

Peace

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of the Universal House of Justice

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EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH:

This is the Day in which God's most excellent favours have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. It behoveth them to cleave to whatsoever will, in this Day, be conducive to the exaltation of their stations, and to the promotion of their best interests....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983), p. 6) [1]

God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", pp. 79-80) [2]

O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the preeminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have ... laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 97) [3]

The Great Being, wishing to reveal the prerequisites of the peace and tranquillity of the world and the advancement of its peoples, hath written: The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the Great Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves. Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. This will ensure the peace and composure of every people, government and nation. We fain would hope that the kings and rulers of the earth, the mirrors of the gracious and almighty name of God, may attain unto this station, and shield mankind from the onslaught of tyranny.... The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script. When this is achieved, to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home. These things are obligatory and absolutely essential. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.... That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of

the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", pp. 249-250) [4]

O ye rulers of the earth! Wherefore have ye clouded the radiance of the Sun, and caused it to cease from shining? Hearken unto the counsel given you by the Pen of the Most High, that haply both ye and the poor may attain unto tranquillity and peace. We beseech God to assist the kings of the earth to establish peace on earth. He, verily, doth what He willeth.

O kings of the earth! We see you increasing every year your expenditures, and laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is wholly and grossly unjust. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and lay not excessive burdens on your peoples. Do not rob them to rear palaces for yourselves; nay rather choose for them that which ye choose for yourselves. Thus We unfold to your eyes that which profiteth you, if ye but perceive. Your people are your treasures. Beware lest your rule violate the commandments of God, and ye deliver your wards to the hands of the robber. By them ye rule, by their means ye subsist, by their aid ye conquer. Yet, how disdainfully ye look upon them! How strange, how very strange!

Now that ye have refused the Most Great Peace, hold ye fast unto this, the Lesser Peace, that haply ye may in some degree better your own condition and that of your dependents.

O rulers of the earth! Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions. Beware lest ye disregard the counsel of the All-Knowing, the Faithful.

Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", pp. 253-254) [5]

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 286) [6]

We pray God—exalted be His glory—and cherish the hope that He may graciously assist the manifestations of affluence and power and the daysprings of sovereignty and glory, the kings of the earth—may God aid them through His strengthening grace—to establish the Lesser Peace. This, indeed, is the greatest means for ensuring the tranquillity of the nations. It is incumbent upon the Sovereigns of the world—may God assist them—unitedly to hold fast unto this Peace, which is the chief instrument for the protection of all mankind. It is Our hope that they will arise to achieve what will be conducive to the well-being of man. It is their duty to convene an all-inclusive assembly, which either they themselves or their ministers will attend, and to enforce whatever measures are required to establish unity and concord amongst men. They must put away the weapons of war, and turn to the instruments of universal reconstruction. Should one king rise up against another, all the other kings must arise to deter him. Arms and armaments will, then, be no more needed beyond that which is necessary to ensure the internal security of their respective countries. If they attain unto this all-surpassing blessing, the people of each nation will pursue, with tranquillity and contentment, their own occupations, and the groanings and lamentations of most men would be silenced. We beseech God to aid them to do His will and pleasure. He, verily, is the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, and the Lord of this

world and of the world to come. It would be preferable and more fitting that the highly-honoured kings themselves should attend such an assembly, and proclaim their edicts. Any king who will arise and carry out this task, he, verily will, in the sight of God, become the cynosure of all kings. Happy is he, and great is his blessedness!

(“Epistle to the Son of the Wolf”, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1988), pp. 30-31) [7]

The sixth Glad-Tidings is the establishment of the Lesser Peace, details of which have formerly been revealed from Our Most Exalted Pen. Great is the blessedness of him who upholdeth it and observeth whatsoever hath been ordained by God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

(“Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”, (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 23) [8]

... In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil. Consider the civilization of the West, how it hath agitated and alarmed the peoples of the world. An infernal engine hath been devised, and hath proved so cruel a weapon of destruction that its like none hath ever witnessed or heard. The purging of such deeply-rooted and overwhelming corruptions cannot be effected unless the peoples of the world unite in pursuit of one common aim and embrace one universal faith. Incline your ears unto the Call of this Wronged One and adhere firmly to the Lesser Peace.

(“Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”, p. 69) [9]

First: It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the earth may be relieved from the burden of exorbitant expenditures. This matter is imperative and absolutely essential, inasmuch as hostilities and conflict lie at the root of affliction and calamity.

(“Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”, p. 89) [10]

In the abundance of Our grace and loving-kindness We have revealed specially for the rulers and ministers of the world that which is conducive to safety and protection, tranquillity and peace; haply the children of men may rest secure from the evils of oppression. He, verily, is the Protector, the Helper, the Giver of victory. It is incumbent upon the men of God’s House of Justice to fix their gaze by day and by night upon that which hath shone forth from the Pen of Glory for the training of peoples, the upbuilding of nations, the protection of man and the safeguarding of his honour.

(“Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”, p. 125) [11]

... They that are possessed of wealth and invested with authority and power must show the profoundest regard for religion. In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil. Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine. Unto this will bear witness every man of true understanding.

(“Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”, p. 125) [12]

We have enjoined upon all mankind to establish the Most Great Peace—the surest of all means for the protection of humanity. The sovereigns of the world should, with one accord, hold fast thereunto, for this is the supreme instrument that can ensure the security and welfare of all peoples and nations. They, verily, are the manifestations of the power of God and the daysprings of His authority. We beseech the Almighty that He may graciously assist them in that which is

conducive to the well-being of their subjects. A full explanation regarding this matter hath been previously set forth by the Pen of Glory; well is it with them that act accordingly.

(“Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”, p. 126) [13]

The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God’s holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife. The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. It behoveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God’s House of Justice, to endeavour to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world. In like manner it is incumbent upon them to enquire into the conditions of their subjects and to acquaint themselves with the affairs and activities of the divers communities in their dominions. We call upon the manifestations of the power of God—the sovereigns and rulers on earth—to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.

(“Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”, pp. 129-130) [14]

Our hope is that the world’s religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes. Let them, after meditating on its needs, take counsel together and, through anxious and full deliberation, administer to a diseased and sorely-afflicted world the remedy it requireth.

The Great Being saith: The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.

(“Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas”, p. 168) [15]

Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind and bettereth the condition thereof... Regard the world as the human body which, though created whole and perfect, has been afflicted, through divers causes, with grave ills and maladies. Not for one day did it rest, nay its sicknesses waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of unskilled physicians who have spurred on the steed of their worldly desires and have erred grievously. And if at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise... That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. This verily is the truth, and all else naught but error.

...

Consider these days in which the Ancient Beauty, He Who is the Most Great Name, hath been sent down to regenerate and unify mankind. Behold how with drawn swords they rose against Him, and committed that which caused the Faithful Spirit to tremble. And whenever We said unto them: ‘Lo, the World Reformer is come,’ they made reply: ‘He, in truth, is one of the stirrers of mischief’....

(Extracts from the Tablet to Queen Victoria, cited in Shoghi Effendi, “The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh: Selected Letters”, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 39-40; p. 163)

[16]

EXTRACTS FROM THE UTTERANCES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH:

... Praise be to God that thou hast attained!... Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile... We desire but the good of the world and happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled —what harm is there in this?... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the “Most Great Peace” shall come... Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold?... Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind...

(Words spoken to E. G. Browne, from his pen portrait of Bahá'u'lláh, J. E. Esslemont, “Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era”, 5th rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), pp. 39-40)

[17]

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ:

Know thou that all the powers combined have not the power to establish universal peace, nor to withstand the overmastering dominion, at every time and season, of these endless wars. Ere long, however, shall the power of heaven, the dominion of the Holy Spirit, hoist on the high summits the banners of love and peace, and there above the castles of majesty and might shall those banners wave in the rushing winds that blow out of the tender mercy of God.

(“Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá”, [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), p. 174)

[18]

Rest thou assured that in this era of the spirit, the Kingdom of Peace will raise up its tabernacle on the summits of the world, and the commandments of the Prince of Peace will so dominate the arteries and nerves of every people as to draw into His sheltering shade all the nations on earth. From springs of love and truth and unity will the true Shepherd give His sheep to drink.

