

1 The Universal House of Justice

2
3 October 1985

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5
6 To the Peoples of the World

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8 The Great Peace towards which people of goodwill throughout the centuries have inclined
9 their hearts, of which seers and poets for countless generations have expressed their vision, and
10 for which from age to age the sacred scriptures of mankind have constantly held the promise, is
11 now at long last within the reach of the nations. For the first time in history it is possible for
12 everyone to view the entire planet, with all its myriad diversified peoples, in one perspective.
13 World peace is not only possible but inevitable. It is the next stage in the evolution of this
14 planet—in the words of one great thinker, “the planetization of mankind.”

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16 Whether peace is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity’s
17 stubborn clinging to old patterns of behavior, or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative
18 will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth. At this critical juncture when the intractable
19 problems confronting nations have been fused into one common concern for the whole world,
20 failure to stem the tide of conflict and disorder would be unconscionably irresponsible.

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22 Among the favorable signs are the steadily growing strength of the steps towards world order
23 taken initially near the beginning of this century in the creation of the League of Nations,
24 succeeded by the more broadly based United Nations Organization; the achievement since the
25 Second World War of independence by the majority of all the nations on earth, indicating the
26 completion of the process of nation building, and the involvement of these fledgling nations with
27 older ones in matters of mutual concern; the consequent vast increase in cooperation among
28 hitherto isolated and antagonistic peoples and groups in international undertakings in the
29 scientific, educational, legal, economic and cultural fields; the rise in recent decades of an
30 unprecedented number of international humanitarian organizations; the spread of women’s and
31 youth movements calling for an end to war; and the spontaneous spawning of widening
32 networks of ordinary people seeking understanding through personal communication.

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34 The scientific and technological advances occurring in this unusually blessed century portend
35 a great surge forward in the social evolution of the planet, and indicate the means by which the
36 practical problems of humanity may be solved. They provide, indeed, the very means for the
37 administration of the complex life of a united world. Yet barriers persist. Doubts,
38 misconceptions, prejudices, suspicions and narrow self-interest beset nations and peoples in
39 their relations one to another.

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41 It is out of a deep sense of spiritual and moral duty that we are impelled at this opportune
42 moment to invite your attention to the penetrating insights first communicated to the rulers of
43 mankind more than a century ago by Bahá’u’lláh, Founder of the Bahá’í Faith, of which we are
44 the Trustees.

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46 “The winds of despair,” Bahá’u’lláh wrote, “are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the
47 strife that divides and afflicts the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending
48 convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appears to be
49 lamentably defective.” This prophetic judgment has been amply confirmed by the common
50 experience of humanity. Flaws in the prevailing order are conspicuous in the inability of
51 sovereign states organized as United Nations to exorcise the specter of war, the threatened

52 collapse of the international economic order, the spread of anarchy and terrorism, and the
53 intense suffering which these and other afflictions are causing to increasing millions. Indeed, so
54 much have aggression and conflict come to characterize our social, economic and religious
55 systems, that many have succumbed to the view that such behavior is intrinsic to human nature
56 and therefore ineradicable.

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58 With the entrenchment of this view, a paralyzing contradiction has developed in human
59 affairs. On the one hand, people of all nations proclaim not only their readiness but their longing
60 for peace and harmony, for an end to the harrowing apprehensions tormenting their daily lives.
61 On the other, uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly
62 selfish and aggressive and thus incapable of erecting a social system at once progressive and
63 peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and
64 initiative but based on cooperation and reciprocity.

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66 As the need for peace becomes more urgent, this fundamental contradiction, which hinders
67 its realization, demands a reassessment of the assumptions upon which the commonly held view
68 of mankind's historical predicament is based. Dispassionately examined, the evidence reveals
69 that such conduct, far from expressing man's true self, represents a distortion of the human
70 spirit. Satisfaction on this point will enable all people to set in motion constructive social forces
71 which, because they are consistent with human nature, will encourage harmony and cooperation
72 instead of war and conflict.

