

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'IS OF THE BRITISH ISLES

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THE GUARDIAN'S LOVING ENCOURAGEMENT

Dear Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly shares with you the following letters just received from Haifa:

April 30th.

"The extreme devotion to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh which the English friends are evincing at such a time of trial and suffering not only sets a truly heroic example to their fellow-Bahá'is the world over, but greatly cheers and encourages the Guardian himself, at a time when he has every reason to long to see the Bahá'is stand out as luminous examples to their fellow-men—thus leading them out of the valley of spiritual death into the glorious plains of the future World Order of mankind.

"The recently received news of the Convention's resolve to teach the Faith as never before in those islands, and to achieve new victories in this all-important field, meets not only with Shoghi Effendi's whole-hearted approval, but also evokes his profound gratitude and admiration. His ardent and loving prayers, continually surround you all and all the sorely-tried Bahá'is, who with you are toiling for the triumph of our Faith."—R. Rabbani.

"Dearly-beloved co-workers,

"The message I have recently received, with the assurance it gives me and the spirit it conveys, merits indeed the highest praise. The English believers, in these days of increasing peril and stress, are manifesting those qualities which only those who have deeply imbibed the transforming spirit and the ennobling principles of the Cause of God are able to reveal. They are by their very acts, their sufferings, and

exertions, and above all by the superb staunchness of their faith, laying a magnificent foundation for the spiritual edifice their hands are destined to raise in their native land. My prayers for them all will surround them wherever they labour and in every sphere of their meritorious activities.

"Gratefully and affectionately.—Shoghi."

May 22nd.

"I cannot adequately express to you all the warm love and profound admiration for the Bahá'is of those islands which Shoghi Effendi feels. At such a time of personal danger and anguish, the spirit of pure love and devotion to the Faith and Order of Bahá'u'lláh which they manifest, and which is so typified by the zeal and wisdom with which your National Spiritual Assembly is handling the affairs of the Cause in that country, is a source of great comfort to the Guardian himself.

"Indeed, he feels that the N.S.A. members are bearing their load of responsibility in a manner which lifts partially the weight of cares from his own shoulders, and sets a noble example to all Bahá'í administrative bodies.

"In reference to your question contained in the minutes of the recent N.S.A. meeting: Shoghi Effendi feels that while all Bahá'is should be encouraged to turn to their Assembly for the solution of their various problems, thus enabling the Spiritual Assembly to fulfil one of its most important functions, yet they are quite free to write to him if they feel the urge to do so.

"He was very pleased to note the teaching plans undertaken by your body at this time; particularly in respect to Manchester. He

hopes the believers there are all well and safe, and will pray for the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh in their contemplated teaching campaign.

"Indeed, dear friends, his thoughts and prayers are constantly with you and the beloved flock of English believers over whom you are so faithfully watching through these dark days. He wishes you at all times to turn to him for any advice or help you may need."

R. RABBANI.

"Dearly beloved co-workers,

"As the dangers confronting the believers in the British Isles increase in number and gravity, my admiration, as well as the admiration of the Bahá'is in East and West, for the spirit that animates those who face them, grows deeper and acquires added intensity and fervour. Though their numbers be small, and their activities restricted, and their trials and anxieties manifold and oppressive, yet their spiritual contribution, through their fortitude, valour, and self-sacrifice, to the progressive unfoldment of the Faith's latent potentialities in the Western world is both notable and constantly increasing. As the clouds of the war dissipate and the horrors of this universal carnage fade away, it will become increasingly evident to both friends and foes of the Faith, how solid has been the foundation which their indomitable spirit has laid, and how rich the harvest which their incessant labours have yielded.

"With a heart brimful with gratitude and love, I will, when visiting the holy shrines, recall their signal acts, and supplicate increasing blessings on the historic work which in their hour of trial they are so magnificently achieving, for the glory, the honour, the extension and the establishment of the invincible Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.—Shoghi."

It is impossible to add anything to such a message. It remains only for us to double, nay treble, our efforts to teach the Cause, and with such love and encouragement from our beloved Guardian, we surely cannot fail to make the most supreme effort.

New Believers.

We are very happy to welcome Mrs. White and Miss Hillier of Torquay, Mr. H. J. Edmund-Evans of London, Mrs. H. Joseph and Miss Young of Manchester, and Miss Hunt of Bowdon, Cheshire.

Change in Membership of the N.S.A.

Mr. A. Sugar has resigned from membership of the National Spiritual Assembly and Mr. J. Joseph has been elected in his place.

Miss Baxter has been elected Vice-Chairman of the N.S.A.

Summer School.

Summer School was held in Bradford from July 26th to August 4th, and was a great success. For a long while we searched for a suitable place in the country in which to hold it, but in vain; and, as a last resort, and in some doubt, we decided to have it in one of the big towns where there is a Bahá'í Centre. There seemed to be difficulties in such a scheme, and we were afraid it would not be nearly so successful as in previous years, but these fears were unjustified. In spite of the fact that most of us lived in a hotel quite a walk away from the Bahá'í Centre, which meant a great deal of coming and going through the town, and in spite of the fact that the Bradford friends did not, of course, live with us at all, but went to their own homes each night—in spite of all this, Summer School was all we hoped for and more, and was a truly wonderful experience for those who attended it.

And, getting advantage out of disadvantage, we were able to use the Summer School to publicise the Cause in Bradford. For the first Sunday, the Bradford Assembly had advertised their usual public meeting in the evening paper, and their room was absolutely full. So it was resolved to make a bigger effort. For the next Sunday a public hall was rented. The meeting was advertised by a special appeal in the Press two evenings running to the Youth of Bradford, and by a brave public-speaking effort on the part of one or two of the friends on an open space in the centre of the town just before the meeting began. All this brought results, and there were over a hundred people present at the meeting, many of whom expressed a wish to come again and hear more about the Cause. This great attempt at teaching, in which Bahá'is from all over the country shared, was the final and supreme success of the Summer School, and the friends all returned home exhilarated and encouraged by the joy of pleasure and work both happily shared in the community.

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

"Summer School opens auspiciously public attracted friends happy. Hearts warmed your loving messages. Beg continual supplication divine assistance. Deepest love."

And just after Summer School closed the following reply was received:

"Overjoyed success attending ever expanding institutions Faith. Continually supplicating unfailing protection every increasing blessings. Eternal gratitude."

FUAD AFNAN



Fuad Afnan was the youngest son of the late Aqá Mirzá Muhsin Afnán and Túbá Khánúm, the second daughter of 'Abdul-Bahá. He was born in Palestine on March 9th, 1917. He was educated at St. George's High School, Jerusalem, and the American University of Beirut, from which he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In September, 1938, Fuad came to this country to take a course in Engineering in the University of London. At the time of his tragic death he was a student at the City and Guilds College.

Fuad had a very generous nature. Always simple, frank and direct, his soul and bearing knew no affectation. His devotion to the Cause was felt deep in his fervent heart, and if at times he gave an impression of reticence, it was because he never thought it necessary to give too often the shape of words to the promptings of his soul. From last November until his passing he was a member of the London Spiritual Assembly, and only a fortnight before his sudden departure from our midst, Fuad was at the Annual National Convention as a London delegate. Friends present on that occasion have testified to the fact that Fuad's ardour and enthusiasm contributed in a full measure to the success of the National Convention of 1941.

In the early hours of May 11th, the house in which Fuad lived was hit by a bomb. Fire ensued and while Fuad was assisting in putting out the fire, a heavy bomb struck the house and made Fuad a casualty. He was soon taken out and removed to hospital. He was then conscious and spoke to Mrs. Lam. Shortly afterwards his soul winged its flight to the Kingdom of Abhá.

On Thursday, May 15th, at 3.30 p.m., his mortal remains were committed to earth in the Kensington Cemetery at Gunnersbury. A number of friends followed him to the cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Norton, Mr. Frank Hurst and Mr. Peter Wilkinson came from Bradford to attend the funeral. Mr. Norton read at the graveside the special prayer for the departed, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh. Other prayers were read by three of the friends present. There were many beautiful flowers in loving memory of him.

Fuad is now in the tender care of his Grandfather—'Abdul-Bahá. We feel, and shall continue to feel, his sad loss to us and to our community. We know that his soul, now in the full light of the Kingdom, will help and further inspire his fellow-believers in their service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. Our deepest sympathy with Fuad's family can only be felt in our hearts, words are completely inadequate to give it full expression. All we can say to them is: we share with you your sorrow. But Fuad was always cheerful, and his comforting smile has left its imprint enduringly on our minds.

Relief of Distress.

The N.S.A. asks for the co-operation of all the believers in the administering of its Relief Fund.

When any Bahá'í is in distress financially, there should be no hesitation in taking the problem to the Local Spiritual Assembly, or in the case of an isolated believer, to the National Spiritual Assembly. Guidance, advice and help should be sought from the Spiritual Assembly, and nobody need, or should, ever feel any sense of shame in stating their difficulty to the Spiritual Assembly.

It is not in keeping with the best interests of the Faith when cases of distress are brought to the notice of the Spiritual Assembly by an individual other than the one concerned. The friends should learn to take all real problems to the Spiritual Assembly themselves, thus enabling the spirit of the Faith to manifest itself through the administrative channels designed by Bahá'u'lláh.

Recommendations from the Convention to the N.S.A.

The National Assembly at its meeting in May adopted all the recommendations made at Convention, which were enumerated in the last number of the Journal, with one exception. The Assembly still feels it is impossible to continue publication of New World Order after the end of the second volume.

Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

A reprint has been made of Stanwood Cobb's book "Security for a Failing World," which is very good for introducing the Teaching. It is now ready and can be obtained at a price of 2s. 6d.

NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

Dear Friends,

We have been given an enormous responsibility—to live the Bahá'í life. The reason for this becomes obvious, when we consider the remark made by a lady who heard of the Cause for the first time, and enquired as to its principles, adding at the same time that she had once been interested in another present-day movement, but that, having observed that one of its adherents had a bad character, she immediately deduced that the movement in question was a basically faulty one and gave up the idea of associating herself with it.

Bahá'u'lláh gave his followers clear indications of the requirements of the Bahá'í life, although he did not leave detailed instructions for dealing with every little problem that is presented every hour to every individual. The framework is there, and we should have the commonsense to apply the broad principles to the smaller issues. The mistakes we make are only incidental to our progress, and it is futile to spend too much time on "inquests," when we become aware that we made a mistake. The direction of our movement has been given to us—how long we take on the journey and whether we progress smoothly, or with jerks and many setbacks depends on the individual and his environment, but we are not running a race for a speed trophy.

So much for our personal life. How about our community life? Unity is the keystone of our Faith, and Disunity is a treachery. Some day we hope that our communities will be very large, and a clearly defined living example for World Unity among the nations; but even now, while our numbers are yet so small, we have to be strongly on our guard against disruptive factors within our ranks.

Somebody may feel that the community as a whole is not pulling its weight, or that the administrative body has made a mistake or an omission somewhere. Or perhaps it may seem that some individual is acting in a way that prejudices the Cause, or is representing it wrongly to outsiders, through insufficient grasp of the Teachings. Well, don't let us harbour the complaint until it turns poisonous, and don't let us whisper it to one individual, but bring it out openly in the right place, so that it can be put right.

A member of a community should bring the problem to the Local Spiritual Assembly, and an isolated believer should write to the National Spiritual Assembly. Constructive criticism can be of real service and will be treated with re-

spect and confidence, for these administrative bodies are there to serve all Bahá'ís. If we are reluctant to bring a complaint into the open, then quite probably this reluctance arises from a suspicion that our own attitude of mind is not an entirely reasonable one in regard to the subject. Even so, frank discussion may help and will certainly clear the air.

We should realise that personal grievances have such an unimportant place in relation to the tremendous happenings in the world to-day.

And yet, the individual does count. The flood that rushes on at such terrifying speed, carrying all before it, is the tide of inevitable happenings, and we cannot struggle against it. But the colour of the stream depends upon the colour of each of the myriad drops that compose it, and we hope that there shall be enough of those drops to make the whole stream "Bahá'í-coloured." Now do you see that every drop counts?

Do you see how much YOU count in relation to the WHOLE?

"You must become the lamps of Bahá'u'lláh so that you may shine with eternal light and be the proofs and evidences of his truth. Then will such signs of purity and chastity be witnessed in your deeds and actions that men will behold the heavenly radiance of your lives and say 'Verily ye are the proofs of Bahá'u'lláh. Verily Bahá'u'lláh is the True One for he has trained such souls as these, each one of which is a proof in himself.' They will say to others, 'Come and witness the conduct of these souls; come and listen to their words, behold the illumination of their hearts, see the evidence of the love of God in them, consider their praiseworthy morals and discover the foundations of the oneness of humanity firmly implanted within them. What greater proof can there be than these people that the message of Bahá'u'lláh is truth and reality.'"

(The Promulgation of Universal Peace.)

Lending Library for Isolated Believers.

By a recent decision of the N.S.A. local assemblies are recommended to add to their lending libraries, for the purpose of supplying isolated believers in their vicinity by post with books they need. Isolated believers wishing to make use of this facility should therefore write to one of the four assemblies—London, Torquay, Manchester, or Bradford, whichever is nearest, and enquire for any books they wish to read.

"THE BAHÁ'Í CAUSE TO-DAY"

Last October an article, entitled "The Bahá'í Cause To-day," written by Mr. W. E. Miller, appeared in "The Moslem World," which is a missionary magazine published in America. Later reprints were made and distributed freely. Some of the friends in this country received them, and the matter was reported at the time in No. 27 of the Bahá'í Journal. Now the May issue of "World Order," which is published by the Bahá'ís of America, contains an article in answer to Mr. Miller's arguments. This article, which is prefaced by a statement from the National Spiritual Assembly of America, is written by Marzieh Gail, and deals so conclusively with the subject that a resumé of it, no matter how concise, will prove of great help to a deeper understanding of the Faith. We regret that lack of space makes it impossible to quote more extensively from Marzieh Gail's splendid article, but we hope that the friends will borrow copies of this number from their Bahá'í Centres and read the article for themselves.

From the Statement of the National Spiritual Assembly of America:

"The man of faith must welcome and cherish every opportunity given him to assert his spiritual experience in terms of heroism and conscious understanding, since this and naught else is the real life of the soul. Through the kindling of the flames of public feeling becomes ignited the quality of faith which is more than personal experience—the welding together of a new community in a common aim which later becomes the very purpose of civilisation."

"To-day we are beyond and above all mere theological argument and speculation. The whole world is immersed in the sea of divine mystery. Speculation and abstract argument collapse. The only quality which can endure is that humility, seeking to serve the world aims which Bahá'u'lláh's Dispensation promotes."

From Marzieh Gail's Article:

"With no surprise, then we find that the historical summary of our Faith, as supplied by Mr. Miller, repeats all the old misinformation as if it were Gospel truth . . . Mr. Miller complains that Azal is 'ignored' in modern Bahá'í histories. Well, there is not much to say about him."

"He gives it as a Bahá'í teaching that Bahá'u'lláh will found a church-state . . . This is most misleading. For there is no such thing as a Bahá'í church, and the concept of State as we have known it heretofore does not express the World State of the future. . . . We stand for the unity of the entire human race. There is no precedent for what we represent."

"I shall not dwell here on Mr. Miller's summary of the Book of Aqdas, a summary obviously meant to be ridiculous. . . . That the entire volume has not yet been introduced in the West is due to the fact that other Bahá'í works are an essential preliminary to its study; these are being supplied in rapid succession, and through the Guardian's unremitting labour."

"Mr. Miller also says, 'There is little in his teachings that is original . . . ' I am glad that Mr. Miller goes so true to form; he satisfies perfectly my sense of history; for this remark is invariably made of the new Prophet by followers of previous ones."

"Well, the relationship of Bahá'ís to 'Abdul-Bahá, and to-day to the Guardian, is not submission as Mr. Miller intends it. It is love. It is a spiritual bond involving no compulsion. It could not be established by force. It is like the concentration of members of a symphony orchestra on the conductor of the symphony."

"The passage from the Master's Will: 'To none is given, the right to put forth his own opinion . . . ' means simply this: No member of the orchestra can desert the pattern of the music. This passage does not refer to scientific research, philosophical exploration, creative activity; it simply expresses the plan of Bahá'u'lláh for world unity: the concentration of the hearts of His followers on an established and designated point."

"On page 25, he says again, 'The Bahá'í dream is of a totalitarian world order, in which the successor of Bahá'u'lláh rules supreme.' This strange 'totalitarian order' exists only in Mr. Miller's mind. . . . Not for a moment would free, twentieth-century adults labour away the best years of their lives to further such a fantastic, such an impossible, and indeed such an undesirable aim. For Bahá'u'lláh teaches that the human race is achieving maturity, that its centuries of subjection and irresponsibility are for ever vanished, that the burden of the conduct of human affairs is now to be borne by all human beings through their representatives, functioning in world institutions and chosen indirectly by universal suffrage."

Next Marzieh Gail deals with Mr. Miller's views regarding the institution of Guardianship, and quotes from "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh" by Shoghi Effendi, which work should be studied by every believer.

"Following precedent, Mr. Miller attempts to make out that our early history had its 'full share of internal as well as external strife.' What he refers to are schemings, not within, but against our Faith, by those who have abandoned it. . . . The humblest Bahá'í has time and again entered a city and, using the power of Bahá'u'lláh, established there a united community of human beings. . . . The one who has left the Cause is unable to do this; not Azal, not

Muhammad-'Alí, not any other of their kind has been able to create a group of united human beings."

"Mr. Miller goes on to say that a Christian accepting Bahá'u'lláh must give up his allegiance to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.' Leaving names aside, I would ask every Christian where he would put his allegiance on the occasion of the return of Christ. . . . Mr. Miller would not be troubled by this question because he apparently does not believe in the return of Christ; but those Christians who do believe in it, will listen to Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings that the Spirit has returned again in the new Name."

Mr. Miller had said that our Faith is inadequate because it 'fails to take sin seriously.' No doubt Mr. Miller has read neither the 'Gleanings' nor 'Prayers and Meditations' nor the 'Hidden Words' we do not believe in the theory of original sin nevertheless every Bahá'í is conscious of his human sinfulness, is constant in prayer and keeps the yearly fast, and begs forgiveness at all times. Mr. Miller has only to refer to our writings to learn this. (Example: The long daily prayer.)

Mr. Miller had said that the Bahá'í Faith fails to provide a Saviour, and 'Bahá'ís have never opened a mission for the down-and-outs' because 'they have no Saviour to offer to the slaves of sin.' "Once the economic order is properly adjusted, these slums will vanish, Mr. Miller. But no singing of hymns on street corners and passing out of tracts will make the slightest change in them now. As for the Saviour, the Saviour is the Manifestation of God."

Mr. Miller had said that the Bahá'í Faith 'keeps men in bondage to the law' and that 'the Christian keeps God's laws, not in order to save himself, but because he has been saved.' Marzieh Gail writes, "No Bahá'í knows whether he has been saved or not; for we believe that our salvation depends on the operation of the Will of God; our works are nothing unless they prove acceptable to Him. Nevertheless we are required to demonstrate our belief in God by obedience to His commands."

"He wonders why we do not go to Central Africa or Tibet forgetting that like the early disciples of Jesus, we must go first to the centres of population . . . Paul went to Athens, to Corinth, to Rome. He apparently does not know that Bahá'ís have already gone to such faraway places as Cochin-China, Ethiopia and Tahiti. . . . He also wishes that the Bahá'ís had built a 'medical mission in India or Tibet' rather than the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár; forgetting that there are thousands of hospitals in the world, but no building where negro and white, Muslim

and Jew, Buddhist and Christian, can kneel together as one people before one God. . . . Mr. Miller also forgets that the House of Worship is the heart of a great cultural institution, which will include not only hospitals, but colleges, laboratories, homes for the aged, and the like."

"Mr. Miller also says that we Bahá'ís are not allowed freely to investigate truth. He speaks of 'books' which 'disappeared from Persia,' the implication being that we destroyed them. Incidentally, although Mr. Miller generously uses 'books' in the plural, he gives only one title, the 'Nuqtatu'l-Káf.' Well, the reason we do not use that book is that it is valueless as history, and not because it sets forth the claims of Azal; proof of which is this, that we use and list in our bibliographies the Tarikh-i-Jadíd, which sets forth the claims of Azal."

"Bahá'u'lláh is His own proof. The Manifestation of God needs no document. Just as a Shakespeare, a Beethoven, needs no testimonial. Even if Jesus had never existed, no one would follow Iscariot."

Marzieh Gail next writes of the fundamental Bahá'í teaching of the oneness of Revelation, in reply to Mr. Miller's allegation that the Bahá'í Faith 'dishonours Jesus Christ.' Passages from "The Book of Certitude" (Iqán) and "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh" are quoted. The Gospels are also quoted to show the definite promise of the "Coming" enshrined in the teachings of Christ.

"If Bahá'u'lláh is what He proclaims, His Cause will establish the millenium. If on the other hand our Faith is not true, it will pass and die and be forgotten. . . . As you say yourself, we can use no compulsion in our teaching we simply tell others that Bahá'u'lláh has come; we simply show them His writings . . ."

"And by way of postscript, I shall add that attacks on the Faith of God are among those things that perish. Who to-day remembers Celsus, who said of the early Christians that they were like quacks who warn even against the doctor; and of their Lord that He was the son of a soldier named Panthera, and His Teachings were garbled quotations from Greek literature, and His miracles tricks learned in Egypt. Who remembers?"

In the last number of the Bahá'í Journal we gave as a subject for meditation and study "The Bahá'í Faith and Sin." We regret that space prevents us giving references in this connection this time, but they will be included in the next issue of the Journal.