O handmaid of God, peace must first be established among individuals, until it leadeth in the end to peace among nations. Wherefore, O ye Bahá'ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.

(“Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá”, p. 246)

[19]

So long as these prejudices [religious, racial, national, political] survive, there will be continuous and fearsome wars.

To remedy this condition there must be universal peace. To bring this about, a Supreme Tribunal must be established, representative of all governments and peoples; questions both national and international must be referred thereto, and all must carry out the decrees of this Tribunal. Should any government or people disobey, let the whole world arise against that government or people.

(“Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá”, p. 249)

[20]

At present universal peace is a matter of great importance, but unity of conscience is essential, so that the foundation of this matter may become secure, its establishment firm and its edifice

strong.

Therefore Bahá'u'lláh, fifty years ago, expounded this question of universal peace at a time when He was confined in the fortress of 'Akká and was wronged and imprisoned...

Among His teachings was the declaration of universal peace.... the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh were not limited to the establishment of universal peace. They embraced many teachings which supplemented and supported that of universal peace.

...

In fine, such teachings are numerous. These manifold principles, which constitute the greatest basis for the felicity of mankind and are of the bounties of the Merciful, must be added to the matter of universal peace and combined with it, so that results may accrue. Otherwise the realization of universal peace by itself in the world of mankind is difficult. As the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are combined with universal peace, they are like a table provided with every kind of fresh and delicious food. Every soul can find, at that table of infinite bounty, that which he desires. If the question is restricted to universal peace alone, the remarkable results which are expected and desired will not be attained. The scope of universal peace must be such that all the communities and religions may find their highest wish realized in it. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are such that all the communities of the world, whether religious, political or ethical, ancient or modern, find in them the expression of their highest wish.

...

For example, the question of universal peace, about which Bahá'u'lláh says that the Supreme Tribunal must be established: although the League of Nations has been brought into existence, yet it is incapable of establishing universal peace. But the Supreme Tribunal which Bahá'u'lláh has described will fulfil this sacred task with the utmost might and power. And His plan is this: that the national assemblies of each country and nation—that is to say parliaments—should elect two or three persons who are the choicest of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government. The Supreme Tribunal will be composed of these people, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation.¹ When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority rule, there will no longer be any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant. In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal. Consider what a firm foundation this is! But by a limited and restricted League the purpose will not be realized as it ought and should. This is the truth about the situation, which has been stated...

(“Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”, pp. 297-298, p. 304, pp. 306-307) [21]

True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination—shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions

of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking—the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world—should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.

Observe that if such a happy situation be forthcoming, no government would need continually to pile up the weapons of war, nor feel itself obliged to produce ever new military weapons with which to conquer the human race. A small force for the purposes of internal security, the correction of criminal and disorderly elements and the prevention of local disturbances, would be required—no more. In this way the entire population would, first of all, be relieved of the crushing burden of expenditure currently imposed for military purposes, and secondly, great numbers of people would cease to devote their time to the continual devising of new weapons of destruction—those testimonials of greed and bloodthirstiness, so inconsistent with the gift of life—and would instead bend their efforts to the production of whatever will foster human existence and peace and well-being, and would become the cause of universal development and prosperity. Then every nation on earth will reign in honour, and every people will be cradled in tranquillity and content.

A few, unaware of the power latent in human endeavour, consider this matter as highly impracticable, nay even beyond the scope of man's utmost efforts. Such is not the case, however. On the contrary, thanks to the unfailing grace of God, the loving-kindness of His favoured ones, the unrivaled endeavours of wise and capable souls, and the thoughts and ideas of the peerless leaders of this age, nothing whatsoever can be regarded as unattainable. Endeavour, ceaseless endeavour, is required. Nothing short of an indomitable determination can possibly achieve it. Many a cause which past ages have regarded as purely visionary, yet in this day has become most easy and practicable. Why should this most great and lofty Cause—the day-star of the firmament of true civilization and the cause of the glory, the advancement, the well-being and the success of all humanity—be regarded as impossible of achievement? Surely the day will come when its beauteous light shall shed illumination upon the assemblage of man.

The apparatus of conflict will, as preparations go on at their present rate, reach the point where war will become something intolerable to mankind.

It is clear from what has already been said that man's glory and greatness do not consist in his being avid for blood and sharp of claw, in tearing down cities and spreading havoc, in butchering armed forces and civilians. What would mean a bright future for him would be his reputation for justice, his kindness to the entire population whether high or low, his building up countries and cities, villages and districts, his making life easy, peaceful and happy for his fellow beings, his laying down fundamental principles for progress, his raising the standards and increasing the wealth of the entire population.

No power on earth can prevail against the armies of justice, and every citadel must fall before them; for men willingly go down under the triumphant strokes of this decisive blade, and desolate places bloom and flourish under the trappings of this host. There are two mighty banners which, when they cast their shadow across the crown of any king, will cause the influence of his

government quickly and easily to penetrate the whole earth, even as if it were the light of the sun: the first of these two banners is wisdom; the second is justice. Against these two most potent forces, the iron hills cannot prevail, and Alexander's wall will break before them. It is clear that life in this fast-fading world is as fleeting and inconstant as the morning wind, and this being so, how fortunate are the great who leave a good name behind them, and the memory of a lifetime spent in the pathway of the good pleasure of God.

...

A conquest can be a praiseworthy thing, and there are times when war becomes the powerful basis of peace, and ruin the very means of reconstruction. If, for example, a high-minded sovereign marshals his troops to block the onset of the insurgent and the aggressor, or again, if he takes the field and distinguishes himself in a struggle to unify a divided state and people, if, in brief, he is waging war for a righteous purpose, then this seeming wrath is mercy itself, and this apparent tyranny the very substance of justice and this warfare the cornerstone of peace. Today, the task befitting great rulers is to establish universal peace, for in this lies the freedom of all peoples.

(“The Secret of Divine Civilization”, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983), pp. 64-67, 70-71)

[22]

In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association and interchange of thought were well nigh impossible. Consequently intercourse, understanding and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable. In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one.... In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century—the century of light—has been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour. The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, “The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh”, pp. 38-39, and “The Promised Day Is Come”, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 120-121)

[23]

... every great Cause in this world of existence findeth visible expression through three means: first, intention; second, confirmation; third, action. Today on this earth there are many souls who

are promoters of peace and reconciliation and are longing for the realization of the oneness and unity of the world of humanity; but this intention needeth a dynamic power, so that it may become manifest in the world of being. In this day the divine instructions and lordly exhortations promulgate this most great aim, and the confirmations of the Kingdom also support and aid the realization of this intention. Therefore, although the combined forces and thoughts of the nations of the world cannot by themselves achieve this exalted purpose, the power of the Word of God penetrateth all things and the assistance of the divine Kingdom is continuous. Erelong it will become evident and clear that the ensign of the Most Great Peace is the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and the tent of union and harmony among nations is the Tabernacle of the divine Kingdom, for therein the intention, the power and the action, all three, are brought together. The realization of everything in the world of being dependeth upon these three elements.

(From a Tablet - translated from Persian)

[24]

As far as possible, rest thou not for a moment, travel to the North and South of the country and summon all men to the oneness of the world of humanity and to universal peace, saying: O people! Bahá'u'lláh laid the foundation of universal peace fifty years ago. He even addressed Epistles to the kings wherein He declared that war could destroy the foundation of the world of humanity, that peace is conducive to everlasting life and that dire peril awaited mankind. Also three years before the outbreak of the world war 'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled to America and most of Europe, where he raised His voice before all gatherings, societies and churches, appealing: O ye assemblage of men! The continent of Europe hath virtually become an arsenal filled with explosives. There are vast stores of destructive material hidden underground, liable to burst forth at a single spark, causing the whole earth to quake. O ye men of understanding! Bestir yourselves that perchance this accumulation of volatile material may not explode. But the appeal went unheeded and consequently this murderous war broke out.

The bulk of humanity now realiseth what a great calamity war is and how war turneth man into a ferocious animal, causing prosperous cities and villages to be reduced to ruins and the foundations of the human edifice to crumble. Now, since all men have been awakened and their ears are attentive, it is time for the promulgation of universal peace—a peace based on righteousness and justice—that mankind may not be exposed to further dangers in the future. Now is the dawn of universal peace, and the first streaks of its light are beginning to appear. We earnestly hope that its effulgent orb may shine forth and flood the East and the West with its radiance. The establishment of universal peace is not possible save through the power of the Word of God...

