

Whatever happened to the Double Crusade?

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As I was thinking about what I might say, I was some weeks ago home alone and I'd been asked by your assistant secretary to give a talk here. And I was wondering what to say to you. And so I was thinking of all of the wonderful achievements of the American Bahá'í community over the years and of the challenges that you face now, of the great potential for growth in this country, and, for all of your activities, the seeming slowness of things, even though you are doing a great deal. I read reports, and there are many activities the friends are engaged in, all kinds of projects, teaching projects, and proclamation projects, and God knows what. And so I was wondering why is it that we are not having a greater expansion in this country? And as I thought about it of course inevitably my mind ran to the messages of the Guardian. So a question popped up in my mind and that is the question that I will begin my talk with. And the question is: whatever happened to the Double Crusade? This question is highly relevant to the Four Year Plan on which this community is now embarked. And so I repeat, whatever happened to the Double Crusade? Whither the army of light? Where have all the soldiers gone? The answers to these questions, or to the main one, in any case, rest with each and all of us. All of you. As we traverse the short stretch of the Four Year Plan, it is a most critical and exciting stage in the evolution of the divine plan. We have come to the stage now and the House of Justice is expecting great things of us all.

At the outset of America's systematic response to The Tablets of the Divine Plan, Shoghi Effendi challenged and urged the American Bahá'ís to pursue a Double Crusade. And what was this? He put it in these words. "First, to regenerate the inward life of their own community and next to assail the longstanding evils that have entrenched themselves in the life of their nation." The challenge is spelled out in clear detail in Shoghi Effendi's magnificent letter addressed in December 1938 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada and published under the title The Advent of Divine Justice. This masterful statement of spiritual and practical guidance, of moral instruction and of historical insight stands as a singular legacy of Shoghi Effendi to the American Bahá'í community. For as I have been given to think, or believe, if The Tablets of the Divine Plan is the charter, the mandate of teaching, The Advent of Divine Justice is the manual, the handbook of teaching, a veritable guide for all seasons and for all the time leading up to the Golden Age of the Bahá'í dispensation. The abiding importance of this letter to the progress of the American Bahá'í community cannot be over-estimated. And I wonder sometimes how much we use it and how much we refer to it.

It is, however, not my purpose here to review this letter, but rather to acquaint you with the orientation of my thoughts and to draw upon its contents in pursuit of my theme which is really the Four Year Plan, and we should concentrate on that. It seems to me that every time we are called upon to execute a new plan we have to reorient ourselves to fundamentals. What really do any of us possess that enables or that renders us capable of responding to such a call? There are two things that come readily to mind, at least to my mind—the consciousness of our own existence, the consciousness of our own existence, and the consciousness of the love of God. Remember what Bahá'u'lláh says in the Hidden Words: "Veiled in My immemorial Being and in the ancient eternity of My Essence I knew My love for thee. Therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine Image and revealed to thee My Beauty." So, existence and love, love.

Then these imply two kinds of, well, I'm thinking through this with you. What do we do with these possessions, this consciousness of our existence and this consciousness of God's love? It seems to me we do two things—we strive to know God and we worship Him. We strive to know Him and we strive to worship Him. It's an expression of love, of course, as Bahá'u'lláh says, "Love Me that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee." So this is a divine reciprocity in which we are involved. This consciousness enables us to fulfill our purpose, it seems to me, to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. Now, how do we do this? First, by recognizing the Manifestation of God for this day, and second, by obeying His laws and ordinances. These two points are made in the opening paragraph of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, as you know. And these two points, it seems to me, implies two kinds of individual action—an internalizing and an externalizing. Such double action is indicated by the term Double Crusade, employed by Shoghi Effendi. Let us see what our Guardian said actually about the Double Crusade. Remember that in *The Advent of Divine Justice* he brings to our attention certain requisites for success in our teaching activities, in our consolidation activities, in all of our Bahá'í activities, and you know these by heart. And he now is summarizing these and he says: "Dearly beloved friends, a rectitude of conduct, which in all its manifestations offers a striking contrast to the deceitfulness and corruption that characterize the political life of the nation and of the partisan factions that compose it, a holiness and chastity that are diametrically opposed to the moral laxity and licentiousness which defile the character of a not inconsiderable proportion of its citizens, an interracial fellowship completely purged from the curse of racial prejudice which stigmatizes the vast majority of its people, these are the weapons which the American believers can and must wield in their Double Crusade. First, to regenerate the inward life of their own community, and next to assail the longstanding evils that have entrenched themselves in the life of their nation." So, one is internal and one is external. He goes on to tell us that "the perfection of such weapons, the wise and effective utilization of every one of them

more than the furtherance of any particular plan, or the devising of any special scheme, or the accumulation of any amount of material resources, can prepare them for the time when the Hand of Destiny will have directed them to assist in creating and in bringing into operation that world order which is now incubating within the world-wide administrative institutions of their Faith."

So then, what are the challenges, the reactions, the results that we may expect from engaging in such a Double Crusade? Shoghi Effendi spends a number of paragraphs explaining these to us. And I have a feeling that we ought to revisit these explanations and understand them well. First the challenges. What does he say? He says, "In the conduct of this two-fold crusade the valiant warriors struggling in the name and for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh must of necessity encounter stiff resistance and suffer many a setback. Their own instincts, no less than the fury of conservative forces, the opposition of vested interests and the objections of a corrupt and pleasure-seeking generation must be reckoned with, resolutely resisted, and completely overcome." So, there is the challenge. Then he gives us an instant reaction. He says "as their defensive measures for the impending struggle are organized and extended, storms of abuse and ridicule," abuse and ridicule, "and campaigns of condemnation and misrepresentation may be unloosed against you. Their faith, they may soon find, has been assaulted, their motives misconstrued, their aims defamed, their aspirations derided, their institutions scorned, their influence belittled, their authority undermined, and their cause at times deserted by a few who will either be incapable of appreciating the nature of their ideas or unwilling to bear the brunt of the mounting criticisms which such a contest is sure to involve."

