

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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ANNUAL CONVENTION

The Convention was held on May 2nd at 46 Bloomsbury Street and was an occasion of true spiritual renewal. The discussion on Teaching was especially profitable but lost much of its value through lack of time. It was felt that a much longer period is needed for the Convention and the new National Spiritual Assembly was requested to consider this matter. The friends and delegates met at ten o'clock and after prayer, the annual report was presented.

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1936—APRIL 1937

The current year may justly be described as outstanding in the history of the Faith in this land. We have been conscious of a new and vital spirit within the community, and outward signs of its activity have not been lacking. Looking backward, over even so short a period, we may discern three stages in the general development. First an awaken-

ing among all the believers, second a realisation of community consciousness, fostered by, and co-incident with, the establishment of the Administrative Order, and thirdly the beginning of a wider and more effective teaching work.

The year began with an event of outstanding importance; the receipt of Shoghi Effendi's general letter entitled "The Unfoldment of World Civilisation," a copy of which was sent to every believer. To this, more than to any other outward cause, may be attributed the expansion of consciousness which has been apparent in the English Bahá'í community. Our attention was directed in a compelling manner to the wide and universal aspects of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation; we were given an indication of the course of history in the next few years, and were forced to realise the crucial necessity of building, firmly and steadily, the fabric of the New World Order in Great Britain. In this letter the Guardian called attention to two processes at work within society—one of disintegration affecting every phase of human life, and one of construction as-

sociated directly with the rise of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Subsequent world shattering events—to name but two, the abdication of Edward VIII with the consequent attacks upon the church, and the outbreak of war in Spain between the upholders of two social doctrines to whose alignment of forces the Guardian had already referred in a previous letter—bear striking testimony to the Guardian's unerring perception, and in association with a host of other ills—strikes and lock-outs, civil disturbances, universal rearmament—confirm his dictum that humanity is now entering the outer fringe of the darkest period of its history. "The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective."

This clear analysis of the present world picture, followed in the second half of his letter by an intimation of the entrancing vision of 'The Most Great Peace,' aroused in the hearts of the friends a desire to play their part in the establishment of that great day. In this noble aim the National Spiritual Assembly provided initiative and leadership, and served as the channel for a flow of encouragement and guidance which constantly came from the Guardian. The activity, consolidation and strengthening of the National Spiritual Assembly has been one of the significant items of the year. Through the measures which it has initiated, the contact it has maintained with the community, the supervision it has exercised over the local Assemblies and isolated believers, and through much practise in the Bahá'í technique of consultation, it has won the confidence of the friends and acquired a

valuable experience to be handed on to subsequent national bodies.

Early in the year a Teaching Bulletin was issued by the National Teaching Committee at approximately regular intervals of a month. It proved a valuable means of drawing the believers together and of stimulating them to fresh activity. It also gave instruction in, and stressed the importance of, Administration. Very soon however, the National Spiritual Assembly felt the need of some means of direct and less circumscribed communication with the friends, and the Teaching Bulletin was discontinued and the *Bahá'í Journal* brought into being. The *Bahá'í Journal* exists as the official organ of the National Spiritual Assembly and has proved one of the greatest assets to the Faith in England. It has been of especial service in assisting the N.S.A. to carry out its desire of realising, in the whole country, that organic unity which is at the core of Bahá'í society. Its scope and tenor will progress with the Faith.

In addition to the regular publication of the *Bahá'í Journal*, the National Spiritual Assembly has circularised the friends on three occasions, once in November calling attention to the principle of unity underlying all Bahá'í life, and urging the observance of two Bahá'í laws—regular attendance at the nineteen day Feast, and regular subscription to the Fund . . . and on two other occasions in connection with the Publishing Company.

Letters have been sent throughout the whole Bahá'í world on two occasions . . . the first in September containing a brief report of our activities, and the second

in April 1937 in connection with the Publishing Company.