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

[25]

Chaos and confusion are daily increasing in the world. They will attain such intensity as to render the frame of mankind unable to bear them. Then will men be awakened and become aware that religion is the impregnable stronghold and the manifest light of the world, and its laws, exhortations and teachings the source of life on earth.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

[26]

EXTRACTS FROM THE UTTERANCES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ:

Today the world of humanity is in need of international unity and conciliation. To establish these great fundamental principles a propelling power is needed. It is self-evident that the unity of the human world and the Most Great Peace cannot be accomplished through material means. They cannot be established through political power, for the political interests of nations are various and the policies of peoples are divergent and conflicting. They cannot be founded through racial or patriotic power, for these are human powers, selfish and weak. The very nature of racial differences and patriotic prejudices prevents the realization of this unity and agreement.

Therefore, it is evidenced that the promotion of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity, which is the essence of the teachings of all the Manifestations of God, is impossible except through the divine power and breaths of the Holy Spirit. Other powers are too weak and are incapable of accomplishing this.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 11-12) [27]

We will pray that the ensign of international peace may be uplifted and that the oneness of the world of humanity may be realized and accomplished. All this is made possible and practicable through your efforts. May this American democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the universality of mankind. May it be the first to upraise the standard of the Most Great Peace, and through this nation of democracy may these philanthropic intentions and institutions be spread broadcast throughout the world. Truly, this is a great and revered nation. Here liberty has reached its highest degree. The intentions of its people are most praiseworthy. They are, indeed, worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Most Great Peace and proclaim the oneness of mankind. I will supplicate God for assistance and confirmation in your behalf.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", pp. 36-37) [28]

Today the greatest need of the world of humanity is discontinuance of the existing misunderstandings among nations. This can be accomplished through the unity of language. Unless the unity of languages is realized, the Most Great Peace and the oneness of the human world cannot be effectively organized and established because the function of language is to portray the mysteries and secrets of human hearts. The heart is like a box, and language is the key. Only by using the key can we open the box and observe the gems it contains. Therefore, the question of an auxiliary international tongue has the utmost importance.... It is my hope that it may be perfected through the bounties of God and that intelligent men may be selected from the various countries of the world to organize an international congress whose chief aim will be the promotion of this universal medium of speech.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", pp. 60-61) [29]

... because I find the American nation so capable of achievement and this government the fairest of western governments, its institutions superior to others, my wish and hope is that the banner of international reconciliation may first be raised on this continent and the standard of the Most Great Peace be unfurled here. May the American people and their government unite in their efforts in order that this light may dawn from this point and spread to all regions, for this is one of the greatest bestowals of God. In order that America may avail herself of this opportunity, I beg that you strive and pray with heart and soul, devoting all your energies to this end: that the banner of international peace may be upraised here and that this democracy may be the cause of the cessation of warfare in all other countries.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", pp. 83-84) [30]

In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of

battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind...

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 108) [31]

All of us know that international peace is good, that it is conducive to human welfare and the glory of man, but volition and action are necessary before it can be established. Action is essential. Inasmuch as this century is a century of light, capacity for action is assured to mankind. Necessarily the divine principles will be spread among men until the time of action arrives. Surely this has been so, and truly the time and conditions are ripe for action now...

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 121) [32]

This has come to pass. The powers of earth cannot withstand the privileges and bestowals which God has ordained for this great and glorious century. It is a need and exigency of the time.... Let this century be the sun of previous centuries, the effulgences of which shall last forever, so that in times to come they shall glorify the twentieth century, saying the twentieth century was the century of lights, the twentieth century was the century of life, the twentieth century was the century of international peace, the twentieth century was the century of divine bestowals, and the twentieth century has left traces which shall last forever.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", pp. 125-126) [33]

The most momentous question of this day is international peace and arbitration, and universal peace is impossible without universal suffrage. Children are educated by the women. The mother bears the troubles and anxieties of rearing the child, undergoes the ordeal of its birth and training. Therefore, it is most difficult for mothers to send to the battlefield those upon whom they have lavished such love and care. Consider a son reared and trained twenty years by a devoted mother. What sleepless nights and restless, anxious days she has spent! Having brought him through dangers and difficulties to the age of maturity, how agonizing then to sacrifice him upon the battlefield! Therefore, the mothers will not sanction war nor be satisfied with it. So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it. This is true and without doubt.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", pp. 134-135) [34]

Now the glorious and brilliant twentieth century has dawned, and the divine bounty is radiating universally....

Truly, this can be called the miracle of centuries, for it is replete with manifestations of the miraculous. The time has come when all mankind shall be united, when all races shall be loyal to one fatherland, all religions become one religion, and racial and religious bias pass away. It is a day in which the oneness of humankind shall uplift its standard and international peace, like the true morning, flood the world with its light...

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 153) [35]

He promulgated the adoption of the same course of education for man and woman. Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes. When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women

be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. Equality between men and women is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the reason that women will never be willing to sanction it. Mothers will not give their sons as sacrifices upon the battlefield after twenty years of anxiety and loving devotion in rearing them from infancy, no matter what cause they are called upon to defend. There is no doubt that when women obtain equality of rights, war will entirely cease among mankind.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 175) [36]

The world is in greatest need of international peace. Until it is established, mankind will not attain composure and tranquillity. It is necessary that the nations and governments organize an international tribunal to which all their disputes and differences shall be referred. The decision of that tribunal shall be final. Individual controversy will be adjudged by a local tribunal. International questions will come before the universal tribunal, and so the cause of warfare will be taken away.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 301) [37]

I find these two great American nations [the United States and Canada] highly capable and advanced ... it is my hope that these revered nations may become prominent factors in the establishment of international peace and the oneness of the world of humanity....

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 318) [38]

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings or parts become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. Therefore, woman must receive the same education as man and all inequality be adjusted. Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.

The evident reasons underlying this are as follows: Woman by nature is opposed to war; she is an advocate of peace. Children are reared and brought up by the mothers who give them the first principles of education and labour assiduously in their behalf. Consider, for instance, a mother who has tenderly reared a son for twenty years to the age of maturity. Surely she will not consent to having that son torn asunder and killed in the field of battle. Therefore, as woman advances toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote and control in human government, most assuredly war will cease; for woman is naturally the most devoted and staunch advocate of international peace.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 375) [39]

A Supreme Tribunal shall be elected by the peoples and governments of every nation, where members from each country and government shall assemble in unity. All disputes shall be brought before this Court, its mission being to prevent war.

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912", 11th ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 132) [40]

A Supreme Tribunal shall be established by the peoples and Governments of every nation, composed of members elected from each country and Government. The members of this Great Council shall assemble in unity. All disputes of an international character shall be submitted to this Court, its work being to arrange by arbitration everything which otherwise would be a cause of war. The mission of this Tribunal would be to prevent war.

(“Paris Talks: Addresses given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912”, p. 155) [41]

As to the question of disarmament, all nations must disarm at the same time. It will not do at all, and it is not proposed, that some nations shall lay down their arms while others, their neighbours, remain armed. The peace of the world must be brought about by international agreement. All nations must agree to disarm simultaneously...

No nation can follow a peace policy while its neighbour remains warlike. There is no justice in that. Nobody would dream of suggesting that the peace of the world could be brought about by any such line of action. It is to be brought about by a general and comprehensive international agreement, and in no other way...

Simultaneous action, he went on, is necessary in any scheme of disarmament. All the governments of the world must transform their battleships and warcraft into merchant vessels. But no one nation can by itself start in upon such a policy and it would be folly should one power attempt to do so ... it would simply invite destruction...

...

Are there any signs that the permanent peace of the world will be established in anything like a reasonable period? ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked.

It will be established in this century, he answered. It will be universal in the twentieth century. All nations will be forced into it.

...

Economic pressure will tell?

Yes: the nations will be forced to come to peace and to agree to the abolition of war. The awful burdens of taxation for war purposes will get beyond human endurance...