Now, I ask you a question, are these things happening now? Are they actually happening? The Faith is being scorned and so on? Is this happening? No, I haven't heard about it, have you? So when I ask the question "whatever happened to the Double Crusade" I'm wondering when are we going to hear about these things? Because that is the time that we will know that the Faith has made an impact and that something is going on and that some progress is about to be made in a rather powerful way. So then, friends, we have something to do here.

`Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that because that, because of `Abdu'l-Bahá, He is speaking, "Many a test will be visited upon you. Troubles will befall you and suffering afflict you." Now, this is not something that Americans like to think about. Nobody likes to think about suffering, but particularly the Americans. We don't like this business. We want everything to be resolved by, you know, a check or a pill. It's not going to work. Then the Guardian exhorts us, I'm coming to the results, those were reactions. He says, "Let not, however, the invincible army of Bahá'u'lláh who in the west and at one of its potential

storm centers," listen to the terminologies he's using, "in the west and in one of its potential storm centers is to fight in His Name and for His sake one of its fiercest and most glorious battles, be afraid of any criticism that might be directed against it. Let it not be deterred by any condemnation with which the tongue of the slanderer may seek to debase its motives. Let it not recoil before the threatening advance of the forces of fanaticism, of orthodoxy, of corruption, and of prejudice that may be leagued against it." Then he tells us something extraordinary, listen to this. He says, "The voice of criticism is a voice that indirectly reinforces the proclamation of the Cause." Now, we know this from solid experience. Look at what has gone on in Iran since 1979. Isn't that whole episode, that suffering, that new assault on the Bahá'í community the reason why our Faith was pushed, forced out of obscurity, because of the criticisms of some mullahs and some other wrong-headed characters? The Guardian goes on to tell us unpopularity, that word that Americans cannot stand, and I'm one of them. "Unpopularity," he says, "but serves to throw into greater relief the contrast between it," that is the community, "and its adversaries. While," and he gets deeper, "while ostracism is itself the magnetic power that must eventually win over to its camp the most vociferous and inveterate amongst its foes."

Now, friends, these are serious matters. The Guardian is explaining to us really the science of progress, the science of success in the Bahá'í community. And we have to anticipate these things. And we must be doing something that would bring us to a stage like that. Otherwise, we have to question ourselves, exactly what are we up to? Are we living the life? Are we acting according to the plans or what? Are we just spinning our wheels? I don't know, I'm not accusing you of anything, I'm just asking questions. You know, there are choices to be made, and these choices are made by individuals primarily, the institutions do their business and give guidelines and directions and they adopt plans and all of these things but ultimately the individual decides what's going to happen here.

Well, in Iran they have to decide this and they do this, they have been doing this for 150 odd years, and it just occurred to me when I thought about all this, how we are a freedom loving people here, we love our liberties and we don't want to be stopped, to be frustrated in our freedom to act. But what the Guardian is telling us here is that we have to put up with some discomfort and that this in fact will be a sign, a signal of success and victories to come. About the Persian believers who are fighting a heroic battle, have always fought a heroic battle to keep the banner of the Faith unfurled, I have a feeling, this is my opinion from what I understand of their situation, that the only genuine freedom that the Bahá'ís of Iran have been able to exercise throughout the existence of the Faith is their independence to decide between recantation and death. To the everlasting glory of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh their decision has generally been to choose

detachment from all earthly things, which is the utmost expression of freedom for any human being. Where the choice has not been as clear they have attempted by their moral character to exert a force that they have been promised by Bahá'u'lláh will ultimately subdue those who oppress them.

Now, we are not being asked to give our lives, we don't have that choice to make in this country. But the Guardian told us that our lot was what? Living sacrifice. Part of the living sacrifice is putting up with unpopularity, being ostracized, being set aside so that the demonstration of your moral and spiritual character will confuse and eventually illumine the hearts of those that will be set against you. And I think we should receive these things with open eyes and open arms. Remember in one of `Abdu'l-Bahá's departing speeches in Washington, he expressed a wish? He said that he wished that upon His departure that the clergy would mount their pulpits and attack the Cause. And He said you know what will happen on that occasion? It will redound to a tremendous proclamation of the Faith. So, friends, there are certain realities that we'll have to deal with as Bahá'ís; and in other words, I'm asking you not to be afraid, to step forth.

The Guardian then goes on to tell us what the results are like. He says "so complete a transformation" you see, as would come from unpopularity and ostracism and so on, "so complete a transformation, so startling a reversal of attitude can only be effected if that chosen vehicle which is designed to carry the message of Bahá'u'lláh to the hungry, the restless, the unshepherded multitudes is itself thoroughly cleansed from the defilements which it seeks to remove." And he mentions them at the beginning, the three requisites of success, tells us what we must do to cleanse ourselves of these defilements.

So, here we are. He tells us that "it is upon you, therefore, my best beloved friends, that I wish to impress not only the urgency and imperative necessity of your holy task, but also the limitless possibilities which it possesses of raising to such an exalted level not only the life and activities of your own community but the motives and standards that govern the relationships existing among the people to which you belong." So his concern is not just for us who believe, but for all the other people in this country who are in need of the teachings, in need of the influence of the teachings, the direct and conscious influence of the teachings. Now, this Double Crusade must now be conducted within the framework of the Four Year Plan. It's the same script but we have to learn how to follow it more accurately, more determinedly, more persistently. It's the same script. So what are the essentials of that plan? Let's get into it a little bit. We know that in the message of the House of Justice that it summarizes the purpose of the plan in a very small paragraph. And then it elaborates. And this is the paragraph. It says, "The Four Year Plan aims at one major accomplishment—a significant advance in the process of entry by troops." Listen

to these words carefully, friends, they're carefully crafted and they are meant to be understood exactly as they are put. "A significant advance in the process of entry by troops." They go on to say, "As we have stated earlier, such an advance is to be achieved through marked progress in the activity and development of the individual believer, of the institutions, and of the local community." Then the House of Justice, wanting to be very clear about its intention and meaning, then defines what it means by "advance in the process of entry by troops." And again, listen to the words carefully and how they are put together. "The phrase," they say, "advance in the process of entry by troops, accommodates the concept that current circumstances demand and existing opportunities allow for a sustained growth of the Bahá'í world community on a large scale." So, circumstances demand and opportunities allow for this substantial expansion of the community. "That," that's a concept now, "that this upsurge is necessary in the face of world conditions, that the three constituent participants in the building of the order of Bahá'u'lláh," and they mean the individual, the institutions, the community, "can foster such growth—first, by spiritually and mentally accepting the possibility of it, and then by working towards embracing masses of new believers."

I want to pause here. This paragraph, I haven't read it all, talks about necessity, opportunity, and ability. It is necessary to do this. Not simply to satisfy ourselves that we can increase our statistical records, the number of believers, but because the world situation demands it; it's a necessity. It's a necessity externally. The world is sick and is getting sicker. Conditions are grave and we who know have the primary responsibility of assisting the world to overcome this illness. We have a moral obligation, a spiritual obligation; that is why. Internally we also have an obligation, which is in a different way. If we do not increase the size of our community we will not be able to function properly. The institutions will not develop. We will not be able to demonstrate the efficacy of the principles of administration. We will have too few people. Imagine, friends, that the institutions that Bahá'u'lláh has created to completely revolutionize a society, that eventually we'll inherit the earth and deal with humanity, guiding humanity, that these institutions local ones, let us say, are sometimes just talking to themselves about themselves. Nine members talking about nine members and what the nine members will do. Or fifteen. I know one time we had the feeling that if you had more than fifteen believers that you were committing a sin. Of course that was a misreading of what the Guardian said, but we do have a way of misreading things. And so when there are fifteen in a community we think we've had mass conversion, we're leaving. Well, leave, but still multiply. Now we are talking about entry by troops. Fifteen will not do, that's not even a number that you can mention with a straight face. You see, friends, the local spiritual assembly, the potential of a local spiritual assembly, is such that if we do not now provide the human resources, if we do not expand the base on which it will operate, the Cause

will go into a state of retrogression. Believe me. Because outside there where Bahá'u'lláh is also influencing events, things are moving very rapidly. Look for instance in the arena of communications, what's going on? We can't stand still. We have a very serious challenge before us.

Now, as to ability, the House of Justice tells us. Well, well, let's talk about opportunity first. It was first the necessity, what about opportunity. We've got it made, the world is going mad, people don't know what to do with themselves. Why don't we tell them something? It's that simple. Why don't we give the message to them? Explain it to them in ways that they can understand. And I think we have to find a way to begin a conversation that will engage the person we want to listen to us, you know, we have to have a real conversation, not just preach at them and tell them what we want to tell them beginning with 1844. Shoghi Effendi again tells us about these opportunities. He says that, let me see, where can I find this in *The Advent*, he says.... First he tells us about why the world is in such shape. He says that "that God- born force," remember this? "irresistible in its sweeping power, incalculable in its potency, unpredictable in its course, mysterious in its workings, and awe-inspiring in its manifestations, a force which as the Báb has written, `vibrates within the innermost being of all created things,' and which, according to Bahá'u'lláh, has through its vibrating influence upset the equilibrium of the world and revolutionized its ordered life. Such a force acting even as a two-edged sword is under our very eyes sundering, on the one hand, the age old ties which for centuries have held together the fabric of civilized society and is unloosing on the other the bonds that still fetter the infant and as yet unemancipated faith of Bahá'u'lláh." He goes on to say that "the undreamt of opportunities offered through the operation of this force, the American believers must now rise and fully and courageously exploit them." Now, he was telling us this in 1938; it is now 1996 and these words are more relevant now than when he wrote them. So, we were not left to wonder about the disturbance of the earth, we were told that this is the case. We were told that in the time of innocence when perhaps we could have hidden behind I don't know what, we were told that this would happen. We shouldn't be surprised, then, about what is going on but to see in all of these disturbing developments the opportunity to teach the Faith and to assist people to understand. So we have had the advantage of being forewarned, and we have anticipated the consequences of the Bahá'í revelation, so we should not be surprised or act as if we are surprised, nor should we become petrified, as people who don't have our understanding, perhaps, have become.

Then he goes on to say "the opportunities which the turmoil of the present age represents, with all its sorrows which it evokes, the fears which it excites, the disillusionment which it produces, the perplexities which it creates, the indignation which

it arouses, the revolt which it provokes, the grievances which it engenders, the spirit of restless search which it awakens, must in like manner be exploited." He was saying in the previous paragraph that we should exploit this building as a teaching instrument, and he says that these opportunities should in like manner be exploited to teach the Faith, to extend its influence, to bring the knowledge of the redemptive power of the Faith to the attention of people. So the question is how are we teaching? What are we saying to people? How do we approach them? Do we listen to their troubles? Do we have them empty out before we start trying to pour things into them so that we can address their needs, their worries, their concerns? These are very serious questions. Now, we have been warned about this. The Guardian goes on to tell us further in this very same letter about the conditions of the world, and he appeals to us not to be deterred by these violent conditions, the commotions in the earth, and then he says, "Such simultaneous processes of rise and fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos, with their continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other are but aspects of a greater plan, one and indivisible, whose source is God, whose author is Bahá'u'lláh, the theater of whose operations is the entire planet and whose ultimate objectives are the unity of the human race and the peace of all mankind."

