

The Ten-Year Crusade:

*Seven Thousand  
Years  
In Retrospect*

*by Allan Ward*

THE TEN-YEAR CRUSADE

SEVEN THOUSAND YEARS IN RETROSPECT

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## Introduction

Here in a brief, dramatic sketch is unfolded a panoramic view of the spiritual development of man beginning with the Adamic age. Like a giant, living tree, revealing root, trunk and branches, we are able to see the great plan of God—the tree of civilization, reclothed from age to age with a new flowering through the renewal of God's ancient covenant with man. Now it has culminated in our own century, and particularly in our decade, with the greatest spiritual opportunity ever given to those who recognize the coming of God's Manifestation, that of bringing the tree into its finest fruitage.

This presentation will enable every newly enrolled Bahá'í to quickly comprehend the meaning of the present World Crusade as the most urgent stage in the Divine Plan inaugurated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Tablets to the American Bahá'ís more than forty years ago. It is also one last signal to every American Bahá'í to arise and fulfill his own spiritual destiny in the few months, weeks and days that remain of this World Crusade—"not to allow through apathy, timidity or complacency, this one remaining opportunity to be irretrievably lost," either for himself or for the American Bahá'í community which has been given a primal responsibility in this last decade of a seven-thousand-year plan of spiritual evolution.

The National Spiritual Assembly has suggested that this material be studied individually and as a community project. The most dramatic and effective method is to select two capable readers to alternate in reading the separate sections of the script, giving it one complete reading without pausing for group discussion. After this, a group leader should encourage consultation and discussion by the entire community. A reading list of additional titles to help newly enrolled Bahá'ís orient themselves to the World Crusade and the present stage of its progress, is given on page 22.

--by Eunice Braun

## THE TEN-YEAR CRUSADE

### SEVEN THOUSAND YEARS IN RETROSPECT

In the beginning was God. And there was His creation. And amidst the vast swirl of creation was a speck--earth. There evolved on earth complexities of life. And--man.

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And ages passed, and man came to know himself as "man" and he became aware of God. Thus the story of Adam is interpreted--here was man, first aware of God and His creation. So it was that a great cycle of religious development began--the Adamic cycle. God would not leave humanity destitute. The pattern was simple: when guidance was needed, God would send a Messenger at a particular time for a particular location. There was one God, and there was one religion, and many Messengers would bring it, in successive stages.

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The time is 2000 B.C. The place, India, along the Indus River. Black darkness has encompassed all the people. And Krishna is there. And He speaks unto them saying:

Whenever there is decay of righteousness...and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I myself come forth; for the protection of the good,...for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age.<sup>1</sup>

And the people are told of another Coming, when the "Most Great Spirit" will appear, the "Tenth Avatar," the "Immaculate Manifestation of Krishna."<sup>2</sup>

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The time is about 1330 B.C. The location is Egypt. And Moses is here. From the burning bush of Sinai, He spreads the fire of wisdom and justice across the East. And He speaks unto them saying:

But I say unto you: deeds of love are worth as much as all the commandments of the law... Love is the beginning and end of the Torah.<sup>3</sup>

And the Lord said... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.<sup>4</sup>

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The time: about 1000 B.C. Persia, a place of warring tribes. In the midst of their confusion, rises Zoroaster, like an undying flame of the knowledge of God. And He speaks saying:

And we worship the former religions of the world devoted to the Righteousness which were instituted at the creation, the holy religions of the Creator... the resplendent and glorious... Yea, we worship the Creator...<sup>5</sup>

"According to tradition, He foretold that a period of three thousand years of conflict and contention must needs precede the advent of the World-Savior, Sháh-Bahrám, Who would... usher in an era of blessedness and peace."<sup>6</sup>

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The time: 560 B.C. The place, India, below the slopes of the Himalayas. God sends another Messenger. And His name is Gautama, the Buddha. And He speaks unto them, saying:

Wherein does religion consist? It consists in doing as little harm as possible, in doing good in abundance, in the practice of love, of compassion, of truthfulness and purity, in all the walks of life.<sup>7</sup>

And He prophesies that a "Buddha named Maitreya, the Buddha of universal fellowship," should, in the fulness of time, arise and reveal "His boundless glory." 8

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The time: about 30 A.D. The place: Palestine. And Christ is here, and His title is the Son of God. And He speaks unto them saying:

Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one,  
that is God. 9

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the  
prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. 10

If you believed in Moses, you would believe me, for he  
wrote of me. 11

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I  
will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Coun-  
selor....I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to  
you. 12

And so He referred to the coming of the "Prince of the world," and the "Comforter,"  
the "Spirit of Truth" who will guide men to all truth at the time of the end. 13

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The time is 622 A.D. To the barbaric tribes of Arabia, the Light of God shines  
again. And Muhammad is here. And He says unto them:

We believe in God, and that which hath been sent down  
to us, and that which hath been sent down to...the  
tribes, and that which hath been given to Moses and to  
Jesus, and that which was given to the prophets from  
their Lord. No difference do we make between any of  
them: and to God we are resigned (Muslims).

