





bounty singled out your native land for the execution of a mighty purpose. Through the agency of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant I, as the ploughman, have been called upon since the beginning of my ministry to turn up and break its ground. The mighty confirmations that have, in the opening days of your career, rained upon you have prepared and invigorated its soil. The tribulations you subsequently were made to suffer have driven deep furrows into the field which my hands had prepared. The seeds with which I have been entrusted I have now scattered far and wide before you. Under your loving care, by your ceaseless exertions, every one of these seeds must germinate, every one must yield its destined fruit. A winter of unprecedented severity will soon be upon you. Its storm clouds are fast gathering on the horizon. Tempestuous winds will assail you from every side. The Light of the Covenant will be obscured through my departure. These mighty blasts, this wintry desolation, shall however pass away. The dormant seed will burst into fresh activity. It shall put forth its buds, shall reveal, in mighty institutions, its leaves and blossoms. The vernal showers which the tender mercies of my heavenly Father will cause to descend upon you will enable this tender plant to spread out its branches to regions far beyond the confines of your native land. And finally the steadily mounting sun of His Revelation, shining in its meridian splendor, will enable this mighty Tree of His Faith to yield, in the fullness of time and on your soil, its golden fruit.

"... His mandate embodied in the Tablets of the Divine Plan." Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 255.

"... the Tablets of the Divine Plan ... are the Charter for the teaching of the Faith." From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 29 September 1977, *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1628, p. 488 (1994).

The implications of such a parting message could not long remain unrevealed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's initiated disciples. No sooner had He concluded His long

and arduous  
journey across the American and European continents than the tremendous  
happenings  
to which He had alluded began to be made manifest. A conflict, such as He had  
predicted, severed for a time all means of communication with those on whom He  
had  
come to place such implicit trust and from whom He was expecting so much in  
return.  
The wintry desolation, with all its havoc and carnage, pursued during four  
years its  
relentless course, while He, repairing to the quiet solitude of His residence  
in the close  
neighborhood of Bahá'u'lláh's hallowed shrine, continued to communicate  
His  
thoughts and wishes to those whom He had left behind and on whom He had  
conferred  
the unique tokens of His favor. In the immortal Tablets which, in the long  
hours of His  
communion with His dearly beloved friends He was moved to reveal, He unfolded  
to  
their eyes His conception of their spiritual destiny, His Plan for the mission  
He wished  
them to undertake. The seeds His hands had sown He was now watering with that  
same  
care, that same love and patience, which had characterized His previous  
endeavors  
whilst He was laboring in their midst.  
In *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi tells us that during the Great War  
'Abdu'l-Bahá  
felt acutely the virtual stoppage of all communication with most of [the]  
Bahá'í centers  
throughout the world. Agony filled His soul at the spectacle of human slaughter  
precipitated through humanity's failure to respond to the summons He had  
issued, or to  
heed the warnings He had given. Surely sorrow upon sorrow was added to the  
burden  
of trials and vicissitudes which He, since His boyhood, had borne so heroically  
for the  
sake, and in the service, of His Father's Cause.  
And yet during these somber days, the darkness of which was reminiscent of the  
tribulations endured during the most dangerous period of His incarceration in  
the  
prison-fortress of 'Akká, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whilst in the precincts of His  
Father's Shrine,  
or when dwelling in the House He occupied in 'Akká, or under the shadow of  
the Báb's  
sepulcher on Mt. Carmel, was moved to confer once again, and for the last time

in His life, on the community of His American followers a signal mark of His special favor by investing them, on the eve of the termination of His earthly ministry, through the revelation of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, with a world mission, whose full implications even now, after the lapse of a quarter of a century, still remain undisclosed, and whose unfoldment thus far, though as yet in its initial stages, has so greatly enriched the spiritual as well as the administrative annals of the first Bahá'í century.

The first eight of these Tablets were penned between March 26 and April 22, 1916.

