

# BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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## FOR CHRISTIAN CONTACTS

by George Townshend

No Christian objection to the claims of Bahá'u'lláh is made more commonly or more confidently than the statement that the Revelation of Jesus Christ is final and absolute, that the Spirit of Truth came at Pentecost or that Christ is the 'Promised One of All Ages', 'the Lord of Hosts', and the object of all the great titles, 'the mighty God', 'the everlasting Father', 'the Prince of Peace', and the rest in Isaiah ix, 6, and that therefore there is no need or room for a further revelation or a new prophet, whether Bahá'u'lláh or any other.

But no objection is more easily refuted from the pages of the Bible itself than is this. The followers of every world religion (except that of Bahá'u'lláh) claim finality: without being able to give any proof of it. Christ, however, says positively, 'Other things I have to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now,' thus revealing in one breath that His teaching is neither final nor absolute, but is measured to the capacity of the hearer, and that more is to follow. There is nothing in history to indicate either that the Spirit of Truth spoke to the disciples at Pentecost or that the Christian Churches have since then been guided unto all truth.

Christ Himself never made the assertion that He was the 'Promised One of All Ages' or 'the Lord of Hosts'; nor did any of the apostles, nor indeed is it to be found in the Bible. Peter's mighty declaration of faith on which the Christian Church is built (Matthew xvi, 16) is simply that 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God'.

Furthermore, Jesus expressly denied that He was the 'Prince of Peace' when he said (Matthew x, 34), 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword'. He denied that 'the government shall be upon His shoulder, to order it and to establish with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever' (Isaiah ix, 6-7) when He said (John xviii, 36) 'My kingdom is not of this world'. He disclaimed that He was the 'everlasting Father' when he said 'the Father is greater than I' (John xiv, 28) or that He was 'the mighty God' when He affirmed that 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son' (John iii, 16). Yet again, Moses'

great prophecy in Deuteronomy xxviii, 63-68; xxx, 1-5 makes it plain that Jesus Christ is not to be identified with him whom Isaiah described in ix, 6-7, for when the Restorer of the Jews came to earth Moses predicted He would find that the kingdom of the Jews had been utterly destroyed in Palestine, that it had been plucked out of the land, and that the Jewish people for their sins and crimes had for long ages been scattered in misery and degradation among the nations of the earth. Then, Moses continued, the Lord would regather His ancient people in compassion, as soon as they had learned to believe in the one true God, would establish them in peace, prosperity and honour in the home of their forefathers for ever. But when Jesus Christ appeared in Palestine the Jews were still settled securely in the country. Their scattering did not begin till after the fall of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 70.

It is in the Bahá'í Era, not the Christian, that Moses' prophecy of the restoration of the Jews is being fulfilled. The year 1844 is an important date in the progress of the emancipation of the Jews and their regathering into Palestine. It is the date of the great 'Declaration of Independence'. The Jews ever since have been in the process of their restoration, which will be completed, as Moses foretold, when they have learned to accept Bahá'u'lláh as their true Messiah.

All these commonly made objections to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh are merely human traditions which it is impious to accept when they contradict the word of God itself.

### EUROPEAN AUXILIARY BOARD

The following division of territories is announced by the Hand of the Cause, George Townshend:

*Marion Hofman:* Faroes, Shetlands, Orkneys, Ireland, Blackburn, Blackpool, Manchester, Liverpool, Stockport, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford, Torquay.

*Dorothy Ferraby:* Channel Islands, Hebrides, Scotland, Newcastle, Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Northampton, Norwich, London, Brighton, Bournemouth.



## AFRICA

(Third instalment of the account of the journey made by Violette and Ali Nakhjavani across Africa)

A week later, on October 2nd, the remaining three of the original expedition said goodbye to this dear, brave knight of Bahá'u'lláh, the first of his Baganda tribe. To reach our destination of the British Cameroons, we headed north across French Equatorial Africa through their thickest and largest equatorial forest over sections of roads quite unknown to the Touring Club of Brazzaville. However, before leaving Brazzaville, we found from government authorities that passage was possible, though difficult. Only two roads connect Brazzaville with the border of the French Cameroons. One was closed, so we had no choice. Almost half of the distance was very good, but as soon as we entered the famous Gabon area the road changed gradually for the worse. After two days, we reached Lambarene, the centre of the Gabon area, and the place where the famous Dr. Albert Schweitzer's hospital is located. This general area is the home of all kinds of tropical diseases, such as sleeping sickness, dysentery, malaria, etc., and also of many snakes and wild animals, gorillas, crocodiles, elephants and others. The town itself is very small and is located on an island in the Ogone River. In spite of the great heat and humidity and the prevalence of so much disease, its location is very beautiful, with its lush vegetation and sparkling waters filled with many native dug-out canoes and the private motor-boats of the government officials. At Lambarene we heard for the first time that the only way of reaching Njole, 100 km. further on, was to take a kind of ferry towed by a motor-boat and used for river cargo. (Ours was the only one but it was crowded with over a hundred natives.) We had to wait two days for this boat, since it ran only twice a week. We left at 6 o'clock on the third morning and made the 100 km. in sixteen hours of terrible heat with no protection from the sun or the hordes of flies by day and mosquitoes by night. Since it was 10 p.m. when we reached Njole, we were forced to stay in our car on the boat and disembark in the morning. And what a disembarkation! It took two hours and the help of many Africans to get the car off the boat and up a steep bank, having no sign of a road to an African village and the headquarters of the county officer, to whom we had a letter of introduction from the district commissioner. We will never forget his helpfulness and hospitality. He really knew the condition of the roads ahead of us and warned us of the difficulties, but at the same time assured us that passage was possible. The next place of any size was 200 km. distant. The territory in between was so unhealthy, he said, that only 1,400 natives were found in two large districts and most of these were ill. Moreover, nothing had been done to maintain the road for six years. However, we set out and on that day were able to cover 100 km. in twelve hours of exhausting driving. Several times we were stuck in the mud and once on a rough plank bridge. Sometimes we succeeded in getting out by ourselves, but other times one of the men would walk to the nearest village for help. That night when eating our supper we decided that nothing could be more difficult than what we had gone through that

day. How little we knew of the next day and the days after!

We left early the next morning and had not gone more than 10 km. when we found the road blocked by the huge trunk of a cocoa tree. Four Africans had been working in shifts since the day before trying to chop it into smaller pieces that could be rolled out of the way. Ali and Enoch joined the gang and yet it took six hours to clear the road enough for us to continue. During this time we were entertained by dozens of monkeys of various kinds doing gymnastics on the trees.

A word about this jungle road. It followed the course of a swift, muddy, roaring river, sometimes on a level with it and at other times hundreds of feet above it. The trees on the sides of this very narrow tunnel of a roadway were so close that Ali often had to use one hand to push the branches away so he could see a few feet ahead. Of course, the road was muddy, but since it was near the beginning of the rainy season, many rocks stuck out above the mud. Since the ruts were deep and the middle of the road much higher than the clearance of our car, we were obliged to straddle one of the ruts and drive on quite a slant.

However, another factor created an even greater hazard. Every hundred feet or so two rough planks were laid across a swampy spot that later would be a rivulet. These planks connecting the ruts were made for big lorries, wider than our little car, so there was a double hazard in crossing these short plank bridges of either getting hung up on the high middle of the road or of missing the planks. Both happened. Our usual solution was to get help from the nearest village and be pulled back to more or less solid ground by man power alone. We were more often suspended on the high centre of the road, and when no one was near enough to help us, we had to manage as best we could with jack, stones, dry grasses and anything available.

On this second never-to-be-forgotten day we couldn't make more than 25 km. in all, since most of the time we were stuck somehow. Our worst experience happened just an hour before sunset, when we slipped into a ditch at the foot of a steep hill. Help from villagers some distance away succeeded after two hours in getting the car back on the road, only to find that for the first time something mechanical was wrong and the car wouldn't budge. Since it was standing practically on an elephant trail to the river, the natives insisted it was too dangerous to sleep in the car, so we carried our bedding to their village, where we slept in a hut with a dirt floor, thatched roof, but only the supporting reeds for a wall. Our anxiety for the car and ourselves, the filth and innumerable insects of all kinds prevented us from getting much sleep in spite of our exhaustion. But before attempting sleep after prayer and consultation, Enoch volunteered to start walking to the nearest town, 75 km. or about 50 miles, away, where the chief of the village told us was a government garage where we could get help. Ali wrote a long letter in French to the district officer in that town, explaining our difficulties and asking for help. So early in the morning Enoch, accompanied by a local African and bearing