No, said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in conclusion, I repeat, no nation can disarm under these circumstances. Disarmament is surely coming, but it must come, and it will come, by the universal consent of the civilized nations of the earth. By international agreement they will lay down their arms and the great era of peace will be ushered in.

In this and no other way can peace be established upon the earth.

(Extracts from interview with newspaper reporter, quoted in “‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Canada” (Thornhill: Bahá’í Canada Publications, 1987), pp. 34-35) [42]

Once the Parliament of Man is established and its constituent parts organized, the governments of the world having entered into a covenant of eternal friendship will have no need of keeping large standing armies and navies. A few battalions to preserve internal order, and an International Police to keep the highways of the seas clear, are all that will be necessary. Then these huge sums will be diverted to other more useful channels, pauperism will disappear, knowledge will increase, the victories of Peace will be sung by poets and bards, knowledge will improve the conditions and mankind will be rocked in the cradle of felicity and bliss. Then, whether a government is constitutional or republican, hereditary monarchy or democratic, the

rulers will devote their time to the prosperity of their nations, the legislation of just and sane laws and the fostering of closer and more amicable relations with their neighbours—thus will the world of humanity become a mirror reflecting the virtues and attributes of the Kingdom of God.

By a general agreement all the governments of the world must disarm simultaneously.... It will not do if one lays down the arms and the other refuses to do so. The nations of the world must concur with each other concerning this supremely important subject, thus they may abandon together the deadly weapons of human slaughter. As long as one nation increases her military and naval budget, another nation will be forced into this crazed competition through her natural and supposed interests....

...

Now the question of disarmament must be put into practice by all the nations and not only by one or two. Consequently the advocates of Peace must strive day and night, so that the individuals of every country may become peace-loving, public opinion may gain a strong and permanent footing, and day by day the army of International Peace be increased, complete disarmament be realized and the Flag of Universal Conciliation be waving on the summit of the mountains of the earth.

...

The ideals of Peace must be nurtured and spread among the inhabitants of the world; they must be instructed in the school of Peace and the evils of war. First: The financiers and bankers must desist from lending money to any government contemplating to wage an unjust war upon an innocent nation. Second: The presidents and managers of the railroads and steamship companies must refrain from transporting war ammunition, infernal engines, guns, cannons and powder from one country into another. Third: The soldiers must petition, through their representatives, the Ministers of War, the politicians, the Congressmen and the generals to put forth in a clear, intelligible language the reasons and the causes which have brought them to the brink of such a national calamity. The soldiers must *demand* this as one of the prerogatives. “Demonstrate to us”, they must say, “that this is a just war, and we will then enter into the battlefield otherwise we will not take one step.... Come forth from your hiding-places, enter into the battlefield if you like to attack each other and tear each other to pieces if you desire to air your so-called contentions. The discord and feud are between you; why do you make us, innocent people, a party to it? If fighting and bloodshed are good things, then lead us into the fray by your presence!”

In short, every means that produces war must be checked and the causes that prevent the occurrence of war be advanced;—so that physical conflict may become an impossibility. On the other hand, every country must be properly delimited, its exact frontiers marked, its national integrity secured, its permanent independence protected, and its vital interests honoured by the family of nations. These services ought to be rendered by an impartial, international Commission. In this manner all causes of friction and differences will be removed. And in case there should arise some disputes between them, they could arbitrate before the Parliament of Man, the representatives of which should be chosen from among the wisest and most judicious men of all the nations of the world.

(“Star of the West”, vol. 5, no. 8 (August 1914), pp. 115-117)

[43]

Every century holds the solution of one predominating problem. Although there may be many problems, yet one of the innumerable problems will loom large and become the most important of all.... in this luminous century the greatest bestowal of the world of humanity is Universal Peace, which must be founded, so that the realm of creation may obtain composure, the East and the West, which include in their arms the five continents of the globe, may embrace each other,

mankind may rest beneath the tent of oneness of the world of humanity, and the flag of universal peace may wave over all the regions....

...

Today the true duty of a powerful king is to establish a universal peace; for verily it signifies the freedom of all the people of the world. Some persons who are ignorant of the world of true humanity and its high ambitions for the general good, reckon such a glorious condition of life to be very difficult, nay rather impossible to compass. But it is not so, far from it.

("Star of the West". vol. 7, no. 14 (November 1916), p. 136) [44]

O ye individuals of humanity, find ye means for the stoppage of this wholesale murder and bloodshed. Now is the appointed time! Now is the opportune time! Arise ye, show ye an effort, put ye forward an extraordinary force, and unfurl ye the Flag of Universal Peace and dam the irresistible fury of this raging torrent which is wreaking havoc and ruin everywhere.

("Star of the West", vol. 18, no. 11 (February 1928), p. 345) [45]

By what process, continued the questioner, will this peace on earth be established? Will it come at once after a universal declaration of the Truth?

No, it will come about gradually, said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. A plant that grows too quickly lasts but a short time. You are my family, and he looked about with a smile, my new children! if a family lives in unison, great results are obtained. Widen the circle; when a city lives in intimate accord greater results will follow, and a continent that is fully united will likewise unite all other continents. Then will be the time of the greatest results, for all the inhabitants of the earth belong to one native land.

("Abdu'l-Bahá in London: Addresses, and Notes of Conversations", Commemorative ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 106) [46]

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

Dearly-beloved friends! Humanity, whether viewed in the light of man's individual conduct or in the existing relationships between organized communities and nations, has, alas, strayed too far and suffered too great a decline to be redeemed through the unaided efforts of the best among its recognized rulers and statesmen—however disinterested their motives, however concerted their action, however unsparing in their zeal and devotion to its cause. No scheme which the calculations of the highest statesmanship may yet devise, no doctrine which the most distinguished exponents of economic theory may hope to advance, no principle which the most ardent of moralists may strive to inculcate, can provide, in the last resort, adequate foundations upon which the future of a distracted world can be built. No appeal for mutual tolerance which the worldly-wise might raise, however compelling and insistent, can calm its passions or help restore its vigour. Nor would any general scheme of mere organized international co-operation, in whatever sphere of human activity, however ingenious in conception or extensive in scope, succeed in removing the root cause of the evil that has so rudely upset the equilibrium of present day society. Not even, I venture to assert, would the very act of devising the machinery required for the political and economic unification of the world—a principle that has been increasingly advocated in recent times—provide in itself the antidote against the poison that is steadily undermining the vigour of organized peoples and nations. What else, might we not confidently affirm, but the unreserved acceptance of the Divine Programme enunciated, with such simplicity and force as far back as sixty years ago, by Bahá'u'lláh, embodying in its essentials God's divinely-appointed scheme for the unification of mankind in this age, coupled with an indomitable conviction in the unfailing efficacy of each and all of its provisions, is eventually capable of

withstanding the forces of internal disintegration which, if unchecked, must needs continue to eat into the vitals of a despairing society. It is towards this goal—the goal of a new World Order, Divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, equitable in principle, challenging in its features—that a harrassed humanity must strive.

To claim to have grasped all the implications of Bahá'u'lláh's prodigious scheme for world-wide human solidarity, or to have fathomed its import, would be presumptuous on the part of even the declared supporters of His Faith. To attempt to visualize it in all its possibilities, to estimate its future benefits, to picture its glory, would be premature at even so advanced a stage in the evolution of mankind.

All we can reasonably venture to attempt is to strive to obtain a glimpse of the first streaks of the promised Dawn that must, in the fullness of time, chase away the gloom that has encircled humanity. All we can do is to point out, in their broadest outline, to what appear to us to be the guiding principles underlying the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, as amplified and enunciated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of His Covenant with all mankind and the appointed Interpreter and Expounder of His Word.

That the unrest and suffering afflicting the mass of mankind are in no small measure the direct consequences of the World War and are attributable to the unwisdom and short-sightedness of the Framers of the Peace Treaties only a biased mind can refuse to admit....

