

美洲与至大和平

*America And The
Most Great Peace*



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致美国和加拿大主所钟爱者以及慈悲者的女仆们。

朋友们和共同促进上帝的信仰的教友们：

自从在美洲大陆第一次提到巴哈欧拉这个名字至即将到来的这个夏季结束时，40 年就要过去了。对每个观察者来说，心中回想一下在这个伟大的美利坚合众国的宗教史上如此伟大的里程碑的重要意义时，伴随第一次公开提到我们所热爱之信仰的缔造者而来的那些事件似乎简直不可思议。就那一历史时刻所作的简短评述在那些听到这些评述的人头脑中所引起的联想似乎更加不可思议。

在向美国公民初次提到巴哈欧拉宣示的天启之存在与目的时（在 1893 年芝加哥的哥伦比亚博览会上由亨利·H·杰萨普向宗教会议发表的一次演说中。——编者。）众人并没有对这一提示显现出共同欢庆、普遍称赞的盛况。被选来作这一提示的人既没有承认自己相信他所传达的消息的内在潜能，也没有意想到这样粗略一提而注定要释放出来的巨大力量。

巴哈伊信仰通过一位公开支持狭隘教会主义的人之口宣布出来——其实这教义本身已向狭隘教会主义发出挑战且力图根除它——在其诞生之时，被描述为一个默默无闻的可鄙教派的分支。这不断得到考验之溪流滋养和阿博都巴哈温柔关照而获得温暖的至大圣名之信息，已深深扎根于美洲的适宜土壤中，在不到半个世纪中，已将枝条伸展到地球最偏远的角落。而现在，它在雄伟圣殿的遮蔽之下巍然屹立，矗立在那片大陆的的心脏地带，决心要宣布自己的权利，证明自己救赎受苦受难的人民的能力。在没有天赋、没有社会地位和财富所给予的任何有利条件支持的情况下，尽管美洲的巴哈伊信徒社团还处于幼年期，人数很少，经验有限，但是，凭借受神灵启示的智慧，联合起来的意志力，对其教务行政管理人员和传教师坚定不移的忠诚，在加快巴哈欧拉所预言的黄金时代的来临中，在东西方的姐妹社团里，已得到无可争辩的领导地位的殊荣。

然而，这初生的、神佑的社团在充满波折的历史进程中所经历的危机多么严重啊！使之从默默无闻逐渐得到公众承认的光明境界的这个过程多么缓慢而又痛苦啊！由于内心懦弱者的背叛、挑拨离间者的恶谋、妄自尊大者和野心勃勃者的背信弃义使其忠诚信徒的队伍遭受的冲击多么剧烈啊！其代表人物在坚定地支持社团的完整、勇敢捍卫他们所拥护的信仰的清白名声的过程中不得不面对的嘲弄、凌辱与诽谤的风暴多么猛烈啊！在勇敢地努力攀登慈爱的教长要求他们登上的高峰的过程中，蒙受特惠的成员，无论老幼，个人还是集体，必须应付的世事的变化和挫折力多么顽强啊！

社团的敌人人数众多而力量强大。他们发现有迹象表明公开支持这个社团的人数日益增多时，就马上争先恐后地当面对其投掷最恶毒的罪名，对着其献身的目标发泄他们的满腔愤怒。这些人经常嘲笑社团财力不足、说它看来气数已尽。他们嘲笑其起源，曲解其意图，对其信条弃之如敝屣，这种嘲笑成了家常便饭，在他们的书面攻击中，不是将如此神圣的天启的英勇先驱者指责为抛弃信仰的懦夫、走歪门邪道的背信弃义者并且将祂卷帙浩繁的全部著作说成是愚钝者的空话闲聊吗？他们不是总想将无耻的阴谋家和篡位者的卑鄙动机转嫁到圣教的神圣创建者身上、将圣约中心看作是残暴专横的化身、制造恶作剧的搅局者和搞损人利己骗局的臭名昭著的代表者吗？毫无作为的敌人，对这个稳步兴起的信仰一再将其世界一体化原则斥为有根本缺陷，宣称其包罗一切的纲领完全是奇谈怪论，将它对未来的看法视为空想和绝对的欺骗。愚蠢的心怀恶意者，将构成其教义的基本真理说成是无用教条的伪装，他们拒绝将其行政机构与其信仰的精神本身区分开来，将它崇敬和确认的奥秘等同于纯粹的迷信。将它所提倡和坚持的世界一体化原则曲解为一种对一致性的肤浅尝试，宣布它反复地强调的超自然力的真实性是无谓地相信魔术。他们将其理想主义的荣耀当作纯粹的乌托邦而加以拒绝。一个神秘莫测的智慧于每个时代采用一种净化的程序，来清除祂所挑选的信徒体内不需要和无价值的污物。这些嫉妒心强烈的患病者便将其呼喝为分立宗教者入侵的征兆，这种入侵力很快就要削弱他们的力量，使他们丧失活力，最终彻底毁灭。

亲爱的教友们！这个不断前进的圣道的不可战胜之军、这个圣道的强大机构的兴起与逐渐巩固的准确而完整的历史，不是我，看来也不是在现在这一代中的任何人的能力之内可以追溯的。为了实现祂的神圣目的，上帝之手制成了而且现在正完善着各种工具，以推动圣道前进从而使其占有如此崇高地位。要对那些推动力试作一个全面的分析或作出恰当的估计，在其发展的这一初期阶段还为时过早。这一伟大天启的未来历史学家们拥有比现在的圣道支持者更有能力之笔，毫无疑问要将一篇有关那些力量之起源的杰作传留给后代。凭借那些力量，钟摆的非凡摆动已使圣教的行政管理中心离开其发源地移向美洲大陆的海岸，并朝其中心地带移动，那儿成了目前快速发展的机构的主要动力和主要堡垒。这个慢慢成熟的信仰发生如此彻底的大变革，记录其历史和估计其意义的任务将转交到他们身上。他们将有机会去颂扬参与完成这一任务的那些男女信徒们，使他们名垂千古。在迎接珍藏于巴哈欧拉教导中允诺的那个黄金时代到来时，评价这些参与建造巴哈欧拉世界体制的每一位出类拔萃人物作出的那份贡献将是他们的莫大荣幸。

