

# BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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## NATIONAL CONVENTION

'The Administrative Order is the indispensable instrument through which the glorious spirit of the Bahá'í Cause finds expression.'

Between April 21st and May 2nd, 1863, Bahá'u'lláh declared His Station and Mission to His faithful followers in the beautiful gardens of Ridván, on the outskirts of Baghdad. These wonderful days in the garden of roses and nightingales are celebrated each year all over the world.

So many of the believers in the British Isles have had the joy of hearing about Bahá'u'lláh's declaration within the last few years. Perhaps we, in recapturing this glorious experience, can dimly imagine the overpowering effect of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration to His companions in the Garden of Ridván.

The first, ninth and twelfth days of Ridván are Holy Days. During this period Bahá'í elections take place and assemblies, whether local or national, give an account of their activities of the past year and receive suggestions and comments from the believers.

Convention is held during the days of Ridván, when the National Assembly is elected, the national reports are presented and plans made for the forthcoming year. If we remember the sacred events which are being commemorated at this time, we shall be helped to keep the level of our consultation lofty and our intentions pure. Although only the elected delegates, the outgoing and incoming National Assembly members may participate directly in the consultation during Convention, it is very important for the whole Community to play as full a part as possible. This may be achieved by delegates meeting their local communities before Convention and receiving suggestions, and by non-delegates submitting their suggestions, during Convention, through a delegate. The delegates' 'twofold function is to elect their national representatives and to submit to them any recommendations they may feel inclined to make. The function of the Convention is purely advisory . . . ' 'The discussion should be free and untrammelled, the election carried on in that spirit of prayer and meditation in which alone every delegate can render obedience to the Guardian's expressed wish.'

As regards the election, which takes place half-way through the proceedings, the Guardian has directed us: 'It is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of prejudice, and

irrespective of any material considerations, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognised ability and mature experience.'

Convention 1951-108—is significant for two important reasons. First the number of delegates will be fifty-seven and second it marks the opening of the Two Year Plan. Under the guidance of our beloved Guardian, we shall have the exciting task of trying to visualise the significance, scope and potentialities of these new goals and of elaborating the details and planning the work.

The stirring news of the formation of the first International Bahá'í Council reminds us that the Guardian has said: 'The various Assemblies, local and national, constitute to-day the bedrock upon which the Universal House is in the future to be firmly established and raised.' 'It devolves upon us whose dearest wish is to see the Cause enter upon that promised era of universal recognition and world achievement, 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.'

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

## FOR MEDITATION

The virtues and attributes pertaining unto God are all evident and manifest, and have been mentioned and described in all the heavenly Books. Among them are trustworthiness, truthfulness, purity of heart while communing with God, forbearance, resignation to whatever the Almighty hath decreed, contentment with the things His Will hath provided, patience, nay thankfulness in the midst of tribulation, and complete reliance, in all circumstances, upon Him. These rank, according to the estimate of God, among the highest and most laudable of all acts. All other acts are, and will ever remain, secondary and subordinate unto them.



## WHAT HINDERS US ?

We find so often in the Teachings that we must not allow the world to distract and hinder us from the work of the Cause. As the Guardian puts it, 'the most urgent of all our obligations to bury our cares and teach the Cause.' We also find—especially in the Qur'an—that we must beware of setting ourselves up as 'partners with God.' We find expressions such as 'the drunkenness of their heedlessness,' 'veils of self,' 'idle imaginations' and the like. We find moreover that the Master makes that wonderful statement, 'as ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be.'

Vivid though this language is, it still needs to be translated into practical every-day meaning for most of us, and in a sense for each of us the problem—for we all have it in some degree—is different.

'As ye have faith'—To act we need sure confidence that we are doing the right thing and that even if we don't see how it can be right we are carrying out the behests of our community as promptly as we can.

We shrink from talking to strangers, inviting the receptive to our homes or to meals, etc., and from association with them for many reasons. These reasons are often physical: our responsibilities to our family or ill health prevent us doing very much; yet even here we may have a field of service if we really want one.

