

The Universal House of Justice

2 September 1982

To the Friends gathered at the Bahá'í International Conference in Montreal

Dearly loved Friends,

Seventy years ago 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited Montreal, hallowing it forever. The visit of the beloved Master to America, the laying by Him of the cornerstone of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West and the revelation by Him five years later of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, which invest its chief executors and their allies with spiritual primacy, constitute successive stages in the gradual disclosure of a mission whose seeds can be found in the Báb's address to the people of the West, urging them to aid God's Holy Cause. This mission was given specific direction through Bahá'u'lláh's summons to the rulers of America, calling on them to heal the injuries of the oppressed and, with the "rod of the commandments" of their Lord, to bring their corrective influence to bear upon the injustices perpetrated by the tyrannical and the ungodly. 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed in clearer details than those given by either the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh the nature and scope of that glorious mission. In His eternal Tablets unveiling America's spiritual destiny the Master wrote, "The continent of America is, in the eyes of the one true God, the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, where the righteous will abide and the free assemble. Therefore, every section thereof is blessed ..." and, referring to Canada, He asserted that its future "is very great, and the events connected with it infinitely glorious." Even more specifically, He expressed the "hope that in the future Montreal may become so stirred, that the melody of the Kingdom may travel to all parts of the world from that Dominion and the breaths of the Holy Spirit may spread from that center to the East and the West of America."

After the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and under the guidance of the Guardian the Bahá'ís of the world witnessed with awe and admiration the North American community arising as one man to champion the Administrative Order taking shape on their own soil, to embark upon the first collective teaching plan in the annals of the Faith, to lead the entire Bahá'í world in intercontinental teaching campaigns, to demonstrate with devotion their exemplary firmness in the Covenant, to extend their support and protection and relief to the oppressed followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the East and particularly in His native land, and to send forth valiant pioneers and traveling teachers to every continent of the globe. These marvelous and noble exertions, calling for the expenditure of resources almost beyond their means, paved the way for the achievement of glorious victories which synchronized with a series of world convulsions, signs of universal commotion and travail, and with repeated crises within the Faith. And in this day, while the blood of the martyrs of Persia is once again watering the roots of the Cause of God and when the international outlook is impenetrably and ominously dark, the Bahá'ís of North America are in the van of the embattled legions of the Cause.

Less than a score of years remain until the end of this century which the Master called "the century of light," and He clearly foresaw that ere its termination an advanced stage would have been reached in the striving towards the political, racial, and religious unity of the peoples of the world, unfolding new horizons in scientific accomplishments, universal undertakings and world solidarity. The calls of the Master and the Guardian plainly summon the Bahá'ís of the Americas to prodigies of proclamation, of teaching and of service. The American melting pot of peoples needs the unifying power of the new Faith of God to achieve its fusion. The representative character of the Bahá'í community should therefore be reinforced through the attraction, conversion and support of an ever-growing number of new believers from the diverse elements constituting the population of that vast mainland and particularly from among Indians and Eskimos about whose future the Master wrote in such glowing terms. In the glorious freedom which enables you to proclaim, to teach and confirm, to educate and deepen yourselves and others

in the verities of the Faith, you have precious opportunities of service denied to many of your fellow believers elsewhere. If your blessed communities are to lead the world spiritually, as the Master envisaged, then the Faith must strike deeper roots in your hearts, the spirit of its teachings must be exemplified in ever greater measure in your lives, and God's Holy Cause must be taught and proclaimed with ever greater intensity. In His immortal Tablets addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America 'Abdu'l-Bahá assures each one of you that "whosoever arises in this day to diffuse the divine fragrances, the cohorts of the Kingdom of God shall confirm him ..."

You are met in this Conference to review the progress of the Seven Year Plan, to be confirmed, galvanized and sent into action. It is not enough for the North American believers to stand at the forefront of the Bahá'í world; the scope of their exertions must be steadily widened. In the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "The range of your future achievements still remains undisclosed. I fervently hope that in the near future the whole earth may be stirred and shaken by the results of your achievements." "Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a centre from which waves of spiritual power will emanate ..." The valiant countries of North America should in the second half of the Seven Year Plan ensure that an ever-swelling number of pioneers and traveling teachers will arise and travel to and settle in countries which need their support, however inhospitable the local conditions may be, ceaselessly endeavoring to contribute to the expansion of the teaching work and the strengthening of the foundations of the communities they are called upon to assist. They should, moreover, continue their defence of the downtrodden, open their doors to their Bahá'í brethren who are seeking refuge in their lands, provide technological expertise to communities which need it, and supply an uninterrupted flow of resources to support the ever-increasing international projects of the Faith.

In their respective homefronts the Bahá'ís of North America should intensify the drive to attract the masses to God's Holy Cause, to provide the means for their integration into the work of the Faith, and should become standard-bearers of an embryonic Bahá'í society which is destined to gradually emerge under the influence of the integrating and civilizing forces emanating from the Source of God's Revelation. Such noble objectives cannot be fully achieved unless and until local communities become those collective centers of unity ordained in our Writings, and every individual earnestly strives to support the structure and ensure the stability of the Administrative Edifice of the Faith.

How fitting that this Conference, and the one held for Bahá'í children on a scale unprecedented in North America, should commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the passing of Bahíyyih Khánum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, whose love for the North American believers and whose admiration for their heroism were so deep and so sustained and whose natural fondness for children was so characteristic of Bahá'u'lláh. May each of you emulate her unswerving devotion and loyalty to the Covenant of God and her perseverance in the path of His love. We shall mark the first day of your Conference, together with the one being held concurrently in Canberra, with prayers at the Holy Shrines that all may "be assisted in ... service and, like unto brilliant stars, shine in these regions with the light of ... guidance."

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]