The idea had been considered of holding a Summer School, and the Guardian signified a desire for it. The National Spiritual Assembly recognised, not only the value of Summer School as an institution but the opportuneness of a national undertaking which would call for the support and effort of all the believers. A Committee was appointed to investigate all the possibilities and to make recommendations to the National Spiritual Assembly. Due to its perseverance and untiring work and the support of the National Assembly, the first British Bahá'í Summer School was held in August 1936, at Matlock Bath. Its success was beyond the most sanguine hopes, and a fresh spirit of fellowship and dedication was engendered and diffused throughout the country. The classes were of a high standard. It would be hard to overestimate the significance of this achievement in the development of the Faith in England, for it demanded and received the enthusiasm and full support of all the believers, it undoubtedly attracted Divine confirmation and stands as our first important national undertaking. The Guardian signified his pleasure at its success and sent the following message:—"The institution of the Summer School constitutes a vital and inseparable part of any teaching campaign, and as such ought to be given the full importance it deserves in the teaching plans and activities of the believers. It should be organised in such a way as to attract the attention of the non-believers to the Cause and thus become an effective medium for teaching." Plans are already complete for the

second Summer School in August 1937.

In July 1936 the World Fellowship of Faiths held its second International Congress in London, the subject being "World Fellowship Through Religion." Representatives of all the leading Faiths were present and a session was allotted to each one. The Bahá'í paper, approved by Shoghi Effendi, was composed and read by Mr. Townshend. In introducing the Bahá'í session, the chairman, Sir Herbert Samuel, said in effect that if he were asked to say which of all the Faiths represented was the nearest to the aim of the Congress, he would reply the Bahá'í, for World fellowship and unity is the *raison d'être* of the Bahá'í Community. Mrs. Helen Bishop, Madame Orlova and Mr. St. Barbe Baker spoke for the Faith, and Mr. Hirst, of Leeds, made a plea for recognition of the Bahá'í principles.

Two important decisions of the National Spiritual Assembly made during the year are as follows:—One, reported in *Bahá'í Journal* number one and clarified in the following number, reads: "Individual believers must not communicate with persons of eminence in governmental or political circles, except through the National Spiritual Assembly." The second ruling delimited the area of jurisdiction of the London Spiritual Assembly to within a radius of twelve and a half miles of Charing Cross.

In January 1937, a convention of Bahá'í students was held in Paris. Six people attended from England and one of them read a paper.

A cable was sent to the American National Spiritual Assembly during the

period of the floods in the Mississippi valley, expressing the sympathy of the British friends with America in this national disaster.

The following Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly have been working during the year: —Teaching; Reviewing; Contacts; Library; Summer School. The Reviewing Committee has approved a book on the Faith and some articles. The Contacts Committee is in close touch with the N.S.A. and sends literature to many people. The Library Committee has been appointed only recently but has succeeded in placing books in various public libraries. Mrs. George was appointed to maintain contact with the isolated believers, a service which is greatly appreciated by them.

Teaching.

In April 1936 the following message was received from the Guardian: —“There is undoubtedly no higher call than that of bringing the Message to a world tormented and torn on every side by the forces of destructive materialism. It is for us to realise the full measure of the responsibility that has been laid upon our shoulders in this matter, and having attained full consciousness of our responsibility to unitedly arise to contribute all that we can towards its discharge.” Although teaching has never ceased and has been notable in certain instances such as Summer School and the work in Devonshire, it is realised that this year in England has been a period of internal consolidation, of gathering our energies, of investigating the most opportune fields and the most effective methods, of gaining experience and of

preparing for efficient teaching work. The N.S.A. believes that one great factor not yet integrated into the scheme of national teaching, is the potentiality of every believer, no matter what his capacities or talents may be, to teach the Cause, and it strongly recommends that this matter should receive the deep and prayerful consideration of every follower of Bahá'u'lláh.