在这个巴哈伊时代的第一世纪，我们现在目睹的这种奇怪现象，在基督教初期和伊斯兰教兴起时各自的历史发展道路上，不是也出现过与此十分相似的现象吗？通过圣教本身不可抵挡的发展释放出的那种曾经催生伟大宗教体系中的每一种宗教的神圣推动力，不是已经促使圣教离开圣教的发源地在更吉祥的地区和更恰当的媒介来具体化其精神，传播其圣道吗？犹太人的品性都奉行摩西启示期的传统仪式，但是，耶路撒冷、安条克和亚历山大的犹太人在他们衰落时不是已经皈依基督教而放弃承认他们希腊和罗马兄弟的统治地位了吗？

他们不是已经被迫承认耶稣基督圣道的旗手们的超人勇气和训练有素的办事效率使这些人能在崩溃的帝国废墟上树立起祂的世界范围领地的标志吗？在类似的环境压力下，生气勃勃的伊斯兰教精神不是被迫放弃了阿拉伯故乡的不毛之地、那个它受尽苦难来建功立业的场所而在遥远的一片土地上结出了它那最优质的缓慢成熟的文明之果吗？

阿博都巴哈本人肯定说：“从太初之时起直到现在，神圣启示之光都是从东方升起，将其光辉照到西方。这样发出的光明已使西方灿烂辉煌。看看由耶稣宣示的基督教信仰吧。虽然它最初出现在东方，但是，直到它的光辉照射到西方时，它的全部潜能才显现出来。”在另一篇文章中，祂向我们保证说：“你们将亲眼见到西方凭借巴哈欧拉信仰的光辉取代东方而发出启导之光的情形，这一天即将来临。”祂还肯定说：“在先知们的书中，记录了某些确定无疑的喜讯。东方曾是真理之阳的初升之地。神的所有先知都出现在东方……西方从东方获得了光明，但是在某些方面，光的反射在西方还要强烈一些。基督教的情况尤其如此。耶稣基督出现在巴勒斯坦，祂的教义在该国建立。虽然天国之门最初在那片国土上开启，上帝的馈赠之物从其中心散播开来，但是，西方人比东方人更充分地接受和传播了基督教教义。

毫不奇怪的是，在阿博都巴哈对西方进行了难忘的访问之后，从同一支准确无误之笔流淌出以下这些被经常引用的话语。对我来说，其意义无论怎么估计都不会过高。在一篇揭示其神圣计划的书简中，祂对居住在美国合众国东北各州的信徒宣布说：“在唯一真神看来，美洲大陆是显现祂的灵性光辉的宝地，祂的信仰之奥秘应在那里揭示出来，正义之士将在那里居住，自由之民将在那里聚集。”在美国访问期间，人们听到祂本人说：“祝愿这个美洲的民主国家成为第一个建立国际协议基础的国家。祝愿它成为宣布人类团结的第一个国家。祝愿它成为展开‘至大和平旗帜’的第一个国家’……美国人民的确值得成为建立伟大和平会堂和宣布人类一体的第一个民族……祝愿美国成为圣灵启迪的传播中心而且全世界都接受神的这一赐福。因为美国已具有比其它国家更大更卓越的能力……祝愿这个国家的居民变得像始终面向上帝的天使。祝愿他们全都成为全能的唯一之神的仆人。祝愿他们从现在已取得的物质成就上升到这样崇高的精神境界，以便让神的启示从这个中心流向全世界各国人民……这个美洲的国家已准备好并能够完成使史页增辉的使命，成为世界羡慕的对象，因其人民的胜利而在东西方都受到祝福……美洲大陆显示出取得十分巨大进展的迹象。它的未来甚至更有希望，因为它的影响和启示是深远的。它将在精神上领导各国。”

鉴于这样一种惊人之语：期望在地球上这样一个令人羡慕的地区里，从史无前例危机的极大痛苦和巨大破坏中将爆发一场宗教文化复兴运动。随着它以美洲信徒为工具而使自身传播开来，这场运动将会使一个衰败的时代得以复兴。这看来会是过高的期望吗？阿博都巴哈最亲密的伙伴证明，正是祂本人不止一次谈到，在北美大陆确立祂父亲的信仰位列三大目的之首。正如祂所设想的，这是在祂的使命期中的主要目标。在祂一生的关键时刻，在祂父亲刚刚去世之时，祂构思出这个想法：通过将这样一个大有前途的国家的居民召集到巴哈欧拉的旗帜之下来开展祂的使命。正是祂，以准确无误的智慧，出于丰富的感情而心甘情愿始终如一地关怀祂所宠爱的信徒，

使他们沉浸在祂的特别恩泽之中。正是祂，在年老体衰的晚年，一摆脱长期残酷监禁的桎梏，就决定去访问许多年来一直是祂无限关爱的那片国土。在祂的信徒执行任务不可避免招致起诉而受审判中，正是祂，通过祂的临在之大能和话语之魅力，将那些能单独给信徒们以支持力的感情和原则灌注到整个信徒团体中。当祂住在他们之中时，无论是在给他们的灵曦堂奠基时还是在为他们举办并且亲自为他们上菜的宴会上，还是在祂重视的更严肃的场合，祂的言行不都暗示了祂的灵性地位吗？祂知道他们将能捍卫灵性传统并以自己的行为使之发扬光大。因此，祂不是已经有意将灵性传统的所有本质都传留给他们了吗？最后，谁能怀疑祂在生命的晚年展示给他们看的神圣计划中，赋予他们最重要的灵性品质使之能赖以实现崇高的天意呢？

