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## NATIONAL TEACHING CONFERENCE

Forty-two years ago the City of Liverpool received the never-to-be-repeated bounty of the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'who', the Guardian has written, 'in His love and mercy called into being this Community' (i.e. the British Bahá'í Community). During the week-end of January 9th-10th believers from all over the British Isles gathered for Teaching Conference in that same City, in the same hotel where He stayed: to consult together on teaching plans for this, the first year of the Ten Year Crusade, which is to carry the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh to all the corners of the earth.

A number of letters and cables were read out, bringing loving greetings and messages to the Conference, including a letter received from Haifa, written by Mr. Leroy Ioas, Secretary of the International Bahá'í Council. The following is an excerpt:

'The Guardian is most anxious that the friends realise the dual aspect of the Ten Year Crusade as it applies to Teaching. The first and foremost, now, is the Virgin Area Campaign of the Crusade, but of vital importance, as that work progresses, is the Teaching Campaign on the home front. If the work at home fails, then the work in foreign fields will likewise fail. The reservoirs at home must be kept filled to overflowing, not only with moral and spiritual support, but likewise with constantly increasing numbers of strong and devoted supporters of the Faith. More Bahá'ís, more Groups, more Assemblies—that is the crying need on the home fronts ...'

### THE LAW OF CONSULTATION

'It is incumbent upon everyone not to take any step without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and they must assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding and be submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered and arranged.'—'Abdu'l-Bahá, P.B.A., 54.

'In this Cause consultation is of vital importance; but spiritual conference and not mere voicing of personal views is intended.'—'Abdu'l-Bahá, P.U.P., 68.

'It is incumbent upon them (members of the House of Justice) to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly. Thus hath the Lord your God commanded you. Beware lest ye put away that which is clearly revealed in His Tablet. Fear God, O ye that perceive.'—Bahá'u'lláh, P.B.A., 50.

This was the main theme and purpose of the Teaching Conference. All the sessions provided inspiration for different aspects of teaching, including one on the use of modern visual aid methods.

Among the outstanding pictures which were carried away from the Conference were those of the valiant pioneers in Africa, so amusingly depicted in one of their letters; of the courageous souls who brave severe climatic conditions and loneliness in the scattered islands; and the vision of the many hundreds of friends gathered to share the blessings of the four Inter-continental Conferences held during the Holy Year.

Just before the inspiring summing-up of the Conference, the friends present felt stunned by the news that Dorothy Baker, Hand of the Cause of God, had been travelling on the missing Comet airliner and that there was no hope of survivors. So great a gain for her but so grievous a loss in the teaching field. Surely such an example will urge us to fresh endeavour in every aspect of our work of spreading the Cause.

As Mr. Ioas wrote: 'Now is the time for the Believers on the home front to arise with the same dedication as those in foreign fields, and win the same type of glorious victories for the Faith. *Dedication to the heavenly task, complete consecration to the noble mission, and living the Life*, are the requirements for success in the teaching field. The Guardian is sure all the Friends will arise, manifesting these qualities, so they may become reeds through which the Holy Spirit may flow, to quicken the seeking souls.'

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The law of consultation, which ranks so high in importance amongst our teachings, is new—new in its conditions and prerequisites, new in its methods and outcome. Absolute equality is ensured by acceptance of the principle of the oneness of mankind, and to those who come together in true consultation is promised the help of the Holy Spirit, and the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself.

As individuals we must manifest during consultation those attributes expected of followers of Bahá: purity of motive, radiance, detachment, attraction to God, humility, patience, servitude to 'His exalted Threshold'. Then, with our fellow believers we may hope to meet with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in absolute love and harmony, turning for aid to the kingdom on high and expressing our views with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation. Thus equipped we may bring true consultation to our spiritual conferences and



readily prefer others before ourselves, evince a deep concern for their welfare, and find ourselves spontaneously yielding implicit obedience to corporate decisions. Without prejudice, rancour, or unworthy personal motives of any kind, we will each bring a characteristic individual ingredient to those decisions, decisions which will then be worthy of the Faith and in harmony with the spirit of its teachings.

If we attune ourselves, and empty our hearts of all save these radiant qualities, *but only then*, our deliberations can be so guided that they will become wiser and mature, practical on a spiritual foundation and oriented with depths of understanding and insight beyond ordinary comprehension.

We have been exhorted to confine our discussions to matters of the spirit and to that end we should ever consider these seven objectives of consultation: (i) the training and guidance of souls; (ii) the instruction of the young; (iii) relief and consolation of the needy; (iv) aid to the feeble and infirm; (v) kindness to all mankind; (vi) diffusion of the fragrances of God; (vii) exaltation of His Holy Word.

These are the basic principles we will bring to our consultations, and the main considerations which will guide us during those periods. With these thoughts constantly in our minds our labours will not be in vain, but such indeed as may merit recognition in the Abhá Kingdom.

In our next letter we shall say something more of the application of consultation in our Bahá'í way of life.

With loving greetings,

NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

### LOCAL ASSEMBLY NEWS

BELFAST are extremely happy to welcome a new believer. Pioneer Kathleen Hornell has visited Haifa and is returning to her post.

BOURNEMOUTH report good progress and two declarations, a couple who now wish to start Bahá'í classes for their five children. Quotations from scripture are included weekly in advertisements. *Correction.* Mrs. Cranmer's articles are appearing in various magazines all over the country and not only in 'local periodicals' as previously reported.

LEEDS new Centre may be exempted from rates, classified as a place of worship. The friends are planning a public meeting with United Nations and Bahá'í speakers, on the lines of those held in Manchester and Nottingham last October.

LONDON Youth Committee have planned and are carrying out extension teaching in Reading.

BRADFORD report another declaration, the fifth this year!

EDINBURGH is also very happy to report a new believer but is still in great need of pioneers.

LIVERPOOL put a great deal of work and love into arrangements for Teaching Conference, held in the Adelphi Hotel (where 'Abdu'l-Bahá stayed) and earned the sincere thanks of all who were able to be there. A well-attended public meeting was held afterwards.

MANCHESTER had the opportunity recently of introducing the Mayor of Salford to some sayings of 'Abdu'l-

Bahá. His Worship expressed interest and was subsequently presented with a copy of *Divine Wisdom*.

NORWICH. The Friends here also cordially welcome two new believers. Several Bahá'ís were happy to attend Teaching Conference.

NOTTINGHAM has started extension teaching in Leicester on a personal level and is holding a public meeting there soon.

### EUROPE and ASIA

ARDEN THUR, HONG KONG. This American pioneer went to Hong Kong immediately after the New Delhi Conference. She writes: 'The bounties of Bahá'u'lláh seem to surround me. To-day when your letters arrived, there was also one from Rúhíyyih Khánum advising me of the Guardian's permission to make the pilgrimage the first week in May. So it looks as if I will be leaving here in April and after Haifa only God knows where I will be.

After two weeks in Hong Kong I obtained a position and yesterday I moved into a nice little apartment, sharing it with a lovely Chinese girl. Now I hope to begin a meeting session since the apartment living room is available to me. There is a Bahá'í here now (new believer from Singapore) ... I look forward to seeing Mr. Murray ... Pray that we may have an L.S.A. by April.

This week-end a doctor friend and I are going to Macao for a Bahá'í meeting. There are three friends there—two of them from my home town. We have been unable to get together before this due to visa difficulties, but surely this time we will succeed.'

CHARLES DUNNING, ORKNEYS. There has been plenty of adverts. for nurses and men in the hosiery line. There is a big meeting to-night and people coming from all over the place. I am going—it gets you known, and I love to be able to impress my views when I am asked questions. I can face all they can give me ... Lerwick, Kirkwall and Aberdeen are all going to try to have a fireside on the same evenings and the same readings. I think this will help a lot. It is Brigitte's idea. I think it is good.

