annals of the Christian, the Islamic and Bábí Dispensations.

On the members of the American Bahá'í Community, the envied custodians of a Divine Plan, the principal builders and defenders of a mighty Order and the recognized champions of an unspeakably glorious and precious Faith, a peculiar and inescapable responsibility must <sup>121</sup> necessarily rest. Through their courage, their self-abnegation, their fortitude and their perseverance; through the range and quality of their achievements, the depth of their consecration, their initiative and resourcefulness, their organizing ability, their readiness and capacity to lend their assistance to less privileged sister communities struggling against heavy odds; through their generous and sustained response to the enormous and ever-increasing financial needs of a world-encompassing, decade-long and

admittedly strenuous enterprise, they must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, vindicate their right to the leadership of this World Crusade.

Now is the time for the hope voiced by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that from their homeland “heavenly illumination” may “stream to all the peoples of the world” to be realized. Now is the time for the truth of His remarkable assertion that that same homeland is “equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world and be blest in both the East and the West,” to be strikingly and unmistakably demonstrated. “Should success crown” their “enterprise,” He, moreover, has assured them, “the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.”

Would to God that this community, boasting already of so superb a record of achievements both at home and overseas, and elevated to such dazzling heights by the hopes cherished and the assurance given by the Center of Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant, may prove itself capable of performing deeds of such distinction, in the course of the opening, as well as the succeeding phases of this World Spiritual Crusade, as will outshine the dedicated acts which have already left their indelible mark on the Apostolic Age of the Faith in the West; will excel the enduring, the historic achievements associated, at a later period, with this community’s memorable contribution to the rise and establishment of the world Administrative Order of Bahá’u’lláh; will surpass the magnificent accomplishments which, subsequently, as the result of the operation of the first Seven Year Plan, illuminated the annals of the Faith in both the North American continent and throughout Latin America and will eclipse the even more dramatic exploits which, during the opening years of the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Faith, and in the course of the prosecution of the Second Seven Year Plan, have exerted so lasting an influence on the fortunes of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh in the 122 Antilles, throughout the republics of Central America, in each of the ten republics of South America, in no less than ten sovereign states in the continent of Europe, and in various dependencies on the eastern and western shores, as well as in the heart of the African continent.

[July 18, 1953]

## Safeguarding American Primacy

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Overjoyed by remarkable achievements of American Bahá’í Community, safeguarding primacy, enhancing prestige, setting magnificent example to sister communities East and West. Assure three Assembly members, also Lofoten valiant pioneer of abiding appreciation, fervent loving prayers.

[September 5, 1953]

## Temple Site Purchased in Panama

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## The Advent of Divine Justice

Author: Shoghi Effendi    Source: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990 first pocket-size edition    Pages: 91

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## “To the beloved of God and the handmaids of the Merciful ...”

1

To the beloved of God and the handmaids of the Merciful throughout the United States and Canada.

Best-beloved brothers and sisters in the love of Bahá'u'lláh:

It would be difficult indeed to adequately express the feelings of irrepressible joy and exultation that flood my heart every time I pause to contemplate the ceaseless evidences of the dynamic energy which animates the stalwart pioneers of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh in the execution of the Plan committed to their charge. The signature of the contract, by your elected national representatives, signaling the opening of the final phase of the greatest enterprise ever launched by the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the West, no less than the extremely heartening progress recorded in the successive reports of their National Teaching Committee, attest, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the fidelity, the vigor, and the thoroughness with which you are conducting the manifold operations which the evolution of the Seven Year Plan must necessarily involve. In both of its aspects, and in all its details, it is being prosecuted with exemplary regularity and precision, with undiminished efficiency, and commendable dispatch.

The resourcefulness which the national representatives of the American believers have, in recent months, so strikingly demonstrated, as evidenced by the successive measures they have adopted, has been matched by the loyal, the unquestioning and generous support accorded them by all those whom they represent, at every critical stage, and with every fresh advance, in the discharge of their sacred duties. Such close interaction, such complete cohesion, such continual harmony and fellowship between the various agencies that contribute to the organic life, and constitute the basic framework, of every properly functioning Bahá'í community, is a phenomenon which offers a striking contrast to the disruptive tendencies which the discordant elements of present-day society so tragically manifest. Whereas every apparent trial with which the unfathomable wisdom of the Almighty deems it necessary to afflict His chosen community serves only to demonstrate afresh its

essential solidarity and to consolidate its inward strength, each of the successive crises in the fortunes of a decadent age exposes more convincingly than the one preceding it the corrosive influences that are fast sapping the vitality and undermining the basis of its declining institutions.

For such demonstrations of the interpositions of an ever-watchful Providence they who stand identified with the Community of the Most Great Name must feel eternally grateful. From every fresh token of His unfailing blessing on the one hand, and of His visitation on the other, they cannot but derive immense hope and courage. Alert to seize every opportunity which the revolutions of the wheel of destiny within their Faith offers them, and undismayed by the prospect of spasmodic convulsions that must sooner or later fatally affect those who have refused to embrace its light, they, and those who will labor after them, must press forward until the processes now set in motion will have each spent its force and contributed its share towards the birth of the Order now stirring in the womb of a travailing age.

These recurrent crises which, with ominous frequency and resistless force, are afflicting an ever-increasing portion of the human race must of necessity continue, however impermanently, to exercise, in a certain measure, their baleful influence upon a world community which has spread its ramifications to the uttermost ends of the earth. How can <sup>3</sup> the beginnings of a world upheaval, unleashing forces that are so gravely deranging the social, the religious, the political, and the economic equilibrium of organized society, throwing into chaos and confusion political systems, racial doctrines, social conceptions, cultural standards, religious associations, and trade relationships—how can such agitations, on a scale so vast, so unprecedented, fail to produce any repercussions on the institutions of a Faith of such tender age whose teachings have a direct and vital bearing on each of these spheres of human life and conduct?

Little wonder, therefore, if they who are holding aloft the banner of so pervasive a Faith, so challenging a Cause, find themselves affected by the impact of these world-shaking forces. Little wonder if they find that in the midst of this whirlpool of contending passions their freedom has been curtailed, their tenets contemned, their institutions assaulted, their motives maligned, their authority jeopardized, their claim rejected.

In the heart of the European continent a community which, as predicted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is destined, by virtue of its spiritual potentialities and geographical situation, to radiate the splendor of the light of the Faith on the countries that surround it, has been momentarily eclipsed through the restrictions which a regime that has sorely misapprehended its purpose and function has chosen to impose upon it. Its voice, alas, is now silenced, its institutions dissolved, its literature banned, its archives confiscated, and its meetings suspended.

In central Asia, in the city enjoying the unique distinction of having been chosen by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the home of the first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár of the Bahá’í world, as well as in the towns and villages of the province to which it belongs, the sore-pressed Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, as a result of the extraordinary and unique vitality which, in the course of several decades, it has consistently manifested, finds itself at the mercy of forces which, alarmed at its rising power, are now bent on reducing it to utter impotence. Its Temple, <sup>4</sup> though still used for purposes of Bahá’í worship, has been expropriated, its Assemblies and committees disbanded, its teaching activities crippled, its chief promoters deported, and not a few of its most enthusiastic supporters, both men and women, imprisoned.

In the land of its birth, wherein reside the immense majority of its followers—a country whose capital has been hailed by Bahá’u’lláh as the “mother of the world” and the “dayspring of the joy of mankind”—a civil authority, as yet undivorced officially from the paralyzing influences of an antiquated, a fanatical, and outrageously corrupt clergy, pursues relentlessly its campaign of repression against the adherents of a Faith which it has for well-nigh a century striven unsuccessfully to suppress. Indifferent to the truth that the members of this innocent and proscribed community can justly claim to rank as among the most disinterested, the most competent, and the most ardent lovers of their native land, contemptuous of their high sense of world citizenship which the advocates of an excessive and narrow nationalism can never hope to appreciate, such an authority refuses to grant to a Faith which extends its spiritual jurisdiction over well-nigh six hundred local communities, and which numerically outnumbers the adherents of either the Christian, the Jewish, or the Zoroastrian Faiths in that land, the necessary legal right to enforce its laws, to administer its affairs, to conduct its schools, to celebrate its festivals, to circulate its literature, to solemnize its rites, to erect its edifices, and to safeguard its endowments.

And now recently in the Holy Land itself, the heart and nerve-center of a world-embracing Faith, the fires of racial animosity, of fratricidal strife, of unabashed terrorism, have lit a conflagration that gravely interferes, on the one hand, with that flow of pilgrims that constitutes the lifeblood of that center, and suspends, on the other, the various projects that had been initiated in connection with the preservation and extension of the areas surrounding the sacred Spots it enshrines. The safety of the small community of resident <sup>5</sup> believers, faced by the rising tide of lawlessness, has been imperiled, its status as a neutral and distinct community indirectly challenged, and its freedom to carry out certain of its observances curtailed. A series of murderous assaults, alternating with outbursts of bitter fanaticism, both racial and religious, involving the leaders as well as the followers of the three leading Faiths in that distracted country, have, at times, threatened to sever all normal communications both within its confines as well as with the outside world. Perilous though the situation has been, the Bahá’í Holy Places, the object of the adoration of a world-encircling Faith, have,

notwithstanding their number and exposed position, and though to outward seeming deprived of any means of protection, been vouchsafed a preservation little short of miraculous.

A world, torn with conflicting passions, and perilously disintegrating from within, finds itself confronted, at so crucial an epoch in its history, by the rising fortunes of an infant Faith, a Faith that, at times, seems to be drawn into its controversies, entangled by its conflicts, eclipsed by its gathering shadows, and overpowered by the mounting tide of its passions. In its very heart, within its cradle, at the seat of its first and venerable Temple, in one of its hitherto flourishing and potentially powerful centers, the as-yet unemancipated Faith of Bahá'u'lláh seems indeed to have retreated before the onrushing forces of violence and disorder to which humanity is steadily falling a victim. The strongholds of such a Faith, one by one and day after day, are to outward seeming being successively isolated, assaulted and captured. As the lights of liberty flicker and go out, as the din of discord grows louder and louder every day, as the fires of fanaticism flame with increasing fierceness in the breasts of men, as the chill of irreligion creeps relentlessly over the soul of mankind, the limbs and organs that constitute the body of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh appear, in varying measure, to have become afflicted with the crippling influences that now hold in their grip the whole of the civilized world. 6

How clearly and strikingly the following words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are being demonstrated at this hour: "The darkness of error that has enveloped the East and the West is, in this most great cycle, battling with the light of Divine Guidance. Its swords and its spears are very sharp and pointed; its army keenly bloodthirsty." "This day," He, in another passage has written, "the powers of all the leaders of religion are directed towards the dispersion of the congregation of the All-Merciful, and the shattering of the Divine Edifice. The hosts of the world, whether material, cultural or political are from every side launching their assault, for the Cause is great, very great. Its greatness is, in this day, clear and manifest to men's eyes."

The one chief remaining citadel, the mighty arm which still raises aloft the standard of an unconquerable Faith, is none other than the blessed community of the followers of the Most Great Name in the North American continent. By its works, and through the unfailing protection vouchsafed to it by an almighty Providence, this distinguished member of the body of the constantly interacting Bahá'í communities of East and West, bids fair to be universally regarded as the cradle, as well as the stronghold, of that future New World Order, which is at once the promise and the glory of the Dispensation associated with the name of Bahá'u'lláh.

Let anyone inclined to either belittle the unique station conferred upon this community, or to question the role it will be called upon to play in the days to come, ponder the implication of these pregnant and highly illuminating words uttered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and addressed to it at a time when the fortunes of a world groaning beneath the burden of a devastating war had reached their lowest ebb. "The

continent of America,” He so significantly wrote, “is, in the eyes of the one true God, the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, where the righteous will abide, and the free assemble.”

Already, the community of the believers of the North American continent—at once the prime mover and pattern of the future communities which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is <sup>7</sup> destined to raise up throughout the length and breadth of the Western Hemisphere—has, despite the prevailing gloom, shown its capacity to be recognized as the torchbearer of that light, the repository of those mysteries, the exponent of that righteousness and the sanctuary of that freedom. To what other light can these above-quoted words possibly allude, if not to the light of the glory of the Golden Age of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh? What mysteries could 'Abdu'l-Bahá have contemplated except the mysteries of that embryonic World Order now evolving within the matrix of His Administration? What righteousness if not the righteousness whose reign that Age and that Order can alone establish? What freedom but the freedom which the proclamation of His sovereignty in the fullness of time must bestow?

The community of the organized promoters of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the American continent—the spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers of an heroic Age, who by their death proclaimed the birth of that Faith—must, in turn, usher in, not by their death but through living sacrifice, that promised World Order, the shell ordained to enshrine that priceless jewel, the world civilization, of which the Faith itself is the sole begetter. While its sister communities are bending beneath the tempestuous winds that beat upon them from every side, this community, preserved by the immutable decrees of the omnipotent Ordainer and deriving continual sustenance from the mandate with which the Tablets of the Divine Plan have invested it, is now busily engaged in laying the foundations and in fostering the growth of those institutions which are to herald the approach of the Age destined to witness the birth and rise of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

A community, relatively negligible in its numerical strength; separated by vast distances from both the focal-center of its Faith and the land wherein the preponderating mass of its fellow-believers reside; bereft in the main of material resources and lacking in experience and in prominence; <sup>8</sup> ignorant of the beliefs, concepts and habits of those peoples and races from which its spiritual Founders have sprung; wholly unfamiliar with the languages in which its sacred Books were originally revealed; constrained to place its sole reliance upon an inadequate rendering of only a fragmentary portion of the literature embodying its laws, its tenets, and its history; subjected from its infancy to tests of extreme severity, involving, at times, the defection of some of its most prominent members; having to contend, ever since its inception, and in an ever-increasing measure, with the forces of corruption, of moral laxity, and ingrained prejudice—such a community, in less than half a century, and unaided by any of its sister communities, whether in the East or in the West, has, by virtue of the celestial

potency with which an all-loving Master has abundantly endowed it, lent an impetus to the onward march of the Cause it has espoused which the combined achievements of its coreligionists in the West have failed to rival.

What other community, it can confidently be asked, has been instrumental in fixing the pattern, and in imparting the original impulse, to those administrative institutions that constitute the vanguard of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh? What other community has been capable of demonstrating, with such consistency, the resourcefulness, the discipline, the iron determination, the zeal and perseverance, the devotion and fidelity, so indispensable to the erection and the continued extension of the framework within which those nascent institutions can alone multiply and mature? What other community has proved itself to be fired by so noble a vision, or willing to rise to such heights of self-sacrifice, or ready to achieve so great a measure of solidarity, as to be able to raise, in so short a time and in the course of such crucial years, an edifice that can well deserve to be regarded as the greatest contribution ever made by the West to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh? What other community can justifiably lay claim to have succeeded, through the unsupported efforts of one of its humble members, in securing the spontaneous  
9 allegiance of Royalty to its Cause, and in winning such marvelous and written testimonies to its truth? What other community has shown the foresight, the organizing ability, the enthusiastic eagerness, that have been responsible for the establishment and multiplication, throughout its territory, of those initial schools which, as time goes by, will, on the one hand, evolve into powerful centers of Bahá'í learning, and, on the other, provide a fertile recruiting ground for the enrichment and consolidation of its teaching force? What other community has produced pioneers combining to such a degree the essential qualities of audacity, of consecration, of tenacity, of self-renunciation, and unstinted devotion, that have prompted them to abandon their homes, and forsake their all, and scatter over the surface of the globe, and hoist in its uttermost corners the triumphant banner of Bahá'u'lláh? Who else but the members of this community have won the eternal distinction of being the first to raise the call of Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá in such highly important and widely scattered centers and territories as the hearts of both the British and French empires, Germany, the Far East, the Balkan States, the Scandinavian countries, Latin America, the Islands of the Pacific, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and now more recently the Baltic States? Who else but those same pioneers have shown themselves ready to undertake the labor, to exercise the patience, and to provide the funds, required for the translation and publication, in no less than forty languages, of their sacred literature, the dissemination of which is an essential prerequisite to any effectively organized campaign of teaching? What other community can lay claim to have had a decisive share in the worldwide efforts that have been exerted for the safeguarding and the extension of the immediate surroundings of its holy shrines, as well as for the preliminary acquisition of the future sites of its international institutions at its world

center? What other community can to its eternal credit claim to have been the first to frame its national and local constitutions, thereby laying down the fundamental lines of the 10 twin charters designed to regulate the activities, define the functions, and safeguard the rights, of its institutions? What other community can boast of having simultaneously acquired and legally secured the basis of its national endowments, thus paving the way for a similar action on the part of its local communities? What other community has achieved the supreme distinction of having obtained, long before any of its sister communities had envisaged such a possibility, the necessary documents assuring the recognition, by both the federal and state authorities, of its Spiritual Assemblies and national endowments? And finally what other community has had the privilege, and been granted the means, to succor the needy, to plead the cause of the downtrodden, and to intervene so energetically for the safeguarding of Bahá'í edifices and institutions in countries such as Persia, Egypt, 'Iráq, Russia, and Germany, where, at various times, its fellow-believers have had to suffer the rigors of both religious and racial persecution?

Such a matchless and brilliant record of service, extending over a period of well-nigh twenty years, and so closely interwoven with the interest and fortunes of such a large section of the worldwide Bahá'í community, deserves to rank as a memorable chapter in the history of the Formative Period of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Reinforced and enriched as it is by the memory of the American believers' earlier achievements, such a record is in itself convincing testimony to their ability to befittingly shoulder the responsibilities which any task may impose upon them in the future. To overrate the significance of these manifold services would be well-nigh impossible. To appraise correctly their value, and dilate on their merits and immediate consequences, is a task which only a future Bahá'í historian can properly discharge. I can only for the present place on record my profound conviction that a community capable of showing forth such deeds, of evincing such a spirit, of rising to such heights, cannot but be already possessed of such potentialities as will enable it to vindicate, in the fullness of 11 time, its right to be acclaimed as the chief creator and champion of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Magnificent as has been this record, reminiscent as it is, in some of its aspects, of the exploits with which the dawn-breakers of an heroic Age have proclaimed the birth of the Faith itself, the task associated with the name of this privileged community is, far from approaching its climax, only beginning to unfold. What the American believers have, within the space of almost fifty years, achieved is infinitesimal when compared to the magnitude of the tasks ahead of them. The rumblings of that catastrophic upheaval, which is to proclaim, at one and the same time, the death-pangs of the old order and the birth-pangs of the new, indicate both the steady approach, as well as the awe-inspiring character, of those tasks.

The virtual establishment of the Administrative Order of their Faith, the erection of its framework, the fashioning of its instruments, and the consolidation of its

subsidiary institutions, was the first task committed to their charge, as an organized community called into being by the Will, and under the instructions, of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Of this initial task they have acquitted themselves with marvelous promptitude, fidelity, and vigor. No sooner had they created and correlated the various and necessary agencies for the efficient conduct of any policy they might subsequently wish to initiate, than they addressed themselves, with equal zest and consecration, to the next more arduous task of erecting the superstructure of an edifice the cornerstone of which 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself had laid. And when that feat was achieved, this community, alive to the passionate pleas, exhortations, and promises recorded in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, resolved to undertake yet another task, which in its scope and spiritual potentialities is sure to outshine any of the works they have already accomplished. Launching with unquenchable enthusiasm and dauntless courage the Seven Year Plan, as the first and practical step towards the fulfillment of the mission prescribed in those epoch-making

<sup>12</sup> Tablets, they entered, with a spirit of renewed consecration, upon their dual task, the consummation of which, it is hoped, will synchronize with the celebration of the centenary of the birth of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Well aware that every advance made in the external ornamentation of their majestic edifice would directly react on the progress of the teaching campaign initiated by them in both the northern and southern American continents, and realizing that every victory gained in the teaching field would, in its turn, facilitate the work, and hasten the completion, of their Temple, they are now pressing on, with courage and faith, in their efforts to discharge, in both of its phases, their obligations under the Plan they have dedicated themselves to execute.

Let them not, however, imagine that the carrying out of the Seven Year Plan, coinciding as it does with the termination of the first century of the Bahá'í era, signifies either the termination of, or even an interruption in, the work which the unerring Hand of the Almighty is directing them to perform. The opening of the second century of the Bahá'í era must needs disclose greater vistas, usher in further stages, and witness the initiation of plans more far-reaching than any as yet conceived. The Plan on which is now focused the attention, the aspirations, and the resources of the entire community of the American believers should be viewed as a mere beginning, as a trial of strength, a stepping-stone to a crusade of still greater magnitude, if the duties and responsibilities with which the Author of the Divine Plan has invested them are to be honorably and entirely fulfilled.

For the consummation of the present Plan can result in no more than the formation of at least one center in each of the Republics of the Western Hemisphere, whereas the duties prescribed in those Tablets call for a wider diffusion, and imply the scattering of a far greater and more representative number of the members of the North American Bahá'í community over the entire surface of the New World. It is the undoubted mission of the American believers, therefore,

<sup>13</sup> to carry forward into the second century the glorious work initiated in the

closing years of the first. Not until they have played their part in guiding the activities of these isolated and newly fledged centers, and in fostering their capacity to initiate in their turn institutions, both local and national, modeled on their own, can they be satisfied to have adequately discharged their immediate obligations under 'Abdu'l-Bahá's divinely revealed Plan.

Nor should it for a moment be supposed that the completion of a task which aims at the multiplication of Bahá'í centers and the provision of the assistance and guidance necessary for the establishment of the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í Faith in the countries of Latin America realizes in its entirety the scheme visualized for them by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. A perusal, however perfunctory, of those Tablets embodying His Plan will instantly reveal a scope for their activities that stretches far beyond the confines of the Western Hemisphere. With their inter-American tasks and responsibilities virtually discharged, their intercontinental mission enters upon its most glorious and decisive phase. "The moment this Divine Message," 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has written, "is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America and is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa, and of Australasia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion."

And who knows but that when this colossal task has been accomplished a greater, a still more superb mission, incomparable in its splendor, and foreordained for them by Bahá'u'lláh, may not be thrust upon them? The glories of such a mission are of such dazzling splendor, the circumstances attending it so remote, and the contemporary events with the culmination of which it is so closely knit in such a state of flux, that it would be premature to attempt, at the present time, any accurate delineation of its features. Suffice it to say that out of the turmoil and tribulations of these "latter years" opportunities undreamt of will be born, and circumstances <sup>14</sup> unpredictable created, that will enable, nay impel, the victorious prosecutors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Plan, to add, through the part they will play in the unrolling of the New World Order, fresh laurels to the crown of their servitude to the threshold of Bahá'u'lláh.

Nor should any of the manifold opportunities, of a totally different order, be allowed to pass unnoticed which the evolution of the Faith itself, whether at its world center, or in the North American continent, or even in the most outlying regions of the earth, must create, calling once again upon the American believers to play a part, no less conspicuous than the share they have previously had in their collective contributions to the propagation of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. I can only for the moment cite at random certain of these opportunities which stand out preeminently, in any attempt to survey the possibilities of the future: The election of the International House of Justice and its establishment in the Holy Land, the spiritual and administrative center of the Bahá'í world, together with the formation of its auxiliary branches and subsidiary institutions; the gradual erection of the

various dependencies of the first Mashriq'l-Adhkár of the West, and the intricate issues involving the establishment and the extension of the structural basis of Bahá'í community life; the codification and promulgation of the ordinances of the Most Holy Book, necessitating the formation, in certain countries of the East, of properly constituted and officially recognized courts of Bahá'í law; the building of the third Mashriq'l-Adhkár of the Bahá'í world in the outskirts of the city of Tīhrán, to be followed by the rise of a similar House of Worship in the Holy Land itself; the deliverance of Bahá'í communities from the fetters of religious orthodoxy in such Islamic countries as Persia, 'Iráq, and Egypt, and the consequent recognition, by the civil authorities in those states, of the independent status and religious character of Bahá'í National and Local Assemblies; the precautionary and defensive measures to be devised, coordinated, and carried out to counteract the full force of the inescapable attacks <sup>15</sup> which the organized efforts of ecclesiastical organizations of various denominations will progressively launch and relentlessly pursue; and, last but not least, the multitudinous issues that must be faced, the obstacles that must be overcome, and the responsibilities that must be assumed, to enable a sore-tried Faith to pass through the successive stages of unmitigated obscurity, of active repression, and of complete emancipation, leading in turn to its being acknowledged as an independent Faith, enjoying the status of full equality with its sister religions, to be followed by its establishment and recognition as a State religion, which in turn must give way to its assumption of the rights and prerogatives associated with the Bahá'í state, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, a stage which must ultimately culminate in the emergence of the worldwide Bahá'í Commonwealth, animated wholly by the spirit, and operating solely in direct conformity with the laws and principles of Bahá'u'lláh.

The challenge offered by these opportunities the American believers, I feel confident, will, in addition to their answer to the teaching call voiced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Tablets, unhesitatingly take up, and will, with their traditional fearlessness, tenacity, and efficiency, so respond to it as to confirm, before all the world, their title and rank as the champion-builders of the mightiest institutions of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Dearly beloved friends! Though the task be long and arduous, yet the prize which the All-Bountiful Bestower has chosen to confer upon you is of such preciousness that neither tongue nor pen can befittingly appraise it. Though the goal towards which you are now so strenuously striving be distant, and as yet undisclosed to men's eyes, yet its promise lies firmly embedded in the authoritative and unalterable utterances of Bahá'u'lláh. Though the course He has traced for you seems, at times, lost in the threatening shadows with which a stricken humanity is now enveloped, yet the unfailing light He has caused to shine continually upon you is of such brightness that no earthly dusk can ever <sup>16</sup> eclipse its splendor. Though small in numbers, and circumscribed as yet in your experiences, powers, and resources, yet the Force which energizes your mission is limitless in its range

and incalculable in its potency. Though the enemies which every acceleration in the progress of your mission must raise up be fierce, numerous, and unrelenting, yet the invisible Hosts which, if you persevere, must, as promised, rush forth to your aid, will, in the end, enable you to vanquish their hopes and annihilate their forces. Though the ultimate blessings that must crown the consummation of your mission be undoubted, and the Divine promises given you firm and irrevocable, yet the measure of the goodly reward which every one of you is to reap must depend on the extent to which your daily exertions will have contributed to the expansion of that mission and the hastening of its triumph.

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## God Passes By

Author: Shoghi Effendi Source: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979 second printing Pages: 412

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## Chapter XVI: The Rise and Establishment of the Faith in the West

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Though the rebellion of Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí precipitated many sombre and distressing events, and though its dire consequences continued for several years to obscure the light of the Covenant, to endanger the life of its appointed Center, and to distract the thoughts and retard the progress of the activities of its supporters in both the East and the West, yet the entire episode, viewed in its proper perspective, proved to be neither more nor less than one of those periodic crises which, since the inception of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and throughout a whole century, have been instrumental in weeding out its harmful elements, in fortifying its foundations, in demonstrating its resilience, and in releasing a further measure of its latent powers.

Now that the provisions of a divinely appointed Covenant had been indubitably proclaimed; now that the purpose of the Covenant was clearly apprehended and its fundamentals had become immovably established in the hearts of the overwhelming majority of the adherents of the Faith; and now that the first assaults launched by its would-be subverters had been successfully repulsed, the Cause for which that Covenant had been designed could forge ahead along the course traced for it by the finger of its Author. Shining exploits and unforgettable victories had already signaled the birth of that Cause and accompanied its rise in several countries of the Asiatic continent, and particularly in the homeland of its Founder. The mission of its newly-appointed Leader, the steward of its glory and the diffuser of its light, was, as conceived by Himself, to enrich and extend the bounds of the incorruptible patrimony entrusted to His hands by shedding the illumination of His Father's Faith upon the West, by expounding the fundamental precepts of that Faith and its cardinal principles, by consolidating the activities which had already been initiated for the promotion of its interests, and, finally, by ushering in, through the provisions of His own Will, the Formative Age in its evolution.

A year after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had, in a verse which He had revealed, and which had evoked the derision of the Covenant-breakers, already foreshadowed an auspicious event which

253 posterity would recognize as one

of the greatest triumphs of His ministry, which in the end would confer an inestimable blessing upon the western world, and which ere long was to dispel the grief and the apprehensions that had surrounded the community of His fellow-exiles in 'Akká. The Great Republic of the West, above all the other countries of the Occident, was singled out to be the first recipient of God's inestimable blessing, and to become the chief agent in its transmission to so many of her sister nations throughout the five continents of the earth.

The importance of so momentous a development in the evolution of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—the establishment of His Cause in the North American continent—at a time when 'Abdu'l-Bahá had just inaugurated His Mission, and was still in the throes of the most grievous crisis with which He was ever confronted, can in no wise be overestimated. As far back as the year which witnessed the birth of the Faith in Shiráz the Báb had, in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, after having warned in a memorable passage the peoples of both the Orient and the Occident, directly addressed the “peoples of the West,” and significantly bidden them “issue forth” from their “cities” to aid God, and “become as brethren” in His “one and indivisible religion.” “In the East,” Bahá'u'lláh Himself had, in anticipation of this development, written, “the light of His Revelation hath broken; in the West the signs of His dominion have appeared.” “Should they attempt,” He, moreover, had predicted, “to conceal its light on the continent, it will assuredly rear its head in the midmost heart of the ocean, and, raising its voice, proclaim: ‘I am the lifegiver of the world!’” “Had this Cause been revealed in the West,” He, shortly before His ascension, is reported by Nabíl in his narrative to have stated, “had Our verses been sent from the West to Persia and other countries of the East, it would have become evident how the people of the Occident would have embraced Our Cause. The people of Persia, however, have failed to appreciate it.” “From the beginning of time until the present day,” is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own testimony, “the light of Divine Revelation hath risen in the East and shed its radiance upon the West. The illumination thus shed hath, however, acquired in the West an extraordinary brilliancy. Consider the Faith proclaimed by Jesus. Though it first appeared in the East, yet not until its light had been shed upon the West did the full measure of its potentialities become manifest.” “The day is approaching,” He has affirmed, “when ye shall witness how, through the splendor of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the West will have replaced the East, radiating the light of Divine <sup>254</sup> guidance.” And again: “The West hath acquired illumination from the East, but, in some respects, the reflection of the light hath been greater in the Occident.” Furthermore, “The East hath, verily, been illumined with the light of the Kingdom. Erelong will this same light shed a still greater illumination upon the West.”

More specifically has the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation Himself chosen to confer upon the rulers of the American continent the unique honor of addressing them collectively in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, His most Holy Book, significantly exhorting them to “adorn the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear

of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance” of their Lord, and bidding them “bind with the hands of justice the broken,” and “crush the oppressor” with the “rod of the commandments” of their “Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.” “The continent of America,” wrote ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “is, in the eyes of the one true God, the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, where the righteous will abide and the free assemble.” “The American continent,” He has furthermore predicted, “giveth signs and evidences of very great advancement. Its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far reaching. It will lead all nations spiritually.”

“The American people,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, even more distinctly, singling out for His special favor the Great Republic of the West, the leading nation of the American continent, has revealed, “are indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Most Great Peace, and proclaim the oneness of mankind.” And again: “This American nation is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West for the triumph of its people.” Furthermore: “May this American democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the unity of mankind. May it be the first to unfurl the standard of the Most Great Peace.” “May the inhabitants of this country,” He, moreover has written, “...rise from their present material attainment to such heights that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world.”

“O ye apostles of Bahá’u’lláh!,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has thus addressed the believers of the North American continent, “...consider how exalted and lofty is the station you are destined to attain... The full measure of your success is as yet unrevealed, its significance still unapprehended.” And again: “Your mission is unspeakably glorious. <sup>255</sup> Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God, will in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.” And finally, this stirring affirmation: “The moment this Divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America, and is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa and of Australasia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion... Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness.”

Little wonder that a community belonging to a nation so abundantly blessed, a nation occupying so eminent a position in a continent so richly endowed, should have been able to add, during the fifty years of its existence, many a page rich with victories to the annals of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh. This is the community, it should be remembered, which, ever since it was called into being through the creative energies released by the proclamation of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh, was nursed in the lap of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s unfailing solicitude, and was trained by Him to discharge

its unique mission through the revelation of innumerable Tablets, through the instructions issued to returning pilgrims, through the despatch of special messengers, through His own travels at a later date, across the North American continent, through the emphasis laid by Him on the institution of the Covenant in the course of those travels, and finally through His mandate embodied in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. This is the community which, from its earliest infancy until the present day, has unremittingly labored and succeeded, through its own unaided efforts, in implanting the banner of Bahá'u'lláh in the vast majority of the sixty countries which, in both the East and the West, can now claim the honor of being included within the pale of His Faith. To this community belongs the distinction of having evolved the pattern, and of having been the first to erect the framework, of the administrative institutions that herald the advent of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Through the efforts of its members the Mother Temple of the West, the Harbinger of that Order, one of the noblest institutions ordained in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and the most stately edifice reared in the entire Bahá'í world, has been erected in the very heart of the North American continent. Through the assiduous labors of its pioneers, its teachers and its administrators, the literature of the Faith has been enormously expanded, its aims and purposes fearlessly defended, and its nascent institutions solidly <sup>256</sup> established. In direct consequence of the unsupported and indefatigable endeavors of the most distinguished of its itinerant teachers the spontaneous allegiance of Royalty to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has been secured and unmistakably proclaimed in several testimonies transmitted to posterity by the pen of the royal convert herself. And finally, to the members of this community, the spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers of the Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, must be ascribed the eternal honor of having arisen, on numerous occasions, with marvelous alacrity, zeal and determination, to champion the cause of the oppressed, to relieve the needy, and to defend the interests of the edifices and institutions reared by their brethren in countries such as Persia, Russia, Egypt, 'Iráq and Germany, countries where the adherents of the Faith have had to sustain, in varying measure, the rigors of racial and religious persecution.

Strange, indeed, that in a country, invested with such a unique function among its sister-nations throughout the West, the first public reference to the Author of so glorious a Faith should have been made through the mouth of one of the members of that ecclesiastical order with which that Faith has had so long to contend, and from which it has frequently suffered. Stranger still that he who first established it in the city of Chicago, fifty years after the Báb had declared His Mission in Shíráz, should himself have forsaken, a few years later, the standard which he, single-handed, had implanted in that city.

It was on September 23, 1893, a little over a year after Bahá'u'lláh's ascension, that, in a paper written by Rev. Henry H. Jessup, D.D., Director of Presbyterian Missionary Operations in North Syria, and read by Rev. George A. Ford of Syria, at

the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, in connection with the Columbian Exposition, commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, it was announced that “a famous Persian Sage,” “the Bábí Saint,” had died recently in ‘Akká, and that two years previous to His ascension “a Cambridge scholar” had visited Him, to whom He had expressed “sentiments so noble, so Christ-like” that the author of the paper, in his “closing words,” wished to share them with his audience. Less than a year later, in February 1894, a Syrian doctor, named Ibráhím Khayru’lláh, who, while residing in Cairo, had been converted by Hájí ‘Abdu’l-Karím-i-Tíhrání to the Faith, had received a Tablet from Bahá’u’lláh, had communicated with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and reached New York in December 1892, established his residence in Chicago, and began to teach actively and systematically the Cause he had espoused. Within the space of two years he had communicated <sup>257</sup> his impressions to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and reported on the remarkable success that had attended his efforts. In 1895 an opening was vouchsafed to him in Kenosha, which he continued to visit once a week, in the course of his teaching activities. By the following year the believers in these two cities, it was reported, were counted by hundreds. In 1897 he published his book, entitled the Bábu’d-Dín, and visited Kansas City, New York City, Ithaca and Philadelphia, where he was able to win for the Faith a considerable number of supporters. The stout-hearted Thornton Chase, surnamed Thábit (Steadfast) by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and designated by Him “the first American believer,” who became a convert to the Faith in 1894, the immortal Louisa A. Moore, the mother teacher of the West, surnamed Livá (Banner) by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Dr. Edward Getsinger, to whom she was later married, Howard MacNutt, Arthur P. Dodge, Isabella D. Brittingham, Lillian F. Kappes, Paul K. Dealy, Chester I. Thacher and Helen S. Goodall, whose names will ever remain associated with the first stirrings of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh in the North American continent, stand out as the most prominent among those who, in those early years, awakened to the call of the New Day, and consecrated their lives to the service of the newly proclaimed Covenant.

By 1898 Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, the well-known philanthropist (wife of Senator George F. Hearst), whom Mrs. Getsinger had, while on a visit to California, attracted to the Faith, had expressed her intention of visiting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Holy Land, had invited several believers, among them Dr. and Mrs. Getsinger, Dr. Khayru’lláh and his wife, to join her, and had completed the necessary arrangements for their historic pilgrimage to ‘Akká. In Paris several resident Americans, among whom were May Ellis Bolles, whom Mrs. Getsinger had won over to the Faith, Miss Pearson, and Ann Apperson, both nieces of Mrs. Hearst, with Mrs. Thornburgh and her daughter, were added to the party, the number of which was later swelled in Egypt by the addition of Dr. Khayru’lláh’s daughters and their grand-mother whom he had recently converted.

The arrival of fifteen pilgrims, in three successive parties, the first of which, including Dr. and Mrs. Getsinger, reached the prison-city of ‘Akká on December 10,

1898; the intimate personal contact established between the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant and the newly arisen heralds of His Revelation in the West; the moving circumstances attending their visit to His Tomb and the great honor bestowed upon them of being conducted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself into its innermost chamber; the spirit which, through precept and example, despite the <sup>258</sup> briefness of their stay, a loving and bountiful Host so powerfully infused into them; and the passionate zeal and unyielding resolve which His inspiring exhortations, His illuminating instructions and the multiple evidences of His divine love kindled in their hearts—all these marked the opening of a new epoch in the development of the Faith in the West, an epoch whose significance the acts subsequently performed by some of these same pilgrims and their fellow-disciples have amply demonstrated.

“Of that first meeting,” one of these pilgrims, recording her impressions, has written, “I can remember neither joy nor pain, nor anything that I can name. I had been carried suddenly to too great a height, my soul had come in contact with the Divine Spirit, and this force, so pure, so holy, so mighty, had overwhelmed me... We could not remove our eyes from His glorious face; we heard all that He said; we drank tea with Him at His bidding; but existence seemed suspended; and when He arose and suddenly left us, we came back with a start to life; but never again, oh! never again, thank God, the same life on this earth.” “In the might and majesty of His presence,” that same pilgrim, recalling the last interview accorded the party of which she was a member, has testified, “our fear was turned to perfect faith, our weakness into strength, our sorrow into hope, and ourselves forgotten in our love for Him. As we all sat before Him, waiting to hear His words, some of the believers wept bitterly. He bade them dry their tears, but they could not for a moment. So again He asked them for His sake not to weep, nor would He talk to us and teach us until all tears were banished...”

...“Those three days,” Mrs. Hearst herself has, in one of her letters, testified, “were the most memorable days of my life... The Master I will not attempt to describe: I will only state that I believe with all my heart that He is the Master, and my greatest blessing in this world is that I have been privileged to be in His presence, and look upon His sanctified face... Without a doubt Abbás Effendi is the Messiah of this day and generation, and we need not look for another.” “I must say,” she, moreover, has in another letter written, “He is the most wonderful Being I have ever met or ever expect to meet in this world... The spiritual atmosphere which surrounds Him and most powerfully affects all those who are blest by being near Him, is indescribable... I believe in Him with all my heart and soul, and I hope all who call themselves believers will concede to Him all the greatness, all the glory, and all the praise, for surely He is the Son of God—and ‘the spirit of the Father abideth in Him.’” <sup>259</sup>

Even Mrs. Hearst's butler, a negro named Robert Turner, the first member of his race to embrace the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the West, had been transported by the influence exerted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the course of that epoch-making pilgrimage.

Such was the tenacity of his faith that even the subsequent estrangement of his beloved mistress from the Cause she had spontaneously embraced failed to becloud its radiance, or to lessen the intensity of the emotions which the loving-kindness showered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá upon him had excited in his breast.

The return of these God-intoxicated pilgrims, some to France, others to the United States, was the signal for an outburst of systematic and sustained activity, which, as it gathered momentum, and spread its ramifications over Western Europe and the states and provinces of the North American continent, grew to so great a scale that 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself resolved that, as soon as He should be released from His prolonged confinement in 'Akká, He would undertake a personal mission to the West. Undeflected in its course by the devastating crisis which the ambition of Dr. Khayru'lláh had, upon his return from the Holy Land (December, 1899) precipitated; undismayed by the agitation which he, working in collaboration with the arch-breaker of the Covenant and his messengers, had provoked; disdainful of the attacks launched by him and his fellow-seceders, as well as by Christian ecclesiastics increasingly jealous of the rising power and extending influence of the Faith; nourished by a continual flow of pilgrims who transmitted the verbal messages and special instructions of a vigilant Master; invigorated by the effusions of His pen recorded in innumerable Tablets; instructed by the successive messengers and teachers dispatched at His behest for its guidance, edification and consolidation, the community of the American believers arose to initiate a series of enterprises which, blessed and stimulated a decade later by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself, were to be but a prelude to the unparalleled services destined to be rendered by its members during the Formative Age of His Father's Dispensation.

