

# BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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## AN OPEN LETTER ABOUT TEACHING CONFERENCE

Dear Barbara,

This year's Teaching Conference was so exhilarating that I simply must write you all about it.

Having talked to people about love and fellowship as the sign of this "Most Great Day", we get together to live in such an atmosphere, even if briefly and imperfectly, i.e., including minor hitches.

You get this feeling of excitement of a family reuniting, a very special type of family whose members are exceptionally devoted to each other, from the very beginning.

The Manchester Assembly had worked very hard on the organisation of this Conference. The meeting room had been booked at the Midland Hotel. (Nothing but the best.) In this large room, the first arrivals began to gather. They were soon deep in the favourite sport of Bahá'ís at leisure. "How are things (meaning public meetings, firesides, active teaching of contacts) with you (meaning your community)?" As more trickled in, the group would grow larger, break up into smaller ones and back into a larger one still.

I have always felt that we all learn at least as much from these informal pre-sessions as from the actual sessions. You can show to the other friends your love and interest, and help with suggestions in a more personal and direct way.

At 2.00 p.m. (more or less), our Conference Chairman, Ernest Gregory, called us to start, with a Devotional session, organised by the Manchester Assembly. The spiritual foundation for practical activity!

A statement from our Hand of the Cause, George Townshend, was read, which helped us all to greater firmness.

After that came an impromptu review of the situation in the British Isles, impromptu in the sense that anybody could get up and talk about the problems facing them. General satisfaction was expressed at the trip of four youths—also known as the kids, or, the squad, Kathleen Hamilton, Joyce Noble, Fuad Abbas and Dan Jordan—around the Northern communities during their Christmas vacation. Many asked for a repeat performance.

I felt a greater eagerness and a restlessness to do more and do better than in previous years. It was as though the Bahá'ís now looked upon personal diffi-

culties not as insuperable barriers, but as challenges that could be overcome.

There was a short break, more people came in, dumped their belongings in corners, greeted those they knew, and found somewhere to sit. The next session was reports from Africa and Europe-Asia.

On behalf of the Africa Committee, Dorothy Ferraby told us about the steady growth of the Faith in Central and East Africa, where the keynote seems to be consolidation, and in West Africa, where the Faith is growing by leaps and bounds. We were also told of how the Africa Committee deals with the colonial authorities in London on behalf of other N.S.A.s working in British Africa.

John Ferraby gave us a last minute report on the progress of the translations into African languages, 26 out of 31 for the 10-Year Crusade, were either completed or in progress.

Then, a young woman, dressed in blue, blonde and small, with a shy look on her face, not known to most, was introduced as Irene Bennett, from Kenya, via Blackpool, and was asked to tell us about the work in Africa as seen on the spot. She gave us greetings from those who left this country for Africa, Hassan and Isobel Sabri, the Samandarís, Philip Hainsworth. If you are short of contacts, and feel the urge to teach, Africa is your place.

It was then my privilege to talk about the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh in the goal territories of Europe and Asia, and to try to convey how they keep their spirits radiant in face of conditions varying from indifference at the best to malevolence at the worst.

To end this session, John Ferraby told us of the quite sudden growth of the Cause in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, where as the result of persecutions of the two Bahá'í pioneers by missionaries, one had been expelled, but there are now three hundred local Bahá'ís there.

After dinner came the N.S.A. session, which lifted us to the climax to which we were held for the remainder of the Conference. To start with, John Ferraby spoke of "Hopeful Aspects and Significant Events", which he based on the Tablet that the Master addressed to the London Believers in 1913, starting "How are the Believers in London? Are they happy? ..." You know it well. We have good reasons to be



happy, it seems. In the first place, because of the opening of the Hazíratu'l-Quds, the fulfilment of all our dreams for a befitting Headquarters; then there is the forthcoming Convention in Kampala, a measure of our success in so few years, and the widespread publicity that the press gave, both nationally and locally, to the Bahá'í appeal against persecution in Irán. Now the stage was set and the time had come to put the rest of the message of the Master into effect, namely, teach like never before.

Ian Semple followed with a talk on the formation of the N.S.A. of East and Central Africa. Not only did he make us feel happy with this as a fulfilment of the work in Africa of the British pioneers and Administrative Organs, but by thinking of it as a development towards the formation of the International House of Justice, and by reminding us of its station and functions, he made us more aware of the momentousness of the step about to be taken.

Finally, Dorothy Ferraby talked to us about the deeper meaning of these words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Therefore order your lives in accordance with the first principle of the Divine Teaching, which is love". Unless this quality of love shines through every one of our actions, indeed is made the mainspring of our whole behaviour, we are only deriving a fraction of the benefit of all our deliberate activity. A tall order? Nothing less will be enough to make us achieve the goals of the Crusade. Only through this effort, would we "gnats" become like "eagles" and we "rivers" run into "oceans".

