

# BAHÁ'Í CANADA

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## Reflections on the Tablets of the Divine Plan

# From the Writings

Therefore, know ye of a certainty that whosoever arises in this day to diffuse the divine fragrances, the cohorts of the Kingdom of God shall confirm him and the bestowals and the favors of the Blessed Perfection shall encircle him. 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.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, no. 7, p. 41.*

These souls are the armies of God and the conquerors of the East and the West. Should one of them turn his face toward some direction and summon the people to the Kingdom of God, all the ideal forces and lordly confirmations will rush to his support and reinforcement. He will behold all the doors open and all the strong fortifications and impregnable castles razed to the ground. Singly and alone he will attack the armies of the world, defeat the right and left wings of the hosts of all the countries, break through the lines of the legions of all the nations and carry his attack to the very center of the powers of the earth. This is the meaning of the Hosts of God. Any soul from among the believers of Bahá’u’lláh who attains to this station will become known as the Apostle of Bahá’u’lláh.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, no. 8, pp. 49-50.*

In the contingent world there are many collective centers which are conducive to association and unity between the children of men. For example, patriotism is a collective center; nationalism is a collective center; identity of interests is a collective center; political alliance is a collective center; the union of ideals is a collective center, and the prosperity of the world of humanity is dependent upon the organization and promotion of the collective centers. Nevertheless, all the above institutions are, in reality, the matter and not the substance, accidental and not eternal—temporary and not everlasting. With the appearance of great revolutions and upheavals, all these collective centers are swept away. But the Collective Center of the Kingdom, embodying the institutions and divine teachings, is the eternal Collective Center. It establishes relationship between the East and the West, organizes the oneness of the world of humanity, and destroys the foundation of differences. It overcomes and includes all the other collective centers. Like unto the ray of the sun, it dispels entirely the darkness encompassing all the regions, bestows ideal life, and causes the effulgence of divine illumination.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, no. 14, p. 419.*

The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the holy Manifestations! When the most great bestowal reveals itself in the hearts of the believers, the world of nature will be transformed, the darkness of the contingent being will vanish, and heavenly illumination will be obtained. Then the whole world will become the Paradise of Abhá, every one of the believers of God will become a blessed tree, producing wonderful fruits.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, no. 8, pp. 52-53.*

O ye believers of God! Be not concerned with the smallness of your numbers, neither be oppressed by the multitude of an unbelieving world. Five grains of wheat will be endowed with heavenly blessing, whereas a thousand tons of tares will yield no results or effect. One fruitful tree will be conducive to the life of society, whereas a thousand forests of wild trees offer no fruits. The plain is covered with pebbles, but precious stones are rare. One pearl is better than a thousand wildernesses of sand, especially this pearl of great price, which is endowed with divine blessing. Ere long thousands of other pearls will be born from it. When that pearl associates and becomes the intimate of the pebbles, they also all change into pearls.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, no. 13, p. 95.*

Praise be to Thee, O my God! These are Thy servants who are attracted by the fragrances of Thy mercifulness, are enkindled by the fire burning in the tree of Thy singleness, and whose eyes are brightened by beholding the splendors of the light shining in the Sinai of Thy oneness. O Lord! Loose their tongues to make mention of Thee amongst Thy people, suffer them to speak forth Thy praise through Thy grace and loving-kindness, assist them with the cohorts of Thine angels, strengthen their loins in Thy service, and make them the signs of Thy guidance amongst Thy creatures. Verily, Thou art the All-Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, no. 13, p. 97.*



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**ON THE COVER** The Chilean temple lit up in the evening during its inauguration.

Photo: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Chile.

# Ridván 2017 message

From the Universal  
House of Justice to the  
Bahá'ís of the World.

Dearly loved Friends,

See how the community of the Greatest Name arises! With but one year elapsed since the inception of the new Plan, reports testify to the scale of what is being attempted and beginning to be accomplished. Bringing greater intensity to 5,000 programmes of growth is demanding a level of effort quite without precedent. With a firm grasp of the fundamentals of the Plan, large numbers of the friends are acting on its requirements, demonstrating rigour and sacrifice in the quality of their response. As envisaged, some intensive programmes of growth that have been long sustained are becoming reservoirs of knowledge and resources, lending support to surrounding areas and facilitating the rapid dissemination of experience and insight. Centres of intense activity—those neighbourhoods and villages where the community-building work is most concentrated—are proving to be fertile ground for collective transformation. An expanded and invigorated legion of Auxiliary Board members and their assistants are stimulating the endeavours of the believers, helping them acquire a vision of how to advance the growth process in various circumstances and identifying approaches that suit the conditions in each cluster. Supported by their respective National Spiritual Assemblies, Regional Bahá'í Councils are learning how the momentum of the Plan can be built across a range of clusters simultaneously, while in some smaller countries without Councils, new entities at the national level are starting to do the same. Although, as would be expected of any organic process, the swift progress being witnessed in some places is yet to appear in others, the total number of intensive programmes of growth in the world is already beginning to mount. Further, we rejoice to see that participation in the activities of the Plan surged markedly during its first four cycles.

The signs could hardly be more promising, then, for what the coming year might bring. And what could be more fitting to offer the Blessed Beauty on the two hundredth anniversary of His Birth than the earnest striving of His loved ones to extend the reach of His Faith? The first of the two bicentenaries to be celebrated by the Bahá'í world is thus an occasion with prospects most thrilling. Viewed aright, this year presents the single greatest worldwide opportunity there has ever been for connecting hearts to Bahá'u'lláh. In the months ahead, let all be mindful of this precious chance and alert to the possibilities that exist in every space for acquainting others with His life and sublime mission. For the teaching opportunity that is now before the Bahá'í world to be seized to its fullest extent, creative thought needs to be given to the conversations that could unfold with every kind of person. In the course of such meaningful conversations, perception is heightened and hearts are opened—sometimes immediately. In this worthy occupation all find a calling, and of the joy that comes from being engaged in this work none should deprive themselves. We entreat the one Beloved that the whole of this bicentennial year may be filled with this joy that is purest and sweetest: telling another soul of the dawning of the Day of God.

The obligations that must be met by the company of the faithful are made the more pressing by the confusion, distrust, and cloudiness in the world. Indeed, the friends should use every opportunity to shine a light that can illuminate the way and offer assurance to the anxious, hope to the despairing. We are reminded of the

counsel given by the Guardian to one Bahá'í community in words that seem intended for our own time: "As the fabric of present-day society heaves and cracks under the strain and stress of portentous events and calamities, as the fissures, accentuating the cleavage separating nation from nation, class from class, race from race, and creed from creed, multiply, the prosecutors of the Plan must evince a still greater cohesion in their spiritual lives and administrative activities, and demonstrate a higher standard of concerted effort, of mutual assistance, and of harmonious development in their collective enterprises." Always emphasizing the spiritual significance of the work of the Faith and the single-minded resolve with which the believers are to discharge their sacred duties, Shoghi Effendi warned too against having any share in political controversies, entanglements, and bickerings. "Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship," he urged on another occasion, "above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world." These are

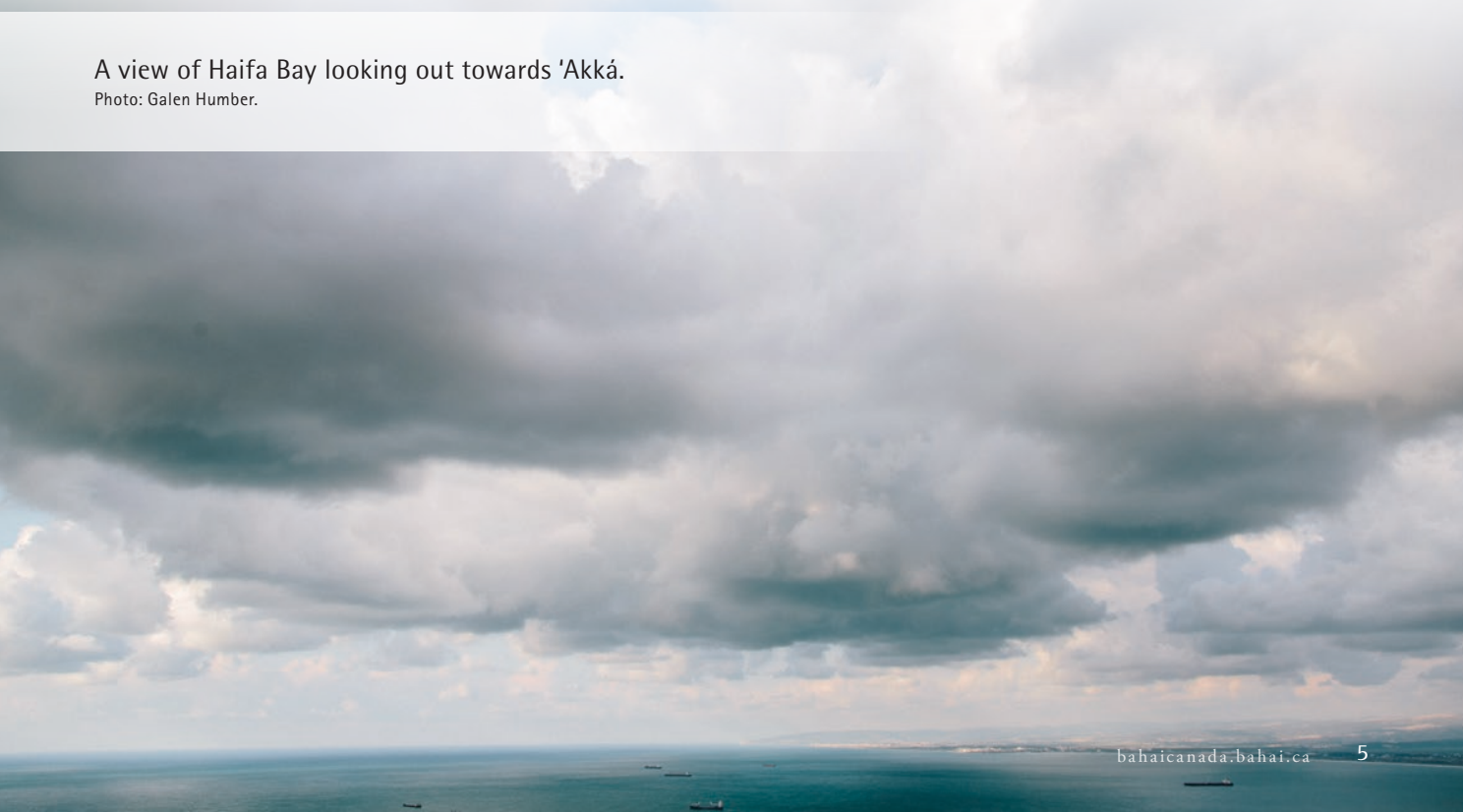
the inevitable foam and spray cast up as wave after wave convulses a turbulent and divided society. Too much is at stake to be occupied with distractions of this kind. As every follower of Bahá'u'lláh knows well, humanity's ultimate well-being is dependent upon its differences being transcended and its unity firmly established. Every contribution Baha'is make to the life of their society is aimed at fostering unity; every community-building endeavour is directed towards the same end. For those tired of contention, the communities growing under the shadow of the Greatest Name offer a potent example of what unity can achieve.

We render praise to the Lord of Lords at seeing so many of His loved ones, in so many ways, giving their all that the banner of the oneness of humankind may be raised aloft. Most cherished friends: As a highly auspicious year now commences, might not each one of us contemplate what heavenly deeds His grace may aid us to perform?

– The Universal House of Justice

A view of Haifa Bay looking out towards 'Akká.

Photo: Galen Humber.



# Regarding economic life

From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 1 March 2017.

Dearly loved Friends,

**I**n an increasingly interconnected world, more light is being cast on the social conditions of every people, giving greater visibility to their circumstances. While there are developments that give hope, there is much that should weigh heavy on the conscience of the human race. Inequity, discrimination, and exploitation blight the life of humanity, seemingly immune to the treatments applied by political schemes of every hue. The economic impact of these afflictions has resulted in the prolonged suffering of so many, as well as in deep-seated, structural defects in society. No one whose heart has been attracted to the teachings of the Blessed Beauty can remain unmoved by these consequences. “The world is in great turmoil,” Bahá'u'lláh observes in the *Lawḥ-i-Dunyá*, “and the minds of its people are in a state of utter confusion. We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them with the glory of His Justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto them at all times and under all conditions.” As the Bahá'í community strives to contribute at the level of thought and action to the betterment of the world, the adverse conditions experienced by many populations will more and more demand its attention.

The welfare of any segment of humanity is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole. Humanity's collective life suffers when any one group thinks of its own well-being in isolation from that of its neighbours or pursues economic gain without regard for how the natural environment, which provides sustenance for all, is affected. A stubborn obstruction, then, stands in the way of meaningful social progress: time and again, avarice and self-interest prevail at the expense of the common good. Unconscionable quantities of wealth are being amassed, and the instability this creates is made worse by how income and opportunity are spread so unevenly both between nations and within nations. But it need not be so. However much such conditions are the outcome of history, they do not have to define the future, and even if current approaches to economic life satisfied humanity's stage of adolescence, they are certainly inadequate for its dawning age of maturity. There is no justification for continuing to perpetuate structures, rules, and systems that manifestly fail to serve the interests of all peoples.

The teachings of the Faith leave no room for doubt: there is an inherent moral dimension to the generation, distribution, and utilization of wealth and resources.

The stresses emerging out of the long-term process of transition from a divided world to a united one are being felt within international relations as much as in the deepening fractures that affect societies large and small. With prevailing modes of thought found to be badly wanting, the world is in desperate need of a shared ethic, a sure framework for addressing the crises that gather like storm clouds. The vision of Bahá'u'lláh challenges many of the assumptions that are allowed to shape contemporary discourse—for instance, that self-interest, far from needing to be restrained, drives prosperity, and that progress depends upon its expression through relentless competition. To view the worth of an individual chiefly in terms of how much one can accumulate and how many goods one can consume relative to others is wholly alien to Bahá'í thought. But neither are the teachings in sympathy with sweeping dismissals of wealth as inherently distasteful or immoral, and asceticism is prohibited. Wealth must serve humanity. Its use must accord with spiritual principles; systems must be created in their light. And, in Bahá'u'lláh's memorable words, “No light can compare with the light of justice. The establishment of order in the world and the tranquillity of the nations depend upon it.”

Although Bahá'u'lláh does not set out in His Revelation a detailed economic system, a constant theme throughout the entire corpus of His teachings is the reorganization of human society. Consideration of this theme inevitably gives rise to questions of economics. Of course, the future order conceived by Bahá'u'lláh is far beyond anything that can be imagined by the present generation. Nevertheless, its eventual emergence will depend on strenuous effort by His followers to put His teachings into effect today. With this in mind, we hope that the comments below will stimulate thoughtful, ongoing reflection by the friends. The aim is to learn about how to participate in the material affairs of society in a way that is consistent with the divine precepts and how, in practical terms, collective prosperity can be advanced through justice and generosity, collaboration and mutual assistance.



