

Some Thoughts on the Lesser Peace

Talk by Mr 'Alí Nakhjavání, 28 December 1984, at the World Centre, for the Ihtifál programme

This subject is both interesting and difficult. It is interesting because we are approaching the Lesser Peace, and it is difficult because when one reads the Writings on this subject, one comes across all kinds of statements that appear to be contradictory. So one has to re-study them, refer to the original maybe, and try to make the subject more understandable. This is what I have attempted and hope to do. I may succeed, and I may not; it will be for you to judge.

I begin by paying a tribute to the beloved Guardian, because without him, and without his interpretations, we would not have been able to understand and say much about the Lesser Peace. In *"The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh"* he says that the Institution of the Guardianship provides the means which enables the Faith to "take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations." However, one must study the writings of Shoghi Effendi and meditate upon them; we see that his remarkable elucidations have given us an overview, not over a series of generations, but over many centuries, and indeed till the end of the Dispensation, and possibly even beyond.

Both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have given us general guidelines in their Writings about peace and the Lesser Peace, but not until Shoghi Effendi began writing his World Order letters did we begin to have an understanding of what this subject was all about. The term "Lesser Peace", in Persian "*Şulḥ-i-Aşghar*", was mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh in His Tablet to Queen Victoria. He uses the recipient of that Tablet, that is Queen Victoria, as a means to address the rulers and kings of the earth. After calling on them to "establish peace on earth", not to lay the burden of their excessive and increasing expenditures on their subjects, and to choose for them what the rulers would choose for themselves, He makes this statement:

*Now that ye have refused the Most Great Peace, hold ye fast unto this, the Lesser Peace, that haply ye may in some degree better your own condition and that of your dependents.*¹

This translation of Shoghi Effendi was released to the Bahá'ís of the world in 1935, in his translation of *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. The earlier translation, which was published in 1923, in *Bahá'í Scriptures*, I will now read to you. It is so inadequate and so incomplete!: "Having rejected this Most Great Peace, it behoveth you to be at peace among yourselves"; whereas Shoghi Effendi's translation is, and it agrees with the original text, of course: "... hold ye fast unto this, the Lesser Peace". The term "Lesser Peace" had not been translated, perhaps because the translator did not know how to translate it, so he just said, "be at peace among yourselves, perchance your affairs may be improved thereby" It is very interesting that Shoghi Effendi, during his pre-Guardianship days, translated the Tablet to Queen Victoria himself. When he came to this passage—this is before 1921—he translated the term "Lesser Peace" as "Minor Peace"; he had already grasped the intent of Bahá'u'lláh.

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 254; and *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 12-3.

One year after his *Gleanings*, Shoghi Effendi, in 1936 in his *Unfoldment of World Civilization* for the first time explained this passage for the Bahá'ís of the West (and of course the Bahá'ís of the East were able to benefit from it). He quoted Bahá'u'lláh—the passage that I read to you—and then he pointed out that what Bahá'u'lláh meant was a machinery devised by the political efforts of mankind to establish a peace among the nations by reducing national armaments and upholding the principle of collective security. After this explanation he referred to the Most Great Peace, and extolled the glories of that Most Great Peace. For example, in that letter and in subsequent letters he taught us that the Most Great Peace involved the following:

1. The recognition of the character, and acknowledgement of the claims, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh
2. The spiritualization of the masses
3. The fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations
4. The direct operation of the laws and principles of Bahá'u'lláh
5. The functioning of the Universal House of Justice as the supreme organ of the Bahá'í Super-State
6. The birth of a world civilization to be perpetuated in future Dispensations—an earthly heaven, capable of mirroring forth the splendours of the Abhá Kingdom—the hallmark of the inception of the Golden Age of Bahá'u'lláh.

So such is the picture we get about the Most Great Peace. The Lesser Peace falls short of these conditions, and among these the primary condition is the recognition of Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for today. This is a very important point for us to remember as we proceed in our study of this subject.