在一篇书简中，祂对他们这样说：“巴哈欧拉的使徒们啊！愿我的生命为你们而牺牲！……看看巴哈欧拉在你们面前所开启之门吧！想想看，你们注定要达到的境界是多么崇高；你们已经得到的恩惠是多么独特。”在另一篇书简中，祂告诉他们：“我的心思现已放在你们身上，一提到你们我内心就剧烈跳动。愿你们能了解我的心灵充满了对你们的爱。我的喜悦淹没了你们，以至于使你们相互喜爱。”在另一片书简中祂断言：“你们成功的切实程度还没有显现出来，其意义仍未被理解。不久你们将亲眼看到，你们中的每一个人犹如一颗闪闪发光的星星，将在你们国家的天空中发出多么明亮的神圣启导之光，将给予人民永恒生命之荣耀。”祂再一次断言：“你们未来成就之大尚不为人所知。不过我强烈希望，在不久的将来，整个地球都将为你们取得的成就感到震撼。”祂向他们保证说：“全能的上帝无疑将给你们以神恩之助，将使你们的灵魂充满圣灵的支持之大能。”祂告诫他们说：不要担心你们的人数少，也不要被世界上众多的不信者所压倒……你们要努力；你们的使命是“难以形容的荣耀。如果你们的事业最终成功，美国肯定会发展成为灵性力量之波发散的中心，上帝天国之宝座将在无比荣光与万千威仪之中牢固地建立起来。”

祂这样鼓励他们说：“阿博都巴哈对你们怀有的希望是，你们在美国所作的努力而获得成功使你们在世界其它地方所作的努力最终也会获得成功，通过你们，圣道的名声可以在整个东西方传播，在全球所有五大洲宣告万军之主的天国来临……迄今为止，你们一直孜孜不倦地努力工作，愿你们今后更努力千百倍。号召在这些国家、首府、海岛、集会和教会里的人们进入阿帕哈天国。你们努力工作的范围必须扩大。其范围越大，神助之证据就越显著……啊！但愿我能到处去，即使我在赤贫状态中步行到这些地区去，在城市，乡村，山区，沙漠和海洋发出‘呀巴哈欧阿帕哈’的呼叫声，宣传神圣的教义，该多好啊！唉！可惜我无法做到这一点。我为此感到极度的哀叹！若系天意，你们可以做到这一点。”最后，就好像要为祂先前所说的话语作一个圆满总结一样，这是体现祂对美国灵性命运看法的严肃断言：“这个神圣信息由美国信徒从美洲海岸传扬开时，就穿过欧洲，亚洲，非洲和澳洲传播，远达太平洋岛屿，这个宗教社团就将稳固地建立在永恒统治的宝座上。然后，世间所有的人都将亲眼见到这个社团受到灵性启迪和神圣引导。全球都将充满对其崇高与伟大的赞美声。”

正是由于以上所引述的阿博都巴哈的这些话，每一个富于思考而有良知的信徒都应思索巴

哈欧拉的这一重要话语的意义：“在东方，祂的启示之光已经初露；在西方，已出现祂的统权之迹象。人们啊，在你们心中深思一下这点吧！不要做那些对全能而最受赞美的祂之劝戒充耳不闻的人……如果他们试图要在这片大陆上掩盖它的光辉，那肯定会使它在大洋的最中心处显露头角，并大声宣布说：‘我是世界生命的给予者！’”

亲爱的教友们！我们的眼睛难道能模糊到辨认不出，以比在任何其它国家更大并以史无前例的方式正在折磨这个美洲国家的痛苦和骚乱是阿博都巴哈这些丰富的话语非常清楚地预示的宗教复兴运动开始的迹象吗？一个民族的灵魂正在开始痛苦地经历的极度痛苦充分地表明这一点。将世界各国特别是西方的这个伟大共和国的悲苦困境与该国少数公民越来越多的财富对照一下吧。如果他们忠实履行自己的义务，其使命就是医治民族的创伤，恢复其自信，重振其破灭了的希望。将那些使群众狂热不已的可怕大动乱，两败俱伤的内讧，小小的争辩，令人筋疲力尽的争吵，无休止的革命与平静的和平与真理之新光对照一下吧。这和平与真理之光护卫、引导和支持着巴哈欧拉的律法与爱的勇敢继承者。目前这个时代的特征是社会公共机构分裂，政客信用丧失，各种理论激增，堕落、愚蠢与狂暴的行为、阴谋诡计、虚伪欺诈和放弃原则的行为嚇人听闻。将它们与稳固的联防、神圣的纪律、统一与团结、确定的信仰、坚定不移的忠诚和自我牺牲的英雄主义行为比较一下吧。后面这些品质是巴哈欧拉信仰的黄金时代的管理者和先驱的标志。

这些先知的话由阿博都巴哈启示出来就不足为怪了，祂向我们保证说：“东方确实已被天国之光照亮。不久，这同样的光将把西方照得更加明亮。然后，通过上帝教义之潜能，其人民之心将更加生机勃勃，他们的灵魂将因祂的永恒之爱的烈火而变得炽热发亮。”祂断言：“信仰上帝之荣幸已极大增加，其伟大之处现已显现出来。它将在人们的心里激发起一阵大骚动的那一天就要来临。因此，美国的居民们，要感到高兴，尽情欢乐吧！”