Our call to examine the implications of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh for economic life is intended to reach Bahá'í institutions and communities but is directed more especially to the individual believer. If a new model of community life, patterned on the teachings, is to emerge, must not the company of the faithful demonstrate in their own lives the rectitude of conduct that is one of its most distinguishing features? Every choice a Bahá'í makes—as employee or employer, producer or consumer, borrower or lender, benefactor or beneficiary—leaves a trace, and the moral duty to lead a coherent life demands that one's economic decisions be in accordance with lofty ideals, that the purity of one's aims be matched by the purity of one's actions to fulfil those aims. Naturally, the friends habitually look to the teachings to set the standard to which to aspire. But the community's deepening engagement with society means that the economic dimension of social existence must receive ever more concentrated attention. Particularly in clusters where the community-building process is beginning to embrace large numbers, the exhortations contained in the Bahá'í Writings should increasingly inform economic relationships within families, neighbourhoods, and peoples. Not content with whatever values prevail in the existing order that surrounds them, the friends everywhere should consider the application of the teachings to their lives and, using the opportunities their circumstances offer them, make their own individual and collective contributions to economic justice and social progress wherever they reside. Such efforts will add to a growing storehouse of knowledge in this regard.

A foundational concept to explore in this context is the spiritual reality of man. In the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the nobility inherent to every human being is unequivocally asserted; it is a fundamental tenet of Bahá'í belief, upon which hope for the future of humankind is built. The soul's capacity to manifest all the names and attributes of God—He Who is the Compassionate, the Bestower, the Bountiful—is repeatedly affirmed in the Writings. Economic life is an arena for the expression of honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, generosity, and other qualities of the spirit. The individual is not merely a self-interested economic unit, striving to claim an ever-greater share of the world's material resources. “Man's merit lieth in service and virtue”, Bahá'u'lláh avers, “and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches.” And further: “Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest.” By consecrating oneself to the service of others, one finds meaning and purpose in life and contributes to the upliftment of society itself. At the outset of His celebrated treatise *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

And the honour and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes

should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

Viewed in this light, many seemingly ordinary economic activities gain new significance because of their potential to add to human welfare and prosperity. “Every person must have an occupation, a trade or a craft,” explains the Master, “so that he may carry other people's burdens, and not himself be a burden to others.” The poor are urged by Bahá'u'lláh to “exert themselves and strive to earn the means of livelihood”, while they who are possessed of riches “must have the utmost regard for the poor”. “Wealth”, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has affirmed, “is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes.” At the same time, the Hidden Words is replete with warnings of its perilous allure, that wealth is a “mighty barrier” between the believer and the proper Object of his adoration. No wonder, then, that Bahá'u'lláh extols the station of the wealthy one who is not hindered by riches from attaining the eternal kingdom; the splendour of such a soul “shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven even as the sun enlightens the people of the earth!” 'Abdu'l-Bahá declares that “if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement”. For wealth is most commendable “provided the entire population is wealthy.” Examining one's life to determine what is a necessity and then discharging with joy one's obligation in relation to the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh is an indispensable discipline to bring one's priorities into balance, purify whatever wealth one possesses, and ensure that the share which is the Right of God provides for the greater good. At all times, contentment and moderation, benevolence and fellow feeling, sacrifice and reliance on the Almighty are qualities that befit the God-fearing soul.

The forces of materialism promote a quite contrary line of thinking: that happiness comes from constant acquisition, that the more one has the better, that worry for the environment is for another day. These seductive messages fuel an increasingly entrenched sense of personal entitlement, which uses the language of justice and rights to disguise self-interest. Indifference to the hardship experienced by others becomes commonplace while entertainment and distracting amusements are voraciously consumed. The enervating influence of materialism seeps into every culture, and all Bahá'ís recognize that, unless they strive to remain conscious

of its effects, they may to one degree or another unwittingly adopt its ways of seeing the world. Parents must be acutely aware that, even when very young, children absorb the norms of their surroundings. The junior youth spiritual empowerment programme encourages thoughtful discernment at an age when the call of materialism grows more insistent. With the approach of adulthood comes a responsibility, shared by one's generation, not to allow worldly pursuits to blind one's eyes to injustice and privation. Over time, the qualities and attitudes nurtured by the courses of the training institute, through exposure to the Word of God, help individuals to see past the illusions that, at every stage of life, the world uses to pull attention away from service and towards the self. And ultimately, the systematic study of the Word of God and the exploration of its implications raises consciousness of the need to manage one's material affairs in keeping with the divine teachings.

Beloved Friends: The extremes of wealth and poverty in the world are becoming ever more untenable. As inequity

persists, so the established order is seen to be unsure of itself, and its values are being questioned. Whatever the tribulations that a conflicted world must confront in the future, we pray that the Almighty will help His loved ones to overcome every obstacle in their path and assist them to serve humanity. The larger the presence of a Bahá'í community in a population, the greater its responsibility to find ways of addressing the root causes of the poverty in its surroundings. Although the friends are at the early stages of learning about such work and of contributing to the related discourses, the community-building process of the Five Year Plan is creating everywhere the ideal environment in which to accrue knowledge and experience, gradually but consistently, about the higher purpose of economic activity. Against the background of the age-long work of erecting a divine civilization, may this exploration become a more pronounced feature of community life, institutional thought, and individual action in the years ahead.

– The Universal House of Justice

# Regarding the development of the institution of the Auxiliary Boards

From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 25 November 2016.

Dearly loved Friends,

**T**oday, the Day of the Covenant, marks the start of a new term of service for the members of the Auxiliary Boards for the Protection and Propagation of the Faith throughout the world, a term which will conclude in the final hours of the first century of the Formative Age. These consecrated officers of the Cause constitute an institution originally conceived and created by Shoghi Effendi to assist the Hands of the Cause of God in their “dual and sacred task of safeguarding the Faith and of promoting its teaching activities.” Now serving as auxiliaries to the Continental Counsellors, they and their assistants play a decisive part in the unfoldment of the global Plans, bringing to the work breadth of vision and clarity of thought, flexibility and resourcefulness. In cluster after cluster, from the first stirrings of activity, they labour alongside the friends, assisting individuals, communities, and institutions to focus their attention on the Plan, to maintain a conception of what needs to be done and the next steps to be taken, and to appreciate the complementarity of the efforts of all the friends and the need for mutual support. And in every aspect of their

service, they foster a spirit of love and unity. So great will be the demands asked of them in the present Plan that we feel compelled to add to the ranks of Auxiliary Board members some 144, bringing the total number to 1,134, equally divided between the Boards for Protection and Propagation. As the Auxiliary Board members take up their new appointments, they will be assisted in deepening their understanding of the spiritual nature of their work and the wide-ranging responsibilities they will shoulder through a series of conferences, called for by the International Teaching Centre, that will take place between now and Riqván 2017. It is our ardent hope that, as a result of these gatherings, an added surge of energy will be diffused throughout the community, reinforcing the valiant exertions of the friends everywhere, and we will offer our supplications at the Sacred Threshold that the sacrificial efforts of the Auxiliary Board members may draw forth unceasing confirmations from the hosts of the celestial Concourse.

– The Universal House of Justice



# Marking the dedication of the Mother Temple of South America

From the Universal House addressed to the participants gathered at the conference to mark the dedication of the Mother Temple of South America, 14 October 2016.

To the Friends Gathered in Santiago, Chile, for the Dedication of the Mother Temple of South America

Dearly loved Friends,

We greet you with immense joy on this singular occasion, a moment of high achievement for the Bahá'í world after much earnest striving: The process of raising up Bahá'í Houses of Worship, an endeavour whose origins can be traced back to the days of the Blessed Beauty Himself, has reached the point where today a Mother Temple stands upon the soil of every continent. Three such Temples now lie on a pan-American axis, to whose southern pole you have all been drawn. As anticipated by the Guardian, it is the Chilean capital city that has become the site of the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of South America. Blending grace and grandeur in equal measure, this Dawning-Point of God's Remembrance now summons all comers to worship the One Who is their Creator, their sovereign Lord, the Giver of Light to the world.

The weighty statements in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* addressed to the presidents of the republics of the Americas, adding to the mandate given by the Báb to all the "peoples of the West" to aid His Cause, confer upon those countries, north and south, honour and obligations ineffaceable. Those pregnant words portended the intimate association of South America with the Faith. We recall with deep admiration the heroic and sacrificial deeds of those believers who first introduced to this continent the name of Bahá'u'lláh. With their resolve kindled by the rallying call of the Master in His Tablets delineating the Divine Plan, and urged on by Shoghi Effendi in the successive directions he gave for the Plan's prosecution, pioneers travelled to the nations of Latin America and began nurturing communities that could maintain Local and, eventually, National Spiritual Assemblies—communities that came to be designated by the Guardian as "associates of the chief executors of the Plan bequeathed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá". The success of large-scale teaching endeavours revealed the purity and open-mindedness of the continent's inhabitants in all their diversity, and their

evident receptivity to the divine impulse. One of the most striking hallmarks of that period was the enthusiasm with which indigenous people embraced the vision of Bahá'u'lláh and His Faith, recognizing the power of His Word to liberate the soul and transform society. With such advances made, the friends took up the challenge of learning how to sustain a process of rapid expansion and consolidation. Insights that emerged from the experience accrued in this region have benefited the entire Bahá'í world, and the present-day efforts of the South American believers to spread the Faith and build communities upon spiritual foundations are a continuing source of inspiration. How fitting, then, that at a time when the peoples and nations of the Western Hemisphere have never been more in need of the illumination brought by the teachings of God's universal Messenger, a powerful spiritual beacon is now in full blaze at the foot of the Andes.

The *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* is "one of the most vital institutions in the world". A Temple and its associated dependencies embody two essential and inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service. As a potent symbol and an integral element of the divine civilization towards which Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation ushers all peoples, the House of Worship becomes the focal point of the community from which it emerges. "The holy fragrances of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*", 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains, "vivify the souls of the righteous, and its vitalizing breezes confer life upon the pure in heart." Indeed, its influence is such as to galvanize an entire people to reach for a more profound sense of unified purpose. The gaze of the Bahá'í world is at this hour fixed upon its newly dedicated Temple, and we are certain that this longed-for victory will bring jubilation to the friends everywhere. Yet they will surely not be content to simply rejoice amongst themselves. Inspired by all that this sublime edifice stands for, let them invite others to discover the



A view of the apex of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Chile with a wooden carving of the invocation "Yá-Bahá'u'l-Abhá" (O Glory of the All-Glorious). This is the eighth and final continental House of Worship to be built. Photo: Bahá'í World News Service

abiding joy that comes from the praise of God and from service to humankind.

Bowing our heads at the Threshold of the Ancient Beauty, we give thanks that He has enabled His devoted followers to construct so striking a Temple fashioned of glass, stone, and light, nurturing an attraction to the sacred. The gratitude we feel increases our longing for that glorious day when the blessing of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be conferred upon every city and village, and we look

first with eagerness to those countries where national and local Houses of Worship are beginning to emerge. May the resplendent sight of what the community of the Greatest Name has now accomplished in Santiago spur the faithful everywhere to intensify their service, however humble, rendered for the betterment of the world, offered to the Glory of God.

– The Universal House of Justice



# Regarding the approaching bicentenary celebrations

From the  
National Spiritual  
Assembly of the  
Bahá'ís of Canada,  
19 June 2017.

To the thousands upon thousands in Canada who are working together for the betterment of the world.

Dear Friends,

With love and admiration, we address this letter to you: children, youth, adults and elders who care deeply about the world and long for its betterment. You live in Canada's far north, its teeming southern cities, its towns, reserves and villages. In countless spaces, you gather to remember your Creator and praise Him, study together and reflect on your neighbourhoods and communities. Aware that the condition of the heart and the condition of society are linked and that each acts on the other, you seek to transform both.

In this sacred task, you are labouring at a spiritually powerful moment in history. In gatherings large and small, people all over the world will soon rejoice in the 200th anniversary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, the latest Bearer of a new message for humanity Whose love binds your hearts and Whose teachings inspire your efforts. Between now and October, when His birth and that of the Báb will be celebrated, each of you will have unprecedented opportunities to draw on mighty spiritual forces to increase your circle of friends and enter into meaningful conversation with those whose paths you cross. To continue and deepen that conversation, many more spaces need to be created for the tens of thousands of every kind of person who are joining us. How, as a community, will we do this in relation to the twin Holy Days?

For example, could each participant in a devotional gathering think of the names of those who might join in a Holy Day celebration in their home, so that one devotional gathering that regularly attracts 10 people gives birth to 10 celebrations with many more? Could children attending children's classes make a list of a group of friends with whom they would naturally wish to celebrate? Might each junior youth group do the same? In addition to studying a prayer with others, could those in a study circle welcome a number of others to celebrations of the Birth of Him whose teachings are illumining the world and banishing its darkness? How might these newly-found friends, representing the widest possible cross-section of humanity, be quickly, lovingly welcomed as fellow-travellers on a path of service?

They will also wish to learn more about Bahá'u'lláh, Who willingly spent His life as a prisoner and in exile so that humanity's life on the planet would transform, and Who now inspires millions around the world who draw strength and guidance from His teachings. Many friends are beginning or refreshing their study of Books 2 and 4 of the Ruhi sequence of institute courses to increase capacity for these deep conversations. It was with great joy that we learned that a film has been commissioned in honour of the bicentenary of Bahá'u'lláh's birth and will be available for viewing worldwide during the Holy Days. Other resources to support your conversations are in production, and more information about them will be shared shortly.

This is the Day of God. The purest, sweetest joy is found in sharing that news with other souls. In humble gratitude for the army of light you represent, it is our prayer that each one of you will draw constantly from that deep well of joy in the coming months.

– National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada



# The Right of God and its Relationship to the Current Plan

As you will be reading and reflecting upon the document, "The Right of God and its Relationship to the Current Plan," the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada is pleased to share with you a few excerpts from the International Board of Trustees letter dated 24 April 2016 that further elucidates the "coherence of the work of the institution of Ḥuqúqu'lláh and the goals of the new Five Year Plan."<sup>1</sup>

The Universal House of Justice in its message of 29 December 2015 indicates that in this new Plan, which "will conclude at the threshold of the second century of the Formative Age of the Faith, we will call the believers everywhere to the immense exertion necessary to bring to fruition the seeds that have been so lovingly and assiduously sown and watered in the five Plans that preceded it."<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting on that call of the Supreme Body as well as the major goal of "a significant advancement of the process of entry by troops"<sup>3</sup> we are mindful of the fact that "as members of the institution of Ḥuqúqu'lláh we are part of the community of believers called upon to arise to meet the needs of the Plan. At the same time, the education of Ḥuqúqu'lláh must continue to be available to Bahá'ís throughout the world."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the International Board of Trustees brings to our attention that "commensurate with building our capacities is the development of spiritual attributes from study and implementation of the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh into our daily lives, a process no different than the recitation of our daily prayers or obedience to the period of fasting."<sup>5</sup> With the progress of the plan the number of believers will increase. Connected to this phenomenon, the members of the institution of Ḥuqúqu'lláh are being challenged by the International Board of Trustees to reach every believer "to ensure that the entire Bahá'í population"<sup>6</sup> is familiar with this mighty law of Bahá'u'lláh. Indeed "education on Ḥuqúqu'lláh is a concurrent process"<sup>7</sup> to the activities and goals of the Plan.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada

1, 4, 5 & 7 24 April 2016 letter of the International Board of Trustees to all Boards of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh to all Boards of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh  
2 & 3 29 December 2015 letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors  
6 27 January 2015 letter of the International Board of Trustees to all Boards of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh

Since its inception by the Universal House of Justice in 1998, the training institute has taken root in Bahá'í communities around the world. The process of consultation, action, and reflection has led to important advancements in the frontiers of learning: the core activities increasingly shape the life and work of individuals and communities. The same “spiritual insights, the knowledge, and the skills”<sup>1</sup> fostered by the institute process are nurtured by obedience to and love for the Law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh. Far from being a mere calculation of debt, the Right of God is “directed to the vital task of raising the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, which is the essential prerequisite for the enduring resolution of the afflictions humanity is now experiencing.”<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, like prayer and service, the Right of God is a constant component of our Bahá'í lives. Just as the institute process aims to “deepen ... knowledge of the Faith, cultivate ... inner spiritual lives and develop abilities of service,” so the Right of God develops within us gratitude and harnesses the material resources needed to “intensify ... individual and collective exertions in the teaching field and ... result in a commensurate acceleration in the expansion of ... communities.”<sup>3</sup> Reciprocity, mutual aid, and cooperation define relationships in both; the transformative effect of participation is seen in both; and both demonstrate that the creation of a just world requires spiritual and material resources.

