

# BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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## THE PRIVILEGE SO PRICELESS

On November 3rd the following cable was received from the Guardian:—

**"Cabling five hundred pounds to be expended discretion your Assembly furtherance teaching activities and Bahá'í publications. Deepest love, assurance continued prayers."**

And the National Spiritual Assembly, feeling deeply moved and overwhelmed at this further sign of our beloved Guardian's generosity and love, and feeling that words alone mean very little, sent the following reply:—

"Immeasurable gratitude. Loving devotion."

"To teach the Cause of God, to proclaim its truths, to defend its interests, to demonstrate, by words as well as by deeds, its indispensability, its potency, and universality, should at no time be regarded as the exclusive concern or sole privilege of Bahá'í administrative institutions, be they Assemblies, or committees. All must participate, however humble their origin, however limited their experience, however restricted their means, however deficient their education, however pressing their cares and pre-occupations, however unfavourable the environment in which they live.

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"The field is indeed so immense, the period so critical, the Cause so great, the workers so few, the time so short, the privilege so priceless, that no follower of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, worthy to bear His name, can afford a moment's hesi-

tation. That God-born Force, irresistible in its sweeping power, incalculable in its potency, unpredictable in its course, mysterious in its workings, and awe-inspiring in its manifestations—a Force which, as the Báb has written, 'vibrates within the innermost being of all created things,' and which, according to Bahá'u'lláh, has through its 'vibrating influence', 'upset the equilibrium of the world and revolutionised its ordered life'—such a Force, acting even as a two-edged sword, is, under our very eyes, sundering, on the one hand, the age-old society, and is unloosing, on the other hand the bonds that still fetter the infant and as yet unemancipated Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

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"The opportunities which the turmoil of the present age presents, with all the sorrows which it evokes, the fears which it excites, the disillusionment which it produces, the perplexities which it creates, the indignation which it arouses, the revolt which it provokes, the grievances its engenders, the spirit of restless search which it awakens, must, in like manner, be exploited for the purpose of spreading far and wide the knowledge of the redemptive power of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and for enlisting fresh recruits in the ever-swelling army of His followers. So precious an opportunity, so rare a conjunction of favourable circumstances, may never again recur. Now is the time, the appointed time."

(Written by Shoghi Effendi to the American believers, in "The Advent of Divine Justice.")



## ANNUAL TEACHING CONFERENCE.

The Annual Teaching Conference will be held on Saturday/Sunday, January 8th/9th, 1944, at the Bahá'í Centre, 39 High Street, Manchester, 4. The theme of the Conference will be "The Last Four Months—A Call to Action," and the programme will be:

**Saturday, January 8th.**

**2.30 p.m.—4.30 p.m.**

Work already done. Opened by the Secretary of the National Teaching Committee.

**5.30 p.m.—7.30 p.m.**

Teaching in the coming four months. Opened by Mr. A. Norton.

**Sunday, January 8th.**

**10 a.m.—1 p.m., with a short break in the middle.**

How the Centenary can help in Teaching. Commencing with a summary of plans by the Centenary Committee.

Mr. H. M. Balyuzi will be chairman of the Conference.

All friends who can possibly do so are urged to attend the Conference. The Manchester friends will provide accommodation for those who wish it, so far as they are able, or provide any other assistance needed. Those wishing accommodation are asked to advise the secretary at the Manchester Centre not later than December 28th.

The following very interesting letter has been received from Mr. Robert Yool of Manchester, who is now with the Army in the Middle East and has been able to visit Haifa:

My dear Bahá'í Friends,

I must apologise for not writing this letter many weeks ago to give you all the interesting news of my visit to Haifa and Bahji. How fortunate I have been, a mere recruit to the Faith, knowing so little of the history and the teachings—and myself not a shining light in the community—to have visited the most Holy Shrines of the Báb—Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and to have walked in the peaceful and most beautiful gardens, sometimes treading where 'Abdu'l-Bahá had walked. Then to have had the great privilege to meet and talk with the Guardian, how I wish I could tell you all he spoke about. I'm sorry to say it's beyond me, but I will try and make this letter interesting and hope you will forgive me if I do not lecture on my return.

First of all, what a welcome I received on meeting Ruhíyyih Khanum and her father, Mr. Maxwell. I was then taken to the Pilgrim House and invited to stay for my seven days leave. What a luxury that was after sleeping

—well just anywhere, sometimes on sand which did make a soft bed but woe betide if a sand-storm blew up just when the food was about and lasted during the night; what a sight we looked in the morning; and then sometimes we halted on a rocky patch and then it was a bed of hard lumps, but what a wonderful sight it was to look up at the stars. Sorry, I'm drifting away from Haifa. How lovely and bright my room was with gorgeous flowers freshly picked from the garden.