最珍爱的教友啊！当我们回顾自从巴哈伊天启的吉祥之光第一次温暖和照亮了美洲大陆以来已经过去40年，我们发现，它可以分为四个不同的时期，每个时期都以一个意义重大的事件告终。这样的事件成为引导美国信徒走向允诺的胜利道路上的里程碑。这40年的第一个时期（1893-1903），其特征是一个缓慢而持续躁动的过程，可以说是在由阿博都巴哈负责美国信徒到巴哈欧拉圣陵朝觐而达到高潮。随后的10年（1903-1913）充满太多的考验和磨难，使巴哈伊信仰在该国的早期开拓者的团体感到焦虑不安，受到净化和激励，阿博都巴哈对美国令人难忘的访问成为他们欢乐的高潮。第三个时期（1913-1923）是一段平静而不断巩固的时期，这个时期神圣任命的教务行政管理机构诞生了，教长的遗嘱明白无误地确立了该机构的基础。其余的10年（1923-1933）以自始至终内部进一步发展以及正在成长的社团的国际活动明显增多而著称。这段时期完成了灵曦堂上层建筑，它是教务行政管理机构的强大堡垒，是其力量的象征及其未来荣耀的迹象。

这些连续时期中的每一段时期看来都明显丰富了该社团的灵性生活，有助于训练其成员准备为自己的独特使命尽巨大的责任。在那段历史的初期，该社团的杰出代表受到感动而开始进行的朝圣，激起了社团成员心灵中无论多大的苦难都无法压制的一种爱与热情。社团随后遭受的考

验和磨难使那些幸存下来的人能掌握自己信仰的含义。无论反对势力下多大的决心，多么精心组织起来，都不可能指望削弱他们的信仰。经受过考验的信徒们后来建立起的机构给其创建者提供了因成员增加和活动范围扩大而迫切需要的那种平衡与稳定的环境。最后，已经牢固地建立起来的教务行政管理机构的拥护者受到激励而建立的圣堂给予他们一个愿景，无论是内部混乱引起的暴风雨还是国际动荡产生的旋风都不可能使其模糊。

遵照我们敬爱的教长的设想、倡议和指导，巴哈伊启示传入新大陆立即产生激动人心的情景。要对最初的那种情景尝试作哪怕是一个简短描述的尝试也要花我很长时间。由于篇幅限制，也不允许我去叙述伴随第一批美国朝圣者对巴哈欧拉圣陵作划时代拜访的情形，去叙述表明这些带着新福音书回到本国的人的英勇事迹，或者去评估他们的成就的直接影响。我的话不足以表达阿博都巴哈对这个已觉醒的大陆所表露的希望、期待和意图立即使那些觐见祂聆听祂讲话的人们心情激动起来的情形。他们成为祂那无法估计的赐福的接受者和被挑选来储存祂的信任的宝库。他们在祂的监舍的庇护之下坐在祂身边，急于要吸收并想保存祂所迸发出的神圣智慧时，那些英雄们内心涌动的那种感情，我永远也无法指望能给予充分恰当的描述。有吸引力的个性和强有力的话语的魅力所产生的冲击力影响着朝圣归来的这群人、这些圣约的圣使在他们历史上的关键时期激发起的坚定不移的决心，显现出顽强的精神，我永远无法给予足够的赞扬。回忆起卢阿，蔡斯，麦克纳特，迪利，古多尔，道奇，法默和布里廷厄姆，这样一些人的名字——仅仅提到少数几个现在聚集到巴哈欧拉的荣耀之下不灭的星系中——永远跟祂的信仰在美洲大陆的兴起和确立联系着，永远给它的编年史增添不为时间所磨灭的光彩。

圣约的头号破坏者曾一度得势而遮蔽其光辉，通过紧接着巴哈欧拉升天后陆续而来的朝圣之旅，圣约的光芒在折磨它的变化无常的世事中，以胜利的姿态出现。通过这些朝圣者的到来，而且只有这些人，致使曾经笼罩着阿博都巴哈一家人的忧郁气氛终于消失了，通过他们的帮助，至伟圣叶单独与其兄长站在一起，面对几乎全体亲朋戚友的反叛，找到了强有力地支撑着她直到生命结束的那种慰藉。由这一小群朝圣回来的教友，在该大陆中心所释放出的力量，敲响了每一个想破坏圣道的人的丧钟。

随后由阿博都巴哈那支不知疲倦的笔启示的书简，以充满激情和清楚明白的语言具体表现出祂的教诲和忠告，祂的呼吁和评论，祂的希望和愿望，祂的担忧和警告。这些书简很快开始被翻译出来，在全北美大陆各处出版发行，给日益扩大的第一批信徒提供了精神食粮，单是这一点就能使他们安全度过他们很快就要经历的严峻考验。

然而，前所未有的危机时刻不可阻挡地就要到来了。由于骄傲和野心作怪，意见分歧的迹象开始遮掩新生社团的光辉，阻碍它的发展，而这个社团是该大陆门徒时代的传教师们经过艰苦奋斗才建立起来的。有这样一个，他曾经在巴哈伊信仰史上开创这样一个光辉时代中起过推动作用，巴哈欧拉的圣约中心曾授予他“巴哈的彼得”、“上帝羊群的牧人”、“美洲的征服者”的称号，获得帮助阿博都巴哈在卡梅尔山上安放巴孛陵墓的基石这一独一无二的荣幸。然而，就是这样的一个人，被他非同寻常的成功弄得丧失了理智，追求对其信徒同伴的不受控制的支配权，

于是厚颜无耻地举起反叛的旗帜。感到希望破灭的这个叛教者脱离阿博都巴哈并与圣教的头号敌人勾结起来，通过歪曲教义和指挥针对阿博都巴哈本人进行无情污蔑的活动，试图逐渐削弱他在长达八年时间里辛辛苦苦使之皈依的那些信徒们的信仰。他以发表短文，通过他盟友的使者的积极合作，还有巴哈伊天启的基督教教会敌人努力给予的增援，达到了打击刚刚开始发展的圣教的目的，使它只能缓慢而痛苦地从中恢复过来。