More often, though, we shrink from doing what we should because of limitations within ourselves. We have got into bad habits—habits of thought, habits of routine—which preoccupy us so that perhaps we prefer the daily newspaper or the inanities of a novellette or thriller or cinema to seeking a thirsty soul as we go about and helping that soul to discover the ingredients of the true remedy for the disillusion and general tastelessness of a materialist world at the moment of its collapse into ruins.

Sometimes we have reluctantly come to allow our actions to be toned down because we see others not doing what we think they should. 'If they don't match words with deeds, why should we?' But here we should recollect Bahá'u'lláh's explicit words 'the faith of no man is conditioned by aught else except himself.' What have the poor people in bus, tram, train, office or next door done to us that they should be deprived because we allow our conduct to be affected by that of other Bahá'ís whom in any case we probably don't know well enough to be aware of their besetting problems. Do we seriously think people won't be interested in our glorious Cause if we approach them the right way? We were once attracted ourselves: if we doubt, we doubt our own reality.

'Progress is the expression of spirit in the world of matter,' we are told by the Master. To get the most effective results we need to feel we are supported by prayer and communion with God and by the fullest sense of co-operation from the members of our community, and then to act as though the decision were perfectly and divinely guided. The first we can assure ourselves of if we will, we are seriously handicapped if

we don't obtain the second and we don't progress very far or fast if we fail in the third.

Each of us needs to trust his fellow believer and act in full confidence that we are each doing our best. There is room for everyone of us in the great immensity of God's eternal creation so we need not fear that others will usurp our place or catch up on us. We should ever look around for the opportunity to say an encouraging word of praise or appreciation.

Once a Bahá'í action—and how few really of our actions are not Bahá'í actions if we analyse them—has been consulted upon and an agreed decision arrived at it hampers the Cause if we don't act at once 'with instant, exact and complete obedience.'

Is it right to hang back in case we surprise ourselves and cannot live up to our new found standards? Away with fancy and to work, for there is plenty to do, and when that is done there will be plenty more. Are we not citizens of a new world, members of a new race of men? It can be so if we let it.

CONSOLIDATION COMMITTEE

### For Sale

The National Assembly announces that a valuable Persian silk carpet measuring twenty-two inches by sixteen inches, in which the Greatest Name is woven, will be offered for sale by auction at Convention. The carpet is richly coloured and is suitable for hanging on a wall. It was made on the occasion of the Centenary and was presented to the National Assembly to sell in aid of the British Bahá'í Fund. Bids will be accepted from individuals or representatives of assemblies and written bids may be sent by those unable to attend in person or by proxy.

### 'Herald of the South'

The Editor of this, the Australasian Bahá'í magazine, whose publication was encouraged by both the Master and the Guardian, will be very pleased to receive well written articles on Bahá'í subjects; those suitable for teaching work are preferred. Articles should be submitted to Mrs. Bertha Dobbins, 112 First Avenue, Joslin, South Australia.

Subscriptions to the *Herald of the South* are welcomed, whether from Bahá'ís or those interested in the Faith. It appears quarterly and the annual subscription is 7/6d. Orders should be sent to Eric S. G. Bowes, Box 1149K, G.P.O., Adelaide.

### Mary Jacobs

Mrs. Mary Jacobs passed away early in January. She had declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh in the last month of the Six Year Plan, when she became the ninth member of the Blackpool Bahá'í Community and thus enabled that Community to form its first Assembly on April 21st. Although she was unable, on account of illness, to take part in the Blackpool meetings, the friends there will remember her kind, gentle and happy nature and will miss her.

### Wedding

Vida Johnston and Dick Backwell were married at the Bradford Bahá'í Centre on February 23rd.



## INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

When, last August, we learned of the Guardian's call to Persia and the United States to help in the Africa work, we had the first real glimpse of the magnitude of the task and its importance. Our article in the October *Journal* described our feelings and initial plans. Now the Guardian himself has further indicated the tremendous significance of the project by linking it with the formation of the International Council: . . . twin compelling evidences (of the) resistless unfoldment (of the) embryonic divinely appointed World Order (of) Bahá'u'lláh.