Early in the year Mr. and Mrs. Bishop came to England and in addition to working in London made a tour of various parts of the country, speaking to audiences gathered by resident Bahá'ís. They returned to Geneva in September. After examination of Mrs. Bishop's report the National Spiritual Assembly wrote to Shoghi Effendi requesting her services for another year, a petition which the Guardian granted. Mrs. Bishop was asked to go to Torquay, where in association with Mr. Tobey and Mrs. McKinley active work was begun. From December until April a constant and intense campaign was conducted, Mrs. Bishop speaking in churches, intellectual institutions and private homes. The result of this work was that three people declared themselves and were enrolled, while a large number were greatly attracted to the Faith and the Teachings were widely spread in that district. Follow up work will be continued by the five believers now there, who are preparing themselves for intensive work with a view to enlarging the group into an Assembly.

In the work of the Spiritual Assemblies there is apparent at this end of the year, a different and more impressive method than could be seen at the begin-

ning. In both London and Manchester the old type of teaching in wide generalisations has been succeeded by intensive and vital discussion groups.

In London, the removal of the centre to 46 Bloomsbury Street, made it necessary to conduct a more intimate type of meeting, similar to a fireside group. This has proved highly effective and large attendances are the rule. Fireside meetings have been conducted at various homes, and in Crouch End a group has been formed under the jurisdiction of the London Spiritual Assembly. This group recently rented the Hornsea Town Hall and conducted a well attended and successful public meeting. Plans are being made for a series of public lectures in Caxton Hall during May. London has enrolled seven new believers during the year.

In Manchester a new and vigorous spirit is at work. The Spiritual Assembly has taken a hall in the centre of the city and is making full use of it. The Nineteen Day Feast has become firmly established in the community, and with an increased understanding of the Administrative Order, a new teaching programme is being undertaken. Two new believers have been enrolled.

The Bahá'í Theatre Group may be mentioned under the heading of Teaching, for this group, organised and directed by Madame Orlova, has proved an effective means of attracting young people to the Faith and of giving them first hand experience of Bahá'í consultation. At Naurooz the group presented scenes from 'As You Like It' and is now working on a pageant of the 'Seven Valleys.'

In March 1937, Mr. Siegfried Schopflocher brought a message from the Guardian to the effect that he wishes us to stress two things:—humanity has come of age, and the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh. These are the two factors to resolve the modern 'riddle of existence.'

A small pamphlet was composed by the National Spiritual Assembly and five thousand copies printed, available at a penny each.

From the very beginning of the year the National Spiritual Assembly felt the need for literature printed in England, but owing to lack of resources the need remained unfilled. Shortly however, circumstances arose with which all the friends are acquainted, which led to the decision to form a Publishing Company, for the purpose of publishing Bahá'í books through an established printing house. In this project the National Spiritual Assembly was fully supported and encouraged by the Guardian, who sent £50 towards the Fund needed. The National Spiritual Assembly pledged and gave its full support, both moral and financial and sought the help of the friends. The response was immediate and generous, but only from a limited number. The N.S.A. is confident however, that when the project itself, and the wide range of its probable results, are more fully understood, every believer will sacrifice for its success. With the permission of the Guardian, a circular letter was printed and sent throughout the Bahá'í World, seeking the help of the world-wide Bahá'í community.

It is surely a symptom of the almighty assistance of Bahá'u'lláh, that within the short space of one year, we should have successfully accomplished a national undertaking and embarked on another which bids fair to become international in scope. For Shogi Effendi has likened the establishment of the Publishing Company to the building of the Temple in America and indicates that its success may "mark the inauguration of a new era of expansion of the Cause throughout the British Isles and the rest of the far-flung British Empire." At its last meeting the N.S.A. was advised that there was £153 in the Publishing Fund, which is sufficient to establish the Company legally with a limited capital liability of £100. Proper legal advice has been obtained and the N.S.A. has recorded its decision to register the Company as "The Bahá'í Publishing Company Limited." Investigations are being made as to the most favourable method of associating the N.S.A. with the Company. It may be truly said that upon the progress of this plan, depends that expansion of the Teaching work which it is now our chief duty to promote.

On March 29th the following cable was received from Haifa:—"Announce Assemblies celebration marriage beloved Guardian. Imperishable honour bestowed upon handmaid of Bahá'u'lláh Ruhíyih Khanum Miss Mary Maxwell. Zaiyih, Mother of Guardian." To this joyful news the National Spiritual Assembly, the Spiritual Assemblies of London and Manchester, and the Bournemouth Group, cabled their expressions of delight. The union of East and West, so dear to the Master's heart, has been

cemented in his own Family.

