

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

29 August 2010

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

'Abdu'l-Bahá's departure one hundred years ago from Haifa for Port Said signalled the opening of a glorious new chapter in the annals of the Faith. He was not to return to the Holy Land for three years. Referring to that historic moment the Guardian would later write: "The establishment of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the Western Hemisphere—the most outstanding achievement that will forever be associated with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry—had ... set in motion such tremendous forces, and been productive of such far-reaching results, as to warrant the active and personal participation of the Centre of the Covenant Himself...." With the inauguration of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels to the West, the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, hemmed in for more than half a century by the hosts of enmity and oppression, burst its restraints. For the first time since its inception, the recognized Head of the Faith enjoyed a freedom of action to pursue unencumbered its divinely prescribed mission.

By any earthly measure, 'Abdu'l-Bahá would have seemed ill prepared to carry out the task before Him. He was sixty-six years old, an exile since childhood, with no formal schooling, a prisoner for forty years, in failing health, and unfamiliar with Western customs and languages. Yet He arose, without thought of comfort, undeterred by the risks involved, and utterly reliant upon divine assistance, to champion the Cause of God. He interacted with diverse peoples in nine countries on three continents. The scope and intensity of His tireless exertions were such as to "dumbfound His followers in East and West with admiration and wonder" and to "exercise an imperishable influence" on the course of the Faith's future.

Over the next few years, Bahá'ís around the world will joyously call to mind the many episodes associated with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's historic journey. But this anniversary is more than a time for commemoration. The words uttered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His travels, and the deeds He undertook with such consummate wisdom and love, offer an abundance of inspiration and manifold insights from which the body of the believers can today draw, whether in their efforts to embrace receptive souls, to raise capacity for service, to build local communities, to strengthen institutions, or to exploit opportunities emerging to engage in social action and contribute to public discourse. We should, therefore, reflect not only upon what the Master achieved and set in motion but also on the work that remains undone to which He has summoned us. In the Tablets of the Divine Plan, He expressed His inmost longing:

O that I could travel, even though on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá" in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans, promote the divine teachings! This, alas, I cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may achieve it.

Nearly a century has passed since these words were recorded. Stage after stage of the Divine Plan has been successfully prosecuted. The Faith has been established in all corners of the world. We are present in those places that 'Abdu'l-Bahá yearned to visit. Individuals, communities, and institutions are now endowed with the capacity necessary for systematic, sustained, and coherent action. During this precious period of remembrance, then, let each and every one of His faithful lovers arise and act in His Name. Let them offer their share, no matter how humble, to the progress of the Plan He authored—that priceless and everlasting bequest.

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