

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Ridván 1964

The Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly-loved Friends,

The divinely propelled process, described in such awe-inspiring words by our beloved Guardian, which began six thousand years ago at the dawn of the Adamic cycle and which is destined to culminate in *"the stage at which the light of God's triumphant Faith shining in all its power and glory will have suffused and enveloped the entire planet"*, is now entering its tenth and last part.

The Ten Year Crusade, so recently consummated in a blaze of victory and rejoicing, constituted the entire ninth part of this process. It saw the Cause of God leap forward in one mighty decade-long effort to the point at which the foundations of its Administrative Order were laid throughout the world, thus preparing the way for that awakening of the masses which must characterize the future progress of the Faith.

From the beginning of this Dispensation the most urgent summons of the Word of God, voiced successively by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, has been to teach the Cause. `Abdu'l-Bahá, in His own words, *"spent His days and nights in promoting the Cause and urging the peoples to service"*. Shoghi Effendi, discharging the sacred mission laid upon him, raised the Administrative Order of the Faith, already enshrined within the Sacred Writings, and forged it into a teaching instrument to accomplish through a succession of plans, national, international, and global, the entire Divine Plan of `Abdu'l-Bahá, and he clearly foresaw in the *"tremendously long"* tenth part of the process already referred to, a series of plans to be launched by the Universal House of Justice, extending over *"successive epochs of both the Formative and Golden Ages of the Faith"*.

The first of these plans is now before us. Opening at Ridván 1964, while the memories of the glorious Jubilee of 1963 still surge within our hearts, it must, during its nine-year course, witness a huge expansion of the Cause of God and universal participation by all believers in the life of that Cause.

At the World Centre of the Faith the tasks of the Plan include publication of a synopsis and codification of the *"Kitáb-i-Aqdas"*, the Most Holy Book; formulation of the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice; development of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, in consultation with the body of the Hands of the Cause, with a view to the extension into the future of its appointed functions of protection and propagation; continued collation and classification of the Bahá'í Sacred Scriptures as well as of the writings of Shoghi Effendi; continued efforts directed towards the emancipation of the Faith from the fetters of religious orthodoxy and its recognition as an independent religion; the preparation of a plan for the

befitting development and beautification of the entire area of Bahá'í property surrounding the Holy Shrines; extension of the existing gardens on Mount Carmel; development of the relationship between the Bahá'í Community and the United Nations; the holding of Oceanic and Inter-Continental Conferences; the co-ordination of worldwide plans to commemorate, in 1967/68, the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's Proclamation to the kings and rulers which centred round His revelation of the Súriy-i-Mulúk in Adrianople.

In the world community the Plan involves the opening of seventy virgin territories and the resettlement of twenty-four; the raising of the number of National Spiritual Assemblies, the pillars sustaining the Universal House of Justice, to one hundred and eight, nine times the number which embarked on the first historic World Crusade in 1953; increasing the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies to over thirteen thousand seven hundred, scattered throughout the territories and islands of the world, at least one thousand seven hundred of them to be incorporated; the raising of the number of localities where Bahá'ís reside to over fifty-four thousand; the building of two more Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, one in Asia and one in Latin America; the acquisition of thirty-two Teaching Institutes, fifty-two national Hazíratu'l-Quds, fifty-four national Endowments, and sites for sixty-two future Temples; wide extension of recognition by civil authorities of the Bahá'í Holy Days and Bahá'í Marriage Certificates; the translation of literature into one hundred and thirty-three more languages, and its enrichment in major languages into which translations have already been made; the establishment of four new Bahá'í Publishing Trusts, and a vast increase in the financial resources of the Faith.

The healthy development of the Cause requires that this great expansion be accompanied by the dedicated effort of every believer in teaching, in living the Bahá'í life, in contributing to the Fund, and particularly in the persistent effort to understand more and more the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. In the words of our beloved Guardian, *"One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh"*.

Expansion and universal participation are the twin objectives of this initial phase of the second epoch of the Divine Plan, and all the goals assigned to the sixty-nine National Communities are contributory to them. The process of co-operation between National Spiritual Assemblies, already initiated by the beloved Guardian, will, during the course of this Plan, apply to over two hundred specific projects and will further strengthen this process which may well assume great importance in future stages of the Formative Age.

Once more, dear friends, we enter the battle but with an incomparably greater array than that which embarked upon the World Crusade in 1953. To that small force of twelve national communities, now veteran campaigners, have been added fifty-seven new legions, each under the generalship of a National Spiritual Assembly, each destined to become a veteran of this and future campaigns. That Crusade began with slightly more than six hundred Local Spiritual Assemblies, the greater part of which were situated in Persia, North America and Europe; the home fronts now comprise nearly four thousand six hundred Local Spiritual Assemblies scattered throughout the continents and islands of the world. We begin this Plan with a tremendous momentum, exemplified by the addition, since last Ridván, of over four thousand new centres and thirteen National Spiritual Assemblies, and by the beginning, in several countries, of that entry by troops into the Cause of God prophesied by `Abdu'l-Bahá and so eagerly anticipated by Him.

The Standard-Bearers of this Nine Year Plan are those same divinely appointed, tried and victorious souls who bore the standard of the World Crusade, the Hands of the Cause of God, whose advice and consultation have been invaluable in the working out of this Nine Year Plan. Supported by their "DEPUTIES, ASSISTANTS [and] ADVISERS", the members of the Auxiliary Boards, they will inspire and protect the army of God, lead through every breach to the limit of available resources and sustain those communities struggling over intractable or stony ground, so that by 1973 the celebrations befitting the centenary of the Revelation of the Most Holy Book may be undertaken by a victorious, firmly established, organically united world community, dedicated to the service of God and the final triumph of His Cause.

Therefore let each of the sixty-nine communities seize its tasks, at once consider how best to accomplish them within the allotted span, raise its band of pioneers, consecrate itself to unremitting labour and set out on its mission. Now is the golden opportunity. For whatever convulsions the waywardness of a godless and materialistic age may yet precipitate in the world, however grievous may be the effects of the rolling up of the present order on the plans and efforts of the Community of the Most Great Name, we must seize the opportunities of the hour and go forward confident that all things are within His mighty grasp and that, if we but play our part, total and unconditional victory will inevitably be ours.

(SIGNED) THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE