

## The Bahá'ís of Florence, OR ☞ Inter-Faith Devotional Service



## Bahá'í Christmas

### Christianity

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18~25

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary.

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God.

And, behold, thou shall conceive in the womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

And she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things: and holy is his name.

*Luke 1:26-49*

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying,

Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men of good will.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

*Luke 2: 1-21*

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed: and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, departed into Egypt:

And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

*Matthew 2: 1-15*

## **Islam**

Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East.

She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.

She said: "I seek refuge from thee to (God) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear God."

He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son."

She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?"

He said: "So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, 'that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us: It is a matter (so) decreed.'"

So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.

And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree: She cried (in her anguish): “Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!”

But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): “Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee;

“And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee.

“So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye. And if thou meetest any man, say, ‘I have vowed a fast to (God) Most Gracious, and this day will I not enter into talk with any human being’”

At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: “O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!

“O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!”

But she pointed to the babe. They said: “How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?”

He said: “I am indeed a servant of God: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet;

“And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live;

“(He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable;

“So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!”

Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute.

*Our'án 19:16~34*

Behold! the angels said: “O Mary! God hath chosen thee and purified thee—chosen thee above the women of all nations.

“O Mary! worship Thy Lord devoutly: Prostrate thyself and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down.”

This is part of the tidings of the things unseen, which We reveal unto thee (O Apostle!) by inspiration: Thou wast not with them when they cast lots with arrows, as to which of them should be charged with the care of Mary: Nor wast thou with them when they disputed (the point).

Behold! the angels said: “O Mary! God giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to God;

“He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous.”

She said: “O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?” He said: “Even so: God createth what He willeth: When He hath decreed a plan, He but saith to it, ‘Be,’ and it is!

“And God will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel,

“And (appoint him) an apostle to the Children of Israel, (with this message): ‘I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God's leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by God's leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe;

‘(I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (Before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear God, and obey me.

‘It is God Who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight.’”

*Our'ún 3:42-48*

### **Báb'í Faith**

Verily, Christ is Our Word which We communicated unto Mary; and let no one say what the Christians term as ‘the third of three’, inasmuch as it would amount to slandering the Remembrance Who, as decreed in the Mother Book, is invested with supreme authority. Indeed God is but one God, and far be it from His glory that there should be aught else besides Him. All those who shall attain unto Him on the Day of Resurrection are but His servants, and God is, of a truth, a sufficient Protector. Verily I am none other but the servant of God and His Word, and none but the first one to bow

down in supplication before God, the Most Exalted; and indeed God witnesseth all things.

*Selections from the Writings of the Báb, pp. 60-61*

### **Bahá'í Faith**

Likewise, reflect upon the state and condition of Mary. So deep was the perplexity of that most beautiful countenance, so grievous her case, that she bitterly regretted she had ever been born. To this beareth witness the text of the sacred verse wherein it is mentioned that after Mary had given birth to Jesus, she bemoaned her plight and cried out: "O would that I had died ere this, and been a thing forgotten, forgotten quite!" I swear by God! Such lamenting consumeth the heart and shaketh the being. Such consternation of soul, such despondency, could have been caused by no other than the censure of the enemy and the cavilings of the infidel and perverse. Reflect, what answer could Mary have given to the people around her? How could she claim that a Babe Whose father was unknown had been conceived of the Holy Ghost? Therefore did Mary, that veiled and immortal Countenance, take up her Child and return unto her home. No sooner had the eyes of the people fallen upon her than they raised their voice saying: "O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of wickedness, nor unchaste thy mother."

And now, meditate upon this most great convulsion, this grievous test. Notwithstanding all these things, God conferred upon that essence of the Spirit, Who was known amongst the people as fatherless, the glory of Prophethood, and made Him His testimony unto all that are in heaven and on earth.

*Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pp. 56-57*

When the days of Moses were ended, and the light of Jesus, shining forth from the dayspring of the Spirit, encompassed the world, all the people of Israel arose in protest against Him. They clamoured that He Whose advent the Bible had foretold must needs promulgate and fulfil the laws of Moses, whereas this youthful Nazarene, who laid claim to the station of the divine Messiah, had annulled the law of divorce and of the sabbath day--the most weighty of all the laws of Moses. Moreover, what of the signs of the Manifestation yet to come? These people of Israel are even unto the present day still expecting that Manifestation which the Bible hath foretold! How many Manifestations of Holiness, how many Revealers of the light everlasting, have appeared since the time of Moses, and yet Israel, wrapt in the densest veils of satanic fancy and false imaginings, is still expectant that the idol of her own handiwork will appear with such signs as she herself hath conceived!.... As she never grasped their true significance, and, to outward seeming, such events never came to pass, she, therefore, remained deprived of recognizing the beauty of Jesus and of beholding the face of God.

And they still await His coming! From time immemorial even unto this day, all the kindreds and peoples of the earth have clung to such fanciful and unseemly thoughts, and thus have deprived themselves of the clear waters streaming from the springs of purity and holiness.

*Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Iqán, pp. 57, 17-19*

The West has always received spiritual enlightenment from the East. The Song of the Kingdom is first heard in the East, but in the West the greater volume of sound bursts upon the listening ears. The Lord Christ arose as a bright Star in the Eastern sky, but the light of His Teaching shone more perfectly in the West, where His influence has taken root more firmly and His Cause has spread to a greater degree than in the land of His birth. The sound of the Song of Christ has echoed over all the lands of the Western World and entered the hearts of its people....

The West is like a strong sturdy plant; when the rain falls gently upon it to give it nourishment and the sun shines upon it, then does it blossom in due time and bring forth good fruit. It is a long time since the Sun of Truth mirrored forth by the Lord Christ has shed its radiance upon the West... But now again, praise be to God, the Holy Spirit speaks anew to the world! The constellation of love and wisdom and power is once more shining from the Divine Horizon to give joy to all who turn their faces to the Light of God. Bahá'u'lláh has rent the veil of prejudice and superstition which was stifling the souls of men. Let us pray to God that the breath of the Holy Spirit may again give hope and refreshment to the people, awakening in them a desire to do the Will of God.

May heart and soul be vivified in every man: so will they all rejoice in a new birth. Then shall humanity put on a new garment in the radiance of the love of God, and it shall be the dawn of a new creation! Then will the Mercy of the Most Merciful be showered upon all mankind and they will arise to a new life.

*Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, pp. 33-35*

If men followed the Holy Counsels and the Teachings of the Prophets, if Divine Light shone in all hearts and men were really religious, we should soon see peace on earth and the Kingdom of God among men.

*‘Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 108*

In the Qur’án it is said: "And We sent Our Spirit unto her, and He appeared unto her in the shape of a perfect man," meaning that the Holy Spirit took the likeness of the human form, as an image is produced in a mirror....

*‘Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 87*

## ***OBSERVING HANUKKAH***

### ***Torah – the Five Books of Moses***

And this is the Instruction—the laws and the rules—that the Lord your God has commended [me] to impart to you, to be observed in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you, your children and your children’s children may revere the Lord your God and follow, as long as you live, all His laws and commandments that I enjoin upon you, to the end that you may long endure. Obey, O Israel, willingly and faithfully, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly [in] a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, spoke to you.

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.

When the Lord your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to you—great and flourishing cities that you did not build, houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and you eat your fill, take heed that you do not forget the Lord who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. Revere only the Lord your God and worship Him alone, and swear only by His name. Do not follow other gods, any gods of the peoples about you—for the Lord your God in your midst is an impassioned God—lest the anger of the Lord your God blaze forth against you and He wipe you off the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 6.1-15

### ***Nevi'im – the prophets***

When Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had put all the prophets<sup>1</sup> to the sword, Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “Thus and more the gods do<sup>2</sup> if by this time tomorrow I have not made you like one of them.”

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<sup>1</sup> Of Baal; see I Kings 18.40

<sup>2</sup> A formula of imprecation

Frightened, he fled at once for his life. He came to Beer-sheba, which is in Judah, and left his servant there; he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush and sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "Enough!" he cried. "Now, O Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

He lay down and fell asleep under a broom bush. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." He looked about; and there, beside his head, was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water! He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." He arose and ate and drank; and with the strength from that meal he walked forty days and forty nights as far as the mountain of God at Horeb. There he went into a cave and there he spent the night.

Then the word of the Lord came to him. He said to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?" He replied, "I am moved by zeal for the Lord, the God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life." "Come out," He called, "and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And lo, the Lord passed by.

*1 Kings 19.1-11*

### ***Kethuvim – The Writings***

Hallelujah.

O servants of the Lord, give praise; praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be blessed now and forever. From east to west the name of the Lord is praised. The Lord is exalted above all nations; His glory is above the heavens.

Who is like the Lord our God, who, enthroned on high, sees what is below, in heaven and on earth?

He raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the refuse heap to set them with the great, with the great men of His people. He sets the childless woman among her household as a happy mother of children.

Hallelujah.

*Psalm 113*

When Israel went forth from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech, Judah became His "holy one" [sanctuary]; Israel, His dominion.

The sea saw them and fled, Jordan ran backward, mountains skipped like rams, hills like sheep.

What alarmed you, O sea, that you fled, Jordan, that you ran backward, mountains that you skipped like rams, hills, like sheep?

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned rock into a pool of water, the flinty rock into a fountain.

*Psalm 114*

Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to Your name bring glory for the sake of Your love and Your faithfulness.

Let the nations not say, "Where, now, is their God?" when our God is in heaven and all that He wills He accomplishes.

Their idols are silver and gold, and the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot touch, feet, but cannot walk; they can make no sound in their throats.

Those who fashion them, all who rust in them, shall become like them.

O Israel, trust in the Lord! He is their help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord! He is their help and shield. O you who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord! He is their help and shield.

The Lord is mindful of us. He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron; He will bless those who fear the Lord, small and great alike.

May the Lord increase your numbers, yours and your children's also. May you be blessed by the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth.

The heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth He gave over to man. The dead cannot praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord now and forever.

Hallelujah.

*Psalm 115*

I love the Lord for He hears my voice, my pleas; for He turns His ear to me whenever I call. The bonds of death encompassed me; the torments of Sheol overtook me.

I came upon trouble and sorrow and I invoked the name of the Lord, "O Lord, save my life!"

The Lord is gracious and beneficent; our God is compassionate. The Lord protects the simple; I was brought low and He saved me. Be at rest, once again, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

You have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

I shall walk before the Lord in the lands of the living. I trust (in the Lord); out of great suffering I spoke and said rashly, "All men are false."

How can I repay the Lord for all His bounties to me? I raise the cup of deliverance and invoke the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people. The death of His faithful ones is grievous in the Lord's sight.

O Lord, I am Your servant, Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have undone the cords that bound me. I will sacrifice a thank offering to You and invoke the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in the midst of Jerusalem.

Hallelujah.

*Psalm 116*

Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol Him, all you peoples, for great is His steadfast love toward us; the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Hallelujah.

Psalm 117

Praise the Lord, for He is good, His steadfast love is eternal.

Let Israel declare, “His steadfast love is eternal.”

Let the House of Aaron declare, “His steadfast love is eternal.”

Let those who fear the Lord declare, “His steadfast love is eternal.”

In distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and brought me relief. The Lord is on my side, I have no fear; what can man do to me?  
With the Lord on my side as my helper, I will see the downfall of my foes.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in mortals; it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in the great.

All nations have beset me; by the name of the Lord I will surely cut them down. They beset me like bees; they shall be extinguished like burning thorns; by the name of the Lord I will surely cut them down.

You (the enemy) pressed me hard, I nearly fell; but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and might; He has become my deliverance.

The tents of the victorious resound with joyous shouts of deliverance, “The right hand of the Lord is triumphant!

The right hand of the Lord is exalted!  
The right hand of the Lord is triumphant!”

I shall not die but live and proclaim the works of the Lord.

The Lord punished me severely, but did not hand me over to death.

Open the gates of victory for me that I may enter them and praise the Lord. This is the gateway to the Lord—the victorious shall enter through it.

I praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my deliverance.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our sight.

This is the day that the Lord has made—let us exult and rejoice on it.

O Lord, deliver us!

O Lord, let us prosper!

May he who enters be blessed in the name of the Lord; we bless you from the House of the Lord.

The Lord is God; He has given us light; bind the festal offering to the horns of the altar with cords.

You are my God and I will praise You;  
You are my God and I will extol You.  
Praise the Lord for He is good, His  
steadfast love is eternal.

*Psalm 118*

### Prayer

O Thou kind Lord! O Thou Who art  
generous and merciful! We are the  
servants of Thy threshold and are  
gathered beneath the sheltering shadow  
of Thy divine unity. The sun of Thy  
mercy is shining upon all, and the clouds  
of Thy bounty shower upon all. Thy gifts  
encompass all, Thy loving providence  
sustains all, Thy protection overshadows  
all, and the glances of Thy favor are cast  
upon all. O Lord! Grant Thine infinite  
bestowals, and let the light of Thy

guidance shine. Illumine the eyes,  
gladden the hearts with abiding joy.  
Confer a new spirit upon all people and  
bestow upon them eternal life. Unlock  
the gates of true understanding and let  
the light of faith shine resplendent.  
Gather all people beneath the shadow of  
Thy bounty and cause them to unite in  
harmony, so that they may become as  
the rays of one sun, as the waves of one  
ocean, and as the fruit of one tree. May  
they drink from the same fountain. May  
they be refreshed by the same breeze.  
May they receive illumination from the  
same source of light. Thou art the Giver,  
the Merciful, the Omnipotent.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 116*



### PRAYER FOR AMERICA

O Thou kind Lord! This gathering is turning to Thee. These hearts are radiant with Thy love. These minds and spirits are exhilarated by the message of Thy glad-tidings. O God! Let this American democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees even as it has aspired to material degrees, and render this just government victorious. Confirm this revered nation to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world. O God! This American nation is worthy of Thy favors and is deserving of Thy mercy. Make it precious and near to Thee through Thy bounty and bestowal.

—Abdu’l-Bahá