

The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh

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Original English



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March 21, 1932

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

Friends and fellow-defenders of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh:

Significant as have been the changes that have lately overtaken a swiftly awakening humanity at this transitional phase of its checkered history, the steady consolidation of the institutions which the administrators of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh are, in every land, toiling to establish should appear no less remarkable to even those who are as yet imperfectly acquainted with the obstacles they have had to surmount or the meagre resources on which they could rely.

That a Faith which, ten years ago, was severely shaken by the sudden removal of an incomparable Master should have, in the face of tremendous obstacles, maintained its unity, resisted the malignant onslaught of its ill-wishers, silenced its calumniators, broadened the basis of its far-flung administration, and raised upon it institutions symbolizing its ideals of worship and service, should be deemed sufficient evidence of the invincible power with which the Almighty has chosen to invest it from the moment of its inception.

That the Cause associated with the name of Bahá'u'lláh feeds itself upon those hidden springs of celestial strength which no force of human personality, whatever its glamour, can replace; that its reliance is solely upon that mystic Source with which no worldly advantage, be it wealth, fame, or learning can compare; that it propagates itself by ways mysterious and utterly at variance with the standards accepted by the generality of mankind, will, if not already apparent, become increasingly manifest as it forges ahead towards fresh conquests in its struggle for the spiritual regeneration of mankind.

Indeed, how could it, unsupported as it has ever been by the counsels and the resources of the wise, the rich, and the learned in the land of its birth, have succeeded in breaking asunder the shackles that weighed upon it at the hour of its birth, in emerging unscathed from the storms that agitated its infancy, had not its animating breath been quickened by that spirit which is



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born of God, and on which all success, wherever and however it be sought, must ultimately depend?

It is not necessary for me to recall, even in their briefest outline, the heart-rending details of that appalling tragedy which marked the birth-pangs of our beloved Faith, enacted in a land notorious for its unrestrained fanaticisms, its crass ignorance, its unbridled cruelty. Nor do I need to expatiate on the valor, the sublime fortitude, that defied the cruel torture-mongers of that race, or stress the number, or emphasize the purity of the lives, of those who died willingly that their Cause might live and prosper. Nor is it necessary to dwell upon the indignation which those atrocities evoked, and the feelings of unqualified admiration that surged, in the breasts of countless men and women, in regions remote from the scene of those indescribable cruelties. Suffice it to say that upon these heroes of Bahá'u'lláh's native land was bestowed the inestimable privilege of sealing with their life-blood the early triumphs of their cherished Faith, and of paving the way for its approaching victory. In the blood of the unnumbered martyrs of Persia lay the seed of the Divinely-appointed Administration which, though transplanted from its native soil, is now budding out, under your loving care, into a new order, destined to overshadow all mankind.

America's Contribution to the Cause

For great as have been the attainments and unforgettable the services of the pioneers of the heroic age of the Cause in Persia, the contribution which their spiritual descendants, the American believers, the champion-builders of the organic structure of the Cause, are now making towards the fulfillment of the Plan which must usher in the golden age of the Cause is no less meritorious in this strenuous period of its history. Few, if any, I venture to assert, among these privileged framers and custodians of the constitution of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh are even dimly aware of the preponderating rôle which the North American continent is destined to play in the future orientation of their world-embracing Cause. Nor does any appreciable number among them seem sufficiently conscious of the decisive influence which they already exercise in the direction and management of its affairs.

"The continent of America," wrote 'Abdu'l-Bahá in February, 1917, "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."

That the supporters of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, throughout the United States and Canada, are increasingly demonstrating the truth of this solemn affirmation is evident to even a casual observer of the record of their manifold services, whether in their individual capacities or through their concerted endeavors. The manifestations of spontaneous loyalty which marked their response to the expressed wishes of a departed Master; the generosity with which they have, on more than one occasion, arisen to lend a helping hand to the needy and harassed among their brethren in Persia; the vigor with which they have resisted the shameless attacks which unrelenting enemies, both from within and without, have, with increasing frequency, launched against them; the example which the body of their national representatives have set to their sister Assemblies in fashioning the instruments essential to the effective discharge of their collective duties; their successful intervention on behalf of their persecuted fellow-workers

in Russia; the moral support they have extended to their Egyptian fellow-disciples at a most critical stage in their struggle for emancipation from the fetters of Islámic orthodoxy; the historic services rendered by those intrepid pioneers who, faithful to the call of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, forsook their homes to plant, in the uttermost corners of the globe, the standard of His Faith; and, last but not least, the magnificence of their self-sacrifice, culminating in the completion of the super-structure of the Maṣhriqu'l-Aḏhkár — these stand out each as an eloquent testimony to the indomitable character of the faith Bahá'u'lláh has kindled in their hearts.