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74 To choose such a course is not to deny humanity's past but to understand it. The Bahá'í Faith
75 regards the current world confusion and calamitous condition in human affairs as a natural
76 phase in an organic process leading ultimately and irresistibly to the unification of the human
77 race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet. The human race, as a
78 distinct, organic unit, has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy
79 and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its
80 turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age.

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82 A candid acknowledgement that prejudice, war and exploitation have been the expression of
83 immature stages in a vast historical process and that the human race is today experiencing the
84 unavoidable tumult which marks its collective coming of age is not a reason for despair but a
85 prerequisite to undertaking the stupendous enterprise of building a peaceful world. That such an
86 enterprise is possible, that the necessary constructive forces do exist, that unifying social
87 structures can be erected, is the theme we urge you to examine.

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89 Whatever suffering and turmoil the years immediately ahead may hold, however dark the
90 immediate circumstances, the Bahá'í community believes that humanity can confront this
91 supreme trial with confidence in its ultimate outcome. Far from signaling the end of
92 civilization, the convulsive changes towards which humanity is being ever more rapidly impelled
93 will serve to release the "potentialities inherent in the station of man" and reveal "the full
94 measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality."

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97 I

98 The endowments which distinguish the human race from all other forms of life are summed
99 up in what is known as the human spirit; the mind is its essential quality. These endowments
100 have enabled humanity to build civilizations and to prosper materially. But such
101 accomplishments alone have never satisfied the human spirit, whose mysterious nature inclines
102 it towards transcendence, a reaching towards an invisible realm, towards the ultimate reality,

103 that unknowable essence of essences called God. The religions brought to mankind by a
104 succession of spiritual luminaries have been the primary link between humanity and that
105 ultimate reality, and have galvanized and refined mankind's capacity to achieve spiritual success
106 together with social progress.

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108 No serious attempt to set human affairs aright, to achieve world peace, can ignore religion.
109 Man's perception and practice of it are largely the stuff of history. An eminent historian
110 described religion as a "faculty of human nature." That the perversion of this faculty has
111 contributed to much of the confusion in society and the conflicts in and between individuals can
112 hardly be denied. But neither can any fair-minded observer discount the preponderating
113 influence exerted by religion on the vital expressions of civilization. Furthermore, its
114 indispensability to social order has repeatedly been demonstrated by its direct effect on laws and
115 morality.

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117 Writing of religion as a social force, Bahá'u'lláh said: "Religion is the greatest of all means for
118 the establishment of order in the world and for the peaceful contentment of all that dwell
119 therein." Referring to the eclipse or corruption of religion, he wrote: "Should the lamp of religion
120 be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness, of justice, of tranquillity
121 and peace cease to shine." In an enumeration of such consequences the Bahá'í writings point out
122 that the "perversion of human nature, the degradation of human conduct, the corruption and
123 dissolution of human institutions, reveal themselves, under such circumstances, in their worst
124 and most revolting aspects. Human character is debased, confidence is shaken, the nerves of
125 discipline are relaxed, the voice of human conscience is stilled, the sense of decency and shame
126 is obscured, conceptions of duty, of solidarity, of reciprocity and loyalty are distorted, and the
127 very feeling of peacefulness, of joy and of hope is gradually extinguished."

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129 If, therefore, humanity has come to a point of paralyzing conflict it must look to itself, to its
130 own negligence, to the siren voices to which it has listened, for the source of the
131 misunderstandings and confusion perpetrated in the name of religion. Those who have held
132 blindly and selfishly to their particular orthodoxies, who have imposed on their votaries
133 erroneous and conflicting interpretations of the pronouncements of the Prophets of God, bear
134 heavy responsibility for this confusion—a confusion compounded by the artificial barriers
135 erected between faith and reason, science and religion. For from a fair-minded examination of
136 the actual utterances of the Founders of the great religions, and of the social milieus in which
137 they were obliged to carry out their missions, there is nothing to support the contentions and
138 prejudices deranging the religious communities of mankind and therefore all human affairs.

