

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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THE NOBLE TASK

TWO LETTERS FROM THE GUARDIAN.

June 17th, 1943:

"... He was very pleased to hear that the publicity you are giving the Faith is meeting with a wider response than has hitherto been the case, and he hopes that the N.S.A. and local assemblies will organise their efforts in such a way as to enable them to draw inquirers closer to the Cause and, if possible, meet with them and include them in suitable teaching classes.

"He feels that Bahá'ís who, though still considering themselves believers, omit attending the 19-Day Feasts for long periods, should not be deprived of their voting rights; they should, however, be encouraged to attend these Feasts as often as possible.

"In less than a year the Bahá'ís the world over will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of their Faith, and the Guardian is very anxious that the British believers should commemorate this historic occasion befittingly. He would, therefore, suggest that your assembly take up the following points for deliberation as soon as possible:—

1. The holding of a large and representative gathering, attended by the Bahá'ís and the public alike, in a hired hall in London on the 23rd of May, 1944. He feels that prominent friends and sympathizers of the Faith should be invited to speak on this occasion, as well as Bahá'ís, and that every effort should be made to make the gathering both festive and dignified, as befits so blessed and solemn an occasion.

2. The publication of a Centenary Pamphlet outlining the important events of the Faith, and with a special emphasis placed on the rise and development of the Cause in England, its early history in that country, the achievements of the friends in spreading the Teachings there and establishing the administration, the formation of the Publishing Trust and so on.

3. He wishes your assembly to call the annual Bahá'í Convention for days that will include the **22nd** of May, so that all the assembled friends may be present at a special Bahá'í meeting to be held at 2 hours and 11 minutes after sunset on May 22nd, as this is the exact time at which the Báb made His first historic declaration of His Mission to Mullá Husayn.

In order to aid the dear English believers in this befitting celebration of so glorious an occasion, the Guardian is forwarding to your assembly the sum of two hundred pounds sterling to be used for the arrangements you deem fit to make, and the publication of the above-mentioned pamphlet. The Bahá'í communities all over the world—wherever free to do so, will also be celebrating this memorable day, each according to their capacity, and he is very anxious that the British Bahá'ís should, as befits their increasingly prominent position in the Bahá'í world, demonstrate to the public and to their fellow-believers, the vitality of their community and the marked advancement it has made of late. He leaves all details to the discretion of your assembly.

Mr. Yool of Manchester was recently able to spend his leave in Haifa at the Western Pilgrim

House, and the Guardian was so happy to welcome one of the English friends here. He hopes that after the war many will be able to make the pilgrimage. They will be most welcome.

Assuring you and all the members of the N.S.A. of his loving prayers and his ardent hopes for the success of this great celebration which you will now be planning.

Yours in His service, with Bahá'í love,
R. RABBANI.

Dear and valued co-workers,

I pray that the celebration of the Centenary of our beloved Faith by the English believers may be a remarkable success. The committee that will have to be appointed for this purpose must strain every nerve, explore every avenue, and lose no time in order to ensure the unqualified success of this undertaking. I will supplicate the Beloved to guide every step you take, to aid you to surmount all obstacles, and to inspire you to undertake the measures that are most conducive to the proper discharge of your noble task. The widest possible publicity should be given to the Faith by every means at your disposal.

Your true and grateful brother,
SHOGHI.

The National Spiritual Assembly and the relative committees are working on plans for the holding of the next Convention and for the celebration of the Centenary. Details will be given in the next issue of the Journal.

August 4th, 1943:

"... He was very encouraged to see the number of places where there are now one or two registered Bahá'ís residing, as these are beacons of the Faith—however lonely and however, as yet, feeble the light they are able to radiate.

"The Guardian feels it would be an excellent plan if some way could be found to raise Bournemouth and Torquay to Assembly status; either through some self-sacrificing souls moving to these places and thus giving them the required number, or through the efforts of local and visiting teachers. With the Centenary of the Faith so rapidly approaching, it seems a great pity that England should be deprived of these two assemblies, when each one of them only requires one person to bring them to assembly status.

"Regarding the questions you asked in connection with the minutes of N.S.A. meetings:

"He would not advise any special contact being made with the Swedenborgians, as the Master's reference is not sufficiently clear and emphatic to warrant it.

"The Guardian does not believe you should ask the Russian Embassy for help in locating Mdme. Grinevskaya's play about the Báb, as he believes they could be of no help in the matter. You might ask the American N.S.A. if they have this material available.

"The Guardian's prayers are offered on behalf of the N.S.A. members, that you, one and all, may be aided and guided in your labours during the coming months, to prepare the way for a befitting and glorious Centenary celebration of our beloved Faith during May of 1944.

With warmest Bahá'í greetings,
R. RABBANI.

Dearly beloved friends,

I was so pleased and encouraged to witness the recent evidences of the determination of the English believers to arise, as never before, during this concluding year of the first Bahá'í Century, and ensure the extension of the teaching activities of the Faith, the consolidation of its interests, and a better understanding and wider recognition of its aims, its principles, and accomplishments. The efforts they must exert during these remaining months must be unprecedented in their range and character. The blessings that will be vouchsafed to them, if they unitedly persevere and vigorously prosecute their urgent task, will alike be unprecedented. The preparation for a befitting celebration of the forthcoming Centenary must likewise be carefully and energetically carried out. May the Almighty sustain and guide them in their vast and meritorious endeavours.

SHOGHI.

Historical Survey Committee.

The Historical Survey Committee is now collecting the material for the book on the history of the Cause in this country. It is expected to have the whole of the manuscript ready for the publishers by the first of January.

This book cannot be a very detailed chronicle. A publication of that kind will certainly be undertaken in the future, but the time is not yet. However, the Committee has decided that now that whilst we are gathering data, it is as well to have as much detail as possible, to be ready for future use. In the light of the Guardian's recent communication on the subject, the scope of this book will be altered to some extent. It will now include also a general account of the whole history of the Cause and its growth and development in other parts of the world.

And now for an appeal. The Committee will greatly appreciate any material that you may be able to provide. Anything that relates to the development of the Faith here or elsewhere, either written or pictorial, will be extremely valuable. Do send them to the Committee as soon as you possibly can.

NEWS.

Bahá'í Meeting.

The first Bahá'í gathering at Puncknoll, Dorset, the home of the Men of the Trees, was held on September 11th. Mrs. Sumner, Miss Vivian Sumner, Miss Ursula Newman and Mr. St. Barbe Baker were present.

New Believer.

We welcome with joy Miss Essylt Peake, formerly of the Manchester community. She is now working in the Land Army in Derbyshire.

The London Community have been given notice to leave their Centre at the end of October and are looking for new, and at the same time more suitable, premises. The new address will be notified as soon as possible.

Miss Cansdale and Mr. Ferraby were married at the London Centre on August 13th. The landlady lent a large room upstairs for the ceremony and over forty people were present.

The next meetings of the National Spiritual Assembly will be on October 9th/10th, in Bradford, and on November 6th/7th in Bournemouth.

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Like the believers in America, Iraq and India, the friends in Iran are scattering themselves in different parts of the country and also in neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan and Bahrein, in order to spread the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. They are working with great devotion and enthusiasm. Let us all pray that their efforts may be blessed.

The believers in Iran are nevertheless still subject to many difficulties on account of their Faith. We hear through the Haifa Newsletter that a number of them have been arrested and imprisoned for having married according to the Bahá'í teachings. We are also told that there has been another addition to the long list of martyrs in that country. Mirza Habib'u'llah Memâry has been martyred in the town of Yezd.

Publishing Trust Announcement.

The Publishing Trust has bought a stock of "A Commentary on the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá," by David Hofman, which is published by George Ronald. This booklet is an explanation of the meaning of the Will and is a useful aid to the understanding of Bahá'í Administration. The price is 1/-.

"The Promised Day is Come," by Shoghi Effendi. Copies of this book, the property of the N.S.A., were lent to various pioneer believers. Not all of them have been returned. Will anybody who still has one of these, please return it to the Secretary of the N.S.A.

As the friends no doubt know, the Bahá'í Faith is mentioned in a number of encyclopaedias and books of reference, and the information given is in many cases not entirely correct. After the war most of these books will probably be issuing new editions, in which we hope to get these statements corrected. If all believers who notice any such incorrect statements will send full particulars to the Secretary of the N.S.A., this will help greatly in getting the necessary information together in good time. The N.S.A. will be grateful for your co-operation in this matter.

"Lauded be Thy name, O Thou in Whose hands is the kingdom of all names, and in the grasp of Whose might are all that are in heaven and all that are on earth! I entreat Thee, by Him Who is Thy Most Effulgent Name Whom Thou hast made a target for the darts of Thy decree in Thy path, O Thou the King of eternity, to rend asunder the veils that have shut off Thy creatures from the horizon of Thy glory, that haply they may turn their faces in the direction of Thy mercy, and draw night unto the Day-Spring of Thy loving-kindness.

Leave not Thy servants to themselves, O my Lord! Draw them through the influence of Thine utterances unto the Dawning-Place of Thine inspiration, and to the Fountain of Thy Revelation, and to the Treasury of Thy wisdom. Thou art He to Whose strength and power all things have testified, Whose Purpose nothing whatsoever of all that hath been created in Thy heaven and on Thy earth hath been able to frustrate.

Render, then, victorious, O my God, Thy servants who have set their faces towards Thee, and directed their steps to the seat of Thy grace. Send down, then, upon them what will keep them safe from the danger of turning to any one but Thee, and from fixing their eyes upon aught else except Thyself.

Potent art Thou to do what Thou wilt, and to rule as Thou pleasest. There is no God but Thee, the God of glory and wisdom."

(From "Prayers and Meditation,"
by Bahá'u'lláh.)

NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

The Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh is unique and without a like anywhere and at any period of human history. The first thing to consider in relation to the Administrative Order is that, although it is the instrument of a revealed religion, it is not ecclesiastical. No Bahá'í institution can adopt articles of faith and lay down modes of worship. The Guardian of the Faith, speaking of the Administrative Order, says, "The keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority, but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of loving consultation."

Loving Consultation—that is the outstanding feature of all Bahá'í affairs. Consultation of course does not mean trying to win somebody else to one's own views. The Master once said that the spark of Truth is generated from the clash of conflicting opinions. At any Bahá'í gathering, whether it is a meeting of a spiritual assembly, of a Nineteen-Day Feast, or a special meeting called to discuss the affairs of the Cause, or any other occasion when the friends consider the interests and the progress of the Faith, it is the bounden duty of everyone who has something to say, to say it. False humility has no place in the scheme of Bahá'í Administration. And then, it is imperative to have the utmost regard for the views and opinions of one another. Nothing must be brushed aside in an arrogant manner. Nothing can be more removed from the spirit of the Administrative Order than to belittle the viewpoint of a believer. Bahá'u'lláh has pronounced courtesy to be a cardinal virtue of the world of humanity. Note His language when He speaks of courtesy.

The power-house of a Bahá'í Community is the Nineteen-Day Feast. A community that is indifferent to its Nineteen-Day Feasts cannot but be a weak community. Not only will it be weak, but declining as well. Furthermore, it will not be only the community as such, as a collective body, that suffers. The individuals will not escape either the consequences of that debility in their own separate lives. They will find that their efforts are hampered, that they cannot marshal the spiritual energy required to carry them over daily hindrances. This is a spiritual law, and time and again it has been proved by experience. And it cannot be otherwise. What is a Nineteen-Day Feast but an occasion of renewal and re-dedication. The united call raised at every Feast to the Throne of Glory provides the channel for the powers

of the invisible world to flow through the assembled believers. Indeed, the Nineteen-Day Feast is also the barometer of the vitality of a Bahá'í Community.

(To be continued.)

"Let deeds, not words, be your adorning."

The Báb.

"Nothing that is done with love is ever any trouble: and there is always time."

'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Dear Friends,

If we carefully meditate on these two quotations, shall we not be inspired to apply them in our daily living? Our deeds are an indication of our Faith to the outer world. Perhaps one way would be to help in any useful and humane undertaking, promoting fellowship and harmony. We can each think of some way in which we can serve humanity.

Problem Page.

At this crucial stage in world history we might consider the "Signs of the Times," the portents described in the Bible and fulfilled in events now taking place and in the Bahá'í Faith. A few such passages are mentioned below, signifying the unexpectedness of the Revelation, man's unpreparedness, the catastrophes preceding His acceptance of it, which are now taking place, the uniting of the whole world for government and peace.

Matthew XVI, 3; XXIV, 5-7.

Mark XIII, 8-9 and 19-32.

Luke XII, 54-6; XVII, 20; XXI, 11, 25, 35.

Daniel XII, 1-4.

Psalms L, 2.

Isaiah V, 26-30; XXV, 6-7; XXXV, 1, 2, 5; XL, 5; XLIII, 9; LII, 6; LXV, 10, 15.

"Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause. This is indeed what profiteth you in this world, and in that which is to come. Your Lord, the God of Mercy, is the All-Informed, the All-Knowing. Grieve not at the things ye witness in this day. The day shall come whereon the tongues of the nations will proclaim: 'The earth is God's, the Almighty, the Single, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing.'—(Quoted by Shoghi Effendi in "The Advent of Divine Justice.")