My impressions of Haifa I will try to describe. When I first arrived I stayed at a soldiers' hostel and looking out from the window up at Mount Carmel I tried to think where the Holy Shrine of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá could be. I thought, well it must be at the top, so I took a No. 4 bus and asked to be dropped off at the Persian Gardens. Now I was surprised because I did not even reach half way. What a beautiful garden, such green grass and lovely flowers—geraniums, petunias, violets, violas, roses and orange blossom and, as you will see in the snaps, stately cypress trees, white pebble path and, standing out above everything, four beautiful monuments. All this has been planned by the Guardian, who after a long and hard day's work visits both the Shrine and Memorial Gardens, always seeing how he can improve the gardens. In the Shrine are orange, lemon, tangerine, pomegranate trees and two very old grape vines. The Holy Shrines are decorated with flowers from the gardens the whole year through.

The view from the Shrine Gardens is beautiful; looking over the top of Haifa across the Bay, one cannot miss seeing (on a clear day) the town of Acca and towards the evening, Acca stands out as a White City and on a perfectly clear day (and I was fortunate to see this) one can see the Mansion at Bahji. But that is not all—beyond Acca there is a stretch of mountains giving a picture of many colours.

I visited the Archives at Bahji and Haifa and was so interested I could have found enough to interest me for a whole day or even more.

I hope to visit Haifa again soon and hope to visit the Archives again.

And now I must draw to a close, with Best Wishes and Bahá'í Greetings to you all,

Yours sincerely,

In His Service,

ROBERT YOOL.

## Báha'í Centenary—May, 1944.

Plans are progressing and it is hoped to give details in the next issue of the Journal about both the Centenary celebrations, and also about the Historical Survey of the Cause, which is going to be published in book form.

### **The Bahá'í Fund.**

The N.S.A. at their meeting in Bournemouth asked the treasurer to make an appeal through the Journal to **every** Bahá'í, and here it is:—

For some years it has always been a most difficult thing for me as your treasurer to give an estimate as to what contributions are likely to come in, from Local Assemblies, and pioneer believers. Every Bahá'í will realize my difficulty, when at an N.S.A. meeting I am asked what amount of money we can afford to spend on this or that project for the furtherance of the Faith. Now this should not be, and especially in a Bahá'í Community. True it is that some Pioneer believers send their contributions at regular times, but these I assure you are few. The same applies to Local Assemblies. Would I astound you, when I say, some believers never send a penny from January 1st to December 31st. We have approximately 160 Bahá'ís in the British Isles, and if every one of us gave ONE SHILLING per week as a minimum, we should be assured of an income of Eight pounds per week. It is not a question of begging the friends to contribute more than they are doing (except in certain cases) but rather to make their contributions regular, at a given time, say monthly. Your N.S.A. would then be in a position to go ahead with teaching,

publicity, etc., feeling more secure in their undertakings. At the moment our financial position is good, but only is this so, because the Guardian recently sent us some generous contributions for specific purposes. Take these donations out of the fund, and I assure you the position would be serious. Let me give you an example: From October 10th to November 7th, the total income from every Bahá'í to the National Fund was £5 5s. 0d., and this amount was from four believers only. Surely I need not say more, because I know you will all give this matter your serious, and immediate attention. A new consciousness of the true significance of the Bahá'í Fund is required of us all.

### **New Believers.**

We welcome as members of the community Mr. Samuel Scott of Leeds, Miss Janet Howes and Mrs. June Course of Northampton, Mrs. Myott of Torquay, and Gunner Michael McLean whose home is at Cromer but who studied the Faith at Torquay.

The next meetings of the National Spiritual Assembly will be held on December 11th and January 22nd.

## **NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE**

The National Teaching Committee wishes to tell the friends of work done in the teaching field recently. It must, however, be borne in mind that only a limited number of believers are free to stay, even for a short time, away from their homes and their work owing to war-time restrictions.

Pioneer work has been done at Harrogate and Blackburn by Mr. Norton, and the believers at Birmingham have been inspired by visits from Miss Baxter and Miss Wellby, and their work has been co-ordinated so that they can hold the Feasts together at least sometimes. As was pointed out in the last Bulletin, the observances of 19-Day Feasts is of the utmost importance and helpfulness, both to the individual and the community as well as the influence from it which permeates the world. In this connection it is good to report that the friends in Dorset met for their first 19-Day Feast during a visit from Miss Ursula Newman, and it is hoped that regularity can be maintained.