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140 The teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated, an ethic
141 variously repeated in all the great religions, lends force to this latter observation in two
142 particular respects: it sums up the moral attitude, the peace-inducing aspect, extending through
143 these religions irrespective of their place or time of origin; it also signifies an aspect of unity
144 which is their essential virtue, a virtue mankind in its disjointed view of history has failed to
145 appreciate.

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147 Had humanity seen the Educators of its collective childhood in their true character, as agents
148 of one civilizing process, it would no doubt have reaped incalculably greater benefits from the
149 cumulative effects of their successive missions. This, alas, it failed to do.

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151 The resurgence of fanatical religious fervor occurring in many lands cannot be regarded as
152 more than a dying convulsion. The very nature of the violent and disruptive phenomena
153 associated with it testifies to the spiritual bankruptcy it represents. Indeed, one of the strangest

154 and saddest features of the current outbreak of religious fanaticism is the extent to which, in
155 each case, it is undermining not only the spiritual values which are conducive to the unity of
156 mankind but also those unique moral victories won by the particular religion it purports to
157 serve.
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159 However vital a force religion has been in the history of mankind, and however dramatic the
160 current resurgence of militant religious fanaticism, religion and religious institutions have, for
161 many decades, been viewed by increasing numbers of people as irrelevant to the major concerns
162 of the modern world. In its place they have turned either to the hedonistic pursuit of material
163 satisfactions or to the following of man-made ideologies designed to rescue society from the
164 evident evils under which it groans. All too many of these ideologies, alas, instead of embracing
165 the concept of the oneness of mankind and promoting the increase of concord among different
166 peoples, have tended to deify the state, to subordinate the rest of mankind to one nation, race or
167 class, to attempt to suppress all discussion and interchange of ideas, or to callously abandon
168 starving millions to the operations of a market system that all too clearly is aggravating the
169 plight of the majority of mankind, while enabling small sections to live in a condition of
170 affluence scarcely dreamed of by our forebears.
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172 How tragic is the record of the substitute faiths that the worldly-wise of our age have created.
173 In the massive disillusionment of entire populations who have been taught to worship at their
174 altars can be read history's irreversible verdict on their value. The fruits these doctrines have
175 produced, after decades of an increasingly unrestrained exercise of power by those who owe
176 their ascendancy in human affairs to them, are the social and economic ills that blight every
177 region of our world in the closing years of the twentieth century. Underlying all these outward
178 afflictions is the spiritual damage reflected in the apathy that has gripped the mass of the
179 peoples of all nations and by the extinction of hope in the hearts of deprived and anguished
180 millions.
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182 The time has come when those who preach the dogmas of materialism, whether of the east or
183 the west, whether of capitalism or socialism, must give account of the moral stewardship they
184 have presumed to exercise. Where is the "new world" promised by these ideologies? Where is
185 the international peace to whose ideals they proclaim their devotion? Where are the
186 breakthroughs into new realms of cultural achievement produced by the aggrandizement of this
187 race, of that nation or of a particular class? Why is the vast majority of the world's peoples
188 sinking ever deeper into hunger and wretchedness when wealth on a scale undreamed of by the
189 Pharaohs, the Caesars, or even the imperialist powers of the nineteenth century is at the
190 disposal of the present arbiters of human affairs?
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192 Most particularly, it is in the glorification of material pursuits, at once the progenitor and
193 common feature of all such ideologies, that we find the roots which nourish the falsehood that
194 human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive. It is here that the ground must be cleared
195 for the building of a new world fit for our descendants.
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197 That materialistic ideals have, in the light of experience, failed to satisfy the needs of
198 mankind calls for an honest acknowledgement that a fresh effort must now be made to find the
199 solutions to the agonizing problems of the planet. The intolerable conditions pervading society
200 bespeak a common failure of all, a circumstance which tends to incite rather than relieve the
201 entrenchment on every side. Clearly, a common remedial effort is urgently required. It is
202 primarily a matter of attitude. Will humanity continue in its waywardness, holding to outworn
203 concepts and unworkable assumptions? Or will its leaders, regardless of ideology, step forth
204 and, with a resolute will, consult together in a united search for appropriate solutions?