### Additions to the Community

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

Stuart Sweet, Bournemouth  
Rosalind Smith, Bournemouth  
Walter Smith, Bournemouth  
Aileen Thompson, London  
Ethel Broom, Sheffield  
Lilian Muirhead, Edinburgh  
Elizabeth Villiers-Stuart, Belfast

### Addresses

*National Secretary:* John Ferraby, 49 Sandbourne Avenue, London, S.W.19.

*National Treasurer:* John Mitchell, Dawnedge Thatch, Aspley Guise, near Bletchley, Bucks.

*Book Orders:* Reg Coulson, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 39 High Street, Manchester 4.



## AFRICA

### PRESENT SITUATION

There are now Bahá'ís in seven places in Kenya, in six places in Tanganyika, in thirty-six in Uganda and in three in the Gold Coast Colony. The first new believer has just been accepted in Mombasa, due to the devoted efforts of the African pioneer there, Lawrence Ouna, and the visiting teachers from Nairobi, and there are two new believers in a second village in the Gold Coast. Unfortunately, the pioneers in the Gold Coast Colony, and in the Northern Territories Protectorate also, have been refused renewal of their visas and have had to leave, which will slow up teaching there. Efforts are being made to enable them to return and the prayers of all asked in this difficulty. Enoch Olinga in the British Cameroons is now settled with a permit and a job, and Ted Cardell in S.W. Africa reports that he has a new job and is happy in it. Claire Gung, our first British pioneer to Africa, who pioneered for the third time, to Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, has now been joined by Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Christian from America and Mr. and Mrs. 'Alá'í from Persia.

### AFRICAN PIONEERS

East Africans have contributed very much to pioneering in this first year of the Ten Year Crusade, the bulk of the pioneers going out from Uganda. Three have gone outside East Africa, of whom two opened virgin territories and one a consolidation territory. Two more have now set out from Kampala for the Gold Coast, to go to school there and help the Faith at the same time. Pioneers have gone from Uganda to open two new towns in Tanganyika and two in Kenya. The pioneers to Kenya are having great difficulty in settling and are suffering a great deal. Uganda pioneers have also gone to a number of new towns and villages inside their own territory, in an endeavour to build up centres for the Faith all over the country.

Pioneering has meant sacrifices from all of them, great difficulties for some, and new experiences and adventures too. Most of them have left wife and family behind and for those who have gone outside Uganda it may in some cases be a long separation.

We have already told of Enoch Olinga's long walk through the jungle for help when the car broke down on the way to the Cameroons. On the same trip the pioneers, whilst travelling through the Belgian Congo, lost a lot of their baggage, which meant for one the loss of his Bahá'í books and for one of all his clothes. Many of the pioneers set out immediately after the Teso Teaching Conference, full of the inspiration they received there and with the love and good wishes of all the friends to speed them on their way. One of them travelled from Uganda to Mwanza in Tanganyika by steamer across Lake Victoria, his first journey by boat, and it was a stormy one too. He has now been joined by his wife and baby, for whom also it was their first long journey. Another pioneer has struggled for three months against lack of a job and, having at last a chance to make some money, he was ill and missed it. He has now taken an inferior, poorly paid job. Yet another has suffered great privations, was turned out of his house for lack of rent, must often

have been hungry, yet the only thing the Committee received was a letter asking for prayers for the 'inexperienced pioneer' and stressing his determination to stick it out whatever the cost.

These friends in Africa have made us a rare gift by the example of sacrifice which they have set. Let us in return think specially of them each time we pray for the pioneers.

AFRICA COMMITTEE

### For Meditation

We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Throne. One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: 'O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognise My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings'. Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

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The following are the goals which the beloved Guardian has given to the five National Spiritual Assemblies, not included before, which do not appear in the publication on the Ten Year Plan.

**CENTRAL AMERICA.** (1) Doubling the number of local Spiritual Assemblies in the localities of each of the ten republics of Central America, and the Antilles. (2) Doubling the number of incorporated local Spiritual Assemblies in each of the ten republics of the same area. (3) Formation of American and Asian Teaching Committees entrusted with the task of prosecuting the teaching phase of the Plan.

