

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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"REJOICE AND BE GLAD THAT THIS DAY HAS DAWNED, TRY TO REALISE ITS POWER, FOR IT IS INDEED WONDERFUL."

Dear Friends,

Bahá'u'lláh says: "Every eye in this Day should seek what will best promote the Cause of God." This is His command, which he has laid upon us—in absolutely everything that we do, we should seek unceasingly to proclaim His Faith and to serve His Cause. Bahá'u'lláh has given His commands to the human race, His laws are universal, but how much more binding are they surely on us who are privileged to know His Revelation. He has chosen us as the instruments to spread His Cause, our community is a nucleus, a very, very small beginning, of His Kingdom on earth. How carefully we should cherish this community, how we should value it and our association with each other in the community of His Name. As the Guardian has said in a recent letter to one of the English believers, we are a spiritual family and the bonds which unite us are so much stronger and more lasting than physical, worldly ties. We are the members of a new type of community, a community based on the Laws of God, the community of the Most Great Name, and accordingly as we understand our membership of that community and as we love and value each other as members of it, so will be our power to obey Bahá'u'lláh's command and to promote His Cause. Christ said: "Let your light so shine before men" and such a light should a Bahá'í community radiate to the world, through the love, the peace and the harmony of its collective life and of its members that its

glory and its attraction will shine forth for all the world to see. Such a community becomes a clear channel through which the Divine bounty can reach the world and thereby it helps to illumine the whole earth, but a community which does not make itself such a channel for the Divine blessings, is contributing to the deprivation of the entire human race, not merely of its own members. Great indeed is this Day in which we live, and we should, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, try to realise its power, because in the measure that we as a community understand it, so we shall be used as the instruments of that power. 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us in the same chapter of "Paris Talks" from which the words at the top of this page are quoted:

"Try with all your hearts to be willing channels for God's Bounty. For I say unto you, that He has chosen you to be His messengers of Love throughout the world, to be His bearers of Spiritual gifts to man, to be the means of spreading Unity and Concord on the earth.

"Thank God for this with all your hearts that such a privilege has been given unto you. For a life devoted to praise is not too long in which to thank God for such a favour."

"May you, one and all, approach to the Threshold of Unity, and enter into the Kingdom. May each of you be like unto a flaming torch, lighted and burning bright with the fire of the Love of God."
—'Abdu'l-Bahá.

"NEW WORLD ORDER."

The N.S.A. would like again to call the attention of the friends to this magazine and to ask for their help in its maintenance and improvement. Its success depends entirely on the efforts we make for it, and there are a number of things that can be done. It has to be written, it has to be judged and criticised when issued, to make sure it is rising to the highest possible standard of quality, it has to be sold and distributed. Therefore the Committee will gratefully receive articles for publication dealing with any aspect of the Bahá'í Teachings and of their application to world development. They will also be glad to receive criticisms and suggestions for improvements and new developments. And further, they depend on all the believers to sell the magazine and to get it distributed as widely as possible. Only in this way can we make the magazine a permanent success.

The N.S.A. wishes to remind the believers once more of the useful publicity work which can be done by writing and introducing the Faith to anyone who in books, magazines, lectures, etc., appears to have the same ideals and to be working in the same direction as the Bahá'í Cause. It would be helpful also if the Contacts Secretary were given the names of all people thus contacted. The ruling of the N.S.A. still stands, however, that contacting of people prominent in political, government and ecclesiastical circles should be left to the National Assembly, to whom all such ideas should be sent.

Gifts of Books to Libraries.

To place books in libraries—public lending libraries, school libraries, libraries of clubs and discussion groups, etc.—is a very useful way of publicising the Faith. The books can, if needed, be provided at the expense of the National Fund. Believers who can find suitable opportunities for placing books in this way should communicate with the secretary of the National Teaching Committee.

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

The believers in Iraq and in India both held very successful Summer Schools last year, which were attended by believers from all parts of these countries. In both these countries too, numbers of the believers are moving to fresh places for pioneer teaching, and in India already several new local assemblies have been formed and more are on the way.

Historical Survey Committee.

This Committee is at work on the task entrusted to us by the Guardian, namely to prepare a survey of the history of the Faith in this country. The result of their work will be published as a book.