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Those who care for the future of the human race may well ponder this advice. “If long-cherished ideals and time-honored institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine.”

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Banning nuclear weapons, prohibiting the use of poison gases, or outlawing germ warfare will not remove the root causes of war. However important such practical measures obviously are as elements of the peace process, they are in themselves too superficial to exert enduring influence. Peoples are ingenious enough to invent yet other forms of warfare, and to use food, raw materials, finance, industrial power, ideology, and terrorism to subvert one another in an endless quest for supremacy and dominion. Nor can the present massive dislocation in the affairs of humanity be resolved through the settlement of specific conflicts or disagreements among nations. A genuine universal framework must be adopted.

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Certainly, there is no lack of recognition by national leaders of the worldwide character of the problem, which is self-evident in the mounting issues that confront them daily. And there are the accumulating studies and solutions proposed by many concerned and enlightened groups as well as by agencies of the United Nations, to remove any possibility of ignorance as to the challenging requirements to be met. There is, however, a paralysis of will; and it is this that must be carefully examined and resolutely dealt with. This paralysis is rooted, as we have stated, in a deep-seated conviction of the inevitable quarrelsomeness of mankind, which has led to the reluctance to entertain the possibility of subordinating national self-interest to the requirements of world order, and in an unwillingness to face courageously the far-reaching implications of establishing a united world authority. It is also traceable to the incapacity of largely ignorant and subjugated masses to articulate their desire for a new order in which they can live in peace, harmony and prosperity with all humanity.

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The tentative steps towards world order, especially since World War II, give hopeful signs. The increasing tendency of groups of nations to formalize relationships which enable them to cooperate in matters of mutual interest suggests that eventually all nations could overcome this paralysis. The Association of South East Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community and Common Market, the Central American Common Market, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the European Communities, the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the South Pacific Forum—all the joint endeavors represented by such organizations prepare the path to world order.

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The increasing attention being focused on some of the most deep-rooted problems of the planet is yet another hopeful sign. Despite the obvious shortcomings of the United Nations, the more than two score declarations and conventions adopted by that organization, even where governments have not been enthusiastic in their commitment, have given ordinary people a sense of a new lease on life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the similar measures concerned with eliminating all forms of discrimination based on race, sex or religious belief; upholding the

256 rights of the child; protecting all persons against being subjected to torture; eradicating hunger
257 and malnutrition; using scientific and technological progress in the interest of peace and the
258 benefit of mankind—all such measures, if courageously enforced and expanded, will advance the
259 day when the specter of war will have lost its power to dominate international relations. There is
260 no need to stress the significance of the issues addressed by these declarations and conventions.
261 However, a few such issues, because of their immediate relevance to establishing world peace,
262 deserve additional comment.

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264 Racism, one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. Its practice
265 perpetrates too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings to be countenanced under
266 any pretext. Racism retards the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims,
267 corrupts its perpetrators, and blights human progress. Recognition of the oneness of mankind,
268 implemented by appropriate legal measures, must be universally upheld if this problem is to be
269 overcome.

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271 The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world
272 in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war. Few societies have dealt effectively with this
273 situation. The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical
274 approaches. A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a
275 wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the
276 people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made. It is an issue that is bound
277 up not only with the necessity for eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty but also with those
278 spiritual verities the understanding of which can produce a new universal attitude. Fostering
279 such an attitude is itself a major part of the solution.

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281 Unbridled nationalism, as distinguished from a sane and legitimate patriotism, must give
282 way to a wider loyalty, to the love of humanity as a whole. Bahá'u'lláh's statement is: "The earth
283 is but one country, and mankind its citizens." The concept of world citizenship is a direct result
284 of the contraction of the world into a single neighborhood through scientific advances and of the
285 indisputable interdependence of nations. Love of all the world's peoples does not exclude love of
286 one's country. The advantage of the part in a world society is best served by promoting the
287 advantage of the whole. Current international activities in various fields which nurture mutual
288 affection and a sense of solidarity among peoples need greatly to be increased.