There is no piety in turning your faces toward the east  
or the west, but he is pious who believeth in God and...  
the prophets. 14

And He foretells the Day "when the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord," when "the Book shall be set," the "Day of God," the "Day of Judgment." 15

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Muḥammad was called the Seal of the Prophets. The long thousands of years of the Adamic cycle are ending. The Day of the End has come. A new cycle is dawning.

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The time is May 22, 1844. The place, Shíráz, Persia. A young man, titled the Báb, proclaims that He is the Gate of God. He has come to close the door on the old cycle and to open the door to a new world-wide cycle of religion. The Báb prophesies that He is opening the way for the next Messenger Who will appear in the startlingly short time of nineteen years, and as Isaiah foretold "the government shall be upon His shoulders."

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The time is April, 1863. In the Garden of Riḍván, Baghdád, 'Iráq, the next Messenger of God proclaims Himself, saying He has come to bring the Teachings to establish the Oneness of Mankind. His title is Bahá'u'lláh, meaning the Glory of God.

To Israel He was neither more nor less than the incarnation of the "Everlasting Father," the "Lord of Hosts" come down "with ten thousands of saints;" to Christendom Christ returned "in the glory of the Father," to Shíah Islám the return of the Imám Ḥusayn; to Sunnī Islám, the descent of the "Spirit of God" (Jesus Christ); to the Zoroastrians the Promised Sháh-Bahrám; to the Hindus the reincarnation of Krishna; to the Buddhists the fifth Buddha. 16

And yet, He came like a thief in the night, as Christ had promised, when many least expected. And Bahá'u'lláh speaks unto them, saying:

The time fore-ordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy scriptures, have all been fulfilled. Out of Zion hath gone forth the Law of God, and Jerusalem, and the hills and land thereof, are filled with the glory of His Revelation. Happy is the man that pondereth in his heart that which hath been revealed in the Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. 17

And so, throughout His lifetime, Bahá'u'lláh revealed books containing the Message of God for this day, the new age of the unity of the whole earth.

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To channel the affairs of a global religion, God revealed the plan for divine justice embodied in an administrative order. The Faith had its birth in the East; it looked to the West to raise up the administrative institutions. The need was twofold; first for a new kind of spiritual administrative body, and second for a crusade to be launched that would bring the blessings of spiritual unity to the entire world.

The impulse from which this historic world-embracing crusade...unprecedented in religious history, derives its creative power may be said to have in a sense originated with the mandate issued by the Báb in His "Qayyúmu'l-Asmá," one of His earliest and greatest works, as far back as the opening years of the first Bahá'í century, and directed specifically to the "peoples of the West," to "issue forth" from their "cities" and aid His Cause. 18

To this initial force, a mightier surge was added.

To this initial impulse given by the Herald of our Faith, whilst confined in the heart of far-away Asia, a still greater force was communicated, and a more specific direction given, when the Author of our Faith Himself, having already set foot on the fringes of the continent of Europe, addressed in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas, from behind the walls of the prison-city of 'Akká, some of the most celebrated passages of that Book to the Chief Magistrates of the entire American continent...To this remarkable pronouncement, conferring such distinction upon the sovereign rulers of the Western Hemisphere, must be added

not only the passages in which the Author of Our Faith clearly foreshadows the revelation of the "signs of His dominion" in the West, but also the no less significant verbal affirmations which, according to reliable eye-witnesses, He more than once made in regard to the glorious destiny which America was to attain in the days to come. 19

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Now begins a chain of events, amazing in their scope, in the Western world: first, to build a foundation of spiritually motivated people; second, to construct the administrative order after Bahá'u'lláh's directions, to be crowned in the fulness of time by the International House of Justice; and third, to spread the healing medicine of divine law around the world to the sore-tried people of a chaotic age.