**INDIA, PAKISTAN AND BURMA.** (1) Doubling the number of Spiritual Assemblies, localities India, Pakistan, Burma. (2) Doubling number incorporated Spiritual Assemblies India, Pakistan, Burma. (3) Expansion of Panchgani School. (4) Formation of Asian Teaching Committee designed to stimulate and co-ordinate teaching activities of the Plan.

**IRAQ.** (1) The initiation of local Bahá'í incorporation in Iraq. (2) The establishment of a Bahá'í burial ground in the City of Baghdad. (3) The establishment of a Bahá'í Summer School in Iraq. (4) Doubling the number of local Spiritual Assemblies and localities in Iraq, including the formation of Spiritual Assemblies in Najaf, Karbilá and Kázimayn. (5) The formation of an Asian and of an African Teaching Committee, designed to stimulate and co-ordinate the teaching activities initiated in accordance with the Ten Year Plan.

**PERSIA.** (1) The purchase of Bahá'í Holy Places in Istanbul and Adrianople. (2) Doubling of the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies in Persia. (3) Initiation in Persia of local Bahá'í incorporation. (4) The formation of an Asian Teaching Committee designed to stimulate and co-ordinate the teaching activities initiated in accordance with the Ten Year Plan.

**SOUTH AMERICA.** (1) Doubling the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies and localities in each of the ten South American Republics. (2) Doubling the number of incorporated local Spiritual Assemblies in the Republics of that same area. (3) Formation of American and Asian Teaching Committees charged with the task of the furtherance of the teaching work of the Plan.

### Temple Services

The following extract from a letter from an American Bahá'í to a Bahá'í friend in England should be of general interest:

'The devotional services (at the Wilmette Mashriqu'l-Adhkár) are well attended. They are really very inspirational to all—Bahá'ís and not-yet-Bahá'ís! The choir is very beautiful. At present there are eight paid singers, but a Bahá'í choir has been started. The choir voices are not amplified and the tone seems to be picked up by the dome—no reverberation, but just *beautiful* tone.'

### The Ordinance of Fasting

The following was written by the Guardian through his Secretary to the American National Assembly in a letter dated January 10th, 1936, and published in the American *Bahá'í News*, No. 98:

As regards fasting, it constitutes together with the obligatory prayers, the two pillars that sustain the revealed Law of God. They act as stimulants to the soul, strengthen, revive and purify it, and thus ensure its steady development.

The ordinance of fasting is, as is the case with these three prayers, a spiritual and vital obligation enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh upon every believer who has attained the age of fifteen. In the Aqdas He thus writes: 'We have commanded you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity; this is ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. He has exempted from this those who are weak from illness or age; as a bounty from His presence, and He is the Forgiving, the Generous.' And in another passage He says: 'We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period, and at its close have designated for you Naw-Rúz as a feast ... The traveller, the ailing, those who are with child or giving suck, are not bound by the fast ... Abstain from food and drink, from sunrise to sundown, and beware lest desire deprive you of this grace that is appointed in the Book.'

Also in the *Questions and Answers* that form an appendix to the Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh reveals the following: 'Verily, I say that God has appointed a great station for fasting and prayer. But during good health its benefit is evident, and when one is ill, it is not permissible to fulfil them.' Concerning the age of maturity, He reveals in the appendix of that same book: 'The age of maturity is in the fifteenth year; women and men are alike in this respect.'

Regarding the vital character and importance of the Divine ordinances and laws, and the necessity of complete obedience to them by the believers, we read thus in the *Gleanings*, p. 175 (American edition): 'Know verily that the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinance prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognise this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation. Were His law to be such as to strike terror into the hearts of all that are in heaven and on earth, that law is naught but manifest justice. The fears and agitation which the revelation of this law provoke in men's hearts should indeed be likened to the cries of the sucking babe weaned from his mother's milk, if ye be of them that perceive ...'

The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as a rule from March 2nd every year and ending on the 20th of the same month, involves complete abstinence from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires.