

America and the Most Great Peace

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

Friends and fellow-promoters of the Faith of God:

Forty years will have elapsed ere the close of this coming summer since the name of Bahá'u'lláh was first mentioned on the American continent. Strange indeed must appear to every observer, pondering in his heart the significance of so great a landmark in the spiritual history of the great American Republic, the circumstances which have attended this first public reference to the Author of our beloved Faith. Stranger still must seem the associations which the brief words uttered on that historic occasion must have evoked in the minds of those who heard them.

Of pomp and circumstance, of any manifestations of public rejoicing or of popular applause, there were none to greet this first intimation to America's citizens of the existence and purpose of the Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. Nor did he who was its chosen instrument profess himself a believer in the indwelling potency of the tidings he conveyed, or suspect the magnitude of the forces which so cursory a mention was destined to release.

In an address by Dr. Henry H. Jessup at the Parliament of Religions, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 17. — Editor.

Announced through the mouth of an avowed supporter of that narrow ecclesiasticism which the Faith itself has challenged and seeks to extirpate, characterized at the moment of its birth as an obscure offshoot of a contemptible creed, the Message of the Most Great Name, fed by streams of unceasing trial and warmed by the sunshine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tender care, has succeeded in driving its roots deep into America's genial soil, has in less than half a century sent out its shoots and tendrils as far as the remotest corners of the globe, and now stands, clothed in the majesty of the consecrated Edifice it has reared in the heart of that continent, determined to proclaim its right and vindicate its capacity to redeem a stricken people. Unsupported by any of



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the advantages which talent, rank and riches can confer, the community of the American believers, despite its tender age, its numerical strength, its limited experience, has by virtue of the inspired wisdom, the united will, the incorruptible loyalty of its administrators and teachers achieved the distinction of an undisputed leadership among its sister communities of East and West in hastening the advent of the Golden Age anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh.

And yet how grave the crises which this infant, this blessed, community has weathered in the course of its checkered history! How slow and painful the process that gradually brought it forth from the obscurity of unmitigated neglect to the broad daylight of public recognition! How severe the shocks which the ranks of its devoted adherents have sustained through the defection of the faint in heart, the malice of the mischief-maker, the treachery of the proud and the ambitious! What storms of ridicule, of abuse and of calumny its representatives have had to face in their staunch support of the integrity, and their valiant defense of the fair name, of the Faith they had espoused! How persistent the vicissitudes and disconcerting the reverses with which its privileged members, young and old alike, individually and collectively, have had to contend in their heroic endeavors to scale the heights which a loving Master had summoned them to attain!

Many and powerful have been its enemies who, as soon as they discovered the evidences of the growing ascendancy of its declared supporters, have vied with one another in hurling at its face the vilest imputations and in pouring out upon the Object of its devotion the vials of their fiercest wrath. How often have these sneered at the scantiness of its resources and the seeming stagnation of its life! How bitterly they ridiculed its origins and, misconceiving its purpose, dismissed it as a useless appendage of an expiring creed! Have they not in their written attacks stigmatized the heroic person of the Forerunner of so holy a Revelation as a coward recanter, a perverted apostate, and denounced the entire range of His voluminous writings as the idle chatter of a thoughtless man? Have they not chosen to ascribe to its divine Founder the basest motives which an unscrupulous plotter and usurper can conceive, and regarded the Center of His Covenant as the embodiment of ruthless tyranny, a stirrer of mischief, and a notorious exponent of expediency and fraud? Its world-unifying principles these impotent enemies of a steadily-rising Faith have time and again denounced as fundamentally defective; have pronounced its all-embracing program as utterly fantastic, and regarded its vision of the future as chimerical and positively deceitful. The fundamental verities that constitute its doctrine its foolish ill-wishers have represented as a cloak of idle dogma, its administrative machinery they have refused to differentiate from the soul of the Faith itself, and the mysteries it reveres and upholds they have identified with sheer superstition. The principle of unification which it advocates and with which it stands identified they have misconceived as a shallow attempt at uniformity, its repeated assertions of the reality of supernatural agencies they have condemned as a vain belief in magic, and the glory of its idealism they have rejected as mere utopia. Every process of purification whereby an inscrutable Wisdom chose from time to time to purge the body of His chosen followers of the defilement of the undesirable and the unworthy, these victims of an unrelenting jealousy have hailed as a symptom of the invading forces of schism which were soon to sap its strength, vitiate its vitality, and complete its ruin.

