

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

Published by

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE BRITISH ISLES
46 BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

No. 39

BAHÁ'Í YEAR 100

APRIL, 1943

"UNPRECEDENTED VICTORIES"

On the occasion of the New Year, the N.S.A. sent the following cable to the Guardian on behalf of all the believers:

"On last Nawruz of first Bahá'í century British community sends loving greetings offers loyal devotion begs prayers."

Two days later came his answer:

"Appreciate message reciprocate loving greetings Thankful divine protection Praying unprecedented victories last year first Bahá'í century."

And so we start the year with such words ringing in our ears. "Thankful divine protection"—we too should all be thankful indeed that we have been so protected, even more thankful that after nearly four years of world war, the Cause in this country is still free to carry on its activities and, by the blessing of Bahá'u'lláh, is growing and becoming more widely known. But with thankfulness for the past and the present should be coupled hope and determination for the future. The Cause is indeed firmly established here, but as yet the number of its adherents is small and its outward influence only beginning, and all our work is still in front of us. At this moment approximately one hundred and fifty people are the vehicle for the destiny of this country, and through that of other countries, since all are inter-dependent. We have been called to this divinely appointed task, this overwhelming but nevertheless thrilling responsibility. And our beloved Guardian is helping us. Twice in the past year he has sent us a munificent gift, but, far more important, he prays at the Holy Shrines for "unprecedented victories" and for the believers who are chosen to help in achieving such victories. We are thrilled when we read of the successes achieved

by the pioneer believers in South America, when we hear of devoted souls setting out to teach in such difficult places as Bahrein, Arabia or Afghanistan, but we too can do the same. Here in this country is a large field for pioneers, right on our own doorsteps even are opportunities for teaching and for sacrifice. Opportunities to achieve the glorious victories of which the Guardian speaks are manifold.

In this coming year, the last year of the first Bahá'í century, a period unequalled in the history of the world, let us then go forward unflinching and with firm determination, confident that the divine power will unstintingly support our efforts. Let us devote ourselves absolutely wholeheartedly to the service of the Faith. Our time, our energy, our capacities, our money, our possessions, for what are they given us except that we may sacrifice them all in the path of the Beloved? We, our lives, everything that we have and everything that we are belong only to Him. Let us use ourselves to the uttermost in His service.

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"Verily, I say unto thee that the gifts of thy Lord are encircling thee in a similar way as the spirit encircles the body at the beginning of the amalgamation of the elements and natures in the womb; the power of the spirit begins then to appear in the body gradually and successively according to the preparation and capacity to receive that everlasting abundance. I ask God to help thee that the spirit will carry out its power in thee as desired and wished."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá in "Bahá'í Scriptures," p. 480)

CONVENTION

As advised in the last issue, Convention will be held in London during Easter week-end, April 24th/26th. The programme is as follows:

Saturday, April 24th.

2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Tea.

5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

Supper, followed by entertainment.

Sunday, April 25th.

10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Lunch.

2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Tea.

5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

Supper, followed by entertainment.

Monday, April 26th.

10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

In the afternoon there will be a social meeting and tea for those able to stay on.

Purpose of the Convention.

And now regarding this forthcoming Convention, I feel that the dominating purpose inspiring the assembled friends, delegates and visitors alike, should be a twofold one. The first is a challenge to the individual, the second a collective responsibility. The one seeks to reinforce the motive power of our spiritual activities, the second aims at raising the standard of administrative efficiency so vitally needed at this advanced stage of our work. We should first and foremost endeavour by every conceivable means to revitalise our precious Cause, rudely shaken by the constant vicissitudes attending the outward departure of a vigilant and gracious Master. Our next object should be to seek to approach, through more intimate association, fuller and more frequent consultation, and a closer familiarity with the character, the mission and the teachings of the Cause, that standard of excellence which should characterise the co-operative efforts of Bahá'í communities in every land.

High aims and pure motives, however laudable in themselves, will surely not suffice if unsupported by measures that are practicable and methods that are sound. Wealth of sentiment, abundance of good-will and effort, will prove of little avail if we should fail to exercise discrimination and restraint and neglect to direct their flow along the most profitable channels. The unfettered freedom of the individual should be tempered with mutual consultation and sacrifice, and the spirit of initiative and enterprise should be reinforced by a deeper re-

alisation of the supreme necessity for concerted action and a fuller devotion to the common weal.