The three protagonists—individuals, institutions, and community—are the driving force behind the success of the institute process. At a fundamental level the relationships among these protagonists are characterized by cooperation and reciprocity, manifestations of the interconnectedness that governs the universe. So the individual, with no regard for “personal benefits and selfish advantages,” sees himself or herself as “one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing,”<sup>4</sup> whose only desire is to carry out His laws. Equally, the community comes to recognize that “wealth of sentiment, abundance of good-will and effort”<sup>5</sup> are of little avail when their flow is not directed along proper channels, that “the unfettered freedom of the individual should be tempered with mutual consultation and sacrifice,” and that “the spirit of initiative and enterprise should be reinforced by a deeper realization of the supreme necessity for concerted action and a fuller devotion to the common weal.”<sup>6</sup> Finally, the institutions channel these energies, for “the world

civilization now on humanity's horizon must achieve a dynamic coherence between the material and spiritual requirements of life.”<sup>7</sup>

Nothing is more inspiring, and nothing spreads more effectively, than the spirit of the youth who arise to serve their Lord with excitement and passion. Their motivation arises from the knowledge that they are contributing to the advancement of civilization and is expressed in obedience to the Universal House of Justice. The institute process directs our efforts in service toward entry by troops and raises up the resources needed to guide humanity through its present crises. The Writings remind us that spiritual development does not exist unsupported: “the progress and promotion of the cause of God depend on material means.”<sup>8</sup> Observance of the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, by “placing funds at the disposal of the Universal House of Justice” allows “the transfer of material resources in ways that promote the welfare of society.”<sup>9</sup> The Universal House of Justice assures us that in “the course of this Dispensation,” the Right of God will “contribute to the spiritualization of humanity through the promotion of a new attitude to the acquisition and use of material resources.”<sup>10</sup> In order for us to develop this “new attitude” we need to gradually overcome our old habits. Bahá'u'lláh enjoins us to “beseech ... God that He may enable everyone to discharge the obligation of Ḥuqúq,”<sup>11</sup> to enable all to “draw nigh unto such stations as none can comprehend save those whom God hath willed.”<sup>12</sup> The “benefits arising therefrom ... fall to the donors themselves”<sup>13</sup> for “He can dispense with all the peoples of the earth.”<sup>14</sup> As the House of Justice points out, the “bright period of youth ... is experienced by all,” though “buffeted by numerous social forces,”<sup>15</sup> foremost of which must be the recognition of the crippling inequity that afflicts so much of the planet. When so many of our peers of all ages find their ideals crumbling into disillusion, Bahá'ís have the Law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh to guide them. Since “poverty cannot be alleviated without a just distribution of material wealth among the peoples of the world ... the institution of Ḥuqúqu'lláh provides a powerful means for fostering the prosperity of humankind.”<sup>16</sup> Here, the Law of the Right of God sheds light on the connection

7 The Universal House of Justice, *Riḍván Message to the Bahá'ís of the world*, 2010.

8 *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: A Compilation*, #4.

9 Social Action: A paper prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre, 26 November 2012.

10 Letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the Deputies and Representatives of the institution of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, 12 January 2003, published in *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: A Compilation*, #30.

11 *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: A Compilation*, #4.

12 *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: A Compilation*, #3.

13 *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: A Compilation*, #8.

14 *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: A Compilation*, #16.

15 The Universal House of Justice to the participants in the 114 youth conferences, 1 July 2013.

16 Social Action: A paper prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre, 26 November 2012.

1 Training Institutes: A document prepared for and approved by the Universal House of Justice, April 1998.

2 Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 25 July 2006, published in *Ḥuqúqu'lláh: A Compilation*, #112.

3 Training Institutes: A document prepared for and approved by the Universal House of Justice, April 1998.

4 *The Secret of Divine Civilization* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 2006 printing), p. 39.

5 *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 87.

6 *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 87.



between justice, unity, and reciprocity. For though “social action may involve the provision of goods and services in some form, its primary concern must be to build capacity within a given population to participate in creating a better world.”<sup>17</sup> Thoughtful study of the letters and guidance streaming from the Universal House of Justice shows that the search for justice is inextricable from the provisions of and obedience to the Law of Ḥuqúqu’lláh.

The friends have been charged with carrying forward an ever-advancing civilization, both materially and spiritually prosperous, representing the next stage of the evolution of humanity. This civilization “will not emerge through the efforts exerted by a select group of nations or even a network of national and international agencies,” but instead must engage “all of humanity.”<sup>18</sup> Each one of us has not only “the right to benefit from a materially and spiritually prosperous civilization” but also the “obligation to contribute towards its construction.”<sup>19</sup> By obeying the Right of God, we contribute to the spiritualization of humanity, since Ḥuqúqu’lláh is “the source of grace, abundance, and of all good...[and that] it

is a bounty which shall remain with every soul in every world of the worlds of God.”<sup>20</sup>

Habits of thought support habits of action: in turn, our actions shape our thoughts. In its letters to the Bahá’í world, the Universal House of Justice consistently uses terms and urges the development of attitudes that are characteristic of Writings on Ḥuqúqu’lláh. Obedience to the Law of Ḥuqúqu’lláh—through lifelong habits of thought and action—cultivates these qualities in the individual; and the consequent restructuring of the economic life of humanity harnesses individual wealth for the good of all. The Law of Ḥuqúqu’lláh, which touches every aspect of our lives—and not simply our financial transactions—can inflame the hearts of all, especially youth, and provide the material and spiritual resources to transform the planet. In this way, the Right of God provides a stable foundation for the regeneration of the world, simultaneously underpinning and emerging from the processes transforming the worldwide Bahá’í community.

– Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu’lláh in Canada

17 The Universal House of Justice, *Riḡván Message to the Bahá’ís of the world*, 2010.

18 *Social Action: A paper prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá’í World Centre*, 26 November 2012.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ḥuqúqu’lláh: A Compilation*, #13.

Photo: Galen Humber.





# About this issue

Last year marked the centenary of the revelation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablets of the Divine Plan, which, Shoghi Effendi explains, is “[T]he mightiest Plan ever generated through the creative power of the Most Great Name.”<sup>1</sup> The current issue of *Bahá’í Canada* focuses on this theme, reflecting on some of the efforts of the Canadian Bahá’í community, both past and present, that carry echoes of words penned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá 100 years ago, addressed to the Bahá’ís of the United States and of Canada.

The Fall 2017 issue includes articles on the heroes and heroines who were the first to respond to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s call for pioneers; a personal account of teaching Indigenous peoples living in the Canadian prairies in the 1960s, as well as descriptions of groups of friends working together to study the Tablets of the Divine Plan, to proclaim the Faith in a Mennonite Church and to translate Bahá’í Writings into Inuktitut. Our feature article provides a moving account of the inauguration of the

Mother Temple of South America in Santiago, Chile last year.

Readers may have noticed that this issue of *Bahá’í Canada* is the first to feature a graphic redesign, meant to more suitably reflect its evolution from a predominately news-based publication to a thematic one, published three to four times per year. It is envisioned that more time-sensitive news items will be published on the *Bahá’í Canada* website <bahaicanada.bahai.ca>. In connection with this, the password protection feature previously active on the website has now been removed, making it more easily accessible to Bahá’ís across the country.

The redesign of *Bahá’í Canada* opens up a need for high quality, thoughtful photographs on an ongoing basis. If individuals feel that they are able to serve in this way, please contact us. We hope that you enjoy this issue of *Bahá’í Canada* and we welcome your feedback and questions as we continue to learn about the use of the website and the magazine. We can be reached at: <bcanada@cdnbn.org>.

<sup>1</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 62.

## Call for submissions: Bicentenary issue

The next issue of *Bahá’í Canada* will be devoted to the upcoming bicentenary, which will celebrate the birth of Bahá’u’lláh and the birth of the Báb. It will focus on cultural and artistic expressions in honour of these historic occasions, as well as reports on the activities that took place across the country.

In relation to the latter, the *Bahá’í Canada* committee is seeking reports and reflections, along with relevant photographs, that describe the myriad ways that institutions, communities and individuals celebrated these occasions and reached out to “the widest possible cross-section of society and to all those with whom they share a connection.”<sup>1</sup> The deadline for these submissions is 17 November 2017.

It is hoped that this issue of *Bahá’í Canada* will befittingly mark these Festivals and speak to “the timeless splendour of those divine Figures Who set in motion an irresistible process of individual and social change.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of the Secretariat, The Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 18 May 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



Resting place of Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, in the Great Northern Cemetery, London.

Photo: Bahá'í International Community.

# From the history of the Bahá'í Faith

This excerpt from *The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Guardianship* by Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánúm, describes how Shoghi Effendi spurred the North American Bahá'í community to arise to carry out the directives enunciated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*.

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**"One of the greatest spiritual sagas of the American nation"**

**I**n 1919, at the Annual Bahá'í Convention in New York, the Tablets revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at a time when He was in great danger during the First World War and which have come to be known as the "Vehicles of the Divine Plan" and the "Spiritual Mandate," conferred by Him on the North American Community of Believers, were unveiled. We American Bahá'ís are all familiar with their remarkable and stirring contents. We were all immensely proud to receive them. No one, however, except Martha Root and a few other venturesome



Marion Jack (1866–1954), was born in Saint John, N.B.  
Photo: Bahá'í International Community.

souls, felt moved to do anything drastic about carrying out the instructions contained in them prior to 1936-37. It was then that Shoghi Effendi's teaching, inspiration and advice began to pour into the minds and hearts of the American Bahá'ís like an incoming tide. He called us to action. For eighteen years, we had basked happily and complacently in the praises and promises 'Abdu'l-Bahá had showered upon us in those Tablets, and in many other writings and statements. The Guardian, however, his fingers on our pulse, knew that we were now able to arise for pioneer work, and through the instruments of the Administration he had so carefully assisted us in evolving, carry forward the frontiers of our achievements. He was, thank God, not mistaken in the confidence and trust he reposed in us. He called and America responded. People from every walk of life, business men, stenographers, old ladies, young ladies, people with families, people often frail in health but iron in spirit, began to arise, and what may in future well be viewed as one of the greatest spiritual sagas of the American nation, began to take place. They were called pioneers, and into new cities, into the virgin States of the United States and the virgin Provinces of Canada—virgin as yet to Bahá'u'lláh's light—these people began to move, at the cost of great personal sacrifice and inconvenience, inspired by nothing but faith and devotion and love for their fellow men, they started to lay the foundations for new Bahá'í communities by establishing new Spiritual Assemblies as a result of their teaching activities.”

— Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum, *Twenty-Five Years of the Guardianship*, in *The Bahá'í World: 1946-1950*, Vol. XI, pp. 117-118)

## Illuminating the path ahead: Heroes and heroines respond to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's call

Responding to the call of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, the early believers in North America arose to scatter and sow seeds of the Faith across the planet. What follows provides a glimpse of this historic response, which has since flourished into communities that continue to labour under the mandate of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as contained in those same sacred Tablets.

**T**he span of only a few years separated the Master's visit to North America in 1912 and the revelation of the Tablets of the Divine Plan. The Tablets were revealed during two concentrated periods: the first eight,



between March 26 and April 19, 1916, and the last six, between February 2 and March 8, 1917—the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh. And we know not only when each Tablet was written but where. For example, the first of the two to Canada was revealed on April 5, 1916, “in the garden adjacent to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh,” while the second was penned on February 21, 1917, “in Bahá'u'lláh’s room at the house of Abbud in Akká.” And He identified the recipients with great specificity: “the Bahá'ís of Canada—Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, Mackenzie, Keewatin, Ungava, Franklin Islands—and Greenland.” How thrilling to see such a detailed listing of our provinces and territories—and fascinating, too, when we recall that Newfoundland did not become part of Canada until 1949!

*“The Tablets launched a spiritual campaign across the globe that continues to the present day. The Plan in which we are now engaged is the most recent iteration of that Plan formulated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which came in response to His Father’s Teachings and directives, was elaborated more fully by Shoghi Effendi during the period of the Guardianship, and has, in the years since, been built upon by the Universal House of Justice.”*

According to one account, these Tablets “arrived like a burst of light out of the darkness of the [first world] war ... and illumined the path ahead,”<sup>1</sup> providing a breathtakingly comprehensive plan for the worldwide

spread of the Bahá'í Faith and the development of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh that stood in complete contrast to the conflagration that was engulfing the world.

The Tablets themselves were transmitted via the humble medium of postcards—transparent, indicating to government censors on alert during the War that there was nothing secret or subversive in them—and addressed to individual believers. The two Tablets to Canada were sent care of Mrs. May Maxwell in Montreal, Que.

The official unveiling of these 14 momentous documents was delayed until the end of the war, during the Eleventh Annual National Convention of the Bahá'í Temple Unity held at the Hotel McAlpin in New York City in April 1919. By this time, the Tablets had been inscribed on parchments, illuminated, and framed. During each session of the Convention, one was read and then unveiled. One account describes how this was staged:

The Tablet of Canada will be unveiled by the little daughter of Mrs. Maxwell, little Mary, and the Tablets of the other sections of the United States will be unveiled by just such dear sweet souls who may embody in themselves the pure ideals and freshness of the Kingdom of Abhá ...

Mrs. Maxwell’s daughter is going to be dressed in a beautiful soft pink silk dress for the occasion and as she advances toward the platform to unveil the Tablet a strain of soft music will be played.<sup>2</sup>

The Tablets launched a spiritual campaign across the globe that continues to the present day. The Plan in which we are now engaged is the most recent iteration of that Plan formulated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which came in response to His Father’s Teachings and directives, was elaborated more fully by Shoghi Effendi during the period of the Guardianship, and has, in the years since, been built upon by the Universal House of Justice.