He makes it quite clear in his cable of January 16th that the campaign will call for the fullest co-operation between the administrative machinery of the British, Persian, American and Egyptian National Assemblies for this ' . . . unique epoch-making enterprise African continent ' has ushered in a new era of planned teaching at international level.

Already we are beginning to appreciate what this will mean in terms of new problems, new kinds of activity, new techniques to be evolved and new fields of service to be explored. We would like to enumerate a few of the problems whose solution will link the administrative machinery of four National Assemblies:—

*Administrative Co-operation.* Consultation between Assemblies and Committees separated by thousands of miles is needed, with possibly no direct contact.

*Pioneering.* (a) This Committee will be in touch with pioneers and prospective pioneers it has never seen nor is likely to meet. (b) Pioneers from different countries, under the jurisdiction of different National Assemblies, will come forward. (c) Some kind of selection will be needed. (d) Preliminary training will be needed. (e) Entry permits and jobs will have to be obtained by people who are not British and whose professional qualification may not be recognised by the Government of the colony. (f) The Committee has and will accumulate knowledge of countries, people, customs, way of life, etc., in the colonies, which should be explained to pioneers in consultation, but which will have to be explained by correspondence. (g) Problems of travel, accommodation, visas, etc., will have to be discussed at long distance.

*Teaching.* (a) Travelling teachers from different countries will have to be organised. (b) Temporarily resident teachers raise similar problems to pioneers. (c) New believers will have to be accepted from a distance, possibly on the report of but one pioneer. (d) Teaching techniques may need modification for Africa. (e) The Guardian has promised eventual international co-operation in joint teaching campaigns, conferences, etc.

*Literature.* The four participating countries have varying standards and types of books.

Yes, the horizons have widened, the field is vast and the prospects are thrilling. We are eagerly looking forward to full liaison with our co-workers from the three other continents in this mighty 'Crusade' now launched.

AFRICA COMMITTEE

## FROM THE GUARDIAN

TO THE MANCHESTER SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

(1) Christ received the kiss of Judas, in fact He said one of His disciples would betray Him. It is not a question of these Holy Souls seeing the future, but of what, in Their wisdom, They deem it necessary to accept in the path of sacrifice. If we are going to question the wisdom of the Prophets we can question God's wisdom too, and the advisability of the whole system we live in.

(2) Nabil's suicide was not insanity but love. He loved Bahá'u'lláh too much to go on in a world that no longer held Him.

(3) The 'sacrifice' of goats has nothing to do with the Faith. Bahá'u'lláh was surrounded by Muslim admirers and friends, and they merely followed the custom of their people on such an occasion, when many hundreds gathered to console His bereaved family.

(4) We cannot, not knowing the factors Bahá'u'lláh weighed in His own mind, judge of the wisdom of His withdrawal to Kurdistan. But, studying His life and teachings, we should see in it an act of wisdom, and not superficially measure Him by our standards.

(5) Love is certainly the attribute we associate par excellence with our Maker. But has He no justice? And does not justice fall on the back of the evil-doer as a scourge?

(6) This question seems to imply a lack of understanding of love. There is very little Divine love in the world to-day, but a great deal of intellectual reasoning, which is an entirely different thing, and springs from the mind and not the heart. The martyrs—most of them—died because of their love for the Báb, for Bahá'u'lláh, and through Them, for God. The veil between the inner and outer world was very thin, and to tear it, and be free to be near the Beloved, was very sweet. But it takes love, not reason, to understand these things. We must also remember the martyrs were called upon to deny their faith or to die; as men of principle they preferred to die.

(7) Bahá'u'lláh's claims are much greater because humanity is more mature and can afford to hear them. But He draws on the same Source that was accessible to all the Prophets. It is we who can now receive more.

(8) The Guardian feels Mr. — should study more deeply the teachings, and meditate on what he studies. We liken God to the sun, which gives us all our life, but we are not in it, nor could support its intensity. Its rays, however, reach us in the degree necessary for our life. So the Spirit of God reaches us through the Souls of the Manifestations. We must learn to commune with their Souls, and this is what the Martyrs seemed to have done, and what brought them such ecstasy of joy that life became nothing. This is the true mysticism, and the secret, inner meaning of life, which humanity has at present drifted so far from. (July 28th, 1950)

### A Fine Contribution

The National Assembly wishes to inform the friends that one of the newest Local Assemblies has contributed during this Bahá'í year £242 to the National Fund.



# THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

**LATIN AMERICA.** The new Communities in South and Central America show great enthusiasm as well as gratitude in anticipation of the election of their first National Spiritual Assemblies. Study Institutes have greatly helped in the consolidation of these young and vigorous Assemblies. Members of the United States National Assembly will spend two days in consultation with the newly elected Assemblies.

**CANADA.** The Canadian National Assembly is holding a Regional Convention in Montreal to consider carefully the Five Year Plan. A fund has been started to enable an Indian, Negro or Eskimo child to attend a Bahá'í School session.

**UNITED STATES.** The second Annual World Religion Day, January 21st, had the theme 'World Religion is the Path to Unity.' The National Assembly sent to Bahá'í Communities a manual with practical plans of action, a series of press releases and radio material with a map showing the Bahá'í World Community. The Temple is becoming increasingly 'the greatest teacher.' To thousands of persons who annually visit it, a large chart tells the story of the interior construction and of the 2,500 centres of the Bahá'í World Community. Now that the work on the Temple is nearing completion, Summer Schools are to be re-opened.

**GERMANY.** Regional Bahá'í gatherings in the autumn of 1950 took place under the management of the Regional Teaching Committees to recall and recapture the spirit of the European Teaching Conference and to study the Guardian's letter of June, 1950. A Youth Winter Camp was held from January 1st—17th in Badener Hohe with ski-ing, tobogganing, and games. The German National Assembly has been notified that the Bahá'í Faith was registered as one of twelve confessions on the census form. This was welcomed with deep satisfaction as a milestone in the history of the Faith in Germany. A fifteen-minutes radio broadcast was given from Berlin in November by two believers and one of these also lectured to a Church Community on 'Buddhism, Islam and the Bahá'í Faith,' showing slides of the Temple.

**FRANCE.** A Bahá'í Centre has been opened in Paris at Galerie Vivienne 34. It is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings, has a small library and a stock of pamphlets. An article on the Faith was published in the *Provencal* on the occasion of Mrs. Barrow's visit to Marseilles.

**SCANDINAVIA.** The pioneers to Norway, Sweden and Denmark are leaving and the local believers are carrying on alone the task of spreading the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

**HOLLAND.** Extension work by the Bahá'ís of Amsterdam has resulted in several declarations and an eager group at the Hague studying the Bahá'í Teachings.

**BELGIUM.** The believers in Brussels have cleaned and repapered their new Centre at 91 Rue Prince Royal. About fifty were present at the first public meeting when the theme was 'World Religion is the Path to World Unity.'

**LUXEMBURG.** New declarations in this active community have off-set the removal of three believers to Paris.

**SWITZERLAND.** The Second Swiss Bahá'í Conference, held in Zurich in November, marks another milestone in the progress of the Faith in Switzerland. Eighty friends attended and the Conference was dedicated to the memory of the Báb, in whose honour the decorations were dominantly green. There was a fine book display and a map of Switzerland with the Greatest Name in the middle from which ribbons radiated to where there was either an Assembly or an isolated believer. Commenting on the Divine Plan, a speaker said: 'To-day it is our beloved Guardian who is charting the course of this Plan . . . It is he who is weaving the pattern, choosing the exact time when those countries specifically mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá must receive that most precious of all gifts—the knowledge of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.'

**ITALY.** Rome is looking forward to the fourth European Teaching Conference and Summer School, to be held there from August 30th to September 10th. About 200 visitors are expected and a Committee of nine is doing preparatory work. Rome has been active in the field of publicity, and many Italian newspapers have recently published articles on the Faith. An enthusiastic group in Naples is studying the Teachings and three new believers have declared themselves there. Teaching work in Florence progresses steadily with firesides, study classes and public meetings, Marion Little reports, and there have been several declarations.

**INDIA.** The eleventh Indian Summer School was held in October at Panchgani, 5,000 feet above sea level. An order has been placed for the translation of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* into an Indonesian language. The Kamarhatti and Mysore Assemblies have registered their constitutions.