So, dear friends, let us not worry, let us not be afraid, this is part of the whole program that God has designed. We have the minor plan. The minor plan is before us in clear detail. The major plan is in the hands of God, and He operates that plan the way He feels and the effects of His operation and our obligation to do things produce these conditions in the world. We should, therefore, not worry, as the Guardian says. He says "reflections such as these should steel the resolve of the entire Bahá'í community," make us strong in other words, "should dissipate their forebodings and arouse them to rededicate themselves to every single provision of that divine charter whose outline has been delineated for them by the pen of `Abdu'l-Bahá." Obviously a reference to The Tablets of the Divine Plan. So, friends, the leaders of our Faith, the Central Figures of our Faith and our Guardian, took the time to explain to us what conditions to expect in the world so that we would not be frightened, but that we would understand what our duty is and should be, so that we would approach our duty with confidence, and so that the more that we saw the disturbance, the more we would be sure that the plan of God was in operation, you see. This is confidence building stuff. Now, it doesn't mean that we should be callous, that we should be careless. How can we be? People are suffering. How can we be happy that there are so many of our citizens on drugs? That people are living in disgraceful conditions in our cities, they're homeless? This is not something to make us happy, this is a sad affair. But what it tells us is that what Bahá'u'lláh has brought, the medicine that He has prescribed is the right medicine. And that knowledge gives us confidence so that we might approach our task in a proper manner, not with a faint heart.

"This religion is not for the feint hearted," as Bahá'u'lláh says.

Now, where shall we go here? Opportunity. Ability. The House of Justice says we can do this thing. And where they feel that we are lacking, they tell us how to pull ourselves together and how to get it done. It's all in this letter, and I can't read the whole letter to you, it would take the whole night. But it's there. They say that "the three constituent participants in the building of the order of Bahá'u'lláh—the individual, the institutions, and the community—can foster such growth." And they tell us how. "First, by spiritually and mentally accepting the possibility of it." And that is the greatest challenge of all. Do we believe that millions of people will become Bahá'ís? Do we believe that one of these days the majority of the people in this country will be Bahá'ís? The majority of the world's people will be Bahá'ís? If we believe that, then we are in good shape. If we are waiting for something to happen that will bring that about, for some great miracle, then I am afraid that we are in the wrong place, we are in the wrong religion. You know, people go around asking about the calamity. What calamity? What calamity? My dear friends, ever since the Báb opened His mouth in Shiraz the world has been in a state of calamity. Don't you see? Look at what is going on in the world. Look at what's going on in Birundi, what is still going on there. In Europe, in you name it. What would you say to Vietnamese people now about the calamity? What calamity are you talking about? Is it this thing that Bahá'u'lláh says suddenly will happen? We have nothing to do with this, that is His business. Our business is to take care of what's before us, not to sit back and wait for divine intervention. Divine intervention does not come unless we are taking action. Don't you know that the Concourse has no dealings with us unless we are in motion? If we are not in motion they're paralyzed, they do nothing. We do it, they do it. We don't do it, they don't do anything. That's the way it is. We're going to get into that a little more.

So, the House of Justice goes on to say that first we have to change our mental attitude. Remember what `Abdu'l-Bahá said in one of His talks? He said that "the reality of man is his thought." Remember this? And then He went on to explain that thought without action is useless. Well, the House of Justice is reaching into where our ultimate reality lies and is telling us to fix it. To fix it. Take care of it there. If you take care of it there, everything else will follow. That's the point they are making. So they say, "can foster such growth, first by spiritually and mentally accepting the possibility of it and then by working towards embracing masses of new believers." Because if you believe it and you accept it you will do the job. If you don't believe it you're going to go through motions, but they won't have any effect, be useless. You'll be tired for no reason. If you're going to be tired, do the thing right. "Setting in motion the means of effecting their spiritual and administrative training and development." No, no, they said "and then by

working towards embracing masses of new believers, setting in motion the means for effecting their spiritual and administrative training and development, thereby multiplying the number of knowledgeable," listen to this, "knowledgeable, active teachers and administrators whose involvement in the work of the Cause will ensure a constant influx of new adherents, an uninterrupted evolution of Bahá'í assemblies, and a steady consolidation of the community." So that's what we are striving for. Then they go on to say more. They say "moreover" and this is something that should bring you a certain measure of comfort and understanding. "Moreover, to advance the process implies that that process is already in progress." It's already happening. "And that local and national communities are at different stages of it." See? Very important point to understand. The process is going on. Now look, friends, we started out like a seed, you know? At one time the only person that believed that there was a new Revelation was Mulla Husayn. He was the only person on earth that believed such a thing. Now, thank God, according to certain books out there, we didn't write them, they say there are five million that believe this thing. That's fine; but five million out of five billion? It doesn't compute too well, you know, considering, considering the state of humanity, the great need of people for transformation, for release from suffering.

All right, now, so what happened? We begin our business with an individual who teaches the Faith to another individual and so on. And when we have enough of us we create institutions, local assembly, let us say. And then we advance to having national assemblies. And then we hope to multiply so that there is a community that will respond to the requirements of the Faith and the requirements of mankind. This whole thing is a process that leads to entry by troops. Now, remember what Shoghi Effendi said in his letter to us here in the United States some years ago, and I hope I pulled out the page so I can bring it to your attention. Yes, yes, yes. He was writing to us about the Ten Year World Crusade, encouraging our community to send out pioneers, to send out traveling teachers, and at the same time he was telling us that we should build up the home front, so that we can produce the pioneers and the traveling teachers. So we had to do two things: we had to build the home front and we had to send out a flow of teachers. He then goes on to say that "such a steady flow of reinforcements," because there were pioneers out there already but he wanted more to go out. And some of our friends who had to work on such things are sitting in this room right now. He says that "such a steady flow of reinforcements is absolutely vital and is of extreme urgency, for nothing short of the vitalizing influx of new blood that will reanimate the world Bahá'í community can safeguard the prizes which at so great a sacrifice involving the expenditure of so much time, effort, and treasure are now being won in virgin territories by Bahá'u'lláh's valiant knights whose privilege is to constitute the spearhead of the onrushing battalions which in diverse theaters and in circumstances often adverse and extremely challenging are

ving with each other for the spiritual conquest of the unsundered territories and islands on the surface of the globe." In other words, there are all kinds of forces out there that want to grab people's attention, he wanted the Bahá'ís to get there quickly and to do their business and to have a sustained and steady flow of teachers that would reinforce those that had gone on before.