Some of the early believers grasped immediately the Tablets’ significance—figures such as Martha Root, Louis Gregory, Imogene Hoagg, Hyde and Clara Dunn, Leonora Armstrong, Hooper Harris, Harlan Ober, “Mother” Beecher, May Maxwell, and Marion Jack. The receipt of these Tablets changed the course of their lives, as they strove to act upon the directives given to them by the beloved Master. For May Maxwell, “They became her charter to travel. They interpreted history for her in an urgent light and emphasized for her the absolute necessity not only of teaching but of spreading the message of Bahá'u'lláh far and wide.”<sup>3</sup>

[May strove] with heart and soul to follow the Master’s guidelines. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s prayers, she was convinced, had given her this baby; He had blessed her little girl from her earliest childhood with His smile. And when His glorious Tablets of the Divine Plan were received at 716 Pine Avenue West in Montreal, May never

1 Violette Nakhjavani, *The Maxwells of Montreal*, Vol. I, pp. 332–333.

2 Violette Nakhjavani, *The Maxwells of Montreal*, Vol. I, p. 347.

3 Violette Nakhjavani, *The Maxwells of Montreal*, Vol. I, p. 333.

doubted her priorities. She knew that if her daughter was to fulfil her potential and attain the summit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wishes for her, then she, May Maxwell, her mother and the mother of the Faith in Canada, should respond to His call herself, follow His Charter, and do everything in her power to obey Him.<sup>4</sup>

Marion—or General Jack, as the Master called her—who was also present at that 1919 National Convention in the McAlpin Hotel, responded immediately by embarking with Imogene Hoagg on a 6,000-mile, 18-month teaching trip to Alaska and the Yukon—“in conditions not exactly ideal, undertaken by two women in their fifties, for their love of humankind.”<sup>5</sup>

For Marion, that trip was just the beginning to a life of service in response to the Tablets of the Divine Plan, a life that ultimately took her to her pioneering post in Sofia, Bulgaria, which she held with gritty but cheerful determination throughout the privations of the Second World War—including the bombing of the house where she lived, the theft of her luggage, the political uncertainties, her lack of knowledge of the Bulgarian language. There were many reasons she could have left. There were many people who told her that she should leave. But she didn’t. As she wrote to her niece in 1947, “I had a letter this week from Haifa, and as I am told to persevere and keep on working I can turn a deaf ear to certain friends, who think I should go back where I came from just because I have turned 80...”<sup>6</sup>

It was that indomitable spirit, that dedication to “sowing the seeds” that earned for Marion Jack the designation by Shoghi Effendi as “immortal heroine,” “greatly loved and deeply admired by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”<sup>7</sup>



Hyde Dunn (1855-1941) and Clara Dunn (1869-1960).

Photo: Bahá’í International Community.

Two people who were not present at the Convention at the McAlpin Hotel in April 1919 were Hyde and Clara Dunn, who, shortly after their marriage as mature adults, began to call each other “Father” and “Mother”—a practice that

*“Mother looked up and said,  
‘Shall we go, Father?’  
‘Yes,’ was my reply,  
and no further discussion  
took place.”*

many of their friends soon followed. The Dunns were far away on the west coast of the United States when the Tablets of the Divine Plan came into their hands. This is how Hyde Dunn describes their response:

Mother was reading ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s call to the United States and Canada, and His appeal was so penetrating and thrilling, it pierced our hearts. In one part He said, ‘If I could only go in poverty and barefooted, and raise the call of Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá,’ but that is not possible.’ Mother looked up and said, ‘Shall we go, Father?’ ‘Yes,’ was my reply, and no further discussion took place.<sup>8</sup>

With that one short question, Mother and Father Dunn left their home, work, and friends, to become the spiritual parents of the entire continent of Australia.

And now, 100 years later, in a letter written to us—to us, the Bahá’ís of North America—on March 26, 2016, the Universal House of Justice told us that while this is a time for “jubilation,” a time to “take pride in the sacrifices and victories” of our spiritual forbears, this is also a time for us to act:

With the same spirit of renunciation shown by your predecessors, cast away the idle fancies and distractions of a world that has lost its way that you may consecrate yourselves in the next five years to the priceless opportunities and inescapable obligations of the latest stage of a spiritual enterprise on which the fate of humanity ultimately depends.<sup>9</sup>

The beloved Master stated in the Tablets of the Divine Plan that “the future of the Dominion of Canada ... is very great, and the events connected with it infinitely glorious.”<sup>10</sup> The needs of this time are different. Those early friends achieved breadth, scattering far and wide to sow the seeds across this nation and the entire globe; now is the time for depth, for the penetration of the message deeper and deeper—into neighbourhoods, villages, towns, into networks of friends, neighbours, coworkers. What part will each of us play in shaping that glorious future?

– Dr. Ann Boyles

<sup>4</sup> Violette Nakhjavani, *The Maxwells of Montreal*, Vol. I, p. 343.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Jason, *Never Be Afraid to Dare: The Story of ‘General Jack’*, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> *Marion Jack: Immortal Heroine*, published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *The Bahá’í World*, Vol. XII, 1950-54, p. 674.

<sup>8</sup> *The Bahá’í World*, Vol. IX, 1940-44, p. 593.

<sup>9</sup> The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá’ís of the United States and the Bahá’ís of Canada, 26 March 2016.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, no. 13, p. 95.

## May Maxwell and the Tablets of the Divine Plan

This passage from *The Maxwells of Montreal* describes how the Tablets of the Divine Plan altered the course of May Maxwell's life, inspiring her to travel across Canada and the United States for several years.

**I**t is wonderful to consider that at the very time when Europe was engulfed in senseless conflict, when internecine war was ravaging the fairest regions of that continent, and one by one the nations were being pulled pell-mell into the bloody fray, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Divine Exemplar and Centre of the Covenant, was revealing His Tablets of the Divine Plan and constructing the foundations of a new world order in complete contrast to the mayhem around Him. Since the war that was raging precluded the festivities appropriate for the hundredth anniversary of the Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed these priceless Tablets to coincide with it instead. They were destined to launch a spiritual campaign of world-wide peace across the globe. They marked a turning point in the regeneration of mankind.

They also marked another turning point in May's life. They became her charter to travel. They interpreted history for her in an urgent light and emphasized for her the absolute necessity not only of teaching but of spreading the message of Bahá'u'lláh far and wide. She entered a new sphere of service after reading these Tablets. From that moment until 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, five years later, she did not rest but moved restlessly, back and forth, across North America, galvanized by His call. She had travelled before, of course, to New York and Green Acre, but had done so primarily for family reasons: to see her mother, her father, her brother and his wife; to spend her summers in the country with her daughter and her husband. This time she travelled for the sake of the Cause alone. It must have been in part due to her extraordinary response to these precious Tablets that she later earned the title of "distinguished disciple" of the Master and one of the "heroines of the Formative age of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh."<sup>1</sup>

Ever since she had arrived in Canada as a bride in 1902, May's Bahá'í activities had all been limited to Montreal and to the east coast of the United States, with the exception of her short trip to New Brunswick earlier. She had taught the Faith either privately in her own home



The Tablets of the Divine Plan became May Maxwell's charter for travel. Photo: Bahá'í International Community.

<sup>1</sup> Shoghi Effendi, cable of 2 March 1940, and letter of 15 April 1940 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, in Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America*, p. 38 and 40.



or in public meetings as a speaker whenever she travelled for health or family reasons, but she had always remained in this closed circuit. After the reception of the two Tablets for Canada, however, at the end of the summer of 1916, she started to move further afield. She began to go far from home and started her journeys from coast to coast. The Tablets of the Divine Plan not only opened the cage door but taught May how to fly.

On 13 October 1916 she gave a public speech at the Red Men's Hall in Edgartown, Massachusetts on 'The Message of Universal Brotherhood,' a subject that must have sounded contradictory and at the same time strangely relevant as the echoes of universal enmity were being sounded across the world. According to *The Vineyard Gazette*, which described her as a 'charming speaker' and published a report on the event the following week,

Mrs. Maxwell . . . Spoke with much feeling of the great catastrophe of the age, the universal war, in which Christian nations, worshippers of one God and followers of one Lord, are slaughtering each other on the battlefield.

On 11 December 1916 she gave another public talk on the Bahá'í Faith in St John, New Brunswick . . . where she travelled with Grace Ober. This trip to a different province in her adopted country marked the first of many journeys over the next decade and a half.

According to a newspaper article in *The Troy Record* about this time, 'Mrs. William Sutherland Maxwell addressed prominent women of Troy on the "Bahá'í Revelation."' She had also attended and addressed the Eighth Convention of the 'Bahá'í Congress' as it was then called, from 29 April to 2 May 1917, and had spoken with great

*'We are one in purpose,' she declared. 'It is such happiness to know that we are all one, one in origin, one in destiny.'*

eloquence, as Louis G. Gregory reported in *Star of the West*.

A friend from Canada voiced the oneness of the world of humanity in so wonderful a way that one might well have thought our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá was using this wonderful soul to convey a message to the Convention. 'We are one in purpose,' she declared. 'It is such happiness to know that we are all one, one in origin, one in destiny.' This message was realized in spirit and in truth.

When speaking to the friends, Amatu'l-Bahá often referred to an important Tablet of the Master's which had inspired her mother in her teaching work and in her travelling. It had been addressed to May Maxwell in the early years of the century and must have been quoted by her often for her daughter to know it so well. It sounds almost like the Master's mandate to May when she left the Old World to travel to the New. [Note May Maxwell heard about the Bahá'í Faith in Paris France, and later moved to Canada] It became His personal charter to her, the lodestar and the compass of her journeys across America and Canada. It symbolized the spirit of her talks, the hallmark of her services.

Thou hast written that during this summer thou art intending to travel to different parts to deliver the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. I hope that thou wilt be confirmed. Whensoever thou desirest to explain and expound a passage from the Holy Bible, turn thy face toward the Divine Kingdom, supplicate for assistance, and then immediately open thy lips. Undoubtedly the confirmations of the Spirit will descend upon thee.

— Violette Nakhjavani, *The Maxwell's of Montreal*, pp. 332-335.

Upon every participator in this concerted effort, unprecedented in the annals of the American Bahá'í community, rests the spiritual obligation to make of the mandate of teaching, so vitally binding upon all, the all-pervading concern of his life. In his daily activities and contacts, in all his journeys, whether for business or otherwise, on his holidays and outings, and on any mission he may be called upon to undertake, every bearer of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh should consider it not only an obligation but a privilege to scatter far and wide the seeds of His Faith, and to rest content in the abiding knowledge that whatever be the immediate response to that Message, and however inadequate the vehicle that conveyed it, the power of its Author will, as He sees fit, enable those seeds to germinate, and in circumstances which no one can foresee enrich the harvest which the labor of His followers will gather.



# Dawning Place of the Mention of God: The dedication of the Mother Temple of South America

The following describes the dedication of the Chilean Temple and the historic contribution three souls made to its realization through their response to the directives in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. This account also includes some highlights from the conference program and the first visits to the Temple, and outlines some details of Canada's connection to the Temple of Light.

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**A** Bahá'í House of Worship, “one of the most vital institutions of the world,”<sup>1</sup> is a pivotal institution of Bahá'í community life. Enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, it is a sacred structure open to all and referred to as “*Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*,” directly translated as the “Dawning Place of the Mention of God.” A Bahá'í House of Worship, also referred to as a Bahá'í Temple, is offered as a gift to humanity by the Bahá'í community to provide a universal place of worship for silent prayer, meditation and reflection, and to foster a spirit of unity.

In addition to being a sacred place for prayer, a House of Worship is also intended to contribute to the social

1 The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2012.

and economic development of the population that prays within it. Each temple is an expression of the inseparable connection that exists between devotion and service, as “ultimately, prayers must be lived in purposeful lives.”<sup>2</sup>

Over time, and as capacity is built, around each House of Worship various essential dependencies will emerge, each dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits of the population served by the temple.

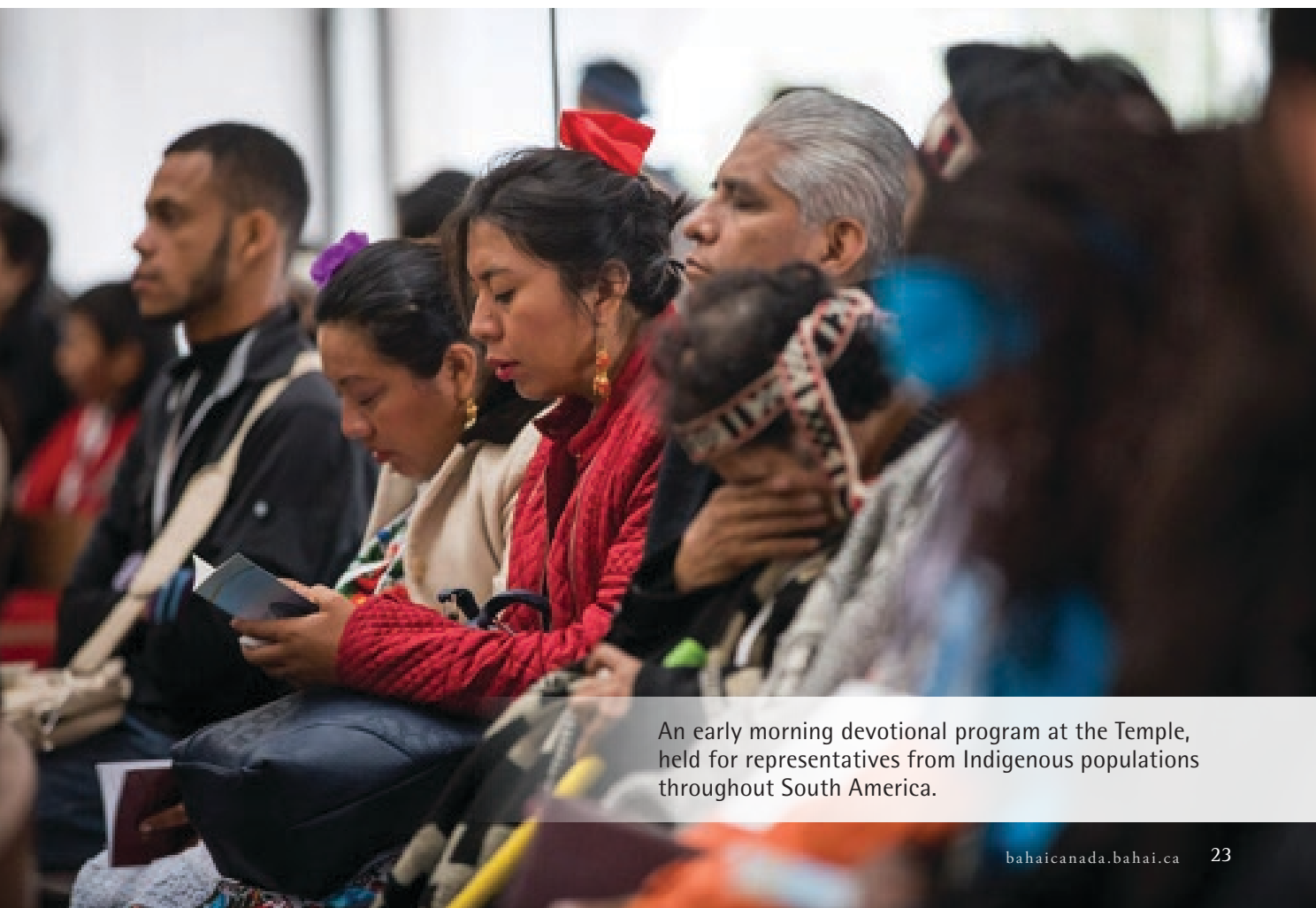
Shoghi Effendi explains:

[H]owever inspiring the conception of Bahá'í worship ... it cannot be regarded as the sole, nor even the essential, factor in the part which the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, as designed by Bahá'u'lláh, is destined to play in the organic life of the Bahá'í community. Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific pursuits centring around the Dependencies of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervor, can never hope to achieve beyond the meagre and often transitory results produced by the contemplations of the ascetic or the communion of the passive worshiper. It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper himself, much less to humanity in general, unless and until translated and transfused into that

The Bahá'í House of Worship is dedicated to the praise of God. The House of Worship forms the central edifice of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* (the Dawning-place of the Praise of God), a complex which, as it unfolds in the future, will comprise in addition to the House of Worship a number of dependencies dedicated to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits. 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* as “one of the most vital institutions in the world”, and Shoghi Effendi indicates that it exemplifies in tangible form the integration of “Bahá'í worship and service”. Anticipating the future development of this institution, Shoghi Effendi envisages that the House of Worship and its dependencies “shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant”. In the future, Bahá'í Houses of Worship will be constructed in every town and village.

*From the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, note 53, p. 190.*

2 The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of Iran, 18 December 2014.



An early morning devotional program at the Temple, held for representatives from Indigenous populations throughout South America.



dynamic and disinterested service to the cause of humanity which it is the supreme privilege of the Dependencies of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* to facilitate and promote.<sup>3</sup>

This unique perspective on the relationship between worship and service, between the temple and the community, is further described by the Universal House of Justice:

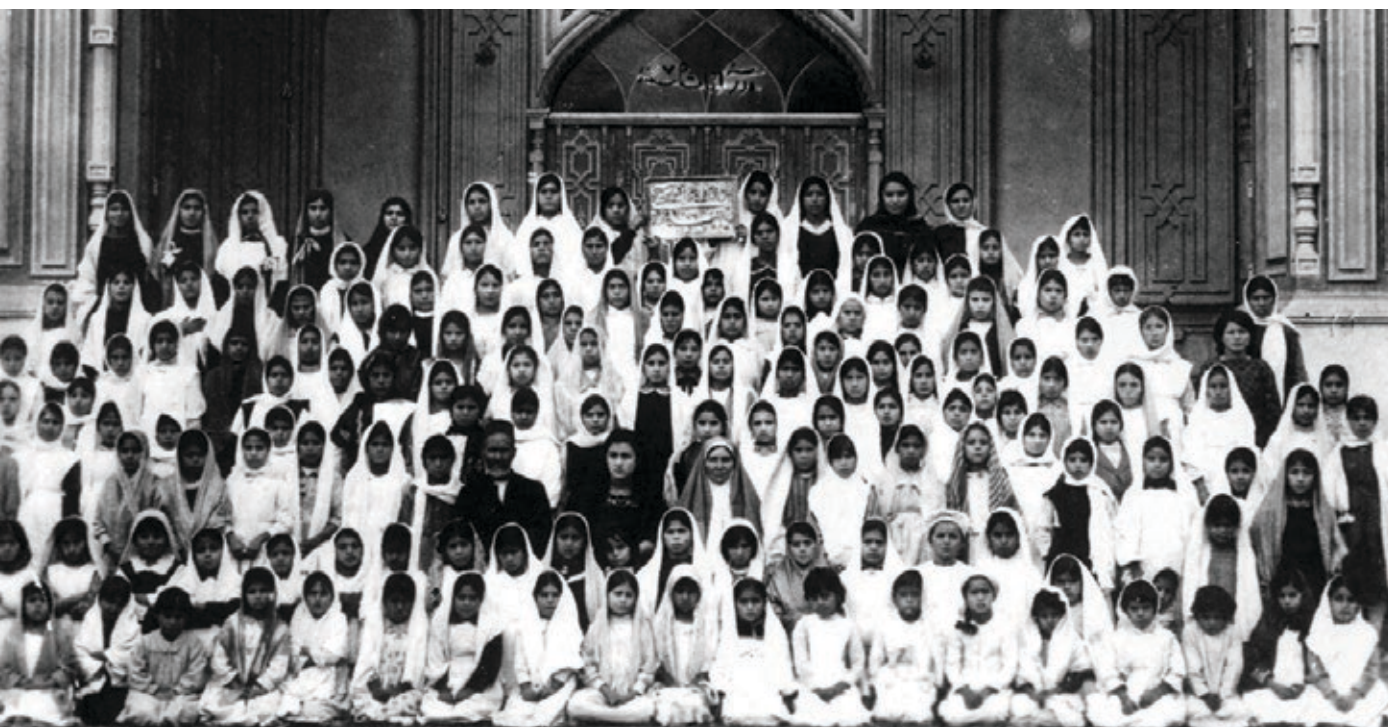
The systematic pursuit of the Plan in all its dimensions gives rise to a pattern of collective endeavour distinguished not only for its commitment to service, but also for its attraction to worship. The intensification of activity which the next five years requires will further enrich the devotional life shared by those who serve side by side in clusters around the world. This process of enrichment is already much advanced: witness, for instance, how gatherings for worship have been integrated into the core of community life. Devotional meetings are occasions where any soul may enter, inhale the heavenly fragrances, experience the sweetness of prayer, meditate upon the Creative Word, be transported on the wings of the spirit, and commune with the one Beloved. Feelings of fellowship and common cause are generated, particularly in the spiritually heightened conversations that naturally occur at such times and through which the “city of the human heart” may be opened. By convening a gathering for worship at which adults and children of any background are welcome, the spirit of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* is evoked in any locality.<sup>4</sup>

3 Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 25 October 1929 in *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 184.

4 The Universal House of Justice to the conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 29 December 2015.

To better understand the conditions that propel a community towards the erection of a House of Worship, in a letter dated 1 August 2014, the Universal House of Justice describes how a devoted band of Persian believers who settled in 'Ishqábád, Turkistan (now Ashgabat, Turkmenistan), raised the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* in 1908. The letter describes how these friends

... bent their energies towards the creation of a pattern of life that would reflect the exalted spiritual and social principles enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In a span of a few decades, this group, originally consisting of a handful of families, was joined there by others and grew to a few thousand believers. This community, fortified by ties of camaraderie and animated by unity of purpose and a spirit of faithfulness, was enabled to reach a high degree of cohesiveness and development, for which it gained renown throughout the Bahá'í world. These friends, guided by their understanding of the divine Teachings, and within the bounds of the religious freedom they were accorded, toiled to create the conditions that would lead to the founding of a *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, that “crowning institution in every Bahá'í community”. On a befitting tract of land in the centre of the city that had been obtained some years before with the consent of the Blessed Beauty Himself, facilities were built for communal well-being—a meeting hall, schools for children, a hostel for visitors, and a small clinic, among others. A sign of the notable achievements of the Bahá'ís in 'Ishqábád, who in those productive years became distinguished for their prosperity, magnanimity, and intellectual and cultural attainments, was their attention to ensuring



Pupils from the girl's school in front of the doors of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of 'Ishqabad, circa 1925.

Photo: The Wilmette Institute.

that all Bahá'í children and youth were literate in a society with rampant illiteracy, especially among girls. Within such an environment of unified endeavour and progress, and fostered at every stage of development by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a magnificent House of Worship emerged—the most prominent edifice in the area. For over twenty years, the friends experienced the heavenly joy of having realized their lofty aim: the establishment of a focal point of worship, a nerve centre of community life, a place where souls gathered at daybreak for humble invocation and communion before flowing out of its doors to engage in their daily pursuits. While the forces of irreligion eventually swept through the region and thwarted hopes, the brief appearance of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in 'Ishqábád is an enduring testament to the volition and effort of a body of believers who established a rich pattern of life deriving its impetus from the power of the Creative Word.<sup>5</sup>

Around the world, the efforts of every Bahá'í community to establish a rich pattern of life described in the previous passage in every cluster brings us ever closer to a time when we can fulfill Bahá'u'lláh's instruction in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas:

Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being ... Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate. Verily, by His remembrance, the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light.<sup>6</sup>

The first Bahá'í House of Worship in 'Ishqábád was expropriated by local authorities in 1928, seriously damaged in an earthquake in 1948, and eventually demolished in 1963. However, the effect of its light and the spirit of those who built it set in motion a wondrous process that continues today. The vision and determination of the friends in 'Ishqábád to erect a House of Worship so inspired the friends on the other side of the planet, that in 1903, they sought permission from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to erect the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West in Wilmette, Illinois.

While 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself laid the cornerstone for the Mother Temple of the West, it fell to Shoghi Effendi to complete its construction and to outline the plans for the erection of the remaining continental Houses of Worship. Upon the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921, Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith set out “to execute the provisions of what he identified as three ‘charters’ of the Bahá'í Faith: Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Carmel, establishing the mandate for the development of the Bahá'í World Centre in the Holy Land; *The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, outlining the framework for the evolution of the Bahá'í administration; and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, providing the guidelines for the global

expansion of the Bahá'í community.”<sup>7</sup> It was during the twentieth century that the provisions were put in place for a total of eight houses of worship to be erected; each was designated a continental or mother temple.

Today, these houses of worship are in North America (Wilmette, IL USA), Africa (Kampala, Uganda), Australia (Sydney, Australia), Europe (Langenhain, Germany), Latin America (Panama City, Panama), Oceania (Apia, Samoa), and the Indian subcontinent (New Delhi, India). The last of these continental Houses of Worship, the Mother Temple of South America, was dedicated to public worship in mid-October 2016.

The dedication of the House of Worship in Chile signified a historic conclusion to a century-long process of raising up continental Bahá'í Houses of Worship around the world. As the community-building efforts of Bahá'ís and their friends in every cluster become increasingly characterized by a vibrant community life, national and local Houses of Worship will be introduced. The National Spiritual Assemblies of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Papua New Guinea, Cambodia, Colombia, India, Kenya, and Vanuatu, are at different stages in erecting their respective temples, supported by the Office of Temples and Sites created at the Bahá'í World Centre in 2012.

## First pioneers to South America in response to the Tablets of the Divine Plan

It was during the middle of First World War, from 26 March 1916 to 8 March 1917, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed 14 tablets to the North American believers. Since the war practically isolated 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Palestine from the rest of the world, He gave instructions to avoid concern by the censors of the Ottoman regime: five of the tablets were to be written on postcards and sent by regular post to prominent believers in the West. The fifth of these tablets, dated 5 April 1916, was addressed to the Bahá'ís of Canada and sent to May Maxwell, in Montreal, Que.

After the war, the remaining tablets were sent to North America, and in April 1919, at the Hotel McAlpin in New York, a befitting ceremony was held to unveil all 14 of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets of the Divine Plan to the entire North American community. Three courageous women were present at this historic event: Martha Root, Leonora Armstrong and May Maxwell. Inspired by the vision outlined in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's charter for the expansion and consolidation of the Faith worldwide, these souls encouraged and supported each other to arise as travel teachers and pioneers to spread the Faith to other continents. Martha Root was the first to arise, and in 1919 she became the first travel teacher to Latin America, opening up an entire continent to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

In 1921, Leonora Armstrong moved from her home in Hudson, New York, to Brazil when she was only 25 years

5 The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, 1 August 2014.

6 Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 29–30.

7 “The Life and Work of Shoghi Effendi,” www.bahai.org (2017).



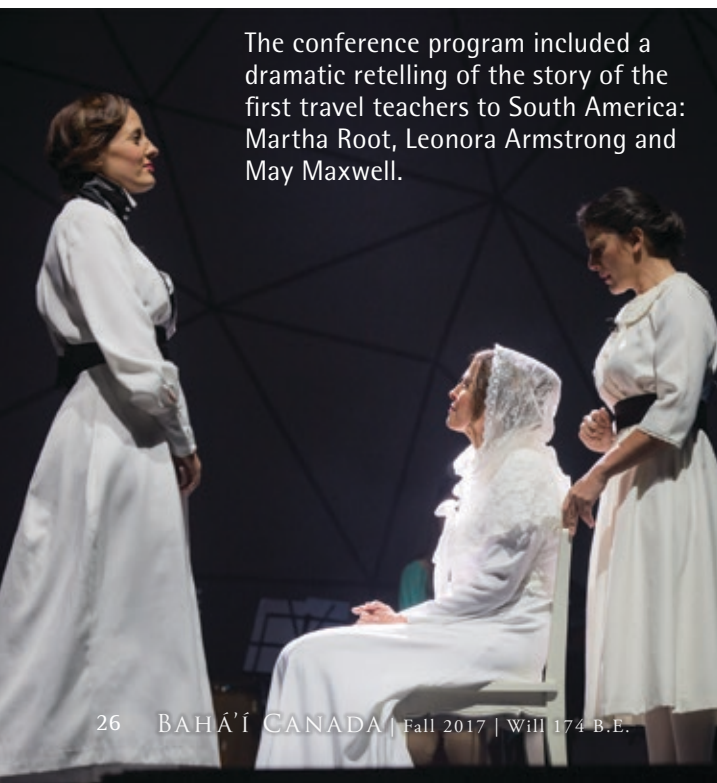
old. Due to her efforts and services for the Bahá'í Faith in Brazil and across Latin America, she was regarded as the Spiritual Mother of the Bahá'ís of South America. After a distinguished life as an educator, translator and teacher, she served on the first Local Spiritual Assembly elected in Brazil, witnessed the creation of the first National Spiritual Assembly, and served as a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Americas. She died at her post at the age of 85.

A third friend, May Maxwell, recognized as the spiritual mother of Canada, arose to pioneer to Argentina in 1940. Although she died only a few weeks after her arrival in South America, Shoghi Effendi described her life of service in these words:

Laden with the fruits garnered through well-nigh half a century of toilsome service to the Cause she so greatly loved, heedless of the warnings of age and ill-health, and afire with the longing to worthily demonstrate her gratitude in her overwhelming awareness of the bounties of her Lord and Master, she set her face towards the southern outpost of the Faith in the New World, and laid down her life in such a spirit of consecration and self-sacrifice as has truly merited the crown of martyrdom.<sup>8</sup>

The dramatic and inspiring stories of these three heroic souls were exquisitely interpreted by three actors in a moving performance on the first day of a conference to dedicate the Mother Temple of South America on 14 October 2016. The dramatic presentation was entitled: “Las Rosas Blancas de America” (The White Roses of America). With the foundation of the response to the Tablets of the Divine Plan firmly established, the rest of the conference celebrated the soul-stirring response of Latin Americans to Bahá'u'lláh's message.

8 Shoghi Effendi: *Messages to America*, pp. 39-40



The conference program included a dramatic retelling of the story of the first travel teachers to South America: Martha Root, Leonora Armstrong and May Maxwell.



Representing the Universal House of Justice, Mrs. Antonella Demonte welcomes a group to a devotional program inside the Temple.

## The conference and related programs of the dedication

At the opening of the conference, the representative of the Universal House of Justice, Mrs. Antonella Demonte, read a special message addressed to the friends gathered at the dedication.

The conference and related programs of the dedication of the House of Worship then shared evidences of the expansion and consolidation efforts made in this continent in response to Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, and highlighted achievements in various areas including education and social and economic development. Friends from practically every South American country shared their experiences on stage through a lively mix of storytelling, video and photo montages, live music, dance and compelling talks. Gradually, the story of Latin America's encounter with Bahá'u'lláh was revealed in a spirit of celebratory joy. The various elements of the program featured quite prominently the response of the Indigenous friends from various regions.

On the last half day of the conference, the program focused on the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and the Mother Temple of South America. Government officials, representatives of the workers that built the Temple and the architect all shared insights of the collective effort required to erect such a structure. The program shed light on how the “Temple and its associated dependencies embody two essential and inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service.”<sup>9</sup> It concluded with the architect sharing glimpses and highlights of the design process that resulted in the unique structure on the foothills of the Andes. His talk acknowledged the countless number of contributors to the project, and in a spirit of profound appreciation, thanked them all for their services and contributions.

9 The Universal House of Justice to the Friends Gathered in Santiago, Chile, for the Dedication of the Mother Temple of South America, 14 October 2016.



## The first visits to the Chilean House of Worship

With the stage now set, the process of transporting the 5,000 attendees in groups of approximately 450 to attend a special devotional program at the House of Worship was set in motion. While the weather was uncharacteristically uncooperative, it in no way deterred the friends from fulfilling their purpose to attend their program.

The representative of the Universal House of Justice welcomed each group personally to the devotional program. Each program consisted of a selection of prayers recited or chanted in Spanish, English, Portuguese or Mapudungun, the language of the Mapuche people of southern Chile. In addition, a verse from the Holy Bible was read and the Temple Choir sang two arrangements. At the conclusion of each devotional program, the participants were privileged to a rare viewing of the portraits of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh while exiting the Temple, a special gift from the Universal House of Justice for this extraordinary occasion.

Each of the group visits and devotional programs were unique. In keeping with the encouragement that the dedication of the Temple be accessible to families with small children, two of the nine devotional programs were specially designed with young children in mind. The program included prayers and choral arrangements of prayers familiar to many children, and the participants included primarily young families, but not exclusively. Small children also received a specifically designed colouring book that explored the concepts of a Bahá'í House of Worship, with a simple narrative and space for children to draw and write about their experience using crayons that were provided. Older children and junior youth received a special prayer book designed for them for this special occasion. For babies and toddlers, there was a play room at the Movistar Arena with closed caption television so the parents could view the proceedings while attending to their children.

The logistics of transporting 5,000 people from a downtown arena to the Temple in a timely and dignified fashion was no simple task. To make matters interesting, on the first day, the weather was what can only be described as combative. It was cool, rainy and very windy. The friends were transported to the Temple site with a fleet of 13 tour buses. There they gathered in the very tent where the public dedication ceremony was held only a few days earlier. As the weather worsened, one of the walls of the tent collapsed in the high winds, which blew the torrential rain horizontally into the tent. The participants were forced to huddle together for warmth and to stay dry. And then it happened. A group of Indigenous friends from Peru broke out their guitars and flutes, and began playing and singing. The atmosphere of the tent was instantly transformed, with people dancing, singing, smiling and celebrating.



Despite inclement weather, the group visits to the Temple were characterized by a profound sense of joy and gratitude to God.

Meanwhile, at the Temple, the devotional program was drawing to a close and the friends began slowly filing out. It was late in the day and getting dark. There were flashes of lightning and clashes of thunder, adding even more drama to an already awe-inspiring experience. The other group made their way up from the tent to the Temple, cold, tired, wet, and maybe even frustrated. But when they entered the sacred precinct of the House of Worship, their radiant faces told another story. Entering the Temple for the first time, hearing the Word of God spoken and chanted in that sacred space and having the blessing of viewing the portraits of the Twin Manifestations while exiting the Temple, had a profound effect on the participants. The spirit of wonderment and joy was contagious and universal.

But our story would be incomplete if we left it at this point. The way down to the buses upon exiting the Temple was via a service road. In the heavy rains, this dirt road had turned to mud. We witnessed one precious soul lose her footing, and as she fell, she reached out and grabbed a friend beside her for support. In a spirit of accompanying one another, she too fell, and on her way down, grabbed a third friend. The three elegantly dressed women slid twenty feet down the muddy road. Then they got up, and with amusement and resolve, made their way down to the busses, laughing.

Given the precarious condition of the service road, the organizers immediately closed it and rerouted the friends to descend using the main staircase. As the friends approached the stairs, however, they realized that the long reflecting pool, so elegantly placed at the side of the main staircase, was overflowing. The wind was blowing with such force that it was pushing the water along the length of the pool and causing it to pour down the staircase, leaving it impassible. As one of the organizers stood at the top of the stairs watching the water cascade down—having only moments ago closed the service road, drenched by the unremitting rain and preoccupied by the thunder and lightning—he asked under his breath, “God, what are you doing?” And in that instant the lights on the main staircase short circuited because of the excessive water and went out. A third pathway was still lit, and was used for both the friends to descend and for the next group to ascend to the Temple. As the friends who had been waiting for their turn for hours saw the expression on the



The occasion, attended by nearly 5,000 individuals, was festive and joyful.

faces of those coming down the path, their angst and discomfort waned, and with each step towards the light of the Temple, they found themselves galvanized and thankful for being among those so blessed as to be in attendance to inaugurate this Temple to public worship.

While the stories of each group are different, the experience was remarkably similar for all. The participants felt grateful to Bahá'ú'lláh and the Universal House of Justice for enabling them to be part of such a profound moment in the annals of Bahá'í and global history.

While groups were at the Temple for their devotional program, the rest of the friends were free to attend a parallel program at the Movistar Arena, visit an exhibition highlighting communities and the history of the Faith in South America, go to the bookstore, socialize with the friends at the food court, and of course to engage the people they met in Santiago in meaningful conversations about the House of Worship and to invite them to the Temple. To this end, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Chile produced a small prayer book, ten copies of which were included in the registration kit along with an encouragement to have significant conversations with



Music and dance reflected the rich cultural landscape of South America's Bahá'í communities.



An exhibition open to the public highlighted the history of the Bahá'í Faith in South America.

people in restaurants, hotels, taxis, stores, etc., such that 50,000 people would receive a personal invitation to get to know their temple, and would receive the prayer book as a gift. When the Temple finally opened to the public, hundreds of people could be seen arriving at the temple site carrying these prayer books.

The parallel program at the Movistar Arena consisted of four two-hour sessions, each with the following elements: 1) a brief devotional program, 2) examples at the cluster level of what we are learning regarding the process of building capacity to contribute to the betterment of the world, 3) examples of social action and socioeconomic development projects inspired by the Teachings, 4) reflections on the history of the Faith in certain regions and the emerging role of

pioneering, 5) appreciation of what we are learning about the use of the arts for presenting concepts and teachings of the Faith, and 6) a display of the cultural diversity of the world shown through folk dances and other artistic expressions. All in all, 19 National Spiritual Assemblies from around the world designed contributions for this program. While the dedication primarily highlighted achievements of the South American Bahá'í communi-



ties, this program was a global forum, allowing everyone to appreciate the universal significance of the dedication of the last continental House of Worship.

## Chile and Canada

The program was joyful, energetic and diverse. Canada was among those countries that responded to the invitation to participate. Canada's participation included an introduction and showing of a video produced in Canada about the Tablets of the Divine Plan. It also featured an Indigenous Canadian storyteller, who, with love and enthusiasm, shared a story of profound historical importance to Canada: the story of Jim and Melba Loft. The Lofts left their home in the United States in 1949 to return to their ancestral homeland, the Tyendinaga Mohawk First Nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada. Despite great hardship, the Lofts persevered and dedicated their lives to bringing the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh to First Nations people. Canada's contribution to the parallel program at the dedication also included a traditional Lakota chant by an Indigenous Canadian Bahá'í, and lastly, featured music about the Plan by two Canadian recording artists.

Over 230 Canadians from all parts of Canada attended the dedication events. The program and exhibits made mention of one specific Canadian who helped open up South America to the Faith: May Maxwell, regarded as "the mother of the Bahá'í community of Canada."

Other connections to Canada include the fact that the architect, Siamak Hariri of Hariri Pontarini Architects, is himself a Canadian. Another intriguing connection which builds on a footnote of historic significance: the Canadian Bahá'í community has the unique distinction of having had several Canadian Bahá'í architects design prestigious Bahá'í edifices around the world. Louis Bourgeois, a Québécois architect, designed the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois. Iranian-Canadian architect Fariborz Sahba designed the Indian subcontinent temple in New Delhi, India. Hand of the Cause of God and Canadian architect William Sutherland Maxwell, husband of May Maxwell, designed the arcade and superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel. And Iranian-Canadian architect Hossain Amanat designed the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, the International Teaching Centre building and the Centre for the Study of the Texts.

For the duration of the last Five Year Plan, the international financial collaboration goals of the Canadian Bahá'í Community have exclusively focused on the Chilean Temple and its construction. In addition, the National Assembly maintained a very close and collaborative relationship with the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Chile, helping with the project management of the building of the Temple. Canada also provided technical assistance to organize the dedication of the House of Worship. Progress reports of the Chilean House of Worship have been regularly reported to the friends

at the National Convention and numerous news articles have been published in the Canadian Bahá'í News Service. And Canadian Bahá'ís, like their co-religionists around the world, have had the privilege of earmarking part of their fund contributions to help cover the costs of the House of Worship in Chile.

The connection between the northernmost country and the southernmost country of the Western hemisphere will most assuredly continue to flourish. There exist opportunities for Canadians to serve in Chile at the Temple and to assist in the advancement of the community building activities of the cluster around the Temple, and the flow of visitors, both local and from afar, will most assuredly continue to grow. In the months immediately following the dedication, more than 40,000 friends have visited the Temple, an indication of the burgeoning devotional character of an enlightened global community.



Siamak Hariri, the Temple architect (seated right), converses with Juan Grimm, the landscape architect (seated left).

## The construction of the Temple of Light

Built with traditional materials like glass, marble, wood and bronze, the Temple fulfills the requirements established by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that it have nine sides with nine entries, and meets the directives of the Universal House of Justice to last 400 years. In his article called "Spirit in the Sky", published in *The Globe and Mail* on 7 December 2016, journalist Alex Bozickovic describes the Temple as a "rare building that takes contemporary craftsmanship and technology to their limits."



“Complex in its form and innovative in its materials and details, it pushes the building art in the service of spirituality.”<sup>10</sup>

Temple architect Siamak Hariri describes his creative process in designing what is frequently referred to as the “Temple of Light,” saying: “I thought we should try to make a building where light does not enter, but is embodied. It is catalyzed.”<sup>11</sup> Hariri explains that “The first concept was a temple of light ...”<sup>12</sup>

“Light, after all, is the connecting force of the universe and all religions celebrate its spiritual delights. That was our starting point—that it would glow with a dreamlike serenity which will explore the range of the phenomena of light and shadow in continual interaction.”<sup>13</sup>

Another Canadian contribution to this universal Temple is the art and technology of the exterior glass. According to the Hariri Pontarini Architects website, “Nine identical wing-like shells spatially define the House of Worship. Each is clad on its exterior with thousands of faceted and shaped custom cast-glass panels and on its interior with computer-cut and carved, translucent marble. The cast glass panels—developed in a four year collaborative research process with Canadian artist Jeff Goodman—in combination with the translucent stone, bathe visitors with dappled light.”<sup>14</sup>

“Goodman created the original prototype for the custom 1.5-inch-thick patterned glass panels that clad the building. The patterning takes its cues from the work of the American artist Mark Tobey, specifically his ‘white writing’ or ‘structured light’ paintings inspired by Chinese calligraphy and his conversion to the Bahá’í Faith early in his career.”<sup>15</sup>

Lisa Rochon of *The Globe and Mail*, wrote:

The panels—made from countless glass rods laid on a sheet and baked at Goodman Studio—are stronger than stone, according to tests, to satisfy a Bahá’í requirement that the building endure for 400 years, and to survive one of the most active earthquake zones in the world.

The structural ambitions of the project are formidable: The glass serves only as the exterior skin of the temple. On its underside, the dome is to be clad in translucent Portuguese marble. All fasteners will be hidden. “The idea is that this is a veil of light,” says Hariri, “with a very soft glow on the inside and the outside.”<sup>16</sup>

Another unique characteristic of the Temple is its dynamic motion. Hariri describes how the design twists upwards towards a central oculus in the centre of the one

room structure, which creates a sense of “movement and stillness, coexisting.” Upon entering the temple, the very design provokes a physical response to reverently raise your head, where your eyes rest momentarily on a sacred symbol of the Greatest Name, hung delicately at the very apex of the temple, and then pass outwards, beyond any physical limitations, towards the heavens.

Featured on *ArchDaily* on 12 October 2016, the Bahá’í House of Worship is described as

A temple of light expressing a faith of inclusion is poised to become an architectural landmark in Chile. Set within the Andean foothills just beyond the metropolis of Santiago, the complex-curved temple is designed by the distinguished Canadian architect Siamak Hariri as an invitation for spiritual contemplation and architectural pilgrimage.

Surrounded by reflecting pools and a landscape of native grasses, the Bahá’í Temple of South America is a domed, luminous structure that echoes the rolling topography of the Andes while appearing to float some 30 metres above the earth. Its nine monumental glass veils frame an open and accessible worship space where up to 600 visitors can be accommodated on curved walnut and leather seating. Looking up to the central oculus at the apex of the dome, visitors will experience a mesmerizing transfer of light from the exterior of cast glass to an interior of translucent Portuguese marble. At sunset, the light captured within the dome shifts from white to silver to ochre and purple.<sup>17</sup>

More than just an award-winning architectural marvel, the Bahá’í House of Worship embodies the oneness of worship and service. In his own words, Siamak Hariri describes the project as:

... very much is about community building ... And so, this idea that it would have a shape and an iconography and a kind of welcoming sense, at the same time remain what is understandably a place which would be a House of Worship is a fascinating assignment, because if it looks like a mosque, or a church, or a synagogue, it’s certainly going to exclude certain people. So how do you create something that’s a little new, that is embracing, that is open, that [allows] people to walk into it from all different directions in a spirit of tolerance, openness, transparency. Really the ambition was to make it so that someone would feel like, if they looked up, they ... were gazing up to the heavens.<sup>18</sup>

– Duncan Hanks

10 Alex Bozickovic, “Spirit in the Sky,” [www.theglobeandmail.com](http://www.theglobeandmail.com) (December 2, 2016).

11 Ibid.

12 “The Life and Work of Shoghi Effendi,” [www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org) (2017).

13 Ibid.

14 “Bahá’í Temple of South America,” [www.hariripontarini.com](http://www.hariripontarini.com) (2017).

15 Guy Horton “How Chile’s Baha’i Temple Uses High Technology to Create a Spiritual Space,” [www.archdaily.com](http://www.archdaily.com) (June 29, 2015).

16 Lisa Rochon “Gehry, Gartner and glass make for luminous buildings,” [www.theglobeandmail.com](http://www.theglobeandmail.com) (September 28, 2012).

17 “Bahá’í Temple / Hariri Pontarini Architects” [www.archdaily.com](http://www.archdaily.com) (October 12, 2016).

18 Cited in the CBC Arts documentary, “Baha’i House of Worship in Chile,” 28 August 2016.

**FEATURED PHOTOS:** All photos were provided by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Chile.

# From Across Canada



John Sr., Carol Manuelito, Paul Schwartz, Junior, Marie and Nelson Lee at Window Rock, Ariz., on their way to the Pine Springs Bahá'í Council Fire, 1962.

These historical accounts shed light on the unfoldment of the Cause in Canada in the 1960s, specifically regarding the teaching of the First Nations peoples. In these stories, John Sargent conveys the spiritual readiness of the Indigenous peoples, and the labours of a handful of souls to realize 'Abdu'l-Bahá's exhortation in the Tablets of the Divine Plan "to teach the masses and, particularly, indigenous peoples."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 26 March 2016.