It would be idle however to contend that the war, with all the losses it involved, the passions it aroused and the grievances it left behind, has solely been responsible for the unprecedented confusion into which almost every section of the civilized world is plunged at present. Is it not a fact—and this is the central idea I desire to emphasize—that the fundamental cause of this world unrest is attributable, not so much to the consequences of what must sooner or later come to be regarded as a transitory dislocation in the affairs of a continually changing world, but rather to the failure of those into whose hands the immediate destinies of peoples and nations have been committed, to adjust their systems of economic and political institutions to the imperative needs of a fast evolving age? Are not these intermittent crises that convulse present-day society due primarily to the lamentable inability of the world's recognized leaders to read aright the signs of the times, to rid themselves once for all of their preconceived ideas and fettering creeds, and to reshape the machinery of their respective governments according to those standards that are implicit in Bahá'u'lláh's supreme declaration of the Oneness of Mankind—the chief and distinguishing feature of the Faith He proclaimed?...

How pathetic indeed are the efforts of those leaders of human institutions who, in utter disregard of the spirit of the age, are striving to adjust national processes, suited to the ancient days of self-contained nations to an age which must either achieve the unity of the world, as adumbrated by Bahá'u'lláh, or perish. At so critical an hour in the history of civilization it behoves the leaders of all the nations of the world, great and small, whether in the East or in the West, whether victors or vanquished, to give heed to the clarion call of Bahá'u'lláh and, thoroughly imbued with a sense of world solidarity, the sine qua non of loyalty to His Cause, arise manfully to carry out in its entirety the one remedial scheme He, the Divine Physician, has prescribed for an ailing humanity. Let them discard, once for all, every preconceived idea, every national prejudice, and give heed to the sublime counsel of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the authorized Expounder of His teachings. You can best serve your country, was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's rejoinder to a high official in the service of the federal government of the United States of America, who had questioned Him as to the best manner in which he could promote the interests of his government and people, if you strive, in your capacity as a citizen of the world, to assist in the eventual application of the principle of federalism underlying the government of your own country to the relationships now existing between the peoples and nations of the world.

...

Some form of a world super-state must needs be evolved, in whose favour all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include within its orbit an international executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a world parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a supreme tribunal whose judgement will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration. A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labour definitely recognized; in which the clamour of religious fanaticism and strife will have been for ever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.

...

Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá'u'lláh. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remould its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity such as 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has explained.

...

Its [the principle of the Oneness of Mankind] implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds—creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world—a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.

It represents the consummation of human evolution—an evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations.

...

To take but one instance. How confident were the assertions made in the days preceding the unification of the states of the North American continent regarding the insuperable barriers that stood in the way of their ultimate federation! Was it not widely and emphatically declared that the conflicting interests, the mutual distrust, the differences of government and habit that divided the states were such as no force, whether spiritual or temporal, could ever hope to harmonize or control? And yet how different were the conditions prevailing a hundred and fifty years ago from those that characterize present-day society! It would indeed be no exaggeration to say that the absence of those facilities which modern scientific progress has placed at the service of humanity in our time made of the problem of welding the American states into a single federation, similar though they were in certain traditions, a task infinitely more complex than that which confronts a divided humanity in its efforts to achieve the unification of all mankind.

Who knows that for so exalted a conception to take shape a suffering more intense than any it has yet experienced will have to be inflicted upon humanity? Could anything less than the fire of a civil war with all its violence and vicissitudes—a war that nearly rent the great American Republic—have welded the states, not only into a Union of independent units, but into a Nation, in spite of all the ethnic differences that characterized its component parts? That so fundamental a revolution, involving such far-reaching changes in the structure of society, can be achieved through the ordinary processes of diplomacy and education seems highly improbable. We have but to turn our gaze to humanity's blood-stained history to realize that nothing short of intense mental as well as physical agony has been able to precipitate those epoch-making changes that constitute the greatest landmarks in the history of human civilization.

Great and far-reaching as have been those changes in the past, they cannot but appear, when viewed in their proper perspective, except as subsidiary adjustments prelude that transformation of unparalleled majesty and scope which humanity is in this age bound to undergo. That the forces of a world catastrophe can alone precipitate such a new phase of human thought is, alas, becoming increasingly apparent. That nothing short of the fire of a severe ordeal, unparalleled in its intensity, can fuse and weld the discordant entities, that constitute the elements of present-day civilization, into the integral components of the world Commonwealth of the future is a truth which future events will increasingly demonstrate.

The prophetic voice of Bahá'u'lláh warning, in the concluding passages of the "Hidden Words", "the peoples of the world" that "an unforeseen calamity is following them and that grievous retribution awaiteth them" throws indeed a lurid light upon the immediate fortunes of sorrowing humanity. Nothing but a fiery ordeal, out of which humanity will emerge, chastened and prepared, can succeed in implanting that sense of responsibility which the leaders of a new-born age must arise to shoulder.

I would again direct your attention to those ominous words of Bahá'u'lláh which I have already quoted: "And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake."

Has not 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself asserted in unequivocal language that "another war, fiercer than the last, will assuredly break out"?

Upon the consummation of this colossal, this unspeakably glorious enterprise—an enterprise that baffled the resources of Roman statesmanship and which Napoleon's desperate efforts failed

to achieve—will depend the ultimate realization of that millennium of which poets of all ages have sung and seers have long dreamed. Upon it will depend the fulfilment of the prophecies uttered by the Prophets of old when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and the lion and the lamb lie down together. It alone can usher in the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father as anticipated by the Faith of Jesus Christ. It alone can lay the foundation for the New World Order visualized by Bahá'u'lláh—a World Order that shall reflect, however dimly, upon this earthly plane, the ineffable splendours of the Abhá Kingdom.

One word more in conclusion. The proclamation of the Oneness of Mankind—the head cornerstone of Bahá'u'lláh's all-embracing dominion—can under no circumstances be compared with such expressions of pious hope as have been uttered in the past. His is not merely a call which He raised, alone and unaided, in the face of the relentless and combined opposition of two of the most powerful Oriental potentates of His day—while Himself an exile and prisoner in their hands. It implies at once a warning and a promise—a warning that in it lies the sole means for the salvation of a greatly suffering world, a promise that its realization is at hand.

Uttered at a time when its possibility had not yet been seriously envisaged in any part of the world, it has, by virtue of that celestial potency which the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh has breathed into it, come at last to be regarded, by an increasing number of thoughtful men, not only as an approaching possibility, but as the necessary outcome of the forces now operating in the world.

Surely the world, contracted and transformed into a single highly complex organism by the marvellous progress achieved in the realm of physical science, by the world-wide expansion of commerce and industry, and struggling, under the pressure of world economic forces, amidst the pitfalls of a materialistic civilization, stands in dire need of a restatement of the Truth underlying all the Revelation, of the past in a language suited to its essential requirements. And what voice other than that of Bahá'u'lláh—the Mouthpiece of God for this age—is capable of effecting a transformation of society as radical as that which He has already accomplished in the hearts of those men and women, so diversified and seemingly irreconcilable, who constitute the body of His declared followers throughout the world?

That such a mighty conception is fast budding out in the minds of men, that voices are being raised in its support, that its salient features must fast crystallize in the consciousness of those who are in authority, few indeed can doubt. That its modest beginnings have already taken shape in the world-wide Administration with which the adherents of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh stand associated only those whose hearts are tainted by prejudice can fail to perceive.

(28 November 1931 to the Bahá'ís of the West, published in "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters", pp. 33-37, 40-43, 45-48)

[47]

No machinery falling short of the standard inculcated by the Bahá'í Revelation, and at variance with the sublime pattern ordained in His teachings, which the collective efforts of mankind may yet devise can ever hope to achieve anything above or beyond that "*Lesser Peace*" to which the Author of our Faith has Himself alluded in His writings. "*Now that ye have refused the Most Great Peace,*" He, admonishing the kings and rulers of the earth, has written, "hold ye fast unto this the Lesser Peace, that haply ye may in some degree better your own condition and that of your dependents." Expatiating on this Lesser Peace, He thus addresses in that same Tablet the rulers of the earth: "*Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions.... Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice.*"

The Most Great Peace, on the other hand, as conceived by Bahá'u'lláh—a peace that must inevitably follow as the practical consequence of the spiritualization of the world and the fusion of

all its races, creeds, classes and nations—can rest on no other basis, and can be preserved through no other agency, except the divinely appointed ordinances that are implicit in the World Order that stands associated with His Holy Name....

...

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regarded as signaling through its advent the *coming of age of the entire human race*. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet. The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture—all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era—should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual, will, nay must indeed as a result of such a consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and develop.

...

The whole of mankind is groaning, is dying to be led to unity, and to terminate its age-long martyrdom. And yet it stubbornly refuses to embrace the light and acknowledge the sovereign authority of the one Power that can extricate it from its entanglements, and avert the woeful calamity that threatens to engulf it.

Ominous indeed is the voice of Bahá'u'lláh that rings through these prophetic words: *“O ye peoples of the world! Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity followeth you, and grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not that which ye have committed hath been effaced in My sight.”* And again: *“We have a fixed time for you, O peoples. If ye fail, at the appointed hour, to turn towards God, He, verily, will lay violent hold on you, and will cause grievous afflictions to assail you from every direction. How severe, indeed, is the chastisement with which your Lord will then chastise you!”*

Must humanity, tormented as she now is, be afflicted with still severer tribulations ere their purifying influence can prepare her to enter the heavenly Kingdom destined to be established upon earth? Must the inauguration of so vast, so unique, so illumined an era in human history be ushered in by so great a catastrophe in human affairs as to recall, nay surpass, the appalling collapse of Roman civilization in the first centuries of the Christian Era? Must a series of profound convulsions stir and rock the human race ere Bahá'u'lláh can be enthroned in the hearts and consciences of the masses, ere His undisputed ascendancy is universally recognized, and the noble edifice of His World Order is reared and established?

The long ages of infancy and childhood, through which the human race had to pass, have receded into the background. Humanity is now experiencing the commotions invariably associated with the most turbulent stage of its evolution, the stage of adolescence, when the impetuosity of youth and its vehemence reach their climax, and must gradually be superseded by the calmness, the wisdom, and the maturity that characterize the stage of manhood. Then will the human race reach that stature of ripeness which will enable it to acquire all the powers and capacities upon which its ultimate development must depend.

...

Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is

striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life.

...

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act as the nerve centre of a world civilization, the focus towards which the unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate. A world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages and will be taught in the schools of all the federated nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue. A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind. In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will co-operate, and will harmoniously develop. The press will, under such a system, while giving full scope to the expression of the diversified views and convictions of mankind, cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests, whether private or public, and will be liberated from the influence of contending governments and peoples. The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be co-ordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated.

National rivalries, hatreds, and intrigues will cease, and racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity, understanding and co-operation. The causes of religious strife will be permanently removed, economic barriers and restrictions will be completely abolished, and the inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated. Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear.

The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race.

A world federal system, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one

common Revelation—such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving.

(11 March 1936, published in “The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh: Selected Letters”, pp. 162-163, 201-204)

[48]

The world-shaking ordeal which Bahá’u’lláh, as quoted in the foregoing pages, has so graphically prophesied, may find it [the American nation] swept, to an unprecedented degree, into its vortex. Out of it it will probably emerge, unlike its reactions to the last world conflict, consciously determined to seize its opportunity, to bring the full weight of its influence to bear upon the gigantic problems that such an ordeal must leave in its wake, and to exorcise forever, in conjunction with its sister nations of both the East and the West, the greatest curse which, from time immemorial, has afflicted and degraded the human race.

Then, and only then, will the American nation, moulded and purified in the crucible of a common war, inured to its rigours, and disciplined by its lessons, be in a position to raise its voice in the councils of the nations, itself lay the corner-stone of a universal and enduring peace, proclaim the solidarity, the unity, and maturity of mankind, and assist in the establishment of the promised reign of righteousness on earth. Then, and only then, will the American nation, while the community of the American believers within its heart is consummating its divinely appointed mission, be able to fulfill the unspeakably glorious destiny ordained for it by the Almighty, and immortally enshrined in the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then, and only then, will the American nation accomplish “*that which will adorn the pages of history,*” “*become the envy of the world and be blest in both the East and the West.*”

(25 December 1938, published in “The Advent of Divine Justice” (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1984), pp. 90-91)

[49]

The world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny. The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth, whatever the leaders of the divisive forces of the world may say or do, is already an accomplished fact. Its unity in the economic sphere is now understood and recognized. The welfare of the part means the welfare of the whole, and the distress of the part brings distress to the whole. The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh has, in His own words, “*lent a fresh impulse and set a new direction*” to this vast process now operating in the world. The fires lit by this great ordeal are the consequences of men’s failure to recognize it. They are, moreover, hastening its consummation. Adversity, prolonged, world wide, afflictive, allied to chaos and universal destruction, must needs convulse the nations, stir the conscience of the world, disillusion the masses, precipitate a radical change in the very conception of society, and coalesce ultimately the disjointed, the bleeding limbs of mankind into one body, single, organically united, and indivisible.

...

To the general character, the implications and features of this world commonwealth, destined to emerge, sooner or later, out of the carnage, agony, and havoc of this great world convulsion, I have already referred in my previous communications. Suffice it to say that this consummation will, by its very nature, be a gradual process, and must, as Bahá’u’lláh has Himself anticipated, lead at first to the establishment of that Lesser Peace which the nations of the earth, as yet unconscious of His Revelation and yet unwittingly enforcing the general principles which He has enunciated, will themselves establish. This momentous and historic step, involving the reconstruction of mankind, as the result of the universal recognition of its oneness and wholeness, will bring in its wake the spiritualization of the masses, consequent to the recognition of the character, and the acknowledgement of the claims, of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh—the essential condition to that ultimate fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations which must signalize the emergence of His New World Order.

Then will the coming of age of the entire human race be proclaimed and celebrated by all the peoples and nations of the earth. Then will the banner of the Most Great Peace be hoisted. Then will the world wide sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh—the Establisher of the Kingdom of the Father foretold by the Son, and anticipated by the Prophets of God before Him and after Him—be recognized, acclaimed, and firmly established. Then will a world civilization be born, flourish, and perpetuate itself, a civilization with a fullness of life such as the world has never seen nor can as yet conceive. Then will the Everlasting Covenant be fulfilled in its completeness. Then will the promise enshrined in all the Books of God be redeemed, and all the prophecies uttered by the Prophets of old come to pass, and the vision of seers and poets be realized. Then will the planet, galvanized through the universal belief of its dwellers in one God, and their allegiance to one common Revelation, mirror, within the limitations imposed upon it, the effulgent glories of the sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh, shining in the plenitude of its splendour in the Abhá Paradise, and be made the footstool of His Throne on high, and acclaimed as the earthly heaven, capable of fulfilling that ineffable destiny fixed for it, from time immemorial, by the love and wisdom of its Creator.

(28 March 1941, published in “The Promised Day Is Come”, pp. 122-124) [50]

The principle of collective security He [Bahá'u'lláh] unreservedly urges; recommends the reduction in national armaments; and proclaims as necessary and inevitable the convening of a world gathering at which the kings and rulers of the world will deliberate for the establishment of peace among the nations.

(“God Passes By”, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), pp. 217-218) [51]

During this Formative Age of the Faith, and in the course of the 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...

...

... 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 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 set-back through the dissociation of that Republic from the newly-born League of Nations which that President had laboured 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 centre 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.

(5 June 1947 to the Bahá'ís of West, published in "Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947-1957" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 6, pp. 32-33) [52]

The raising of this Edifice will in turn herald the construction, in the course of successive epochs of the Formative Age of the Faith, of several other structures, which will serve as the administrative seats of such divinely appointed institutions as the Guardianship, the Hands of the Cause, and the Universal House of Justice. These Edifices will, in the shape of a far-flung arc, and following a harmonizing style of architecture, surround the resting-places of the Greatest Holy Leaf, ranking as foremost among the members of her sex in the Bahá'í Dispensation, of her Brother, offered up as a ransom by Bahá'u'lláh for the quickening of the world and its unification, and of their Mother, proclaimed by Him to be His chosen "consort in all the worlds of God". The ultimate completion of this stupendous undertaking will mark the culmination of the development of a world-wide divinely-appointed Administrative Order whose beginnings may be traced as far back as the concluding years of the Heroic Age of the Faith.