我勿须赘述在巴哈欧拉圣道的美国信徒队伍发生的这一严重但是短暂分裂的直接影响。我也勿须详述那些大量涌现出来诽谤他们的文章的性质。看来似乎也没有必要列举随时保持警惕的教长为了减缓并最终消除他们的疑惧而采取的措施。阿博都巴哈一个紧接一个地先后派遣了4个使者去安抚那个混乱的社团并使之恢复活力。让未来的历史学家去评估其中每个受挑选者的使命的价值吧。这些历史学家的任务是查考在阿博都巴哈的这些代表被委托承担的工作中，在那个庞大的教务机构的初始阶段，受命要去奠定的那块基石——祂后来亲自看见了这个教务行政管理机构的象征性大厦，祂的遗嘱条款注定要扩大这个机构的基础和范围。

只要说说下面这点就够了：一个不可战胜的信仰在其发展的这个阶段，它的活动范围扩大了，一方面迫使其敌人为了要发动的进攻发明新的武器，另一方面鼓励其最高创建人通过指示称职的代表和传教师在教务行政管理机构的初级阶段来指导其信徒，随着该机构的发展，它马上就会培育、捍卫和促进其精神。像瓦特拉尔斯基、威尔逊、杰萨普和理查森这样一些顽固的攻击者的著作竞相徒劳地试图玷污其纯洁，阻止其前进并迫使它投降。对于指责他们搞虚无主义、异端邪说、伊斯兰式的诺斯替教、伤风败俗行为，随心所欲地指责他们搞神秘主义和共产主义，对于这样无耻的指责，这些毫不动摇的受害者们按照阿博都巴哈的指示行事，通过开展一系列本质上应是起先锋作用的活动来反驳，正式承认了教务行政管理机构。被阿博都巴哈称为芝加歌的“正义院”的该城第一个属灵的协商机构的落成；巴哈伊出版社的设立；格林埃克（Green Acre）教友会的建立；《西方之星》的出版；与迁移巴孛圣骸到卡梅尔山的永久安息之地同时进行的第一次巴哈伊全国大会的召开；巴哈伊礼拜堂的公司注册和灵曦堂执行委员会的组成——这些是历史上最动荡时期令人永世不忘的美国信徒们所取得的最显著成就。自从那时候以来，正是通过这些行动，使巴哈欧拉圣约之方舟进入了令人烦恼的无尽苦难之海，由阿博都巴哈的强有力之臂掌握航向，并由一群经过严峻考验的信徒们以大胆主动行动和充沛的活力来操纵，不顾逆境中苦难的狂风暴雨，一直坚定地沿着自己的航线前进。当它朝着期望中的安全与平静的避风港前进时，这些苦难的狂风暴雨已经猛烈吹打并且一定会继续袭击它。

因为不满足于对美洲大陆内当选代表的协同努力所取得的成绩，而且在其范围之外——在英国，法国和德国——最早的传教师所取得的初步成功的鼓励下，美洲信徒社团决心在遥远的地区将新成员征募到正在前进的巴哈欧拉之军中来。他们从本国的西海岸出发，由新生信仰无穷力量的推动，巴哈欧拉教义的这些巡回传教师们朝着太平洋岛屿前进，再远达中国和日本，决心跨过最远的海洋去建立他们所热爱的信仰的前哨基地。到那时，这个社团在国内外都显示了它扩大范围的能力，巩固了它通过巨大努力建立起的基础。反对其崛起而发出来的愤怒声音正被淹没

在由东方庆贺其最新胜利的欢呼声中。险恶而隐隐约约出现的那些丑恶特征渐渐远去，给这些要想发挥自己潜能的高尚武士们提供了一个更宽大的场所。

巴哈欧拉的信仰在美洲大陆确实已恢复活力。它像火凤凰一样活力十足美丽绝伦地重新飞升起来，现在，通过它那胜利的阐述者们的声音，不断向阿博都巴哈呼唤，恳求祂旅行到美洲大陆去。值得受委托的拥护者的使命第一批成果使他们的声音强烈到这种程度：刚刚摆脱令人屈辱的暴政枷锁的阿博都巴哈，发现自己无法抗拒这些呼唤。祂对自己所宠爱的孩子们伟大而无可比拟的爱迫使祂去响应这些呼唤。而且，各种各样感兴趣的组织，无论是宗教、教育或慈善组织的代表们都向祂发出许多次邀请，表达他们渴望从祂口中接受对祂父亲教义的阐述，这就增强了他们的热情恳求。

虽然因年老而背部佝偻，虽然因遭受五十年的流放和监禁所累积的烦恼而招致多种疾病，但是阿博都巴哈还是踏上了令人难忘的旅程，跨过海洋到那片祂可能因自己的莅临而赐福、通过祂自己的行为和精神引导祂的信徒做出的行动而使之圣化的那片国土。我的笔完全无法描述伴随祂成功巡游美国和加拿大主要城市的那些情况。宣布祂的到来所引起的欢乐，祂的活动引人注目的情况，祂的话语所释放出的力量，祂的教导的含义激起的反对，祂的言行导致的重要事件——未来几代人毫无疑问会仔细而适当地将这些情况记录下来。他们将仔细勾画出它们的特征，回忆并记住这些情况，将把记录下来的最详细的情况传给后代。目前哪怕是要尝试简述一下这样庞大这样吸引人的主题，对我们来说确实是太冒昧了。二十多年过去之后，周密思考一下美国宗教史上这个显著的里程碑，我们发现我们仍然不得不承认，我们没有能力掌握其含义或理解其奥秘。在前几页中，我已提到那次令人永远难忘的访问的几个更突出的特点。当我们回顾这些事件的时候，它们令人信服地显示，阿博都巴哈的特殊目的是通过这些象征性的宗教活动赋予西方第一个诞生的社团以卓越的灵性，而这应是美国信徒与生俱来的权利。