Who, contemplating so splendid a record of service, can doubt that these faithful stewards of the redeeming grace of God have preserved, undivided and unimpaired, the priceless heritage entrusted to their charge? Have they not, one might well reflect, in ways which only future historians will indicate, approached the high standard that characterized those deeds of imperishable renown accomplished by those that have gone before them?

Not by the material resources which the members of this infant community can now summon to their aid; not by the numerical strength of its present-day supporters; nor by any direct tangible benefits its votaries can as yet confer upon the multitude of the needy and the disconsolate among their countrymen, should its potentialities be tested or its worth determined. Nowhere but in the purity of its precepts, the sublimity of its standards, the integrity of its laws, the reasonableness of its claims, the comprehensiveness of its scope, the universality of its program, the flexibility of its institutions, the lives of its founders, the heroism of its martyrs, and the transforming power of its influence, should the unprejudiced observer seek to obtain the true criterion that can enable him to fathom its mysteries or to estimate its virtue.

Decline of Mortal Dominion

How unfair, how irrelevant, to venture any comparison between the slow and gradual consolidation of the Faith proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh and those man-created movements which, having their origin in human desires and with their hopes centered on mortal dominion, must inevitably decline and perish! Springing from a finite mind, begotten of human fancy, and oftentimes the product of ill-conceived designs, such movements succeed, by reason of their novelty, their appeal to man's baser instincts and their dependence upon the resources of a sordid world, in dazzling for a time the eyes of men, only to plunge finally from the heights of their meteoric career into the darkness of oblivion, dissolved by the very forces that had assisted in their creation.

Not so with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Born in an environment of appalling degradation, springing from a soil steeped in age-long corruptions, hatreds and prejudice, inculcating principles irreconcilable with the accepted standards of the times, and faced from the beginning with the relentless enmity of government, church and people, this nascent Faith of God has, by virtue of the celestial potency with which it has been endowed, succeeded, in less than four score years and ten, in emancipating itself from the galling chains of Islámic domination, in proclaiming the self-sufficiency of its ideals and the independent integrity of its laws, in planting its banner in no less than forty of the most advanced countries of the world, in establishing its outposts in lands beyond the farthest seas, in consecrating its religious edifices in the midmost heart of the Asiatic and American continents, in inducing two of the most

powerful governments of the West to ratify the instruments essential to its administrative activities, in obtaining from royalty befitting tributes to the excellence of its teachings, and, finally, in forcing its grievances upon the attention of the representatives of the highest Tribunal in the civilized world, and in securing from its members written affirmations that are tantamount to a tacit recognition of its religious status and to an express declaration of the justice of its cause.

Circumscribed though its power as a social force may as yet appear, and however obvious may seem the present ineffectiveness of its world-embracing program, we, who stand identified with its blessed name, cannot but marvel at the measure of its achievements if we but compare them with the modest accomplishments that have marked the rise of the Dispensations of the past. Where else, if not in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, can the unbiased student of comparative religion cite instances of a claim as stupendous as that which the Author of that Faith advanced, foes as relentless as those which He faced, a devotion more sublime than that which He kindled, a life as eventful and as enthralling as that which He led? Has Christianity or Islám, has any Dispensation that preceded them, offered instances of such combinations of courage and restraint, of magnanimity and power, of broad-mindedness and loyalty, as those which characterized the conduct of the heroes of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh? Where else do we find evidences of a transformation as swift, as complete, and as sudden, as those effected in the lives of the apostles of the Báb? Few, indeed, are the instances recorded in any of the authenticated annals of the religions of the past of a self-abnegation as complete, a constancy as firm, a magnanimity as sublime, a loyalty as uncompromising, as those which bore witness to the character of that immortal band which stands identified with this Divine Revelation — this latest and most compelling manifestation of the love and the omnipotence of the Almighty!

