

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

21 August 1977

[To an individual]

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice has studied your long letter of 19 May 1977. With many of your observations it thoroughly agrees; others, it believes are founded on erroneous information, on an inaccurate assessment of the current status of the Bahá'í community, or on misconceptions about the objectives towards which it is working. The House of Justice does not have the time which would be required to formulate a detailed reply to all the various points in your letter. It reaffirms, however, the decisions conveyed to your National Spiritual Assembly in its letter of 2 December 1976, and has instructed us to add the following comments.

Mankind's response to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh has been dangerously, one might say disastrously, slow. From the earliest days it has been brought to the notice of leaders and scholars, but few of these, very few, have rallied to its support. The most profound and most widespread response has been from the middle classes and indeed from the poor, the unlettered, the deprived and the suffering. But, as the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf on 20 June 1942,

That is perhaps what is most glorious about our present activities all over the world, that we, a band not large in numbers, not possessing financial backing or the prestige of great names, should, in the name of our beloved Faith, be forging ahead at such a pace, and demonstrating to future and present generations that it is the God-given qualities of our religion that are raising it up and not the transient support of worldly fame and power. All that will come later, when it has been made clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that what raised aloft the banner of Bahá'u'lláh was the love, sacrifice, and devotion of His humble followers and the change that His teachings wrought in their hearts and lives.

Already the situation is changing, and larger numbers of believers are occupying positions of eminence and distinction in the world, but, in comparison with the overwhelming majority of the Bahá'ís, they are still a small handful. The process of changing the hearts and lives is also a gradual one, but while we should strive to hasten it, we should not let the problems dismay us. On 5 July 1947 the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer:

The primary reason for anyone becoming a Bahá'í must of course be because he has come to believe the doctrines, the teachings and the Order of Bahá'u'lláh are the correct thing for this stage in the world's evolution. The Bahá'ís themselves as a body have one great advantage: they are sincerely convinced Bahá'u'lláh is right; they have a plan, and they are trying to follow it. But to pretend they are perfect, that the Bahá'ís of the future will not be a hundred times more mature, better balanced, more exemplary in their conduct, would be foolish.

The Universal House of Justice is aware of the magnitude of the problems that the Bahá'í communities face, but as the response to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh increases and as the Bahá'í community throughout the world shows its ability to overcome these problems, the attention of men and women of every stratum of society will increasingly be drawn to the Faith. The most urgent need now—so late is the hour—is for the Bahá'ís to spread the Message, while they are still able to do so, to the largest possible number of their fellow human beings, simultaneously expanding and consolidating the Bahá'í community as quickly as they can with the resources at their disposal. As mankind passes through the darkest phase of its history, the Bahá'í community

will have to face not only entry by troops, which it is now experiencing, but, before too long, mass conversion.

The first step in the reconstruction of human society is for individuals to accept Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for this age and to begin to strive, as well as they can, to follow His Teachings in their individual and in their communal lives. Conversion is but the first step, yet it is the essential one. Without it no amount of expertise or scientifically based knowledge will have a lasting effect, because the fundamental motivating and sustaining power will be lacking.

As the Bahá'í community grows it will acquire experts in numerous fields—both by Bahá'ís becoming experts and by experts becoming Bahá'ís. As these experts bring their knowledge and skill to the service of the community and, even more, as they transform their various disciplines by bringing to bear upon them the light of the Divine Teachings, problem after problem now disrupting society will be answered. In such developments they should strive to make the utmost use of non-Bahá'í resources and should collaborate fully with non-Bahá'ís who are working in the same fields. Such collaboration will, in the long run, be of far more benefit than any attempt now to treat such scientific endeavors as specifically Bahá'í projects operating under Bahá'í institutions and financed by investment of Bahá'í funds.

Paralleling this process, Bahá'í institutional life will also be developing, and as it does so the Assemblies will draw increasingly upon scientific and expert knowledge—whether of Bahá'ís or of non-Bahá'ís—to assist in solving the problems of their communities.

In time great Bahá'í institutions of learning, great international and national projects for the betterment of human life will be inaugurated and flourish.

The Bahá'í work for the reconstruction of human society can thus be seen to comprise three streams: the most fundamental is the spreading of the Word of God, the winning of the allegiance of ever-greater numbers of men and women to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and the establishment of the Bahá'í Administrative Order; concurrent with this is the contribution to human advancement and to the progress of the Bahá'í community made by individual Bahá'ís in the pursuit of their daily work; and then there are the projects and institutions for human advancement launched and operated by Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies as their resources grow and the range of their activities expands. It is for the Universal House of Justice to direct the energies of the believers in these various channels and to make known what activities are timely and have priority. It considers that the establishment of an International Human Development Center now as a Bahá'í-affiliated institution would be untimely and ill-advised.

The House of Justice assures you of its prayers for the confirmation of your endeavors on behalf of the Faith and in your professional work.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat