

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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THE MYSTERY OF SACRIFICE

The National Assembly, instead of addressing a letter to you in this issue of the Journal, wishes to bring to your attention the following talk of the Master:—

In order to understand the reality of sacrifice, let us consider the crucifixion and death of His Holiness Jesus Christ. It is true that He sacrificed Himself for our sake. What is the meaning of this? When His Holiness Christ appeared, He knew that He must proclaim Himself in opposition to all the nations and peoples of the earth. He knew that mankind would arise against Him and inflict upon Him all manner of tribulations. There is no doubt that one who put forth such a claim as Christ announced would arouse the hostility of the world and be subjected to personal abuse. He realised that His blood would be shed and His body rent by violence. Notwithstanding His knowledge of what would befall Him, He arose to proclaim His message, suffered all tribulation and hardships from the people, and finally offered His life as a sacrifice in order to illumine humanity; gave His blood in order to guide the world of mankind. He accepted every calamity and suffering in order to guide men to the truth. Had He desired to save His own life, and were He without wish to offer Himself in sacrifice, He would not have been able to guide a single soul. There was no doubt that His blessed blood would be shed and His body broken. Nevertheless that holy soul accepted calamity and death in His love for mankind. This is one of the meanings of sacrifice.

The Second Meaning of Sacrifice.

As to the second meaning, he said: "I am the bread which came down from heaven." It was not the body of Christ which came from heaven. His body came from the womb of Mary, but the Christ perfections descended from heaven; the reality of Christ came down from heaven. The spirit of Christ, and not the body, descended from heaven. The body of Christ was but human. There could be no question that the physical body was born from the womb of Mary. But the reality of Christ, the spirit of Christ, the perfections of Christ, all came from heaven. Consequently by saying He was the bread which came from heaven, He meant that the perfections which He showed

forth were divine perfections, that the blessings within Him were heavenly gifts and bestowals, that His light was the light of reality. He said: "If any man eat of this bread, He shall live for ever." That is to say, whosoever assimilates these divine perfections which are within Me will never die; whosoever has a share and partakes of these heavenly bounties I embody will find eternal life; he who takes unto himself these divine lights shall find life everlasting. How manifest the meaning is! How evident! For the soul which acquires divine perfections and seeks heavenly illumination from the teachings of Christ will undoubtedly live eternally. This is also one of the mysteries of sacrifice.

In reality His Holiness Abraham sacrificed Himself, for He brought heavenly teachings to the world and conferred heavenly food upon mankind.

The Third Meaning of Sacrifice.

As to the third meaning of sacrifice, it is this—if you plant a seed in the ground, a tree will become manifest from the seed. The seed sacrifices itself to the tree that will come from it. The seed is outwardly lost, destroyed, but the same seed which is ascrificed will be absorbed and embodied in the tree, its blossoms, fruits and branches. If the identity of that seed had not been sacrificed to the tree which became manifest from it, no branches, blossoms or fruits would have been frothcoming. His Holiness Christ outwardly disappeared. His personal identity became hidden from the eyes, even as the identity of the seed disappeared; but the bounties, divine qualities and perfections of Christ became manifest in the Christian community which Christ founded through sacrificing himself. When you look at the tree you will realise that the perfections, blessings, properties and beauty of the seed have become manifest in the branches, twigs, blossoms and fruit; consequently the seed has sacrificed itself to the tree. Had it not done so, the tree would not have come into existence. His Holiness Christ, like unto the seed, sacrificed Himself for the tree of Christianity. Therefore His perfections, bounties, favours, lights and graces became manifest in the Christian community, for the coming of which He sacrificed Himself.

The Fourth Meaning of Sacrifice.

As to the fourth significance of sacrifice, it is the principle that a reality sacrifices its own characteristics. Man must sever himself from the influences of the world of matter, from the world of nature, and its laws; for the material world is the world of corruption and death. It is the world of evil and darkness, of animalism and ferocity, bloodthirstiness, ambition and avarice, of self-worship, egotism and passion; it is the world of nature. Man must strip himself of all these imperfections, must sacrifice these tendencies which are peculiar to the outer and material world of existence.

On the other hand, man must acquire heavenly qualities and attain divine attributes. He must become the image and likeness of God. He must seek the bounty of the eternal, become the manifestor of the love of God, the light of guidance, the tree of life and the depository of the bounties of God. That is to say, man must sacrifice the qualities and attributes of the world of nature for the qualities and attributes of the world of God. For instance, consider the substance we call iron. Observe its qualities; it is solid, black, cold. These are the characteristics of iron. When the same iron absorbs heat from the fire, it sacrifices its attribute of solidity for the attribute of fluidity. It sacrifices its attribute of darkness for the attribute of light, which is a quality of the fire. It sacrifices its attribute of coldness to the quality of heat which the fire possesses; so that in the iron there remains no solidity, darkness or cold. It becomes illumined and transformed, having sacrificed its qualities to the qualities and attributes of the fire.

Likewise man, when separated and severed from the attributes of the world of nature, sacrifices the qualities and exigencies of that mortal realm and manifests the perfections of the Kingdom, just as the qualities of the iron disappeared and the qualities of the fire appeared in their place.

Every man, trained through the teachings of God and illumined by the light of His Guidance, who becomes a believer in God and His signs and is enkindled with the fire of the love of God, sacrifices the imperfections of nature for the sake of divine perfections. Consequently every perfect person, every illumined, heavenly individual stands in the station of sacrifice. It is my hope that through the assistance and providence of God, and through the bounties of the kingdom of Abha, you may be entirely severed from the imperfections of the world of nature, purified from selfish, human desires, receiving life from the kingdom of Abha and attaining heavenly graces. May the divine light become manifest upon your faces, the fragrances of holiness refresh your nostrils, and the breath of the Holy Spirit quicken you with eternal life.

ADDITIONS TO THE COMMUNITY.

Since the last list appeared in the Journal registration cards have been received from the following:—

Manouthchehre Anvar (Youth from Iran)	Newcastle
Lily Quistgaard (Youth from Denmark)	Oxford
Robert Sloan	Belfast
Douglas Langford	Torquay
Violet Baseley (Youth)	Birmingham

NATIONAL COMMITTEES.

ARCHIVES. "To collect, preserve and be responsible for the National Archives and the National Reference Library." Hasan Balyuzi, Abbas Dehkan, Isobel Slade.

ASSEMBLY DEVELOPMENT. "To promote in the local assemblies unity, love, harmony and proper understanding of the administration of the Cause." Robert Cheek (Chairman), Dorothy Ferraby (Secretary) Claire Gung, Lizzie Lacey, Joe Lee.

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL. "To edit and publish the Bahá'í Journal on behalf of the National Assembly. The decision of the Committee on editorial matters is final, subject to review by the N.S.A." Muriel Hayter (Secretary), John Ferraby (Editor), Evelyn Baxter.

BAHÁ'Í PUBLISHING TRUST. "To be responsible for the policy and direction of the affairs of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, under the supervision of the National Assembly."

BAHÁ'Í PUBLISHING TRUST TRADING. Reg. Coulson, Arthur Whitworth.

CHILD EDUCATION. "To make a study of the Bahá'í education of children, to advise about this and encourage it and to provide suitable material." Alice Baines, Elsie Lee, Joe Lee, Grace Watson, Arthur Whitworth.

FINANCE ADVISORY. "(1) To assist in preparing the annual budget and to review it periodically throughout the year. (2) To advise on the best means of meeting the budget needs. (3) To review the progress of donations, to advise and make recommendations regarding the financial relationship of the Assembly to

the national community where necessary. (4) To review the financial reports made by the National Treasurer and the National Committees, to compare these with the budgets and make reports and recommendations to the N.S.A. as necessary. (5) To review accounting procedure and to make any recommendations for improvements. To make satisfactory arrangements for the annual audit. (6) To make any special financial studies as requested by the N.S.A." Richard Bachwell, Sidney Barrett, Marion Hofman, Marcel Mihaeloff, Marion Burgess Norton.

OVERSEAS SCHOOLCHILDREN. "To take responsibility on behalf of the N.S.A. for the affairs of the Persian schoolchildren in their care and to take decisions on matters referred to them by the wardens." Henry Backwell, Abbas Dehkan, Eruch Munsiff, Isobel Slade.

OVERSEAS STUDENTS. "(1) To extend a welcome to students from overseas. (2) To obtain from the students all the necessary information which will enable the committee, in close liaison with the N.T.C., to settle the students in a town in which they can best pursue their studies or training, and at the same time further the work of the Cause. (3) To build up and maintain a fund of relevant information regarding educational possibilities with particular reference to goal towns." (For Men) Eruch Munsiff (Chairman-Secretary), Abbas Dehkan, John Ferraby, Egon Kamming. (For Women) Gladys Backwell, Nuran Dehkan, Dorothy Kamming.

REVIEWING. "(1) To review all material for publication with the exception of (a) Complete books of Scripture (b) Compilations of Scripture and the Guardian's writings (c) Material for Bahá'í periodicals and letters sent to newspapers and non-Bahá'í periodicals. (2) To consider accuracy, literary style and presentation. (3) To give an opinion as to its suitability for publication." Florence Pinchon (Secretary), Henry Backwell, Richard Backwell.

SCRIPTS. "To collect and prepare dramatic scripts relating to the Faith; to give advice and assistance on production if required." Hasan Balyuzi, Mary Basil Hall, Marjorie Parker.

SUMMER SCHOOL. "To organise Summer School." Richard Backwell (Chairman), Dorothy Ferraby (Secretary), Reg. Coulson

SERVICE FOR THE BLIND. "To be responsible for all matters relating to literature for the blind." Clara Stone, Herbert Stone.

TEACHING, NATIONAL. "To carry out the provisions of the Six Year Plan in accordance with the policy laid down from time to time by the National Assembly. To co-ordinate teaching work of the British Bahá'í community. Supervision and direction of the work of the Regional Teaching Committees."

Marion Hofman (Chairman), Philip Hainsworth (Secretary), David Hofman, Connie Langdon Davies, Isobel Locke.

TEACHING, REGIONAL. "Regional Teaching Committees are auxiliaries of the National Teaching Committee appointed to plan and carry out regional teaching in co-operation with assemblies, groups, isolated believers and teachers in their regions. They are under the supervision and direction of the National Teaching Committee, to whom their reports are submitted." *Northern Region*—Stella Farnsworth, Marcel Mihaeloff, Isobel Robison, Louis Ross-Enfield, Arthur Whitworth. *South Western Region*—Ralph Crates, Joan Giddings, Elizabeth Gorvett, Fred Stahler, Dora Weeks. *Midland and South Eastern Region*—Gladys Backwell, Muriel Hayter, Vivien Isenthal, Dorothy Rose.

YOUTH. "(1) Generally to stimulate the Bahá'í Youth to assume the responsibilities of Bahá'í life and actively further the aims of the Six Year Plan. (2) To publish the Bahá'í Youth Bulletin. (3) To prepare and prosecute Bahá'í Youth days at Summer School and International Youth Day. (4) To maintain international correspondence." Ernest Lacey, Hugh McKinley, George Marshall, Angela Stevens.

FROM THE GUARDIAN

The very important cable sent by the Guardian on 8th July is printed below with words inserted in brackets to make it easier to read:—

Highly approve Assembly's programme (of) action, delighted (with its) energetic (and) hopeful measures. As (the) concluding year (of the) Final Phase (of the) Six Year Plan rapidly ebbs away, (the) attention (of) all members (of the) British Bahá'í Community, already fully aroused to action, highly conscious (of their) glorious opportunity (and) unflinchingly determined (to) attain (their) Goal, should be unwaveringly focussed, (their) energies mustered (and) all available resources mobilised (for) one last forward charge enabling them ere (the) final hour strikes (to) seize (the) laurels (of) victory hanging within their reach. (A) Concerted effort, sustained, consecrated (and) nation-wide (in) scope, transcending (in) intensity (the) mighty efforts already exerted (during the) past five years by (the British) Community, will unfailingly ensure (the) worthy consummation (of the) initial memorable stage (of the) first historic Crusade launched by Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual battalions (throughout the) length (and) breadth (of the) British Isles. (I) plead afresh, directing (a) particular appeal (to the) few remaining inactive participants, who through inexperience, timidity or overburdening circumstances still hesitate (to) fling themselves (into the) arena wherein (a) struggling Community (is) being called upon (in) this fateful hour (to) display before (the) eyes (of the) Bahá'í World its prowess (and to) demonstrate the intrinsic worth (of) its stewardship (of the) Faith (of) Bahá'u'lláh. (I am) impelled, in recognition (of the) brilliant record (of) past services and (as a) token (of the) confidence inspired (by the) latest exploits (in the) field (of) service, (to) pledge (one) Thousand Pounds (for the) furtherance (of the) sacred task now (in its) most acute phase

(and) steadily approaching culmination. Intense prayers (are) ascending from (my) longing heart (to the) throne (of the) Lord (of) Hosts, supplicating (a) victory which will befittingly crown strenuous exertions wholly unparelled (in the) annals (of the) Faith (of) Bahá'u'lláh (in the) British Isles.

The National Assembly cabled on 18th July:—

Assembly humbly grateful your inspiring cable pledge begs prayers we prove worthy your trust. Happy report declaration Oxford Jenkerson family settled there loving devotion.

The Guardian replied on 24th July:—

Delighted news Oxford assure Jenkerson family loving prayers.

Letters to Individuals.

The following was written to Marcel Mihaeloff by the Guardian through his secretary, dated 7th April, 1949:

"He fully appreciates your situation, but considers this does not justify you in breaking the law of the Aqdas which is that your parents must consent to your marriage. Do you not think if you wrote them, as a loving and devoted son, and explained to them that your happiness depended on their consenting to your marrying the young lady of your choice, that they would give their consent?"

On more than one occasion parents have been so impressed by the respect for their wishes in this important matter that they have consented, and even become in the end Bahá'ís themselves, because they saw what a good effect the Faith had on their children. Do you not want to give your parents this opportunity? The Guardian feels you should, and that to begin such an important and sacred relationship by not obeying the Law of God is certainly not right."

THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

In the American "Bahá'í News," we read of the wonderful spirit prevailing in the Goal Countries of Europe, and of the joyous and enthusiastic celebration of Naw-Rúz. In BELGIUM, for example, after a Bahá'í lecture and short talks and readings from the Sacred Tablets—which greatly impressed everyone present—one lady declared her faith, saying: "It is for me a great privilege to enter the Bahá'í con-fraternity . . . Thank you." In HOLLAND, 32 people gathered for dinner and music, and a talk on the Faith. Enthusiasm was great. In NORWAY, 37 were "carried away on the wings of fellowship" at an inspiring spiritual Feast; tea and cakes were beautifully served by the Feast Committee. This is the first Naw-Rúz that any of these communities have celebrated, and was thus a very joyous one..

GERMANY. It is a great joy to us to know that our dear, devoted brethren, surmounting great obstacles and facing tremendous difficulties, are none the less forging ahead in the organisation of their work, and promoting teaching. They have successfully printed their first "Bahá'í News," which, together with "Hidden Words," has been translated into German and included in a 126-page book of Bahá'í Prayers.

EGYPT reports that the Cause is spreading well, in spite of printing difficulties, and that all Bahá'ís responded with zeal to the Guardian's call to ". . . arise as one man . . . fulfil objectives . . ."

CANADA is getting to work as an independent N.S.A., and rejoices in the fact that three 22-year-old Bahá'ís, young in the Faith also, have pioneered to Charlotte-town.

UNITED STATES. Our greatly admired, if somewhat envied, sister-community is doing great things in spite of tremendous obstacles. Their use of a radio station, with a "Know Your Neighbour" programme, gave voice to the minorities, who were very grateful; and the Bahá'ís now have a representative on the Spokane Race Relations Council. We read with sympathy that due to the moving of 15 of its members, the Brattleboro' Assembly almost lost its status, but later became extremely active in spreading the Faith.

At a Regional Conference in S. California, it was felt that lack of growth in a community may be due either to lethargy or disharmony, and that Bahá'ís must LOVE the Cause and it must come first; there must be unity within the community. Rochester (N.Y.) tried the experiment of pooling resources of time and effort as well as finances, with a nearby town, to promote a weekly meeting—something on the lines of our own "Adoption" plan. In addition to a weekly public meeting, the San Francisco community holds four weekly study-classes: two for Youth, one for Bahá'ís only, and one for enquirers.

IRAN. The historic work initiated two years ago for the advancement of women has made great headway. Special classes aim at giving women what has been specified in the Plan as "mimum Bahá'í education, comprising a short history of the Course, the learning of obligatory prayers, principles of Bahá'í Administration, and a study of the Teachings and Sacred Writings." Help and advice are also given to women in backward regions, regarding health, housekeeping, domestic and social education, child welfare, etc. Our dear Persian friends are also doing tremendous work in sending gift parcels to the beloved friends in Central Europe; in three months, they have despatched 1,200 parcels, and yet they feel they are doing little to relieve the distress and to repay the help and inspiration they receive from the West. The Youth of Iran are extremely active, and are carrying out extensive teaching work as well as helping in the general uplift and education of their fellow-Youth.

AUSTRALIA is making an effort to ensure a uniform system of Assembly incorporation, and to knit more closely the members of their widely scattered community. We are reminded that their long-established "Herald of the South" would greatly benefit by increased numbers of subscribers from all countries.

We pray for all these devoted friends in their gigantic task in face of increasing difficulties, knowing that Baha'u'llah is using them and us to establish His Kingdom. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it . . ."

PRAYER BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

Lauded by Thy Name, O Lord my God! Darkness hath fallen upon every land, and the forces of mischief have encompassed all the nations. Through them, however, I perceive the splendours of Thy wisdom, and discern the brightness of the light of Thy providence.

They that are shut out as by a veil from Thee have imagined that they have the power to put out Thy light, and to quench Thy fire, and to still the winds of Thy grace. Nay, and to this Thy might beareth me witness! Had not every tribulation been made the bearer of Thy wisdom, and every ordeal the vehicle of Thy providence, no one would have dared oppose us, though the powers of earth and heaven were to be leagued against us. Were I to unravel the wondrous mysteries of Thy wisdom which are laid here before me, the reins of Thine enemies would be cleft asunder.

Glorified be Thou, then, O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy Most Great Name to assemble them that love Thee around the Law that streameth from the good-pleasure of Thy Will, and to send down upon them what will assure their hearts.

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.