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290 Religious strife, throughout history, has been the cause of innumerable wars and conflicts, a
291 major blight to progress, and is increasingly abhorrent to the people of all faiths and no faith.
292 Followers of all religions must be willing to face the basic questions which this strife raises, and
293 to arrive at clear answers. How are the differences between them to be resolved, both in theory
294 and in practice? The challenge facing the religious leaders of mankind is to contemplate, with
295 hearts filled with the spirit of compassion and a desire for truth, the plight of humanity, and to
296 ask themselves whether they cannot, in humility before their Almighty Creator, submerge their
297 theological differences in a great spirit of mutual forbearance that will enable them to work
298 together for the advancement of human understanding and peace.

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300 The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the
301 most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality
302 perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful
303 attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and
304 ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon
305 which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all

306 fields of human endeavor will the moral and psychological climate be created in which
307 international peace can emerge.
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309 The cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of
310 dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves the utmost support that the governments
311 of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principal reason for the decline and
312 fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education
313 is accorded all its citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability of many nations to fulfill this
314 necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities. The decision-making agencies involved
315 would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is
316 through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly
317 diffused throughout society. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration
318 should also be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the standard
319 education of every child.
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321 A fundamental lack of communication between peoples seriously undermines efforts towards
322 world peace. Adopting an international auxiliary language would go far to resolve this problem
323 and necessitates the most urgent attention.
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325 Two points bear emphasizing in all these issues. One is that the abolition of war is not simply
326 a matter of signing treaties and protocols; it is a complex task requiring a new level of
327 commitment to resolving issues not customarily associated with the pursuit of peace. Based on
328 political agreements alone, the idea of collective security is a chimera. The other point is that the
329 primary challenge in dealing with issues of peace is to raise the context to the level of principle,
330 as distinct from pure pragmatism. For, in essence, peace stems from an inner state supported by
331 a spiritual or moral attitude, and it is chiefly in evoking this attitude that the possibility of
332 enduring solutions can be found.
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334 There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be
335 found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise
336 practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not
337 enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which
338 harmonizes with that which is immanent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a
339 dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical
340 measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to
341 solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by
342 them.
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345 III

346 The primary question to be resolved is how the present world, with its entrenched pattern of
347 conflict, can change to a world in which harmony and cooperation will prevail.
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349 World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind,
350 a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm. Anthropology, physiology, psychology,
351 recognize only one human species, albeit infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life.
352 Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice—prejudice of every kind—race,
353 class, color, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people
354 to consider themselves superior to others.

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356 Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization
357 and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind. Universal acceptance
358 of this spiritual principle is essential to any successful attempt to establish world peace. It
359 should therefore be universally proclaimed, taught in schools, and constantly asserted in every
360 nation as preparation for the organic change in the structure of society which it implies.

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362 In the Bahá'í view, recognition of the oneness of mankind "calls for no less than the
363 reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world—a world organically unified
364 in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and
365 finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of
366 its federated units."

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368 Elaborating the implications of this pivotal principle, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the
369 Bahá'í Faith, commented in 1931 that: "Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing
370 foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner
371 consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate
372 allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a
373 sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy
374 so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does
375 it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and
376 tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls
377 for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists
378 upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified
379 world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at
380 uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity."

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382 The achievement of such ends requires several stages in the adjustment of national political
383 attitudes, which now verge on anarchy in the absence of clearly defined laws or universally
384 accepted and enforceable principles regulating the relationships between nations. The League of
385 Nations, the United Nations, and the many organizations and agreements produced by them
386 have unquestionably been helpful in attenuating some of the negative effects of international
387 conflicts, but they have shown themselves incapable of preventing war. Indeed, there have been
388 scores of wars since the end of the Second World War; many are yet raging.

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390 The predominant aspects of this problem had already emerged in the nineteenth century
391 when Bahá'u'lláh first advanced his proposals for the establishment of world peace. The
392 principle of collective security was propounded by him in statements addressed to the rulers of
393 the world. Shoghi Effendi commented on his meaning: "What else could these weighty words
394 signify," he wrote, "if they did not point to the inevitable curtailment of unfettered national
395 sovereignty as an indispensable preliminary to the formation of the future Commonwealth of all
396 the nations of the world? Some form of a world superstate must needs be evolved, in whose
397 favor all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain
398 rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of
399 maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include
400 within its orbit an international executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable
401 authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a world parliament whose
402 members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be
403 confirmed by their respective governments; and a supreme tribunal whose judgment will have a
404 binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to
405 submit their case to its consideration.

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407 “... A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently
408 demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labor definitely recognized; in which the
409 clamor of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of
410 racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—
411 the product of the considered judgment of the world’s federated representatives—shall have as
412 its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units;
413 and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will
414 have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears,
415 in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá’u’lláh, an Order that shall come to be
416 regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.”

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418 The implementation of these far-reaching measures was indicated by Bahá’u’lláh: “The time
419 must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage
420 of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and,
421 participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations
422 of the world’s Great Peace amongst men.”

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424 The courage, the resolution, the pure motive, the selfless love of one people for another—all
425 the spiritual and moral qualities required for effecting this momentous step towards peace are
426 focused on the will to act. And it is towards arousing the necessary volition that earnest
427 consideration must be given to the reality of man, namely, his thought. To understand the
428 relevance of this potent reality is also to appreciate the social necessity of actualizing its unique
429 value through candid, dispassionate and cordial consultation, and of acting upon the results of
430 this process. Bahá’u’lláh insistently drew attention to the virtues and indispensability of
431 consultation for ordering human affairs. He said: “Consultation bestows greater awareness and
432 transmutes conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leads the way
433 and guides. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity.
434 The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.” The very
435 attempt to achieve peace through the consultative action he proposed can release such a salutary
436 spirit among the peoples of the earth that no power could resist the final, triumphal outcome.

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438 Concerning the proceedings for this world gathering, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the son of Bahá’u’lláh and
439 authorized interpreter of his teachings, offered these insights: “They must make the Cause of
440 Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a
441 Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant,
442 the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the
443 world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble
444 undertaking—the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world—should be regarded as
445 sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the
446 stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and
447 frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations
448 of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and
449 obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should
450 be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be
451 allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle
452 underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its
453 provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the
454 human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that
455 government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will
456 assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.”

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458 The holding of this mighty convocation is long overdue.

459
460 With all the ardor of our hearts, we appeal to the leaders of all nations to seize this opportune
461 moment and take irreversible steps to convoke this world meeting. All the forces of history impel
462 the human race towards this act which will mark for all time the dawn of its long-awaited
463 maturity.

464
465 Will not the United Nations, with the full support of its membership, rise to the high
466 purposes of such a crowning event?

467
468 Let men and women, youth and children everywhere recognize the eternal merit of this
469 imperative action for all peoples and lift up their voices in willing assent. Indeed, let it be this
470 generation that inaugurates this glorious stage in the evolution of social life on the planet.

471
472

473 IV

474 The source of the optimism we feel is a vision transcending the cessation of war and the
475 creation of agencies of international cooperation. Permanent peace among nations is an
476 essential stage, but not, Bahá'u'lláh asserts, the ultimate goal of the social development of
477 humanity. Beyond the initial armistice forced upon the world by the fear of nuclear holocaust,
478 beyond the political peace reluctantly entered into by suspicious rival nations, beyond pragmatic
479 arrangements for security and coexistence, beyond even the many experiments in cooperation
480 which these steps will make possible lies the crowning goal: the unification of all the peoples of
481 the world in one universal family.