Then he writes this critical paragraph. He says, "This flow, moreover, will presage and hasten the advent of the day which as prophesied by `Abdu'l-Bahá, will witness the entry by troops of peoples of diverse nations and races into the Bahá'í world." Now, friends, the Guardian is talking process here. He's telling us the consequences of process. "This flow," he says moreover, first he tells us to build up a head, get the people out there, there's an advance guard, then he says reinforce them and keep the flow going. He says, "This flow, moreover, will presage and hasten the advent of the day which as prophesied by `Abdu'l-Bahá, will witness the entry by troops of peoples of diverse nations and races into the Bahá'í world. A day which viewed in its proper perspective, will be the prelude of that long-awaited hour when a mass conversion on the part of these same nations and races and, as a direct result of a chain of events, momentous and possibly catastrophic in nature, and which cannot as yet be even dimly visualized, will suddenly," suddenly, "revolutionize the fortunes of the Faith, derange the equilibrium of the world, and reinforce a thousand-fold the numerical strength as well as the material power and the spiritual authority of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh."

So let's look at what the Guardian is telling us. He's telling us to go step by step, that if we will keep the flow of teachers going, if the teachers will do their business, this will be a presage, will hasten that day, you see, the advent of that day when we'll have entry by troops. And this in itself is a prelude to this other thing, the mass conversion which will be accompanied by other things that we have no control over. Now we have gone around this world and around this community talking about mass conversion, mass conversion, mass conversion. We don't have mass conversion, we've never had it. And we're not going to have it until these conditions prevail, until we supply the teachers, until we produce the conditions in the communities, we build up our institutions, produce, in other words, the infrastructure, and the critical mass that will cause entry by troops. That is what the House of Justice is talking about. Not the insanity of people just going out and thinking that now the House wants us to go out in the street and bring in 10,000 people. Well, if you can do it, for God's sake do it. But they are talking about all of the building of the activities of the structure that will make this process, that will hasten this process, and will bring about the actual results, you see, of entry by troops. A continuous influx of believers into the Cause. So, if Chicago can bring in a million, bring in the million. Right? If Rapid City can bring in fifty more, bring in the fifty. You see? I as an individual,

if I can teach a person, fine, bring in that person. If I can teach a hundred, bring in the hundred. Or the thousand. I may not be able to teach a thousand people or appeal to a thousand people, but I may teach one individual who has got the capacity to do it. The thing is that all of us must be in motion, must be acting according to our duty given to us by Bahá'u'lláh to teach His Faith, and to uphold His institutions, and if we are doing our best, following the guidelines in our Writings and the instructions of the House of Justice, then we are involved in the process.

What the House of Justice wants us to do is to overcome a kind of pathology in our brain about large communities. To accept that this religion has not come to create esoteric groups, church membership, little fraternities here and there, and sororities. This religion has come to raise up a world civilization, and for there to be a world civilization we must have the people of the world in it. The fact of the matter is that in some places people are afraid that because...if they expand their numbers then they will lose control of things, or they won't have enough friends, or something will go crazy. Well, if we have more people we'll have more circles in which to have more friends. There'll be more circles of friends. Obviously we can't be friendly with 10,000 people at once, but to the extent that you can be friendly with a lot of people, you'll have more people that you can draw from to be friendly with. We'll be able to do things that we can't do now, friends. The feasts will be different. Instead of going to the feast and just spinning over the teaching committee's concern that one person should go over there or this and that, which we have to be concerned about and it's part of our training and sometimes it bores us a little bit but we go through it because we want to do our duty to the Lord, we will have feasts that will be talking about tremendous, creative things. Like building orphanages, taking care of children, producing institutions, foundations, new developments, because you will have the resources to do it. Now the poor assemblies talk about it, they just dream about it. They drool. Doesn't help. This doesn't produce any concrete results at all. You see the point? You see what I'm trying to get at? I'm sure you do.

The House of Justice then goes on to say "the individual and the institutions, while operating in distinctive spheres, are summoned to arise, to meet the requirements of this crucial time in the life of our community and in the fortunes of all humankind." In other words, friends, our community needs to get on with the business of the Faith seriously, consistently, persistently. We must do it for the sake of humanity, if not for the sake of ourselves, I mean, and there's no comfort in it. The comfort does not come from, I don't know what, from being able to sit back and relax and do all kinds of... It comes from knowing that you are doing the right thing, no matter how painful it is. That's where the comfort and the gratification comes. And we know that we are in the right place so let's do what we have to do, and if it means that we are going to be criticized, fine. If it means

we are going to be ostracized, better. If it means that we're going to be unpopular, let it happen. Because it means that our community will have established a pattern of behavior that sets it aside for others to observe and eventually that observation will produce the result down the road. They will come in because they will have seen in a proper perspective what we represent.

Now, the House of Justice addresses itself to the three components. I don't want to go into all of that because it will take too long. It addresses itself to the individual, to the institutions, and to the community. You have read the letter, you know what's in it. But I would like to spend a little time on the individual before closing. The House of Justice tells us that the role of the individual is of unique importance in the work of the Cause. Indeed, I do not know of a single Bahá'í institution that can teach the Faith and live the life in the sense that, you know, individuals do. The teaching committees at whatever level, local or national, don't teach anybody anything. Individuals do these things. On the basis of the opportunities that they face, the circumstances that they forge to teach, how do they do it? What teaching committee can tell you what to do? How to do it? Where to do it? Well, maybe where, but they can't tell you exactly how to do it. And some of us have been waiting around for methods. Methods. And every time that we hear that something works in India, we say, "Ah, it will work here." Well, who says? Why should it work here? We are not Indians. We're dealing with different kinds of people. This religion is flexible. It is supposed to adjust itself to the requirements of the time and place, not to be a copy cat and just copy things just because other people are doing it. And I think that somehow we fractured ourselves by thinking that we could do it like the people in Uganda, and in India, and in whatnot and it does not work. And we are here to witness that it doesn't work. We have to figure out how to take care of the American mentality and deal with it. We are Americans, we know how to deal with that, let's do it. And not import things that don't work. Now, that is not to say we shouldn't be encouraged by what's happening abroad, elsewhere. Obviously. And we might find aspects of that thing which are adoptable to what we, you know, that we can adopt. But, friends, we have to think about what we are doing here, and deal with the people that we know. And deal with them in a manner that is suited to their culture, and their background, and all of that. Not try to make an Indian out of an American or vice versa. It doesn't work, you see.