When will this Golden Age begin? When will the Formative Age end? This has not been fixed explicitly in the Writings. In one of his letters to the East, Shoghi Effendi says that this is a mystery concealed within the treasury of God's knowledge. We simply do not know. He is not telling us, even if He knew. However, Shoghi Effendi is reported to have told pilgrims that the Golden Age and the Most Great Peace would occur towards the end of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh. In any case, in his Foreword to *God Passes By*, he clearly states that it would be in the course of "succeeding centuries" that the world-embracing Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future will emerge. If, therefore, the Most Great Peace is to follow the Lesser Peace, as it does follow, then the period for the full establishment and efflorescence of the Lesser Peace will not be a brief span of time, but a gradual process which will extend over a long period.

Now we come to the frequently asked question: We do not know when the Golden Age will begin, but do we know exactly when the Lesser Peace will begin? If we are looking for a date, the answer is given by the Guardian in a letter written on his behalf, dated 15 August 1957, the last year of his life; it is a very simple statement:

World Government will come, but we do not know the date.¹

¹ Shoghi Effendi: *Peace*, p. 196. 15 August 1957 to an individual believer.

But, if we are looking for a general period of time, our first insight into this subject is contained in a Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1906, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to Mrs Whyte of Edinburgh, Scotland, at a time when He was living in the House of 'Abdu'lláh Páshá. This Tablet became known later as the *Tablet of the Seven Candles*. I will read from that Tablet:

... all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century—the century of light—hath been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon.

Now, before I read you His statement on the seven candles, I want you to bear in mind that the order is not of capital importance.

The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour. The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.¹

Shoghi Effendi quoted this passage twice in his writings, once in 1931 in *"The Goal of a New World Order"*, and the second time ten years later, in 1941, in *The Promised Day Is Come*. When quoting it the second time, he added this comment in his own words:

This is the stage which the world is now approaching, the stage of world unity,²
he is referring to the fifth candle:

... which, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá assures us, will, in this century, be securely established.³

He doesn't want to leave any doubts in our minds.

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 31-2.

² Shoghi Effendi: *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 121.

³ *ibid.*

Now, referring to this twentieth century, there are many references in the Tablets and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that extol this century, as we just heard. There are others similar to it. They are too many to quote here. Suffice it to say that when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in Montreal, a reporter of the *Montreal Star* asked Him: “Are there any signs that the permanent peace of the world will be established in anything like a reasonable period?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s answer was, and it was published in the “*Montreal Star*”, and republished by the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly:

*It will be established in this century. It will be universal in the twentieth century. All nations will be forced into it.*¹

On another occasion, not in Montreal but in the United States, He said,

*Some persons who are ignorant of the world of true humanity and its high ambitions for the general good, reckon such a glorious condition of life to be very difficult, nay rather impossible to compass. But it is not so, far from it.*²

Again, in His *The Secret of Divine Civilization* He says,

*A few, unaware of the power latent in human endeavour, consider this matter as highly impracticable, nay even beyond the scope of man’s utmost efforts. Such is not the case, however. ... Many a cause which past ages have regarded as purely visionary, yet in this day has become most easy and practicable. Why should this most great and lofty Cause ... be regarded as impossible of achievement?*³

Now, back to the Tablet of the Seven Candles. Someone asked Shoghi Effendi, in 1945, about the order of the appearance of the candles, and that is a point I have already mentioned. The Guardian’s reply, written on his behalf on 19 November 1945, was this:

The Seven Lights of Unity will not necessarily appear in the order given.⁴

A question was asked about the second candle, which is unity of thought. The reply, in that same letter, was,

A product of the second may well be universal culture.⁵

But a far more important question was asked, more important than these two that I read to you. It was asked in 1936. This person who asked it is sitting right here in this room—Marion Hofman. God bless her for having asked this question. She was then Marion Holley. She asked him about the first and fifth candles. You recall the first candle “was unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned”; the fifth was the “Unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland.” So she wanted to know what was the difference between these two?—a very good question, a question of such importance that I cannot really in my lame words express appreciation to Marion for having asked it and to the beloved Guardian for his illuminating reply:

With reference to your question concerning ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s reference to ‘unity in the political realm [first candle]: this unity should be clearly distinguished from the ‘unity of nations’ [fifth candle]. The first is a unity which politically independent

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Peace*, p. 171. Extracts from interview with newspaper reporter, quoted in *Abdu’l-Baha in Canada* (Thornhill: Bahá’í Canada Publications, 1987), pp. 34–5.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Peace*, p. 174. Quoted from *Star of the West*, 7:14 (November 1916), p. 136.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 66.