During the year the National Spiritual Assembly has met twelve times; ten times in London, once in Manchester and once at Summer School. It was found necessary to purchase a typewriter for the secretarial work.

One of the greatest problems with which the N.S.A. has had to contend, has been the National Fund. Although this year, receipts are slightly in excess of expenses, it will be seen from the Treasurer's report how very limited are the funds at the disposal of the N.S.A. It is felt that the friends do not yet realise the importance of regular contribution to the Fund, or that it is a Bahá'í Law, and not a principle . . . a command of Bahá'u'lláh.

This report would not be complete without some reference to the encouragement and guidance which has been received from the Guardian during the year. His constant message has been to persevere and teach the Cause. "Persevere and never feel disheartened." "Rest assured and persevere." . . . "Now is the beginning of your work. And as in the beginning of every task, you are bound to meet all sorts of difficulties. The more you strive to overcome these, the greater will be your reward, and the nearer you will get to that glorious success which, as repeatedly promised by Bahá'u'lláh, must needs crown the efforts of all those who, whole-heartedly and with pure detachment, strive to work for the spread and establishment of His Cause." And lately these inspiring words to an individual believer, published with his permission. "The goal

is clear, the path safe and certain, and the assurances of Bahá'u'lláh as to the eventual success of our efforts quite emphatic."

In comparison with the greatness and eventual destiny of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the year may well seem to be of little significance. But in comparison with previous years, and remembering the difficulties which have been overcome both within and without the Faith, and remembering too the smallness of our numbers, we can realise with gratitude the meaning of the Guardian's words referring to "this auspicious stage in the evolution of the Faith" in England. The uniting of all the friends in an organic unity, the strengthening of the position and authority of the National Spiritual Assembly, the firm establishment of the Administrative Order, as attested by the Guardian, the publication of the *Bahá'í Journal*, the inception of Summer School, the teaching campaign in Devonshire, the consolidation of the Faith in London and Manchester within the Administrative structure and the subsequent beginning of new teaching work in those centres, the initial success of the plan for the Publishing Company, the enthusiasm and active work of the London Youth Group—these are among the outstanding features of the ninety-third year of the Bahá'í era in Great Britain.

"All-praise and glory be to God Who, through the power of His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness of non-existence, and clothed it with the mantle of life . . . O, how blessed the day when, aided by the grace and might of the one true God, man will

have freed himself from the bondage of the world and all that is therein, and will have attained unto true and abiding rest beneath the shadow of the Tree of Knowledge."

Faithfully,
In His Service,
National Spiritual Assembly.
by DAVID HOFMAN,
Secretary.

The Treasurer presented a report showing that expenses had been kept within income. The Fund was discussed after lunch.

The discussion on the reports was concluded and the delegates voted for the incoming N.S.A. While the tellers were counting the votes the Convention adjourned for luncheon. The outgoing N.S.A. was re-elected and at a short meeting in the afternoon the following organisation was made.

Miss Grace Challis ... *Chairman.*
Mr. Alfred Sugar ... *Vice-Ch'm'n.*
Mr. David Hofman . . *Secretary.*
Mrs. Slade ... *Treasurer.*
Mrs. K. V. Brown.
Mr. Balyuzi.
Mr. Lee.
Mr. Tobey.
Mr. Asgarzadeh.

Consultation was begun immediately after the election result had been announced. The following cable was sent to the Guardian:—

"Delegates friends assembled convention send devoted loving greetings. Outgoing Assembly re-elected."

The Guardian cabled the following reply: —

“Assure delegates friends loving appreciation remembrance holy shrines. Supplicating unprecedented success teaching field administrative activities.”

The Bahá'í Fund.

This matter was discussed in relation to why the friends had not realised the obligation to contribute regularly and steadily. It was suggested that two points should be stressed. Bahá'u'lláh demands that a part of our income should go to the Faith. The amount of the contribution is not of primary importance; the smallest donation is acceptable; it is the spiritual principle of obedience to a spiritual law which is important.

