

# BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

*Published by*

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles  
46 Bloomsbury Street  
London, W.C.1

---

No. 16

JANUARY, 1939

---

## THE HEIGHT OF OPPORTUNITY

"The marvellous zeal, unity, understanding and devotion exemplified by the English believers in recent months, individually as well as through their concerted efforts, constitute a landmark in the progressive development of the Faith in that land. They who have risen to the height of their present opportunities stand at the threshold of unprecedented achievements. They must labour continually, exercise the utmost vigilance, proclaim courageously and cling tenaciously to the principles of their Faith, spiritual as well as administrative, and resolve to endure every sacrifice and hardship, however severe, for the vindication, the consolidation and recognition of the Faith they profess and are now so admirably serving. With a heart filled with pride and gratitude I pray continually for their triumph. Shoghi."

Beloved Friends; we urge you all to read and meditate upon this message, to ponder it in your hearts and try to understand all its implications. Let us regard it as a whole, and not remember only the generous words of praise which it contains. There is also a challenge and a promise, and a warning. The challenge is to rise to the height of

opportunity; if we do this we have the promise of unprecedented achievements; the warning is of hardship and the demand for sacrifice.

If we are to respond to this critical and thrilling opportunity we must seek Divine assistance. We rise to our fullest capacity only through the power of the Spirit, and now, as never before, do we need its strength and energising influence. Let us resolve to remain continually in the clear light of prayer, individually and as a community. If we do this we know that God will use us to achieve His purpose.

"Illumine mine eyes, O my Lord, with the splendours of the horizon of Thy Revelation, and brighten my heart with the effulgence of the Day-Star of Thy knowledge and wisdom, that I may set myself wholly towards Thy face, and be rid of all attachment to anyone except Thee, in such wise that the changes and chances of the world will be powerless to hinder me from recognising Him Who is the Manifestation of Thine Own Self, and the Revealer of Thy Signs, and the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, and the Repository of Thy Cause."

## NATIONAL EMERGENCY

"He has noted your Assembly's request for his advice as to what forms of national service the friends may volunteer for in times of emergency. While the believers, he feels, should exert every effort to obtain from the authorities a permit exempting them from active military service in a combatant capacity, it is their duty at the same time, as loyal and devoted citizens, to offer their services to their country in any field of national service which is not specifically aggressive or directly military. Such forms of national work as air raid precaution service, ambulance corps, and other humanitarian work or activity of a non-combatant nature, are the most suitable types of service the friends can render, and which they should gladly volunteer for, since in addition to the fact that they do not involve any violation of the spirit or principle of the Teachings they constitute a form of social and humanitarian service which the Cause holds sacred and emphatically enjoins."

This instruction from Shoghi Effendi is very clear and should be followed by all the believers. When the forthcoming national register is compiled, the friends should offer their services in whatever capacity they are most fitted for. Care of children, attention to the injured, A.R.P., ambulance work, are all forms of service which we should undertake. With regard to seeking exemption from active military service, the friends are requested to leave this matter in the hands of the N.S.A. for the time being. A further communication will be made to the friends later.

## THE TEACHING CONFERENCE

The second annual Teaching Conference, held in Manchester on January 1st, was a vital and spiritual meeting. The traditional hospitality of the Manchester friends contributed greatly to the feeling of warmth and fellowship which pervaded the whole week-end. On the Saturday evening, after the Nineteen Day Feast, the twenty-first birthday of Hosein Mukhless was celebrated, when he declared himself a Bahá'í. The friends were also delighted to hear of the birth of a son to Mrs. Weeks, in Bristol.

Friends from Bradford, London, Manchester and Torquay were present, as well as one isolated believer, Mrs. Cooper of Blackburn. Messages were received from Miss Challis and from Mrs. Stevens.

The reports from London and Manchester showed that the Teaching work was being systematically pursued, and that interest in the Faith was being widened.

### Bradford.

The campaign of Teaching in Bradford already showed good results. The resident believers were holding meetings in the Centre and through the activity of Mr. Peter Wilkinson a meeting had been arranged in an Anglican church which was attended by fifty men. The meeting had been addressed by Mr. Hofman and return dates for other speakers had been offered. Some of those present had subsequently attended meetings in the Centre. Miss Pinchon, at the request of the N.S.A., had gone to stay in Bradford for a while, and was

doing valuable work by personal teaching and by speaking in the Centre. It was reported that three new believers were declared and there was every reason to hope that a Spiritual Assembly could be elected in April.