We broke up for the night, and again went into little groups discussing the Conference, teaching in general, Manchester ...

Sunday morning we had a two-tiered discussion on personal teaching. Ten people discussed, on a round table basis under a chairman, Marion Hofman, different aspects of personal teaching, for half an hour; the rest of the session was given to general discussion. Two of the best contributions came from the floor, made by two quite new Believers.

Bob Jackson, from Reading, said that if you wanted to catch a fish, you had to prepare your bait well, i.e. if you want people to accept the Faith, lead the Bahá'í Life, and always be well equipped to answer queries.

Mr. Wade, of London, was frankly puzzled by the keynote of the discussion "teaching the Faith". It was more a question of giving the Faith. No one wanted to be taught anything, thank you very much. The thing was surely to always be ready when, and only when, the contact asked for information, and never to apply any pressure.

At the end of the session, we were all introduced to Josiah Green, a Bahá'í from Jamaica, who came here a few weeks ago, and has already pioneered to Nottingham. In a few touching words, he told us how he had accepted the Faith in America, how he was happy to be with us (it seems we are nicer than he expected) and how he would do his utmost to help in our work.

In the final session, Sunday afternoon, all the Assemblies under numbers, presented their problems through delegates specially appointed for this purpose. The novelty was that once the problems had been stated, the Chairman, Betty Reed, assisted by representatives of each Regional committee, asked the people present what help they were prepared to give. You'd be surprised how many people volunteered to visit different communities, or thought of contacts they had in these towns whom they could put in touch with the local Bahá'ís.

A Devotional programme, and the end. Not really sad, more like sorry that we would not enjoy Bahá'í companionship again until April—on such a scale that is, because the community has a rash of week-end regional Teaching Conferences all over the country at the moment. Looks as though we just can't tear ourselves away from each other ...

See you soon,

Mickey Mihaeloff

### FROM THE BRITISH CAMEROOMS

"On the 12th of November, we celebrated the Birthday of the Glorious One, Bahá'u'lláh. Before that date we had taken permission from the District Officer of Victoria for the use of the botanical gardens for a picnic. We had also invited our Moliwe friends, who promised to join us on that day.

"The day drew near and every heart was full of gladness. Indeed it was a happy day. Bahá'ís all over had decorated their houses with beautiful flowers; we also had dressed our little Bahá'í meeting hall in which we usually assemble. The Moliwe friends apparently appeared to be letting us down as the hour and minute hands moved round their dial showing us that it was getting time to start. Happily immediately after, they all came in and other Bahá'ís began entering into the room one after the other, in a short space of time the little room was all full up.

"We had to first celebrate this day with a devotional programme which lasted for some time, and after that we took our seats to the shade where all the celebrations were made. Nevertheless, the botanical gardens were still booked for our use and as it was we had to stroll into them and pleasantly and joyfully had a beautiful scenery, after which we dispersed.

"That did not end our day's programme for at night a very good concert was staged by the Victoria friends and it arrested the attention of very many people who were around. It was attended by over 150 people, of which about 50 were Bahá'ís. The atmosphere was truly splendid, and we all enjoyed it much. Loving messages were sent to the beloved Guardian."

"Saturday, 26 November: The Day of the Covenant was observed. A band of over 20 children assembled and were fed. These played little games and plays, and also gave very nice tunes. Group pictures were taken. It is interesting to note that non-Bahá'ís sent their children to the gathering which had aroused their interest."



## TEACHING

The quotations below were selected by the National Teaching Committee to inspire those who teach the Faith.

"Reveal thou (or teach thou) the Word of God; be not grieved at the people's lack of hearing. Do thou sow the seed, and God will make it grow and the cloud of mercy will develop it."

"Occupy thyself with the Kingdom as much as thou canst and forget all else save the True One; in order that thou mayest, day by day, find a new power in the Cause of God and gain a great stability."

"When thou occupiest thyself with all thy strength in service, thou wilt become a magnet of attraction and cause every seeker to reach the presence of the Desired One; thou wilt raise a great clamour in the world and evince such an ecstasy and rapture that will astonish the minds."

('Abdu'l-Bahá in "Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" Vol. 1. pp. 209, 198, and 203).

"I pray that you may be manifestations of the love of Bahá'u'lláh; that each one of you may become like a clear lamp of crystal from which the rays of the bounties of the Blessed Perfection may shine forth to all nations and peoples. This is my highest aspiration."

"With hearts set aglow by the fire of the love of God and spirits refreshed by the food of the heavenly spirit you must go forth as the disciples nineteen hundred years ago, quickening the hearts of men by the call of glad-tidings, the light of God in your faces, severed from everything save God. Therefore order your lives in accordance with the first principle of the divine teaching, which is love. Service to humanity is service to God. Let the love and light of the Kingdom radiate through you until all who look upon you shall be illumined by its reflection. Be as stars brilliant and sparkling in the loftiness of their heavenly station. Do you appreciate the day in which you live?"

"This is the century of the Blessed Perfection!

"This is the cycle of the light of His Beauty!

"This is the consummate day of all the prophets!

"These are the days of seed-sowing. These are the days of tree-planting. The bountiful bestowals of God are successive. He who sows a seed in this day will behold his reward in the fruits and harvest of the heavenly kingdom."

('Abdu'l-Bahá in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace" pp. 1 and 6.)

"If only the friends could realise it, the glory of our Faith is not that people with unique abilities do the work of the Cause, but that it is done by the sacrifice of loving and devoted souls who arise selflessly to undertake work they feel themselves incompetent, sometimes, to achieve. God works through them and endows them with gifts they did not dream they could ever possess."

(Shoghi Effendi, through his secretary,  
December 18th, 1943.)

## EUROPEAN AND ASIAN TEACHING

### COMMITTEE

The following is an extract from a letter received from the Secretary of the Bahá'í group in Hong Kong, one of the consolidation areas under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles:

"November is a busy month of the Bahá'í Faith, with two Feast days and two significant anniversaries, the Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh and the Day of the Covenant. In addition we here in Hong Kong and Macau had the great bounty of having a short visit from the distinguished Hand of the Cause, Mr. Z. Khadem. This morning at the airport we bade goodbye to Mr. Khadem, his wife and Miss Haddad of Tíhrán, as they left on their teaching trip to Bangkok. While they were here in Hong Kong we had one home meeting, with an attendance of twenty-one, including the Bahá'ís. We also had other visits with Mr. Khadem, at which he inspired us by telling of his travels and experience in working for the Faith in various lands. He sets the great example of strict and implicit obedience to our Beloved Guardian.

"On 12th November, we had a community dinner at our home, with fifteen present, nine of whom were non-Bahá'ís. We had Persian pilau prepared by Mrs. Azizi, and East Indian curry prepared by Mr. and Mrs. Datwani. We are holding two regular study classes each week, and we go out to attend different gatherings, lectures and meetings, with the view of meeting new people. In this connection, my husband and I joined the United Nations Association of Hong Kong, first studying its bye-laws to see if these contained anything that contravened our Bahá'í teachings. During the United Nations Week Celebration, I was asked to be chairman of a meeting, and my husband also spoke briefly."

A later letter reports four declarations, three of them from young Chinese men and contains the following encouraging information:

"In our letter of 24th January to you, we wrote of a tea we were giving at our home for selected members of the United Nations Association of Hong Kong. This tea turned out to be a most complete Bahá'í meeting. After the meeting progressed and tea was served, the Vice-Chairman of the Association said, to my great amazement and utmost delight, 'Mrs. Seto, please tell these friends about the Bahá'í Faith'. After such a pleasing request, I felt very free to speak, and did so for well over half an hour. After which, I gave those present Bahá'í pamphlets in the Chinese language, and to the Vice-Chairman, a brochure of the proposals for the revision of the United Nations Charter. The friends stayed on and on until early evening. Present on this occasion were a professor, a doctor and students, none of whom had ever heard of the Faith. We shall give another tea in the coming months and throughout the year. We are working closely with this organisation."



## Additions to the Community

Since the last list was published in *Bahá'í Journal*, registration cards have been received from the following:

Mahvash Masoudi (from Iran), Leeds  
 Iskandar Shayani (youth from Iran), Bournemouth  
 Rene Aldridge, Brighton  
 Nancy Blair, Northern Ireland  
 Rahmatollah Sana (youth from Iran), Chislehurst  
 Robert Callaway, Bristol  
 David Wood (youth), Norwich  
 John Wade, London  
 Rose Wade, London  
 Cherry Viveash, Chichester  
 Anne Chisholm (from Canada), Edinburgh  
 Feraidun Farrokhzadeg (from Iran), London  
 David Beckett (from Chile), St. Mary's Bay  
 John West (from Lofoten), Coventry  
 Denis Morse, Norwich  
 Mary Prince, Leicester  
 Tahereh Khodadoust (from Iran), Carshalton  
 Willy Blum, Bristol  
 Lamee Nikanpour (from Iran), Stockton-on-Tees  
 Shoaollah Nikanpour (from Iran), Stockton-on-Tees  
 Salah Ali (from Iraq), Portsmouth  
 Ghanar Rayati (from Iran), Bebington  
 Vera Long Leicester  
 Ian Sinclair, Leicester

## THE ETERNAL COVENANT

(This extract is taken from a book by John Ferraby not yet completed.)

The Age of Bahá'u'lláh differs from other Ages in comprising the fulfilment of a cycle. Every Messenger of God, from Adam to the Báb, has proclaimed its greatness. All that past Ages witnessed, all that past Dispensations achieved, has been preparation for this supreme Day of God when He manifested Himself in unveiled glory. In this Age all former Ages culminate and in this Day all former Days mature.

God has covenanted about this Day in an Eternal Covenant that has permeated every Dispensation. The prophecies of all the Messengers of God about Bahá'u'lláh have been products of the Eternal Covenant. Every Revelation has contributed towards its fulfilment. It has been the guiding principle that harmonised the various Dispensations and the power that co-ordinated development of the various peoples of the world. And now, in this King of Days, it has culminated in the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, Who introduces the cycle of fulfilment.

The greatness of the Age of Bahá'u'lláh does not lie in His superiority to other Manifestations of God, for His inmost essence is identical with theirs; it does not even lie solely in the intensity of His Revelation, undeniably great though this may be. Its true significance is that it stands at the focal point of all previous Revelations; here their rays converge; here is the ultimate object of their existence; here, in our own age, the Eternal Covenant, from which all other Covenants have sprung, has been fulfilled.

## LOCALITIES IN THE BRITISH ISLES IN

### WHICH THERE ARE BAHÁ'ÍS

The Guardian recently asked for a list of places in the British Isles where there were Bahá'ís and it was found that there were Bahá'ís in exactly 100 places according to the National Assembly's records. These places are listed below:

#### LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

##### Pivotal Centres

Belfast	Cardiff
Dublin	Edinburgh

##### Weak Assemblies

Blackburn	Birmingham
Hove	Glasgow
Nottingham	

##### Assemblies Chosen for Incorporation

Bradford	Northampton
Norwich	Oxford
Sheffield	

##### Assemblies Incorporated

London	Liverpool
Manchester	

##### Other Local Spiritual Assemblies

Blackpool	Bournemouth
Bristol	Leeds

#### GROUPS

##### Goal Towns

Cambridge	Leicester
Portsmouth	Reading

##### Other Groups

Altrincham, Cheshire	Brighton, Sussex
Broadstairs, Kent	Dundrum, Co. Dublin
Eccles, Lancashire	High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire
Hull, Yorkshire	
Ilkeston, Derbyshire	Hyde, Cheshire
Middlewich, Cheshire	Ilkley, Yorkshire
Normanton, Yorkshire	Newmarket, Suffolk
Prestwich, Lancashire	Portland, Dorset
Salford, Lancashire	Sale, Cheshire
Stretford, Lancashire	Salisbury, Wiltshire
Thornbury, Yorkshire	Swinton, Lancashire
Wellington, Somerset	Wallsend, Northumberland
Wokingham, Berkshire	Winchester, Hampshire
	Cheadle, Cheshire
	Torquay, Devonshire

#### CENTRES

Amersham, Buckinghamshire	Arundel, Sussex
Botley, Hampshire	Brechin, Angus
Coventry, Warwickshire	Crawfordsburn, Co. Down
Cudworth, Yorkshire	Cyn Coed, Glamorgan
Duckmanton, Derbyshire	Gateshead, Co. Durham
Grays, Essex	Greenisland, Co. Antrim
Hartpury, Gloucestershire	Hartwell, Northamptonshire
Helens Bay, Co. Down	Helensburgh, Dunbarton
Humble, Midlothian	Langholm, Dumfriesshire
Lupton, Westmorland	Maughold, Isle of Man
Motherwell, Lanarkshire	Newport, Monmouthshire
North Shields, Northumberland	Old Coulsden, Surrey
Paignton, Devonshire	Petersfield, Hampshire
Pleasington, Lancashire	Ponteland, Northumberland
Portstewart, Co. Londonderry	Poynings, Sussex
Preston, Lancashire	Redditch, Worcestershire
Rossington, Yorkshire	Sacriston, Co. Durham
Saintfield, Co. Antrim	St. Ives, Cornwall
Sevenoaks, Kent	Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire
Talybont, Merioneth	Thetford, Norfolk
Walkden, Lancashire	Westcott, Surrey
Wimborne, Dorset	Woodthorpe, Nottingham
Wraybury, Buckinghamshire	West End, Hants
	Newcastle, Northumberland