Message from Germany.

Mr. Tobey brought a message of love from the German friends and spoke of their activities, especially of the nineteen day Feast. He said this was very beautiful in Germany as an atmosphere of quiet repose was induced by the playing of very good music before the prayers were read. The German friends were anxious to attend our Summer School but as they could not bring money out of the country it was suggested that we should offer them hospitality and they would do the same for English friends attending Esslingen.

Group Activity.

It was emphasised that the principle of group action must be realised in principle and in action before the Faith would

move forward strongly. Too much is being left to individuals, which is detrimental to the community and to the individual. Every believer must place his energy in the group reservoir and draw from it a new power of action. As long as individual work went on unintegrated into the group activity our efforts would be dispersed. Integration with the group would give re-inforcement and focus. The position of the National Spiritual Assembly was mentioned: —“A group of brilliant people would probably fail to do what we are trying to do. You have voted a National Spiritual Assembly. We are part of you, not outside you. We are not independent, we are a portion of the body of which you are a portion. You have elected us to handle the affairs of the Cause. If you do not like what we do, tell us, and then we can get together and work. We should not have little independent bodies in the Cause, this suspends the activity. But we are trying to work in a practical way . . .”

Teaching.

Two aspects of Teaching were discussed . . . the teaching of the Cause to the public and the training of teachers. It was realised that the training of teachers was very important and the foundation of future work. To this end a class had been formed in London and was studying the Creative Word as a discussion group instead of listening to lectures. It was felt that the resultant deepening of the individual's understanding of the Faith was the best method of preparation. The responsibility to acquire knowledge rested with every individual, but the preparation to be a Bahá'í

teacher demanded more than an assimilation of knowledge; it required a development of the teacher's personality and a deepening of his understanding of the spiritual principles of the Faith. These ends were best served through study and discussion of the Word.

Teaching the Faith was a different process from imparting instruction. The old idea of teaching was to transmit knowledge and develop the intellect; the Bahá'í teacher must transmit an energy and unfold a soul. The spiritual equipment of the teacher thus was of prime importance. The living of a Bahá'í life is undoubtedly the best way of teaching, but teachers who present the Cause in public must know the teachings and be competent to answer questions. To this end material has been put in the Journal for the guidance of the friends, a procedure which will be continued. It was suggested that a list of the questions most generally asked should be listed and passages from the Writings, or from the works of the Guardian, should be quoted in reply. The N.S.A. was asked to consider this suggestion.

The importance of dedication was stressed. Every believer must realise the responsibility to teach, then resolve to prepare himself, pray for help and use the power of the Spirit.

The question of imparting a teaching which aroused the antagonism of an individual was discussed, a case being quoted of telling a pacifist that obedience to government is a spiritual law. The statement of the Buddha was quoted, that spiritual teaching was either confirmation or precipitation. At this point it became necessary to adjourn.

All the friends reassembled at Lady Blomfield's and were entertained at the Feast of Rizwan. It was suggested that a telegram should be sent to the King on the occasion of the Coronation, and this was adopted by the N.S.A.

Telegram to the King.

The following message was sent a few days before the Coronation. "H.M. The King, London. On behalf of the Bahá'í Community of Great Britain and Ireland, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles desire to express our joy on the occasion of your majesty's coronation and to declare our devotion and loyalty to your majesty's person and government. We pray God to sustain and guide you and to bless you richly with every happiness."

ELECTION OF ASSEMBLIES

The Bahá'í communities of London and Manchester have elected the following Spiritual Assemblies.

London.

Mr. R. St. Barbe Baker	<i>Chairman.</i>
Mrs. Florence George	<i>Vice-Ch'm'n.</i>
Mr. Hasan Balyuzi ...	} <i>Joint</i>
Miss Dorothy Cansdale	
	<i>Secretaries.</i>
Mrs. K. V. Brown ...	<i>Treasurer.</i>
Miss Marguerite Wellby	<i>Asst. Treas.</i>
Mr. Z. Asgarzadeh.	
Miss S. Golden	
	<i>Kilford</i>
Mr. Walter Wilkins.	

Address: —Bahá'í Centre, 46 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1.

Manchester.

Mr. J. Craven ... *Chairman.*
Mr. J. Lee ... *Secretary.*
Mr. J. Chessel ... *Treasurer.*
Mrs. Lee.
Mr. Sugar.
Miss Alice Williams .. *Foreign*
Corr'sp'nd'nt.
Miss Lavender.
Mrs. Sugar.
Miss Gibbs.

Address: —Bahá'í Centre, Commerce
Building, High Street, Manchester, 4.

SUMMER SCHOOL

Plans for Summer School are now complete; following is the detail of organisation.

Time: —July 31st to August 21st.

Place: —Cromford Court, Matlock
Bath.

Terms: —8/- per day per person all
inclusive.

School will be opened on the morning of Sunday, August 1st by Lady Blomfield. Those planning to attend the opening should arrive on Saturday night.

For registration and all particulars apply to Mr. Hasan Balyuzi, 14 Frog-nal Mansions, Hampstead, N.W.3.

REGISTER NOW ! !

FAITH BANNED IN GERMANY

The N.S.A. has received news that the Bahá'í Faith has been prohibited in Germany. The N.S.A. is disbanded, and the books and records confiscated. No details are available.

TEACHING

The N.S.A. has decided not to re-appoint a Teaching Committee, but to fulfil this function itself. Miss Baxter has been appointed Teaching Secretary to the N.S.A.

Mrs. Romer has started a campaign in Brighton, in which she is being assisted by one or two residents. Circulars were printed inviting people to a lecture on 'The Goal of a New World Order' and Mrs. Romer reports that she has contacted some thirty societies.

A series of Public lectures in Caxton Hall has been conducted by the London Spiritual Assembly. Another series will commence in October.

PUBLISHING FUND

Contributions from outside Great Britain have been gratefully received from the following: —

The Guardian: opening contribution of £50.

The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Adasiyyih.

Four Bahá'ís of Shanghai.

BAHA'I LITERATURE

The following is a list of literature available from Mr. Walter Wilkins, 46 Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1.

Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

- * The Hidden Words.
Cloth 1/3; leather 2/6; paper 9d.
- The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys ... 2/-
- Gleanings From The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh ... 7/6
- Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. 10/-

Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

- Some Answered Questions ... 6/-
- Promulgation of Universal Peace.
2 Vols. ... per vol. 10/-
- Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 3 Vols.
per vol. 8/-
- * Paris Talks ... 2/-
- Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá ... 6d.
- Bahá'í Scriptures; a compilation of selected passages from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá ... 10/-

Writings of Shoghi Effendi.

- Bahá'í Administration ... 6/-
- The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. 6d.
- * The Goal of a New World Order ... 2d.
- The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh ... 6d.
- The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.
Cloth 3/-
Paper 1/-

- The Unfoldment of World Civilisation ... 9d.
- The Future World Commonwealth ... 6d.

Writings on the Bahá'í Faith.

- * Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era,
by Dr. J. E. Esslemont. Cloth 6/-
Paper board 2/6
- Mysticism and the Bahá'í Revelation ... *Ruhi Afnan.* 2/-
- The Bahá'í Revelation.
Thornton Chase 4/-
- The Universal Religion.
Hippolyte Dreyfus. 4/-
- Bahá'í, The Spirit of the Age.
Horace Holley. 10/-
- * The Drama of the Kingdom.
Mary Basil Hall. 1/-
- The Coming of The Glory.
Florence Pinchon. 6d.

Study Outlines and Guides.

- Twenty lessons in Bahá'í Administration ... 1/-
- Study Outline for the Kitab-i-Iqan ... 1/-
- Study guide for the Dawnbreakers. 1/-
- Bahá'í Teachings on Economics, a compilation ... 6d.
- There are numerous pamphlets ranging in price from ½d. to 6d.

Bahá'í World.

- A biennial record of the World Faith. Volume VI is now off the press, and a few copies will be stocked ... 12/-
- * Printed in England.