No sooner had one of these pilgrims, the afore-mentioned May Bolles, returned to Paris than she succeeded, in compliance with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's emphatic instructions, in establishing in that city the first Bahá'í center to be formed on the European continent. This center was, shortly after her arrival, reinforced by the conversion of the illumined Thomas Breakwell, the first English believer, immortalized by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's fervent eulogy revealed in his memory; of Hippolyte Dreyfus, the first Frenchman to embrace the Faith, who, 260 through his writings, translations, travels and other pioneer services, was able to consolidate, as the years went by, the work which had been initiated in his country; and of Laura Barney, whose imperishable service was to collect and transmit to posterity in the form of a book, entitled "Some Answered Questions," 'Abdu'l-Bahá's priceless explanations, covering a wide variety of subjects, given to her in the course of an extended pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Three years later, in 1902, May Bolles, now married to a Canadian, transferred her residence to Montreal, and succeeded in laying the foundations of the Cause in that Dominion.

In London Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper, as a consequence of the creative influences released by that never-to-be-forgotten pilgrimage, was able to initiate activities which, stimulated and expanded through the efforts of the first English

believers, and particularly of Ethel J. Rosenberg, converted in 1899, enabled them to erect, in later years, the structure of their administrative institutions in the British Isles. In the North American continent, the defection and the denunciatory publications of Dr. Khayru'lláh (encouraged as he was by Mírzá Muḥammad-‘Alí and his son Shu‘á’u’lláh, whom he had despatched to America) tested to the utmost the loyalty of the newly fledged community; but successive messengers despatched by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (such as Hájí ‘Abdu’l-Karím-i-Ṭihrání, Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan-i-Khurásání, Mírzá Asadu’lláh and Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl) succeeded in rapidly dispelling the doubts, and in deepening the understanding, of the believers, in holding the community together, and in forming the nucleus of those administrative institutions which, two decades later, were to be formally inaugurated through the explicit provisions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will and Testament. As far back as the year 1899 a council board of seven officers, the forerunner of a series of Assemblies which, ere the close of the first Bahá’í Century, were to cover the North American Continent from coast to coast, was established in the city of Kenosha. In 1902 a Bahá’í Publishing Society, designed to propagate the literature of a gradually expanding community, was formed in Chicago. A Bahá’í Bulletin, for the purpose of disseminating the teachings of the Faith was inaugurated in New York. The “Bahá’í News,” another periodical, subsequently appeared in Chicago, and soon developed into a magazine entitled “Star of the West.” The translation of some of the most important writings of Bahá’u’lláh, such as the “Hidden Words,” the “Kitáb-i-Íqán,” the “Tablets to the Kings,” and the “Seven Valleys,” together with the Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as well 261 as several treatises and pamphlets written by Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl and others, was energetically undertaken. A considerable correspondence with various centers throughout the Orient was initiated, and grew steadily in scope and importance. Brief histories of the Faith, books and pamphlets written in its defence, articles for the press, accounts of travels and pilgrimages, eulogies and poems, were likewise published and widely disseminated.

Simultaneously, travellers and teachers, emerging triumphantly from the storms of tests and trials which had threatened to engulf their beloved Cause, arose, of their own accord, to reinforce and multiply the strongholds of the Faith already established. Centers were opened in the cities of Washington, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Baltimore, Minneapolis, Buffalo, Rochester, Pittsburgh, Seattle, St. Paul and in other places. Audacious pioneers, whether as visitors or settlers, eager to spread the new born Evangel beyond the confines of their native country, undertook journeys, and embarked on enterprises which carried its light to the heart of Europe, to the Far East, and as far as the islands of the Pacific. Mason Remey voyaged to Russia and Persia, and later, with Howard Struven, circled, for the first time in Bahá’í history, the globe, visiting on his way the Hawaiian Islands, Japan, China, India and Burma. Hooper Harris and Harlan Ober traveled, during no less than seven months, in India and Burma, visiting Bombay, Poona, Lahore, Calcutta, Rangoon and Mandalay. Alma Knobloch, following on the

heels of Dr. K. E. Fisher, hoisted the standard of the Faith in Germany, and carried its light to Austria. Dr. Susan I. Moody, Sydney Sprague, Lillian F. Kappes, Dr. Sarah Clock, and Elizabeth Stewart transferred their residence to Tíhrán for the purpose of furthering the manifold interests of the Faith, in collaboration with the Bahá'ís of that city. Sarah Farmer, who had already initiated in 1894, at Green Acre, in the State of Maine, summer conferences and established a center for the promotion of unity and fellowship between races and religions, placed, after her pilgrimage to 'Akká in 1900, the facilities these conferences provided at the disposal of the followers of the Faith which she had herself recently embraced.

And last but not least, inspired by the example set by their fellow-disciples in Ishqábád, who had already commenced the construction of the first Mashriq'l-Adhkár of the Bahá'í world, and afire with the desire to demonstrate, in a tangible and befitting manner, the quality of their faith and devotion, the Bahá'ís of Chicago, having petitioned 'Abdu'l-Bahá for permission to erect a House of Worship,

262 and secured, in a Tablet revealed in June 1903, His ready and enthusiastic approval, arose, despite the smallness of their numbers and their limited resources, to initiate an enterprise which must rank as the greatest single contribution which the Bahá'ís of America, and indeed of the West, have as yet made to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The subsequent encouragement given them by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the contributions raised by various Assemblies decided the members of this Assembly to invite representatives of their fellow-believers in various parts of the country to meet in Chicago for the initiation of the stupendous undertaking they had conceived. On November 26, 1907, the assembled representatives, convened for that purpose, appointed a committee of nine to locate a suitable site for the proposed Temple. By April 9, 1908, the sum of two thousand dollars had been paid for the purchase of two building lots, situated near the shore of Lake Michigan. In March 1909, a convention representative of various Bahá'í centers was called, in pursuance of instructions received from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The thirty-nine delegates, representing thirty-six cities, who had assembled in Chicago, on the very day the remains of the Báb were laid to rest by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the specially erected mausoleum on Mt. Carmel, established a permanent national organization, known as the Bahá'í Temple Unity, which was incorporated as a religious corporation, functioning under the laws of the State of Illinois, and invested with full authority to hold title to the property of the Temple and to provide ways and means for its construction. At this same convention a constitution was framed, the Executive Board of the Bahá'í Temple Unity was elected, and was authorized by the delegates to complete the purchase of the land recommended by the previous Convention. Contributions for this historic enterprise, from India, Persia, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Russia, Egypt, Germany, France, England, Canada, Mexico, the Hawaiian Islands, and even Mauritius, and from no less than sixty American cities, amounted by 1910, two years previous to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival in America, to no less than twenty thousand dollars, a remarkable testimony alike to the solidarity of

the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in both the East and the West, and to the self-sacrificing efforts exerted by the American believers who, as the work progressed, assumed a preponderating share in providing the sum of over a million dollars required for the erection of the structure of the Temple and its external ornamentation.

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## Citadel of Faith

Author: Shoghi Effendi Source: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980 third printing Pages: 171

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## Believers' Generous Response to Temple Fund

1

Thrilled by generous response of believers to Temple Fund. Deeply touched. Hail latest striking evidence of the magnificent spirit, unshakable solidarity and unflinching resolve of American Bahá'í Community. Deepest loving gratitude.

[January 20, 1947]

## Call to Fuller Participation

Acclaim with grateful heart evidences of steadily accelerating movement of pioneers, multiplication of conferences, consolidation of activities of national committees, progress in preliminaries of internal ornamentation of Temple, and formulation of teaching policy in southern states. Overwhelmed by tributes paid my own humble efforts by stalwart company whose championship of Faith of Bahá'u'lláh during last quarter century provided greatest support and solace, enabling me to sustain the weight of cares and responsibilities of Guardianship.

Impelled to plead afresh to ponder responsibilities incurred in transatlantic field of service. Time is flying. First year of Second Seven Year Plan is drawing to a close. Shadow of war's tragic aftermath is deepening. Initial stage of colossal task undertaken in European continent still in balance. Urge stress for entire community extreme urgency to reinforce promptly, at whatever cost, however inadequate the instruments, the number of volunteers, both settlers and itinerant teachers, whom posterity will rightly recognize as vanguard of torch-bearers of Bahá'u'lláh's resistless, world-redeeming order to despairing millions of diversified races, conflicting nationalities in darkest, most severely tested, spiritually depleted continent of globe. Prayerfully awaiting response by all ranks of community to supreme call to fuller participation in glorious enterprise.

[January 30, 1947]

## **Consolidation in Europe**

2

Overjoyed, grateful, proud of notable expansion of manifold activities in three continents. Vital significance of preeminent objective in European continent cannot be overemphasized. Intense, sustained, self-sacrificing efforts aimed at rapid consolidation of American Community's recently initiated fate-laden transatlantic enterprise are urgent, imperative, highly meritorious. Praying for such demonstration of heroism as will outshine exploits illuminating pages of American Bahá'í history in continents of Western Hemisphere.

[March 24, 1947]

### **Participation in Second Seven Year Plan [MESSAGE TO 1947 CONVENTION]**

My heart is filled with delight, wonder, pride and gratitude in contemplation of the peace-time exploits, in both hemispheres, of the world community of the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, triumphantly emerging from the crucible of global war and moving irresistibly into the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

The opening years of the second century of the Bahá'í Era, synchronizing with concluding stage of the memorable quarter-century elapsed since the termination of the Heroic Age of the Faith, have been distinguished by a compelling demonstration by the entire body of believers, headed by the valorous American Bahá'í Community, of solidarity, resolve and self-sacrifice as well as by a magnificent record of systematic, world-wide achievements.

The three years since the celebration of the Centenary have been characterized by a simultaneous process of internal consolidation and steady enlargement of the orbit of a fast-evolving Administrative Order.

These years witnessed, first, the astounding resurgence of a war-devastated Bahá'í community of Central Europe, the rehabilitation of the communities in Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands and the Far East; second, the inauguration of a new Seven Year Plan by the American Bahá'í Community destined to culminate with the Centenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Prophetic Mission, aiming at the  
 3 formation of three national assemblies in Latin America and the Dominion of Canada, at completion of the holiest House of Worship in the Bahá'í world, and at the erection of the structure of the Administrative Order in ten sovereign states of the European continent; and third, the formulation by the British, the Indian and the Persian National Assemblies of Six Year, Four and One-Half Year, and Forty-Five Month Plans respectively, culminating with the Centenary of the Báb's Martyrdom and pledged to establish nineteen spiritual assemblies in the British

Isles, double the number of assemblies in the Indian subcontinent, establish ninety-five new centers of the Faith in Persia, convert the groups in Bahrein, Mecca and Kabul into assemblies and plant the banner of the Faith in the Arabian territories of Yemen, Oman, Ahsa and Kuwait.

Moreover, the number of countries opened to the onswEEPing Faith, and the number of languages in which its literature has been translated and printed, is now raised to eighty-three and forty-seven, respectively. Four additional countries are in process of enrollment. Translations into fifteen other languages are being undertaken. No less than seventeen thousand pounds have accumulated for the international relief of war-afflicted Bahá'í communities of East and West. The Bahá'í endowments on the North American continent have now passed the two million dollar mark. The value of the endowments recently acquired at the World Center of the Faith, dedicated to the Shrines, are estimated at thirty-five thousand pounds. Bahá'í literature has been disseminated as far north as Upernavik, Greenland, above the Arctic Circle. The Bahá'í message has been broadcast by radio as far south as Magallanes. The area of land dedicated to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Persia has increased by almost a quarter-million square meters. The number of localities in the Antipodes where Bahá'ís reside has been raised to thirty-five, spread over Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania. Twenty-seven assemblies are functioning in Latin America. In over a hundred localities Bahá'ís are resident in Central and South America, almost double the localities at opening of the first Seven Year Plan. Historic Latin American conferences have been held in Buenos Aires and Panama. Summer schools are established in Argentina and Chile. Land has been offered in Chile for site of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Latin America. Additional assemblies have been incorporated in Paraguay and Colombia. Seven others are in process of incorporation. A notable impetus has been lent this world-redeeming Message through the concerted measures devised by the American National Assembly designed to proclaim the Faith to the masses through public conferences, press and radio.

Such remarkable multiplication of dynamic institutions, such thrilling deployment of world-regenerating forces, North, South, East and West, endow the preeminent goal of the Second Seven Year Plan in Europe with extraordinary urgency and peculiar significance. I am impelled to appeal to all American believers possessing independent means to arise and supplement the course of the second year of the Second Seven Year Plan through personal participation or appointment of deputies, the superb exertions of the heroic vanguard of the hosts destined, through successive decades, to achieve the spiritual conquest of the continent unconquered by Islám, rightly regarded as the mother of Christendom, the fountainhead of American culture, the mainspring of western civilization, and the recipient of the unique honor of two successive visits to its shores by the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant.

[April 28, 1947]

## **NSA Must Control Credentials of Foreigners**

Owing to arrival of disloyal so-called Bahá'ís your Assembly's control of credentials should be strictly exercised, otherwise corruptive influences will spread and injure the magnificent services being achieved by the American Bahá'í Community.

[Circa June 1947]

## **The Challenging Requirements of the Present Hour**

The opening years of the second century of the Bahá'í Era have synchronized with the termination of the first epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, a Dispensation which posterity will recognize as the most glorious and momentous in the greatest cycle in the world's religious history.

The first seventy-seven years of the preceding century, constituting the Apostolic and Heroic Age of our Faith, fell into three distinct <sup>5</sup> epochs, of nine, of thirty-nine and of twenty-nine years' duration, associated respectively with the Bábí Dispensation and the ministries of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This Primitive Age of the Bahá'í Era, unapproached in spiritual fecundity by any period associated with the mission of the Founder of any previous Dispensation, was impregnated, from its inception to its termination, with the creative energies generated through the advent of two independent Manifestations and the establishment of a Covenant unique in the spiritual annals of mankind.

The last twenty-three years of that same century coincided with the first epoch of the second, the Iron and Formative, Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh—the first of a series of epochs which must precede the inception of the last and Golden Age of that Dispensation—a Dispensation which, as the Author of the Faith has Himself categorically asserted, must extend over a period of no less than one thousand years, and which will constitute the first stage in a series of Dispensations, to be established by future Manifestations, all deriving their inspiration from the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, and destined to last, in their aggregate, no less than five thousand centuries.