Centenary Committee.

The Committee has made plans for the celebration of the Bahá'í Centenary in May, 1944, which have been approved by the National Spiritual Assembly. They are briefly as follows: To lease a suitable hall and hold during the period of the celebrations an exhibition containing all available material connected with the history of the Cause in the British Isles, and all its activities down to the present time. It is hoped also to obtain a model of the Temple at Wilmette to show there, and photographs of the Shrines at Haifa, of 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself, and other interesting pictures relating to the Faith will also be shown. The book written by the Historical Survey Committee, will, of course be a central part of the exhibition.

In conjunction with the Exhibition, it is planned to hold a series of receptions to which a number of eminent people will be invited. These receptions will take the form of a simple Bahá'í meeting, prayers and readings, a brief talk, music if possible, and refreshments. At some of them it is suggested to give a short presentation of tableaux showing scenes from "The Dawnbreakers." It is hoped that cables of greeting will be received from all the different Bahá'í communities of the world, as well as from the Guardian, and these will be prominently exhibited. Every effort will be made to publicise the celebrations in the press and elsewhere.

This is a brief outline of the plan, details have still to be filled in, and there is very much work for everyone to do. At the moment the Committee will be grateful for suggestions from the believers, later active hard work will be needed.

Local communities will of course be planning celebrations in their own districts.

Poster Competition.

In connection with the Centenary celebrations, the N.S.A. is organising a search for suitable posters to advertise it. This search is to take the form of a competition, which is open to Bahá'ís and is also being publicised amongst all the art schools in the country. Ten prizes are being given, one of 5 guineas and nine of 2 guineas. Further particulars may be obtained from the secretary of the Centenary Committee.

Note from the Treasurer of the National Fund.

Friends are asked to note once more that all cheques sent to the National Fund should be made payable to The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles, not to the treasurer personally.

Centenary Fund Appeal.

As National Treasurer I have also been appointed treasurer for the Centenary Fund, and in making this appeal to every believer in the British Isles, I do so with courage, because I know you are all conscious of the significance of this momentous year—the last year of the first Bahá'í Century. The Centenary Committee are busy now preparing for fitting celebrations of a special character, not only for London, but for every town where a Bahá'í Community is established. Pioneer believers, too, will have their full share of consideration. The Guardian recently opened the Fund with a generous donation, and a few believers have already made small contributions. My appeal is to every Bahá'í. I have had money already offered from non-Bahá'ís, but it cannot be accepted. Our community is only small, but our hearts are large, aren't they? Sit down now, please, and write a cheque, or a postal order, made payable to The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles, put it in an envelope marked "Centenary," and forward to me at 41, Cranbourne Road, Chellow Dene, Bradford, Yorkshire. None of us living to-day are likely to have such an appeal presented to us again. Can we all respond?

Your Treasurer,
ARTHUR NORTON.

Addition.

To the list of delegates given in the last issue of the Journal should be added:

Mrs. L. Stevens, "Three Hills," Hampton Avenue, Babbacombe, Torquay.

Correction.

In the list of new believers in the last Journal Miss Sheila Jewell was stated to be living in Blackpool. This should have been Bristol.

Bahá'í Diary.

The N.S.A. is negotiating for the publication of a diary which will combine the ordinary and the Bahá'í calendars. It will contain also several pages of information about the Faith and should be a very useful instrument of publicity. It will be sold at a price of 1s. 10d. The co-operation of all believers is asked in getting the diaries accepted for sale by shops, as well as direct purchases by interested friends.

Summer School.

At the time of going to press Summer School has just ended. To say it was the best one yet is to force a comparison with all the others, all of which have been good, each in its own way. Each has its own qualities and each is a little different from any other. This year's was perhaps the most serious of them all—for the first time we had sessions in the evening as well as in the morning, and thus really devoted ourselves to preparation for our teaching work. Spare time, too, was mostly devoted to earnest talk rather than to amusement. In another way also it was a hard-working summer school. Due to shortage of domestic staff, there was a good deal of washing-up, waiting at table etc., to be done by the visitors, all of whom worked willingly and cheerfully. This is only the second occasion on which we have been able to get a place all to ourselves for more than a week-end, the other occasion being at Cudham in 1938.