(Shoghi Effendi, 1925. Quoted in "Bahá'í Administration")

Bahá'í Assemblies.

The various Assemblies, local and national, constitute to-day the bedrock upon the strength of which the Universal House of Justice is in future to be firmly established and raised. Not until these function vigorously and harmoniously can the hope for the termination of this period of transition be realised. It devolves upon us whose dearest wish is to see the Cause enter upon that promised era of universal recognition and world achievements, to do all in our power to consolidate the foundations of these Assemblies, promoting at the same time a fuller understanding of their purpose and more harmonious co-operation for their maintenance and success.

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Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candour, and courage on the other.

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in "Bahá'í Procedure")

NEWS

Mr. Albert Joseph, of the Manchester community, and Miss Adele Blauer were married in the Manchester Centre on Sunday, March 21st.

New Believers.

We welcome with great pleasure Mrs. E. Sumner and Miss Vivian Sumner (Youth) of Morecomblake, near Bridport, Dorset.

We hear from the American Red Cross that a lot of the educated coloured American troops now stationed in this country are lonely and unbefriended. This is a matter in which Bahá'ís can and should help. The National Spiritual Assembly urges all the believers to do everything they can to entertain coloured troops whenever possible and to urge all their friends to do the same. We feel sure there are many people who would willingly help once the matter is brought to their notice.

Ridván

"Arise, and proclaim unto the entire creation the tidings that He Who is the All-Merciful hath directed His steps towards the Ridván and entered it. Guide, then, the people unto the garden of delight which God hath made the Throne of His Paradise. We have chosen thee to be our most mighty Trumpet, whose blast is to signalise the resurrection of all mankind.

"The Best-Beloved is come. In His right hand is the sealed Wine of His name. Happy is the man that turneth unto Him, and drinketh his fill, and exclaimeth: 'Praise be to Thee, O Revealer of the signs of God!' By the righteousness of the Almighty! Every hidden thing hath been manifested through the power of truth. All the favours of God have been sent down, as a token of His grace. The waters of everlasting life have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men. Every single cup hath been borne round by the hand of the Well-Beloved. Draw near, and tarry not, though it be for one short moment.

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"Rejoice with exceeding gladness, O people of Bahá, as ye call to remembrance the Day of supreme felicity, the Day whereon the Tongue of the Ancient of Days hath spoken, as He departed from His House, proceeding to the Spot from which He shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of His name, the All-Merciful. God is Our witness. Were We to reveal the hidden secrets of that Day, all they that dwell on earth and in the heavens would swoon away and die, except such as will be preserved by God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh)

Summer School.

Summer School will be held this year at Westham House, Barford, near Warwick, from Friday, 30th July, to Friday, 6th August. Further details will be issued separately.

The Relief Fund.

The Relief Fund was founded early in 1941, with the Guardian's generous gift of £100 for the relief of the believers in this country. Other sums were added to it, and the fund has been functioning more or less continuously ever since. By its means the community has been able to help a number of believers through difficulties. To give continuous help, however, the fund needs continuous replenishment, and this certainly is a purpose which should be very close to our hearts. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave help unstintingly to all who were in need. In this, as in every other respect, we should surely follow His example.

"We are all united in one Divine purpose, no material motive is ours, and our dearest wish is to spread the Love of God throughout the world. . . .

"Work! Work with all your strength, spread the Cause of the Kingdom among men; teach the self-sufficient to turn humbly towards God, the sinful to sin no more, and await with glad expectation the coming of the Kingdom.

"Love and obey your Heavenly Father, and rest assured that Divine help is yours. Verily I say unto you that you shall indeed conquer the world!

"Only have faith, patience and courage—this is but the beginning, but surely you will succeed, for God is with you!"

('Abdu'l-Bahá, "Talks given in Paris.")

NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

Ask any Jew what are the big events that stand out like milestones in his calendar year, and he will immediately tell you, "Passover, Chanuka, The Day of Atonement, etc." The Christian thinks that a calendar without Christmas and Easter in it would be unthinkable. Even though he may be of the type that is so divorced from religion, that these Church festivities are only thought of as occasions when he can close his shop or office, and (in peace-time) go off into the country or indulge in some other form of favourite pastime, there are also people of the devout type who celebrate every Saint's

Day. This was the case in some parts of Central Europe where, greatly to the delight of the children, the schools were often closed every few days for the sake of another Saint.