#### **Torquay.**

Mrs. Stevens was continuing to hold meetings, and the Nineteen Day Feast was being held regularly. A member of the London community had moved to Dartington and Mrs. Turvey had returned from South Africa; with the expected return of Mr. Tobey, it seems possible that here too a Spiritual Assembly might be formed. It was hoped that a few more people would declare themselves.

The Conference made the following recommendations for the consideration of the National Spiritual Assembly : —

1. That the N.S.A. should communicate more frequently with the local Assemblies, in the form of a more personal letter than the Journal.

2. That the administration should be clarified in the Journal, especially with regard to the relationship of local Spiritual Assemblies to the N.S.A. A copy of Bahá'í Procedure should be sent to all Assemblies and groups.

3. That a five year plan should be adopted, with the aim of having at least one believer in every county of England by the end of 1944.

On Sunday evening several of the friends spoke briefly and the Conference ended happily, with a keener sense of the unity of all the friends throughout the country.

## **ARCHIVES**

The National Spiritual Assembly has made arrangements for the protection of the Archives in time of emergency, and seeks the co-operation of the friends in the following ways. They are requested to send all objects which should be preserved for the Faith, to the National Spiritual Assembly. In the case of the original Tablets from the Master, the N.S.A. has arranged to make photo-static copies. Several Tablets which belong to our Archives are in America and the National Spiritual Assembly there has agreed to keep them for us until conditions are safer in Europe.

The N.S.A. requires a few copies of the early numbers of the Journal, starting with No. 1, which was mimeographed and going to number 6. The numbers after this are not required, but copies from 1 to 6 will be gratefully received.

## **NATIONAL FUND**

The treasurer reports that so far expenses have exceeded income by five pounds. In the light of the Guardian's message, we are confident that the friends will remedy this situation and provide the necessary funds for the work to continue.

## **THE NINETEEN DAY FEAST**

The institution of the Nineteen Day Feast is unique and peerless among gatherings and communal efforts. It is the only meeting at which attendance has been enjoined by the Founders of our Faith. The degree of its success indicates the virility of a Bahá'í community.

---

**SUMMER SCHOOL, 1939, JULY 24th—AUGUST 12th**  
**ENROL NOW**



And from it can flow an illimitable measure of spiritual power. The Master once said that, should the Bahá'ís make full use of the spiritual potentialities of the Nineteen Day Feast, they could thereby change the destinies of a whole city.

The Nineteen Day Feast, according to the directions of 'Abdul-Bahá, is composed of three distinct parts, each one well-defined in its scope and yet all so blended as to form one continuous and unbroken process. Fellowship in Bahá'u'lláh is the link and must be the keynote of every Nineteen Day Feast. Believers come to a Feast not so much to partake in communal worship, to express their views on the problems of the community, to associate lovingly, but above all of these, important and vital as they are, the believers attend the Feast in order to experience the unity unfolded by the Divine Hand of Bahá'u'lláh. A Nineteen Day Feast that fails to make that experience a throbbing reality is reduced to a mere mechanical performance that only accentuates human frailties and shortcomings.

The conflicting tendencies of the world must be shed outside the doors of the Nineteen Day Feast. This however does not mean either the assumption of an air of indifference or hiding behind a facade of spiritual pride and affected superiority. It only means emptying our hearts and minds to make room for the Grace of Bahá'u'lláh. Otherwise a barrier, wrought by our own hands, intervenes between the communal character of the Feast and the Source which is to feed and sustain it. The Master has said that he is present with us at the Nineteen Day Feast. It is our

duty, nay our inestimable privilege to realise that guiding and benevolent Presence. At the Nineteen Day Feast the collective life of the community obtains its form and nourishment, and therein the efficiency of the work during the next nineteen days is mainly determined.

And now a few lines on the procedure of the Nineteen Day Feast. The believer giving the Feast has the privilege of arranging the devotional programme and taking charge of its fulfilment. It is highly desirable to give a personal word of welcome and thus open the proceedings. At the close of the devotional programme, the Spiritual Assembly takes charge of the meeting. During this part of the Feast, the Secretary and the Treasurer of the Assembly and various committees present reports.

The purpose of these reports is certainly not a mere enumeration of problems, resolutions and decisions. Otherwise the medium of a Newsletter or a Bulletin would be sufficient. The underlying principle is consultation. It is the inalienable right of every believer to express an opinion upon the topics and subjects raised in the various reports, and also to formulate suggestions. And the Spiritual Assembly is in duty bound to give full consideration to suggestions and recommendations emanating from the Nineteen Day Feast.

The third component part of the Feast is of a social nature. By this time the atmosphere of the Feast is well established. Breaking bread together is an ancient custom, symbolic of amity and fellowship. In a Bahá'í Feast it transcends the level of custom and rite, and becomes a true expression of unity.