

# BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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## DEDICATION OF THE HAZÍRATU'L-QUDS AND TEACHING CONFERENCE

### Message from the Guardian

In reply to a message from the Conference, the Guardian cabled on 17th January:

'Share joy friends supplicating unprecedented blessings.'

### Impression by Marion Hofman

An unforgettable event will ever mark the second year of the Ten-Year Crusade in the annals of the British Bahá'í Community. Teaching Conference, 15th–16th January, 1955, held for the first time in the National Hazíratu'l-Quds, with the Dedication a special bounty to bestow upon all present luminous and tranquil heart, brought reward and joy to all who had worked so long and arduously to bring the Cause from its early establishment in two capitals of English life to its present foothold in fifty or more centres scattered throughout the British Isles. At the same time, we knew that this Conference and this Dedication spoke to our souls a challenge beyond any ever put to us: a challenge to rise up in all the potency of our new-won strength, to carry solidity and vigour to every Bahá'í community, and to spread wide the heavenly influence of God's Word to new multitudes of His children, now overshadowed by His punishment and dependent for their rebirth upon the news which we and we alone are able to tell them.

This was the meaning of Teaching Conference which each of us carried in his heart, and this was the two-fold aspect of the programme which, following the theme 'The Challenge of the New Spirit', reviewed the unfoldment of our work and looked forward to that 'concerted effort' for which, in the words of our Guardian, 'the hour is propitious'.

There were indeed many highlights in this memorable week-end and foremost was the programme of Dedication on Saturday night. Enriched by the counsels of two beloved and reverend Hands of the Cause, Mr. Leroy Ioas and Dr. Hermann Grossmann; uplifted through spiritual spheres in the readings and music, so well chosen and beautifully performed; encircled by the fragrance of attar of rose sent with his love by our Guardian through Mr. Ioas, who anointed each one of us; impressed by the dignity befitting the Cause

achieved in the arrangements and decoration of the Parvine Room in which we met; and exhilarated by our very meeting together, 150 strong, the largest Bahá'í gathering ever yet held in Britain—all of us who were there knew ourselves privileged and blessed.

There were four sessions of the Conference itself. The first on Saturday afternoon dealt with 'The Challenge on a World Basis', and spread before us, through the vision of Hasan Balyuzi and Dr. Grossmann, the Global and European Progress of the Ten-Year Crusade.

The second session after tea, presented by the National Spiritual Assembly, stressed the crucial nature of this present hour, the call to 'a concerted effort which in its scope and intensity will surpass any united action of which the British followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have proved themselves capable in the past'. Recognising that this call from our Guardian of June, 1954, has not yet evoked a fitting response, the N.S.A. laid before the friends the urgent and drastic duty of maintaining, through dispersion and intensified teaching, the nine Assemblies of the Six-Year Plan in which there were a total of 19 vacancies. This duty and the continued development of new Goal Towns require ever-increasing funds which are in the strictest sense the 'life-blood' of our community. A cable later received from John Ferraby, on pilgrimage in Haifa, surprised the conference with new aspects of the Guardian's instruction, namely, the priority of the National over the Local Funds, and the need for more believers to give more, to the measure of individual sacrifice. Far from feeling hard-pressed by these two great aspects of our duty—teaching and giving—the N.S.A. shared its confident belief that all battles can be won if the believers will but tap their spiritual resources, will pray, study and meditate, and thus draw from the Creative Word the potency with which Bahá'u'lláh has endowed it.

The third session on Sunday morning was vivid and diversified, and quickened the Conference through the original and illuminating talks by the five speakers—Louis Ross-Enfield, Dorothy Ferraby, Alma Gregory, Ian Semple, and Marcel Mihaeloff—who challenged individual Bahá'ís with the qualities enumerated by



the Guardian for the success of our tasks: Concentration, Dedication, Co-ordination, Resourcefulness, and Perseverance. There followed a general discussion of the utmost liveliness, not the least highlights of which came from our dear friend Florence Rideout of Salisbury, who pledged herself to new audacity and whose prayer book 'is an utter disgrace'; from our cherished visitor Rafi Mottahedeh, who brought from the Guardian the message to scatter and disperse, then to teach, but above all, to do 'steadily and continuously' whatever service we undertake as this is most 'meritorious'; and from Mildred Mottahedeh, whose report of her recent tour of Pacific Islands and of the sacrifices of the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh in these far outposts was deeply moving. Later we heard from Trudi Scott a sincere testimony to the bounties of pioneering and a stirring call to action.

One would think that such a Conference could reach no higher levels, but on Sunday afternoon the believers were lifted by Mr. Ioas, in his account of progress at the World Centre and in his evocation of the very presence of our beloved Guardian, to 'heavenly realms beyond description'. We were enlightened, enthralled, shaken, and re-created by an experience of Haifa which none of us had ever known, save on pilgrimage in these sacred Spots. No gratitude could equal the wordless feeling of each heart in the cleansing of this spiritual baptism.

And so this glorious Conference came to an end. To the National Teaching Committee and its Chairman, our dear Dick Backwell, who was so soon to leave for British Guiana, all who attended owe warm thanks. May the Conference, working out its spirit, be ever remembered as the 'threshold' of a new phase of life and growth for the Bahá'ís of the British Isles!

## LOCAL NEWS

LEEDS. Matthew Hall was asked to give a Bahá'í talk at the Leeds Unitarian Church, which was followed by discussion. About thirty people were present, including two Unitarian ministers.

GLASGOW. Ada Williams spoke on 'God's Kingdom on Earth' in St. Andrew's Hall on March 11th. Five Bahá'ís were present, five non-Bahá'ís and three Bahá'í children.

MANCHESTER. The Faculty of Technology Union of the University of Manchester has agreed to the formation of a Bahá'í World Religion Society for the study of the Bahá'í Faith. The application was made by Sureyya Doktoroglu, a Bahá'í student at the University who found a sufficient number of people willing to sign the application.

EDINBURGH. Bernard Leach arrived in Edinburgh on Sunday, March 13th, and spoke to the Friends during the afternoon on his recent experiences in Japan and Haifa.

SHEFFIELD. Mrs. Laura Davies of Toronto spent two days in Sheffield on her return from Haifa and

spoke at the Sheffield Centre. A write-up on her visit was published in a local paper.

READING. Richard St. Barbe Baker recently spoke and showed his films at the Reading Town Hall. Ian Semple was chairman. Over a hundred people attended.

## For Meditation

Happy indeed is the man that hath turned towards the sanctuary of Thy presence, and rid himself of all attachment to any one except Thyself. He is truly exalted who hath confessed Thy glory, and fixed his eyes upon the Day-Star of Thy loving-kindness. He is endued with understanding who is aware of Thy Revelation and hath acknowledged Thy manifold tokens, Thy signs and Thy testimonies. He is a man of insight whose eyes have been illumined with the brightness of Thy face, and who, as soon as Thy call was raised, hath recognised Thee. He is a man of hearing who hath been led to hearken unto Thy speech, and to draw nigh unto the billowing ocean of Thine utterances.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

## CONVENTION

(An extract from an article in *Bahá'í Journal* for March, 1949)

While a successful Convention must depend primarily upon the delegates, the summit of inspiration cannot be reached without the whole-hearted support of the entire Community. There are many ways in which those not elected to participate directly can share triumph. Every member of a local community can add strength to Convention by approaching the election of delegates 'with that purity of spirit that can alone obtain our Beloved's most cherished desire'. Everyone can study carefully the annual reports of the National Assembly and its Committees, with a view to participating actively in the consultation meeting each local Assembly should call to enable its Community to make its opinions and feelings known to its delegates. Any member of the British Bahá'í Community may submit, in advance of Convention, items for the Agenda, either by asking one of the local delegates to propose to the Convention that the item be discussed, or by suggesting it to the Secretary of the National Assembly for transmission to the Convention Secretary when elected. At the Convention itself, the presence of Bahá'í visitors who are not delegates is of the greatest benefit; although they cannot directly participate in the consultation, any delegate may at his own discretion put forward a proposal or viewpoint suggested by a visitor. The spiritual strength of a Convention is greatly increased and the whole Community is knit more firmly by the attendance of a large number of visitors. The three days of Convention provide one of the most important occasions of the year for the promotion of closer association among the members of the national community. Even those who are unable to attend in person can greatly assist the deliberations by prayer.



## TWO ARTICLES *by* GEORGE TOWNSHEND

### PRAYER AND STUDY

We know that our resources are exhausted yet we are faced with the further challenge of helping in the regeneration of 'a spiritually famished continent'. Let us pause and enquire if there are not in prayer, meditation and study hidden springs of spiritual energy that will meet our needs and carry us through our difficulties.

The 'Tablet of Ahmad' stands there for ever to show every faithful Bahá'í what mysterious and tremendous powers of succour and comfort are within his reach through the remembrance of the Manifestation and of the leading features of His life and ministry. We may often, therefore, in reading Scripture consciously seek communion with the Father Himself.

Take for instance that wonderful story of God's saving love for mankind—the 'Book of Certitude'. At first the largeness and the elevation of the theme, the sweeping torrential power and majesty of the language overawe us and make us feel we are too small and lowly to live at such altitude. But if we persevere we learn that the love of the heart of Bahá'u'lláh which races and surges through these pages is as much greater and richer and warmer than our love for Him as His intellect is than ours. Here in these mighty pages rolls the Infinite Ocean from the overflowing waters of which we mortals fill our little measures. The thought, explaining or exposing mysteries or dogmas or superstitions that for ages have baffled or deceived mankind, assuredly does not originate on any plane that the human mind moves on. It is spoken with the voice of Truth. Prejudice and partiality cannot live in its presence, at its approach they shrivel up and evaporate.

As these verities of heaven emerge, the old falsities die away, and instead of confusion and uproar and schism, the mind is filled with reconciliation and harmony. But the subject of this whole masterpiece of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is the Great Universal Scheme of God's redemption of mankind. It is the story of God's all-conquering love telling how hardly has God's victory over man's ignorance and ill-will been won.

Innumerable are the passages in which the love motive bursts forth. But besides all these the strong prevailing love of the Author is felt loading every page with emotion, and abiding in every phrase.

These great truths are applied by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in that briefing of the Western pioneers which He gave in America in 1912 and published under the title of the 'Promulgation of Universal Peace'. This volume was followed in 1917-18 by the 'Divine Plan' in which He sends out the pioneers whom He has thus instructed.

His manner of Revelation was in contrast to that of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh spoke as the King of Kings, overwhelming in His power and majesty. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, 'Teach as if you were offering gifts to a king', and by His own example showed the Bahá'ís how it could be done. When Bahá'u'lláh revealed His Word it was as if the heaven of heavens opened and there

descended an urn of golden light, pouring its healing rays over all things. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke it was as though He called you to heavenly places and gave into your hands fruits and flowers which he had gathered for you in Paradise. Generally speaking, His method in His American addresses was to take some outstanding error, resolve it into its elements and then quietly show some key thought by which it could be destroyed at its life centre. The unbalanced and gross materialism of the time He maintained was utterly and even ludicrously unsound and should be probed, exposed and destroyed by the Bahá'ís with hard facts and simple intelligence.

Towards Christian Truth too 'Abdu'l-Bahá advocated more searching investigation. He pressed for instance for the study of such questions as:

'What proofs have you regarding the essence of God?'

'How do you explain inspiration and Revelation?'

'What are the evidences of conscious intelligence beyond the material universe?'

'Can you suggest a plan or method for the betterment of human morality?'

'Can you clearly define and differentiate the world of nature and the world of divinity?'

This insistence on the need of hard thinking on spiritual and ethical questions is reflected from Bahá'u'lláh who was for ever urging the reader to ponder and to reflect. Both of them in like manner promised the most wonderful powers and blessings and rewards to those who will think and pray and live according to the directions given them by the Messengers of God. For instance, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, 'If the believers arise to act according to the good pleasure of the Blessed Perfection the lights will be revealed, the mysteries will be discovered and the veils rent asunder, the darkness dispelled, the verses of unity chanted and the melodies of the glorious Lord sung. Work unceasingly! Labour diligently! so that the everlasting bounty may be realised.'

### GOD'S ZERO HOUR

The Bible, from its beginning to its end, from the early chapters of Genesis, in which in an allegory is given to fallen man the first promise of an ultimate redemption of the human race, to the closing chapter of the Book of Revelation—the Bible carries us towards the fulfilment of one supreme, all-embracing prophecy, namely that there shall come in history one transcendent hour of awful crisis when the Destined World Saviour, the Lord of Hosts, shall in a cataclysm of destruction, wipe away the wicked from the earth and give it to the righteous and lowly of heart to reign over it as His heirs for ever and ever.

Furthermore, the Bible foretells that when this unprecedented catastrophe comes, only the spiritually minded will recognise it for what it is. The generality



of mankind will be overwhelmed by the flood of affliction without knowing whence it comes or what it means.

Mankind is living now in that world crisis. The hour of fulfilment has descended on us when we least expected it. We have been taken unawares; caught as in a snare. Behind us lies the Kingdom of Man with its ignorance, its illusions, its limitations and its savageries. Before us opens the Kingdom of God. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts has performed this.