We are now entering the second epoch of the second Age of the first of these Dispensations. The first epoch witnessed the birth and the primary stages in the erection of the framework of the Administrative Order of the Faith—the nucleus and pattern of its World Order—according to the precepts laid down in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, as well as the launching of the initial phase of the world-encompassing Plan bequeathed by Him to the American Bahá'í Community. That epoch was characterized by a twofold process aiming at the consolidation of the administrative structure of the Faith and the extension of the range of its

institutions. It witnessed on the one hand, the emergence and the laying of the groundwork of that embryonic World Order whose advent was announced by the Báb in the Bayán, whose laws were revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and whose features were delineated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament. It was marked on the other hand by the launching, in the Western Hemisphere, of the first stage of a Plan whose original impulse was communicated by the Herald of our Faith in His Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, to whose implications the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation alluded in His Tablets, and whose Charter was revealed by the Center of His Covenant in the evening of His life. 6

The epoch we have now entered is destined to impart a great impetus to this historic, this twofold process. It must witness, on the one hand, the consummation of a laboriously constructed Administrative Order, and, on the other, the unfoldment of successive stages in the development of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Plan beyond the confines of the Western Hemisphere and of the continent of Europe.

## **CROWNING FEATURE OF ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER: THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE**

During this Formative Age of the Faith, and in the course of present and succeeding epochs, the last and crowning stage in the erection of the framework of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—the election of the Universal House of Justice—will have been completed, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Mother-Book of His Revelation, will have been codified and its laws promulgated, the Lesser Peace will have been established, the unity of mankind will have been achieved and its maturity attained, the Plan conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá will have been executed, the emancipation of the Faith from the fetters of religious orthodoxy will have been effected, and its independent religious status will have been universally recognized, whilst in the course of the Golden Age, destined to consummate the Dispensation itself, the banner of the Most Great Peace, promised by its Author, will have been unfurled, the World Bahá'í Commonwealth will have emerged in the plenitude of its power and splendor, and the birth and efflorescence of a world civilization, the child of that Peace, will have conferred its inestimable blessings upon all mankind.

## **FOURFOLD OBJECTIVE TO PRESENT REQUIREMENTS**

Not ours, however, to unriddle the workings of a distant future, or to dwell upon the promised glories of a God-impelled and unimaginably potent Revelation. Ours, rather, the task to cast our eyes upon, and bend our energies to meet, the challenging requirements of the present hour. Labors, of an urgent and sacred character, claim insistently our undivided attention during the opening years of this

new epoch which we have entered. The Second Seven Year Plan, intended to carry a stage further the mission conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the American Bahá'í Community, is now entering its second year, and must, as it operates in three continents, be productive of results outshining any as yet achieved since the Divine Plan itself was set in motion during the concluding years of the first Bahá'í century. Unlike the plans which Bahá'í communities in Europe and on the Asiatic continent have spontaneously inaugurated since the commencement of the present century, the Plan with which the community of the "Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh" stands identified is divine in origin, is guided by the explicit and repeated instructions that have flowed from the pen of the Center of the Covenant Himself, is energized by the all-compelling will of its Author, claims as the theater for its operation territories spread over five continents and the islands of the seven seas, and must continue to function, ere its purpose is achieved, throughout successive epochs in the course of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation. As it propels itself forward, driven by forces which its prosecutors can not hope to properly assess, as it spreads its ramifications to the furthest corners of the Western Hemisphere, and across the oceans to the continents of the Old World, and beyond them to the far-flung islands of the seas, this Plan, the birthright of the North American Bahá'í Community, will be increasingly regarded as an agency designed not only for the enlargement of the limits of the Faith and the multiplication of its institutions over the face of the planet, but for the acceleration of the construction and completion of the administrative framework of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Order, hastening thereby the advent of that Golden Age which must witness the proclamation of the Most Great Peace and the unfoldment of that world civilization which is the offspring and primary purpose of that Peace.

The fourfold objective, which the prosecutors of the Plan, in the present early stage of its development, are now pursuing, and which is designed to stimulate the dual process initiated during the opening phase of the Formative Age of the Faith, must be strenuously and unfalteringly pursued. The second year of the Second Seven Year Plan must witness, on all fronts, on the part of young and old alike, rich and poor, colored and white, neophyte and veteran, a rededication to the tasks undertaken and an intensification of effort for their furtherance wholly unparalleled in the annals of American Bahá'í history. In every state of the United States, in every province of the Dominion of Canada, in every republic of Central and South America, in each of the ten selected sovereign states of the European continent, the ever-swelling legions of Bahá'u'lláh's steadily advancing army, obeying the Mandate of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, launched on the second stage of their world-wide crusade, deriving fresh courage from the exploits that have distinguished the opening phase of the present stage of their enterprise, must strain every nerve to scale loftier heights of heroism, and deploy, over a wider range, their divinely sustained forces, as their present Plan unfolds and moves towards a climax.

## **GOALS IN THE UNITED STATES AND**

## ALASKA

In the United States of America, the base from which the manifold operations of this holy expedition are conducted, the enterprise associated with the completion of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West, designed to consummate this historic undertaking in time for the celebration of its Jubilee in the year 1953, must be strenuously pushed forward. The prodigious efforts exerted for the erection of this noble edifice—the holiest House of Worship ever to be reared by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh—on which no less than one million four hundred thousand dollars have thus far been expended, and which will necessitate the expenditure of at least half a million more dollars, ere it is completed, must not, for one moment, be relaxed. The necessary modifications of the design chosen for its interior ornamentation should be adopted, the plans and specifications prepared, the preliminary contracts for its execution placed, and actual construction work started, if possible, ere the expiry of the present year.

The utmost effort by the National Teaching Committee and its auxiliary Regional Teaching Committees, aimed at raising the number of spiritual assemblies in the North American continent to no less than one hundred and seventy-five, ere the expiry of the current year, should be exerted. The eighty cities newly opened to the Faith should, likewise, be reinforced. The two hundred and eighteen groups already constituted should be continually encouraged to evolve into assemblies, while the vast number of localities, totalling over nine hundred, where isolated believers reside, should, however tremendous the exertion required, be enabled to attain group status, and be eventually converted into properly functioning assemblies.

Collateral to this process of reinforcing the fabrics of the Administrative Order and of widening its basis, a resolute attempt should be made by the national elected representatives of the entire community, aided by their Public Relations, Race Unity, Public Meetings, Visual Education, College Speakers Bureau and Radio Committees, to reinforce the measures already adopted for the proclamation, through the press and radio, of the verities of the Faith to the masses, and for the establishment of closer contact with the leaders of public thought, with colleges and universities and with newspaper and magazine editors. National advertising and publicity should be further developed, the contact with seven hundred and fifty newspapers, magazines and trade papers should be maintained and the public relations programs amplified. Association, as distinct from affiliation, and untainted by any participation in political matters, with the various organs, leaders and representatives of the United Nations and kindred organizations should be stimulated for the purpose of giving, on the one hand, greater publicity to the aims and purposes of the Faith, and of paving the way, on the other, for the eventual conversion of a selected number of capable and receptive souls who will reinforce the ranks of its active and unreserved supporters.

The process of the incorporation of properly functioning spiritual assemblies must be simultaneously and vigorously carried out. The forty-five assemblies now incorporated are the first fruits of an enterprise of great significance, which must rapidly develop in the days to come, as an essential preliminary to the establishment, and the extension of the scope, of Bahá'í local endowments, as soon as the financial obligations incurred in connection with the completion of the Temple have been discharged. The institutions of the three summer schools, at Green Acre, Davison and Geyserville, and the International School at Temerity Ranch, as well as the activities of the Bahá'í Youth, must, under the close supervision of their respective national committees, be continually expanded and increasingly utilized as agencies for the furtherance of the vital objectives of the Plan.

The beneficial and highly responsible activities undertaken by the Publishing, the Reviewing, the Library, the Service for the Blind, the Visual Education, the Pamphlet Literature and Study Aids Committees, designed to disseminate and insure the integrity of Bahá'í literature, should, however indirectly connected with the purposes of the Plan, and within the limits imposed upon them through its operation, be steadily expanded, consolidated and be made to promote, in whatever way possible, its paramount interests.

Nor should the “spacious territory of Alaska,” particularly mentioned <sup>10</sup> by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His Tablets of the Divine Plan, and at present the northern outpost of the Faith in the Western Hemisphere, be ignored, or its vital requirements neglected. The maintenance and consolidation of the first historic spiritual assembly in Anchorage, the northernmost administrative center of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the world; the multiplication of Bahá'í centers in that territory; the propagation of the teachings among the Eskimos, emphasized by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s pen in those same Tablets; the translation and publication of selected passages from Bahá'í literature in their native language; the extension of the limits of the Faith beyond Fairbanks and nearer to the Arctic Circle—these constitute the urgent tasks facing the prosecutors of the present Plan in the years immediately ahead.

“Alaska is a vast country,” are ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own words, recorded in those Tablets, “...Perchance, God willing, the lights of the Most Great Guidance will illuminate that country, and the breezes of the rose garden of the love of God will perfume the nostrils of the inhabitants of Alaska. Should you be aided to render such a service, rest ye assured that your heads shall be crowned with the diadem of everlasting sovereignty.”

## **CANADA TO FORM SEPARATE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

In the Dominion of Canada, to whose significance and future the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has repeatedly referred, and in all the nine provinces of

which, as a direct result of the operation of the first Seven Year Plan, the Faith has established its spiritual assemblies, the Canadian believers, as a token of their recognition of the significance of the forthcoming formation of their first National Spiritual Assembly, must arise and carry out befittingly the task allotted to them in their homeland. Irrespective of the smallness of their numbers, notwithstanding the vastness of the territory for which they have been made responsible, and as a sign of their appreciation of the great bounty and independent status soon to be conferred upon them, they must, unitedly, exert a supreme effort to enlarge the limits, multiply the administrative centers, consolidate the institutions, and broadcast the truths and essentials of their beloved Faith throughout the length and breadth of that immense dominion.

The thirteen Canadian assemblies already formed should be, at all costs, maintained and fortified. The fifty-six localities where Bahá'ís<sup>11</sup> reside should receive immediate attention, and the most promising among them should be chosen for the establishment of future assemblies, in order to broaden the basis and reinforce the foundations of the future pillar of the Universal House of Justice. Particular attention should, moreover, be paid to the need for the establishment, without delay, of the first Canadian Bahá'í summer school, which, as the scope of the activities of the Canadian believers extends, will have to be gradually supplemented by other institutions of a similar character, as has been the case in the development of summer schools in the United States of America. Preliminary steps should, likewise, be taken for the incorporation of all firmly grounded spiritual assemblies, as a prelude to the establishment of local and national endowments. The institution of the local Fund, in every center where the administrative structure of the Faith has been erected, should be assiduously developed. The holding of conferences designed to foster the unity, the solidarity and harmonious development of the Canadian Bahá'í Community should be steadily encouraged. An organized attempt should be made to broadcast the Message to the masses and their leaders through the medium of the press and radio. A deliberate and sustained endeavor should be exerted to win fresh recruits for the Faith from the ranks of the considerable French-speaking population of that dominion. The greatest care should be exercised to attract the attention, and win the support of other minorities in that land, such as the Indians, the Eskimos, the Dukhobors and the Negroes, thereby reinforcing the representative character of a rapidly developing community.

Nor should that community, as its local centers multiply, and the fabric of its national institutions is erected, and its maturity is demonstrated, and its independence vindicated, lose sight of, or neglect, the weighty provisions of those Tablets of the Divine Plan, addressed specifically to its members by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, wherein He confers upon them the mission of carrying the Message of His Father to territories and islands beyond the confines of that dominion, to Newfoundland and the Franklin Islands, to the Yukon, to Mackenzie, Keewatin, Ungava and Greenland.

The tentative steps recently taken by a Danish believer in disseminating Bahá'í literature in the territory of Greenland, in a number of settlements and outposts beyond the Arctic Circle, and in dispatching Bahá'í books to Godthaab, its capital, and as far north as Upernavik on Baffin Bay, constitutes a modest yet historic beginning<sup>12</sup> which the Canadian believers, in the light of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets addressed to them, must follow up in the years to come.

“Should the fire of the love of God be kindled in Greenland,” He significantly assures them in one of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, “all the ice of that country will be melted, and its cold weather become temperate—that is, if the hearts be touched with the heat of the love of God, that territory will become a divine rose garden and a heavenly paradise, and the souls, even as fruitful trees, will acquire the utmost freshness and beauty. Effort, the utmost effort, is required.”

Theirs is the duty, the privilege and honor, once their central administrative institution is firmly established, its subsidiary agencies are vigorously operating, and its immediate requirements are met, to take preliminary measures, on however small a scale, ere the Second Seven Year Plan is terminated, for the dispatch of a handful of pioneers to some of these territories, as an evidence of the determination and capacity of a newly independent national community to assume the functions, and discharge the responsibilities with which it has been invested in those immortal Tablets by the pen of the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant.

“There is no difference between countries,” is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's testimony in one of those Tablets. “The future of the Dominion of Canada, however, is very great, and the events connected with it infinitely glorious. It shall become the object of the glance of Providence, and shall show forth the bounties of the All-Glorious.” “Again I repeat,” He, in that same Tablet affirms, “that the future of Canada is very great, whether from a material or a spiritual standpoint... The clouds of the Kingdom will water the seeds of guidance which have been sown there.”