⁴ Shoghi Effendi: *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 67; and *Peace*, p. 195. 19 November 1945 to an individual believer.

⁵ *ibid.*

and sovereign states achieve among themselves; while the second is one which is brought about between nations, the difference between a state and a nation being that the former, as you know, is a political entity without necessarily being homogeneous in race, whereas the second implies national as well as political homogeneity.¹

What was 'Abdu'l-Bahá talking about? He was talking about two stages, two distinct stages in this process of the political unification of the world. One is the unity of sovereign governments, the other is the unity of peoples. One is a "Union" or a "Confederation" in terms of American history, the other is a "Federation". I believe—and I may be totally wrong—that we have not reached the full implications of the first candle as yet, i.e. unity in the political realm. Now, some 66 years after the formation of the League of Nations and nearly 40 years after the establishment of the "United Nations Organization", I don't think we have really achieved it. Truly the title "United Nations" I believe is a misnomer in terms of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's and Shoghi Effendi's definitions. Maybe it should be called "A partial Union or Confederation of most of the Governments of the world". As someone said, instead of "United Nations" it is really "Untied Nations". The whole concept of the power of veto is foreign to the concept of the Lesser Peace as advocated in our Writings.

Now, back to the difference between a "Union" and a "Nation" or the "Federation", with specific reference to the United States of America. 'Abdu'l-Bahá leads the way in drawing our attention to the close resemblance and similarity that exist between the United States of America, and the United States of the world. Addressing a high official of the US Government He made this statement:

You can best serve your country if you strive, in your capacity as a citizen of the world, to assist in the eventual application of the principle of federalism, underlying the government of your own country, to the relationships now existing between the peoples and nations of the world.²

Shoghi Effendi goes beyond this parallel set forth by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He tells us that the stages that witnessed the welding of the disjointed and independent American states into a single federation would be similar to the political unification of the world. Listen to this remarkable statement:

How confident were the assertions made in the days preceding the unification of the states of the North American continent regarding the insuperable barriers that stood in the way of their ultimate federation! Was it not widely and emphatically declared that the conflicting interests, the mutual distrust, the differences of government and habit that divided the states were such as no force, whether spiritual or temporal, could ever hope to harmonize or control? And yet how different were the conditions prevailing a hundred and fifty years ago³

Today we should say nearly 200 years ago—these words were written about 50 years ago:

... from those that characterize present-day society! It would indeed be no exaggeration to say ...

¹ Shoghi Effendi: *Peace*, p. 194. 26 July 1936 to an individual believer.

² Shoghi Effendi: *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 88.

³ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 45.

this sentence is very important and I have underlined it for myself here:

It would indeed be no exaggeration to say that the absence of those facilities which modern scientific progress has placed at the service of humanity in our time made of the problem of welding the American states into a single federation, similar though they were in certain traditions, a task infinitely more complex than that which confronts a divided humanity in its efforts to achieve the unification of all mankind.¹

He regards that stage more complex than the stage we are entering in today on a world level. And then this highly significant conclusion:

Who knows that for so exalted a conception to take shape a suffering more intense than any it has yet experienced will have to be inflicted upon humanity? Could anything less than the fire of a civil war with all its violence and vicissitudes—a war that nearly rent the great American Republic—have welded the states, not only into a Union of independent units, but into a Nation, in spite of all the ethnic differences that characterized its component parts?²

May I pause just a minute here. He mentions a “Union”; he is referring, I believe, to the year 1781 when the Articles of Confederation were approved. When he speaks about the “Nation” he is referring to six years later when the Constitution was drawn up by the Federal Constitutional Convention in 1787. Now, H. G. Wells in his *History of the World* has made a wonderful remark on this point, between these two stages—1781 and 1787; he says that first Constitution said: “We the States ...”; the second Constitution read: “We the people of the United States”; this is precisely the point which Shoghi Effendi made to Mrs Marion Hofman in her letter, exactly the same point. So he says,

... not only into a Union of independent units, but into a Nation, in spite of all the ethnic differences that characterized its component parts? That so fundamental a revolution, involving such far-reaching changes in the structure of society, can be achieved through the ordinary processes of diplomacy and education seems highly improbable. We have but to turn our gaze to humanity's blood-stained history to realize that nothing short of intense mental as well as physical agony has been able to precipitate those epoch-making changes that constitute the greatest landmarks in the history of human civilization.³

And then with his voice as God's Sign on earth, he solemnly declares:

That the forces of a world catastrophe can alone precipitate such a new phase of human thought is, alas, becoming increasingly apparent. That nothing short of the fire of a severe ordeal, unparalleled in its intensity, can fuse and weld the discordant entities that constitute the elements of present-day civilization, into the integral components of the world commonwealth of the future, is a truth which future events will increasingly demonstrate.

... Nothing but a fiery ordeal, out of which humanity will emerge, chastened and prepared, can succeed in implanting that sense of responsibility which the leaders of a new-born age must arise to shoulder.⁴

¹ ibid.

² Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 45.

³ ibid.

⁴ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 46.

Now ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had already stated:

*Chaos and confusion are daily increasing in the world. They will attain such intensity as to render the frame of mankind unable to bear them. Then will men be awakened*¹

Thus in accordance with these texts—and I have selected, believe me, but a few, as there are several on this very theme—the stages yet ahead of us should be something along these lines (and this is my personal opinion):

1. intensification of chaos and confusion in the world
2. an unparalleled, severe world ordeal
3. a confederation of all states and governments of the world—the first candle
4. a federation of all the nations of the world—the fifth candle

Now before we dismiss the subject of the United States, there is one more reference to that country given to us by Shoghi Effendi in which he expounds the role that the United States has played and will play in the establishment of peace in this world. First, we recall the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In the light of these various stages see how much more meaning one could attach to these, His words:

*May this American democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement.*²

International agreement, not universal agreement, but international agreement—maybe a reference to World War II and what happened at that time.

*May it be the first nation to proclaim the unity of mankind.*³

possibly the Lesser Peace here:

May it be the first to unfurl the standard of the “Most Great Peace”⁴

The United States will go **all the way**, up to the Most Great Peace. He even, in one of His talks, joins Canada to the United States. He says,

I find these two great American nations [the United States and Canada] highly capable and advanced ... it is my hope that these revered nations may become prominent factors in the establishment of international peace and the oneness of the world of humanity;⁵

Now, let us turn to the words of Shoghi Effendi. We find this lucid statement, in which he is referring to the unfoldment of the destiny of America, not of the American community, as it relates to the question of peace. He writes that this is a process which

.... dates back to the outbreak of the first World War that threw the great republic of the West into the vortex of the first stage of a world upheaval. It received its initial impetus through the formulation of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, closely associating for the first time that republic with the fortunes of the Old World. It suffered its first setback through the

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Peace*, p. 165; and *Lights of Guidance*, p. 126.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 36.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 318.

dissociation of that republic from the newly born League of Nations which that president had laboured to create. It acquired added momentum through the outbreak of the second World War, inflicting unprecedented suffering on that republic, and involving it still further in the affairs of all the continents of the globe. It was further reinforced through the declaration embodied in the Atlantic Charter, as voiced by one of its chief progenitors, Franklin D. Roosevelt. It assumed a definite outline through the birth of the United Nations at the San Francisco Conference. It acquired added significance through the choice of the City of the Covenant itself as the seat of the newly born organization, ...¹

So this is for the past. Now into the future.

