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The Challenging Requirements of the Present Hour

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

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

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

We are now entering the second epoch of the second Age of the first of these Dispensations. The first epoch witnessed the birth and the primary stages in the erection of the framework of the Administrative Order of the Faith—the nucleus and pattern of its World Order—according to the precepts laid down in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, as well as the launching of the initial phase of the world-encompassing Plan bequeathed by Him to the American Bahá'í Community. That epoch was characterized by a twofold process aiming at the consolidation of the administrative structure of the Faith and the extension of the range of its institutions. It witnessed on the one hand, the emergence and the laying of the groundwork of that embryonic World Order whose advent was announced by the Báb in the Bayán, whose laws were revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and whose features were delineated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament. It was marked on the other hand by the launching, in the Western Hemisphere, of the first stage of a Plan whose original impulse was communicated by the Herald of our Faith in His Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', to whose implications the Author of

the Bahá'í Revelation alluded in His Tablets, and whose Charter was revealed by the Center of His Covenant in the evening of His life.

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

Crowning Feature of Administrative Order: The Universal House of Justice

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

Fourfold Objective to Present Requirements

Not ours, however, to unriddle the workings of a distant future, or to dwell upon the promised glories of a God-impelled and unimaginably potent Revelation. Ours, rather, the task to cast our eyes upon, and bend our energies to meet, the challenging requirements of the present hour. Labors, of an urgent and sacred character, claim insistently our undivided attention during the opening years of this new epoch which we have entered. The Second Seven Year Plan, intended to carry a stage further the mission conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the American Bahá'í Community, is now entering its second year, and must, as it operates in three continents, be productive of results outshining any as yet achieved since the Divine Plan itself was set in motion during the concluding years of the first Bahá'í century. Unlike the plans which Bahá'í communities in Europe and on the Asiatic continent have spontaneously inaugurated since the commencement of the present century, the Plan with which the community of the

“Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh” stands identified is divine in origin, is guided by the explicit and repeated instructions that have flowed from the pen of the Center of the Covenant Himself, is energized by the all-compelling will of its Author, claims as the theater for its operation territories spread over five continents and the islands of the seven seas, and must continue to function, ere its purpose is achieved, throughout successive epochs in the course of the Formative Age of the Bahá’í Dispensation. As it propels itself forward, driven by forces which its prosecutors can not hope to properly assess, as it spreads its ramifications to the furthest corners of the Western Hemisphere, and across the oceans to the continents of the Old World, and beyond them to the far-flung islands of the seas, this Plan, the birthright of the North American Bahá’í Community, will be increasingly regarded as an agency designed not only for the enlargement of the limits of the Faith and the multiplication of its institutions over the face of the planet, but for the acceleration of the construction and completion of the administrative framework of Bahá’u’lláh’s embryonic World Order, hastening thereby the advent of that Golden Age which must witness the proclamation of the Most Great Peace and the unfoldment of that world civilization which is the offspring and primary purpose of that Peace.

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

Goals in the United States and Alaska

In the United States of America, the base from which the manifold operations of this holy expedition are conducted, the enterprise associated with the completion of the first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár of the West, designed to consummate this historic undertaking in time for the celebration of its Jubilee in the year 1953, must be strenuously pushed forward. The prodigious efforts exerted for the erection of this noble

edifice—the holiest House of Worship ever to be reared by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh—on which no less than one million four hundred thousand dollars have thus far been expended, and which will necessitate the expenditure of at least half a million more dollars, ere it is completed, must not, for one moment, be relaxed. The necessary modifications of the design chosen for its interior ornamentation should be adopted, the plans and specifications prepared, the preliminary contracts for its execution placed, and actual construction work started, if possible, ere the expiry of the present year.