History records this period as one of awesome bloodletting in Europe. It is truly breathtaking to contemplate the devising of the Divine Strategy for the redemption of the planet in the midst of the din and destruction of the old order. The transforming vision of 'Abdu'l-Bahá spreads before us the plans for the spiritual conquest of the globe. The final six Tablets were revealed between February 2 and March 8, 1917, barely a month before the entry of the

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 86–7.

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 304–5.

United States into the war. Of the first group, five Tablets had actually reached America and been published in the September 8, 1916, issue of *Star of the West*. After that all communication with the Holy Land was severed, and the remainder of the Tablets were kept in a vault under the Shrine of the Báb on Mt. Carmel for the duration of the war. They were dispatched to America at the end of the war where they were unveiled in befitting ceremonies during the “Convention of the Covenant” held at Hotel McAlpin in New York City on April 26–30, 1919.

Although exemplary individuals like the Dunns and Martha Root had given immediate response to the call of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for “souls who will illumine this dark universe and quicken to life this dead world”, the full implementation of the Plan began in 1937 when Shoghi Effendi conferred on the North American Bahá'í community the mission

of the First  
Seven Year Plan—“The first stage of that enterprise, which had been held in  
abeyance, for  
well-nigh twenty years, while the administrative institutions of the Faith were  
slowly taking  
shape and were being perfected.”

The spiritual conquest of the Western Hemisphere—completed by 1944, the  
centennial of  
the birth of our Faith—was not the only fruit of that First Seven Year Plan.  
It served as a  
working model of the systematic process by which the beloved Guardian was  
guiding the  
Bahá’í world toward the realization of the Master’s vision. Regional  
plans of pioneering  
were entrusted to the friends in the East even before the end of the Second  
World War.

The Second Seven Year Plan spanning the years 1946–1953 gave the valiant  
North  
American Bahá’í community the task of the spiritual revitalization of  
Europe, ravaged once  
more by the devastation and desolation of war.

The grand stage in the unfolding realization of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine  
Plan was ushered in  
by the beloved Guardian in 1953, the eve of the hundredth anniversary of  
Bahá’u’lláh’s  
prophetic revelations in the Síyáh-Chál of Tíhrán, with the inception of  
the Ten Year  
Crusade. Although several national Bahá’í communities had already  
undertaken pioneering  
plans of their own before 1953, now for the first time the entire Bahá’í  
world was given a  
share in the fulfillment of the goals of the Master’s Plan by being woven  
into one mighty  
Crusade for planting the banner of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh on the entire  
planet.

The Nine and the Five Year Plans (1964–1973; 1974–1979) of the Universal  
House of  
Justice may be seen as the successive steps in the inexorable and triumphant  
march of the

\*

armies of Bahá’u’lláh to the call sounded in the Tablets of the Divine  
Plan. During all these  
momentous accomplishments, and the epochs yet to come, the loving voice of the  
Master  
heard so movingly in the prayers which accompany these Tablets, shall remain as  
our source  
of inspiration and confirmation.

Amin Banani

October 1976

Star of the West, VII:10, pp. 87–91.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 80.

Shoghi Effendi, This Decisive Hour, pp. 117–8.

\*

The Seven Year Plan (1979–1986), the Six Year Plan (1986–1992), and the Three Year Plan (1993–1996)

continue the process.—Ed.

Foreword to 1993 edition

During the sixteen years since last impression of Tablets of the Divine Plan the Bahá’í

international community has undergone [a] dramatic transformation. Notable external

indices of growth include the completion of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice; the

dedication of Bahá’í Houses of Worship in India and Samoa; the inauguration of radio

stations in Ecuador, Peru, the United States, Bolivia, Panama, and Liberia; the rapid

expansion of the Faith in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union following the collapse of the

iron curtain; and the enrolment of large numbers of people, with some countries enlisting

many thousands and others hundreds of thousands, bringing the Faith’s worldwide

membership to at least five million in 1993.