The Bahá'ís in Bristol had a week-end visit from Miss Baxter and were able to meet for a Feast on the Sunday afternoon. Miss Gamble,

our oldest Bahá'í (ninety-five) who is in hospital at Bath was visited on the return journey. Other places where Miss Baxter has helped the local community are Bournemouth, where she spoke at the Psychology Club and shared a 19-Day Feast with the believers; and Torquay, where the friends are struggling to re-establish their Spiritual Assembly. These faithful few are hampered by illness and beg your constant prayers.

Northampton is another place where considerable work has been done. Following propaganda work by means of advertisements and meetings addressed by David Hofman, the few believers have got together and with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Ferraby have held several meetings and are celebrating Bahá'í feasts. May Bahá'u'lláh bless all these and other efforts to extend His Faith in this land.

Some activity has been promoted at Ilkeston where Mrs. Brown spent four days with Mrs. Lacey and prepared for advertisement, a shop-window display and arranged for a public meeting to be held on November 28th. A number of contacts were made which should prove very helpful with the public meeting.

## National Teaching Committee (*contd.*)

Dear friends,

Let us always remember that we are not only among the first to acknowledge Bahá'u'lláh as the Word of God for this Age, but we stand before the world as torches in the dark night, from which others will be illumined; we are also the precursors—advance models—of what the new humanity is to be, in our private character, in Bahá'í activities and in our dealings with the world at large.

In this connection let us ponder the words of Bahá'u'lláh Himself: "Humanity has emerged from its former state of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities. New bounties, perfect bestowals are awaiting and already descending upon him." And again, "Verily, He (Jesus) said: 'Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.' In this day, however, We say: 'Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become the quickeners of mankind.'"

### The Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh. (2).

Last time in this brief discussion of the Administrative Order, we ended with this sentence: "Indeed the 19-Day Feast is the barometer of the vitality of a Bahá'í Community." It is also true to say that the degree of success attained by a local spiritual assembly in its deliberation is a measure of the spiritual growth of the community which that assembly is elected to serve. In other words, the work of a local spiritual assembly is no more and no less than the reflection of the attainments of the community. The power that stands at the back of an assembly is that energy which is released by the impact of the Word of God on the soul of the community. The stronger this spiritual force, the stronger is its capacity of attraction—the ability to invite the attention of the outside world and, still more important, the ability to attract the powers and the blessings of the Unseen Kingdom.

Before we go any further with this theme, it is essential to consider the mode of Bahá'í elections. A Bahá'í election demands the fullest exercise of the spiritual and the intellectual faculties of the voter, in an atmosphere freed from the slightest trace of compulsion or persuasion. Therefore no nomination of candidates and no kind of canvassing is permissible. The voter in a Bahá'í election relies solely and absolutely on the promptings of his or her own conscience, which is in turn inspired by prayer and meditation. A Bahá'í, before casting his

or her vote, prays ardently and sincerely for guidance, and the choice is the free choice of their soul. Once the members of a Bahá'í assembly, local or national, are elected, their ultimate responsibility is to their Bahá'í conscience, in other words to Bahá'u'lláh. Should the electors feel discontented with the work done by the members of an assembly, they can remedy the situation at the following election.

However the institution of the 19-Day Feast is the ground upon which the assembly and the community meet to submit every issue to the searching test of unity in service and devotion. It is the irrevocable duty of the spiritual assembly to consult with the community at the 19-Day Feast. And at the same time it is the spiritual duty of every Bahá'í present at the Feast, should they have any observation to make, or any proposal to suggest, to mention it frankly and fearlessly. There can be no secrecy between the spiritual assembly and the body of the believers, except where the case of an individual is concerned, the public discussion of which would be a breach of confidence. It is the privilege of the believers to bring any grievances they have to the assembly, and it is the duty of the assembly to consider them with great care and impartiality. However it is the spiritual assembly as a body that functions, and not each separate member in an individual capacity. That is to say, outside the assembly meeting its members have no privileges which the other believers in the community do not possess. Therefore should a believer have a grievance, the place to state it is at an assembly meeting and not in interviews with the individual members of the assembly. It has been proved time and again that a community suffers from the neglect of this vital principle. Matters that have been of only slight importance have sometimes assumed undue proportions and become a cause of futile arguments, because they were not referred in time to the spiritual assembly or presented at the 19-Day Feast.

Unity is the basic theme of the Bahá'í Faith, but unity does not mean a dead and deadening uniformity. There is such a thing as the unanimous silence of the graveyard. The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is a living dynamic force and the institutions created by it are living organisms. We must not be afraid of a clash of opinion, indeed we should welcome it. As was stated last time, the Master has definitely said that the spark of truth arises from the clash of divergent views. This is the point which cannot be too much stressed. Unity is always observed, if one submits one's own personal inclinations and interests to the common weal.

(To be continued.)