Contrast with Religions of the Past

We may vainly search in the records of the earliest beginnings of any of the recognized religions of the past for episodes as thrilling in their details, or as far-reaching in their consequences, as those that illumine the pages of the history of this Faith. The almost incredible circumstances attending the martyrdom of that youthful Prince of Glory; the forces of barbaric repression which this tragedy subsequently released; the manifestations of unsurpassed heroism to which it gave rise; the exhortations and warnings which have streamed from the pen of the Divine Prisoner in His Epistles to the potentates of the Church and the monarchs and rulers of the world; the undaunted loyalty with which our brethren are battling in Muslim countries with the forces of religious orthodoxy — these may be reckoned as the most outstanding features of what the world will come to recognize as the greatest drama in the world's spiritual history.

I need not recall, in this connection, the unfortunate episodes that have, admittedly, and to a very great extent, marred the early history of both Judaism and Islám. Nor is it necessary to stress the damaging effect of the excesses, the rivalries and divisions, the fanatical outbursts and acts of ingratitude that are associated with the early development of the people of Israel and with the militant career of the ruthless pioneers of the Faith of Muḥammad.

It would be sufficient for my purpose to call attention to the great number of those who, in the first two centuries of the Christian era, "purchased an ignominious life by betraying the holy

Scriptures into the hands of the infidels," the scandalous conduct of those bishops who were thereby branded as traitors, the discord of the African Church, the gradual infiltration into Christian doctrine of the principles of the Mithraic cult, of the Alexandrian school of thought, of the precepts of Zoroastrianism and of Grecian philosophy, and the adoption by the churches of Greece and of Asia of the institutions of provincial synods of a model which they borrowed from the representative councils of their respective countries.

How great was the obstinacy with which the Jewish converts among the early Christians adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors, and how fervent their eagerness to impose them on the Gentiles! Were not the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem all circumcised Jews, and had not the congregation over which they presided united the laws of Moses with the doctrine of Christ? Is it not a fact that no more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the Roman Empire had enlisted themselves under the standard of Christ before the conversion of Constantine? Was not the ruin of the Temple, in the city of Jerusalem, and of the public religion of the Jews, severely felt by the so-called Nazarenes, who persevered, above a century, in the practice of the Mosaic Law?

How striking the contrast when we remember, in the light of the afore-mentioned facts, the number of those followers of Bahá'u'lláh who, in Persia and the adjoining countries, had enlisted at the time of His Ascension as the convinced supporters of His Faith! How encouraging to observe the undeviating loyalty with which His valiant followers are guarding the purity and integrity of His clear and unequivocal teachings! How edifying the spectacle of those who are battling with the forces of a firmly entrenched orthodoxy in their struggle to emancipate themselves from the fetters of an outworn creed! How inspiring the conduct of those Muslim followers of Bahá'u'lláh who view, not with regret or apathy, but with feelings of unconcealed satisfaction, the deserved chastisement which the Almighty has inflicted upon those twin institutions of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, those engines of despotism and sworn enemies of the Cause of God!

Fundamental Principle of Religious Truth

Let no one, however, mistake my purpose. The Revelation, of which Bahá'u'lláh is the source and center, abrogates none of the religions that have preceded it, nor does it attempt, in the slightest degree, to distort their features or to belittle their value. It disclaims any intention of dwarfing any of the Prophets of the past, or of whittling down the eternal verity of their teachings. It can, in no wise, conflict with the spirit that animates their claims, nor does it seek to undermine the basis of any man's allegiance to their cause. Its declared, its primary purpose is to enable every adherent of these Faiths to obtain a fuller understanding of the religion with which he stands identified, and to acquire a clearer apprehension of its purpose. It is neither eclectic in the presentation of its truths, nor arrogant in the affirmation of its claims. Its teachings revolve around the fundamental principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is progressive, not final. Unequivocally and without the least reservation it proclaims all established religions to be divine in origin, identical in their aims, complementary in their functions, continuous in their purpose, indispensable in their value to mankind.

“All the Prophets of God,” asserts Bahá’u’lláh in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, “abide in the same tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech, and proclaim the same Faith.” From the “beginning that hath no beginning,” these Exponents of the Unity of God and Channels of His incessant utterance have shed the light of the invisible Beauty upon mankind, and will continue, to the “end that hath no end,” to vouchsafe fresh revelations of His might and additional experiences of His inconceivable glory. To contend that any particular religion is final, that “all Revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine mercy are closed, that from the daysprings of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again, that the ocean of everlasting bounty is forever stilled, and that out of the Tabernacle of ancient glory the Messengers of God have ceased to be made manifest” would indeed be nothing less than sheer blasphemy.

“They differ,” explains Bahá’u’lláh in that same epistle, “only in the intensity of their revelation and the comparative potency of their light.” And this, not by reason of any inherent incapacity of any one of them to reveal in a fuller measure the glory of the Message with which He has been entrusted, but rather because of the immaturity and unpreparedness of the age He lived in to apprehend and absorb the full potentialities latent in that Faith.

“Know of a certainty,” explains Bahá’u’lláh, “that in every Dispensation the light of Divine Revelation has been vouchsafed to men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity. Consider the sun. How feeble its rays the moment it appears above the horizon. How gradually its warmth and potency increase as it approaches its zenith, enabling meanwhile all created things to adapt themselves to the growing intensity of its light. How steadily it declines until it reaches its setting point. Were it, all of a sudden, to manifest the energies latent within it, it would, no doubt, cause injury to all created things.... In like manner, if the Sun of Truth were suddenly to reveal, at the earliest stages of its manifestation, the full measure of the potencies which the providence of the Almighty has bestowed upon it, the earth of human understanding would waste away and be consumed; for men’s hearts would neither sustain the intensity of its revelation, nor be able to mirror forth the radiance of its light. Dismayed and overpowered, they would cease to exist.”

It is for this reason, and this reason only, that those who have recognized the Light of God in this age, claim no finality for the Revelation with which they stand identified, nor arrogate to the Faith they have embraced powers and attributes intrinsically superior to, or essentially different from, those which have characterized any of the religious systems that preceded it.

Does not Bahá’u’lláh Himself allude to the progressiveness of Divine Revelation and to the limitations which an inscrutable Wisdom has chosen to impose upon Him? What else can this passage of the Hidden Words imply, if not that He Who revealed it disclaimed finality for the Revelation entrusted to Him by the Almighty? “O Son of Justice! In the night-season the beauty of the immortal Being hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu’l-Muntahá, and wept with such a weeping that the concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at His lamenting. Whereupon there was asked, Why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity. Then summoned to return I beheld, and lo! certain doves of holiness were sore tried within the claws of the dogs of earth. Thereupon the Maid of Heaven hastened forth, unveiled, and resplendent, from Her mystic mansion, and asked of their names, and all were told but one. And when urged, the first Letter thereof was uttered, whereupon the dwellers of the celestial chambers rushed forth out of their habitation of

glory. And whilst the second letter was pronounced they fell down, one and all, upon the dust. At that moment a Voice was heard from the inmost shrine: 'Thus far and no farther.' Verily we bear witness to that which they have done and now are doing."

"The Revelation of which I am the bearer," Bahá'u'lláh explicitly declares, "is adapted to humanity's spiritual receptiveness and capacity; otherwise, the Light that shines within me can neither wax nor wane. Whatever I manifest is nothing more or less than the measure of the Divine glory which God has bidden me reveal."

If the Light that is now streaming forth upon an increasingly responsive humanity with a radiance that bids fair to eclipse the splendor of such triumphs as the forces of religion have achieved in days past; if the signs and tokens which proclaimed its advent have been, in many respects, unique in the annals of past Revelations; if its votaries have evinced traits and qualities unexampled in the spiritual history of mankind; these should be attributed not to a superior merit which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, as a Revelation isolated and alien from any previous Dispensation, might possess, but rather should be viewed and explained as the inevitable outcome of the forces that have made of this present age an age infinitely more advanced, more receptive, and more insistent to receive an ampler measure of Divine Guidance than has hitherto been vouchsafed to mankind.