It must, however long and tortuous the way, lead, through a series of victories and reverses, to the political unification of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, to the emergence of a world government and the establishment of the Lesser Peace, as foretold by Bahá'u'lláh and foreshadowed by the Prophet Isaiah. It must, in the end, culminate in the unfurling of the banner of the Most Great Peace, in the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.²

What a mystery this is! Now, look at the terms that he uses here. After speaking of victories, and reverses, he says that this will lead to the political unification of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Now this Eastern Hemisphere is a term that is used to refer to Europe, to Asia and to Africa. The Western Hemisphere is a term that applies to the Americas, North, Central and South. So there is going to be, before world government can come, some kind of an understanding, an agreement, an international agreement, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, between these continents. Take Europe, we have the Soviet Union in Europe, it is part of this Eastern Hemisphere. Take Asia, we have the Muslim world there with all their forces. We have China. Thus we move first to a world government, then to the Lesser Peace. Therefore we have three stages: a cessation of hostilities between these warring camps, a world government, the Lesser Peace.

There is an underlying mystery, as I was just saying, that links the United States to the Lesser Peace and to the Most Great Peace. Let us recall the words of Bahá'u'lláh to the Rulers of America:

*Adorn ye the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord ...*³

This is a diversion. Even in the matter of the deliverance of the persecuted Bahá'ís of Iran, Shoghi Effendi says that the suffering and persecuted Bahá'ís in the Cradle of His Faith will witness

... the signs of their promised redemption which, as foretold by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, ...

he ascribes this prophecy to 'Abdu'l-Bahá

... must first be made manifest through the efforts of their brethren in that great freedom-loving Republic of the West.⁴

¹ Shoghi Effendi: *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 32-3.

² Shoghi Effendi: *Citadel of Faith*, p. 33.

³ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 52; and *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 63.

⁴ Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 117.

A close study of the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will reveal that this goal—I’m talking about the Confederation now, that is the stage before the Federation, prior to the Lesser Peace—this goal will be achieved in two stages. Now, this is my conclusion. I will read you the texts and then you can arrive at your own conclusions. Here is this very celebrated passage of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *The Secret of Divine Civilization*:

True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns ...

He didn’t say “all”; this is where the two stages come in; I just read you that it would be led by the United States and secondly by Canada

*... shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world.*¹

See how the words agree, the concepts agree.

They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world

because they are not all the world:

*... and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race.*²

So you see, we have first, a group of leaders who spontaneously, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, will be forced into establishing peace; they have no choice. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá clearly tells us, and Shoghi Effendi confirms, these leaders will be led by the United States. They will lay the foundations of peace, and submit their conclusions to the rest of the world; and then when these are accepted, this is just the fulfilment of the first candle.

As to the stage of the Federation of the Nations of the World—the light of the fifth candle—according to what I understand—it will be revealed to men’s eyes also in two stages. The preliminary stage of this Lesser Peace is when the nations of the world—and I am quoting Shoghi Effendi—will be “unconscious” of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation yet they will “unwittingly” enforce “the general principles which He has enunciated”. So they are unaware of Bahá’u’lláh’s station, yet they will be unwittingly enforcing general Bahá’í principles. Now, he has explained this in greater detail in a letter to an individual:

With reference to the question you have asked concerning the time and means through which the Lesser and Most Great Peace, referred to by Bahá’u’lláh, will be established, following the coming World War: Your view that the Lesser Peace will come about through the political efforts of the states and nations of the world, and independently of any direct Bahá’í plan or effort,

I repeat, “independently of any direct Bahá’í plan or effort”:

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 64; and *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 37.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 64; and *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 37.

... and the Most Great Peace [will] be established through the instrumentality of the believers, and by the direct operation of the laws and principles revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and the functioning of the Universal House of Justice as the supreme organ of the Bahá'í super state—your view on this subject is quite correct and in full accord with the pronouncements of the Guardian ...¹

Now, what form will this Order take?—I am talking now about the Lesser Peace that the world will unconsciously establish; this we cannot forecast. It will certainly be outside the orbit of our Faith, and as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said, and I have repeated this several times tonight, all nations will be “forced” into it. It is this peace that we know will take place in this century. It will be by general agreement. All the governments, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, will disarm; and then He adds: they will disarm “simultaneously”.