Dearly-beloved friends! It is not for me, nor does it seem within the competence of any one of the present generation, to trace the exact and full history of the rise and gradual consolidation of

this invincible arm, this mighty organ, of a continually advancing Cause. It would be premature at this early stage of its evolution, to attempt an exhaustive analysis, or to arrive at a just estimate, of the impelling forces that have urged it forward to occupy so exalted a place among the various instruments which the Hand of Omnipotence has fashioned, and is now perfecting, for the execution of His divine Purpose. Future historians of this mighty Revelation, endowed with pens abler than any which its present-day supporters can claim to possess, will no doubt transmit to posterity a masterly exposition of the origins of those forces which, through a remarkable swing of the pendulum, have caused the administrative center of the Faith to gravitate, away from its cradle, to the shores of the American continent and towards its very heart — the present mainspring and chief bulwark of its fast evolving institutions. On them will devolve the task of recording the history, and of estimating the significance, of so radical a revolution in the fortunes of a slowly maturing Faith. Theirs will be the opportunity to extol the virtues and to immortalize the memory of those men and women who have participated in its accomplishment. Theirs will be the privilege of evaluating the share which each of these champion-builders of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh has had in ushering in that golden Millennium, the promise of which lies enshrined in His teachings.

Does not the history of primitive Christianity and of the rise of Islám, each in its own way, offer a striking parallel to this strange phenomenon the beginnings of which we are now witnessing in this, the first century of the Bahá'í Era? Has not the Divine Impulse which gave birth to each of these great religious systems been driven, through the operation of those forces which the irresistible growth of the Faith itself had released, to seek away from the land of its birth and in more propitious climes a ready field and a more adequate medium for the incarnation of its spirit and the propagation of its cause? Have not the Asiatic churches of Jerusalem, of Antioch and of Alexandria, consisting chiefly of those Jewish converts, whose character and temperament inclined them to sympathize with the traditional ceremonies of the Mosaic Dispensation, been forced as they steadily declined to recognize the growing ascendancy of their Greek and Roman brethren? Have they not been compelled to acknowledge the superior valor and the trained efficiency which have enabled these standard-bearers of the Cause of Jesus Christ to erect the symbols of His world-wide dominion on the ruins of a collapsing Empire? Has not the animating spirit of Islám been constrained, under the pressure of similar circumstances, to abandon the inhospitable wastes of its Arabian Home, the theatre of its greatest sufferings and exploits, to yield in a distant land the fairest fruit of its slowly maturing civilization?

“From the beginning of time until the present day,” ‘Abdu'l-Bahá Himself affirms, “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, in another passage, assures us, “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.” “In the books of the Prophets,” He again asserts, “certain glad-tidings are recorded which are absolutely true and free from doubt. The East hath ever been the dawning-place of the Sun of Truth. In the East all the Prophets of God have appeared ...The West hath acquired illumination from the East but in some respects the reflection of the light hath been

greater in the Occident. This is specially true of Christianity. Jesus Christ appeared in Palestine and His teachings were founded in that country. Although the doors of the Kingdom were first opened in that land and the bestowals of God were spread broadcast from its center, the people of the West have embraced and promulgated Christianity more fully than the people of the East.”

Little wonder that from the same unerring pen there should have flowed, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s memorable visit to the West, these often-quoted words, the significance of which it would be impossible for me to overrate: “The continent of America,” He announced in a Tablet unveiling His Divine Plan to the believers residing in the North-Eastern States of the American Republic, “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.” “May this American democracy,” He Himself, while in America, was heard to remark, “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’... The American people are indeed worthy of being the first to build the tabernacle of the great peace and proclaim the oneness of mankind... May America become the distributing center of spiritual enlightenment and all the world receive this heavenly blessing. For America has developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations... May the inhabitants of this country become like angels of heaven with faces turned continually toward God. May all of them become servants of the omnipotent One. May they 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... 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... The American continent gives 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.”

Would it seem extravagant, in the light of so sublime an utterance, to expect that in the midst of so enviable a region of the earth and out of the agony and wreckage of an unprecedented crisis there should burst forth a spiritual renaissance which, as it propagates itself through the instrumentality of the American believers, will rehabilitate the fortunes of a decadent age? It was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself, His most intimate associates testify, Who, on more than one occasion, intimated that the establishment of His Father’s Faith in the North American continent ranked as the most outstanding among the threefold aims which, as He conceived it, constituted the principal objective of His ministry. It was He Who, in the heyday of His life and almost immediately after His Father’s ascension, conceived the idea of inaugurating His mission by enlisting the inhabitants of so promising a country under the banner of Bahá’u’lláh. He it was Who in His unerring wisdom and out of the abundance of His heart chose to bestow on His favored disciples, to the very last day of His life, the tokens of His unfailing solicitude and to overwhelm them with the marks of His special favor. It was He Who, in His declining years, as soon as delivered from the shackles of a long and cruel incarceration, decided to visit the land which had remained for so many years the object of His infinite care and love. It was He Who, through the power of His presence and the charm of His utterance, infused into the entire body of His followers those sentiments and principles which could alone sustain them amidst the trials which the very prosecution of their task would inevitably engender. Was He not, through

the several functions which He exercised whilst He dwelt amongst them, whether in the laying of the corner-stone of their House of Worship, or in the Feast which He offered them and at which He chose to serve them in person, or in the emphasis which He on a more solemn occasion placed on the implications of His spiritual station — was He not, thereby, deliberately bequeathing to them all the essentials of that spiritual heritage which He knew they would ably safeguard and by their deeds continually enrich? And finally who can doubt that in the Divine Plan which, in the evening of His life, He unveiled to their eyes He was investing them with that spiritual primacy on which they could rely in the fulfillment of their high destiny?

“O ye apostles of Bahá’u’lláh!” He thus addresses them in one of His Tablets, “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,” He tells them in another passage, “are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul glows 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 declares in another Tablet, “is as yet unrevealed, its significance still 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.” “The range of your future achievements,” He once more affirms, “still remains undisclosed. I fervently hope that in the near future the whole earth may be stirred and shaken by the results of your achievements.” “The Almighty,” He assures them, “will no doubt grant you the help of His grace, will invest you with the tokens of His might, and will endue your souls with the sustaining power of His holy Spirit.” “Be not concerned,” He admonishes them, “with the smallness of your numbers, neither be oppressed by the multitude of an unbelieving world... Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. 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 plentitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.”

“The hope which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cherishes for you,” He thus urges them, “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... 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 evidences of Divine assistance... Oh! 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.” And finally, as if to crown all His previous utterances, is this solemn affirmation embodying His Vision of America’s spiritual destiny: “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 all the peoples of the 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."

It is in the light of these above-quoted words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that every thoughtful and conscientious believer should ponder the significance of this momentous utterance of Bahá'u'lláh: "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... Should they attempt 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 life-giver of the world!'"

Dearly-beloved friends! Can our eyes be so dim as to fail to recognize in the anguish and turmoil which, greater than in any other country and in a manner unprecedented in its history, are now afflicting the American nation, evidences of the beginnings of that spiritual renaissance which these pregnant words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá so clearly foreshadow? The throes and twinges of agony which the soul of a nation in travail is now beginning to experience abundantly proclaim it. Contrast the sad plight of the nations of the earth, and in particular this great Republic of the West, with the rising fortunes of that handful of its citizens, whose mission, if they be faithful to their trust, is to heal its wounds, restore its confidence and revive its shattered hopes. Contrast the dreadful convulsions, the internecine conflicts, the petty disputes, the outworn controversies, the interminable revolutions that agitate the masses, with the calm new light of Peace and of Truth which envelops, guides and sustains those valiant inheritors of the law and love of Bahá'u'lláh. Compare the disintegrating institutions, the discredited statesmanship, the exploded theories, the appalling degradation, the follies and furies, the shifts, shams and compromises that characterize the present age, with the steady consolidation, the holy discipline, the unity and cohesiveness, the assured conviction, the uncompromising loyalty, the heroic self-sacrifice that constitute the hallmark of these faithful stewards and harbingers of the golden age of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Small wonder that these prophetic words should have been revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The East," He assures us, "hath verily been illumined with the light of the Kingdom. Ere long will this same light shed a still greater illumination upon the West. Then will the hearts of its people be vivified through the potency of the teachings of God and their souls be set aglow by the undying fire of His love." "The prestige of the Faith of God," He asserts, "has immensely increased. Its greatness is now manifest. The day is approaching when it will have cast a tremendous tumult in men's hearts. Rejoice, therefore, O denizens of America, rejoice with exceeding gladness!"

Most prized and best-beloved brethren! As we look back upon the forty years which have passed since the auspicious rays of the Bahá'í Revelation first warmed and illuminated the American continent we find that they may well fall into four distinct periods, each culminating in an event of such significance as to constitute a milestone along the road leading the American believers towards their promised victory. The first of these four decades (1893–1903), characterized by a process of slow and steady fermentation, may be said to have culminated in the historic pilgrimages undertaken by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's American disciples to the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. The ten years which followed (1903–1913), so full of the tests and trials which agitated, cleansed and energized the body of the earliest pioneers of the Faith in that land, had as their happy climax 'Abdu'l-Bahá's memorable visit to America. The third period (1913–1923), a period of quiet and

uninterrupted consolidation, had as its inevitable result the birth of that divinely-appointed Administration, the foundations of which the Will of a departed Master had unmistakably established. The remaining ten years (1923–1933), distinguished throughout by further internal development, as well as by a notable expansion of the international activities of a growing community, witnessed the completion of the superstructure of the Maṣhriqu'l-Aḍhkár — the Administration's mighty bulwark, the symbol of its strength and the sign of its future glory.

Each of these successive periods would seem to have contributed its distinct share in enriching the spiritual life of that community, and in preparing its members for the discharge of the tremendous responsibilities of their unique mission. The pilgrimages which its foremost representatives were moved to undertake in that earliest period of its history fired the souls of its members with a love and zeal which no amount of adversity could quench. The tests and tribulations it subsequently suffered enabled those who survived them to obtain a grasp of the implications of their faith that no opposition, however determined and well-organized, could ever hope to weaken. The institutions which its tried and tested adherents later on established furnished their promoters with that poise and stability which the increase of their numbers and the ceaseless extension of their activities urgently demanded. And finally the Temple which the exponents of an already firmly established Administration were inspired to erect gave them the vision which neither the storms of internal disorder nor the whirlwinds of international commotion could possibly obscure.