Internally, the capacity of the Bahá’í community to implement the Bahá’í teachings in

daily life has enlarged substantially. Bahá’ís have increasingly become involved in the

promotion of world peace, environmental causes, literacy, the work of the United Nations and

its agencies, and projects designed to improve social and economic conditions.

Bahá’í youth

in growing numbers have participated in periods of extended service, and

Bahá’í scholarship

has emerged as a force contributing to a fuller understanding of the Bahá’í teachings. All

betoken a greater ability of Bahá’ís to apply their religious beliefs to the world around them.

As always in the advancement of the Cause of God, victory and crisis are locked in close

embrace. In 1979 the Islamic revolution in Írán engulfed the mother community of the

Bahá’í world in a firestorm of persecution. The execution of hundreds of

Bahá'ís, many of whom occupied key positions of service at both local and national levels; the demolition of the House of the Báb in Shíráz; the seizure of holy places, properties, bank accounts, and pension funds; the dismissal of many Bahá'ís from their jobs; and the banning of Bahá'í administrative institutions were elements of a systematic campaign aimed at eradicating the Bahá'í community. However, the pressure of world opinion, aroused by the efforts of Bahá'ís throughout the world, induced a relaxation of overt persecution, although the Bahá'í Faith in Írán continues to be outlawed and its members denied basic human rights.

Indeed, the crisis into which the Bahá'í community was thrown in 1979 proved an impetus

to the victories that have marked the last fifteen years of growth. While presenting the case

of the Iranian Bahá'ís to the United Nations, heads of state, parliaments, the media, and the

public, Bahá'ís rose to a higher plane of organization and dedication.

Deeply moved by the

plight of their fellow believers, they widened the scope of their efforts and channelled their

energies into actions worthy of the sacrifices of the Iranian Bahá'í community.

Correspondingly, worldwide recognition of the Faith reached a new level.

From a broader vantage point the victories of the Bahá'í community over the past sixteen

years may be seen as further unfoldments of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan.

Revealed to the

Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada in 1916 and 1917, these remarkable documents

elaborate on the call sounded by the Báb to the “peoples of the West” to “issue forth” from

From Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, New Delhi, India. 2000.

their ‘cities’ and aid His Cause” and on intimations made by

Bahá'u'lláh to the glorious

destiny America would attain in the future and to the “signs of His dominion” that would

appear in the West. In the Tablets of the Divine Plan 'Abdu'l-Bahá

fashions in broad outline

a master plan for the spiritual regeneration of the world and entrusts its execution to the

Bahá'ís of North America, whom He urges to arise to propagate the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the planet and thereby set in motion the redemptive forces released by Bahá'u'lláh's revelation.

The task of implementing the Divine Plan fell to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandson, Shoghi Effendi, whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith in His Will and Testament. Shoghi Effendi envisioned the Divine Plan as a "laborious and tremendously long process" involving the establishment of the Bahá'í Administrative Order "in all the newly opened sovereign states, dependencies and islands of the planet, as well as in all the remaining territories of the globe ...." The process began in 1921 with a "period of incubation" during which Shoghi Effendi introduced principles of Bahá'í administration and established an initial contingent of local and national spiritual assemblies. In 1937 he formally launched the Divine Plan with the first in a series of plans designed to carry out its provisions to progressively fuller degrees, a pattern the Universal House of Justice continues today.