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

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

The process of the incorporation of properly functioning spiritual assemblies must be simultaneously and vigorously carried out. The forty-five assemblies now incorporated are the first fruits of an enterprise of great significance, which must rapidly develop in the days to come, as an essential preliminary to the establishment, and the extension of the scope, of Bahá'í local endowments, as soon as the financial obligations incurred in connection with the completion of the Temple have been discharged. The institutions of the three summer schools, at Green Acre, Davison and Geyserville, and

the International School at Temerity Ranch, as well as the activities of the Bahá'í Youth, must, under the close supervision of their respective national committees, be continually expanded and increasingly utilized as agencies for the furtherance of the vital objectives of the Plan.

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

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

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

Canada to Form Separate National Assembly

In the Dominion of Canada, to whose significance and future the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has repeatedly referred, and in all the nine provinces of which, as a direct result of the operation of the first Seven Year Plan, the Faith has established its spiritual assemblies, the Canadian believers, as a token of their recognition of the significance of the forthcoming formation of their first National Spiritual Assembly, must arise and carry out befittingly the task allotted to them in their homeland. Irrespective of the smallness of their numbers, notwithstanding the vastness of the territory for which they have been made responsible, and as a sign of their appreciation of the great bounty and independent status soon to be conferred upon them, they must, unitedly, exert a supreme effort to

enlarge the limits, multiply the administrative centers, consolidate the institutions, and broadcast the truths and essentials of their beloved Faith throughout the length and breadth of that immense dominion.

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

Nor should that community, as its local centers multiply, and the fabric of its national institutions is erected, and its maturity is demonstrated, and its independence vindicated, lose sight of, or neglect, the weighty provisions of those Tablets of the Divine Plan, addressed specifically to its members by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, wherein He confers upon them the mission of carrying the Message of His Father to territories and islands beyond the confines of that dominion, to Newfoundland and the Franklin Islands, to the Yukon, to Mackenzie, Keewatin, Ungava and Greenland. The tentative steps recently taken by a Danish believer in disseminating Bahá'í literature in the territory of Greenland, in a number of settlements and outposts beyond the Arctic Circle, and in dispatching Bahá'í books to Godthaab, its capital, and as far north as Upernavik on Baffin Bay, constitutes a modest yet historic beginning which the Canadian believers, in the light of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets addressed to them, must follow up in the years to come.

“Should the fire of the love of God be kindled in Greenland,” He significantly assures them in one of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, “all the ice of that country will be melted, and its cold weather become

temperate—that is, if the hearts be touched with the heat of the love of God, that territory will become a divine rose garden and a heavenly paradise, and the souls, even as fruitful trees, will acquire the utmost freshness and beauty. Effort, the utmost effort, is required.”

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

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

Tasks in Latin America

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

The marvelous progress achieved as a result of the operation of the first Seven Year Plan, as evidenced by the establishment of full-fledged spiritual assemblies in the virgin territories of no less than fourteen republics, and the formation of active groups in the remaining republics, has been enhanced by the even more startling expansion of Bahá'í activity since the termination of the first stage of the Divine Plan. As a result of this expansion spiritual assemblies have been established in all the remaining republics, the number of localities where Bahá'ís reside has been raised to over a hundred, almost double the number of localities in which the Faith had been introduced after the completion of the first Seven Year Plan, the number of spiritual assemblies has swelled to no less than thirty-seven, three of which have been duly incorporated, a notable impetus has been given to the activities of the

distributing centers of Bahá'í literature in Argentina and Panama, historic conferences have been held in these two republics, summer schools have been inaugurated in Argentina and Chile, and a tract of land has been presented as a site for the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Latin America. No community since the inception of the hundred-year-old Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, not even the community of the Most Great Name in the North American continent, can boast of an evolution as rapid, a consolidation as sound, a multiplication of centers as swift, as those that have marked the birth and rise of the community of His followers in Latin America.

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

Two Regional National Assemblies a Vital Objective

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

In order that these future tasks may be carried out with dispatch, efficiency, harmony and in strict accordance with the administrative and spiritual principles of our Faith, the Latin American promoters of the present Seven Year Plan must focus their attention on the requirements of the present hour, close

their ranks, reinforce the bonds of unity, of solidarity and of cooperation which unite them, rededicate themselves individually to the sacred, all-important and vital task of teaching, exert strenuous endeavors to deepen their knowledge of the history and fundamentals of their Faith, steep themselves in the spirit and the love of its teachings and acquire special training for future pioneer activity throughout the length and breadth of the vast stretches of territory which extend from the confines of the great republic in the north to the Straits of Magellan in the south.

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

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

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

Importance of the American Indians

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

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

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

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

Bahá'u'lláh's Summons to the Western Hemisphere

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Crusade to be Launched in Europe

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

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

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

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

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

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

unerring, is the Pilot of their bark, the Charterer of their course, the Founder of their spiritual fellowship, the Bestower of that primacy which is the hallmark of their destiny.

Evolving Strongholds in Ten Initial Countries

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

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

No opportunity, in view of the necessity of insuring the harmonious development of the Faith, should be ignored, which its potential enemies, whether ecclesiastical or otherwise, may offer, to set forth, in a restrained and unprovocative language, its aims and tenets, to defend its interests, to proclaim its universality, to assert the supernatural, the supra-national and non-political character of its institutions, and its acceptance of the divine origin of the Faiths which have preceded it. Nor should any chance be missed of associating the Faith, as distinct from affiliating it, with all progressive, non-political, non-ecclesiastical institutions, whether social, educational, or charitable, whose objectives harmonize with some of its tenets, and amongst whose members and supporters individuals may be found who will eventually embrace its truth. Particular attention should, moreover, be paid to attendance at congresses and conferences, and to any contacts that can be made with colleges and universities which offer a fertile field for the scattering of the seeds of the Faith, and afford opportunities for broadcasting its message, and for winning fresh recruits to its strength.

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

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

unprecedented character in the evolution of the Faith, since its inception, constitute a historic landmark in the development of the organic world-wide Bahá'í community, and will be the harbinger of those epoch-making world conferences, at which the representatives of the nations and races within the Bahá'í fold will convene for the strengthening of the spiritual and administrative bonds that unite its members.

Initiating National Headquarters and Adapting Teaching Methods

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

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

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

These pioneers, in their contact with the members of divers creeds, races and nations, covering a range which offers no parallel in either the north or south continents, must neither antagonize them nor compromise with their own essential principles. They must be neither provocative nor supine, neither

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

Europe Feels Stirrings of Spiritual Revolution

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

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

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

Divine Plan Challenges North American Believers

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

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

To those of His followers, dwelling in that enviable and blessed continent, He has chosen to address these no less inspiring words, as recorded in one of those Tablets revealed in honor of the believers of the United States and Canada: “O ye apostles of Bahá’u’lláh! May my life be sacrificed for you!... Behold the portals which Bahá’u’lláh hath opened before you! Consider how exalted and lofty is the station you are destined to attain, how unique the favors with which you have been endowed... My thoughts are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul gloweth with your love, so great a happiness would flood your hearts as to cause you to become enamored with each other.” “The full measure of your success,” He, in another Tablet, addressed to the entire company of His followers in the North American continent these prophetic words: “is as yet unrevealed, its significance unapprehended. Ere long ye will with your own eyes witness how brilliantly every one of you, even as a shining star, will radiate in the firmament of your country the light of divine guidance, and will bestow upon its people the glory of an everlasting life... I fervently hope that in the near future the whole earth may be stirred and shaken by the results of your achievements. The hope which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cherishes for you is that the same success which has attended your efforts in America may crown your endeavors in other parts of the world, that through you the fame of the Cause of God may be diffused throughout the East and the West, and the advent of the Kingdom of the Lord of Hosts be proclaimed in all the five continents of the globe. The moment this Divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America, and is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa and of Australia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion. Then will all the peoples of the world witness that this community is spiritually illumined and divinely guided. Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness... Know ye of a certainty that whatever gathering ye enter, the waves of the Holy Spirit are surging over it, and the heavenly grace of the Blessed Beauty encompasseth that gathering... O that I could travel, even though on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of Yá-Bahá’u’l-Abhá in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans promote the divine teachings! This, alas, I cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may achieve it... Thus far ye have been untiring in your labors. Let your exertions henceforth increase a thousandfold. Summon the people in these countries, capitals, islands, assemblies and churches to enter the Abhá Kingdom. The scope of your exertions must needs be extended. The wider its range, the more striking will be the evidence of divine assistance.”