It would take me too long to attempt even a brief description of the first stirrings which the introduction of the Bahá'í Revelation into the New World, as conceived, initiated and directed by our beloved Master, immediately created. Nor does space permit me to narrate the circumstances attending the epoch-making visit of the first American pilgrims to Bahá'u'lláh's hallowed shrine, to relate the deeds which signalized the return of these bearers of a new-born Gospel to their native country, or to assess the immediate consequences of their achievements. No word of mine would suffice to express how instantly the revelation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's hopes, expectations and purpose for an awakened continent, electrified the minds and hearts of those who were privileged to hear Him, who were made the recipients of His inestimable blessings and the chosen repositories of His confidence and trust. I can never hope to interpret adequately the feelings that surged within those heroic hearts as they sat at their Master's feet, beneath the shelter of His prison-house, eager to absorb and intent to preserve the effusions of His divine Wisdom. I can never pay sufficient tribute to that spirit of unyielding determination which the impact of a magnetic personality and the spell of a mighty utterance kindled in the entire company of these returning pilgrims, these consecrated heralds of the Covenant of God, at so decisive an epoch of their history. The memory of such names as Lua, Chase, MacNutt, Dealy, Goodall, Dodge, Farmer and Brittingham — to mention only a few of that immortal galaxy now gathered to the glory of Bahá'u'lláh — will for ever remain associated with the rise and establishment of His Faith in the American continent, and will continue to shed on its annals a lustre that time can never dim.

It was through these pilgrimages, as they succeeded one another in the years immediately following the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, that the splendor of the Covenant, beclouded for a time by the apparent ascendancy of its Arch-Breaker, emerged triumphant amidst the vicissitudes which had afflicted it. It was through the arrival of these pilgrims, and these alone, that the

gloom which had enveloped the disconsolate members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family was finally dispelled. Through the agency of these successive visitors the Greatest Holy Leaf, who alone with her Brother among the members of her Father's household had to confront the rebellion of almost the entire company of her relatives and associates, found that consolation which so powerfully sustained her till the very close of her life. By the forces which this little band of returning pilgrims was able to release in the heart of that continent the death-knell of every scheme initiated by the would-be wrecker of the Cause of God was sounded.

The Tablets which were subsequently revealed by the untiring pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, embodying in passionate and unequivocal language His instructions and counsels, His appeals and comments, His hopes and wishes, His fears and warnings, soon began to be translated, published and circulated throughout the length and breadth of the North American continent, providing the ever-widening circle of the first believers with that spiritual sustenance which could alone enable them to survive the severe trials they were soon to experience.

The hour of an unprecedented crisis was, however, inexorably approaching. Evidences of dissension, actuated by pride and ambition, were beginning to obscure the radiance and retard the growth of the newly-born community which the apostolic teachers of that continent had labored to establish. He who had been instrumental in inaugurating so splendid an era in the history of the Faith, on whom the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant had conferred the titles of "Bahá's Peter," of the "Shepherd of God's Flocks," of the "Conqueror of America," upon whom had been bestowed the unique privilege of helping 'Abdu'l-Bahá lay the foundation-stone of the Báb's Mausoleum on Mt. Carmel — such a man, blinded by his extraordinary success and aspiring after an uncontrolled domination over the beliefs and activities of his fellow-disciples, insolently raised the standard of revolt. Seceding from 'Abdu'l-Bahá and allying himself with the Arch-Enemy of the Faith of God, this deluded apostate sought, by perverting the teachings and directing a campaign of unrelenting vilification against the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to undermine the faith of those believers whom he had during no less than eight years, so strenuously toiled to convert. By the tracts he published, through the active collaboration of the emissaries of his chief Ally, and reinforced by the efforts which the Christian ecclesiastical enemies of the Bahá'í Revelation were beginning to exert, he succeeded in dealing the nascent Faith of God a blow from which it could only slowly and painfully recover.

I need not dwell on the immediate effects of this serious yet transitory cleavage in the ranks of the American adherents of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. Nor do I need to expatiate on the character of the defamatory writings that poured upon them. Nor does it seem necessary to recount the measures to which an ever-vigilant Master resorted in order to assuage and eventually to dissipate their apprehensions. It is for the future historian to appraise the value of the mission of each of the four chosen messengers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá who, in rapid succession, were dispatched by Him to pacify and reinvigorate that troubled community. His will be the task of tracing, in the work which these deputies of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were commissioned to undertake, the beginnings of that vast Administration, the corner-stone of which these messengers were instructed to lay — an Administration whose symbolic Edifice He, at a later time, was to found in person and whose basis and scope the provisions of His Will were destined to widen.

