

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

Published by

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE BRITISH ISLES
BM/BAHAI, LONDON, W.C.1

No. 124

Bahá'í Year 112

OCTOBER, 1955

MESSAGES FROM THE GUARDIAN

5th August, 1955

Mr. John Ferraby,
National Spiritual Assembly of the
Bahá'ís of the British Isles.

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

Your letters of July 7, 13 and 15, August 19, 20 (three) and 31, September 17 (two) and 27, October 13, 16 (two) and 26, November 4, 15, 16 and 20, and December 8 (four) and 18, 1954, and January 6 (two), 10 and 25, February 7, 11, 14, 21 and 28, March 11 (two), 16 and 23, April 4, 7, 15, 19, 22 and 27, May 9, 12 and 27, June 8 and 9, July 5 (four), 11 and 14, 1955, with enclosures, also the material sent separately, have been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

The matters taken up by cable I will not go into again here in detail.

It has been a great source of satisfaction to him to receive here last winter two members of the National Body, Mr. and Mrs. John Ferraby, as well as more than one believer from England. The contact with the British Bahá'ís always pleases him greatly. As you know, he admires many of the staunch British qualities very much, and is proud of the accomplishments of this Community during recent years.

He has been pleased over the progress made in the teaching field abroad and at home; in the publication of Bahá'í literature in African languages; and, above all, by the purchase of the National Headquarters in London, and the formal dedication of the building, recently held. He feels sure that, now that the National Assembly has a befitting seat for its national affairs—a building which at the same time will solve the problem of the London Spiritual Assembly, through giving them a meeting-place—the work in both London and throughout the country will receive a new impetus. With every important step forward there is a new release of spiritual energy; and the founding of the National Hazíratu'l-Quds is certainly a most important milestone in the progress of the Cause in the British Isles.

As regards various questions raised in your correspondence with him, he sees no reason why the Publishing Trust should have a separate legal status, as long as it is not essential for it to do so.

He approves of returning to Ronga as one of the languages into which Bahá'í literature should be translated, according to the provisions of the Ten-Year Plan, and giving up Shangaan.

He would like very much to receive photostats of the actual Certificates of Incorporation issued to the London and Manchester and Liverpool Assemblies, to be placed in the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh.

He does not think your Assembly need take any action about removing archives or other material from London. If, at a future date, the world situation reaches the point where it is obvious that things in London are in great danger, then your Assembly should consider the matter. Fortunately, that is not the case at present.

Any monies received from the sale of the property bequeathed by Mrs. Basil Hall can be used by your Assembly as it sees fit.

As he already pointed out to the Secretary, when he was in Haifa, a National Endowment is at the present time to be considered more in the nature of a token endowment. It need not be in the capital, and can represent a very small investment; indeed as little as One Thousand Dollars, if a suitable piece of property for that price should be found, would be acceptable.

He was very sorry to hear of the tragic death of Mrs. Langdon-Davies. She was a capable, staunch and devoted member of the Community and of the National Assembly as well; and her services will be missed by her co-workers, and particularly the friends in Oxford. He prays for the progress of her soul in the Abhá kingdom, and that she may be rewarded for her labours in this world, performed with so much zeal and steadfastness.

He hopes that Mr. John Mitchell's condition has improved. He was very sorry indeed to hear that he had been forced to leave Malta. Please assure him of the Guardian's loving and fervent prayers on his behalf.

As regards the question of Bahá'ís belonging to churches, synagogues, Freemasonry, etc., the friends must realise that now that the Faith is over a hundred years old, and its own institutions arising, so to speak, rapidly above-ground, the distinctions are becoming ever sharper, and the necessity for them to support

whole-heartedly their own institutions and cut themselves off entirely from those of the past, is now clearer than ever before. The eyes of the people of the world are beginning to be focussed on us; and, as humanity's plight goes from bad to worse, we will be watched ever more intently by non-Bahá'ís, to see whether we do uphold our own institutions whole-heartedly; whether we are the people of the new creation or not; whether we live up to our beliefs, principles and laws in deed as well as word. We cannot be too careful. We cannot be too exemplary.

There is another aspect to this question which the friends should seriously ponder, and that is that, whereas organisations such as Freemasonry may have been in the past entirely free from any political taint, in the state of flux the world is in at present, and the extraordinary way in which things become corrupted and tainted by political thought and influences, there is no guarantee that such an association might not gradually or suddenly become a political instrument. The less Bahá'ís have to do, therefore, with such things, the better . . .

If you send him five copies of everything published in the British Isles, it will be sufficient for the libraries here at the World Centre . . .

The Africa Committee should carefully consider such problems as that of the negro pioneers being too long apart from their wives; and, if no other solution is feasible, the pioneer will have to return to his family. In the case of some of the very distinguished servants of the Faith who have arisen and gone forth from Uganda to pioneer, this would indeed be a loss to the work. If their wives could go and join them, it would naturally be preferable. This is a matter for the Committee in consultation with your Assembly and the Hand of the Cause, Musa Banani, to decide.

Undoubtedly the most important task facing the British Community at the present time, is to increase its membership. It has performed miracles during the past ten years, through shifting around devoted volunteers from one centre to another, in order to maintain or to create Spiritual Assemblies; but, efficacious as this has been in the past, it is certainly not a permanent solution to the problem. The only solution is to bring in more Bahá'ís. This requires patient, prayerful, ceaseless efforts on the part of, not only the Bahá'í teachers and pioneers, but every single member of the Community. The British people are traditionally slow to move. Fortunately, once they do move, it's almost impossible to stop them; but to overcome the inertia requires great effort. In bringing new people into the Faith, the friends always come up against this problem. He urges all the Bahá'ís, however, not to become discouraged, but to persevere and redouble their efforts, knowing that they can and must succeed in the end. He, on his part, will reinforce their efforts with his prayers in the holy Shrines . . .

As regards your question about depleted Assemblies, as there is nothing in the constitution of the National Spiritual Assembly covering these matters, every National Body is free to make its own decision as to what the status of an Assembly is from one annual

election to the next, if they fall below nine for any reason.

As regards certain matters raised in your recent letters:

Your Assembly is free to choose the place for the endowment for the East and Central N.S.A. if you feel Uganda inadvisable.

The delegates reaching the Conventions in Africa is a matter for each N.S.A., from whose area of jurisdiction they are elected, to arrange and provide financial help if needed.

A prisoner, showing sincere faith in the Cause, may be accepted as a Bahá'í on the same basis of investigating his qualifications as to belief as any other individual outside prison. Each case should be carefully considered on its own merits. Naturally, a person in confinement cannot be active in any community and administrative work. When he gets out, he becomes part of the Community in which he resides. No new ruling is required in this matter. All other details in relation to prisoners can be decided by the N.S.A. concerned as they arise.

The Guardian feels that, though it is naturally preferable, it is not essential for consolidation territories to have a group by Ridván 1956 . . .

With warm Bahá'í love,

(signed) R. RABBANI

Dear and Valued Co-Workers:

The contribution made, since the inception of the world-wide Bahá'í Crusade, severally as well as collectively, by the assiduously striving, clear-visioned, inflexibly resolved and unswervingly faithful members of the British Bahá'í Community to the progress and development of the Ten-Year Plan, inaugurated on the morrow of the centenary celebrations of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission, has been such as to excite the heartfelt admiration of their fellow-workers in every continent of the globe. The prestige of this valiant Community has soared rapidly, its annals have been notably enriched, the foundations on which its fortunes now rest have been considerably reinforced, whilst the variety and solidity of its administrative achievements have won the unstinted praise of its sister Communities in both the East and the West. My own feelings of unqualified admiration for the tenacity of the faith of its members, for their unrelaxing vigilance, their unfailing sense of responsibility and their willingness to sacrifice in order to meet any challenges that confront them, have deepened with every advance they have made, and every victory they have won, along the path leading them towards the fulfilment of their destiny.

The historic triumph achieved as a result of the successful prosecution of the Six-Year Plan, spontaneously embarked upon by this numerically small yet richly endowed, spiritually resourceful Community, on the morrow of the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, followed immediately by the initiation of a Two-Year Plan which marked the inauguration of this Community's mission beyond the confines of its homeland, culminated in the formal

association of its members with their brethren in every continent of the globe for the launching and prosecution of a decade-long world-embracing crusade, destined to carry that same Community through yet another stage, of the utmost significance, in the fulfilment of its world-wide and glorious mission among the widely scattered territories of the British Crown in no less than three continents of the globe.

The extension and consolidation, in the course of more than a decade, of the administrative base established so painstakingly for the prosecution of this Community's far-flung mission, through the formation and multiplication of isolated centres, groups and local assemblies throughout the length and breadth of England, in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Eire; the opening of the virgin islands lying in the neighbourhood of these territories and forming a part of the British Isles, constituting a most welcome and much-needed reinforcement of the Administrative Structure raised so valiantly and patiently by its members in their island home; the magnificent success surpassing, in its quality and scope, the fondest expectations of the elected representatives of this Community, which attended the spiritual conquest of a number of African territories, situated along the western and eastern shores of that continent and in its very heart; the settlement of pioneers in two Mediterranean islands; the selection and purchase of a befitting national administrative headquarters situated close to the heart of the capital city of the British Empire; the acquisition of a plot in the outskirts of the capital city of Uganda, situated in the heart of the African continent, to serve as the site for a future Bahá'í House of Worship; the rapid advancement in the translation and publication of Bahá'í literature in the thirty-one African languages, allotted, under the Ten-Year Plan to the elected national representatives of this same Community; the steady progress made more recently in the incorporation of firmly-established local assemblies; the formation of the Israel Branch of the British National Assembly at the world centre of the Faith in Israel—these stand out as the most prominent and significant evidences of the uninterrupted development of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, under the wise leadership, and through the assiduous and incessant exertions, of the elected national representatives of this virile Community.

The year that has recently opened, constituting the second and last year of the second phase of a Ten-Year global crusade, must witness a development and consolidation of the activities already initiated, in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Bahá'í endeavour, as swift and as notable as the progress already achieved in recent years. Time is indeed short. The responsibilities shouldered by the members of this Community are manifold, pressing, sacred and inescapable. The eyes of the entire Bahá'í world are upon them, eager and expectant to witness feats as superb as those that have marked the birth and establishment of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the British Isles, and exploits as meritorious and significant as those that have accompanied the inception and progress of the mission entrusted to His British

followers, on the morrow of the emergence of that Administrative Order in their homeland.

The process aiming at the rapid increase in the number of the avowed and active supporters of the Faith must continue unabated in the months immediately ahead. A simultaneous multiplication in the number of isolated centres, groups and local assemblies must be ensured in order to reinforce the agencies on which the rising administrative structure of the Faith must ultimately rest. The process of incorporation must likewise be strenuously stimulated for the purpose of strengthening legally, and enhancing the prestige, of these rising institutions. The newly-opened territories forming part of the British Isles, situated in the Mediterranean, in the Atlantic Ocean, along the western and eastern coasts of Africa, and in its very heart, must be continually reinforced, and the prizes won in those distant fields safeguarded, however great the sacrifice involved. The establishment of national Bahá'í endowments in the British Isles is yet another task which, ere the termination of the current year, must be accomplished, as a prelude to the establishing of a similar endowment in the continent of Africa following the emergence of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Central and East Africa.

Above all, the most careful consideration should be given to the measures required to ensure the emergence of the afore-mentioned National Assembly in the heart of the African continent, marking the culmination of the efforts so diligently exerted, and the fruition of the enterprises so painstakingly inaugurated since the formation of the Two-Year Plan by the British Bahá'í Community.

The emergence of this institution, signalling the erection of yet another pillar of the Universal House of Justice in the African continent, and constituting the first fruit yielded on foreign soil of the Mission entrusted to the British followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and which may be hailed as a worthy counterpart of the central Administrative Institution established, on the morrow of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Passing in the heart of the British Isles, will be acclaimed by posterity as a milestone of far-reaching significance in British Bahá'í history. It will proclaim to the entire Bahá'í world the maturity of the swiftly rising, highly promising, steadily consolidating British Bahá'í Community. Every British follower of the Faith, whether in his home islands or overseas, must feel proud and deeply grateful for the impending consummation of so superb and momentous a victory. Every energy must be bent to ensure a befitting celebration of such an enduring and magnificent achievement.

The efforts of the members of this Community must indeed be redoubled, nay, trebled, as they view with afflicted hearts the tragic trend of events transpiring with such dramatic and sudden swiftness in Bahá'u'lláh's native land. The tribulations suffered, over so wide a field, by so many of their co-religionists, under circumstances so appalling and harrowing in their nature, at the hands of redoubtable, pitiless, barbarous adversaries, should spur them on to still greater endeavours in a land, blessed with freedom of religion

and tolerance, occupying so conspicuous a position among its sister nations.

Theirs is an opportunity which they must instantly grasp. Theirs is a responsibility which they cannot escape. Theirs is the duty to offset, by the quality of their achievements, the dire losses which are now being sustained in the cradle of the Faith. That they may in every field and at all times discharge their heavy responsibilities is my constant prayer and dearest hope.

(signed) SHOGHI

Kampala Mashriqu'l-Adhhár

22nd August, 1955

Mr. John Ferraby, Secretary
British National Spiritual Assembly,
London.

Dear John,

I am writing you this at the instruction of the beloved Guardian.

As you will have no doubt seen by his recent cable, he has come to the historic decision to build a Temple in Africa, in Kampala. He has been in communication with Mr. Banani about this, and from reports received it appears there will be no objections. The land must be surveyed (this is being done), and design of the building submitted so as to meet health and building requirements.

The Guardian wishes your Assembly to please get busy *at once* and have a design, or designs, made for the building; it is *not* necessary to try in any way to copy the Wilmette Temple: the things that are essential are the following:

1. A nine-sided building.
2. A dome, in proportion to the building.
3. A seating capacity between 300 and 500; you could count floor space at 300 or 400 and provide a balcony around the auditorium for expansion in seating capacity.
4. No 'chapels' or small rooms should be added; this was a misapprehension held in the old days.

As to materials, your Assembly and architect can go into that, but brick or cement would be all right. Stone would seem to be out of the question.

It should not be too expensive or pretentious, but dignified and worthy.

There is no reason why the architect should be a Bahá'í—in fact your use of someone there would get it done faster probably. The imperative thing is to send preliminary drawings to the Guardian within two months, if possible.

The terrible situation in Persia makes him most anxious to have this project go forward *speedily*. He feels funds will not be too much of a problem if great costs are not involved.

He sends you and all N.S.A. members his loving greetings.

RÚHÍYYIH

6th September 1955

'Kindly expedite preparation plans Kampala Temple. Important.'

To the Summer School

Summer School cabled the Guardian:

'120 participating British Summer School, North Wales. United Kingdom, Eire and seven other nationalities represented including Africa. Happy gatherings, studious atmosphere, eager participation youth. Special Teaching Conference determined respond challenge civic limits assemblies. Beg prayers, assure unswerving loyalty, devotion, beloved Guardian.'

To which the Guardian replied on 6th September:

'Delighted great success, deeply appreciate resolve. Loving prayers.'

23rd August 1955

The Persecution in Persia

Certain amendments to the cable below, to the American National Assembly dated 23rd August, have been received and are incorporated in the text given here, especially in paragraphs seven and ten.

'Mysterious dispensations ever-watchful Providence (are) hastening, through turmoil (and) trial, triumph His undefeatable Faith, dictating (at) this critical hour sudden deterioration (of the) situation confronting largest community Bahá'í world, as evidenced (by the) violent recrudescence persecution afflicting intermittently (for) over (a) century, its members residing Bahá'u'lláh's native land.

Following seizure, destruction dome (of the) Community's national administrative headquarters, occupation (of) similar institutions (in) all provinces, government declaration (to the) Majlis outlawing Faith (and a) virulent press (and) radio campaign, distorting its history, calumniating its Founders, misrepresenting its tenets, obscuring its aims (and) purposes, (a) series (of) atrocities (has been) perpetrated (in) rapid succession (throughout) length, breadth land against members sorely-tried Community.

House (of the) Báb, foremost Shrine (in) Iran, twice desecrated, severely damaged; Bahá'u'lláh's ancestral home (at) Tákur occupied; house (of the) Báb's uncle razed (to the) ground; shops, farms plundered; crops burned, livestock destroyed; bodies disinterred (in) cemeteries (and) mutilated; private houses broken into, damaged, looted; adults execrated, beaten; young women abducted, forced marry Muslims; children mocked, reviled, beaten, expelled schools; boycott (by) butchers, bakers imposed; fifteen-year-old girl raped; eleven-month-old baby trampled underfoot; pressure brought bear (upon) believers (to) recant Faith.

More recently (a) family (of) seven, oldest eighty, youngest nineteen, residing Hurmuzak (in) Province (of) Yazd, set upon (by) mob two thousand strong, accompanied music (of) drums (and) trumpets, (which) hacked them (to) pieces with spades (and) axes. Meanwhile official circular issued (by the) Prime Minister,

addressed Government Departments, ordering expulsion (of) all Bahá'í employees refusing (to) recant.

(This) highly distressing situation threatens (to) worsen (during) Muharram (and) Safar.

Reacting (to) these barbarous acts, over thousand groups, local assemblies (of) Bahá'í world appealed telegraphically (to) the authorities, (and) all National Assemblies addressed written communications (to) Sháh, government (and) parliament, pleading (for) justice, protection.

Finding pleas unanswered, (an) appeal (has been) lodged (with) United Nations (by) representatives International Bahá'í Community (at) Geneva. Copies appeal delivered (to) representatives (of) member nations (of) the Social (and) Economic Council, Director Human Rights Division, certain specialised agencies, (and) non-governmental organisations with consultative status. Furthermore, President Eisenhower, who, according (to) newspapers, first mentioned (the) persecutions (at) a press conference in Washington, appealed (to) National representatives (of) the American Bahá'í Community, all Assemblies, groups (in) the United States (to) intervene behalf oppressed sister Community.

Whatever (the) outcome (of) present heart-rending events, one fact emerges clear (and) indisputable. God's infant Faith, provided, through operation quarter-century-long process associated (with) first epoch formative age (of) the Faith, (with) the machinery (of) a divinely appointed Administrative Order; utilising, (in) the course (of) the succeeding epoch, through formulation (of) a series (of) national plans, culminating launching World Crusade, (the) newly-born administrative agencies for systematic propagation Faith; (is) now gradually emerging from obscurity (in) wake (of) the ordeal convulsing overwhelming majority (of) the followers (of) the Faith.

World-wide reverberations (of) this nation-wide commotion will be hailed (by) posterity (as) mighty blast (of) God's trumpet designed awaken, through instrumentality its oldest, most redoubtable, most vicious, most fanatical adversaries, countless multitudes, Chancelleries, Chief Magistrates (of) the East (and) West, (to) existence, implications Faith proclaimed (by) His Messenger (in) this Day. This long-desired, ardently-hoped-for emergence, itself (a) long-drawn-out process, (is) bound pave way emancipation (of) this) same Faith (from) fetters orthodoxy (in) Islamic countries, as well as ultimate recognition independent character Revelation Bahá'u'lláh (in) His homeland.

Owing grievous losses sustained, necessity demonstrate world-wide Bahá'í solidarity an 'aid (for) the persecuted' fund (has been) inaugurated (for) the purpose bringing immediate relief despoiled, homeless victims. Myself contributing equivalent eighteen thousand dollars (for) this noble purpose. However conscious (I am) of the manifold demands (on) the adherents (of) the Faith, (I am) impelled invite them participate through contributions to be transmitted through (their) respective National Assemblies.

Moreover, undeterred obstacles placed path crusaders (of) Bahá'u'lláh, historic decision arrived at (to) raise Mother Temple (of) Africa (in) the City (of) Kampala, situated (at) its heart (and) constituting supreme consolation (to) the masses (of) oppressed, valiant brethren (in) Cradle Faith. Every continent globe except Australasia will thereby pride itself (and) derive direct spiritual benefits (from) its own Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Befitting recognition will, moreover, have been accorded (the) marvellous expansion (of) the Faith (and) amazing multiplication its administrative institutions throughout this continent, a continent fully deserving a House (of) Worship, complementing (the) four national Hazíratu'l-Quds already established, wherein spirit unconquerable Faith can dwell, within whose walls African adherents Faith Bahá'u'lláh can congregate, from which anthems (of) praise glorifying (the) Most Great Name can ascend (to) the Concourse (in) the Abhá Kingdom.

Transmit message Hands Cause, National Assemblies.'

From a letter to the American National Assembly

The Guardian wrote to the American National Assembly a long letter, dated 20th August, about the persecution in Persia, from which the following extract is taken:

This fresh ordeal that has, in pursuance of the mysterious dispensations of Providence, afflicted the Faith at this unexpected hour, far from dealing a fatal blow to its institutions or existence, should be regarded as a blessing in disguise, not a 'calamity' but a 'providence' of God, not a devastating flood but a 'gentle rain' on a 'green pasture', a 'wick' and 'oil' unto the 'lamp' of His Faith, a 'nurture' for His Cause, 'water for that which has been planted in the hearts of men', a 'crown set on the head' of His Messenger for this Day.

Whatever its outcome, this sudden commotion that has seized the Bahá'í world, that has revived the hopes and emboldened the host of the adversaries of the Faith intent on quenching its light and obliterating it from the face of the earth, has served as a trumpet call in the sounding of which the Press of the world, the cries of its vociferous enemies, the public remonstrances of both men of good will and those in authority have joined, proclaiming far and wide its existence, publicising its history, defending its verities, unveiling its truths, demonstrating the character of its institutions and advertising its aims and purposes.

Seldom, if at any time since its inception, has such a widespread publicity been accorded the infant Faith of God, now at long last emerging from an obscurity which has so long and so grievously oppressed it. Not even the dramatic execution of its Herald, nor the blood-bath which, in circumstances of fiendish cruelty followed quickly in its wake in the city of Tíhran, nor even the widely advertised travels of the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant in the West, succeeded in focusing the attention of the world and in inviting the notice of those in high places as has this latest mani-

festation of God's inscrutable will, this marvellous demonstration of His invincible power, this latest move in His own Major Plan, using both the mighty and lowly as pawns in His world-shaping game, for the fulfilment of His immediate purpose and the eventual establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

For though the newly-launched world Spiritual Crusade, constituting at best only the Minor Plan in the execution of the Almighty's design for the redemption of mankind—has, as a result of this turmoil, paralysing temporarily the vast majority of the organised followers of Bahá'u'lláh within His birthplace, suffered a severe setback—yet the overall Plan of God, moving mysteriously and in contrast to the orderly and well-known processes of a clearly devised Plan, has received an impetus the force of which only posterity can adequately assess.

A Faith which, for a quarter of a century has, in strict accordance with the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, been building its Administrative Order—the embryonic World Order of Bahá'u'lláh—through the laborious erection of its local and national administrative institutions; which set out, in the opening years of the second epoch of this formative age, through the launching of a series of national Plans as well as a World Crusade, to utilise the machinery of its institutions, created patiently and unobtrusively in the course of the first Epoch of that Age, for the systematic propagation of its teachings in all continents and chief islands of the globe—such a Faith finds itself, whilst in the midst of discharging its second and vital task, thrust into the limelight of an unprecedented publicity—a publicity which its followers never anticipated, which will involve them in fresh and inescapable responsibilities, and which will, no doubt, reinforce the tasks which they have undertaken, in recent years, to discharge.

To the intensification of such a publicity in which non-Bahá'í agencies and even the avowed adversaries of the Faith are playing so active a part, the members of the American Bahá'í Community, the outstanding defenders of the Faith, blessed with a freedom so cruelly denied the vast majority of their brethren, and equipped with the means and instruments needed to make that publicity effective, must fully and decisively contribute. The echoes of the mighty trumpet blast, now so providentially sounded, awakening a multitude of the ignorant and the sceptical, both high and low, to the existence and significance of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, must under no circumstances, and at such a propitious hour, be allowed to die out. Nay, their reverberations must be followed up by further calls designed to proclaim, in still more resounding tones, the aims and tenets of his glorious Cause, and to expose, whilst avoiding any attack on the ruling authorities, even more convincingly than before, the barbarous ferocity of the acts which have been perpetrated, as well as the odious fanaticism which has inspired such conduct.

Strenuous and urgent as is the task falling to the lot of a Community (i.e. the American Bahá'í Community) already so overburdened with a multiplicity of unavoid-

able obligations, the possibilities involved in the assumption of this supplementary responsibility are truly tremendous, the benefits that are destined to accrue from its proper discharge are immense, and the reward inestimably rich.

Let them remember, as they pursue diligently this sacred task, that such a publicity, following closely upon such dire tribulations, afflicting so large a number of their brethren in so sacred a land, cannot but prove to be a prelude, however slow the process involved, to the emancipation of these same valiant sufferers from the galling fetters of an antiquated religious orthodoxy which, great as has been its decline in the course of over a century, still wields considerable power and exercises a widespread influence in high circles as well as among the masses. Such an emancipation which cannot be confined to Bahá'u'lláh's native land will, in varying measure, have its repercussions in Islamic countries, or may be even preceded by a similar phenomenon in neighbouring territories, hastening and adding fresh impetus to the bursting of the bonds that fetter the freedom of the followers of God's infant Faith.

Such a consummation will, in its turn, pave the way for the recognition of the Faith as an independent religion established on a basis of absolute equality with its sister religions, enjoying the unqualified protection of the civil authorities for its followers and its institutions, and fully empowered, in all matters related to Personal Status, to apply without any reservations the laws and ordinances ordained in the Most Holy Book.

For Meditation

Thy might beareth me witness! I am well aware that were I to bow myself before a handful of dust, from now until the end that hath no end, in acknowledgment of its relationship to Thy name, the Fashioner, I would still find myself far removed from that dust, and incapable of approaching it, and would discover that such an adoration can in no wise befit it, nor transcend the limitations to which I myself have been subjected. And were I to arise to serve one of Thy servants, and to wait at his door so long as Thine own kingdom endureth and Thine omnipotence will last, as a sign of my acknowledgment of the tie that bindeth him to Thy name, the Creator, I would, likewise—and to this Thy glory beareth me witness—have to confess my complete failure to do him adequate service, and my deprivation of what can truly befit his station. And this for the reason that I recognise in them naught else except the bond that bindeth them to Thy names and Thine attributes.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

AN INTRODUCTION TO 'THE PROMISED DAY IS COME'

by George Townshend

Strongly marked by those dynamic features which distinguish the writing of Shoghi Effendi from the other authors of the present age, *The Promised Day is Come* is the most challenging, the most impassioned, the most momentous of the works of the Guardian. It is not merely an argument, but an overpowering indictment of mankind for their rejection and unremitting persecution of the Promised One of All Ages Who has come upon them (as prophecy foretold) like 'a thief in the night' of their spiritual darkness. The author traces the calamities of the world to-day to one main cause: the spiritual waywardness of the human race.

The book has for its central theme the Bible's great subject: God's Plan of Universal Redemption. This plan is usually regarded by practising Christians as a thing settled and fixed. Christ, by His teachings and sacrifice has, they think, already won the salvation of the world. All who acknowledge Him as their saviour are saved and the Christian Churches are the trustees for the administration and extension of the grand redemptive process. Christianity is regarded as final. Sacred history is regarded as over; the Covenant of God under which it was operated is at an end; we are living under a distinct system commonly known as Secular History.

This book, like all the works of Shoghi Effendi, challenges such an interpretation of the Gospel altogether. He regards the divine plan of salvation as still the central theme of human history, active, urgent and constituting the most vital issue of all human life. The everlasting Covenant is to this day, as in the times of the Bible, the one constant operating system through which God supplies the driving force of human history and directs every detail of its movement. The notions of a 'sacred history' and a 'secular history' are idle fancies of the mind and have no real existence at all. Whether religious thinkers realise it or not, the course of human events has through all these centuries been proceeding along the course foreordained by God and indicated in Bible prophecy. Now in our time something unique has occurred. Something foretold hundreds and thousands of years ago has at last come to pass. A great Prophet has stood forth, declaring that the time ordained for the unification and regeneration of the human race has arrived, and that He has been sent by the Almighty to make this announcement and to carry out the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth in the power and according to the instructions of the Most High God.

In other writings (as the *Goal of a New World Order* or the *Unfoldment of World Civilisation*), Shoghi Effendi has shown forth the creative effect of The

Word of Bahá'u'lláh—in changing human lives, attracting human hearts, uniting human beings brought up in alien traditions, building a closely-knit and organised fellowship, and spreading it through the world. He has shown the power of the Bahá'í Faith and its Founder to endure and master opposition, calumny, maltreatment, and difficulties of every kind. But here it is otherwise.

Here the author, on the other hand, dilates on the persecution to which Bahá'u'lláh and His Great Companions were subjected year after year, indeed throughout their whole Ministry, on the exile and imprisonment, on the vilification, the contempt, the indignities, the agonies of body and the anguish of mind which they were made to endure. He tells of the princes, the monarchs, the great dignitaries, the great rulers, to whom His messages were sent, and of their insolence, their disdain, their heedlessness to His words; he tells of Bahá'u'lláh's appeals that His Cause should be investigated and His many wrongs examined and redressed, and of the callous indifference and neglect with which these appeals were met. Then from the pages of history he shows how retribution was visited by the wrath of God on these potentates; he tells of thrones upset, dynasties humbled to the dust, institutions the most ancient and venerable collapsing suddenly into grievous decay; he shows a whole social order captained by these royal or ecclesiastical magnates shaken, convulsed, disrupted, and subverted, and proves with a logic and a clearness which none can deny or resist that the tragic decline of the West is not an unaccountable riddle, but has been brought about by a clear spiritual cause—just as the fall of Jerusalem at the beginning of our era was brought about by the Jews' rejection and crucifixion of their unrecognised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

In 1941, when the Guardian, moved by indignation and by pity, published this book, much of the suffering that since that year has fallen on us, or soon must fall, might still have been averted. But neither the great world nor its leaders took any notice of his warnings, much less any action.

How is it they cannot see what Shoghi Effendi sees and shows them? Because they have deserted the standards of their Bible and its values and are unable to read Holy Writ with a spiritual mind or a purified heart. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation have obscured their vision. Misled by prejudice, they cannot contemplate the history of our own time and weigh its deeds and its values by the same tests they are taught to apply in the Old and New Testaments. Instead of using God's standard, they use the standards of human convention. They cannot see God with their own eyes, or hear his word with their own ears.

When will an independent generation arise who will listen to the spiritual truths with their own hearts?

A VISIT TO THE NORTHERN ISLANDS PIONEERS

by M. S. Mihaeloff

When you set off for the Northern islands, you have a feeling as you step into the plane that you are almost bound for another planet. There is still something heroic about going so far north. In fact, as you fly on, the countryside underneath you becomes bleaker, the terrain becomes less and less cultivated, and past Banff you do not see a tree again until you fly back.

You have this feeling that it is so hard just to keep alive in this growing desolation that the people are going to be morose, self-centred and humourless, and that all these places are pretty much the same.

Yet nothing could be more wrong. I don't think I could have had a happier time anywhere else, not only with the wonderful pioneers but with their friends, and none of these places is really quite like either of the other two.

A general impression of the effect of the pioneers on the people in the places in which they live is that now I feel I understand better what the Master meant when he said that he 'wished distinction for us'. Here you have these islands, so long isolated, their people suspicious of anything or anyone new, really fighting hard to make a living (apart from the Orkneys, where they are relatively wealthy) and, on the other hand, you have these Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, none of them wealthy, none of them indulging in the local drinking pastimes, literally drawing people to them because they give them a feeling of Peace instead of the atmosphere of strife in which they live, of rest instead of running away from things, of contentment instead of grumbling. You really have to be there to savour the full flavour of the experience.

So rather than go on trying unsuccessfully to analyse the feeling that I experienced at their feet, I shall just go on to tell you what happened, and only hope that you too will some time go to visit these spiritual giants and come back thankful for the enormous mercy of being able to celebrate a Bahá'í Feast with fellow-Believers; just that!

Just as each of these places is each different, so is the effect of each Knight on you. Charlie Dunning teaches you a kind of dogged and absolute reliance on

the Will of Bahá'u'lláh. You learn from him a supreme confidence to hold fast regardless. It is something that even Charlie can't explain away. The people there, even without realising it, are drawn to him and by so doing recognise and pay tribute to this greatness. The opening gambit in every conversation I had with people there was astonishment at the amazing recovery Charlie had made from his illness earlier this year.

From Brigitte, you come away having learnt how to present the Bahá'í teachings 'like a gift to a King', how to love your enemies, 'look upon your evil-wishers as your well-wishers' and what it is to genuinely care for other people and always think of something to do for them.

Finally, from Eskil Ljunberg you learn acceptance of impossible living conditions as the 'price one has to pay to serve Him'. Just how it must feel to be so isolated with two boats a month taking two and a half days to Europe; no air service; no visitors since he went there, and still to pour out that ocean of love!

I just want to tell you now about a few of the things that happened as examples not only of the reception you will get from the friends of the pioneers, but to show what a wonderful time you will have there.

I shall always remember the Italian café owner of Kirkwall saying as we were leaving, 'Don't worry about Charles, we're keeping an eye on him'. Or the customs officer at Lerwick saying, 'We have the highest regard for Miss Hasselblatt here'. Or Brigitte listening to the tape-recordings of Convention, her face lighting up as though she was meeting the person face to face each time she recognised the voice.

And for ever I shall warmly remember the respect and honour accorded to the visiting Bahá'í by Eskil's friends, to the extent of two dinner parties and one fireside, where one of the contacts explained what the Faith was to two neighbours of Eskil's; the first talk ever given about the Cause in the Faroese language which was tape-recorded. Just think of the extent to which Eskil must have 'lived' the Cause to have such treatment given to Eskil's friend!

Finally, I shall never forget how these wonderful pioneers from whom you learn so much about the art of being a Bahá'í meet you everywhere, worry and fuss about your comfort and turn to you, of all people, for guidance, you who have come to seek wisdom from them . . .