Detachment from the Physical World

“Now is the time,” He no less significantly remarks in another of these Tablets, “for you to divest yourselves of the garment of attachment to this world that perisheth, to be wholly severed from the physical world, become heavenly angels, and travel to these countries. I swear by Him besides Whom there is none other God that each one of you will become an Isráfil of Life, and will blow the Breath of Life into the souls of others.” And lastly this glorious promise in another of those immortal Tablets: “Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God, will, in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.”

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

Contribution of the West to World Order

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

‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself, confirming this statement, has written: “From the beginning of time until the present day the light of Divine Revelation hath risen in the East and shed its radiance upon the West.

The illumination thus shed hath, however, acquired in the West an extraordinary brilliancy. Consider the Faith proclaimed by Jesus. Though it first appeared in the East, yet not until its light had been shed upon the West did the full measure of its potentialities become manifest.” “The day is approaching when ye shall witness how, through the splendor of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh the West will have replaced the East, radiating the light of divine guidance.” “The West hath acquired illumination from the East, but, in some respects the reflection of the light hath been greater in the Occident.” “The East hath, verily, been illumined with the light of the Kingdom. Erelong will this same light shed a still greater illumination through the potency of the teachings of God, and their souls be set aglow by the undying fire of His love.”

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

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

The Workings of Two Simultaneous Processes

How could it forfeit its birthright or mar its heritage, when the country from which the vast majority of its members have sprung, the great republic of the West, government and people alike, is itself, through experiment and trial, slowly, painfully, unwittingly and irresistibly advancing towards the goal destined for it by both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá? Indeed if we would read aright the signs of the times, and appraise correctly the significances of contemporaneous events that are impelling forward both the American Bahá'í Community and the nation of which it forms a part on the road leading them to their ultimate destiny, we cannot fail to perceive the workings of two simultaneous processes, generated as far back as the concluding years of the Heroic Age of our Faith, each clearly defined, each distinctly separate, yet closely related and destined to culminate, in the fullness of time, in a single glorious consummation.

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

The other process dates back to the outbreak of the first World War that threw the great republic of the West into the vortex of the first stage of a world upheaval. It received its initial impetus through the formulation of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, closely associating for the first time that republic with the fortunes of the Old World. It suffered its first setback through the dissociation of that republic from the newly born League of Nations which that president had labored to create. It acquired added

momentum through the outbreak of the second World War, inflicting unprecedented suffering on that republic, and involving it still further in the affairs of all the continents of the globe. It was further reinforced through the declaration embodied in the Atlantic Charter, as voiced by one of its chief progenitors, Franklin D. Roosevelt. It assumed a definite outline through the birth of the United Nations at the San Francisco Conference. It acquired added significance through the choice of the City of the Covenant itself as the seat of the newly born organization, through the declaration recently made by the American president related to his country's commitments in Greece and Turkey, as well as through the submission to the General Assembly of the United Nations of the thorny and challenging problem of the Holy Land, the spiritual as well as the administrative center of the World Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. It must, however long and tortuous the way, lead, through a series of victories and reverses, to the political unification of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, to the emergence of a world government and the establishment of the Lesser Peace, as foretold by Bahá'u'lláh and foreshadowed by the Prophet Isaiah. It must, in the end, culminate in the unfurling of the banner of the Most Great Peace, in the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.