The school was held in lovely surroundings in the heart of Warwickshire, close to the river Avon. The house was charming, the gardens beautiful and the weather very kind. And above all, the owners of the place, which is a boarding school, did everything possible to make a visit a happy one, and we are very grateful to them for allowing us to stay there. One afternoon most of the friends went to Stratford-on-Avon and attended a performance at the Memorial Theatre.

In all the Summer School was attended by forty-four visitors. Eight of them were not Bahá'ís. We were glad to have such a number of sympathetic friends with us. We hope they enjoyed it as much as we did.

Discussion at the meetings was lively, and much to the point. Everyone was anxious to think of new ways to teach and to add to their knowledge and the inspiration received from our being together will no doubt soon begin to make itself felt in our teaching work.

During Summer School the following cable was sent to the Guardian:—

"Seventh Summer School sends affectionate greetings. Programme concentrated preparation furtherance teaching work. Detailed plans Centenary considered. Praying successful outcome. Devoted love."

And since our return, the following reply has come:—

"Concentration teaching and Centenary preparations most vital matters. Fervently pray all may become radiantly active. Greeting deeply appreciated.

SHOGHI RABBANI."

NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

TEACHING BULLETIN.

Dear Friends,

The keynote of this Bulletin is "Regularity." A New Order cannot be established either in the world or in the individual without this essential pre-requisite: regularity in our prayers, regularity at 19-day feasts and public meetings, and also regularity in our study, in our giving to the funds, in our reports, etc. Hence the Committee submits thoughts on the observance of 19-Day Feasts.

The 19-Day Feast.

It is felt that many of us are not fully conscious of the significance of the 19-Day Feast. The Feast was inaugurated by the Báb and confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh, and the keeping of it is one of the three sacred obligations of a believer. We are apt to think of it as just a unity meeting, a coming together of the friends in consultation and fellowship; but it fulfils a much greater function than these two very important principles. Have we not noted time and again how the attendance at a 19-Day Feast reflects the spirit of the community? Local Spiritual Assemblies have dealt periodically with the problem of poor attendance at the 19-Day Feasts, and have to admit that it is solely on account of a lack of a true consciousness of the Bahá'í life and that new Civilisation into which Bahá'u'lláh has ushered us.

If we will meditate awhile and realise that He has called us to enter the Kingdom, to work to establish it on earth, we will desire to carry out the obligations He requires of us, knowing that in so doing we shall be helped and blessed.

The individual coming to the Feast should feel he is the guest of Bahá'u'lláh, that the greatest honour has been conferred upon him in being called to the Feast. According to the spirit of the believers assembled will the Feast be a glimpse of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Each receives his portion of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which sustains him to face the outside world and to draw fresh souls into the Faith. But this is not all. We are told that the reading of the prayers and sacred writings at the Feast not only strengthen us individually and as a community, but affects the spiritual growth of the city, and outwards to the whole country and so round the world. Bahá'ís throughout the world have this supreme privilege: isn't it a thrilling thought!

Shoghi Effendi has appealed to us to establish new Bahá'í communities before this, the first Bahá'í century is ended. We feel so feeble in spite of his overpowering praise of us. He knows we have capacity, though we are uncon-

scious of it ourselves. To gain that consciousness we must be fed by the Holy Spirit: we must keep the Feast every 19 days. It may be impossible to be present in the body through illness, work or absence from town, but one can keep the Feast either alone, or, better, with one or two other Bahá'ís. Pioneer believers, who are deprived of attending the Feasts of a community, can set aside an hour or so and keep the Feast in its three essential parts, thus:

1. Prayer, meditation, reading of the Holy Word.
2. Consultation with friends, if present, or communication with a fellow-believer or with the National Teaching Committee by letter.
3. Take food and drink together or at least in the spirit of communion.

Let nothing whatever prevent us from keeping the Feast.

Problem Page.

Ours is the task of making known the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to a nominally Christian nation. It was suggested at the National Teaching Conference that we should be fully prepared with the Bahá'í answer to various dogmas and questions propounded by Christians. Will you please let the Committee have any such questions you have come up against. In the meantime we suggest the following with references where information is to be found in Bahá'í writings:—

SOME CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS.

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