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The time: May, 1892. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh, is designated as the Perfect Exemplar of the Teachings and the Perfect Interpreter of His Father's Words. The Cause of God now comes under His loving direction.

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The time is 1893. The first mention of the Bahá'í Faith is made in the United States. From this tiny seed rises up a band of followers. Nurtured with the tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the sturdy, faithful band grows in attributes and numbers.

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The time: the spring of 1912. The spiritual basis of the plan is being set. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Himself, comes to the American believers. After eight months among them, as the believers bid Him farewell on board the ship, He speaks to them, saying:

This is my last meeting with you. These are my final words of exhortation. I have repeatedly summoned you to the cause of the unity of the world of humanity, announcing that all mankind are the servants of the same God. Therefore, you must manifest the greatest kindness and love towards the nations of the world... Therefore, if anyone offends another he offends God...

As to you: your efforts must be lofty. Exert yourselves with heart and soul so that through your efforts the light of universal peace may shine...

Consider how the Prophets who have been sent... have exhorted mankind to unity and love. This has been the goal of their guidance and message...

You are informed of the mysteries of God. Your eyes are illumined, your ears are quickened with hearing. You must look towards each other and then towards mankind with the utmost love and kindness. You have no excuse to bring before God if you fail to live according to His command, for you are informed of that which constitutes the good-pleasure of God...

Until man reaches this high station the world of humanity shall not find rest, and eternal felicity shall not be attained. But if man lives up to these divine Commandments, this world of earth shall be transformed into the world of heaven and this material sphere shall be converted into a Paradise of Glory.

It is my hope that you may become successful in this high calling...

Unto this I call you, praying God to strengthen and bless you. 20

And the believers know that America has a mission--a spiritual mission.

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The time is 1916. America's spiritual mission becomes more definite. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, from Haifa, in the midst of the darkest days of the first world war, writes a series

of tablets titled simply The Tablets of the Divine Plan in their printed form. In them is described a program of service to humanity that will encompass the entire globe--the continents and island groups of the world are mentioned. The spiritual requirements of teachers is explained. The importance of the God-given mission is stressed. It is a huge job. And the administrative machinery to carry it out is not yet ready.

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The year is 1921. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has ascended. Shoghi Effendi, His grandson, in his twenty-fourth year, is appointed as the Guardian of the Bahá'í World Faith, in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament. His first letter to the Western believers begins:

Dearly beloved brethren and sisters in 'Abdu'l-Bahá: At this early hour when the morning light is just breaking upon the Holy Land, whilst the gloom of the dear Master's bereavement is still hanging thick upon the hearts, I feel as if my soul turns in yearning love and full of hope to that great company of His loved ones across the seas, who now share with us all the agonies of His separation. <sup>21</sup>

And thus he turns his eyes to the Western hemisphere, and it turns its eyes to him. And an administrative order, which is to become the pattern for the whole Bahá'í world, is built up in the North American continent. It takes nearly twenty years, twenty long years, while the plans in The Tablets of the Divine Plan wait. Shoghi Effendi writes:

...The destinies of the followers of Bahá'u'llah in the North American continent must for generations to come remain inextricably interwoven with the Divine Plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 7 ... Its initiation, officially and on a vast scale, had, for well nigh twenty years, been held in

abeyance, while the processes of a slowly emerging administrative Order, were, under the unerring guidance of Providence, creating and perfecting the agencies for its efficient and systematic prosecution. <sup>22</sup>

At last the believers are prepared. Shoghi Effendi writes:

The administrative machinery of the Cause having now sufficiently evolved, its aim and object fairly well grasped and understood, and its method and working made more familiar to every believer, I feel the time is ripe when it should be fully and consciously utilized to further the purpose for which it has been created. <sup>23</sup>

The world is in troubled times and chaos is descending increasingly. Humanity can see "the ever-increasing confusion of the world, threatened as never before with disruptive forces, fierce rivalries, fresh commotions and grave disorder." <sup>24</sup>

But Shoghi Effendi points out:

And as to the world's evil plight we need but recall the writings... of Bahá'u'lláh, who... declared in terms prophetic the prime cause of the ills and sufferings of mankind, and set forth their true and divine remedy. "Should the Lamp of Religion be hidden" He declares, "Chaos and confusion will ensue." How admirably fitting and applicable are these words to the present state of mankind!

Ours is then the duty and privilege to labor, by day and by night, amidst the storm and stress of these troublous days, that we may quicken the zeal of our fellow-men, rekindle their hopes, stimulate their interest, open their eyes to the true Faith of God and enlist their active support in the carrying out of our common task for the peace and regeneration of the world. <sup>25</sup>

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The time is 1937. The first step in the crusade for the redemption of mankind is getting underway. Its initial stage is a threefold project. First comes a plan involving seven years of effort to extend the Faith to every state in the Union, all the countries of South America and to all the provinces of Canada. Then, a

second seven-year plan will be launched, to carry the Faith deeply into Europe, and to consolidate the foundation already laid in the Americas. Following this will come a Ten-Year Crusade, which is to spread the Faith to Africa and Asia and the island groups--to all the territories of the globe. On this world-wide administrative basis, the International House of Justice is to be formed. The date concluding this third phase will be 1963.

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But the year is still 1937, and Shoghi Effendi is stressing the requirements that must characterize the lives of the Bahá'ís as their work begins:

These requirements are none other than a high sense of moral rectitude in their social and administrative activities, absolute chastity in their individual lives, and complete freedom from prejudice in their dealings with people of a different race, class, creed, or color. <sup>26</sup>

So important are these vital matters, that Shoghi Effendi writes an entire book--The Advent of Divine Justice--to explain the requirements of personal development and group unity for those who would arise.

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The year is 1941. Total war in the world commences. But the propagation of the Divine Plan must not be interrupted. It is the only salvation for a convulsing humanity. Shoghi Effendi writes the book, The Promised Day is Come, at this critical hour. He shows, in historical retrospect, the causes of this first installment of the world cataclysm. He opens with Bahá'u'lláh's prophetic words:

The time for the destruction of the world and its people hath arrived. <sup>27</sup>

And to the sorely-tried, sometimes bewildered, believers in the West, he writes:

Severe and unprecedented as may be the internal tests and ordeals which the members of this community may yet experience, however tragic and momentous the external happenings which might well disrupt the fabric of the society in which they live, they must not throughout these six remaining years, allow themselves to be deflected from the course they are now steadily pursuing... 28

He quotes 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words, saying "Let your exertions, henceforth, increase a thousandfold." And he points the way clearly to the eternal path, as he writes:

Through the clearness and steadiness of their vision, through the unvitiated vitality of their belief, through the incorruptibility of their character, through the adamant force of their resolve, the matchless superiority of their aims and purpose, and the unsurpassed range of their accomplishments, they who labor... throughout both Americas can best demonstrate to the visionless, faithless and restless society to which they belong their power to proffer a haven of refuge to its members in the hour of their realized doom. 29

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The time is March, 1945. The armed combat ceases for a time, thus offering a breathing spell in the great world cataclysm. But none know how long this lull will last, or when the violence of the cataclysm will resume, with greater intensity, perhaps ending the opportunity to accomplish America's spiritual mission. Thus there is a race with time. Shoghi Effendi writes, as the first seven-year plan ends:

There is no time to lose, The hour is ripe for the proclamation, without fear, without reserve, and without hesitation, and on a scale never as yet undertaken, of the One Message that can alone extricate humanity from the morass into which it is steadily sinking, and from which they who claim to be the followers of... Ḥ Bahá'u'lláh can and will eventually rescue it. 30

And so the second seven-year plan is launched.

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The time is June, 1946. Shoghi Effendi writes:

The opening decade of the second Bahá'í century coincides with the launching of the second Seven-Year Plan...

Setbacks may well surprise... ~~The~~ privileged American prosecutors of the Plan<sup>7</sup>; trials and disappointments may tax their patience and resourcefulness; the forces of darkness, either from within or from without, may seek to dampen their ardor, to disrupt their unity and break their spirit; pitfalls may surround the little band that must act as a vanguard to the host which must, in the years to come, spiritually raise up the sorely ravaged continent of Europe. None of these, however fierce, sinister or unyielding they may appear, must be allowed to deflect the protagonists of a God-impelled Plan, from the course which 'Abdu'l-Bahá has chosen for them, and which the agencies of a firmly established, laboriously erected, Administrative Order, are now enabling them to effectively pursue. 31

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The time is June 30, 1952. The Second Seven-Year Plan is drawing to a close.