This vast and irresistible process, unexampled in the spiritual history of mankind, and which will synchronize with two no less significant developments—the establishment of the Lesser Peace and the evolution of Bahá'í national and local institutions—the one outside and the other within the Bahá'í world—will attain its final consummation, in the Golden Age of the Faith, through the raising of the standard of the Most Great Peace, and the emergence, in the plenitude of its power and glory, of the focal Centre of the agencies constituting the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The final establishment of this seat of the future Bahá'í World Commonwealth will signalize at once the proclamation of the sovereignty of the Founder of our Faith and the advent of the Kingdom of the Father repeatedly lauded and promised by Jesus Christ.

This World Order will, in turn, in the course of successive Dispensations of the Bahá'í Cycle, yield its fairest fruit through the birth and flowering of a civilization, divinely inspired, unique in its features, world-embracing in its scope, and fundamentally spiritual in its character—a civilization destined as it unfolds to derive its initial impulse from the spirit animating the very institutions which, in their embryonic state, are now stirring in the womb of the present Formative Age of the Faith.

(27 November 1954 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in "Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950-1957" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 74-75) [53]

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

The world is in great turmoil, and what is most pathetic is that it has learned to keep away from God, Who alone can save it and alleviate its sufferings. It is our duty, we who have been trusted with the task of applying the divine remedy given by Bahá'u'lláh, to concentrate our attention upon the consummation of this task, and not rest until the peace foretold by the Prophets of God is permanently established...

(9 December 1931 to the Bahá'ís of Tokyo)

[54]

Shoghi Effendi wrote his last general letter to the western friends because he felt that the public should be made to understand the attitude the Bahá'í Faith maintains towards the prevailing economic and political problems. We should let the world know what the real aim of Bahá'u'lláh was. Up to the present Unity of Mankind was only of an academic importance. Now it is becoming more and more a subject for international statesmen to think of. It is coming to the field of practical politics. It is therefore a wonderful chance for us to come to the front and expound the teaching which is the goal and aim of the social precepts of Bahá'u'lláh. Shoghi Effendi hopes that the friends will re-echo this call to an organic unity of mankind until it forms part of the conscious faith of every living man in the world. Great judgement should be however practised lest we be misunderstood and our Faith be classed among radical movements.

(28 January 1932 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

[55]

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated January 26th 1932 which accompanied a printed copy of his last general letter. He thanks you both for this as well as for the one hundred copies you are shipping to him. He is deeply gratified to learn that the friends find it interesting and worthwhile enough as to make its subject-matter the topic of their teaching campaign. He sincerely hopes that this will also awaken some of the friends to the importance of this teaching of the Cause and stimulate them to make a thorough and deep study of it. For it undoubtedly forms the goal of the social precepts of the Faith. There is no reason why the Bahá'ís should not take the lead in advocating such a federation of the world, towards which the world is driven by forces it cannot control...

(16 February 1932 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

[56]

The different nations of the world will never attain peace except after recognizing the significance of the teachings and whole-heartedly upholding them for through those precepts all international problems will be solved and every man will secure the spiritual environment in which his soul can evolve and produce its highest fruits.

(15 January 1933 to an individual believer)

[57]

The Guardian has also read with deep interest all the enclosed papers. He is firmly convinced that through perseverance and concerted action the cause of Peace will eventually triumph over all the dark forces which threaten the welfare and progress of the world today. But such purely human attempts are undoubtedly ineffective unless inspired and guided by the power of faith. Without the assistance of God, as given through the message of Bahá'u'lláh, peace can never be safely and adequately established. To disregard the Bahá'í solution for world peace is to build on foundations of sand. To accept and apply it is to make peace not a mere dream, or an ideal, but a living reality. This is the point which the Guardian wishes you to develop, to emphasize again and again, and to support by convincing arguments. The Bahá'í peace programme is, indeed, not only one way of attaining that goal. It is not even relatively the best. It is, in the last resort, the sole effective instrument for the establishment of the reign of peace in this world. This attitude does not involve any total repudiation of other solutions offered by various philanthropists. It merely shows their inadequacy compared to the Divine Plan for the unification of the world. We cannot escape the truth that nothing mundane can in the last resort be enduring, unless supported and sustained through the power of God.

(25 September 1933 to an individual believer)

[58]

Whatever our shortcomings may be, and however formidable the forces of darkness which besiege us today, the unification of mankind as outlined and ensured by the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh will in the fullness of time be firmly and permanently established. This is Bahá'u'lláh's promise, and no power on earth can in the long run prevent or even retard its adequate realization. The friends should, therefore, not lose hope, but fully conscious of their power and their rôle they should persevere in their mighty efforts for the extension and the consolidation of Bahá'u'lláh's universal dominion on earth.

(6 November 1933 to an individual believer)

[59]

As regards the International Executive referred to by the Guardian in his "Goal of a New World Order", it should be noted that this statement refers by no means to the Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, but simply to that world government which will herald the advent and lead to the final establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The formation of this International Executive, which corresponds to the executive head or board in present-day national governments, is but a step leading to the Bahá'í world government of the future, and hence should not be identified with either the institution of the Guardianship or that of the International House of Justice.

(17 March 1934 to two believers)

[60]

In connection with your teaching work: what the Guardian wishes you to particularly emphasize in all your talks is the supreme necessity for all individuals and nations in this day to adopt in its entirety the social programme given by Bahá'u'lláh for the reconstruction of the religious, economic and political life of mankind. He wishes you to explain and analyze the elements that help in raising this Divine World Order in the light of the present-day events and conditions in the world. Special stress, he feels, should be laid on the impending necessity of establishing a supranational and sovereign world state, as the one described by Bahá'u'lláh. With the world becoming increasingly subject to tumults and convulsions never experienced before, the realization of such a necessity is entering into the consciousness of not only the wise and learned, but of the common people as well. The believers should, therefore, seize this opportunity and make a supreme effort to present, in a convincing and eloquent language, those social and humanitarian teachings of the Faith which we believe to constitute the sole panacea for the innumerable ills afflicting our present-day world.

(15 November 1935 to two believers)

[61]

With reference to your question concerning 'Abdu'l-Bahá's reference to "unity in the political realm": this unity should be clearly distinguished from the "unity of nations". The first is a unity which politically independent and sovereign states achieve among themselves; while the second is one which is brought about between nations, the difference between a state and a nation being that the former, as you know, is a political entity without necessarily being homogeneous in race, whereas the second implies national as well as political homogeneity.

(26 July 1936 to an individual believer)

[62]

As regards your teaching work: the Guardian has already advised you to stress in your talks the idea of a world superstate, and the concept of the Oneness of Mankind underlying it. In addition, he wishes you also to emphasize the fact that humanity, taken as a whole, has entered the most critical and momentous stage of its evolution, the stage of maturity. This idea of the coming of age of mankind constitutes the central core of the Bahá'í Teachings, and is the most distinguishing feature of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. A proper understanding of this concept gives the key to an adequate appreciation of the tremendous claim made by the Author of the Faith, both with regard to His own station, and to the incomparable greatness of His Dispensation.

(12 October 1936 to an individual believer)

[63]

With reference to the question you have asked concerning the time and means through which the Lesser and Most Great Peace, referred to by Bahá'u'lláh, will be established, following the coming World War: Your view that the Lesser Peace will come about through the political efforts of the states and nations of the world, and independently of any direct Bahá'í plan or effort, and the Most Great Peace be established through the instrumentality of the believers, and by the direct operation of the laws and principles revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and the functioning of the Universal House of Justice as the supreme organ of the Bahá'í superstate—your view on this subject is quite correct and in full accord with the pronouncements of the Guardian as embodied in “The Unfoldment of World Civilization”.

(14 March 1939 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada,
and to an individual believer) [64]

Though it is premature to try and endeavour to foresee on what basis various nations would be represented on any international council, or in any international form of government, it is clear that from the Bahá'í standpoint it could only be carried out on a basis of true justice; and justice does not imply one race having a preponderating vote over some other race's representatives, and thus being in a position to dominate them.

(12 April 1942 to an individual believer) [65]

What 'Abdu'l-Bahá meant about the women arising for peace is that this a matter which vitally affects women, and when they form a conscious and overwhelming mass of public opinion against war there can be no war. The Bahá'í women are already organized through being members of the Faith and the Administrative Order. No further organization is needed. But they should, through teaching and through the active moral support they give to every movement directed towards peace, seek to exert a strong influence on other women's minds in regard to this essential matter.