Now, the teaching of the Cause is of course with the individual primarily, as you know, because Bahá'u'lláh has given that duty to individuals. He has prescribed it for individuals. And He has promised certain support to the individuals, certain blessings. And I don't have to read all of that to you, you know about it. But the House of Justice went into some detail in explaining why the individual is unique. It says, "The individual alone can exercise those capacities which include the ability to take initiative, to seize

opportunities, to form friendships, to interact personally with others, to build relationships, to win the cooperation of others in common service to the Faith and society, and to convert into action the decisions made by consultative bodies." I think perhaps we are forgetting that the Guardian made it very clear to us that the institutions, what? They have authority. The mass of the believers have what? The power to execute them. And that power resides in initiative and ability. Individual initiative and ability. We must understand this clearly. So, when the plan of the national assembly comes out, or the plan of the local assembly, how is it going to be done? Because it's going to be done this way. I am going to go home and think: "What am I supposed to do with myself now? How am I going to do this or am going to do that?" And I, privately, in the privacy of my own heart and my own mind, will decide exactly what I'm going to do and do it. And remember in The Advent of Divine Justice the Guardian told the friends not to wait to hear from institutions in order to carry out this vital duty of teaching. Why should you wait to hear from anybody at all? You have heard from Bahá'u'lláh. Do it. You don't have to wait on anybody. I don't believe that we need any plans to teach. We don't need it at all. The plans are supposed to help us, to give us a system to our activities, to give us a means of measuring our progress, because we need to be encouraged that we are doing something. That's what the plans are for. The plans do not take the place of individual initiative and individual action and individual decision on teaching. My God, you want to tell me if the House of Justice didn't write to us for the next twenty years, the Bahá'ís would stop teaching the Faith? You see? The responsibility is too great. It transcends, it goes beyond the House of Justice. It goes beyond any institution on earth. It has to do with the duty given to us by the Manifestation of God Himself. The consequences of not carrying on as we should are rather grave, I think, you know. Because when you think that now in this day, what Bahá'u'lláh has done to us all, He tells us that in this day every created thing is endowed with all the potentialities it can bear. Now, friends, I put it to you if this power can be demonstrated in sand, such as what goes into microchips, what do you suppose God has done to us as individuals, as the supreme talisman? You think there's any limit to the powers that you can exert morally and spiritually? There isn't. This confusion is in our mind, believe me.

Now, about individuals. Look at how `Abdu'l-Bahá puts it. I was in St. Peter's Basilica, that's why this comes into my mind recently. He talks about Peter, who was the first apostle of Jesus Christ. Listen to what `Abdu'l-Bahá says. He says, "Peter, according to the history of the Church, was also incapable of keeping count of the days of the week. Whenever he decided to go fishing he would tie up his weekly food into seven parcels. And everyday he would eat one of them. And when he had reach the seventh, he would know that the Sabbath had arrived. And thereupon would observe it." That's what the Master says. Then Shoghi Effendi comments. He says, "If the Son of Man," you know

who the Son of Man is, Jesus; "if the Son of Man was capable of infusing into apparently so crude and helpless an instrument with such potency as to cause in the words of Bahá'u'lláh the mysteries of wisdom and of utterance to flow out of his mouth, and to exalt him above the rest of His disciples and render him fit to become His successor and the founder of His Church, how much more can the Father, who is Bahá'u'lláh, empower the most puny and insignificant among His followers to achieve for the execution of His purpose such wonders as would dwarf the mightiest achievements of even the first apostle of Jesus Christ." Listen to this, friends, this is serious. He's telling us that you, individually, He's talking to you, can achieve more than this Peter, who was a great man, who was a tremendous character. But he wasn't all that bright. But the Manifestation of God was able to infuse such power in him that he did the things that Bahá'u'lláh said. And if you go to Rome you'll see the tremendous basilica they built up for him, the memorial. An incredible building. Friends, you have nothing to worry about but your own fear and doubt. And, so far as I'm concerned, fears and doubts are luxuries we cannot afford. These are luxuries, really luxuries. When you think of what's happening to the children in Birundi, to the children in, what's this country in Europe that is gone crazy? Bosnia. What's happening all over the world? What's happened to the children in our cities? Come on, what are we afraid of? We have the thing in hand. We have powers we can call on. We have forces behind us. We have a powerful history behind us of success. Great development. Can you imagine that we are putting up on Mount Carmel, in the heart of that mountain, these enormous structures? How is it possible that such a thing could happen? That even now the people are recognizing that the Shrine of the Báb is actually at the exact point that it should be in the city, it's the actual point of the whole city. Architects are praising this and wondering what happened that Bahá'u'lláh, they give talks, non-Bahá'ís, about what Bahá'u'lláh has done on that mountain. Imagine when the Tablet of Carmel was revealed, that mountain was an empty, scruffy place. You go there now and they're talking about what? "The most important green lung in Israel"? Why? Because we have faith. Because we did the impossible. Look at this building that we are in. Imagine that our Bahá'í brothers and sisters before us who were far fewer in number and who also were led by women, decided to do this thing and to put up this building, and had the blessing of `Abdu'l-Bahá to do it. They didn't know how they would go about it. They didn't have the technology in place to put this building up when it was designed. But aren't you sitting in it now? And the Bahá'ís had the temerity to start this building in the Depression. Can you imagine what that means? I remember as a kid in Jamaica that the Bahá'ís had little cans that they had tin smiths to make that the people would put pennies in to send to the Temple in Wilmette, to build this Temple. What do you suppose did this? It was the power of God Almighty. It had nothing to do with economics. It had nothing to do with the theories flowing down from Marx and Hegel and all these characters. You see? We can do it, friends. We are so many now. You know? `Abdu'l-

Bahá says one of us is good for a thousand. Well, come on, let's behave as if we are a thousand people.

