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HISTORY UNFOLDS

Hundreds of millions of years ago, when the earth was young, the earliest living things floated beneath the surface of the sea. The spirit of God surged causing single cells to unite into more complex life; it surged again, and life left the sea for dry land. Surge after surge of the creative spirit raised the summit of earthly existence until our forefathers, recognisably human, stood upright upon the ground. Five hundred thousand years passed, during which man lived a life so different from our own that we can neither discover nor understand its true nature. Then, six thousand years ago, the Adamic cycle started; the human spirit reached its modern phase of development. The era of civilisation began. Hundreds of millions of years of planned development, planned by God to usher in our present age, brought mankind to the cycle of civilisation.

For six thousand years of this cycle man has battled on, sometimes walking in the path of God, but mostly killing, persecuting, torturing his fellow-men. For six thousand years there has been no peace upon the earth, and very little in the souls of men. These years have been prophetic, preliminary to the era of fulfilment. And now God has cried 'Enough'. The fighting and the killing are to cease; the hearts of men are to find rest; the Kingdom of God is to be established upon earth, giving rise to a world civilisation, divinely inspired, that will progress continuously to a distant maturity many thousands of years ahead. For this fulfilment evolution was ordained; for this fulfilment man descended from the trees; and for this fulfilment civilisation came into being. All that has gone before upon the earth has been a prelude to this great day of the unity of mankind; all that comes after for five hundred thousand years will depend upon the unification now taking place. No wonder Bahá'u'lláh proclaims so vibrantly and repeatedly the greatness, the unsurpassable greatness, of this Day.

We who live in it are greatly privileged. We are the chosen instruments of that creative Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh, for establishing the Cause of God throughout the world. We, the members of the Bahá'í Community, have been chosen for reasons known only to Bahá'u'lláh to lead mankind to a recognition of its true destiny; and if we fail in the

trust that He has given us, we are told that God will raise the stones in our place to execute His Will. But we are instruments only; we do not have the task, far beyond our powers, of planning and executing alone so great an undertaking. The heavenly hosts stand ready to seize every opportunity we give them; the Guardian of the Cause of God brings us guidance directly from Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant works unseen but irresistibly to ensure the triumph of the Word of God.

The unique and incomparably important undertaking of establishing world unity, in which the Bahá'ís are now engaged, began with the Declaration by the Báb of His Mission in 1844. 'Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land', He told the Letters of the Living 'And, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His (Bahá'u'lláh's) coming'. From that day on the promoters of the Cause of God have been working in accordance with a divinely guided plan. First the Báb guided the promulgation of the teachings, then Bahá'u'lláh, then 'Abdu'l-Bahá; towards the end of his life 'Abdu'l-Bahá provided the Tablets of the Divine Plan to form the Teaching Charter for the remainder of the Dispensation; and on His passing He left us the Guardianship through which the Divine Plan will be made to bear its fairest fruit. Contemplating the Tablets of the Divine Plan, the Guardian has now evolved for us the Ten Year Crusade, the latest manifestation of the Divine Plan for establishing the Most Great Peace, in which man's ordered life will culminate. It is not too much to say that the Ten Year Crusade constitutes at this moment the growing point of life on this planet. Those who execute it are the heirs of all progress since life on the earth began.

The Ten Year Crusade is not just a practical scheme for organising the teaching work, nor even an ordinary phase of the Divine Plan for establishing the Most Great Peace. It covers a phase of unique significance, for through it Daniel's prophecy 'blessed is he who cometh to the 1335 days' will be fulfilled. 'This prophecy', the Guardian has written to a believer, 'refers to the spread of the Faith over the entire globe—which is the real goal of the Ten Year Crusade.' How blessed are we, who have been permitted to serve the Cause of

God during this historic period! All who are true Bahá'ís must surely pray night and day to be enabled to perform ever more effective service in the great Crusade that is preparing the way for the eventual salvation of mankind from degradation and suffering. As we study the Tablets of the Divine Plan to find how to serve more effectively, we are struck by the comprehensive guidance the Master has given us. Although some of the Tablets may seem to apply to a specific area, really all have general significance; the first four, addressed to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada jointly, and significant primarily for international teaching, and the last eight, addressed to the Bahá'ís of various parts of America, for local teaching in any part of the world. He who would teach as God would have him teach should study carefully the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