Suffice it to say that at this stage of its evolution the activities of an invincible Faith had assumed such dimensions as to force on the one hand its enemies to devise fresh weapons for their

projected assaults, and on the other to encourage its supreme Promoter to instruct its followers, through qualified representatives and teachers, in the rudiments of an Administration which, as it evolved, would at once incarnate, safeguard and foster its spirit. The works of such stubborn assailants as those of Vatralsky, Wilson, Jessup and Richardson vie with one another in their futile attempts to stain its purity, to arrest its march and compel its surrender. To the charges of Nihilism, of heresy, of Muḥammadan Gnosticism, of immorality, of Occultism and Communism so freely leveled against them, the undismayed victims of such outrageous denunciations, acting under the instructions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, retorted by initiating a series of activities which by their very nature were to be the precursors of permanent, officially recognized administrative institutions. The inauguration of Chicago's first House of Spirituality designated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as that city's "House of Justice"; the establishment of the Bahá'í Publishing Society; the founding of the Green Acre Fellowship; the publication of the Star of the West; the holding of the first Bahá'í National Convention, synchronizing with the transference of the sacred remains of the Báb to its final resting-place on Mt. Carmel; the incorporation of the Bahá'í Temple Unity and the formation of the Executive Committee of the Maṣḥriqu'l-Aḏhkár — these stand out as the most conspicuous accomplishments of the American believers which have immortalized the memory of the most turbulent period of their history. Launched through these very acts into the troublesome seas of ceaseless tribulation, piloted by the mighty arm of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and manned by the bold initiative and abundant vitality of a band of sorely-tried disciples, the Ark of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant has, ever since those days, been steadily pursuing its course contemptuous of the storms of bitter misfortune that have raged, and which must continue to assail it, as it forges ahead towards the promised haven of undisturbed security and peace.

Unsatisfied with the achievements which crowned the concerted efforts of their elected representatives within the American continent, and emboldened by the initial success of their pioneer teachers, beyond its confines, in Great Britain, France and Germany, the community of the American believers resolved to win in distant climes fresh recruits to the advancing army of Bahá'u'lláh. Setting out from the western shores of their native land and impelled by the indomitable energy of a new-born faith, these itinerant teachers of the Gospel of Bahá'u'lláh pushed on towards the islands of the Pacific, and as far as China and Japan, determined to establish beyond the farthest seas the outposts of their beloved Faith. Both at home and abroad this community had by that time demonstrated its capacity to widen the range and consolidate the foundations of its vast endeavors. The angry voices that had been raised in protest against its rise were being drowned amid the acclamations with which the East greeted its recent victories. Those ugly features that had loomed so threateningly were gradually receding into the distance, furnishing a still wider field to these noble warriors for the exercise of their latent energies.

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the continent of America had indeed been resuscitated. Phoenix-like it had risen in all its freshness, vigor and beauty and was now, through the voice of its triumphant exponents, insistently calling to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, imploring Him to undertake a journey to its shores. The first fruits of the mission entrusted to its worthy upholders had lent such poignancy to their call that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who had just been delivered from the fetters of a galling tyranny, found Himself unable to resist. His great, His incomparable, love for His own favored children impelled Him to respond. Their passionate entreaty had, moreover, been reinforced by the numerous invitations which representatives of various interested

organizations, whether religious, educational or humanitarian, had extended to Him, expressing their eagerness to receive from His own mouth an exposition of His Father's teachings.

Though bent with age, though suffering from ailments resulting from the accumulated cares of fifty years of exile and captivity, 'Abdu'l-Bahá set out on His memorable journey across the seas to the land where He might bless by His presence, and sanctify through His deeds, the mighty acts His spirit had led His disciples to perform. The circumstances that have attended His triumphal progress through the chief cities of the United States and Canada my pen is utterly incapable of describing. The joys which the announcement of His arrival evoked, the publicity which His activities created, the forces which His utterances released, the opposition which the implications of His teachings excited, the significant episodes to which His words and deeds continually gave rise — these future generations will, no doubt, minutely and befittingly register. They will carefully delineate their features, will cherish and preserve their memory, and will transmit unimpaired the record of their minutest details to their descendants. It would indeed be presumptuous on our part to attempt, at the present time, to sketch even the bare outline of so vast, so enthralling a theme. Contemplating after the lapse of above twenty years this notable landmark in America's spiritual history we still find ourselves compelled to confess our inability to grasp its import or to fathom its mystery. I have alluded in the preceding pages to a few of the more salient features of that never-to-be-forgotten visit. These incidents, as we look back upon them, eloquently proclaim 'Abdu'l-Bahá's specific purpose to confer through these symbolic functions upon the first-born of the communities of the West that spiritual primacy which was to be the birthright of the American believers.

The seeds which 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ceaseless activities so lavishly scattered had endowed the United States and Canada, nay the entire continent, with potentialities such as it had never known in its history. On the small band of His trained and beloved disciples, and through them on their descendants, He, through that visit, had bequeathed a priceless heritage — a heritage which carried with it the sacred and primary obligation to arise and carry on in that fertile field the work He had so gloriously initiated. We can dimly picture to ourselves the wishes that must have welled from His eager heart as He bade His last farewell to that promising country. An inscrutable Wisdom, we can well imagine Him remark to His disciples on the eve of His departure, has, in His infinite bounty singled out your native land for the execution of a mighty purpose. Through the agency of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant I, as the ploughman, have been called upon since the beginning of my ministry to turn up and break its ground. The mighty confirmations that have, in the opening days of your career, rained upon you have prepared and invigorated its soil. The tribulations you subsequently were made to suffer have driven deep furrows into the field which my hands had prepared. The seeds with which I have been entrusted I have now scattered far and wide before you. Under your loving care, by your ceaseless exertions, every one of these seeds must germinate, every one must yield its destined fruit. A winter of unprecedented severity will soon be upon you. Its storm-clouds are fast gathering on the horizon. Tempestuous winds will assail you from every side. The Light of the Covenant will be obscured through my departure. These mighty blasts, this wintry desolation, shall however pass away. The dormant seed will burst into fresh activity. It shall put forth its buds, shall reveal, in mighty institutions, its leaves and blossoms. The vernal showers which the tender mercies of my heavenly Father will cause to descend upon you will enable this tender plant to spread out its branches to regions far beyond the confines of your native land. And

finally the steadily mounting sun of His Revelation, shining in its meridian splendor, will enable this mighty Tree of His Faith to yield, in the fullness of time and on your soil, its golden fruit.

The implications of such a parting message could not long remain unrevealed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's initiated disciples. No sooner had He concluded His long and arduous journey across the American and European continents than the tremendous happenings to which He had alluded began to be made manifest. A conflict, such as He had predicted, severed for a time all means of communication with those on whom He had come to place such implicit trust and from whom He was expecting so much in return. The wintry desolation, with all its havoc and carnage, pursued during four years its relentless course, while He, repairing to the quiet solitude of His residence in the close neighborhood of Bahá'u'lláh's hallowed shrine, continued to communicate His thoughts and wishes to those whom He had left behind and on whom He had conferred the unique tokens of His favor. In the immortal Tablets which, in the long hours of His communion with His dearly-beloved friends He was moved to reveal, He unfolded to their eyes His conception of their spiritual destiny, His Plan for the mission He wished them to undertake. The seeds His hands had sown He was now watering with that same care, that same love and patience, which had characterized His previous endeavors whilst He was laboring in their midst.

The clarion call which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had raised was the signal for an outburst of renewed activity which, alike in the motives it inspired and the forces it set in motion, America had scarcely experienced. Lending an unprecedented impetus to the work which the enterprising ambassadors of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh had initiated in distant lands, this mighty movement has continued to spread until the present day, has gathered momentum as it extended its ramifications over the surface of the globe, and will continue to accelerate its march until the last wishes of its original Promoter are completely fulfilled.

Forsaking home, kindred, friends and position a handful of men and women, fired with a zeal and confidence which no human agency can kindle, arose to carry out the mandate which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had issued. Sailing northward as far as Alaska, pushing on to the West Indies, penetrating the South American continent to the banks of the Amazon and across the Andes to the southernmost ends of the Argentine Republic, pressing on westward into the island of Tahiti and beyond it to the Australian continent and still beyond it as far as New Zealand and Tasmania, these intrepid heralds of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have succeeded by their very acts in setting to the present generation of their fellow-believers throughout the East an example which they may well emulate. Headed by their illustrious representative, who ever since the call of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was raised has been twice round the world and is still, with marvellous courage and fortitude, enriching the matchless record of her services, these men and women have been instrumental in extending, to a degree as yet unsurpassed in Bahá'í history, the sway of Bahá'u'lláh's universal dominion. In the face of almost insurmountable obstacles they have succeeded in most of the countries through which they have passed or in which they have resided, in proclaiming the teachings of their Faith, in circulating its literature, in defending its cause, in laying the basis of its institutions and in reinforcing the number of its declared supporters. It would be impossible for me to unfold in this short compass the tale of such heroic actions. Nor can any tribute of mine do justice to the spirit which has enabled these standard-

bearers of the Religion of God to win such laurels and to confer such distinction on the generation to which they belong.

The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh had by that time encircled the globe. Its light, born in darkest Persia, had been carried successively to the European, the African and the American continents, and was now penetrating the heart of Australia, encompassing thereby the whole earth with a girdle of shining glory. The share which such worthy, such stout-hearted, disciples have had in brightening the last days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's earthly life He alone has truly recognized and can sufficiently estimate. The unique and eternal significance of such accomplishments the labors of the rising generation will assuredly reveal, their memory its works will befittingly preserve and extol. How deep a satisfaction 'Abdu'l-Bahá must have felt, while conscious of the approaching hour of His departure, as He witnessed the first fruits of the international services of these heroes of His Father's Faith! To their keeping He had committed a great and goodly heritage. In the twilight of His earthly life He could rest content in the serene assurance that such able hands could be relied upon to preserve its integrity and exalt its virtue.

The passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, so sudden in the circumstances which caused it, so dramatic in its consequences, could neither impede the operation of such a dynamic force nor obscure its purpose. Those fervid appeals, embodied in the Will and Testament of a departed Master, could not but confirm its aim, define its character and reinforce the promise of its ultimate success.