Now, I want to give you a little encouragement, and you have to bear with me because I'll be gone soon and you can forget about me. But I want to give you a little encouragement by telling you something about one of our own people, from here, from this country, that was one of those things that `Abdu'l-Bahá talked about in The Tablets of the Divine Plan. Who was a divine angel, one who took the battle of the Cause to the center of the earth and stirred up countries and continents. I want to talk to you a little bit about her because she was one of us and you will sympathize. I'm sure that she will inspire you. Because...where's her portrait? I had the audio-visual department blow up her portrait so I could bring it and put it here when I'm talking to you about her. Good.

Now, friends, you are looking at the portrait of Leonora Armstrong. Leonora Armstrong is known to us as the "Mother of South America." How did she become such a thing? Leonora was born in New York, in Hudson, upstate New York. Her mother and father were very nice people, they were not Bahá'ís. And she was born in 1895. They saw to it that she got a good education. She was bright. She had a sister. But at age of 5 her mother died. And life was very tough for her. She writes about this. She says, "How we could endure through those years of our childhood and adolescence such loneliness, such suffering, even cruelty, I do not know. I can remember how, when still a small child, often at night before going to bed, I knelt down at my sister's bedside and in agony of soul, implored God with all the intensity of my being, to let us feel His presence, His nearness, His protection. Little did I then dream, in what way and how specifically that prayer was later to be answered." Now, we are talking about the early years of this century. We had no Bahá'í institutions, none. There was scattering of Bahá'ís. She was a gifted student, she was at the head of her, the top of her class, her high school class. And she went to Cornell University. And she used to teach Latin. And then, what happened? She had a grandmother, her maternal grandmother, who became one of the early believers. And this grandmother influenced her very much, Mother Sterling. She taught her, obviously, the Faith. And Leonora used to memorize what little writings they had available to them then, extracts from the Writings and prayers.

She, of course, through her grandmother's influence, came to know some of the early believers, such as May Maxwell, and she became very attached to her, they were very friendly. She said that May, more than anyone else, "helped me to feel the great love of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá, the reality of love, which I had longed to feel, and a deep bond was formed between us, which gave me the greatest joy I had known." Now, she was one of the fortunate ones, in 1919, who was in New York when The Tablets of

the Divine Plan were unveiled. You know about that from our history. And she was impressed with this event. And of course the call of the tablets reached her heart and she wanted to do something. So she wrote to `Abdu'l-Bahá, she wrote to Him. And `Abdu'l-Bahá replied to her, and this is part of what He said to her, He said, "Thou hadst expressed that great wish to be of service to the Divine Threshold, and to heal the infirm with the Divine Panacea. The infirm who is afflicted with passion and self, spiritual malady is more severe than physical illness, for it may be that the later may be converted by the least remedy into health and vigor, while the former will not be cured by a thousand well-known remedies. My hope is that thou mayest become a spiritual physician."

So she said that this hope expressed by the Master for her filled her, this was her aspiration. And then she wanted to know what to do. She knew Martha Root, Martha Root had come in from one of her travels and Martha Root talked with her about her trip to South America and places that she would have liked to visit and wished that someone would now go back and visit these places and bring the light of the Teachings to the people. So she felt "okay, maybe I could do this." And she wanted to go to Brazil, particularly because `Abdu'l-Bahá had mentioned Bahia, remember He mentioned that city in particular and she wanted to go there. She says here that "of course the relatives are wondering." Can you imagine 1919, 1920, a young woman, what, she was what? 25? In those days going to South America by herself? Just think about it. It is an amazing thing, so of course her relatives were worrying about her and her friends were also concerned. She said, "I felt my resolution weakening when some social worker in the northern part of New York State gave me the sudden idea to slip up to Montreal to consult May Maxwell." May Maxwell was sick in bed. When she told her she said, told her what she was thinking of doing and so on, she said that May Maxwell sat up straight in bed and said, "Leonora, what are you waiting for? Go!" She went.

Now, friends, she went to Bahia, or tried to get there. She was alone, she had meager means, sometimes she even suffered malnutrition, didn't have enough to eat and illness. She had to study the language, you see, to become proficient in it then she taught English. But she, while she was struggling to make herself proficient in Portuguese and so on, she was doing social work because she came from that background. Her mother and her grandmother helped people. And do you know that she literally became known as an angel? People used to refer to her as an angel because she was doing these things. Now, she went, she didn't have self-confidence. Imagine that a person who didn't have self-confidence goes off, at least that's what she said about herself, goes off to such a place by herself. And I heard a story about her going to Manaus [?] and I talked to Hooper Dunbar about this, he wrote her In Memorial article and he knew her and he had interviewed her.

And I talked to him before I left Haifa about her. And he told me that he would ask her about her early days and how she managed and so on. She went to Manaus and she didn't know people, she decided to get in touch with the mayor and the mayor seemed to sympathize with her and got to know her and he decided that since she wanted so badly to talk about her Faith that he would get a place for her. So he secured the Opera House. Can you imagine the Opera House? This poor Leonora couldn't give public talks, she was, you know, a bit timid, not very confident. She memorized talks of `Abdu'l-Bahá. When she went to the Opera House, you know what kind of scene she beheld? There were 4000 people there. Can you imagine? So she recited the talks of `Abdu'l-Bahá. They went over very well. Then they started asking her to give talks at schools. Yah. You see? What was carrying her? The love of `Abdu'l-Bahá, a dedication to the Cause. She said to herself, "I have to do this thing. I am afraid, but I don't care, I have to do it." That's what Leonora did.

So she went and she talked to these people, she established a community in Bahia, where she died. And Hooper told me, Dunbar told me that he would ask her, "Well, what kind of groups did you talk to? What sort of fireside groups?" She said 400 people would come to these groups. And he swallowed, he said, "My God, imagine 400 people coming to a fireside." But she had that magnetism and she was, she attracted the people.