阿博都巴哈在连续不断的活动中大量撒播的种子给予了美国和加拿大，不，应是整个美洲大陆，在其历史上闻所未闻的潜能。通过那次访问，祂将一份宝贵的世袭财产留给一小群经过训练并受祂钟爱的信徒，通过他们又传留给他们的后代。这份财产带有相应的神圣而基本的义务：他们须在那片富饶的土地上奋起开展祂已荣耀地开创的工作。我们可以自己隐约地想象祂在向那个有希望的国家作最后告别时从祂热切的心中涌现出来的那些愿望。我们可以充分想象，在祂离开前夕祂对信徒们说，一位神秘莫测的哲人以祂无限的宏恩挑选了你们的国土来实施一项大计。凭借巴哈欧拉圣约的力量，自从我的使命期开始我就已被召唤来作耕地人翻耕土地。在你们事业的初期就已如雨水般降赐于你们的伟大确认现已准备了土壤并使之充满活力。你们随后要遭受的苦难已使犁沟深入到准备好的田地里。现在，我已在你们面前到处撒播我受托照管的种子。在你们的悉心照管下，通过你们不停的努力，这些种子中每一粒都一定会发芽，每一颗都一定会结出命定的果实。前所未有的严冬很快就要降临。它的暴雨云正在地平线上快速聚集。暴风雪将从四面八方袭击你们。圣约之灯光将因我的离去而被遮蔽。然而，这些狂风，这种冬天的凄凉景象终将过去。休眠的种子会突然重新活跃起来。它一定会发芽，一定会在强大的机构中展现自己的

叶和花。我天堂的父亲的温柔仁慈使之降临于你们的春雨，将使这株幼嫩的植物能将枝条伸展到你们本国范围以外的地区。最后，祂那稳步攀升的天启之阳，发出最耀眼的光辉，将使祂这株强大的信仰之树，在其鼎盛时期在你们的国土上结出金色的果实。

这样一篇告别辞的含义不可能长久不透露给阿博都巴哈已受启蒙的门徒。祂刚刚结束横跨欧美两大陆的艰苦长途旅行之后，祂曾暗示过的那些大事件就开始显现出来。正如祂所预言的这样一场战争在一段时间里切断了祂与那些祂所信任的而又寄予厚望的人的一切通讯联络手段。由于大屠杀和大破坏，四年期间冬天似的凄凉景象一直残酷地延续着，而祂却到紧邻巴哈欧拉圣陵的住宅去静静独居，继续把自己的思想和希望传送给那些祂留下来而且给予了祂那独一无二的恩惠之表征的人。在与珍贵的教友长期交往中，祂受感动而启示了许多不朽的书简。在这些书简中，祂向他们揭露祂对他们灵性命运的构想、祂把希望他们承担任务的计划展示给他们看。祂这时正以同样的关爱和耐心给祂双手播下的种子浇水，这种关爱和耐心是祂先前在他们中努力工作时的特点。

阿博都巴哈发出的响亮号召是猛然开始新活动的信号。它激发了目的相似的活动并使之起动的力量，这是美洲几乎从未经历过的。由于给予了巴哈欧拉的具有进取心的信使们在遥远的国土上已经开创的工作以空前的推动力，所以，这场伟大的运动能继续扩展至现在。当它将自己的影响扩大到整个地球表面时，就聚集了动力，而且将继续加快其前进的步伐，直至其原创者的临终愿望完全得以实现为止。

一小群男女抛弃了家庭，亲属，朋友和地位，充满了任何人间力量都无法激发起的热情和信心，奋起执行阿博都巴哈已发布的命令。巴哈欧拉之信仰的这些勇敢的先驱者们，向北航行远达阿拉斯加，继续推进到西印度群岛，向南深入南美大陆，到达亚马孙河两岸，再翻越安第斯山脉，到达阿根廷共和国的最南端，继续向西进入塔希提岛，越过该岛到达澳洲大陆，再越过该大陆远至新西兰和塔斯马尼亚岛。他们就是靠自己的这些行动，成功地为整个东方现在的这一代信徒朋友树立起完全可以模仿的榜样。自从阿博都巴哈发出号召以来，他们的杰出代表就已两次环游世界，并且仍然在以非凡的勇气和坚忍不拔的精神充实着她那无与伦比的服务记录。在杰出代表的率领下，这些男男女女在扩大巴哈欧拉在世界范围内的影响方面起到的推动作用，在巴哈伊历史上迄今为止无人能超越。面对几乎不可克服的障碍，他们在经过的大部分国家或居住过的国家里，成功地宣传他们信仰的教义，传阅其文献，捍卫了圣道，为其教务机构奠定了基础并增加了公开支持者的人数。我无能力在这么简短的文章里揭示他们的英勇事迹，我的任何赞颂之辞都不足以公正评判那种使这些圣教的旗手们能赢得这样的殊荣并且给予他们所属于的那一代人如此高的荣誉。

到那时，巴哈欧拉的圣道已环绕全球。圣道之灯诞生于最黑暗的波斯，此时已陆续传递到欧洲，非洲和美洲大陆，而现在正深入到澳洲的中心地带，从而以一条闪亮的荣耀之光环围绕整个地球。信徒们在为阿博都巴哈尘世生活的晚年增辉添彩中共有的那种高尚勇敢的品质，唯有祂才能真正认识到并给予足够的评价。在成长中的这一代的艰苦努力，肯定将显示出独特永恒的意义。

义，其功德应受赞扬并永记不忘。当阿博都巴哈意识到自己离世的时刻快要到来时，由于祂亲眼见到了祂父亲的圣教的这些英雄们所做的国际服务的第一批成果，一定感到多么深度的满意啊！祂已将一笔丰厚的遗产交给他们保管。在祂尘世生活的暮年里，祂在能干的助手们沉静的保证下充满信心，他们会保持圣教的完整和弘扬其美德。

阿博都巴哈的去世来得那么突然，其结果那么令人注目，但这既不可能妨碍教义的动力所起的作用，也不可能遮掩其目标。那些体现在一位去世教长遗嘱中的热诚呼吁只可能进一步肯定其目的，明示其特性和增强它最后成功的许诺。