Ali's letter, set forth amid the gravest misgivings on the part of all of us. We, with ten Africans, returned to the car, where from 7 to 12 o'clock Ali went over the car cleaning, lubricating and trying within the limits of his knowledge to discover the trouble. Since all his efforts were unsuccessful, the Africans offered to push the car over two steep hills, so we could leave it near their village. Having reached there, Ali thought that it might be the clutch giving trouble, and without knowing anything about it began to adjust the screw under the car and found he could get the car started. So in a rush we loaded our things into the car, but unfortunately just then a tropical storm broke and made the worst worse. This time there was only the two of us. Between the storm and the clutch, which needed adjustment every few miles, we spent four terrible nightmare hours in places far from villages and filled with all kinds of animals. Under such conditions how great the Power of God seemed to us and how helpless was man when in danger. If it were not for our confidence in the Guardian's cabled assurance, 'LOVING FERVENT PRAYERS ACCOMPANYING YOU', and through these sacred prayers the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh, I am sure we would never have survived the really great dangers surrounding us. How close we felt to the Holy Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh, who about a hundred years before had that terrible experience between Tíhrán and Baghdád at the time of His first exile. We thought that our experiences were but a drop in the ocean of His difficulties on that journey. We were surrounded by dangerous animals, but He was exposed to the more dangerous savage nature of hostile man. Many times when we were in the midst of rain and mud and couldn't move, we wondered why we should have these difficulties, but when we could again proceed we heard and saw the destruction by herds of elephants who had crossed our path only a few minutes ahead of us as they went into the interior of the forest because of the rain.

When we reached the next village we both felt on the verge of fainting, as our food supply had given out the day before. The first thing we did was to get a few bananas and ask about Enoch and his guide. Because of our previous experiences we decided to hire two helpers to accompany us to the next village soon after dark. We spent that night in our car, but we were really too exhausted to sleep.

The next morning we left with another two helpers from the last village, and after a few repetitions of our previous troubles, reached the next village about 10.30 a.m. At each village we inquired about Enoch, and so we knew that so far he was all right. So we progressed from village to village, each time changing helpers, as they would not go an hour ahead of us. So after one and a half laborious days for all of us, we met again on top of a hill. Poor Enoch was only half alive after having walked for thirty-five miles through this strange and unsafe country. Not the least of the difficulties of our divided party was the anxiety each had felt for the safety of the other. It was fully a week before he could forget the physical pain of that walk.

These 200 km., with all the trials and disasters, were miraculously ended on the fourth day. After a couple of good meals and good nights' sleep, our physical discomforts were forgotten. What remains with us are the wonderful spiritual experiences of those dark days.

## For Meditation

The heights which, through the most gracious favour of God, mortal man can attain, in this Day, are as yet unrevealed to his sight. The world of being hath never had, nor doth it yet possess the capacity for, such a revelation. The day, however, is approaching when the potentialities of so great a favour will, by virtue of His behest, be manifested unto men. Though the forces of the nations be arrayed against Him, though the kings of the earth be leagued to undermine His Cause, the power of His might shall stand unshaken. He, verily, speaketh the truth, and summoneth all mankind to the way of Him Who is the Incomparable, the All-Knowing.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

## BAHÁ'Í WORLD

**AUSTRALIA.** A four-acre site has been secured in Sydney for the Temple.

**BELGIUM.** The Benelux Regional Conference and Summer School were held in Brussels in June. The Regional Committee had the bounty of a cable direct from the Guardian.

**CANADA.** Winnipeg ran their publicity in a Ukrainian language paper which brought enquiries from all parts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Kingston Bahá'ís ascribe two recent declarations to Sunday morning prayer meetings held for assistance in community teaching and for the success of the Ten Year Crusade.

**COSTA RICA.** A Teaching Conference was held at Quepos in February.

**DENMARK.** The Second Scandinavian Regional Conference was attended by forty believers at Copenhagen in April. A Summer School is to be planned later this year.

**GERMANY.** In spite of some opposition a site has been secured near Frankfurt for the future Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. It is located at the exact geographical centre of Europe.

**JAPAN.** Apart from the Tokyo Assembly, there is an organised group at Amagasaki and nine isolated centres. Amagasaki already has its Hazíratu'l-Quds, a home presented by a believer. A monthly newsletter in Japanese has been undertaken, a new pamphlet issued, a revised edition of the Japanese *New Era* prepared and a pamphlet published in Braille. Miss Agnes Alexander, who has taught the Faith in the Far East for forty years, has settled in Kyoto.

## Bahá'í Burial

In the American *Bahá'í News* No. 278 for April, 1954, the American National Assembly report receipt of a communication from the Guardian making mandatory for Western Bahá'ís the law of the Aqdas that after death the body is not to be transported more than one hour's journey. The National Assembly's solicitor has amended to cover this obligation the clause previously drafted for Bahá'ís who wish to make provision for Bahá'í burial in their will. The amended clause reads:

'I direct that my body be not cremated and I request that my burial and any service held in connection therewith be conducted according to the custom of the Bahá'í Faith and under the direction of a Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly.'