Necessity for a Fresh Revelation

Dearly beloved friends: Who, contemplating the helplessness, the fears and miseries of humanity in this day, can any longer question the necessity for a fresh revelation of the quickening power of God's redemptive love and guidance? Who, witnessing on one hand the stupendous advance achieved in the realm of human knowledge, of power, of skill and inventiveness, and viewing on the other the unprecedented character of the sufferings that afflict, and the dangers that beset, present-day society, can be so blind as to doubt that the hour has at last struck for the advent of a new Revelation, for a re-statement of the Divine Purpose, and for the consequent revival of those spiritual forces that have, at fixed intervals, rehabilitated the fortunes of human society? Does not the very operation of the world-unifying forces that are at work in this age necessitate that He Who is the Bearer of the Message of God in this day should not only reaffirm that self-same exalted standard of individual conduct inculcated by the Prophets gone before Him, but embody in His appeal, to all governments and peoples, the essentials of that social code, that Divine Economy, which must guide humanity's concerted efforts in establishing that all-embracing federation which is to signalize the advent of the Kingdom of God on this earth?

May we not, therefore, recognizing as we do the necessity for such a revelation of God's redeeming power, meditate upon the supreme grandeur of the System unfolded by the hand of Bahá'u'lláh in this day? May we not pause, pressed though we be by the daily preoccupations which the ever-widening range of the administrative activities of His Faith must involve, to reflect upon the sanctity of the responsibilities it is our privilege to shoulder?

The Station of the Báb

Not only in the character of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, however stupendous be His claim, does the greatness of this Dispensation reside. For among the distinguishing features of His Faith ranks, as a further evidence of its uniqueness, the fundamental truth that in the person of its Forerunner, the Báb, every follower of Bahá'u'lláh recognizes not merely an inspired annunciator but a direct Manifestation of God. It is their firm belief that, no matter how short the duration of His Dispensation, and however brief the period of the operation of His laws, the Báb had been endowed with a potency such as no founder of any of the past religions was, in the providence of the Almighty, allowed to possess. That He was not merely the precursor of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, that He was more than a divinely-inspired personage, that His was the station of an independent, self-sufficient Manifestation of God, is abundantly demonstrated by Himself, is affirmed in unmistakable terms by Bahá'u'lláh, and is finally attested by the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Nowhere but in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh's masterly exposition of the one unifying truth underlying all the Revelations of the past, can we obtain a clearer apprehension of the potency of those forces inherent in that Preliminary Manifestation with which His own Faith stands indissolubly associated. Expatriating upon the unfathomed import of the signs and tokens that have accompanied the Revelation proclaimed by the Báb, the promised Qá'im, He recalls these prophetic words: "Knowledge is twenty and seven letters. All that the Prophets have revealed are two letters thereof. No man thus far hath known more than these two letters. But when the Qá'im shall arise, He will cause the remaining twenty and five letters to be made manifest." "Behold," adds Bahá'u'lláh, "how great and lofty is His station!" "Of His Revelation," He further adds, "the Prophets of God, His saints and chosen ones, have either not been informed, or in pursuance of God's inscrutable Decree, they have not disclosed."

And yet, immeasurably exalted as is the station of the Báb, and marvellous as have been the happenings that have signaled the advent of His Cause, so wondrous a Revelation cannot but pale before the effulgence of that Orb of unsurpassed splendor Whose rise He foretold and whose superiority He readily acknowledged. We have but to turn to the writings of the Báb Himself in order to estimate the significance of that Quintessence of Light of which He, with all the majesty of His power, was but its humble and chosen Precursor.

Again and again the Báb admits, in glowing and unequivocal language, the preëminent character of a Faith destined to be made manifest after Him and to supersede His Cause. "The germ," He asserts in the Persian Bayán, the chief and best-preserved repository of His laws, "that holds within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of all those who follow me." "Of all the tributes," the Báb repeatedly proclaims in His writings, "I have paid to Him Who is to come after Me, the greatest is this, My written confession, that no words of Mine can adequately describe Him, nor can any reference to Him in my Book, the Bayán, do justice to His Cause." Addressing Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí, surnamed Vahíd, the most learned and influential among his followers, He says: "By the righteousness of Him Whose power causeth the seed to germinate and Who breatheth the spirit of life into all things, were I to be assured that in the day of His Manifestation thou wilt deny Him, I would unhesitatingly disown thee and repudiate thy faith.... If, on the other hand, I be told

that a Christian, who beareth no allegiance to My Faith, will believe in Him, the same will I regard as the apple of Mine eye.”