In these Tablets, over and over again, the Master compares teaching with scattering seeds. Now seeds do not grow, still less give fruit, at once; so we must not be impatient, or disconsolate if our teaching does not bear immediate fruit, but must patiently go on teaching. 'A person declaring the glad tidings of the appearance of the realities and significances of the Kingdom', says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'is like unto a farmer who scatters seeds in the rich soil. The spring cloud will pour upon them the rain of bounty, and unquestionably the station of the farmer will be raised in the estimation of the lord of the village, and many harvests will be gathered.' We are reaping now the product of the seeds sown by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on his visits to Britain, which the British Bahá'ís will continue for many generations to harvest.

The condition for obtaining this great harvest, as well as that from the seeds sown by the believers for nearly sixty years in the British Isles, is effort. 'O ye friends of God!' says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Exert ye with heart and soul, so that association, love, unity and agreement be obtained between the hearts, all the aims may be merged into one aim, all the songs become one song and the power of the Holy Spirit may become so overwhelmingly victorious as to overcome all the forces of the world of nature. Work! This is the great Work, should ye become assisted therein.'

Effort, and work, and sowing the seed spell self-sacrifice, of which the Central Figures of the Faith provide a perpetual example to lure us ever on. Their suffering created and scattered the seeds whose product we now reap and sow anew. Through their suffering, the spiritual basis of world unity was laid. Through their suffering, mankind was given the capacity to purify its heart and open its eyes, to recognise the greatness of this Message and contribute to the triumph of the hosts of righteousness in this wonderful Day.

What man of feeling can read the following words of Bahá'u'lláh and remain unmoved: 'By the righteousness of God! Every morning I arose from My bed I discovered the hosts of countless afflictions massed behind My door, and every night when I lay down, lo! My heart was torn with agony at what it had suffered from the fiendish cruelty of its foes. With every piece

of bread the Ancient Beauty breaketh is coupled the assault of a fresh affliction'. Or these words of the Báb: 'In this mountain I have remained alone, and have come to such a pass that none of those gone before Me have suffered what I have suffered, nor any transgressor endured what I have endured!' Or these of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 'O my Lord, my heart's Desire, Thou Whom I ever invoke, Thou Who art my Aider and my Shelter, my Helper and my Refuge! Thou seest me submerged in an ocean of calamities that overwhelm the soul, of afflictions that oppress the heart, of woes that disperse Thy gathering, of ills and pains that scatter Thy flock'. Yet however great these sufferings they were all endured voluntarily, we must remember, for the sake of mankind. Bahá'u'lláh says: 'The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. . . . We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish'.

We in the British Isles do not yet have to endure persecution and tribulation of this kind, but nevertheless we are called upon to suffer for the Cause of God, to suffer voluntarily and cheerfully that the banner of the Most Great Peace may be raised throughout the land and that the Ten Year Crusade may lead quickly to the triumph of which Daniel speaks. We are called upon voluntarily to sacrifice, voluntarily to endure discomfort or even hardship, in order to teach the Cause of God, achieve the goals of the Plan, and so support the National Fund as to ensure that the essential work of the Crusade is adequately financed.

Let us never forget what Bahá'u'lláh told us. 'The true lover yearneth for tribulation even as doth the rebel for forgiveness and the sinful for mercy.' The suffering of the Founders of the Faith sowed the harvest which our own self-sacrifice must reap. Do we love mankind? Then let us give ourselves, our souls, our bodies, our all, for the triumph of God's Cause. Let us arise spontaneously, unitedly, and immediately as the Letters of the Living and the early Bábís once rose in answer to the unforgettable call of the Báb: 'Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory'. Thus will the triumph of the Cause and our own spiritual well-being be assured.