The names of thousands of heroes and saints have been written in the annals of Bahá'í history. The chaos of the world around increases. The coming renewal of open conflict seems nearer. The Guardian writes;

No matter how long the period that separates them from ultimate victory; however arduous the task; however formidable the exertions demanded of them; however dark the days which mankind, perplexed and sorely-tried, must, in its hour of travail, traverse; however severe the tests with which they who are to redeem its fortunes will be confronted... however grievous the ordeal of temporary separation from the heart and nerve-center of their Faith which

future unforeseeable disturbances may impose upon them...I adjure them, as this solemn hour draws nigh, to resolve never to flinch, never to hesitate, never to relax, until each and every objective in the Plans to be proclaimed...has been fully consummated. 32

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The year is 1953. The third set of plans is proclaimed in the form of the Ten-Year Crusade. It is launched to carry the Faith to the far-flung corners of the globe. Thousands move, in their quiet way, to carry on God's work, and to fulfill the promise of the New Day.

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The time is July 19, 1956. Three precious years have passed. World tensions have mounted. The believers strive not to lose their remaining opportunities. They believe that the whole future of mankind depends on their response. The beloved Guardian reminds the followers that they cannot help others until they change themselves. He writes:

The gross materialism that engulfs the entire nation at the present hour; the attachment to worldly things that enshrouds the souls of men; the fears and anxieties that distract their minds; the pleasure and dissipations that fill their time, the prejudices and animosities that darken their outlook, the apathy and lethargy that paralyze their spiritual faculties--these are among the formidable obstacles that stand in the path of every would-be warrior in the service of Bahá'u'lláh, obstacles which he must battle against and surmount in his crusade for the redemption of his own countrymen.

To the degree that the home front Crusader is himself cleansed of these impurities, liberated from these petty preoccupations and gnawing anxieties, delivered from these prejudices and antagonisms, emptied of self,

and filled by the healing and the sustaining power of God, will he be able to combat the forces arrayed against him, magnetize the souls of those whom he seeks to convert, and win their unreserved, their enthusiastic and enduring allegiance to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Delicate and strenuous though the task may be, however arduous and prolonged the effort required, whatsoever the nature of the perils and pitfalls that beset the path of whoever arises to revive the fortunes of a Faith struggling against the rising forces of materialism, nationalism, secularism, racialism, ecclesiasticism, the all-conquering potency of the grace of God, vouchsafed through the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, will, undoubtedly, mysteriously and surprisingly, enable whosoever arises to champion His Cause to win complete and total victory. 33

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The time is September 21, 1957. The race with time increases to a fever pitch. There is no time to lose. An alarming communication comes and each believer reads:

The Plan, prosecuted hitherto so vigorously by the rank and file of this community may be said to be still suffering in some of its vital aspects, from certain deficiencies, which, if not speedily and fundamentally remedied, will not only mutilate the Plan itself, but jeopardize the prizes won so laboriously since its inauguration. 34

Following on the heels of this desperate challenge come the words:

The Homefront... which must continue to act as base for the steady expansion of future operations in every continent of the globe... which must be increasingly regarded... as the sole stronghold of a Faith, which cannot hope to escape unscathed from the turmoil gathering around it--such a Homefront must, at all costs, and in the shortest possible time, be spiritually reinvigorated... 35

The time is November, 1957.    The cablegram arrives from Haifa:

Shoghi Effendi beloved of all hearts sacred trust  
given believers by Master passed away suddenly.

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The time is now.    One of the last pleas of the beloved Guardian echoes  
in the hearts of the friends:

Once again--and this time more fervently than ever  
before--I direct my plea to every single member of  
this strenuously laboring, clear-visioned, stout-  
hearted, spiritually endowed community, every man  
and woman, on whose individual efforts, resolution,  
self-sacrifice and perseverance the immediate des-  
tinies of the Faith of God, now traversing so crucial  
a stage in its rise and establishment, primarily de-  
pends, not to allow through apathy, timidity or  
complacency, this <sup>36</sup>one remaining opportunity to be  
irretrievably lost.

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## SUPPLEMENTARY READING LIST

TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN. Tablets revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the North American Bahá'ís during the first World War. This is the Charter which conferred upon Shoghi Effendi the authority and obligation to establish these teaching plans. (1959 edition with preface by Horace Holley and photograph of the Master.)  
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AMERICA'S GOD-GIVEN MISSION. Compilation from the writings for group study on the "preponderating role" the Bahá'ís of America are called upon to play in the carrying out of the Divine Plan.  
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THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH: Statistical Information (1844-1952) with Supplement on the Ten-Year International Teaching Plan, 1953-1963. Compiled by Shoghi Effendi. A map prepared by the Guardian depicts in color the assigned tasks of the Ten-Year Plan.  
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