Out of the pangs of anguish which His bereaved followers have suffered, amid the heat and dust which the attacks launched by a sleepless enemy had precipitated, the Administration of Bahá'u'lláh's invincible Faith was born. The potent energies released through the ascension of the Center of His Covenant crystallized into this supreme, this infallible Organ for the accomplishment of a Divine Purpose. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá unveiled its character, reaffirmed its basis, supplemented its principles, asserted its indispensability, and enumerated its chief institutions. With that self-same spontaneity which had characterized her response to the Message proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh America had now arisen to espouse the cause of the Administration which the Will and Testament of His Son had unmistakably established. It was given to her, and to her alone, in the turbulent years following the revelation of so momentous a Document, to become the fearless champion of that Administration, the pivot of its new-born institutions and the leading promoter of its influence. To their Persian brethren, who in the heroic age of the Faith had won the crown of martyrdom, the American believers, forerunners of its golden age, were now worthily succeeding, bearing in their turn the palm of a hard-won victory. The unbroken record of their illustrious deeds had established beyond the shadow of a doubt their preponderating share in shaping the destinies of their Faith. In a world writhing with pain and declining into chaos this community — the vanguard of the liberating forces of Bahá'u'lláh — succeeded in the years following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing in raising high above the institutions established by its sister communities in East and West what may well constitute the chief pillar of that future House — a House which posterity will regard as the last refuge of a tottering civilization.

In the prosecution of their task neither the whisperings of the treacherous nor the virulent attacks of their avowed enemies were allowed to deflect them from their high purpose or to undermine their faith in the sublimity of their calling. The agitation provoked by him who in his incessant and sordid pursuit of earthly riches would have, but for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's warning, sullied

the fair name of their Faith, had left them in the main undisturbed. Schooled by tribulation and secure within the stronghold of their fast evolving institutions they scorned his insinuations and by their unswerving loyalty were able to shatter his hopes. They refused to allow any consideration of the admitted prestige and past services of his father and of his associates to weaken their determination to ignore entirely the person whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá had so emphatically condemned. The veiled attacks with which a handful of deluded enthusiasts subsequently sought in the pages of their periodical to check the growth and blight the prospects of an infant Administration had likewise failed to achieve their purpose. The attitude which a besotted woman later on assumed, her ludicrous assertions, her boldness in flouting the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and in challenging its authenticity and her attempts to subvert its principles were again powerless to produce the slightest breach in the ranks of its valiant upholders. The treacherous schemes which the ambition of a perfidious and still more recent enemy has devised and through which he is still striving to deface 'Abdu'l-Bahá's noble handiwork and corrupt its administrative principles are being once more completely frustrated. These intermittent and abortive attempts on the part of its assailants to force the surrender of the newly built stronghold of the Faith its defenders have from the very beginning utterly disdained. No matter how fierce the assaults of the enemy or skillful his stratagem they have refused to yield one jot or one tittle of their cherished convictions. His insinuations and clamor they have consistently ignored. The motives which animated his actions, the methods he steadily pursued, the precarious privileges he seemed momentarily to enjoy they could not but despise. Thriving for a time through the devices which their scheming minds had conceived and supported by the ephemeral advantages which fame, ability or fortune can confer these notorious exponents of corruption and heresy have succeeded in protruding for a time their ugly features only to sink, as rapidly as they had risen, into the mire of an ignominious end.

From the midst of these afflictive trials, reminiscent in some of their aspects of the violent storm that had accompanied the birth of the Faith in their native land, the American believers had again triumphantly emerged, their course undeflected, their fame unsullied, their heritage unimpaired. A series of magnificent accomplishments, each more significant than the previous, were to shed increasing lustre on an already illustrious record. In the dark years immediately following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension their deeds shone with a radiance that made them the object of the envy and the admiration of the less privileged among their brethren. The entire community, untrammled and supremely confident, was rising to a great and glorious opportunity. The forces that had motivated its birth, that had assisted in its rise, were now accelerating its growth, in a manner and with such rapidity that neither the pangs of a world-wide sorrow nor the unceasing convulsions of a distracted age could paralyze its efforts or retard its march.

Internally the community had embarked in a number of enterprises that were to enable it on the one hand to extend still further the scope of its spiritual jurisdiction and on the other to fashion the essential instruments for the creation and consolidation of the institutions which such an extension imperatively demanded. Externally its undertakings were inspired by the twofold objective of prosecuting, even more intensely than before, the admirable work which in each of the five continents its international teachers had initiated, and of assuming an increasing share in the handling and solution of the delicate and complex problems with which

a newly-emancipated Faith was being confronted. The birth of the Administration in that continent had signaled these praiseworthy exertions. Its gradual consolidation was destined to insure their continuance and to accentuate their effectiveness.