摆脱了信徒们失去教长的巨大丧亲之痛，在一刻也不肯放松的敌人发动的进攻所造成的紧张局势和尘雾之中，巴哈欧拉的不可战胜的信仰，其教务行政管理机构诞生了。圣约中心去世而释放出的强大能量凝聚成这个为实现神圣目的而建立的绝对可靠的最高机构。阿博都巴哈的遗嘱揭示了它的性质，再次确认了它的基本原则，补充了它的基本信条，肯定了它的必要性，列举了它的主要机构。完全相同的一致性是美国对巴哈欧拉宣布的信息作出反应的特点。她这时以这种一致性奋力支持巴哈欧拉之子遗嘱中明确无误地建立的教务行政管理机构。这个重要文件启示之后，在一个动荡的年代中，这给予她，而且是单独给予她这样的机会成为它大无畏的捍卫者、它是新生机构的枢轴及其影响的主要促进者。波斯教友在巴哈伊信仰的英雄时代赢得了殉道者的王冠，这些美国信徒就是它黄金时代的先驱，他们现在正在获得应有的成功，轮到他们取得来之不易的胜利奖章。他们的光辉事迹无人打破其记录，毫无疑问已压倒一切成为决定他们的信仰的命运的大功臣。在这个遭受苦难陷入混乱的世界，这个社团作为巴哈欧拉解放力量的先锋队，在紧接阿博都巴哈去世之后的年代成功地鹤立于东西方姐妹社团建立的分支机构之上，完全有理由成为未来会堂的主要支柱——后代子孙将把这会堂看作是摇摇欲坠的文明的最后避难所。

在他们执行任务的过程中，既不让背信弃义者的流言蜚语也不让公开的敌人的恶毒攻击使他们偏离自己的崇高目标或破坏他们信仰的卓越感召力。要不是阿博都巴哈的警告，那个贪得无厌地追求尘世财富的人就已玷污了他们信仰的美名。然而由那个人煽动起的焦虑不安情绪却使他们基本上未受影响。由于经过苦难的磨练，他们在迅速发展的分支机构中又感到安全放心，所以他们鄙视他的影射攻击，以矢志不渝的忠诚，粉碎他的奢望。他们拒绝让他利用他父亲和他的伙伴公认的声望以及过去他为他们所作的服务来削弱他们的决心，他们要对阿博都巴哈强烈谴责过的那个人完全置之不理。一小撮受欺骗的宗教狂热分子随后企图利用他们的期刊来进行隐蔽攻击以阻止新生的教务行政管理机构的成长，破坏其前程，同样失败了。一个糊涂女人所持的态度，她的荒唐可笑的断言，她蔑视阿博都巴哈的遗嘱并质疑其真实性的放肆行为以及要破坏其原则的企图再一次无力在勇敢的支持者队伍中产生最微小的破坏作用。一个野心勃勃背信弃义的更新近敌人策划了危险的阴谋诡计，并借此大力损害阿博都巴哈亲手推动的事业，败坏其教务行政管理原则。这些阴谋诡计正再一次遭到彻底挫败。袭击者一方断断续续但遭到失败的想要迫使新建的信仰堡垒投降的企图，圣道捍卫者们从一开始就予以彻底鄙弃。无论敌人的攻击是多么激烈，计谋是多么老练，他们丝毫都不肯放弃自己怀有的信仰。他们从来不理睬他的献媚求宠和大肆喧

器。使他的行为活跃欢快的那些动机，他一惯追求的那些方法，他似乎时时刻刻在享有的那些朝不保夕的特权。对于这些，他们都只能予以鄙视。通过狡诈的头脑构想出的阴谋手段，得到名声、能力和财富能给予短暂好处的支持而兴盛一时，这些臭名昭著的腐败典型和离经叛道者终于露出了他们的丑恶面目。正如他们迅速发迹一样，他们也迅速地沉到耻辱下场的泥沼中。

从这些折磨人的考验中，美国信徒们联想起他们所遭受的伴随巴哈伊信仰在他们本国诞生而来的一些狂风暴雨，他们再一次获得胜利，他们的路线没有偏离，他们的名声未被玷污，他们继承的遗产没有减少。一系列的重大成就，每一个都比前一个更重要，给予已经光辉灿烂的记录锦上添花。在紧接着阿博都巴哈去世后的黑暗年代，他们的事迹大放光芒，使他们成为没有那么荣幸的教友们羡慕和赞扬的对象。整个社团不受妨碍，极为自信，正在出现大好的机会。那些催生它并助其站起来的力量这时又在加快它的成长，其快速成长的方式，无论是世界性的阵阵悲痛还是一个混乱时代的大骚乱都不能使其努力失去作用或阻止其前进。

从内部来看，这个社团已着手于许多雄心勃勃的计划，一方面将使其能进一步扩展它的灵性管辖范围，另一方面能为创建和巩固这种扩展迫切所需的分支机构制定必不可少的文件。从外部来说，它承担的任务甚至比以前更强烈地受到双重目标的鼓励：一是从事它的国际传教士在五大洲中的每个洲开创的值得赞扬的工作，二是在处理和解决一个刚刚摆脱束缚的信仰正在面临的微妙而复杂的问题方面承担越来越大的责任。教务行政管理机构在该大陆的诞生使他们所作的这些值得赞扬的种种努力令人注目。它逐渐得到巩固注定将保证这些工作的连续性并使其更令人瞩目。