The Outpouring of Divine Grace

“If all the peoples of the world,” Bahá'u'lláh Himself affirms, “be invested with the powers and attributes destined for the Letters of the Living, the chosen disciples of the Báb, whose station is ten thousand times more glorious than any which the apostles of old have attained, and if they, one and all, should, swift as the twinkling of an eye, hesitate to recognize the Light of my Revelation, their faith shall be of no avail, and they shall be accounted among the infidels.” “So tremendous,” He writes, “is the outpouring of Divine grace in this Dispensation that if mortal hands could be swift enough to record them, within the space of a single day and night, there would stream verses of such number as to be equivalent to the whole of the Persian Bayán.”

Such, dearly-beloved friends, is the effusion of celestial grace vouchsafed by the Almighty to this age, this most illumined century! We stand too close to so colossal a Revelation to expect in this, the first century of its era, to arrive at a just estimate of its towering grandeur, its infinite possibilities, its transcendent beauty. Small though our present numbers may be, however limited our capacities, or circumscribed our influence, we, into whose hands so pure, so tender, so precious a heritage has been entrusted, should at all times strive, with unrelaxing vigilance, to abstain from any thoughts, words, or deeds, that might tend to dim its brilliance, or injure its growth. How tremendous our responsibility; how delicate and laborious our task!

Dear friends: Clear and emphatic as are the instructions which our departed Master has reiterated in countless Tablets bequeathed by Him to His followers throughout the world, a few, owing to the restricted influence of the Cause in the West, have been purposely withheld from the body of His occidental disciples, who, despite their numerical inferiority, are now exercising such a preponderating influence in the direction and administration of its affairs. I feel it, therefore, incumbent upon me to stress, now that the time is ripe, the importance of an instruction which, at the present stage of the evolution of our Faith, should be increasingly emphasized, irrespective of its application to the East or to the West. And this principle is no other than that which involves the non-participation by the adherents of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, whether in their individual capacities or collectively as local or national Assemblies, in any form of activity that might be interpreted, either directly or indirectly, as an interference in the political affairs of any particular government. Whether it be in the publications which they initiate and supervise; or in their official and public deliberations; or in the posts they occupy and the services they render; or in the communications they address to their fellow-disciples; or in their dealings with men of eminence and authority; or in their affiliations with kindred societies and organizations, it is, I am firmly convinced, their first and sacred obligation to abstain from any word or deed that might be construed as a violation of this vital principle. Theirs is the duty to demonstrate, on one hand, the nonpolitical character of their Faith, and to assert, on the other, their unqualified loyalty and obedience to whatever is the considered judgment of their respective governments.

The Divine Polity

Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster. Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen. Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them. Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world. It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representatives, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must necessarily involve. Let them affirm their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Bahá'u'lláh, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to become worthy agencies of that Divine Polity which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men.

It should be made unmistakably clear that such an attitude implies neither the slightest indifference to the cause and interests of their own country, nor involves any insubordination on their part to the authority of recognized and established governments. Nor does it constitute a repudiation of their sacred obligation to promote, in the most effective manner, the best interests of their government and people. It indicates the desire cherished by every true and loyal follower of Bahá'u'lláh to serve, in an unselfish, unostentatious and patriotic fashion, the highest interests of the country to which he belongs, and in a way that would entail no departure from the high standards of integrity and truthfulness associated with the teachings of his Faith.

As the number of the Bahá'í communities in various parts of the world multiplies and their power, as a social force, becomes increasingly apparent, they will no doubt find themselves increasingly subjected to the pressure which men of authority and influence, in the political domain, will exercise in the hope of obtaining the support they require for the advancement of their aims. These communities will, moreover, feel a growing need of the good-will and the assistance of their respective governments in their efforts to widen the scope, and to consolidate the foundations, of the institutions committed to their charge. Let them beware lest, in their eagerness to further the aims of their beloved Cause, they should be led unwittingly to bargain with their Faith, to compromise with their essential principles, or to sacrifice, in return for any material advantage which their institutions may derive, the integrity of their spiritual ideals. Let them proclaim that in whatever country they reside, and however advanced their institutions, or profound their desire to enforce the laws, and apply the principles, enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, they will, unhesitatingly, subordinate the operation of such laws and the application of such principles to the requirements and legal enactments of their respective governments. Theirs is

not the purpose, while endeavoring to conduct and perfect the administrative affairs of their Faith, to violate, under any circumstances, the provisions of their country's constitution, much less to allow the machinery of their administration to supersede the government of their respective countries.