Additions to the Community

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

Nezhat Mohajer (from Iran)	Stoke-on-Trent
Mehrangiz Hakimian	London
Jack Attfield	Norwich
Albert John Donald Pearce	Bournemouth
Brenda Ann Eisen (Youth)	Bournemouth
Ata Salmanpour (from Iran)	London
Hetty Engelsman	Belfast

Nooshin Nafez (Youth from Iran)	London
Bahman Setareh (Youth from Iran)	London
Boleslaw Czarnecki	Cardiff
Nickou Raoufian (Youth from Iran)	Taunton
Ashraf Anvar (from Iran)	Jersey
Eshagh Anvar (from Iran)	Jersey

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND YOU

The Guardian, in his letter of July 11th, 1956, to our National Assembly, told us that the publicity given by important newspapers to the persecution of Bahá'ís in Persia 'should constitute a prelude and a stepping-stone to a still wider undertaking, aimed at a more systematic presentation of the ideals animating our beloved Cause and of its fundamental verities'. Through his secretary he said 'This has opened the door on a new phase of the unfoldment of the Faith in the British Isles'. It is the duty of the Public Relations Committee to help the British Bahá'í Community to achieve this goal the Guardian has set us.

There is a great deal that every member of the Community can do. The Public Relations Committee has compiled a leaflet 'Facts about the Bahá'í Faith', which can be used both for teaching and public relations; wide distribution of this leaflet is one step towards achieving the 'still wider publicity' the Guardian asks for.

Writing letters to the press is another way of helping. A brief letter, that does not appear to be pushing sectarian views, can often be written to a local paper either about current events, or about some item that has appeared in the paper. Even if such letters are not published, they help to make the editor aware of the existence and importance of the Faith. Letters to national papers serve this purpose too, whether published or not; the national press is very sensitive to its postbag. Even a letter, not intended for publication, to the editor of a periodical may create useful public relations.

Sometimes local journals of small circulation will publish articles on the Faith. Every little helps; look out for openings in your own locality. Club, institute and house magazines are often eager for something new with which to fill their space.

Correction of mis-statements about the Faith are a different matter. The Public Relations Committee will always be glad to have its attention drawn to such mis-statements, but it will not always be wise for the Committee to take action. Correcting a minor error in a transitory publication may do more harm than good, by causing the editor to be chary of mentioning the Faith in future for fear of complaints that he has erred. It is best, therefore, for anyone coming across a mistaken reference to the Faith to let the Committee know about it, rather than to attempt to correct the error without consultation. The Secretary of the Committee is Miss Evelyn Chilvers, 7 Cathedral Street, Norwich.

As well as action by individual Bahá'ís, the Committee is trying to stimulate and guide public relations in local communities through press correspondents. Every local Assembly has been asked to appoint one,

to whom a copy of a document prepared by the Committee entitled 'Suggestions for Press Correspondents' is sent. Among other things, this document advises how to build up good relations with the local press, how to prepare notices of meetings and how to prepare copy for the press. Your local press correspondent will no doubt let you see this if you are interested. It is hoped that a press correspondent will become a recognised institution in every local community.

A new phase of the unfoldment of the Faith in the British Isles has been entered, the Guardian tells us, and progress at the beginning of any new phase is liable to be slow. But public relations is now an important part of British Bahá'í activity. It is here to stay. If the members of the Community become increasingly public relations conscious, it need not be long before the goal of more systematic presentation is reached. Public Relations is not a matter for an Assembly or Committee only, but concerns us all.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

CHILDREN OVER 15

The National Assembly has consulted the Guardian about the proper procedure for children of Bahá'í parents when they reach the age of fifteen, and he has told us to follow the American practice. This means:

- (1) Children of Bahá'í parents may be considered Bahá'ís after reaching the age of 15 only if they have declared their belief and been accepted by a Spiritual Assembly, or if they come to this country with a Bahá'í credential from another National Assembly.
- (2) A child of 15 or more may only attend Nineteen Day Feasts or receive other Bahá'í privileges after being accepted as a Bahá'í.
- (3) Upon reaching the age of 21 a Bahá'í youth should notify his Assembly, upon which he will be put upon the voting list. If an Assembly knows a Bahá'í youth in its community has reached 21 without notifying it, it should ask him whether he wants to be put on the voting list.

To ease the transfer to this new procedure, the National Assembly will allow children of Bahá'í parents who have reached the age of 15 and have not declared their Faith, one year's grace in which to make up their minds. These children may continue to attend Nineteen Day Feasts until December 31st, 1957, without declaring themselves, after which any who have not declared will have to cease attending feasts. They will, of course, still be welcome at meetings to which the public are invited. Children who take advantage of the year's grace should receive special instruction during the year, either from parents or Local Assemblies or both, to enable them to decide knowledgeably whether to declare themselves Bahá'ís.