美国信徒取得的卓越成就在国内外大大提高了他们的声望，为至大圣名增加了光彩。我目前所能作的仅是列举其中最突出的成就，将解释其重要性和对其价值进行适当评估的任务留给将来的几代人。在东西方姐妹分会中他们已名列首位这一荣誉应归功于他们选举出来的代表机构，为有效履行集体职责而制订和公布了一些必不可少的文件并得到法律的认可，每个正规建立起来的巴哈伊社团都必须视之为值得采用或模仿的模式。将全国性捐赠建立在永久的无可争议的基楚之上并创建必要的机构来组建那些分支机构，其职能是代表财产受托人管理在他们管辖范围之外获得的财产，这一英雄业绩也应归因于他们的努力。巴哈伊信仰在它摆脱穆斯林正统信仰的束缚的斗争中必须克服许多障碍，按照他们自己的意愿将道义支持扩大到埃及教友这样重的负担，他们能够搬掉一些最难以克服的障碍。通过这些选举出的代表有效而及时的干预，他们能够消除威胁与他们一起工作的苏维埃共和国的同伴遇到的那些灾难和危险，并且避免了有可能给最优秀可贵的巴哈伊分支机构之一带来直接毁灭危险的狂暴行动。无论在道义上还是在经济上，美国信徒从来不乏对波斯教友全心全意的帮助。在阿博都巴哈去世后的岁月里，波斯教友遭受了好几次巨大的灾祸，受到感动的美国信徒以个人或集体的方式向处于困苦中的波斯教友伸出援助之手，但是，没有任何东西能拯救这些不幸的受害者。正是美国教友努力首创的那种宣传方式，引导他们进行抗议，上诉和请愿，这才缓和了这些苦难，抑制了巴哈伊信仰在该国的反对者最恶劣最残暴的行为。要不是他们中最杰出的代表之一，还有谁会奋起抗争，迫使国际最高法庭注意到世界

上有个被剥夺了最神圣圣所的宗教信仰所遭受的冤情？还有谁能通过锲而不舍的努力成功地使一个受到迫害的宗教事业获得书面确认其正义行动、默认其独立宗教地位的权利？国际联盟的永久托管委员会通过的决议是：“本委会建议，理事会要求英国政府向伊拉克政府提出抗议，旨在要求立即纠正拒不承认请愿者（巴格达的巴哈伊总会）的正义行动的作法。”除了一个美国信徒还有谁能从皇家获得这样不同凡响的再三声明而使圣教恢复力量，能得到如此引人注目的对其教义的普适性及其使命的崇尚性的证明。英国女王的书面证明是这样的：“巴哈伊教义带来和平与谅解。它就像得到广泛接受的教义，将所有那些长久以来寻求希望的人聚集在一起。它承认过去的所有伟大的先知，它不会破坏任何别的宗教信条，而是让所有的门开启着。我对许多教派的信徒之间持续不断的纷争感到悲伤，对于他们相互之间不容异说的现象感到厌倦。但是，我在巴哈伊教义中发现了经常被拒绝接受被误解的真正基督精神：团结而不是纷争，希望而不是谴责，爱而不是恨，对所有的人的一种巨大安慰，”在将近一个世纪里，一些障碍妨碍了该社团的发展，削弱了波斯信徒朋友的力量。通过他们社团中最优秀成员之一显示出的勇气，信仰巴哈欧拉的美国信徒们不是在为消除那些障碍铺平道路的过程中起了推动作用吗？由于一直很重视阿博都巴哈发出的热情请求，美国不是将越来越多的最有献身精神的男女公民派到天涯海角去了吗？他们人生的唯一愿望就是巩固巴哈欧拉在全世界影响所及的地区的基础。在欧洲最北部的一些都市，在它的中部各州，在整个巴尔干半岛，在沿非洲、亚洲和南美洲大陆的海岸，今天人们可以发现一小群妇女开拓者。她们独立无援，财力物力匮乏，却在为迎接阿博都巴哈预言的那一天的到来而辛勤工作。在减轻长期以来压在该大陆那些坚定不移富于自我牺牲精神的热爱至伟圣叶的人们心上的重负方面，至伟圣叶在即将临终时的态度不是雄辩地证明了她那无与伦比的贡献吗？最后，宏伟的灵曦堂上层建筑的竣工（美国过去和现在成就的至高无上的荣耀）锻造了那条神秘的链条，它将比以前任何时候都更加牢固地把作为巴哈伊信仰之源泉和中心以及他们最真诚崇拜的对象的神连接起来，谁敢于否认这一点呢？

美洲大陆的信徒朋友啊！你们过去和现在的成就确实伟大！你们将有的奇迹更是大得无法估量！由你们的牺牲建起的圣殿仍然有待于给予装饰。必须得到由你们亲手创建的最高教务行政管理机构支持的圣堂迄今为止还没有建立起来。必须支配其运作的那些律法宝库的主要条款大部分至今仍然秘而不宣。如果阿博都巴哈的愿望要得到实现，那面必须在你们自己国家升起的旗帜还没有展示。那面旗帜将象征统一，而统一局面远远还没建立起来。甚至连必须体现和保持那种统一的机构都还没有创建。将要奋起承担对于决定这个烦扰不安时代命运至关重要的领导责任的会是美国还是一个欧洲国家？美国的巴哈伊社团已被授予并且至今极好地保有灵性的首要地位，她会让东西方的任何一个姐妹社团获得这样的优势以致使她失去那种首要地位吗？她不是宁愿通过更进一步显示激发其生活兴趣的那些天赋能力来帮助提高已去世的教长的爱与智慧赋予她的宝贵遗产的价值吗？

她的过去已经证明她的信仰无穷无尽的生命力。难道她的未来不会再次肯定这一点吗？

你们真诚的兄弟，

守基。

1933年4月21日于

巴勒斯坦，海法

America and the Most Great Peace

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 [In an address by Dr. Henry H. Jessup at the Parliament of Religions, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893.—Editor.] 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.

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 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 Islam 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 Abha 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 Ya Bahá’u’l-Abha 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 *Mashriqu'l-Adhkar*—he 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 Bab’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 檪 n 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 Muhammadan 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 Bab 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 *Mashriqu’l-Adhkar*—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, untrammelled 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 signalized 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 Iraqi Government with a view to the immediate redress of the denial of justice from which the petitioners (the Bahá’í Spiritual Assembly of Baghdad) 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-Adhkar—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, 1933.

美洲与至大和平

America and the Most Great Peace

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