## NEW COMMITTEES

**UNITED NATIONS:** 'To receive and digest material received from U.N.O. and its subsidiaries and U.N.A. and to make recommendations to the National Assembly when it is felt the N.S.A. should take action with either of these bodies.' Louis Ross-Enfield, Ronald Samuda.

**SERVICE FOR THE BLIND:** 'To be responsible for all matters relating to literature for the blind.' John Mitchell, Betty Reed, John Shortland, John Banoy.

John Banoy is the Welfare Officer for the Blind in Northampton, who has kindly consented to serve on this Committee.

## Change of Address

We regret that the address of the Bradford Secretary was given wrongly in the February *Journal*. The correct address is:

Mr. A. Norton, 41 Cranbourne Road, Chellow Dene, Bradford.

Friends are reminded that the address of the Treasurer is 279 Sheen Lane, London, S.W.14.



## " DEEPENING IN THE CAUSE "

This "Deepening in the Cause" comes to those who learn to love the Cause of God, who hear it call them in the name of their own hearts, who gain through it admission to a new, more precious comradeship than they had ever known, to a new complete all-satisfying means of serving their fellowmen, who realise that through it they are drawing near to the Prophet of the Age, the Father, the Best Beloved, whom all the sons of men in the remote recesses of their hearts bow down to and adore and whom we consciously worship in Bahá'u'lláh.

God has imposed on the Faithful a great and solemn trust; and that we may perform it the better He has enjoined on us certain daily practices through which we shall win the aid of the power of the Covenant and which He requires us strictly to observe. One of these is the practice of reading twice every day a portion of our Scriptures - a portion in the morning and another in the evening. If we omit this He declares in the Agdas that we have not kept the covenant.

In His greatest religious work, the "Book of Certitude", He writes much of the reading of Scripture, and with immense power and emphasis reveals how important it is to read it in the right way and to discover its true meaning. He has shown that the Word of God, vital as it is for the guidance of mankind, is not to be judged by human standards nor tried by reference to the opinions of fallible men, but rather to be perused with a spiritual mind and with a heart that is detached, disinterested, and humbly seeks the truth. The right interpretation, He affirms, is not to be sought from men of mortal learning but from a Messenger of God or from one who is in spirit near to such a messenger.

Scripture reading not only instructs us in the Teachings but sets us free from the obsession of material cares and concerns, lifts us to new levels of thought and emotion, and animates us with that divine love, wisdom and energy with which every sentence, every letter of the Sacred Text is overwhelmingly charged.

The deepening influence of such daily reading carried on systematically month after month, year after year, is incalculable.

To this daily practice Bahá'u'lláh has added another, in the Three Obligatory Prayers. One of these every Bahá'í is required to use every day, conforming in each case to the special directions given, and nothing, it seems, except an insurmountable obstacle, will be accepted as an excuse

for neglect of this obligation. Hundreds and thousands of other prayers, suitable for all manner of occasions and each of them endowed with an effective spiritual force different from that of any ordinary human prayer, have also been left for our use by Bahá'u'lláh and by 'Abdu'l Bahá. They themselves in their lives have set believers an example of constant prayer - of prayer continued sometimes for hours on end, and 'Abdu'l Bahá has told us that "in all the worlds of existence there is nothing more important than prayer".

Day after day, night after night, the loyal Bahá'í is expected by Bahá'u'lláh to improve and develop himself. In the evening he should be better than he was in the morning. In the morning he should be better than he was the previous evening. And in "The Hidden Words" he is bidden to bring himself to account each day ere he is summoned to a reckoning by God.

Thus constant vigilance, constant effort, and regularity in reading and in prayer, are definitely required by Bahá'u'lláh of him who would deepen his faith.

But however difficult the journey, he is encouraged by Bahá'u'lláh to rejoice in the promise that "He who seeks us with perseverance shall be assuredly guided on to us", and he is strengthened by the knowledge that "at every step, aid from the invisible will attend him and the heat of his search be intensified".

George Townshend

Consolidation Committee  
March 1951.