## **TASKS IN LATIN AMERICA**

In the far-flung Latin American field, where the first fruits of the Divine Plan, operating beyond the confines of the North American continent, have already been garnered in such abundance, the Latin American Bahá'í communities, from the Mexican border to the extremity of Chile, should bestir themselves for the collective, the historic and gigantic tasks that await them, and which must culminate, ere the expiry of the present Plan, in the formation of two national spiritual assemblies for Central and South America.<sup>13</sup>

The marvelous progress achieved as a result of the operation of the first Seven Year Plan, as evidenced by the establishment of full-fledged spiritual assemblies in the virgin territories of no less than fourteen republics, and the formation of active groups in the remaining republics, has been enhanced by the even more startling expansion of Bahá'í activity since the termination of the first stage of the Divine

Plan. As a result of this expansion spiritual assemblies have been established in all the remaining republics, the number of localities where Bahá'ís reside has been raised to over a hundred, almost double the number of localities in which the Faith had been introduced after the completion of the first Seven Year Plan, the number of spiritual assemblies has swelled to no less than thirty-seven, three of which have been duly incorporated, a notable impetus has been given to the activities of the distributing centers of Bahá'í literature in Argentina and Panama, historic conferences have been held in these two republics, summer schools have been inaugurated in Argentina and Chile, and a tract of land has been presented as a site for the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Latin America. No community since the inception of the hundred-year-old Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, not even the community of the Most Great Name in the North American continent, can boast of an evolution as rapid, a consolidation as sound, a multiplication of centers as swift, as those that have marked the birth and rise of the community of His followers in Latin America.

The colossal tasks that now summon this Latin American Bahá'í community to a challenge, cannot but dwarf, if faithfully and promptly accomplished, the magnificent achievements that have immortalized the first decade of organized activity in Latin American Bahá'í history. The seed-sowing stage associated, in the main, with the labors and travels of that saintly soul, that star-servant of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the incomparable Martha Root, links this decade of organized Bahá'í activity in Latin America with both the closing years of the Heroic Age of our Faith and the first fifteen years of the initial epoch of the Age we live in.

## **TWO REGIONAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES A VITAL OBJECTIVE**

The emergence of organized local communities in most of the republics of Latin America will be forever associated with the exploits that have shed such luster on the first stage of the Divine Plan launched <sup>14</sup> during the concluding years of that first epoch of the Formative Age of our Faith. The constitution of two independent duly elected national spiritual assemblies for the northern and southern zones of Latin America is now to be regarded as one of the most vital objectives of the Second Seven Year Plan, whose inauguration synchronizes with the opening years of the second Bahá'í century, and which will be chiefly associated with the first phase of the second epoch of that Age. The emergence of these two national assemblies, precursors of the institutions which must participate in the election, and contribute to the support, of the Universal House of Justice—the last crowning unit in the erection of the fabric of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—must lead gradually and uninterruptedly, and in the course of successive epochs of the Formative Age, to the constitution in each of the republics of Central and South America, of a properly elected, fully representative national assembly, constituting thereby the last stage in the administrative evolution of that

Faith throughout Latin America.

In order that these future tasks may be carried out with dispatch, efficiency, harmony and in strict accordance with the administrative and spiritual principles of our Faith, the Latin American promoters of the present Seven Year Plan must focus their attention on the requirements of the present hour, close their ranks, reinforce the bonds of unity, of solidarity and of cooperation which unite them, rededicate themselves individually to the sacred, all-important and vital task of teaching, exert strenuous endeavors to deepen their knowledge of the history and fundamentals of their Faith, steep themselves in the spirit and the love of its teachings and acquire special training for future pioneer activity throughout the length and breadth of the vast stretches of territory which extend from the confines of the great republic in the north to the Straits of Magellan in the south.

The process of the steady multiplication of spiritual assemblies, already numbering thirty-seven, of groups whose number equals that of the assemblies, and of the forty localities where isolated believers reside, must vigorously and uninterruptedly continue. The incorporation of well-grounded spiritual assemblies, following the example set by the spiritual assemblies of San José, Costa Rica, of Bogotá, Colombia, and of Asunción, Paraguay, as a preliminary to the incorporation of the future national assemblies to be established in Latin America, must be <sup>15</sup> strenuously and efficiently carried out. A beginning, however modest, should be made in the direction of establishing local Funds, supported by native believers and designed to supplement the financial assistance extended by the parent community in North America, for the furtherance of pioneer activity, for the dissemination of Bahá'í literature, for the maintenance of local Bahá'í headquarters, for the gradual initiation of Bahá'í endowments, such as the land offered for a Bahá'í Temple in Chile, for the holding of conferences and of summer schools, for the creation of publicity agencies, and for the conduct and expansion of youth activities.

Strong and sustained support should be given to the vitally needed and meritorious activities started by the native Latin American traveling teachers, particularly in the pioneer field, who, as the mighty task progresses, must increasingly bear the brunt of responsibility for the propagation of the Faith in their homelands. Full advantage should be taken of the facilities provided by the use of practical workshop courses in Latin American pioneering at the International School at Temerity Ranch. The two summer schools in Azeiza and Santiago, as well as one planned in Vera Cruz, should be utilized, not only as centers for the acquisition of Bahá'í learning, but as training grounds for pioneering among the Spanish and Portuguese speaking populations of all the republics of Latin America. The regional conferences held in Buenos Aires and Panama should be followed by conferences of a similar character, at which a growing number of attendants from among the ranks of Latin American believers will assume an ever-increasing share of responsibility in the initiation and conduct of the affairs of a continually evolving

community. A deliberate effort should be made to increase, through correspondence teaching and its extension to all the Spanish speaking countries, the number of the active supporters of the Faith, so desperately needed in view of the vastness of the field, the mighty responsibilities that have been incurred, the smallness of the number of laborers, and the shortness of the time at their disposal.

Other agencies, such as publicity and advertising in the press, the multiplication of accurate and improved radio scripts, the extension of teaching projects through regional teaching committees, visual education and the organization of public meetings, should be fully utilized to capture the attention, win the sympathy, and secure the active and unreserved support of a steadily increasing proportion of the population <sup>16</sup> of the various Latin American republics. The publishing activities of a constantly growing community should, likewise, be stimulated, their scope should be continually widened, the quality of Bahá'í publications in Spanish, Portuguese and French be improved, and their dissemination over a wide area be insured. The two Spanish bulletins, the one already published in Santiago and the other planned in San José, should, likewise, as an adjunct to Bahá'í publications, be developed and widely circulated. The contact established with the two hundred and forty-four Masonic Lodges should be reinforced by similar contacts with schools as well as business firms established throughout the various republics, for the sole purpose of giving further publicity to the Faith, and winning ultimately fresh recruits to the strength of its followers.

## **IMPORTANCE OF THE AMERICAN INDIANS**

Particular attention, I feel, should, at this juncture, be directed to the various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the "ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula." "Attach great importance," is His admonition to the entire body of the believers in the United States and the Dominion of Canada, "to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muḥammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muḥammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world." The initial contact already established, in the concluding years of the first Bahá'í century, in obedience to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Mandate, with the Cherokee and Oneida Indians in North Carolina and Wisconsin, with the Patagonian, the Mexican and the Inca Indians, and the Mayans in Argentina, Mexico, Peru and Yucatan, respectively, should, as the Latin American Bahá'í communities gain in stature and strength, be consolidated and extended. A special effort should be exerted to secure the unqualified adherence of members of some of these tribes to the Faith, their subsequent election to its councils, and their

unreserved support of the organized attempts that will have to be made in the future by the <sup>17</sup> projected national assemblies for the large-scale conversion of Indian races to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Nor should the peculiar position of the Republic of Panama be overlooked at the present stage in the development of the Faith in Latin America. "All the above countries," 'Abdu'l-Bahá, referring to the Central American republics in one of the Tablets of His Divine Plan, has affirmed, "have importance, but especially the Republic of Panama, wherein the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans come together through the Panama Canal. It is a center for travel and passage from America to other continents of the world, and in the future it will gain most great importance." "Likewise," He moreover has written, "ye must give great attention to the Republic of Panama, for in that point the Occident and the Orient find each other united through the Panama Canal, and it is also situated between the two great oceans. That place will become very important in the future. The teachings, once established there, will unite the East and the West, the North and the South."

The manifold activities initiated since the launching of the first Seven Year Plan should, under no circumstances, be neglected or allowed to stagnate. The excellent publicity accorded the Faith, and the contact established with several leaders in that republic should be followed up, systematically and with the greatest care, by the growing community within its confines. The initial contact with the Indians should be developed with assiduous care and unfailing patience. Furthermore, the strengthening of the bonds now being forged between the North American communities and their sister communities in Latin America must constitute, owing to the unique and central position occupied by that republic, one of the chief objectives of the Panamanian believers, the progress of whose activities deserves to rank as one of the most notable chapters of recent Latin American Bahá'í history.

Nor should the valuable and meritorious labors accomplished since the inception of the first Seven Year Plan in Punta Arenas de Magallanes, that far-off center situated not only on the southern extremity of the Western Hemisphere, but constituting the southernmost outpost of the Faith in the whole world, be for a moment neglected in the course of the second stage in the development of the Divine Plan. The assembly already constituted in that city, the remarkable radio publicity secured by the believers there, the assistance extended by them to the <sup>18</sup> teaching work in other parts of Chile, should be regarded only as a prelude to the work of consolidation which must be indefatigably pursued. This work, if properly carried out, in conjunction with the activities associated with the assemblies of Santiago, Valparaíso and Viná del Mar, and the groups of Puerto Montt, Valdivia, Quilpue, Temuco, Sewell, Chorrillos, Mülchen and other smaller ones, as well as several isolated localities in that republic, may well hasten the advent of the day when the Chilean followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh will have established the first independent national spiritual assembly to be formed by any single nation of Latin America.

## BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S SUMMONS TO THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Whoever it may be among these Latin American communities who will eventually carry off the palm of victory, and win this immortal distinction, all without exception, and with equal zeal, must participate in this vast and collective enterprise which is engaging, in an ever-increasing measure, their attention and challenging their resources. Let them remember that the Author of their Faith has in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Mother-Book of His Revelation, singled out the company of the Presidents of their countries, together with those of the North American continent, and addressed them in terms that sharply contrast with the dire warnings and condemnatory words addressed directly and indirectly, to the King of Prussia, the French and Austrian Emperors and the Sultan of Turkey, who, together with those Presidents, are the only sovereigns and rulers specifically mentioned by Him in that Book.

“Hearken ye, O rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein!” is His summons sounded in that mighty Charter of the future world civilization, “unto that which the Dove is warbling on the Branch of Eternity: There is none other God but Me, the Ever-Abiding, the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful. Adorn ye the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance of your Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Thus counselleth you He Who is the Dayspring of Names, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. The Promised One hath appeared in this glorified Station, whereat all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. Take ye advantage of the Day of God. Verily, to meet Him is better for you than all that whereon

19 the sun shineth, could ye but know it. O concourse of rulers! Give ear unto that which hath been raised from the Dayspring of Grandeur: Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Lord of Utterance, the All-Knowing. Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.”

Let them ponder the honor which the Author of the Revelation Himself has chosen to confer upon their countries, the obligations which that honor automatically brings in its wake, the opportunities it offers, the power it releases for the removal of all obstacles, however formidable, which may be encountered in their path, and the promise of guidance it implies for the attainment of the objectives alluded to in these memorable passages.

To the eager, the warm-hearted, the spiritually minded and staunch members of these Latin American Bahá'í communities who, among the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, already constitute the most considerable body of recruits from the ranks of the most deeply entrenched and powerful Church of Christendom; whose motherlands have been chosen as the scene of the earliest victories won by the prosecutors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan; launched on their crusade for the spiritual conquest of the

whole planet; the establishment of whose projected national spiritual assemblies must constitute a notable landmark in the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation; whose leading spiritual assemblies are now establishing direct contact with the World Center of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land; the photographs of whose elected representatives, at their chief centers, will soon adorn the walls of His Mansion at Bahjí; a few of whose members have already arisen to carry back the torch of divine guidance entrusted to their care to the peoples and races from which they have sprung—to this privileged, this youngest, this dynamic and highly promising member of the organic Bahá'í World Community, I feel moved, before I dismiss this aspect of my theme, to direct this general appeal to rise to the heights of the glorious opportunity which destiny is unfolding before its members. Theirs is the opportunity, if they but seize it, to adorn the opening pages of the annals of the second Bahá'í century with a tale of deeds approaching in valor those with which their Persian brethren have illuminated the opening years of the first, and comparable with the 20 exploits more recently achieved by their North American fellow-believers and which have shed such luster on the closing decade of that same century.

## **SPIRITUAL CRUSADE TO BE LAUNCHED IN EUROPE**

To the fourth, and by far the most momentous, the most arduous, the most challenging task to be carried out under the Second Seven Year Plan—the systematic launching of a crusade in a mighty, a tormented, a spiritually famished continent, a continent drawn, in recent years through political developments as well as through improvement in the means of transportation, so close to the great republic of the West, and constituting a stepping-stone on the road leading to the redemption of the Old World—I must now direct the attention of my readers.

This as yet unfought and unbelievably potent crusade, embarked upon in the opening decade of the second century of the Bahá'í Era, signaling the commencement of the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, and marking the first stage in the propulsion of a divinely conceived Plan across the borders of the Western Hemisphere, must, as its pace augments, reveal the first signs and tokens which, as anticipated by the Author of the Plan Himself, must accompany the carrying of His Father's Message across the ocean, at the hands of His "apostles," from the shores of their homeland to the European continent. "The moment," is His powerfully sustaining, gloriously inspiring promise, "this Divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America, and is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa and of Australia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion. Then will all the peoples of the world witness that this community is spiritually

illuminated and divinely guided. Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness.”

The first stage in this transatlantic field of service which those crusading for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the Western Hemisphere are now entering is a step fraught with possibilities such as no mind can adequately envisage. Its challenge is overwhelming and its potentialities unfathomable. Its hazards, rigors and pitfalls are numerous, its field immense, the number of its promoters as yet utterly inadequate, <sup>21</sup> the resources required for its effective prosecution barely tapped. The races, nations and classes included within its orbit are numerous and highly diversified, and the prizes to be won by its victors incalculably great. The hatreds that inflame, the rivalries that agitate, the controversies that confuse, the miseries that afflict, these races, nations and classes are bitter and of long standing. The influence and fanaticism, whether ecclesiastical or political, of potentially hostile organizations, firmly entrenched within their ancestral strongholds, are formidable.