## SPIRITUAL PROGRESS OF INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS

The basic qualifications of a believer and the fundamental requirements for spiritual progress are the same — recognition of the Manifestation and obedience to His laws and ordinances. Recognition becomes more firmly based and deeper in meaning through study; and obedience, through practice, becomes more and more total until it is 'second nature'.

At the beginning, other believers can help or hinder, but ultimately the individual has progressed but little if he has not learned to rely upon God, upon Bahá'u'lláh. Some become estranged, grow lukewarm, or even leave the Faith altogether because of the unwisdom of other believers or because of a personal test they cannot muster strength to overcome. All that we can do then is to show love, to try and remove the cause of the estrangement, and if we have been partly to blame, to avoid unwisdom in the future; but we cannot accept final responsibility, for that is a matter which lies solely between the individual soul and God.

Many are the aids to spirituality, but essentially they all in this day require to be linked with action or they are without effect. The wellspring of everything is firmness in the Covenant, fellowship and love for fellow-believers, and a readiness for prayerful, humble service to all mankind for the sake of God and His Cause. Our prayers, our fasting, our reading of the Word both morning and evening, our efforts to 'let each morn be better than its eve, each morrow than its yesterday', need all to be related to the forward march of the Kingdom, and thus to teaching. Our motives need to be concentrated to this end alone. We need to know our own selves, and to round out our weaknesses, replacing them by strengths.

We have for our perfect exemplar our beloved Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We have divine guidance from our beloved Guardian in regard to the current objectives of the whole Bahá'í world, and also for fitting ourselves for worthy participation. He has asked us (ADJ, p. 41) (1) to study the literature, (2) delve into the teachings, (3) assimilate the laws and principles, (4) ponder the admonitions, tenets and purposes, (5) memorise certain exhortations and prayers, (6) master the essentials of the administration, (7) keep abreast of current developments, (8) obtain knowledge of Islám, (9) investigate the institutions and circumstances connected with the origin and birth of the Faith, the Station of the Báb, and the laws of Bahá'u'lláh. We have our objective, to confer some pleasure on our beloved Guardian, and to advance by however small a bit the establishment of the Cause, and the heritage of the Abhá Kingdom hereafter.

Nobility, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, can reach 'such a degree of evolution one scarcely needs to try to be good any longer'. It can become 'the accent of our lives, when all our deeds are the distinctive expression of our nobility'. Most of us attain such a station gradually, by the watchful exercise of the will, releasing ourselves of our limitations 'by making of the will a door through which the confirmations of the spirit come', coming to accept our lives with radiant acquiescence and more and more successfully organising our moments for teaching.

There will be set-backs, frustrations and disappointments, and especially do we need to guard against complacency, or resting on our oars, for this is the greatest danger.

If we teach the Cause, we will benefit most, reaping a bounty nine times as great as we confer, and discovering unexpected capacities and depths of knowledge and spirituality. If we do not teach the Cause, we become cut off from the life-giving contact with the Holy Spirit.

Most of us need to be patient with ourselves over our spiritual progress. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

'Your faith comes like rain: the first drops are far between, but soon it will pour in torrents. Your faith is also like a seed that will bear its fruit. In a tree we judge of its life and vigour by the way it grows; so it is with man. The knowledge of God rises in the heart like the sun, it mounts, mounts, always casting an immortal light.'

NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

## NATIONAL COMMITTEES

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL. Editor: John Ferraby.

BAHÁ'Í WORLD. Representative: Jean Pitcher.

PERSIAN. 'To advise and, where necessary, help Persian Bahá'ís in this country. To concern itself with and make recommendations to the National Assembly about their welfare and happiness.' Hasan Balyuzi, Abbas Dehkan, Habib Hazari, Achoury Nazar.

REVIEWING. '(1) To review all material for publication except material reviewed by other national committees, and letters sent to newspapers and non-Bahá'í periodicals. (2) To consider the accuracy of Bahá'í facts and teachings therein. (3) To consider literary style and presentation.' Brian Townshend (Secretary), Rustom Sabit, Isobel Slade.

## Additions to the Community

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

Iraj Zamiri (Youth from Iran), London  
Marian Mihaeloff, Bradford  
Marina Nazar (Youth), London  
Habibollah Nahai (from Iran), London  
Edith Lewandowski, London  
Dorothy Wiginton, Oxford  
Margaret Lloyd (from Tanganyika), London  
Daniel Collins, Liverpool  
Dorothea Abbott, Liverpool  
Mary Robinson, Liverpool  
Golrokh Sabit (from Iran), Nottingham