A Parallel between the American Bahá'í Community and the American Republic

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

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

On the other hand is a nation that has achieved undisputed ascendancy in the entire Western Hemisphere, whose rulers have been uniquely honored by being collectively addressed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas; which has been acclaimed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the "home of the righteous and the gathering-place of the free," where the "splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled" and belonging to a continent which, as recorded by that same pen, "giveth signs and evidences of very great advancement," whose "future is even more promising," whose "influence and illumination are far-reaching," and which "will lead all nations spiritually." Moreover, it is to this great republic of the West that the Center of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh has referred as the nation that has "developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations," and which "is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will

adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West for the triumph of its people.” It is for this same American democracy that He expressed His fervent hope that it might be “the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement,” “to proclaim the unity of mankind,” and “to unfurl the Standard of the Most Great Peace,” that it might become “the distributing center of spiritual enlightenment, and all the world receive this heavenly blessing,” and that its inhabitants might “rise from their present material attainments to such a height that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world.” It is in connection with its people that He has affirmed that they are “indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Great Peace and proclaim the oneness of mankind.”

The United States is Signally Blest

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

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

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

for the relief of human suffering and the rehabilitation of peoples and nations, be overlooked in a survey of the position which she holds, and which distinguishes her from her sister nations in both the new and old worlds.

Tribulations Are Inevitable

Many and divers are the setbacks and reverses which this nation, extolled so highly by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and occupying at present so unique a position among its fellow nations, must, alas, suffer. The road leading to its destiny is long, thorny and tortuous. The impact of various forces upon the structure and polity of that nation will be tremendous. Tribulations, on a scale unprecedented in its history, and calculated to purge its institutions, to purify the hearts of its people, to fuse its constituent elements, and to weld it into one entity with its sister nations in both hemispheres, are inevitable.

In one of the most remarkable Tablets revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, passages of which have already been quoted on previous occasions, written in the evening of His life, soon after the termination of the first World War, He anticipates, in succinct and ominous sentences, the successive ebullitions which must afflict humanity, and whose full force the American nation must, if her destiny is to be accomplished, inevitably experience. “The ills from which the world now suffers,” He wrote, “will multiply; the gloom which envelops it will deepen. The Balkans will remain discontented. Its restlessness will increase. The vanquished powers will continue to agitate. They will resort to every measure that may rekindle the flame of war. Movements, newly born and world-wide in their range, will exert their utmost effort for the advancement of their designs. The Movement of the Left will acquire great importance. Its influence will spread.”

The agitation in the Balkan Peninsula; the feverish activity in which Germany and Italy played a disastrous role, culminating in the outbreak of the second World War; the rise of the Fascist and Nazi movements, which spread their ramifications to distant parts of the globe; the spread of communism which, as a result of the victory of Soviet Russia in that same war, has been greatly accelerated—all these happenings, some unequivocally, others in veiled language, have been forecast in this Tablet, the full force of whose implications are as yet undisclosed, and which, we may well anticipate, the American nation, as yet insufficiently schooled by adversity, must sooner or later experience.

America to Evolve Until Last Task is Discharged

Whatever the Hand of a beneficent and inscrutable Destiny has reserved for this youthful, this virile, this idealistic, this spiritually blessed and enviable nation, however severe the storms which may buffet

it in the days to come in either hemisphere, however sweeping the changes which the impact of cataclysmic forces from without, and the stirrings of a Divine embryonic Order from within, will effect in its structure and life, we may, confident in the words uttered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, feel assured that that great republic—the shell that enshrines so precious a member of the world community of the followers of His Father—will continue to evolve, undivided and undefeatable, until the sum total of its contributions to the birth, the rise and the fruition of that world civilization, the child of the Most Great Peace and hallmark of the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh, will have been made, and its last task discharged.

<signed>

Shoghi

Haifa, Palestine

June 5, 1947