The members of the North American Bahá'í Community, to whose care the immediate destinies of this fate-laden crusade have been entrusted, are standing at a new crossroads. Behind them is an imperishable record, brief yet illustrious, of feats performed over the entire range of the Western Hemisphere. Before them stretches a vista alluring in its as yet hazy outlines, entrancing in its magnitude, reaching to the far horizons of as yet unconquered territories. They can look back, since that crusade was launched, upon a decade of modest beginnings, of toilsome labors, of richly deserved rewards. They now look forward to successive epochs reaching as far as the fringes of that Golden Age that is to be, glowing in the light of God-given promises, destined to be traversed at the cost of infinite toil and of heroic self-sacrifice.

They can neither retrace their steps, nor falter, nor even afford to mark time. The sands are running out, the short span of six brief years intervening between the present hour and the termination of the second stage of the enterprise on which they have embarked will soon expire. The hosts on high, having sounded the signal, are impatient to rush forward, and demonstrate anew the irresistible force of their might. Europe, in the throes of the aftermath of a horribly devastating conflict, calls desperately, in one of the darkest hours of its history, for that sovereign remedy which only the Plan, conceived by a divinely appointed Physician, can administer. Sister communities, in the north and in the heart of that continent, alive to the needs, the opportunities and the glorious mission of the vanguard of Bahá'u'lláh's crusaders, now landing on the shores of that agitated continent, are only too eager to reinforce the stupendous exertions that must needs be made for its ultimate redemption. Nor will other sister communities further afield refrain, for a moment, from lending a helping hand, once the progress of this gigantic movement now set in motion is accelerated. Above and <sup>22</sup> beyond them all, unsleeping, ever-solicitous, unerring, is the Pilot of their bark, the Charterer of their course, the

Founder of their spiritual fellowship, the Bestower of that primacy which is the hallmark of their destiny.

## **EVOLVING STRONGHOLDS IN TEN INITIAL COUNTRIES**

The ten countries, constituting the initial field wherein the prowess of these crusaders must, in the years immediately ahead, be exhibited, and in whose capitals the foundations of the embryonic Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh must preferably be unassailably laid, must each evolve into strongholds from which the dynamic energies of that Faith can be diffused to neighboring territories in the course of the unfoldment of the Plan. The nuclei that are now being formed, and the groups that are beginning to emerge, must be speedily and systematically reinforced, not only through the dispatch and settlement of pioneers and the visits paid them by itinerant teachers, but also through the progressive development of the teaching work which the pioneers themselves must initiate and foster among the native population in those countries. Any artificially created assembly, consisting of settlers from abroad, can at best be considered as temporary and insecure, and should, if the second stage of the European enterprise is to be commenced without undue delay in the future, be supplanted by broad-based, securely grounded, efficiently functioning assemblies, composed primarily of the people of the countries themselves, who are firm in faith, unimpeachable in their loyalty and whole-hearted in their support of the Administrative Order of the Faith. The twenty-five pioneers that have already proceeded to Scandinavia and the Low Countries, to the Iberian Peninsula, to Switzerland and Italy, should, in the course of this current year, and while the process of teaching the native population is being inaugurated, be reinforced by as many additional pioneers as possible, and particularly by those who, possessed of independent means, can, either themselves or through their appointed deputies, swell the number of the valiant workers already laboring with such devotion in those fields.

The translation, the publication and dissemination of Bahá'í literature, whether in the form of leaflets, pamphlets or books, in the nine selected languages, should, as the work progresses and the demand is correspondingly increased, be strenuously carried out, as a preliminary <sup>23</sup> to its free distribution among the public on certain occasions, and its presentation to both the leaders of public thought and the numerous and famous libraries established in those countries. No time should be lost in establishing, on however small a scale, initial contact with the press and other agencies designed to invite greater attention on the part of the masses to the historic work now being initiated in their respective countries.

No opportunity, in view of the necessity of insuring the harmonious development of the Faith, should be ignored, which its potential enemies, whether ecclesiastical or otherwise, may offer, to set forth, in a restrained and unprovocative language, its

aims and tenets, to defend its interests, to proclaim its universality, to assert the supernatural, the supra-national and non-political character of its institutions, and its acceptance of the divine origin of the Faiths which have preceded it. Nor should any chance be missed of associating the Faith, as distinct from affiliating it, with all progressive, non-political, non-ecclesiastical institutions, whether social, educational, or charitable, whose objectives harmonize with some of its tenets, and amongst whose members and supporters individuals may be found who will eventually embrace its truth. Particular attention should, moreover, be paid to attendance at congresses and conferences, and to any contacts that can be made with colleges and universities which offer a fertile field for the scattering of the seeds of the Faith, and afford opportunities for broadcasting its message, and for winning fresh recruits to its strength.

Nor should any occasion be neglected by the pioneers of attending, if their personal circumstances permit, either the British or German Bahá'í summer schools, and of forging such links with these institutions as will not only assist them in the discharge of their duties, but enable them to initiate, when the time is ripe, an institution of a similar character, under the auspices of the European Teaching Committee—an institution which will be the forerunner of the summer schools that will have to be founded separately by the future assemblies in their respective countries. Above all, any assistance which the two national spiritual assemblies, already established on that continent, and their auxiliary committees, and particularly their publishing agencies, can extend should be gratefully welcomed and utilized to the full, until such time as the institutions destined to evolve in these countries can assume independently the conduct of their own affairs. 24

A constant interchange of news between the centers, through the medium of the Geneva Bulletin, whose scope must be steadily enlarged, and close contact with each other through the European office of the European Teaching Committee, functioning as an adjunct to the International Bahá'í Bureau, should, furthermore, be maintained and reinforced, whenever circumstances are favorable, by the convening of conferences, which will bring together as many pioneers laboring in these ten countries, and newly converted believers, as possible, enabling them to jointly consider their plans, problems and activities, concert measures for the progress of the Faith in that continent, and pave the way for the future formation of regional national spiritual assemblies, which must precede the constitution of separate independent national institutions in each of these countries. Such summer schools and conferences, initiated and conducted by one of the most important agencies of the highest administrative institution in the North American Bahá'í Community, gathering together as they will Bahá'í representatives of various races and nations on the continent of Europe, will, by reason of their unprecedented character in the evolution of the Faith, since its inception, constitute a historic landmark in the development of the organic world-wide Bahá'í community, and will be the harbinger of those epoch-making world conferences, at which the

representatives of the nations and races within the Bahá'í fold will convene for the strengthening of the spiritual and administrative bonds that unite its members.

## **INITIATING NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND ADAPTING TEACHING METHODS**

A beginning, however limited in scope, should be made, ere the present stage of the Divine Plan draws to a close, in the direction of establishing befitting administrative headquarters for the rising communities and their projected assemblies in the capital cities of Stockholm, of Oslo, of Copenhagen, of The Hague, of Brussels, of Luxembourg, of Madrid, of Lisbon, of Rome and of Bern, through the rental of suitable quarters which, in the course of time, must lead to either the construction or the purchase in each of these capitals of a national Hazíratu'l-Quds, as a future seat for independent, elected national spiritual assemblies.

A tentative start, though strictly speaking excluded from the scope 25 of the present Plan, should, I feel, be made, ere the six remaining years have run their course, aiming at the formation, in each of the ten designated countries, of a number of nuclei, however few, however unstable, which will proclaim to the entire Bahá'í world the ability of the prosecutors of the Plan to exceed their allocated task, even as they surpassed, in the Latin American field, the goals which they had originally set before them. Such a feat, if accomplished, would impart to my overburdened heart a joy that would equal the many consolations which a dearly loved community has showered upon me, in the past, by its signal acts, both within its homeland and abroad, since the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Nor should any of the pioneers, at this early stage in the upbuilding of Bahá'í national communities, overlook the fundamental prerequisite for any successful teaching enterprise, which is to adapt the presentation of the fundamental principles of their Faith to the cultural and religious backgrounds, the ideologies, and the temperament of the divers races and nations whom they are called upon to enlighten and attract. The susceptibilities of these races and nations, from both the northern and southern climes, springing from either the Germanic or Latin stock, belonging to either the Catholic or Protestant communion, some democratic, others totalitarian in outlook, some socialistic, others capitalistic in their tendencies, differing widely in their customs and standards of living, should at all times be carefully considered, and under no circumstances neglected.

These pioneers, in their contact with the members of divers creeds, races and nations, covering a range which offers no parallel in either the north or south continents, must neither antagonize them nor compromise with their own essential principles. They must be neither provocative nor supine, neither fanatical nor excessively liberal, in their exposition of the fundamental and distinguishing features of their Faith. They must be either wary or bold, they must act swiftly or mark time, they must use the direct or indirect method, they must be challenging or

conciliatory, in strict accordance with the spiritual receptivity of the soul with whom they come in contact, whether he be a nobleman or a commoner, a northerner or a southerner, a layman or a priest, a capitalist or a socialist, a statesman or a prince, an artisan or a beggar. In their presentation of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh they must neither hesitate nor falter. They must be neither contemptuous of the 26 poor nor timid before the great. In their exposition of its verities they must neither overstress nor whittle down the truth which they champion, whether their hearer belong to royalty, or be a prince of the church, or a politician, or a tradesman, or a man of the street. To all alike, high or low, rich or poor, they must proffer, with open hands, with a radiant heart, with an eloquent tongue, with infinite patience, with uncompromising loyalty, with great wisdom, with unshakable courage, the Cup of Salvation at so critical an hour, to the confused, the hungry, the distraught and fear-stricken multitudes, in the north, in the west, in the south and in the heart, of that sorely tried continent.

## **EUROPE FEELS STIRRINGS OF SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION**

The second century of the Bahá'í Era has dawned. The second stage of the Divine Plan has been launched. The second epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation has opened. The tragedy of a continent, so blessed, so rich in history, so harassed, is moving towards a climax. The vanguard of the torchbearers of a world-redeeming civilization are landing on its shores and are settling in its capitals. An epoch has commenced, inaugurating the systematic conquest of the European continent by the organized body of the "apostles of Bahá'u'lláh," destined to unfold its potentialities in the course of succeeding centuries, and bidding fair to eclipse the radiance of those past ages which have successfully witnessed the introduction of the Christian Faith into the continent's northern climes, the efflorescence of Islamic culture that shed such radiance along its southern shores, and the rise of the Reformation in its very heart.

The stage is set. The hour is propitious. The signal is sounded. Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual battalions are moving into position. The initial clash between the forces of darkness and the army of light, as unnoticed as the landing, two milleniums ago, of the apostles of Christ on the southern shores of the European continent, is being registered by the denizens of the Abhá Kingdom. The Author of the Plan that has set so titanic an enterprise in motion is Himself mounted at the head of these battalions, and leads them on to capture the cities of men's hearts. A continent, twice blessed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's successive visits to its shores, and the scene of His first public appearance in the West; which has been the cradle of a civilization to some of whose beneficent features the pen of Bahá'u'lláh has paid significant tribute; on whose soil both the 27 Greek and Roman civilizations were born and flourished; which has contributed so richly to the unfoldment of American

civilization; the fountainhead of American culture; the mother of Christendom, and the scene of the greatest exploits of the followers of Jesus Christ; in some of whose outlying territories have been won some of the most resplendent victories which ushered in the Golden Age of Islám; which sustained, in its very heart, the violent impact of the onrushing hosts of that Faith, intent on the subjugation of its cities, but which refused to bend the knee to its invaders, and succeeded in the end in repulsing their assault—such a continent is now experiencing, at the hands of the little as yet unnoticed band of pioneers sent forth by the enviable, the privileged, the dynamic American Bahá'í Community, the first stirrings of that spiritual revolution which must culminate, in the Golden Age that is as yet unborn, in the permanent establishment of Bahá'u'lláh's Order throughout that continent.

## **DIVINE PLAN CHALLENGES NORTH AMERICAN BELIEVERS**

One word in conclusion to those to whom the Tablets of so stupendous a Plan have been addressed, to whose care the destinies of so prodigious an enterprise have been committed, and of whom such titanic efforts are now demanded. I can do no better than recall, nor can I sufficiently emphasize, or refrain from quoting anew, those stirring and pregnant passages that illuminate the pages of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's epoch-making Tablets.

In one of these Tablets, addressed to the believers in the Northeastern States, these weighty and highly significant words are recorded: "All countries, in the estimation of the one true God, are but one country, and all cities and villages are on an equal footing... Through faith and certitude, and the precedence achieved by one over another, however, the dweller conferreth honor upon the dwelling, some of the countries achieve distinction, and attain a preeminent position. For instance, notwithstanding that some of the countries of Europe and of America are distinguished by, and surpass other countries in, the salubrity of their climate, the wholesomeness of their water, and the charm of their mountains, plains and prairies, yet Palestine became the glory of all nations inasmuch as all the holy and Divine Manifestations, from the time of Abraham until the appearance of the Seal of the Prophets (Muḥammad), have lived in, or migrated <sup>28</sup> to, or traveled through, that country. Likewise, Mecca and Medina have achieved illimitable glory, as the light of Prophethood shone forth therein. For this reason Palestine and Hījáz have been distinguished from all other countries." "Likewise," is His remarkable disclosure, "the continent of America is, in the eyes of the one true God, the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, the home of the righteous, and the gathering-place of the free."