(24 March 1945 to two believers) [66]

The Seven Lights of Unity will not necessarily appear in the order given. A product of the second may well be universal culture.

(19 November 1945 to an individual believer) [67]

The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh will establish a new way of life for humanity. Those who are Bahá'ís must endeavour to establish this way of life just as rapidly as possible. Now that the hour has arrived when the Bahá'í Faith is gaining prominence, and is being reviewed by so many peoples, it is necessary that the adherents of the Faith should live up to the high ideals of the Faith in every way. In this way they can demonstrate that the Bahá'í Faith does create a new way of life, which brings to the individual a complete association with the Will of God, and thus the establishment of a peaceful and universal society. Divisional attachments are of men, while universal service is of God.

The Guardian is now anxious that all the friends achieve a universal consciousness and universal way of life.

(20 November 1955 to an individual believer) [68]

World government will come, but we do not know the date.

(15 August 1957 to an individual believer) [69]

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

When Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed His Message to the world in the nineteenth century He made it abundantly clear that the first step essential for the peace and progress of mankind was its unification. As He says, "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." ("The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 203) To this day, however, you will find most people take the opposite point of view: they look upon unity as an ultimate, almost unattainable goal and concentrate first on remedying all the other ills of mankind. If they did but know it, these other ills are but various symptoms and side effects of the basic disease—disunity.

Bahá'u'lláh has, furthermore, stated that the revivification of mankind and the curing of all its ills can be achieved only through the instrumentality of His Faith...

...

We are told by Shoghi Effendi that two great processes are at work in the world: the great Plan of God, tumultuous in its progress, working through mankind as a whole, tearing down barriers to world unity and forging humankind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and experience. This process will produce, in God's due time, the Lesser Peace, the political unification of the world. Mankind at that time can be likened to a body that is unified but without life. The second process, the task of breathing life into this unified body—of creating true unity and spirituality culminating in the Most Great Peace—is that of the Bahá'ís, who are labouring consciously, with detailed instructions and continuing Divine guidance, to erect the fabric of the Kingdom of God on earth, into which they call their fellow men, thus conferring upon them eternal life.

(8 December 1967, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968", 1st rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), pp. 131-134) [70]

It is true that 'Abdu'l-Bahá made statements linking the establishment of the unity of nations to the twentieth century. For example: "The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which, in this century, will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland." And, in The "Promised Day Is Come", following a similar statement quoted from "Some Answered Questions", Shoghi Effendi makes this comment: "This is the stage which the world is now approaching, the stage of world unity, which, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá assures us, will, in this century, be securely established."

There is also this statement from a letter written in 1946 to an individual believer on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary:

All we know is that the Lesser and the Most Great Peace will come—their exact dates we do not know. The same is true as regards the possibility of a future war; we cannot state dogmatically it will or will not take place—all we know is that mankind must suffer and be punished sufficiently to make it turn to God.

(29 July 1974) [71]

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

... the Bahá'í Faith aims to eliminate all war, including nuclear. The fundamental purpose of our Faith is unity and the establishment of peace. This goal, which is the longing of people throughout an increasingly insecure world, can only be achieved through the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Since it is only the Bahá'ís who can give these Teachings to mankind, the friends must weigh carefully how they will spend their time and energy and guard against associating with activities which unduly distract them from their primary responsibility of sharing the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

(4 July 1982 to an individual believer)

[72]

At the present time, the subject of nuclear disarmament has become very much a political issue, with demonstrations taking place not only in the United States but also in England and some western European countries. To single out nuclear disarmament falls short of the Bahá'í position and would involve the Faith in the current disputes between nations. It is very clear that Bahá'ís believe disarmament, not only of nuclear weapons but of biological, chemical and all other forms, is essential....

(12 January 1983 to an individual believer)

[73]

Concerning the transition from the present system of national sovereignty to a system of world government, the House of Justice fully agrees with your view that the Bahá'ís must now do all in their power to promote this transition. This requires several related activities, all of which are goals of the present Seven Year Plan. One is the establishment as rapidly as possible of firmly grounded efficiently functioning Local Spiritual Assemblies in every part of the world, so that seekers everywhere will have a point of reference to which they can turn for guidance and for the Teachings of the Faith. A second is the deepening of the believers, of all ages, in their understanding of and obedience to the Teachings. A third is the proclamation of the Faith to all strata of society, and in particular to those in authority and to leaders of thought so that those who hold the direction of peoples in their hands will learn accurately about the nature and tenets of the Faith and will grow to respect it and implement its principles. A fourth is the promotion of Bahá'í scholarship, so that an increasing number of believers will be able to analyse the problems of mankind in every field and to show how the Teachings solve them. A fifth is the development of relations between the Bahá'í International Community and the United Nations both directly with the highest UN institutions and at a grass-roots level in areas of rural development, education, etc.

As you are no doubt aware, the Guardian indicated that the development of mankind from its present chaotic condition to the stage of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth would be a long and gradual one. The coming into existence of a World Authority and the initiation of the Lesser Peace, is one major transformation in this process, and will be followed by other stages of the development of the Faith as outlined by Shoghi Effendi in his writings. Undoubtedly, as these developments are taking place, the counsel the institutions of the Faith can give to governments, the pattern of world administration offered by the Bahá'í community and the great humanitarian projects which will be launched under the aegis of the Universal House of Justice, will exercise a great influence on the course of progress.

(19 January 1983 to an individual believer)

[74]

It is true that Bahá'ís are not pacifists since we uphold the use of force in the service of justice and upholding law. But we do not believe that war is ever necessary and its abolition is one of the essential purposes and brightest promises of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation. His specific command to the kings of the earth is: "Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice." (Tablet to Queen Victoria, "The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 13) The beloved Guardian has explained that the unity of mankind implies the establishment of a world commonwealth, a world federal system, "liberated from the curse of war and its miseries in which Force is made the servant of Justice" whose world executive "backed by an international Force ... will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth." This is obviously not war but the maintenance of law and order on a world scale. Warfare is the ultimate tragedy of disunity among nations where no international authority exists powerful enough to restrain them from pursuing their own limited interests. Bahá'ís therefore ask to serve their countries in non-combatant ways during such fighting; they will doubtless serve in such an international Force as Bahá'u'lláh envisions, whenever it comes into being.

(11 September 1984 to an individual believer)

[75]

Bahá'u'lláh's principal mission in appearing at this time in human history is the realization of the oneness of mankind and the establishment of peace among the nations; therefore, all the forces which are focused on accomplishing these ends are influenced by His Revelation. We know, however, that peace will come in stages. First, there will come the Lesser Peace, when the unity of nations will be achieved, then gradually the Most Great Peace—the spiritual as well as social and political unity of mankind, when the Bahá'í World Commonwealth, operating in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Most Holy Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, will have been established through the efforts of the Bahá'ís.

As to the Lesser Peace, Shoghi Effendi has explained that this will initially be a political unity arrived at by decision of the governments of various nations; it will not be established by direct action of the Bahá'í community. This does not mean, however, that the Bahá'ís are standing aside and waiting for the Lesser Peace to come before they do something about the peace of mankind. Indeed, by promoting the principles of the Faith, which are indispensable to the maintenance of peace, and by fashioning the instruments of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, which we are told by the beloved Guardian is the pattern for future society, the Bahá'ís are constantly engaged in laying the groundwork for a permanent peace, the Most Great Peace being their ultimate goal.

The Lesser Peace itself will pass through stages; at the initial stage the governments will act entirely on their own without the conscious involvement of the Faith; later on, in God's good time, the Faith will have a direct influence on it in ways indicated by Shoghi Effendi in his "The Goal of a New World Order". In connection with the steps that will lead to this latter stage, the Universal House of Justice will certainly determine what has to be done, in accordance with the guidance in the Writings, such as the passage you quoted from "Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh", page 89. In the meantime, the Bahá'ís will undoubtedly continue to do all in their power to promote the establishment of peace.

(31 January 1985 to an individual believer)

[76]

Notes

- 1 The translation of this sentence has been revised since the publication of “Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”. ←

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