That era is being left behind, together with so many everyday things that will not return after the lapse of the first half of this century of the Christian Era. As Bahá'ís, we are conscious of the fact that already we are living in the dawn light of a New Era, while the light of the Old Era fades around us. So, too, we must be fully conscious of the things that belong to the Bahá'í Era.

Our year, with its milestones, should become indelibly engraved upon our consciousness, even though we have not had the advantage—most of us—of having the Bahá'í Festivals woven into the pattern of our earliest childhood memories, and so indissolubly blended with our rhythm of life.

There are nine Feast days which Bahá'u'lláh enjoined us to keep as days free from work and to be spent in communion with each other. The first of these is, of course, *Nawruz*, our own New Year day, on March 21st, and this is a date that every Bahá'í most easily remembers.

Taking the others in chronological order, as historical events, they are as follows:

November 12th. *The Birth of Bahá'u'lláh*, in Tihván, in the year 1817, before the Cause of the Báb became known, since it was not until

October 20th, that the *Birth of the Báb* took place in 1819 in Shiráz. Our Era dates from the year 1844, when on

May 2nd we celebrate the *Declaration of the Báb* to Mulla Hussayn, two hours after sunset, in Shiráz. It is an interesting fact that this date also coincides with the birth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

July 9th we commemorate the *Martyrdom of the Báb*, a young man only thirty years old, at noon in the barrack square at Tabriz, at the hands of the firing squad. This was in the year 1850. After a time, Bahá'u'lláh, an ardent follower of the Báb, became the recognised leader of the Bábis. Just before he was sent into exile in Akká, he called together his friends, in the garden which afterwards became known as the Garden of Ridván, in which he encamped during the preparations for the journey. Here on

April 21st, 1863, at 3 p.m., he made the momentous *Declaration* that He was the One foretold by the Báb—He whom God shall make manifest—the Promised One of all the Prophets of earlier times. This was the first day of the period spent in the Garden of Ridván, and in spite of the sorrow of his impending departure, the friends were filled with joy at the wonderful news they had received; and so we celebrate the whole of these twelve days, and in particular

April 29th, the *ninth day*, and

May 2nd, the *12th and last day of Ridván*. The last of our Days of Commemoration is,

May 29th, the anniversary of the *Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh* at 3 a.m. in the morning of that day in 1892 at Bahji, where He lived after He left the fortress of Akká.

These are the Nine Bahá'í Days of Commemoration, which form our milestones, and in addition, we mark the Day of Covenant on 26th November, and we commemorate the Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on 28th November, 1921, at 1 a.m.

For greater convenience we summarize the dates in calendar order:

Mar. 21st.—*Nawruz*.

April 21st—3 p.m., First day of Ridván.

„ 29th—Ninth day of Ridván.

May 2nd—Twelfth day of Ridván.

„ 22nd—Two hours after sunset, Declaration of the Báb.

„ 29th—3 a.m., Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh.

July 9th—Noon, Martyrdom of the Báb.

Oct. 20th—Birth of the Báb.

Nov. 12th—Birth of Bahá'u'lláh.

Nov. 26th—Day of the Covenant.

„ 28th—1 a.m., Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Pioneers! Do you know that you can get stacks of useful pamphlets for teaching purposes from us? For the most part these are very cheap—1d., 3d., or 6d.—and as they are all small and thin, they are easily tucked into a corner of your handbag, or a pocket. You never know where one of these may prove useful—on a train journey, at public meetings, or tea parties, if there are such things nowadays. May we send you a few?

—National Teaching Committee.

The National Teaching Committee wishes to repeat once more its desire to help the believers, especially the pioneers, in every possible way. It is not easy to teach unsupported by a local assembly to whom one can take one's problems, but the National Teaching Committee can fill the function of an assembly in this respect if the believers will only refer to it their questions and problems. If you have difficulty in contacting different types of people, if you have questions about the Teachings, let the Committee help you, either by a personal letter, or if the problem is a general one, through the "Journal."

Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

A new edition of "The Unfoldment of World Civilisation" by Shoghi Effendi will be ready in a few weeks' time. It will be attractively bound in a brightly coloured cover and will be on sale at a price of 1/6 per copy. In this book the Guardian outlines the developments which are bound to accompany the final breakdown of the old order and the growth of the New World. It is of particular value for teaching at the present time and will no doubt become more and more useful as the world situation develops.