

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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LETTERS FROM THE GUARDIAN

Two letters have just come from the Guardian, of which extracts are given below:

July 18th.

"... He was very happy to receive your letter, and his heart rejoiced at the good news which it conveyed. The holding of a successful Bahá'í Convention, during days of such stress and strain as the English believers are passing through, he considers as a triumph of the spirit of their faith in Bahá'u'lláh. They are increasingly demonstrating their right to be called champions of the Cause of God, and manifesting their ability to follow in the footsteps of the early heroes of their religion. The Guardian feels truly proud of them.

"These evidences of growth, in spite of the universal destruction that is holding the planet in its grip at the present time, should greatly hearten the believers. They bear witness to the future harvest which their unceasing labours are sure to reap, and demonstrate the great and God-given strength which flows and will flow ever more abundantly from the springs which Bahá'u'lláh has unsealed in these days.

"Shoghi Effendi assures you all of his unceasing prayers on your behalf, that God may strengthen, bless, and guide you in your great work for His Faith.

"He wishes you to please convey his love to all the British believers and to assure them of his prayers for their protection and for the triumph of their labours.

R. RABBANI."

"Dear and prized co-workers,

"I am thrilled by the recent evidences of the noble determination of the English believers to extend the range of their activities, in these days of grave danger and widespread and ever-deepening anxiety and stress, the report of your convention sessions, of your teaching activities, of your Bahá'í publications, and other administrative undertakings enhances my admiration and deepens my gratitude for the historic work you are achieving in these days. This feeling is shared by all those of your co-workers, both in the East and the West, who follow the progress of your work despite the formidable obstacles in your path. We all pray for your safety, for the realization of all your hopes, and the fulfilment of the plans you have so boldly conceived and are so energetically carrying out.

Your true brother,

SHOGHI."

August 20th.

"The Guardian is happy to see that, in spite of the great physical and nervous strain which the believers of England are at present being subjected to—especially in centres like London—they yet persevere with the work of the Cause and the attraction of new souls.

"The Guardian does not feel that the friends should for a moment feel discouraged if they do not succeed in having large meetings or the public do not regularly attend. This is easily understandable in view of the severe ordeal

which their present sufferings subject them to. However, the importance of broadcasting the seeds of the Cause far and wide can never be sufficiently stressed. It is the right and privilege of agonized humanity to hear of the Faith and the Plan of Bahá'u'lláh in these days, and in this holy duty to their fellow men the Bahá'ís must not fail, whatever may be the sadness of their personal plight, for they alone can truly see the future in the tragic present, and possess hope and strength to go on with the spiritual battle for the victory of the New Day.

"He hopes the Summer School will be a success. In all your undertakings you may rest assured of his constant and most loving prayers, not only for the National Assembly members, but for each and ever member of the flock they are watching over and guiding.

R. RABBANI."

"Dear and valued co-workers,

"The report of your continued activities, conducted amid the turmoil that oppresses and afflicts the English believers, is a source of continual joy and inspiration to me, as well as those who, in distant parts of the Bahá'í world, are made to realize the unwavering constancy with which you are all upholding the vital interests of the Faith of God. That the teaching work is steadily expanding, that the institutions of the Faith are functioning with vigour, and in accordance with the principles of the Administrative Order, testify to the solidity of the foundations that have been established. On this foundation you will, as the present hindrances are removed, and the tremendous reactions of this conflict are made apparent, rear an edifice worthy of the Name, and attesting the glory of the Faith, of Bahá'u'lláh. Persevere in your present labours and be ever confident.

Your true and grateful brother,

SHOGLI."

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ANNUAL TEACHING CONFERENCE

A short annual Teaching Conference will be held at the Bahá'í Centre, 39 High Street, Manchester, on Sunday, January 18th. There will be two sessions, commencing at 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m., followed by a unity feast at 5 p.m. The morning session will be a discussion on "Teaching—Opportunities and Difficulties," and the afternoon will be open for general problems. It is realised that attendance at the Conference will involve a long journey for some of the believers, but the N.S.A. appeals to everyone to attend if they possibly can.

"SACRIFICE IS THE GREAT FOUNDATION"

Dear Friends,

During August the National Spiritual Assembly issued an appeal to all the believers in this country to help the Publishing Trust to the utmost of their ability, in order especially that a new book of Bahá'í Scriptures could be produced. Let us not allow the passing of time to drive this appeal from our minds—it is an urgent and very important matter, one on which the progress of the Faith in the British Isles in the coming years depends. How shall we present the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, how bring people to a realisation of the wonder and glory of His Revelation, if we are unable to offer them His Word for their guidance and help? The whole of our teaching work is based on this need—for how many of us, if deprived of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdul-Bahá, has memorised enough of them to live and to teach quite independently of the printed word?

The Publishing Trust, as the Guardian has told us, is our Temple. Surely we cannot be half-hearted in our efforts for it. Let us remember the supreme sacrifices which the American believers made for their Temple, and how the Bahá'ís in Ashkhabad, in far-off Turkistan, gave all they had not only to build the first Bahá'í Temple of all, but afterwards to retain it. The Bábís in the early days in Persia laid such a firm foundation for the Cause with their lives, and the Cause always needs sacrifice in order to progress—but this time it is not other people's sacrifices which are needed, but our own.

The support of the Publishing Trust is indeed an urgent matter, but there is more than this involved—it is our spiritual progress too which is at stake, our development as a community and as individuals. The effort and the sacrifice which we make will bring us Divine blessings, so that thereby we acquire greater understanding and greater power to attract others to the Faith. To make efforts for the sake of the Cause is to ask for and to receive the Divine bounty. Let us give and give and give, not only our material possessions, but above and beyond these, let us give without stint our time, our energy, our knowledge and our hearts; in fact, let us give the whole of our lives to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

In Memoriam

I have made death a messenger of joy to thee; wherefore dost thou grieve?—Bahá'u'lláh.

Winifred Wade, of Broadstone, Dorset, passed to the Abha Kingdom on July 1st, 1941.

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

The N.S.A. held its last meeting on October 4th and 5th and, for the first time in its history, it met in Bournemouth. During its stay the Assembly met the Bournemouth believers and friends on the Saturday afternoon at a unity feast, and a very happy meeting was held.

On Sunday afternoon a public meeting was arranged in a room belonging to the Psychology Club, and Mr. Hofman talked to an interested gathering about the Cause.

The following resolutions, which are of general interest, were taken by the N.S.A. :—

That all junior members of the community must re-declare themselves on reaching the age of twenty-one, in order to be included in the voting list.

That a full list of names and addresses of all believers and communities should be available at each Centre and at the office of the N.S.A., from which information will be supplied on application.

That the rule that all prominent people should only be approached about the Faith by the N.S.A. should apply to Members of Parliament.

The next meeting of the N.S.A. will be held in London on November 29th and 30th, and the following one in Manchester on January 17th.

PUBLISHING TRUST

A sum of £59 15s. 9d. has to date been received in answer to the appeal made in August, which is above one-eighth of the amount we have set ourselves to obtain. Friends are thinking of various ingenious ways to raise money—one community is collecting odd bits of gold and silver jewellery to sell; one friend has given a typewriter to be sold; and one is selling his books, which seems a peculiarly appropriate way of paying for the new Scriptures. No doubt there are many more ways of helping, if we only think hard enough.

A card is to be issued bearing the phonetic pronunciation of Persian and Arabic words commonly used, which will be sold for 1d. Explanations of such words will be given in future publications, either in brackets in the text or as footnotes.

Mr. Hofman has resigned from his position as a paid employee of the Publishing Trust. He will, however, continue to do the work of managing-editor voluntarily until called up for military service.

SUMMER SCHOOL

The N.S.A. is already seeking a suitable place to hold next year's summer school. If friends know of a possible place, will they please communicate with the Secretary of the N.S.A.

NEWS

We welcome with great pleasure three new believers—Mrs. D. Tapley, of Altrincham; Mr. J. G. Ferraby, of London; and Miss Nancy Cooper, of Blackburn (junior member).

Mr. Hofman's application to perform only non-combatant duties was heard by the tribunal in Manchester recently. He was given a sympathetic hearing, and his request was granted. The further application to the Ministry of Labour that he should be classed as reserved on account of his full-time work for the Cause was, however, refused.

Miss Hillier, of Torquay, has removed to Salisbury.