To enumerate only the most outstanding accomplishments which, in their own country and beyond its confines, have so greatly enhanced the prestige of the American believers and have redounded to the glory and honor of the Most Great Name is all I can presently undertake, leaving to future generations the task of explaining their import and of affixing a fitting estimate to their value. To the body of their elected representatives must be attributed the honor of having been the first among their sister Assemblies of East and West to devise, promulgate and legalize the essential instruments for the effective discharge of their collective duties — instruments which every properly constituted Bahá'í community must regard as a pattern worthy to be adopted and copied. To their efforts must likewise be ascribed the historic achievement of establishing their national endowments upon a permanent and unassailable basis and of creating the necessary agency for the formation of those subsidiary organs whose function is to administer on behalf of their trustees such possessions as these may acquire beyond the limits of their immediate jurisdiction. By the weight of their moral support so freely extended to their Egyptian brethren they were able to remove some of the most formidable obstacles which the Faith had to surmount in its struggle to enfranchise itself from the fetters of Muslim orthodoxy. Through the effective and timely intervention of these same elected representatives they were able to avert the woes and dangers which had menaced their persecuted fellow-workers in the Soviet Republics, and to ward off the rage which had threatened with immediate ruin one of the most precious and noblest of Bahá'í institutions. Nothing short of the whole-hearted assistance, whether moral or financial which the American believers, individually and collectively, were moved to extend on several occasions to the needy and harassed among their brethren in Persia could have saved these hapless victims of the consequences of the calamities that had visited them in the years following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension. It was the publicity which the efforts of their American brethren had created, the protests they were led to make, the appeals and petitions they had submitted, which mitigated these sufferings and curbed the violence of the worst and most tyrannical opponents of the Faith in that land. Who else, if not one of their most distinguished representatives, has risen to force upon the attention of the highest Tribunal the world has yet seen the grievances which a Faith, robbed of one of its holiest sanctuaries, had suffered at the hand of the usurper? Who else has succeeded in securing, through patient and persistent effort, those written affirmations which proclaim the justice of a persecuted cause and tacitly recognize its right to an independent religious status? "The Commission," is the resolution passed by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, "recommends that the Council should ask the British Government to make representations to the 'Iráqí Government with a view to the immediate redress of the denial of justice from which the petitioners (the Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly of Baghḍád) have suffered." Has any one else except an American believer been led to obtain from royalty such remarkable and repeated testimonies to the regenerating power of the Faith of God, such striking references to the universality of its teachings and the sublimity of its mission. "The Bahá'í teaching," such is the Queen's written testimony, "brings peace and understanding. It is like a wide embrace gathering together all those who have long searched for words of hope. It accepts all great Prophets gone before, it destroys no other creeds and leaves all doors open. Saddened by the continual strife amongst believers of many confessions

and wearied of their intolerance towards each other, I discovered in the Bahá'í teaching the real spirit of Christ so often denied and misunderstood: Unity instead of strife, Hope instead of condemnation, Love instead of hate, and a great reassurance for all men." Have not the American adherents of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, through the courage displayed by one of the most brilliant members of their community, been instrumental in paving the way for the removal of those barriers which have, for well-nigh a century, hampered the growth and crippled the energy of their fellow-believers in Persia? Is it not America who, ever mindful of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passionate entreaty, has sent out to the ends of the earth a steadily increasing number of its most consecrated citizens — men and women the one wish of whose lives is to consolidate the foundations of Bahá'u'lláh's world-embracing dominion? In the northernmost capitals of Europe, in most of its central states, throughout the Balkan Peninsula, along the shores of the African, the Asiatic and South American continents are to be found this day a small band of women pioneers who, single-handed and with scanty resources, are toiling for the advent of the Day 'Abdu'l-Bahá has foretold. Did not the attitude of the Greatest Holy Leaf, as she approached the close of her life, bear eloquent testimony to the incomparable share which her steadfast and self-sacrificing lovers in that continent have had in lightening the burden which had weighed so long and so heavily on her heart? And finally who can be so bold as to deny that the completion of the superstructure of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár — the crowning glory of America's past and present achievements — has forged that mystic chain which is to link, more firmly than ever, the hearts of its champion-builders with Him Who is the Source and Center of their Faith and the Object of their truest adoration?

Fellow-believers in the American continent! Great indeed have been your past and present achievements! Immeasurably greater are the wonders which the future has in store for you! The Edifice your sacrifices have raised still remains to be clothed. The House which must needs be supported by the highest administrative institution your hands have reared, is as yet unbuilt. The provisions of the chief Repository of those laws that must govern its operation are thus far mostly undisclosed. The Standard which, if 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wishes are to be fulfilled, must be raised in your own country has yet to be unfurled. The Unity of which that standard is to be the symbol is far from being yet established. The machinery which must needs incarnate and preserve that unity is not even created. Will it be America, will it be one of the countries of Europe, who will arise to assume the leadership essential to the shaping of the destinies of this troubled age? Will America allow any of her sister communities in East or West to achieve such ascendancy as shall deprive her of that spiritual primacy with which she has been invested and which she has thus far so nobly retained? Will she not rather contribute, by a still further revelation of those inherent powers that motivate her life, to enhance the priceless heritage which the love and wisdom of a departed Master have conferred upon her?

Her past has been a testimony to the inexhaustible vitality of her faith. May not her future confirm it?

Your true brother,
Shoghi.
Haifa, Palestine.
April 21,