To those of His followers, dwelling in that enviable and blessed continent, He has chosen to address these no less inspiring words, as recorded in one of those Tablets

revealed in honor of the believers of the United States and Canada: “O ye apostles of Bahá’u’lláh! May my life be sacrificed for you!... Behold the portals which Bahá’u’lláh hath opened before you! Consider how exalted and lofty is the station you are destined to attain, how unique the favors with which you have been endowed... My thoughts are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul gloweth with your love, so great a happiness would flood your hearts as to cause you to become enamored with each other.” “The full measure of your success,” He, in another Tablet, addressed to the entire company of His followers in the North American continent these prophetic words: “is as yet unrevealed, its significance unapprehended. Ere long ye will with your own eyes witness how brilliantly every one of you, even as a shining star, will radiate in the firmament of your country the light of divine guidance, and will bestow upon its people the glory of an everlasting life... I fervently hope that in the near future the whole earth may be stirred and shaken by the results of your achievements. The hope which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cherishes for you is that the same success which has attended your efforts in America may crown your endeavors in other parts of the world, that through you the fame of the Cause of God may be diffused throughout the East and the West, and the advent of the Kingdom of the Lord of Hosts be proclaimed in all the five continents of the globe. The moment this Divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America, and is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa and of Australia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion. Then will all the peoples of the <sup>29</sup> world witness that this community is spiritually illumined and divinely guided. Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness... Know ye of a certainty that whatever gathering ye enter, the waves of the Holy Spirit are surging over it, and the heavenly grace of the Blessed Beauty encompasseth that gathering... O that I could travel, even though on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of Yá-Bahá’u’l-Abhá in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans promote the divine teachings! This, alas, I cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may achieve it... Thus far ye have been untiring in your labors. Let your exertions henceforth increase a thousandfold. Summon the people in these countries, capitals, islands, assemblies and churches to enter the Abhá Kingdom. The scope of your exertions must needs be extended. The wider its range, the more striking will be the evidence of divine assistance.”

## **DETACHMENT FROM THE PHYSICAL WORLD**

“Now is the time,” He no less significantly remarks in another of these Tablets, “for you to divest yourselves of the garment of attachment to this world that perisheth, to be wholly severed from the physical world, become heavenly angels,

and travel to these countries. I swear by Him besides Whom there is none other God that each one of you will become an Isráfíl of Life, and will blow the Breath of Life into the souls of others.” And lastly this glorious promise in another of those immortal Tablets: “Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God, will, in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.”

In one of the earliest Tablets addressed by Him to the American believers these equally significant words have been penned: “If ye be truly united, if ye agree to promote that which is the essential purpose, and to show forth an all-unifying love, I swear by Him Who causeth the seed to split and the breeze to waft, so great a light will shine forth from your faces as to reach the highest heavens, the fame of your glory will be noised abroad, the evidences of your preeminence will spread throughout all regions, your power will penetrate the realities of all things, your aims and purposes will exert their influence upon the great and mighty nations, your spirits will encompass the whole world of <sup>30</sup> being, and ye will discover yourselves to be kings in the dominions of the Kingdom, and attired with the glorious crowns of the invisible Realm, and become the marshals of the army of peace, and princes of the forces of light, and stars shining from the horizon of perfection, and brilliant lamps shedding their radiance upon men.”

## **CONTRIBUTION OF THE WEST TO WORLD ORDER**

In the light of these glowing tributes, these ardent hopes, these soul-stirring promises, recorded by the pen of the Center of the Covenant, is it surprising to find that the Author of the Covenant Himself has, anticipating the great contribution which the West is destined to make to the establishment of His World Order, made such a momentous statement in His writings: “In the East the light of His Revelation hath broken; in the West have appeared the signs of His dominion. Ponder this in your hearts, O people, and be not of those who have turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Praised.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself, confirming this statement, has written: “From the beginning of time until the present day the light of Divine Revelation hath risen in the East and shed its radiance upon the West. The illumination thus shed hath, however, acquired in the West an extraordinary brilliancy. Consider the Faith proclaimed by Jesus. Though it first appeared in the East, yet not until its light had been shed upon the West did the full measure of its potentialities become manifest.” “The day is approaching when ye shall witness how, through the splendor of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh the West will have replaced the East, radiating the light of divine guidance.” “The West hath acquired illumination from the East, but, in some respects the reflection of the light hath been greater in the Occident.” “The East

hath, verily, been illumined with the light of the Kingdom. Erelong will this same light shed a still greater illumination through the potency of the teachings of God, and their souls be set aglow by the undying fire of His love.”

Invested, among its sister communities in East and West, with the primacy conferred upon it by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan; armed with the mandatory provisions of His momentous Tablets; equipped with the agencies of a quarter-century-old Administrative Order, whose fabric it has reared and consolidated; encouraged by the marvelous <sup>31</sup> success achieved by its daughter communities throughout the Americas, a success which has sealed the triumph of the first stage of that Plan; launched on a campaign of vaster dimensions, of superior merit, of weightier potentialities, than any it has hitherto initiated, a campaign destined to multiply its spiritual progeny in distant lands and amidst divers races, the community of the Most Great Name in the North American continent must arise, as it has never before in its history, and demonstrate anew its capacity to perform such deeds as are worthy of its high calling. Its members, the executors of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Plan, the champion-builders of Bahá’u’lláh’s embryonic Order, the torchbearers of a world-girdling civilization, must, in the years immediately ahead, bestir themselves, and, as bidden by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “increase” their exertions “a thousandfold,” lay bare further vistas in the “range” of their “future achievements” and of their “unspeakably glorious” mission, and hasten the day when, as prophesied by Him, their community will “find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion,” when “the whole earth” will be stirred and shaken by the results of its “achievements” and “resound with the praises of majesty and greatness,” when America will “evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.”

In every state of the United States, in every province of the Dominion of Canada, in every republic of Latin America, in each of the ten European countries to which its inescapable responsibilities are insistently calling it, this community, so blessed in the past, so promising at present, so dazzling in its future destiny, must, if it would guard its priceless birthright and enhance its heritage, forge ahead with equal zeal, with unrelaxing vigilance, with indomitable courage, with tireless energy, until the present stage of its mission is triumphantly concluded.

## **THE WORKINGS OF TWO SIMULTANEOUS PROCESSES**

How could it forfeit its birthright or mar its heritage, when the country from which the vast majority of its members have sprung, the great republic of the West, government and people alike, is itself, through experiment and trial, slowly, painfully, unwittingly and irresistibly advancing towards the goal destined for it by both Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? Indeed if we would read aright the signs of the

32 times, and appraise correctly the significances of contemporaneous events that are impelling forward both the American Bahá'í Community and the nation of which it forms a part on the road leading them to their ultimate destiny, we cannot fail to perceive the workings of two simultaneous processes, generated as far back as the concluding years of the Heroic Age of our Faith, each clearly defined, each distinctly separate, yet closely related and destined to culminate, in the fullness of time, in a single glorious consummation.

One of these processes is associated with the mission of the American Bahá'í Community, the other with the destiny of the American nation. The one serves directly the interests of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the other promotes indirectly the institutions that are to be associated with the establishment of His World Order. The first process dates back to the revelation of those stupendous Tablets constituting the Charter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan. It was held in abeyance for well-nigh twenty years while the fabric of an indispensable Administrative Order, designed as a divinely appointed agency for the operation of that Plan, was being constructed. It registered its initial success with the triumphant conclusion of the first stage of its operation in the republics of the Western Hemisphere. It signaled the opening of the second phase of its development through the inauguration of the present teaching campaign in the European continent. It must pass into the third stage of its evolution with the initiation of the third Seven Year Plan, designed to culminate in the establishment of the structure of the Administrative Order in all the remaining sovereign states and chief dependencies of the globe. It must reach the end of the first epoch in its evolution with the fulfillment of the prophecy mentioned by Daniel in the last chapter of His Book, related to the year 1335, and associated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the world triumph of the Faith of His Father. It will be consummated through the emergence of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth in the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

The other process dates back to the outbreak of the first World War that threw the great republic of the West into the vortex of the first stage of a world upheaval. It received its initial impetus through the formulation of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, closely associating for the first time that republic with the fortunes of the Old World. It suffered its first setback through the dissociation of that republic from the newly born League of Nations which that president had labored to  
33 create. It acquired added momentum through the outbreak of the second World War, inflicting unprecedented suffering on that republic, and involving it still further in the affairs of all the continents of the globe. It was further reinforced through the declaration embodied in the Atlantic Charter, as voiced by one of its chief progenitors, Franklin D. Roosevelt. It assumed a definite outline through the birth of the United Nations at the San Francisco Conference. It acquired added significance through the choice of the City of the Covenant itself as the seat of the newly born organization, through the declaration recently made by the American

president related to his country's commitments in Greece and Turkey, as well as through the submission to the General Assembly of the United Nations of the thorny and challenging problem of the Holy Land, the spiritual as well as the administrative center of the World Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. It must, however long and tortuous the way, lead, through a series of victories and reverses, to the political unification of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, to the emergence of a world government and the establishment of the Lesser Peace, as foretold by Bahá'u'lláh and foreshadowed by the Prophet Isaiah. It must, in the end, culminate in the unfurling of the banner of the Most Great Peace, in the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.

## **A PARALLEL BETWEEN THE AMERICAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY AND THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC**

Might not a still closer parallel be drawn between the community singled out for the execution of this world-embracing Plan, in its relation to its sister communities, and the nation of which it forms a part, in its relation to its sister nations? On the one hand is a community which ever since its birth has been nursed in the lap of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and been lovingly trained by Him through the revelation of unnumbered Tablets, through the dispatch of special and successive messengers, and through His own prolonged visit to the North American continent in the evening of His life. It was to the members of this community, the spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers of the Heroic Age of our Faith, that He, whilst sojourning in the City of the Covenant, chose to reveal the implications of that Covenant. It was in the vicinity of this community's earliest established center that He laid, with His own hands, the cornerstone of the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of the western world. It was to the members of this community <sup>34</sup> that He subsequently addressed His Tablets of the Divine Plan, investing it with a spiritual primacy, and singling it out for a glorious mission among its sister communities. It was this community which won the immortal honor of being the first to introduce the Faith in the British Isles, in France and in Germany, and which sent forth its consecrated pioneers and teachers to China, Japan and India, to Australia and New Zealand, to the Balkan Peninsula, to South Africa, to Latin America, to the Baltic States, to Scandinavia and the islands of the Pacific, hoisting thereby its banner in the vast majority of the countries won over to its cause, in both the East and the West, prior to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing.

It was this community, the cradle and stronghold of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, which, on the morrow of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension, was the first among all other Bahá'í communities in East and West to arise and champion the cause of that Order, to fix its pattern, to erect its fabric, to initiate its endowments, to establish and consolidate its subsidiary institutions, and to

vindicate its aims and purposes. To it belongs the unique distinction of having erected, in the heart of the North American continent, the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West, the holiest edifice ever to be reared by the hands of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in either the Eastern or Western Hemisphere. It was through the assiduous and unflagging labors of the most distinguished and consecrated among its itinerant teachers that the allegiance of royalty to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh was won, and unequivocally proclaimed in successive testimonies as penned by the royal convert herself. To its members, the vanguard of the torchbearers of the future world civilization, must, moreover, be ascribed the imperishable glory of having launched and successfully concluded the first stage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, in the concluding years of the first Bahá'í century, establishing thereby the structural basis of the Administrative Order of the Faith in all the republics of Central and South America. It is this same community which is once again carrying off the palm of victory through launching, in the first decade of the second century of the Bahá'í Era, the second stage of that same Plan, destined to lay the foundations of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in no less than ten sovereign states in the continent of Europe, comprising the Scandinavian states, the Low Countries, the states of the Iberian Peninsula, Switzerland and Italy. And lastly, to its enterprising members must go the unique honor and <sup>35</sup> privilege of having arisen, on unnumbered occasions, and over a period of more than a quarter of a century, to champion the cause of the down-trodden and persecuted among their brethren in Persia, in Egypt, in Russia, in 'Iráq and in Germany, to stretch a generous helping hand to the needy among them, to defend and safeguard the interests of their institutions, and to plead their cause before political and ecclesiastical adversaries.

On the other hand is a nation that has achieved undisputed ascendancy in the entire Western Hemisphere, whose rulers have been uniquely honored by being collectively addressed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas; which has been acclaimed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the "home of the righteous and the gathering-place of the free," where the "splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled" and belonging to a continent which, as recorded by that same pen, "giveth signs and evidences of very great advancement," whose "future is even more promising," whose "influence and illumination are far-reaching," and which "will lead all nations spiritually." Moreover, it is to this great republic of the West that the Center of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh has referred as the nation that has "developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations," and which "is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West for the triumph of its people." It is for this same American democracy that He expressed His fervent hope that it might be "the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement," "to proclaim the unity of mankind," and "to unfurl the Standard of the

Most Great Peace,” that it might become “the distributing center of spiritual enlightenment, and all the world receive this heavenly blessing,” and that its inhabitants might “rise from their present material attainments to such a height that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world.” It is in connection with its people that He has affirmed that they are “indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Great Peace and proclaim the oneness of mankind.”

## THE UNITED STATES IS SIGNALLY BLEST

This nation so signally blest, occupying so eminent and responsible a position in a continent so wonderfully endowed, was the first among <sup>36</sup> the nations of the West to be warmed and illuminated by the rays of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, soon after the proclamation of His Covenant on the morrow of His ascension. This nation, moreover, may well claim to have, as a result of its effective participation in both the first and second world wars, redressed the balance, saved mankind the horrors of devastation and bloodshed involved in the prolongation of hostilities, and decisively contributed, in the course of the latter conflict, to the overthrow of the exponents of ideologies fundamentally at variance with the universal tenets of our Faith.

To her President, the immortal Woodrow Wilson, must be ascribed the unique honor, among the statesmen of any nation, whether of the East or of the West, of having voiced sentiments so akin to the principles animating the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, and of having more than any other world leader, contributed to the creation of the League of Nations—achievements which the pen of the Center of God's Covenant acclaimed as signaling the dawn of the Most Great Peace, whose sun, according to that same pen, must needs arise as the direct consequence of the enforcement of the laws of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.

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To the matchless position achieved by so preeminent a president of the American Union, in a former period, at so critical a juncture in international affairs, must now be added the splendid initiative taken, in recent years, by the American government, culminating in the birth of the successor of that League in San Francisco, and the establishment of its permanent seat in the city of New York. Nor can the preponderating influence exerted by this nation in the councils of the world, the prodigious economic and political power that it wields, the prestige it enjoys, the wealth of which it disposes, the idealism that animates its people, her magnificent contribution, as a result of her unparalleled productive power, for the relief of human suffering and the rehabilitation of peoples and nations, be overlooked in a survey of the position which she holds, and which distinguishes her from her sister nations in both the new and old worlds.

## TRIBULATIONS ARE INEVITABLE