It should also be borne in mind that the very extension of the activities in which we are engaged, and the variety of the communities which labor under divers forms of government, so essentially different in their standards, policies, and methods, make it absolutely essential for all those who are the declared members of any one of these communities to avoid any action that might, by arousing the suspicion or exciting the antagonism of any one government, involve their brethren in fresh persecutions or complicate the nature of their task. How else, might I ask, could such a far-flung Faith, which transcends political and social boundaries, which includes within its pale so great a variety of races and nations, which will have to rely increasingly, as it forges ahead, on the good-will and support of the diversified and contending governments of the earth — how else could such a Faith succeed in preserving its unity, in safeguarding its interests, and in ensuring the steady and peaceful development of its institutions?

Such an attitude, however, is not dictated by considerations of selfish expediency, but is actuated, first and foremost, by the broad principle that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh will, under no circumstances, suffer themselves to be involved, whether as individuals or in their collective capacities, in matters that would entail the slightest departure from the fundamental verities and ideals of their Faith. Neither the charges which the uninformed and the malicious may be led to bring against them, nor the allurements of honors and rewards, will ever induce them to surrender their trust or to deviate from their path. Let their words proclaim, and their conduct testify, that they who follow Bahá'u'lláh, in whatever land they reside, are actuated by no selfish ambition, that they neither thirst for power, nor mind any wave of unpopularity, of distrust or criticism, which a strict adherence to their standards might provoke.

Difficult and delicate though be our task, the sustaining power of Bahá'u'lláh and of His Divine guidance will assuredly assist us if we follow steadfastly in His way, and strive to uphold the integrity of His laws. The light of His redeeming grace, which no earthly power can obscure, will if we persevere, illuminate our path, as we steer our course amid the snares and pitfalls of a troubled age, and will enable us to discharge our duties in a manner that would redound to the glory and the honor of His blessed Name.

Our Beloved Temple

And finally, dearly-beloved brethren, let me once more direct your attention to the pressing claims of the Maṣhriqu'l-Aḍhkár, our beloved Temple. Need I remind you of the imperative necessity of carrying out to a successful conclusion, while there is yet time, the great enterprise to which, before the eyes of a watching world, we stand committed? Need I stress the great damage which further delay in the prosecution of this divinely-appointed task must, even in these critical and unforeseen circumstances, inflict upon the prestige of our beloved Cause? I am, I can assure you, acutely conscious of the stringency of the circumstances with which you are faced, the embarrassments under which you labor, the cares with which you are burdened, the pressing urgency of the demands that are being incessantly made upon your depleted

resources. I am, however, still more profoundly aware of the unprecedented character of the opportunity which it is your privilege to seize and utilize. I am aware of the incalculable blessings that must await the termination of a collective enterprise which, by the range and quality of the sacrifices it entailed, deserves to be ranked among the most outstanding examples of Bahá'í solidarity ever since those deeds of brilliant heroism immortalized the memory of the heroes of Nayríz, of Zanján, and of Ṭabarsí. I appeal to you, therefore, friends and fellow-disciples of Bahá'u'lláh, for a more abundant measure of self-sacrifice, for a higher standard of concerted effort, for a still more compelling evidence of the reality of the faith that glows within you.

And in this fervent plea, my voice is once more reinforced by the passionate, and perhaps, the last, entreaty, of the Greatest Holy Leaf, whose spirit, now hovering on the edge of the Great Beyond, longs to carry on its flight to the Abhá Kingdom, and into the presence of a Divine, an almighty Father, an assurance of the joyous consummation of an enterprise, the progress of which has so greatly brightened the closing days of her earthly life. That the American believers, those stout-hearted pioneers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, will unanimously respond, with that same spontaneous generosity, that same measure of self-sacrifice, as have characterized their response to her appeals in the past, no one who is familiar with the vitality of their faith can possibly question.

Would to God that by the end of the spring of the year 1933 the multitudes who, from the remote corners of the globe, will throng the grounds of the Great Fair to be held in the neighborhood of that hallowed shrine may, as a result of your sustained spirit of self-sacrifice, be privileged to gaze on the arrayed splendor of its dome — a dome that shall stand as a flaming beacon and a symbol of hope amidst the gloom of a despairing world.

Your
Shoghi.
Haifa,
March 21,

true

brother,

Palestine.