MARRIAGE DECLARATION

We understand from the American National Assembly that the wording of the Marriage Declaration that appears on their certificate in *Bahá'í World*, Vol. XII, is the translation given by the Guardian. It

should therefore be used at all Bahá'í marriages. Bride and groom each say in turn—'We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God'.

THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

This Ridván 1957 (114) will see the elected number of National Assemblies rise from fifteen to twenty-six in all. Thirteen new National Assemblies will appear, the two Latin American Regional Assemblies becoming four and National Assemblies elected for the North Pacific, Alaska, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland; Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg; Portugal and Spain; Pakistan; Arabian Peninsula; South-East Asia, and New Zealand.

AUSTRALIA

News of two radio advertised meetings comes from Alice Springs and of other activity from Woodville and Port Adelaide (Australia), Devonport and Hobart (Tasmania).

INDIA

A Bahá'í Summer School was held in Calcutta on October 19th–27th, 1956, and a South India Teaching Conference arranged to be held in Bangalore on December 31st and January 1st, 1957. A Teaching and Assembly Development Conference for Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand has also been held. The Indian Publishing Trust has published some pamphlets for presenting the Faith to Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists.

PAKISTAN

A Bahá'í Summer School was held in Montgomery (West Pakistan) from October 11th to 20th, 1956.

PACIFIC

All but three of the languages to be translated by the Australasian N.S.A. have been dealt with and three additional ones added.

Menawei Islands (South-West Pacific) lying west of Sumatra have a total of six centres and 1,100 declared and enrolled believers.

The Gilbert Islands now have 500 believers and Government recognition of the Faith.

Cook Islands have the first L.S.A. of Rarotonga.

Tuamotu Archipelago—the pioneer and three believers are teaching in 100 of 400 islands of the groups.

Solomon Islands now have six believers.

SEYCHELLES

These islands now have 26 believers.

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP

The National Assembly wishes to make clear the Bahá'í attitude to Trade Union Membership. This is in no way contrary to the teachings of the Faith, but Bahá'ís should not participate in the political activities of trade unions. They should make a point of 'contracting out' of the political levy to which most trade unionists are automatically liable unless they say they do not want to pay this levy, which everyone has the right to say without being penalised. Holding trade

union office is also permissible for Bahá'ís, providing the office does not require participation in politics.

FOR MEDITATION

The more you love, the nearer you will be to God. Love is one of the bounties of God. Therefore to love one another is good.

The bounties of God are: to love each other, to speak the truth, to sever our hearts from the world, to be reverent, to be humble, to be hospitable. By these things you know the faithful servant of God. How do we know the light? By its rays. So when you see these qualities you will know that the servant of God has received the regeneration. You must be thus reborn. You must pray and supplicate, and the more you pray and supplicate, the nearer you will be to God.

When a dead body is thrown into the ocean, the waves will throw it back upon the shore. So it is with the Ocean of Truth—it will not accept a dead body; and if a believer has not these bounties of God, the sea will roll until he is finally cast out.

The people of God have no dependence upon the conditions of this world; they neither become bittered with the bitterness of the cup, nor do they become intoxicated if the cup be sweet.

The people of God are like the birds, who satisfy themselves with a few crumbs, and sit the whole time on the branches of the tree singing the praises of God.

Correcting Published Errors

The Public Relations Committee has, with the approval of the National Assembly, decided upon the following policy statement concerning treatment of errors found in various types of publications:

There are four classes of publications to be considered:

- (a) reference books of lasting value, in which it was most important that all information should be fully correct;
- (b) books of lesser standard in which it was likely to be worth considering errors, even if they were small, but in which considerable tact should be used to make sure that the writer was not antagonised. The writer might appreciate having his attention drawn to the errors in case there is a further edition;
- (c) articles in newspapers and periodicals of standing which, although transitory, carried weight. Major errors should be corrected, but correcting minor ones would run a risk of antagonising the editor and would not be worthwhile, probably even discouraging further mention;
- (d) articles in less responsible papers or periodicals, or passing references in more important papers should be ignored unless they made gross errors which were contrary to fundamental Bahá'í teachings.