Greetings have been received from Miss Agnes Alexander, of Honolulu; from the Auckland, N.Z., Spiritual Assembly; and from the Bahá'í Group in Tasmania.

The believers in Altrincham and in Amesbury have been formed into groups.

An interesting correspondence discussion has been conducted recently about the Bahá'í Faith in the North of Scotland weekly, "John o' Groat Journal."

ESPERANTO

The N.S.A. has decided to support the petition now being organised, asking the British and Allied Governments to take steps to have Esperanto taught in schools, to promote international harmony and understanding. The N.S.A. recommends all the friends to sign this petition.

MISSING BOOK

The copy of "The Divine Art of Living" belonging to the London Reference Library has been missing ever since it was taken to the Summer School at Hoddesdon. Will assemblies and believers please search their libraries, in case they may have taken it away inadvertently?

(Continued from page 4.)

Mr. Hofman gave a talk on the Cause to the Society for Study of Religions on November 3rd. He has been asked for an article for their magazine.

London holds periodic special public meetings, for which formal invitations are sent out, and these attract interested crowds. The ordinary public meetings there are also better attended.

Torquay now holds its public meetings on Saturday afternoons, to suit local traffic conditions, and finds this a very satisfactory arrangement.

In all we have to report eleven new believers since Convention.

NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

Dear Friends,

At this moment when the world struggle is hourly increasing in intensity and ferocity, and the emotions of the people are steadily rising, it is vitally necessary that Bahá'í communities should become so consolidated that nothing on earth can weaken their solidarity.

In common with all religions and all ethical societies we have the commandment to love one another: "Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness"; but Bahá'u'lláh came to establish a new world order—the Kingdom of God on earth—and provided the means without which it can never be built: the administrative order, directly under His guidance, through the medium of the Guardian. Implicit obedience to the Guardian, rendered through our obedience to our Local Spiritual Assemblies and the National Spiritual Assembly, is the first and foremost duty of every Bahá'í. Let us never forget that our Assemblies are not composed of a collection or group of individuals imposing their ideas upon the community, but consist of a group of human beings acting as a unit and providing a channel for the spirit. According to the degree of detachment attained and the sincerity of the members of an Assembly, combined with the amount of support and obedience accorded their decisions by the community, so is the intensity of the power of the spirit released determined, and upon this depends the growth of the communities. How grave is the responsibility of every single individual.

Let us study carefully the Will and Testament of 'Abdul-Bahá, in which the principles and form of the administrative order are so clearly set out. Here is what he says about obedience to the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice, which itself cannot come into existence until sufficient National Assemblies are formed to make this possible.

"The sacred and youthful branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice, to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled against God; whoso opposeth him hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them hath con-

tended with God; whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God. May the wrath, the fierce indignation, the vengeance of God rest upon him! The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God."

The Bahá'í Attitude to Sin. References.

The generally accepted idea of Sin is the breaking of the moral law. In the Bahá'í teachings, the greatest sin is turning away from and denying the Manifestation of God when He appears. A passage from Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 17 to 27, states this emphatically, and the same theme is expressed in His Tablet to Ahmad.

A section in "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era" deals with the non-existence of Evil, p. 168, and another on p. 79 with forgiveness or "sin-covering." Mention of Sin in prayers occurs in the Blue Prayer Book, pp. 43, 60, 72, 79, 80 and 91.

Teaching Activities

Teaching has been infused with new vigour since Convention, and more especially through the inspiration derived from Summer School. There is much evidence of new life in the community and of interest in the Faith being shown by many fresh people. People are not only coming to meetings in response to our efforts, but are seeking the Cause out for themselves.

Manchester has benefited very much by having had a resident teacher for the past six months. Many fireside meetings have been held and a great number of people have become acquainted with the Cause. Mr. Hofman gave the sermon in Platt Unitarian Chapel on October 26th, and afterwards met the youth group. The minister encouraged them to study the Bahá'í Teachings. The new group at Altrincham is already well organised and is working hard. A fortnightly fireside meeting is also held regularly at Blackburn, and Mr. Hofman spoke to an interested larger meeting there. Several people are seriously studying the Teachings. Nancy Cooper (new youth) interested her scripture mistress, who came to a meeting. Nancy was asked to tell the class about the Faith, and they are all going to tea with her to hear more.

(Continued at foot of previous page.)