## Mass teaching on the Canadian prairies in the 1960s

**A**fter my father had become a Bahá'í, I noticed an immediate change in our pattern of activity. In early 1962 we were in Casper, Wyo. The Ten Year Crusade was coming to an end, and the teaching work was in full gear. He threw himself into the Faith so wholeheartedly that it wasn't long before I got swept up in the process. Because of my father's fascination with and love for the American Indians, the work that we threw ourselves into most vigorously was teaching the Faith amongst the First Nations peoples of North America. We began to travel to the various reserves to talk about the Faith, but not with a lot of success in those early days.

Bob and Carol Manuelito were Navajo Bahá'ís living in the United States in Laramie, Wyo. After work on Friday, they would leave Laramie, make the 150 mile journey north to Casper, Wyo., and arrive at about 9 o'clock at night. My dad just opened his house to them. They knew they could come in, throw their sleeping bags on the living room floor and be ready for an early start the next morning. Early in the morning, Carol would stick her head into my room, and say, "Junior,"—people had taken to calling me Junior which I preferred over Jackie—"Junior, we're goin' Injin' huntin', you wanna come?" I'd say, "Sure," and go with them another 150 miles west up to Fort Washakie, or one of the other reserves



Dale Whitecow and Bev Knowlton, Piikani youth in 1963.

in Northern Wyoming. Virtually every weekend my dad and I would travel to the various reserves from Wolf Point, Mont. down to Pine Springs, Ariz. We met a lot of nice people and eventually many of these communities were opened to the Faith, but the work was very slow.

Across the border in Canada, however, it was another story. Angus Cowan was teaching in Saskatchewan and Alberta and found the First Nations peoples highly receptive. Angus was a really sweet, pure-hearted person who just loved the First Nations peoples and who the First Nations peoples really loved in return. As a result, they started becoming Bahá'ís in vast numbers, so much so that he couldn't handle the follow-up work. He wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, asking them to send some reinforcements to help him. They, in turn, sent the call to the Canadian community, and the Irwins, the Rosses and a few others responded and came out to give a hand, but they were still too few. So the Secretary of the Canadian National Assembly wrote to the National Assembly of the United States and said, "Have you got any Bahá'ís who are experienced in working with the First Nations peoples who could come up and give us a hand?" As the National Assembly of the United States had heard about the work that my dad

was doing on some of the reserves in the West, they asked him, "Could you go up to Canada and help out because things are really poppin' up there?" He was more than willing to go because his business had failed, and he had more free time than he really wanted. So we went up and started working with Angus. I went with him that summer, but I had to return to school in the fall. We went from reserve to reserve, from the summer of '62, through to the summer of '65. This was the time of mass teaching of the Bahá'í Faith on the Canadian Prairies.

## The heart and the mind

In my opinion, many people in the Western tradition filter ideas through their minds first. Any concept must meet certain intellectual conditions before they open their hearts to the idea. The First Nations peoples seem to do the opposite; they test an idea with their hearts first, and if it feels right with their spirit they are then willing to spend the intellectual time and effort to learn all the details.

The following incident may demonstrate how this works. Years after these mass teaching efforts, when I had returned to Canada from pioneering in Africa, I tried to consolidate the teaching work we had done years earlier and was not all that successful. Andrew Kay was

an elder on Poorman Reserve<sup>2</sup> in Saskatchewan. He was a spiritual leader for the community and well respected in Indian Country. I came up to his house unannounced and knocked on his door. We had visited his home many years before, but he didn't recognize me of course, because I was 10 years older. I had gone from a 13-year old boy to a 23-year-old man. He invited me in and offered me tea and biscuits, and I charged into a long-winded explanation of the importance of the Faith to the First Nations peoples and how we had to read the Bahá'í Writings and pray every day. He listened patiently for some time and then gently said, "I think you should stop talking now." It was not a threatening comment and actually I could feel in my heart he was right, but I still felt defeated because I so desperately wanted the Faith to enter properly into the lives of the First Nations peoples so that they and their families could benefit from the blessings it bestows. We just sat there quietly for some time until finally I asked, "Andrew, how is it you became a Bahá'í?" He thought for a moment and said, "Come with me."

We went into his bedroom, and over his bed he had his medicine bundle and pipe hanging on a nail and to my surprise, behind his bundle he also had the Greatest Name hanging there (the Greatest Name is a symbol that represents an invocation, which translates to "O Glory of the All-Glorious"). He took his pipe, his medicine bundle, sat down in the living room, set out all his paraphernalia and together we smudged and smoked his pipe. When we had finished he said, "One day, I was praying under my tree."

I should tell you a bit about this tree. I had noticed when I arrived that just outside of his house he had this magnificent, old, broken-down, cottonwood tree. When these trees get old, the great limbs crack and break off. They lay down in confusion on the ground, they're ugly, but they've got a certain

<sup>2</sup> This reserve is known as Kawacatoose First Nation today.



dignified character. This one was covered with colourful rags—I mean, *covered!* These were the prayer cloths that Andrew had been putting up for years and years. Some were brand new and had only been put up maybe days or weeks before. Some had been put up years before. They were faded and tattered, and they looked more like Spanish moss than prayer cloths.

Andrew continued: “I was out under my tree and I was praying. I must have dozed off, because a spirit guide came to me and said, ‘Andrew, follow me.’ And so I went with the spirit guide and we got up on a knoll on the prairie, and he looked way across, and he said, ‘Look over there across the prairie. What colour is that?’ And as I looked way across the horizon of the prairie, I saw that it was blue, and I said, ‘It’s blue.’ Then he said, ‘Andrew look over here, and tell me what you see.’ And I looked over there, and saw Quill Lake. And he said, ‘What colour is that?’ I said, ‘It’s blue.’ And then he said, ‘Look over here and see the hills in the distance. What colour are the hills?’ And I said, ‘Blue.’ And then he said, ‘Look at this.’ And I looked up in the sky, and there was this strange symbol, the symbol of the Greatest Name, in the sky. And he said, ‘What colour is this?’ And I said, ‘It’s blue.’ Then he said, ‘Remember this, Andrew: to the Creator all things are one. In four days, a very important messenger will come to your door, and you must listen to what he has to say.”

So, Andrew woke up from this sort of vision. Four days later he got up in the morning, he put the kettle on, set out the table for two, and got biscuits ready in anticipation of this important messenger. About mid-morning he heard a knock, went to his door, opened it and there was Angus Cowan standing there.

## The visitor

The teaching work was going so well in Canada, and the number of Bahá’ís helping were so few that my dad dedicated most of his time to this effort. I would go up whenever

I could, during the summer and during the winter break, but I spent the school year staying with Al and Sue Foreman, a Bahá’í couple living in Casper, Wyo. Our teaching method was to go from reserve to reserve and do ‘home visits.’ In winter this could be hard as the roads into the reserves were usually not ploughed, and sometimes access was closed due to the reserve being quarantined. I’m not sure why they were quarantined, but we still were not allowed in. However, when we did go in, the people were so highly receptive, it was—as I mentioned before—as though they were in a state of expectation. Here are a couple of stories that may illustrate the nature of the teaching work at this time.

A man on one of the reserves got drunk one night. He walked out of the house, without a coat on, without his shoes and socks on, and fell asleep in a snowdrift. It was extremely cold that night. When they finally found him the next day, he was near death from hypothermia. They took him to the hospital, but his feet and some of his fingers were beyond repair with frostbite. They had to cut them off, and it was touch and go as to whether or not he would survive this exposure. Suddenly, while he was in bed and unconscious, the door opened, and he saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá walk into the room. He walked up to this guy and said, “Ben, what have you been drinking?” Ben hung his head, and said, “I’ve been drinking alcohol.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded, “What is wrong with the pure, clear water that we have created for you?” Then he added that a visitor would come soon to help him. With that, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá disappeared.

A few days later my father came to visit him in the hospital. My dad had met his family on one of the reserves we were visiting, and they asked if he could say some prayers for their uncle who was critically ill in the hospital. When he got there Ben was conscious and awake, but still not in a good condition. My dad asked, “Is it alright if I say some prayers with you?” Ben said, “Yes, please.



Angus Cowan, Fort Qu’Appelle in Sask., 1964.

Thank you.” My father opened his prayer book and, as it happened, he had a picture of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a bookmark. Ben suddenly bolted up against the headboard of the bed, his eyes wide, pointed to the picture and said, “That’s him! That’s him!” My father was puzzled and asked, “What do you mean, that’s him?” And Ben said, “That’s the man who came to visit me a couple of days ago in my hospital room!”

## The power of the Holy Spirit

Another time when we were doing home visits on a reserve we came to this particular house. Back in those days, the Department of Indian Affairs’ houses were very cheaply built. The internal partitions were just two-by-four framing with one-eighth inch plywood paneling on both sides. I mention this because in her book *Angus – From the Heart*, Patricia Verge repeats a story of a family who tore down a wall to make more room for one of these home visits. As it happened, I was there that night. Angus, my dad and I went to that house at random and unannounced. We were going to go around the reserve over the next couple of days and visit the people. This was our usual modus operandi. It was a very cold,

clear Saskatchewan night. The temperature was well below zero and the stars shone spectacularly overhead in the clear, moonless sky. As we were visiting, they put on some tea and opened a tin of biscuits for us. We weren't there long before there was a knock on the door. Somebody came in, they sat down, and so now there were more of us. Soon there was another knock, and there were still more of us. People just kept coming until there was no more room. So, they had to tear the wall down between the living room and the bedroom to make room for all the people that were coming. Now, I'll tell you what: I don't think anybody left that room to go out to tell other people that they needed to hear this and be there. Who knows how they got there, or why they all came—why they felt they needed to be there.

You could feel the power of the Holy Spirit. It fills your veins with life. I can't remember how many days we stayed or where we slept; in the car, on the floor, or wherever, it didn't seem to matter, we only wanted to be with the people, and the people wanted to be with us. The spirit was flowing, and everybody knew it; they could feel its power. And they came to us. Wherever we went, they came to us. The more the people came, the stronger the flow of the Spirit, which, in turn, attracted even more people. We were amazed by what was happening.

## Hooray! Now what?

More than a thousand people accepted the Faith, spread across the Western Provinces. We had never seen anything like it. We were only a handful of teachers and we were all so excited. However, it slowly began to dawn on us: how could we ever hope to consolidate so many new believers? The whole situation was fraught with difficulties—logistical difficulties. The primary one was that there were just plain not enough Bahá'ís with enough spare time to really consolidate such a large number of new believers. Secondly, even if the Bahá'í community could devote the necessary time, there was no methodology or plan or material developed to cope with this large influx of new believers. The third problem was that of basic education—basic literacy skills, as well as basic administrative skills that just did not exist in First Nations communities at that time.

Some felt that the adult generation was 'lost' anyway and that all our energy and scarce resources should be directed into children's classes. Others, like my dad, felt some effort had to be made to help deepen the adults, and he began to go out regularly to the reserves and hold study classes with them. He would read to them for hours from *The New Garden* by Hushmand Fatheazam. Sometimes he would come back so hoarse that he could

hardly speak. While the friends tried their best, the situation was just too overwhelming and one by one they began to burn out.

Ultimately I don't know the real meaning and value of that earlier work, or the spiritual benefit to those that were involved. I guess we'll only know that in the next world. But in a recent letter from the House of Justice, a passage from one of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets is cited which, as the House of Justice writes, "describes, in striking terms, the challenge entailed in spreading His Cause"<sup>3</sup>:

How many the lands that remained untilled and uncultivated; and how many the lands that were tilled and cultivated, and yet remained without water; and how many the lands which, when the harvest time arrived, no harvester came forth to reap! However, through the wonders of God's favour and the revelations of His loving-kindness, We cherish the hope that souls may appear who are the embodiments of heavenly virtue and who will occupy themselves with teaching the Cause of God and training all that dwell on earth.<sup>4</sup>

– John Sargent

3 From the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 29 December 2015.

4 Ibid.

Photo: Joseph Barrientos



# Bahá'í Writings from Ruhi Book 1 translated into Inuktitut

What follows describes the efforts of a group of individuals to translate and publish excerpts from the Bahá'í Writings found in Ruhi Book 1: *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit* in Inuktitut Syllabics and Roman Orthography form, an endeavour that echoes 'Abdu'l-Bahá's call in the Tablets of the Divine Plan to translate the Sacred Texts.

In His Tablet to the Bahá'ís of Canada and Greenland, revealed on April 5, 1916, in the garden adjacent to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote: "God willing, the call of the Kingdom may reach the ears of the Eskimos [Inuit], the inhabitants of the Islands of Franklin in the north of Canada, as well as Greenland." In connection to this exhortation, Patricia Parks said, "Please note the reference to the 'ears.' I think this might imply the spoken word. And, in true Bahá'í fashion, I think that would mean respectfully doing one's best to bring the Message in the language of the people."

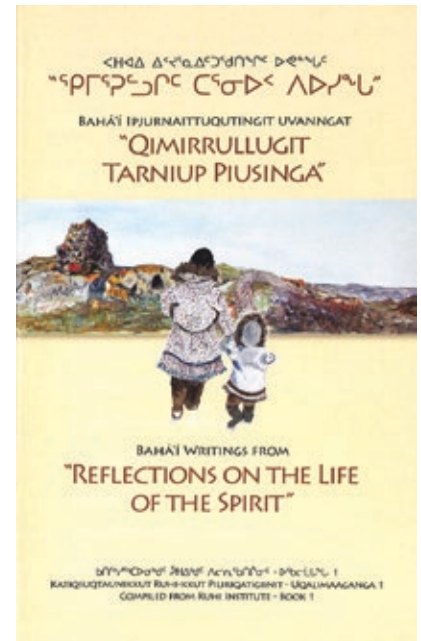
Thus launched a group of friends' efforts to translate excerpts from the Bahá'í Writings included in Ruhi Book 1 into Inuktitut, the most prevalent Inuit language reported in Canada. The process of getting this project to the point of publication was no easy task. Published Bahá'í Writings in Inuktitut are rare. In the past, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada had asked Mrs. Parks and Del Carry to compile a prayer book in Inuktitut. This took approximately five years to complete and was published in 1999.

The Spirit North Conference took place in Iqaluit, Nunavut in 2011. Afterward, Jane Macmillan, Mrs. Parks, and Catherine Carry consulted on their desire for concrete action to emerge from the conference. Mrs. Parks felt that it was timely for the Writings included in Ruhi Book 1 to be translated into Inuktitut, and so the three women

enthusiastically embarked on this project.

Ms. Carry arranged for Janet Tamalik McGrath, a translator, to be hired, as well as Mr. Carry, a graphic artist. Mrs. Parks organized the editing, working predominantly with Anisa Suno. Joseph Kowtaq, from Baker Lake, Nunavut also assisted with the editorial process. Ms. Carry then pulled it all together and sent it off to Mr. Carry, who prepared the book for publication.

Translating these excerpts from the Bahá'í Writings into Inuktitut is a significant milestone because it allows Inuit people to engage directly with the Word of God in their mother tongue. Participants studying Book 1 in Nunavut now have access to translations of quotations they are studying. Ms. Patricia Parks continues, "I believe that, with a growing number of prayers and Writings now available in Inuktitut,



Cover image of a recently-published book composed of translations of Bahá'í Writings in Inuktitut Syllabics and Roman Orthography form.

the next stage is to record each of them so that the spoken word can be heard and that the direction given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to bring the Message to the 'ears' of the Inuit will be on its way to being fulfilled."

– Elizabeth Ujarak Appadoo

*Inuktitut – Bahá'í Writings From "Reflections On the Life of the Spirit"* can be purchased through the Bahá'í Distribution Service website <[www.bookstore.bahai.ca](http://www.bookstore.bahai.ca)>.



