

Arc Project: 1994 Open Letter

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To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

As construction work commences on the first of the monumental Edifices which must be raised on Mount Carmel to complete the World Administrative Centre of the Bahá'í Faith, it seems Appropriate to review the significance of this vast project and to reflect on its basic purpose.

The projects under way on this mountain are of profound significance. They represent much more than the erection of buildings to meet the expanding needs of the Bahá'í World Centre. The call for contributions to the Arc Projects Fund, far from being a diversion of resources which might otherwise be used to help relieve the distress of mankind, offers the followers of Bahá'u'lláh a providential opportunity to participate in an endeavour which is central to the work of the Faith in eradicating the causes of the appalling suffering now afflicting humanity.

The Bahá'í community encourages and supports the manifold efforts being made by people of goodwill to better the condition of humankind and promote unity and harmony among the peoples and nations of the earth. However, the believers should never, for even one moment, lose sight of the fact that the crisis now engulfing every part of the planet is essentially spiritual. "That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world", Bahá'u'lláh emphatically states, "is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith." Our acute awareness of the magnitude of the misery which so many groups and individuals are experiencing should spur us on to ever-greater exertions, inspired and animated by an abiding consciousness that only through the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh can the multitudinous problems burdening humanity be resolved.

From the dawn of Bahá'í history, attention has been directed to the glory of the World Order which the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is destined to unfold. The Bab Himself declared, "Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the order of Bahá'u'lláh and rendereth thanks unto his Lord!" while Bahá'u'lláh affirmed, in the Mother Book of His Dispensation, that "the world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. It is abundantly evident that the exalted aims of the Faith can be accomplished only through the instrumentality of the World Order which Bahá'u'lláh has established for that purpose. The spiritual transformation of humanity, the relief of the diverse peoples of the earth from rampant suffering, the attainment and preservation of true peace in the world, the birth of a world civilization -- all such noble objectives of the Cause of God will remain unrealized

unless they are associated with that radical change in the structure and functioning of human society inherent in the growth and fruition of His divinely ordained Order. The institutions of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, now being raised in all parts of the world through the endeavours of the believers, are the precursor, the nucleus and the pattern of that World Order which will, in the course of time, exert its full benevolent influence on all the peoples of the earth.

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Shoghi Effendi explained that the revelation by Bahá'u'lláh of the Kitab-i-Aqdas "preserves for posterity the basic laws and ordinances on which the fabric of His future World Order must rest. And he referred to "the triple impulse generated through the revelation of the Tablet of Carmel by Bahá'u'lláh and the Will and Testament as well as the Tablets of the Divine Plan bequeathed by the Centre of His Covenant -- the three Charters which have set in motion three distinct processes, the first operating in the Holy Land for the development of the institutions of the Faith at its World Centre and the other two, throughout the rest of the Bahá'í world, for its propagation and the establishment of its Administrative Order." These three processes, although distinct, are closely interrelated. Developments at the World Centre of the Faith, the heart and nerve-centre of the Administrative Order, must necessarily exert a pronounced influence on the organic body of the worldwide Bahá'í community, and be affected by its vitality. The Administrative Order may best be viewed as the chief instrument for the prosecution of the Divine Plan, while that Plan has become recognized as the most potent agency for the development of the administrative structure of the Faith. It follows that, for the sound and balanced growth of the Faith and the speedy attainment of world Order, due attention must be paid to all three processes.

The construction work now in progress on Mount Carmel should be seen as a major historic thrust in the development of the first of these three mighty processes -- a process which was launched more than one hundred years ago by Bahá'u'lláh Himself when He pitched His tent on this Holy Mountain and revealed the Tablet described by the Guardian as "the Charter of the World Spiritual and Administrative Centres of the Faith". The unfoldment of this process has been distinguished by the interment of the sacred remains of the Bab in the bosom of this mountain within a sanctuary built by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, followed subsequently by the erection of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Bab by Shoghi Effendi. When, in 1939, the Guardian transferred the bodily remains of the brother and mother of the Master to their final resting-place in the immediate vicinity of that of the Greatest Holy Leaf, he described his action as one which "incalculably reinforces the spiritual potencies of that consecrated Spot which, under the wings of the Bab's overshadowing Sepulchre", is

designated to be the focal centre of these world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions which the followers of Bahá'u'lláh are raising for the salvation of humanity and the fulfilment of its glorious destiny.

Shortly before his passing, the Guardian completed the structure of the International Bahá'í Archives, "the first stately Edifice destined to usher in the establishment of the World Administrative Centre of the Faith on Mount Carmel -- the Ark referred to by Bahá'u'lláh in the closing passages of His Tablet of Carmel".

In more recent years the contributions of the believers around the world permitted construction of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, the second of the Edifices which Shoghi Effendi had envisaged as being located on a far-flung arc, surrounding the resting-places of the members of the Holy Family. This achievement opened the way for the announcement in 1987 of the project for erection of the remaining buildings of the World Administrative Centre of the Faith and for the construction of the eighteen monumental terraces contemplated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, below and above the Shrine of the Bab. It signalled a major step toward the consummation of the vision expressed

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by the Guardian as "the splendour of the institutions which that triumphant Faith must erect on the slopes of a mountain, destined to be so linked with the city of 'Akka that a single grand metropolis will be formed to enshrine the spiritual as well as the administrative seats of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth".

The Edifices and Terraces now under construction are a manifest expression of the emergence from obscurity of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and of the determining role it is ordained to play in the affairs of humankind. When the buildings are completed, they will stand as the visible seat of mighty institutions whose purpose is no other than the spiritualization of humanity and the preservation of justice and unity throughout the world. The future significance of the Terraces is evident from their characterization by Shoghi Effendi as "the Pathway of the Kings and Rulers of the World". The beauty and magnificence of the Gardens and Terraces now under development are symbolic of the nature of the transformation which is destined to occur both within the hearts of the world's peoples and in the physical environment of the planet.

The establishment of the World Administrative Centre of the Faith on Mount Carmel at this juncture in the fortunes of mankind is essential to hasten the accomplishment of God's purpose for humanity through the operation of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The believers are called upon to sustain this vast collective enterprise upon which the community of the Most Great Name is now embarked, through a sacrificial outpouring of material

resources and through their dedication to the work of the Cause at this time of unprecedented need and opportunity.

Mount Carmel was extolled by the prophet Isaiah almost three thousand years ago, when he announced that "it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. Now, with the coming of the Lord of Hosts, His devoted servants throughout the world have been summoned to the momentous undertaking with which the fulfilment of this ancient promise is associated. As they dedicate themselves to this mighty task, let them draw inspiration from these Words of Bahá'u'lláh: "Carmel, in the Book of God, hath been designated as the Hill of God, and His Vineyard. It is here that, by the grace of the Lord of Revelation, the Tabernacle of Glory hath been raised. Happy are they that attain thereunto; happy they that set their faces towards it."

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

cc: The Hands of the Cause of God
International Teaching Centre
Counsellors

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