Now, Leonora was very, she said she didn't have self-confidence but she had tremendous courage in many ways. She decided to translate Bahá'í literature into Portuguese. And the fundamental literature that they have in Brazil, the translations are hers—God Passes By, Gleanings. Right. There's a story about her. The Guardian wanted literature in Spanish. Now, Brazil is a Portuguese-speaking country. She wanted to do something about this. She didn't know Spanish herself. Later on she would decide to go to Spain to study Spanish. But anyway. She then had an idea. She heard that there was a convent of Spanish speaking nuns. She went to this convent. I mean, friends, just think of this. This timid, self-effacing woman, imagine she's out there by herself. She goes to this convent, she sees the Mother Superior, and she says to her, "I have a book that I would like translated into Spanish and I understand that some of the nuns here are proficient in that language. And it's a good book." And, in other words it's not a dirty book, it's a good book. And Mother Superior looks at this book and, of course, she realizes that this is, this is a bomb she's holding in her hand. So what did she do? The Mother Superior decided to help, but she divided up the work among four nuns and she gave them different parts of the book so that there wouldn't be a sequence. And that's how the book was translated. Now, it doesn't matter. The fact is that Leonora got the book translated into Spanish. You see? Courage. This is courage. Courage is really persisting even when you are afraid. That's what courage is.

So, in 1930, I think it was about 1930, she decided to go to Madrid to study Spanish because the Guardian wanted Spanish literature and she wanted to become proficient. She went there and while she was traveling, by the way, as she traveled around she stopped in places and she went to very, all kinds of countries to teach the Faith. For instance, in 1927, they say, she became the first Bahá'í to visit and speak of the Cause in Columbia, Venezuela, Curacao, Trinidad, Barbados, Haiti, British Guinea, and Dutch Guinea, thus complementing and completing Martha Root's unfulfilled intention of raising the Call of God in all Latin American countries. Now, so she went to Madrid and she was able to found the first Bahá'í group in Spain. So, she is now taking her work across the Atlantic. And then she wasn't succeeding, because she fell ill, in going to the University. And she had the thought of going to see the Guardian. She wrote, got permission, and went to see him. She married a man in '41 named Harold Armstrong, he was an Englishman and he was a very great character. He supported her in her work. And of course she carried on in her own inimitable style, to teach the Cause, to nurture the friends, and she lived to see the raising up of a national assembly in Brazil and, of course, of the growth of the Cause in South America. She, as you know, was appointed a Counselor, I think she was among the first contingent, I think, of counselors. And at the time of her passing she had been ill for a time. And round about that time the House of Justice had had two of Bahá'u'lláh's tablets translated into English, the Fire Tablet and the Long Healing Prayer. And Leonora, in her sick bed, you could say in her dying bed, translated these two works into Portuguese, and that was her final gift to Brazil. I have heard that she was in such a state of luminosity, literally physical, she was like a light, she was burning when, in her last days. And people remarked how luminous she was in those final days.

Now, friends, this is what `Abdu'l-Bahá is talking about. This is an apostle of Bahá'u'lláh. How did she become an apostle of Bahá'u'lláh? Not because she was the strongest person in Hudson, NY. Not because she had great ideas about conquering the world. She was afraid, she was self-effacing. But, out of her devotion to `Abdu'l-Bahá. You know, `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote her a letter in Brazil. You know how He addressed it? He just put "Brazil, Leonora Armstrong" and it got to her. Yah, it's true. Now, what has happened? Seventy-five years have passed since the Cause was established in Brazil. This year the Brazilian Parliament had a special session, a special session, and Amatu'l-Bahá was going to Brazil, they invited her to be their guest, they had this whole session that went on for maybe two hours. And a number of the members of Parliament spoke about the Cause and its Teachings and the impact that it had had on Brazil. One of them got up and spoke about Leonora Armstrong and what she had done, the place where she landed when she came to Rio has a mark, has a monument has been put up there, to mark the place where she arrived in that place in Brazil. You see? Now look at this, if she could do

it, you can do it. She's one of us. What did she have? Faith, devotion. She was totally dedicated, and even though she was afraid, she persisted. She believed what `Abdu'l-Bahá told her and it worked. And now, to her eternal glory, she is the Mother of South America. Brazil is talking about her now, other governments will be talking about her in the future. You see?

So, what I want to tell you is quite this, that the individuals among us should arise and claim what is theirs in action. They have the Concourse behind them; they have all of the powers of the universe behind them. Bahá'u'lláh has promised them this, promised each of us this, and you should have complete confidence in what He has said. And proceed with the work of the Cause, and do what the Four Year Plan has asked. Because not only has He given us these promises, but He has given us institutions and an arrangement by which we can be told, literally from day to day, what is expected. And so we have company now. She didn't have any company when she went to South America, there were no institutions. There was no national assembly here or in Canada, there was no teaching committee, there was nothing when she left in 1920 to go to Brazil. So, what's wrong with us? We have the House of Justice, we have the national assembly, we have counselors, we have auxiliary board members, assistants to auxiliary board members, we have Hands of the Cause, local assemblies. My God, friends, what's happening? We are very rich. We don't need to worry. We have all of the forces on earth and in heaven working for us. So let's get going.

Now I want to end on this note. Bahá'u'lláh had addressed Himself to the Christians in one of His tablets. And remember He said that Christ said, "Come, and I'll make you fishers of men." You remember this? And Bahá'u'lláh said that, "I say, `Come, and I'll make you" what? "Quickeners of mankind." Is that what He said? Yes. And then, He said something to us, or to the Christians and some of us have come from that background here, I suppose, but it's meant for everybody; He said this, and I want to tell you, I have it in writing, but let me try to recall, I can't find it. Let me try to recall it from memory. He says, "If ye will obey Me, you will see that which We have promised you. And I will make you the friends of My Soul in the realm of My Greatness, and the companions of My Beauty in the Heaven of My Might forever."