But we do not accept the commands of the Age of Transition. We refuse to advance. We fight back against the purpose of God. Terrified, bewildered, at a loss, we know not where to go nor whither to turn. Blindly we follow the blind. One single step divides us from the long-promised Redemption with its beatitudes. Nothing separates us from complete destruction—save only the mercy of God whom we have scorned.

This decade closing in 1963 is said to be the most momentous in all human history. It is God's Zero hour. Who is there among the Faithful—worthy of the name—who will not now, instantly, without hesitation do and give his utmost that a vast concourse of mankind may still at this late hour see, and call on the Name of the Lord, and be saved?

### FREEMASONRY

At the Conference called in Frankfurt last October by the European Hands of the Cause, it was said that it was not possible for a Bahá'í to be a Freemason. Thinking that Freemasonry might vary from country to country, the National Assembly sought confirmation from the Guardian, who cabled on 11th November, 1954:

'Disapprove membership Freemasonry.'

On the 22nd December this was amplified by a further cable:

'Any Bahá'í determined retain membership Freemasonry loses voting rights.'

In view of these clear statements, the National Assembly asks any member of the British Bahá'í Community who is a Freemason to inform the Assembly, who will be glad to advise on steps to be taken. The Assembly realises that the nature of Freemasonry may make it difficult for some members to withdraw from it at a moment's notice and will be pleased to discuss within what period withdrawal should take place.

That it is impossible for a Bahá'í to be also a Freemason in no way means that Bahá'ís oppose Freemasonry. In the present stage of the development of the Faith it is necessary for Bahá'ís to refrain from affiliation with most organisations. We can associate with them, for example, over charitable or humanitarian matters, but must not be members. Although most of the principles of many organisations are in accordance with Bahá'í teachings, usually they have one or two principles which are not in accordance, so the Bahá'ís cannot join. To do so would imply allegiance to the principles not in accordance with the teachings as well as to those which are.

This is a general rule, applying to all organisations whose constitution has any principles inconsistent with

Bahá'í teachings and no exception can be made in favour of Freemasonry. The matter should be clearly explained to any Freemasons sufficiently interested in the Faith to want to declare themselves Bahá'ís, who should be given a definite period in which to make up their minds whether they wish to be Freemasons or members of the Bahá'í Community.

### Addresses and Telephone Numbers

*Bristol Secretary:* Mrs. Alma Gregory, 21 St. Johns Road, Clifton, Bristol.

*Cardiff Secretary:* Mrs. Giddings, 43 Plasturton Avenue, Canton, Cardiff.

*Edinburgh Secretary:* Mrs. Mihaeloff, 15 Melville Street, Edinburgh 3.

*Belfast Telephone:* Mrs. Jean Villiers Stuart, White-abbey 2245.

### A Gift from Pilgrims

The National Assembly records with gratitude receipt of donations to the Ḥazírátu'l-Quds Fund from all the pilgrims in Bahji at the time of the Dedication. Unfortunately it does not have addresses to which individual receipts could be sent.

### National Assembly Bye-Election

Forty-three delegates voted, but two of the ballot papers arrived late. The eighty-two valid votes were divided as follows:

Ian Semple	...	...	27
Alma Gregory	...	...	7
Gladys Backwell	...	...	6
Kathleen Hornell	...	...	6
David Hofman	...	...	5
Ernest Miller	...	...	4
Joe Lee	...	...	3
Marcel Mihaeloff	...	...	3

Henry Backwell, Jean Campbell, Joe Jameson, Eruch Munsiff, Donald Millar, John Shortland, 2 each.  
Ethna Archibald, Joan Benfield, Robert Cheek, Habib Habibi, Vivian Isenthal, Albert Joseph, Jean Pitcher, Betty Reed, Jean Villiers Stuart, 1 each.

### Additions to the Community

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

Massoud Rafast (from Iran), Liverpool  
Sydney Ackroyd (Youth), Cambridge  
Jean Glover, Brighton  
Owen Battrick, Reading  
John Firman, Slough  
William Rouse, Barnsley  
Gertrude Hiscocks, Manchester  
Mabel Joseph, London  
Zdzislaw Charewicz, Edinburgh  
Mahin Tofigh (from Iran), London  
Jeannette Battrick, Reading  
Soheil Taheri (from Iran), London  
Ahmed Rabbani (from Iran), London