482
483 Disunity is a danger that the nations and peoples of the earth can no longer endure; the
484 consequences are too terrible to contemplate, too obvious to require any demonstration. "The
485 well-being of mankind," Bahá'u'lláh wrote more than a century ago, "its peace and security, are
486 unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." In observing that "mankind is
487 groaning, is dying to be led to unity, and to terminate its agelong martyrdom," Shoghi Effendi
488 further commented that: "Unification of the whole of mankind is the hallmark of the stage which
489 human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been
490 successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed
491 humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state
492 sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish,
493 recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the
494 machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life."

495
496 All contemporary forces of change validate this view. The proofs can be discerned in the
497 many examples already cited of the favorable signs towards world peace in current international
498 movements and developments. The army of men and women, drawn from virtually every
499 culture, race and nation on earth, who serve the multifarious agencies of the United Nations,
500 represent a planetary "civil service" whose impressive accomplishments are indicative of the
501 degree of cooperation that can be attained even under discouraging conditions. An urge towards
502 unity, like a spiritual springtime, struggles to express itself through countless international
503 congresses that bring together people from a vast array of disciplines. It motivates appeals for
504 international projects involving children and youth. Indeed, it is the real source of the
505 remarkable movement towards ecumenism by which members of historically antagonistic
506 religions and sects seem irresistibly drawn towards one another. Together with the opposing
507 tendency to warfare and self-aggrandizement against which it ceaselessly struggles, the drive

508 towards world unity is one of the dominant, pervasive features of life on the planet during the
509 closing years of the twentieth century.

510
511 The experience of the Bahá'í community may be seen as an example of this enlarging unity. It
512 is a community of some three to four million people drawn from many nations, cultures, classes
513 and creeds, engaged in a wide range of activities serving the spiritual, social and economic needs
514 of the peoples of many lands. It is a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the
515 human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative
516 principles, and cherishing equally all the great outpourings of divine guidance in human history.
517 Its existence is yet another convincing proof of the practicality of its Founder's vision of a united
518 world, another evidence that humanity can live as one global society, equal to whatever
519 challenges its coming of age may entail. If the Bahá'í experience can contribute in whatever
520 measure to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race, we are happy to offer it as a model
521 for study.

522
523 In contemplating the supreme importance of the task now challenging the entire world, we
524 bow our heads in humility before the awesome majesty of the divine Creator, who out of His
525 infinite love has created all humanity from the same stock; exalted the gemlike reality of man;
526 honored it with intellect and wisdom, nobility and immortality; and conferred upon man the
527 "unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him," a capacity that "must needs be
528 regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation."

529
530 We hold firmly the conviction that all human beings have been created "to carry forward an
531 ever-advancing civilization"; that "to act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man"; that the
532 virtues that befit human dignity are trustworthiness, forbearance, mercy, compassion and
533 loving-kindness towards all peoples. We reaffirm the belief that the "potentialities inherent in
534 the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality,
535 must all be manifested in this promised Day of God." These are the motivations for our
536 unshakable faith that unity and peace are the attainable goal towards which humanity is
537 striving.

538
539 At this writing, the expectant voices of Bahá'ís can be heard despite the persecution they still
540 endure in the land in which their Faith was born. By their example of steadfast hope, they bear
541 witness to the belief that the imminent realization of this age-old dream of peace is now, by
542 virtue of the transforming effects of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation, invested with the force of divine
543 authority. Thus we convey to you not only a vision in words: we summon the power of deeds of
544 faith and sacrifice; we convey the anxious plea of our coreligionists everywhere for peace and
545 unity. We join with all who are the victims of aggression, all who yearn for an end to conflict and
546 contention, all whose devotion to principles of peace and world order promotes the ennobling
547 purposes for which humanity was called into being by an all-loving Creator.

548
549 In the earnestness of our desire to impart to you the fervor of our hope and the depth of our
550 confidence, we cite the emphatic promise of Bahá'u'lláh: "These fruitless strifes, these ruinous
551 wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come."

552
553 [signed: The Universal House of Justice]

554