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TABLET FROM 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ TO THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF ENGLAND

HE IS GOD

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

Your letter, which was written by heavenly inspiration, whose contents and meanings are full of interest, and whose discrimination springs from hearts that shine, has been received. Of a truth, the believers of London, being steadfast servants, stand firm. They shall not slacken, nor, in the lapse of time, shall their light grow dim. For they are Bahá'ís, children of Heaven and of the light of the Godhead. Surely, without doubt they shall be the cause of spreading God's Word, and the channel for spreading the Divine Teachings and bringing about the unity and equality of mankind.

It is easy to accept the Kingdom, but it is difficult to endure therein, for the tests are hard and heavy. On all occasions the English are firm and are not turned aside, being neither prone to begin a matter for a little while nor ready to abandon it for a little reason through failing in zeal. Verily in every undertaking they show firmness.

Though you dwell in the West, praise be to God, you have heard the Divine Call from the East, and like unto Moses you have become warmed by the fire of the Tree that has been lighted in Asia, and you have found the true Path, becoming kindled like lamps, having entered into the Kingdom of God. Now in thanksgiving for this bounty you pray for blessing on the people of the world, till by light of the Kingdom of Splendour their eyes become illuminated and their hearts become even as mirrors attaining the rays of the Sun of Truth.

My hope is this: that the outbreathing of the Holy Spirit be inspired into your hearts, that your tongues begin to reveal the mysteries and to expound the meaning and the truth of the Holy Books. May the friends become physicians to cure by the Divine Teachings the deep-rooted diseases of the body of the world, to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead and awakening to the sleepers. Be sure that the blessing of the Holy Spirit will descend upon you, and that the Hosts of the Kingdom will come to your aid.

Upon you be the Glory of God!

(Signed)

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ ABBAS

Given at Ramleh, Egypt, May 1911.

ORKNEY CORRESPONDENCE

A FRANK COMMENT ON THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

Written at the request of Mr. Charles Dunning by the Assistant Editor of the ORKNEY HERALD, Kirkwall

I should say that possibly four people in Kirkwall have some grasp of Bahá'í teaching. Mr. Charles Dunning has been tireless in his efforts to spread his faith, but Orkney is strongly conservative in religious outlook, and I should think the prospect of forming an assembly in Kirkwall is remote. Those who have taken the trouble to read and evaluate books on the Bahá'í Faith in this town do not feel antagonistic to its teachings, for it is obvious that these teachings are profoundly ethical, but the serious Christians among them find in the religion of Christ a more compelling power, and find too in Christianity—what the Bahá'í Faith does not seem to offer—a divine atonement for sin.

To the convinced Christian, Christ is *Lord*—a claim he stakes his soul upon, and a loyalty to which he dare not be false. To such a man there can be no other allegiance. Waverers, and good people without religious affiliations, may be attracted to the Bahá'í Faith, and it may do some of them much good. But it seems to me that their actual loyalty would depend on the weight of the claims made on them. Bahá'í pioneers will need to be careful not to encourage people who have found the claims of Christianity too heavy and want to find an 'easy' faith.

All men of goodwill must be in agreement with many of the aims and ideas of the Bahá'í Faith, but the questions most thoughtful people in Kirkwall would ask are these: Is it better than Christianity? Does it excel in ethical teaching the Sermon on the Mount? Does it offer any central truth to equal that of the living, immanent reality of the risen Christ? Unless the answers to these questions are in each case Yes, the question must be asked: Why offer it in a Christian country as a substitute for the accepted faith?

It will be obvious where the present writer stands. He is sympathetic to all that is good in the movement, but his allegiance is to his Church. While endeavouring to be open-minded and fair, he could not for a moment consider dividing that allegiance. Any value his remarks may have may be as a guide to the feelings of the more serious type of Christian. They are not offered gratuitously; for they have been written only at the pressing invitation of Mr. Charles Dunning.

A REPLY TO A 'FRANK COMMENT ON THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH'

By Dr. Ernest Miller

(1) The first point stated in this comment is that serious Christians find in the religion of Christ a more compelling power.

My reply, writing as a Bahá'í, is that this is simply because their eyes have not yet been opened to the Divine majesty, power, beauty and love manifested in Bahá'u'lláh and revealed in the Bahá'í writings. It is because their enlightenment has first come from the Christian scriptures that these hold their faith and that they find in them a source of power.

(2) It is stated that the Bahá'í Faith does not seem to offer a Divine atonement for sin.

This is due to a misunderstanding. It is repeatedly insisted in the Bahá'í writings that all the Holy Manifestations suffer willingly in ways and to a degree that we cannot imagine, so that thereby we may be freed from the bondage of self and sin and 'attain unto true liberty'. Their tribulations are 'a glory wherewith God hath adorned His own Self'. The suffering of Jesus on the cross, as taught in Christian doctrine and represented in Christian art, is one instance of this, which especially for Christians symbolizes the whole. The Christ Spirit is crucified again and again in all the sufferings of all the Holy Manifestations.

(3) 'To the convinced Christian Christ is *Lord*—a claim he stakes his soul upon, and a loyalty to which he dare not be false. To such a man there can be no other allegiance.'

The loyalty to Jesus Christ and to Bahá'u'lláh are one and the same. There is no possible conflict. In each case the loyalty is to God and His Divine Perfections revealed in the man, Jesus, and in the man, Husayn 'Alí (Bahá'u'lláh).

(4) 'Is the Bahá'í Faith better than Christianity? Does it excel in ethical teaching the Sermon on the Mount?'

It is better for the world of humanity as it is to-day. It accepts the gospels as divinely inspired, though not always to be understood literally. It accepts Jesus as being all that He is therein represented as claiming to be and it accepts His teachings. Thus the Sermon on the Mount is as much a part of the Bahá'í scriptures as the Old Testament is part of the Christian scriptures. Bahá'í ethical teaching does not excel that of the Sermon on the Mount, so far as the relations of one individual to another are concerned. But it goes beyond the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount in that it deals also with the relations of the individual to humanity as a whole, teaching us that the unity of mankind in the love of God is for this day 'the goal that excelleth every other goal'. Further, it reveals the nature of the institutions through which this goal will be achieved, and the believers are commanded to concern themselves with establishing and preserving these institutions in addition to serving their fellow-men individually like Good Samaritans.

(5) 'Does it offer any central truth to equal that of the living, immanent reality of the risen Christ?'

Yes, it confirms the living immanent reality of the risen Christ in the eternal Divine Unity of all the Holy Manifestations of the past, present and future, the Word of St. John's gospel, by whom God, the transcendent Deity, creates all things that are created and reveals Himself to His creation.

(6) 'Why offer it in a Christian country as a substitute for the accepted faith?'

Because it is the chapter of the book of the one religion of God which applies especially to our times. The Sermon on the Mount was not preached to the Jews when Moses gave them the ten commandments—they were not ready for it. Similarly, the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh was not created to establish the organic unity of mankind when Christ gave His message and His revelation of God's love—the world was not ready for it. Now in this day of mankind's maturity there is a need for the Bahá'í institutions—the

Guardian, the appointed Hands of the Cause and their assistants, and the legislative and administrative bodies, local, national and international, elected in a manner prescribed by divine wisdom. These provide mankind with its focal point of loyalty on the material plane at the world centre on Mount Carmel, as well as with the inspired guidance and effective spiritual power to establish the peaceful world community, in which it can fulfil its unimaginable destiny.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the writer of '*A Frank Comment on the Bahá'í Faith*'. The evident sincerity and the clarity of what he has written have enabled me to appreciate more clearly than before that there is a unity of the Spirit across the barriers of supposedly different religions.

E.A.T.C.

The Committee is pleased to note signs of a quickening of interest in the Faith in the islands under its jurisdiction. In the Faroes Eskil Ljungberg has had many visitors during the summer months and a good proportion of these have been interested in the Faith. Recently Eskil reported that the Consul is reading *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, which he presented to him a couple of days after the Consul had received some great honour from the Italian Government in recognition of his services.

In Shetland Brigitte Haselblatt, Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, and the new native Bahá'í, Mrs. Lilian McKay, have embarked on a full programme of work for the Faith. During the Christmas vacation, Peter McLaren, a Bahá'í from U.S.A., recently arrived in Glasgow to take a postgraduate study course at the Royal Technical College, visited Shetland, Orkney and the Hebrides, and was able to meet a number of the local people in each island. His full report has not yet been received.

Charles Dunning, Knight of Bahá'u'lláh in Orkney, has gone on pilgrimage to Haifa. After many attempts to go by cargo boat he had eventually to fly on January 6th: this late departure gave him a chance to attend Teaching Conference in Birmingham and to take with him when he left a personal message to the Guardian signed by every person attending the Conference.

Government restrictions in Eire make it difficult for pioneers to settle there, but the efforts of three would-be pioneer couples have cheered up the Committee: we sincerely hope these may be successful. Jersey, too, is a difficult place to pioneer for the same reason, but here again we are glad to be able to report that several people are making efforts to settle there: we trust they will succeed.

The valiant pioneers in Malta are also doing good work. They need a pioneer, preferably a man.

Hong Kong has reported a recent addition to their numbers: Mr. Chiu declared his belief in the Faith in November. Mr. Datwani, acting secretary in the absence of Mrs. Mamie Seto, gave news of Chinese prayer books recently published in Macao; of Bahá'í teaching being given in Mentawai Islands despite the opposition coming from other religions, and of Mr. Azizi's wish to go to Hainan—a project which the Guardian is anxious should be accomplished at an early date. Mr. and Mrs. Shariffi, Bahá'ís from Iran, are expected in Hong Kong soon.

THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN BRITISH GUIANA

We have received the following report from British Guiana, where Dick and Vida Backwell are pioneering:

Dr. Malcolm King, a Jamaican who had qualified in the United States and practised in Milwaukee, came to British Guiana in October 1953, his fifth pioneer project in a virgin territory. He was 73 when he arrived, and could stay for only a few months before returning to the United States both to keep his practice going and to retain his citizenship. It was a time of great political turmoil in British Guiana, where the constitution had been suspended and emergency regulations imposed entailing various restrictions.

Before he returned home, however, Alan Delph, Reggie Stone, John Leacock and Alston Quow had embraced the Faith and the foundations laid for further development.

Malcolm King came back to British Guiana in December 1954 and remained until July 1955 when, after seeing the first assembly formed in Georgetown from among ten members, he departed to pioneer in Trinidad. During all this period he held two discussion groups each week, on Wednesdays and Sundays, at Alan Delph's and Mrs. Winter's houses. He also spoke of the Cause privately to a great number of people prominent in government and professional circles and placed a quantity of Bahá'í books in the public library.

Alston Quow had departed to Mackenzie, the centre of the bauxite industry about 67 miles up-river from Georgetown, but between December 1954 and April 1955 five more people, Adrienne Winter, Clarine Savory, Ivan and Radleen Fraser, Dr. Charles Nicholson declared themselves and Vida and Dick Backwell arrived from the British Isles to strengthen the community. Before he left for Trinidad a further five had declared, Marion Bunyan, Clement Washington, Frederick Lowrie, Edgar Wood, Pearl Weston.

During the last eighteen months, since Dr. King's departure, there has been a steady stream of persons joining the Faith which now (November 1956) numbers 26 adults and one youth. Together with the 17 children of parents who are Bahá'ís on both sides, the Georgetown community numbers 44 souls.

British Guiana is a country of some 83,000 square miles, but its population of about 495,000 is almost wholly resident on a narrow coastal strip 270 miles long, much of it below sea level at high tide. The towns are few, Georgetown (120,000), New Amsterdam (14,000), Bartica, Mackenzie being the only places with more than a few hundred people. The remainder live in scattered villages, sugar estate communities, small timber and other settlements and aboriginal reserves. The people themselves derive from varied environments and comprise the following approximate numbers: Amerindians or aboriginals, 24,000; Africans, 170,000; British, 4,000; Chinese, 4,000; East Indian, 230,000 (Muslim 35,000, the rest Hindu); Portuguese, 9,000, and Mixed 54,000.

The Bahá'í community at first was composed of people of African, British and Mixed origin, all of Christian background. It was perhaps not surprising that the Guardian in reply to their first letter to him advised concentration upon those of other ethnic origins so that the community should more truly reflect the ethnic composition of the population as a whole.

It was therefore a great thrill to all the believers when an East Indian, one of the only five recognised Muslim marriage officers, sought to embrace the Cause and subsequently asked for a Bahá'í marriage ceremony. There are now good prospects of not only his Muslim wife but also of two or three other East Indians of Hindu religion shortly declaring themselves.

Most of the Bahá'ís live in Georgetown, but apart from Alston Quow in Mackenzie, there are believers now in Craig, Providence, Kitty, Lodge and Bel Air which are localities either several miles from the capital town or neighbouring suburban areas not strictly within its civic limits.

Public meetings, by invitation only, were held in Georgetown in March, in Lodge in May, in Kitty in July, in Farm in September this year, attracting 75, 55, 27 and 92 respectively. Several more books have been placed in the public library, which has promised to circulate them to branch libraries in the country districts, and indeed \$400 worth of Bahá'í books have been sold in under two years. Contact with New Delhi has been established for the supply of books specially written to attract Hindus. Copies of *Prescription for Living* have been accepted for the sugar estate welfare libraries. A broadcast review of the same book was given over the local radio station. Bahá'í books have been placed in the public library in Bridgetown, Barbados. Articles about the Faith have been accepted by all three daily newspapers since August and continue to be accepted at intervals by the *Daily Argosy*, which has published fourteen articles so far.

The Georgetown community has helped finance a week's visit by Vida Backwell to Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, in November 1955, has sent money (\$72 B.W.I.) to the Persian Relief Fund and has collected \$50 B.W.I. for the International Fund to be transmitted this month. Plans for incorporation are well ahead and should be completed during the next month. The goal of translation into Arawak seems likely to be frustrated for lack of a written form of the language.

Contact has been established with a few groups of Hindus and talks given on Muslim platforms on several occasions. Discussion meetings have been held in several localities, both inside and outside Georgetown, and several people visiting Great Britain on holiday have been put in touch with Bahá'ís in London and returned with deepened interest.

As the small Bahá'í community in British Guiana grows it faces growing pains. The problems of such an ethnically diverse population constitute a challenge and a great promise. The prayers of the British Bahá'ís are besought for continued progress and united effort towards the great future that lies inherent in the peoples and land of British Guiana.

NATIONAL BAHÁ'Í ARCHIVES

We report with deepest gratitude the gift of a Lock of the Hair of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. This hair has been in the possession of Hasan Balyuzi's family, together with Tablets from Bahá'u'lláh which accompanied it, and has been given by him to the National Archives. A relic having such an intimate connection with the Manifestation of God is the holiest item in our archives. In one of His prayers Bahá'u'lláh says: 'The hair of my head declareth the power of Thy sovereignty and might.'

Change of Address

Cardiff Secretary. David Lewis, 56 King George V Drive, Heath, Cardiff.

Additions to the Community

Since the last list was published, registration cards have been received from the following:

Houshang-Behrouz (from Iran)	Plymouth
Nora Rafat (from Iran)	London
Frances Bateman	Reading
Vida Nassiry (Youth from Iran)	Woodford Green
Marjory Lucas	Manchester
Mehrangiz Zamiadi (from Iran)	London
Jehangir Hedayati (from Iran)	London
Steven Jackson (Youth)	Nottingham
Betty Bowd	Reading
Harold Shepherd	Manchester
Peter McLaren (from U.S.A.)	Glasgow
Elizabeth Wren (Youth)	Portsmouth
Doris Steen	Brighton
Shahin Azadeh (from Iran)	Northampton
Parvin Arfai (from Iran)	Northampton
Simindokht Bahi (from Iran)	Sheffield
Margarete Pryce	Bristol
Julian Griffin	London
Christiane Merseburger	London
Svend Kamming	London
Jack Singer (from U.S.A.)	London
Esther Singer (from U.S.A.)	London

BAHÁ'Í PUBLISHING TRUST

CHRIST AND BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, BY GEORGE TOWNSHEND

This book, which the Guardian has described as Mr. Townshend's crowning achievement, is expected to be ready in March. It shows how Christian leaders have for nearly two thousand years misled their flocks and how the Teaching Jesus has been fulfilled successively by Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh. Published by George Ronald.

Paper 5s. od.

Cloth 8s. 6d.