Junior youth in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut make their way to visit friends.





After her passing, Shoghi Effendi declared May Maxwell a martyr of the Bahá'í Faith. Photo: Stephen and Lynn Bedingfield

## A visit to the tomb of May Ellis Maxwell

"Erelong the world and whatsoever is therein will pass away; but the traces of the martyrs in the Path of God will remain forever."

– 'Abdu'l-Bahá, published in *Bahá'í World I-XII*, p. 516.

Recently, some 77 years after her glorious passing, my wife and I had the great bounty and privilege of visiting the beautiful, gleaming white tomb of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's beloved handmaid, distinguished disciple May Ellis Maxwell. Considered as the mother of the Bahá'í community of Canada, she passed away in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

At that sacred spot — remembering our circle of family and friends, the Bahá'í community of Yellowknife, the Bahá'í community of Canada, and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada — with love, tenderness and tears of joy, we recited the two prayers for Canada from the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

May Maxwell's tomb is beautifully set amongst a number of other Bahá'í graves.

– Stephen and Lynn Bedingfield

## A group of friends study the Tablets of the Divine Plan

An individual describes a group of friends' commitment to commemorate and study 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets of the Divine Plan.

To commemorate the centenary of the revelation of the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, a group of friends came together to read each letter on the anniversary of the date on which it was revealed. We started spontaneously on 26 March 2016, following the receipt of two letters from the Universal House of Justice. We read the messages and decided to read the first tablet which had been revealed on that same day. This led to a commitment to read each tablet on the date it was revealed 100 years earlier. Other people joined the group for the recitation of the tablet.

Each gathering was filled with joy. We would read a tablet and discuss its significance. One thing that struck the group was the timelessness of the tablets.

The recitation and study of the last tablet took place on 8 March 2017 and we ended the gathering by reading the message of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada in commemoration of the last tablet. We intend to continue meeting and reading other books of the Faith.

– Nurisha Scott



Junior youth in the Rundle neighbourhood of Calgary, Alta. carry out an art activity.

## "The fresh breeze of a visitor"

A Bahá'í from Carstairs, Alta. recounts how drawing inspiration from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels through North America enabled her to introduce the Bahá'í Faith in an unlikely setting.

I arrived at Dale Lillico's farm north of Pincher Creek, Alta. on a Saturday morning late in May 2016. What a remarkable, surprising visit! Although I went for the purpose of collecting details about her storied life for the Alberta Bahá'í History Project, I ended up proclaiming the Faith in a Mennonite Church the following Sunday morning.

Here's how it happened. Soon after I arrived, Dale's friend, a retired United Church minister, called to invite her to attend a sermon she was giving the next day on the subject of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, at the invitation of the rural Springridge Mennonite Church. It turns out that I had attended that very church many times as a child, on visits down to see my uncle and aunt. I was eager to go with Dale.

The minister did an admirable job of sharing the challenges and opportunities of reconciliation. At the end of the service, a local member of the church welcomed us as visitors, and passed a microphone around to anyone who wished to share, extend greetings, or comment. I felt I needed to say something not only about my family connection to their congregation, but about the subject of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, which was indeed a part of the reason I was in the area. I was collecting stories, many of them having to do with decades-long friendships between these two



A painting of the foothills of the Rockies from Carstairs, Alta.

Artist: Angie Roth McIntosh

groups — individuals I only knew because they were Bahá'ís.

I feared being so bold as to “proclaim” my membership in the Bahá'í Faith in a Mennonite Church, the religion I was raised in. At the age of 12, another branch of that church had reprimanded me for repeatedly asking why only Christians went to heaven. As the microphone came around to me, I prayed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá to guide me. It seemed I heard Him reply, “You can certainly do this small thing. When I was in North America, I proclaimed the Faith from many pulpits.”

I got up my nerve and said, “I am delighted to be here again after 50 years. I used to come here with my Aunt Edith and Uncle John. My parents were Gordon and Sue Dyck.” There were audible gasps and smiles of recognition. The Mennonites' ties of kinship are extensive. My father had been a much-loved member of the Alberta Conference of Mennonites, and everyone present seemed to know of and love him. “I'm in the area visiting my friend Dale Lillico,” I continued — again, the congregation knew and respected Dale through community connections — “Collecting stories of multi-generational friendships between Indigenous and white individuals like my friend, Dale, here. These people are Bahá'ís,

whom I know because I also joined the Bahá'í Faith — with its central principle of the oneness of mankind — as a young adult. However, I remain deeply grateful to this day to my Mennonite heritage for grounding me in a life of service to my fellow man, and a love for my Creator.”

Afterwards, some people swarmed me with expressions of delight at the kinship connections, while others gravitated to Dale saying things like, “I didn't know you were a Bahá'í. What do Bahá'ís believe?” and “Do you worship the same God as we do?” Dale was thrilled with the opportunity to teach so directly. For years, the both of us, members of rural Alberta communities, had been politely rebuffed in almost all of our invitations to neighbors to join us in events connected to the Bahá'í Faith.

In reflecting on it later, we felt that one of the unique blessings of travel and visits to rural Bahá'ís was that rural people always ask, “How do you two know each other?” Previously, both Dale and I felt that our own local teaching efforts had been almost at a standstill. It seems the fresh breeze of a visitor coming through can change things.

— Joan Young



# Teaching conferences

"O wayfarer in the path of God! Take thou thy portion of the ocean of His grace, and deprive not thyself of the things that lie hidden in its depths."

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 280.

In Canada, the latest series of teaching conferences began in the Fall of 2016; since then, over 3,000 participants attended 34 gatherings across the country, organized collaboratively by a number of institutions of the Faith. Over the past few years, these gatherings emerged as a strategy to encourage universal participation in the teaching work and, in light of the approaching bicentenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, stimulate the Bahá'í community's efforts to "reach out to the widest possible cross-section of society and to all those with whom they share a connection."<sup>1</sup> How the three protagonists of the Plan — individuals, communities and institutions — can read their realities and identify opportunities to increase the number of people with whom they converse was a central topic of consultation.

Acknowledging that the bicentenary celebrations are embedded in a wider process of social transformation, the teaching conferences also provided a space for participants to study relevant guidance, make concrete plans for teaching and revisit conversation themes from Ruhi Institute Book 2: *Arising to Serve* in preparation for the task ahead. Included here is a selection of photographs from these events.



The teaching conference in Halifax, N.S. was characterized by an atmosphere of friendliness and joy. Photo: Anthony Power



Friends gathered at a teaching conference in Halifax, N.S., with some joining via videoconference. Photo: Anthony Power



Teaching conference participants in Montreal, Que. study the 18 May 2016 message written on behalf of the House of Justice regarding the upcoming bicentennial celebrations.



Devotional songs in the French language created an elevated atmosphere at the teaching conference in Québec City, Que.

<sup>1</sup> Department of the Secretariat, the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 18 May 2016.





Participants at the teaching conference in the York North, Ont. cluster studied materials developed for the occasion. Photo: Vic Voytek.



The teaching conference in the York North, Ont. cluster opened with a devotional program. Photo: Vic Voytek.

Friends gathered at the teaching conference in Charlottetown, P.E.I. Photo: Paul Vreeland



Consultations in a breakout session of the teaching conference in Vancouver, B.C. focused on how to engage the wider community in the upcoming bicentennial celebrations. Photo: Jason Snyder

Counsellor Borna Nouredin addresses participants at a teaching conference in Vancouver, B.C. Photo: Jason Snyder





# 69th Annual National Convention

During the weekend of April 27-30, 171 delegates representing every province and territory of Canada gathered in Toronto, Ont. to elect the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada.

Those gathered also deliberated on the plans and actions of the Bahá'í community, sharing insights from the grassroots, the recent Riḍván message from the Universal House of Justice, as well as its March 1, 2017 message regarding economic justice. Several photographs are included here.



Once all ballots are cast, delegates and volunteers applaud the election of the National Spiritual Assembly. Photo: Louis Brunet



Delegates consulted on plans underway for countrywide bicentenary celebrations.



Councillor Shabnam Tashakour addresses the 69th annual National Convention. Photo: Kyle Schmalenberg



A group shot of delegates at the convention. Photo: Laura Mostmand

# NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

## National Spiritual Assembly

Secretariat: [secretariat@cdnbnc.org](mailto:secretariat@cdnbnc.org)

Phone: 905-889-8168

Fax: 905-889-8184

**Treasury:** [treasury@cdnbnc.org](mailto:treasury@cdnbnc.org)

**Bahá'í Canada Committee:** [bcanada@cdnbnc.org](mailto:bcanada@cdnbnc.org)

**National and Unit Conventions:** [conventions@cdnbnc.org](mailto:conventions@cdnbnc.org)

**Office of External Affairs:** [externalaffairs@cdnbnc.org](mailto:externalaffairs@cdnbnc.org)

**Records Department:** [records@cdnbnc.org](mailto:records@cdnbnc.org)

**Contribute to the Funds of the Faith** through the Treasurer of your Local Assembly, the Regional Bahá'í Council in your area, or online at [www.bahai-funds.ca](http://www.bahai-funds.ca). You can also donate through the National Spiritual Assembly. In this case, kindly make your cheque payable to "Canadian Bahá'í Fund" and mail it to:

The Treasury Department, Bahá'í National Centre,  
7200 Leslie Street Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8.

The major Funds of the Faith to which one can make contributions are:

The Local Fund (only through a Local Spiritual Assembly or online)

The National Fund

The Deputization Fund

The Continental Fund

The Wilmette House of Worship Fund

The Santiago House of Worship Fund

The International Fund

The World Centre Endowment Fund

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902-894-5503

# GENERAL INFORMATION

To purchase **Bahá'í books in English, Persian, Chinese or Spanish**, visit [bookstore.bahai.ca](http://bookstore.bahai.ca) Or contact:

University of Toronto

Press Distribution

Phone: 1-800-565-9523 or 416-667-7791

In the event that the title you are looking for is not available, contact the Bahá'í Distribution Service:

Email: [bds-admin@cdnbnc.org](mailto:bds-admin@cdnbnc.org)

Phone: 1-800-465-3287 or 905-889-8168

To purchase **Bahá'í books in French**, contact the Service de distribution bahá'í-Québec (SDB-Q)

75 d'auteuil Street, Québec, QC, G1R 4C3

Email: [sdbq@videotron.ca](mailto:sdbq@videotron.ca)

Phone: 418-692-2402

Online catalogue:

<http://bookstore.bahai.ca/sdb-catalogue.pdf>

**To travel teach or pioneer within Canada or internationally**, contact the Pioneer Desk at [pioneer@cdnbnc.org](mailto:pioneer@cdnbnc.org) or 905-889-8168.

**To change your address**, please notify your Local Spiritual Assembly, Regional Council or the Records Department of the National Spiritual Assembly, providing your name, old address, new address and your Bahá'í ID number to: Records Department, Bahá'í National Centre, 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8; Phone: 905-889-8168; Fax: 905-889-8184; Email: [records@cdnbnc.org](mailto:records@cdnbnc.org).

**To request international credentials** from the Bahá'í National Centre when planning to visit countries other than the United States, contact the Records Department: 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8; Phone 905-889-8168; Fax: 905-889-8184; Email: [records@cdnbnc.org](mailto:records@cdnbnc.org).

**Pilgrimage requests** (nine-day pilgrimage or three-day visit) are to be made directly to the Bahá'í World Centre through the Bahá'í Pilgrimage Website

<http://pilgrimage.bahai.org>

or by post or fax: Office of Pilgrimage,

PO Box 155, 3100101, Haifa, Israel;

Fax: 011-972-4-835-8507.

**Getting married?** Please contact, without delay, the Local Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the wedding will be held. A Bahá'í wedding cannot take place without the authorization of a Local Assembly.

**Submit news, photos, etc. to Bahá'í Canada** through email [bcanada@cdnbnc.org](mailto:bcanada@cdnbnc.org) or mail to 7200 Leslie St., Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8. Items submitted to *Bahá'í Canada* are considered for publication online and in the magazine



# The Right of God ~ Ḥuqúqu'lláh

"Ḥuqúqu'lláh is indeed a great law. It is incumbent upon all to make this offering, because it is the source of grace, abundance, and of all good. It is a bounty which shall remain with every soul in every world of the worlds of God, the All-Possessing, the All-Bountiful." – Bahá'u'lláh, Ḥuqúqu'lláh – *The Right of God*, p.5.

## ḤUQÚQU'LLÁH PAYMENT INFORMATION

In response to guidance from the International Board of Trustees, the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada has set up a centralized system of receiving and recording of payments at the Treasury Department of the Bahá'í National Centre. Payments of the Right of God (Ḥuqúqu'lláh) are not processed through individual Deputies or Representatives.

Payments should be sent directly to the Ḥuqúqu'lláh Treasury at the Bahá'í National Centre, 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8. The Ḥuqúqu'lláh Treasury will issue one receipt, which will serve both as an acknowledgment receipt and as an official tax receipt. It is up to the individual to determine whether or not she/he wishes to use the receipt when filing her/his income tax return. Cheques, bank drafts, bank and/or postal money orders should be made payable to "Canadian Bahá'í Fund" earmarked "Ḥuqúqu'lláh" or "Right of God." Payments to the Right of God can also be made utilizing the <[www.bahai-funds.ca](http://www.bahai-funds.ca)> Online Contribution System. The individual's Bahá'í identification number must be provided on all payments.

Payments should not be made through a Local Spiritual Assembly.

Inquiries regarding the law of the Right of God (Ḥuqúqu'lláh) should be directed to your nearest Representative or Deputee Trustee.

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### اطلاعیه مهم در خصوص نحوه پرداخت "حقوق الله"

با توجه به راهنمایی هیأت بین المللی امنای حقوق الله، هیأت امنای حقوق الله در کانادا برنامه مرکزی جدیدی را برای دریافت وجوه، صادر کردن رسید و نگهداری سوابق حقوق الله در اداره مالی دفتر محفل ملی کانادا برقرار کرده است. لذا امور مربوط به حقوق الله دیگر توسط افراد معاونین و یا نمایندگان امین حقوق الله اجرا نخواهد شد. وجوه مزبور مستقیماً باید به صندوق حقوق الله به آدرس زیر ارسال گردد:

Bahá'í National Centre Ḥuqúqu'lláh Treasury, 7200 Leslie Street Thornhill ON L3T 6L8

خزانه دار هیأت امنای حقوق الله رسید وجوه دریافت شده را که در عین حال رسید مالیاتی نیز محسوب میگردد برای فرستنده ارسال خواهند داشت. تقدیم کنندگان حقوق الله میتوانند از این رسید ها در زمان تهیه اوراق مالیاتی استفاده نمایند. در روی چک، حواله بانکی یا پستی باید عبارت Canadian Bahá'í Fund – Ḥuqúqu'lláh ذکر شود. شماره تسجیل بهائی نیز باید در هر پرداخت قید گردد. از چندی پیش امکان پرداخت حقوق الله از طریق سایت اینترنتی "[www.bahai-funds.ca](http://www.bahai-funds.ca)" و با استفاده از کارتهای اعتباری نیز میسر شده است. وجوه تقدیمی برای حقوق الله به هیچ وجه نباید توسط محافل روحانی محلی ارسال شود.

سوالات مربوط به حقوق الله را از معاونین و یا نمایندگان امین حقوق الله درخواست کنید