Shoghi Effendi saw the Divine Plan as consisting of epochs and stages. The first stage of its first epoch began with a Seven Year Plan (1937–1944) assigned to the Bahá'ís of North America. The second stage comprised another Seven Year Plan (1946–1953) undertaken by Bahá'ís of the United States and plans of varying duration pursued by the Bahá'ís of the British Isles; of Canada; of Central America; of South America; of Australia and New Zealand; of India, Pakistani, and Burma; of Germany and Austria; of Írán; of 'Iráq; and of Egypt and the Sudan. The third and final stage of the first epoch was the Ten Year Crusade (1953–1963), which Bahá'ís throughout the world pursued in a common undertaking. The second epoch of the Divine Plan began in 1964 under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice and consists of stages marked by the Nine year Plan (1964–1973), the Five Year Plan (1974–1979), the Seven Year Plan (1979–1986), the Six Year Plan

(1986–1992), and the  
Three Year Plan (1993–1996).  
The Divine Plan will continue to evolve throughout the Formative Age and into  
what  
Shoghi Effendi called the "vast reaches of time stretching into the Golden ...  
Age ...", the  
third and crowning age of the Bahá'í Dispensation. The Golden Age will  
witness the  
flowering of a world civilization that is "the offspring and primary  
purpose" of the Most  
Great Peace—the Kingdom of God on earth—the establishment of which is the  
object of  
Bahá'u'lláh's revelation.

Shoghi Effendi, *This Decisive Hour*, p. 116.  
ibid.

Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950–1957*, p. 153.

Shoghi Effendi, *This Decisive Hour*, p. 73.

Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947–1957*, p. 114.

Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947–1957*, p. 7.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets of the Divine Plan, together with His Will and  
Testament,

constitute the greatest legacy He left to posterity and thus occupy a  
pre-eminent position  
among Bahá'í sacred scriptures. As we move farther and further away from  
their date of  
revelation, we witness with amazement the transforming effects that these  
documents exert in  
the world and return with fresh and eager eyes to glean from their lines the  
manifold  
meanings that hold the key to the world's salvation.

Geoffrey W. Marks

Publisher's foreword to 1993 edition

Five of the fourteen Tablets in *Tablets of the Divine Plan* were published in  
Star of the  
West on September 8, 1916, before World War I severed communications between  
the United  
States and Palestine. After World War I all fourteen Tablets, which were  
translated by  
Ahmad Sohrab, were shared with the Bahá'í convention in New York City and  
published in a  
small volume together with comments made on the occasion by Ahmad Sohrab. The  
cover  
bore the title *Unveiling of the Divine Plan*, and the title page, the words  
*Tablets, Instructions*  
and *Words of Explanation Revealed by Abdul Baha Abbas for the Assemblies and*

Meetings

of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada.

In 1936 the Bahá'í Publishing Committee brought out a small volume containing only the

Tablets of the Divine Plan and bearing the title *America's Spiritual Mission*.

It was reprinted

in 1948.

In 1959 the Tablets were reissued under the title *Tablets of the Divine Plan* and were

subsequently reprinted seven times, with corrections being made to the prayers in 1971 at the

request of the Universal House of Justice.

In 1977 a new edition was published, printing the Tablets in chronological order and

including information from the Tablets on when and where they were revealed.

Many

passages translated by Shoghi Effendi replaced earlier translations.

The 1993 edition, the first one to be made available in a pocket-size format, is designed to

make the book available to more readers. At the request of the Universal House of Justice, a

number of changes have been made to ensure accuracy and consistency: Several passages

translated by Shoghi Effendi replace earlier translations; one passage and a few words have

been retranslated to correct errors; direct quotations and paraphrases from the Qur'án and the

Bible have been clarified; punctuation, capitalization, and lowercasing have been made

consistent; several typographical errors have been eliminated; and footnotes are provided for

verses from and allusions to the Qur'án and the Bible.

To facilitate references to any edition of *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, the

Tablets and all the

paragraphs in the Tablets have been given numbers. This numbering system, first adopted by

Bahá'í Verlag in its 1987 edition of *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, will, as it is adopted by

publishers world-wide, enable readers to locate and refer to passages in virtually any edition.

The paragraph numbers in Tablets 6 and 8 differ by one number from those used in the

German edition of *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, for the word "Supplication", which is part of

'Abdu'l-Bahá's text, is given a separate paragraph number in the U.S. edition.