But the second stage of this Lesser Peace, in my humble opinion, will occur after the year 2000. It will be a peace that is also described in our Writings as the Lesser Peace, but it will be established under the impact of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the direct impact of His teachings, but it is still not yet the Most Great Peace. Shoghi Effendi fully outlines the features of this second stage of the Lesser Peace in “*The Goal of a New World Order*”, written in November 1931, in the well-known passage beginning with the words: “Some form of a world super-state...”² Three years later, in a letter written on his behalf in 1934, he made it clear that the passage in question did not by any means refer to the Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, which is the hallmark of the Most Great Peace and the Golden Age of Bahá'u'lláh. The passage referred to this stage, this second stage of the Lesser Peace, that Bahá'u'lláh could well have had in mind when He wrote:

*It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the earth may be relieved from the burden of exorbitant expenditures. This matter is imperative and absolutely essential, inasmuch as hostilities and conflict lie at the root of affliction and calamity.*³

Now, back to Shoghi Effendi's statement and this, his celebrated passage in his “*The Goal of a New World Order*”:

Some form of a world super-state must needs be evolved, in whose favour all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include within its orbit an international executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a world parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a supreme tribunal whose judgement will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration. A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labour definitely recognized; in which the clamour of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; ...

this is where the influence of the Faith will have had its impact:

¹ Shoghi Effendi: *Peace*, p. 194. 14 March 1939 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, and to an individual believer.

² Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 40.

³ Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 89; and *Lights of Guidance*, p. 432.

... in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.¹

This is the outline of the Lesser Peace in its second, its fuller stage.

As to the outline of the institutions and features of the Most Great Peace, that is something else altogether, and you find that in the words of Shoghi Effendi in *“The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh”*, pp. 203–4, in his letter *“The Unfoldment of World Civilization”*. It is a different picture from the one described in the passage that I have just read from *“The Goal of a New World Order”*.

Now, there are a few other hints found in our Writings about the achievements of the Lesser Peace in both stages, in addition to the features Shoghi Effendi has included in what he calls his broad outline. I have extracted them, and I will read them quickly:

1. The limits and boundaries of each and every nation will be clearly fixed.
2. The relations of governments towards one another will be definitely laid down.
3. The size of the armaments of each nation will be determined.
4. All international agreements and obligations will be checked and reviewed.
5. Steps will be taken that resources spent on the destruction of the human race will be used for universal development and prosperity.
6. Every nation on earth, whether its government is a constitutional monarchy or republican, will reign in honour, and its peoples will be cradled in tranquillity and content[ment].

What I read are thoughts extracted from *The Secret of Divine Civilization* and talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and published in *Star of the West*.

Now, it would be an interesting subject for discussion if at some future date a study were made of the seven stages through which the Faith of God is to pass, as outlined by the Guardian, and correlate these stages with the steps that will lead humanity from its present phase of chaos, confusion and imbalance to the stage of orderliness and equilibrium, and ultimately to the splendours of the Most Great Peace.

There is no time here for me to quote the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to, or making reference to, bankers, financiers, calling on them to desist from lending money to projects that promote unjust wars; to soldiers, calling on them to petition their superiors not to be sent to fight wars inspired by cruelty and injustice; to experts and men of good will from various countries, to convene a congress to adopt an international language; to mothers, to stop

¹ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 40–1.

permitting their husbands, their sons, their brothers to be killed on battlefields; and finally to the philosophers of the West, to the wise leaders and sages of humanity, to the governments of the world, and to the rank and file of humanity, to find ways and means to stop all wars. Addressing all peoples, He says:

“Now is the appointed time! Now is the opportune time! Arise ye, show ye an effort, put ye forward an extraordinary force, and unfurl ye the Flag of Universal Peace and dam the irresistible fury of this raging torrent which is wreaking havoc and ruin everywhere.”¹

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Peace*, p. 174. From *Star of the West*, 18:11 (February 1928), p. 345.