

BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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The Memorial over the Beloved Guardian's grave
in the Great North London Cemetery

TEACHING CONFERENCE 115

'This Crucial Midway Point'

In midwinter conditions of snow and frost—and bright sunshine—about 120 members of the British Bahá'í Community made their way to Blackpool on January 10th–11th for this Conference. One of the happiest of Bahá'í gatherings. The joy of friends meeting friends was more evident than ever. The fourth kind of love as defined by Adu'l-Bahá becomes more evident every year and many had made sacrifices in order to be present.

The whole emphasis of the Conference was centred on the Home Front and the achievement of the British goals of the Ten Year Crusade, as set by the beloved Guardian in 1953.

On Saturday afternoon following the opening devotional programme arranged by the friends in Blackpool, the Chairman, Ernest Gregory, gave a short statement on the present situation in the British Isles. This allowed time for consultation and for any suggestions and opinions from all present.

After tea, Ian Semple opened the Session by reading the recent 'Message to the Bahá'ís of East and West issued by the Hands at the conclusion of their second historic meeting in the Holy-land'. As the story of the progression of the world-wide projects, the World Conferences, and the many goals achieved, unfolded—the necessary efforts required for this tiny country seemed as if they must be small in comparison. But we know that the beloved Guardian constantly encouraged the British Bahá'ís, knowing that their difficulties, though different, are as challenging as those elsewhere. A short statement of the World Progress of the Crusade and further consultation completed this session.

The last evening session consisted of talks given by the Hands of the Cause, Hasan Balyuzi and John Ferraby, bringing home to everyone present the realization of the immense importance of the Ten Year Crusade for the future of the whole world. How much depends upon its successful conclusion for the well being of mankind. The formation of the International House of Justice, the basis for World Unity and World Salvation, and the responsibility resting upon every believer to undertake their part towards this consumation—to share in the effort and in the glory of successful achievement. Those two great talks gave the real situation in true perspective.

The programme for Sunday morning gives—first, 'Individual Responsibility for Teaching'; second, 'Community Responsibility for Teaching'. Actually these sessions dovetailed into each other—but what a

session! Marion Hofman cheered our hearts with statistics showing that at this crucial midway point the British Community to-day is actually even nearer achieving their goals than at the same stage during the six-year plan—and with nearly double the number of believers to carry out the work. If the zeal and devotion is equal and pioneers arise proportionally the goals cannot fail to be attained. A large map was used to demonstrate exactly where pioneers and helpers were most needed. One by one no less than eighteen friends arose and offered to go. They walked in turn to the platform and each one collected a strip containing the name of a goal town until every strip was taken. Many of these volunteers were Persian friends who always have and still do so much to help this country.

On Sunday afternoon some members of the N.S.A. gave short talks on 'The Significance of the Ten Year Crusade' which must certainly have convinced the new pioneers that they are doing the right thing in the right way. Special emphasis was given on the same theme in the final talk by Dorothy Ferraby.

After a beautiful devotional dispersal was rapid to catch trains or travel long distances by road. How much we had to think about as we travelled home and realized even more than before the full meaning of the quotation on our programmes:

'Unloose your tongues and proclaim unceasingly His Cause. This shall be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of the future, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.'

The following cable was read to the friends during the Conference before being sent to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land:

'Over 120 believers Teaching Conference conscious urgency complete glorious Crusade mindful necessity unprecedented expansion individual's teaching efforts linked active programmes administrative institutions consulted upon means sacrifices necessary stop Spirit enterprise recreated stop Declaration opens Pontypridd 18 pioneers arisen fill all remaining goals 4 groups determined establish additional Assemblies two hundred pounds contributed Pioneer Fund supplicate prayers, beloved Hands Cause Holy Land.'

Reply:

'Hearts overjoyed excellent progress plans aimed fulfillment cherished hopes beloved Guardian community dear his heart praying shrines outstanding success.—Hands Faith.'

Quotations

Now you must engage in the service of the Cause of God with the utmost firmness, steadfastness, and resolution, and expend day and night in the promotion of the religion of God.

Show ye an effort! Work unceasingly! labour diligently! so that the everlasting bounty be realised, eternal life be destined and the nostrils be perfumed with the holy fragrances.

From The Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá

A TALK GIVEN BY HAND OF THE CAUSE HASAN BALLYUZI AT TEACHING CONFERENCE 1959

You heard in the previous session the message which the Hands of the Cause sent out from Haifa from their second meeting at Bahji. We have seen in it the great urgency of the task which is now facing us all. You will see that in spite of the great victories, and indeed they have been great victories, yet we still have a great deal to do in the next 50 months. No less than 394 Local Spiritual Assemblies have to be established throughout the Bahá'í world. We have to have 34 National Spiritual Assemblies as laid down by the beloved Guardian himself: 34 more have to be established. The task is indeed tremendous, and now it is the duty of every individual Bahá'í not to wait for what the other Bahá'í might do or what the particular committee or assembly might put forth as a plan of action, because a plan of action is there for every individual Bahá'í—to teach the Cause of God as never before and to teach it, and teach it, and teach it, and teach it . . .

That is our duty and our great privilege. The beloved Guardian has made it absolutely clear in his very last message to the Bahá'í world what must character-

ise this phase of his Ten Year Crusade. There is a great deal which is totally and completely unknown to us, and to which it is futile trying to find the answer. But this much is clear, definite and certain: that the Guardian has given us a plan, that there are these unfinished tasks of the plan to be finished. As long as we do these things which he tells us to do we cannot go wrong. Let us forget everything now except the goals of the Plan and except the instructions of our beloved Guardian on what is to be done. I personally see us, the Bahá'í world and the entire world in total and complete darkness, and in this complete darkness there is one strong ray of light. That one strong ray of light that leads on to the future, light upon light, is the guidance of the Guardian as laid down in the Ten Year Crusade. And as long as we walk straight in the path of guidance and do not deviate from right or left we are safe and sure of doing the Guardian's will. Every individual Bahá'í must make his or her response now, and teach the Cause, and teach it until we have finished those tasks which the beloved Guardian gave us. After that it is all in God's hands.

SCOTTISH REGIONAL TEACHING CONFERENCE

Nearly two-thirds of the Scottish Bahá'í community attended the Regional teaching conference held at the Grand Hotel, Glasgow on Sunday, 25th January. The aim of the conference was to try and ensure that Bahá'ís who were not able to attend the National Conference would have a chance to share some of the highlights. The programme included—'The Ten Year Plan, its aims and achievements', presented by Betty Reed;

'Responsibility for teaching by community and individual' was presented by David Hofman. 'The Message to the Bahá'ís of East and West, issued by the Hands of the Cause' was read and explained by Ian Semple.

Consultation and discussion made it clear that the R.T.C. would have to organise at least three of these conferences per year.

CAMBRIDGE WEEK-END SCHOOL

A most successful gathering was held in Cambridge during the week-end of February 21st and 22nd, organised by the Eastern Regional Committee. Many friends from other Communities joined the Cambridge Bahá'ís who, as the hosts, arranged the lectures and

discussion on the theme: 'The beginning of all things is the Knowledge of God . . .'

A detailed account of the School will, no doubt, be issued later on.

WORLD RELIGION DAY

BOURNEMOUTH

World Religion Day was celebrated on January 18th. As the audience proved too large for us to accommodate them all, we met in the Unity room, kindly loaned us for this purpose. We rent our Centre from this organisation, their meeting room being opposite ours, so that the friends only had to cross from one room to the other. There were 40 people present, 30 of whom were non-Bahá'ís.

We were able to get representatives from the Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian and Moslem Faiths, but were unable to contact any member from the Zoroastrian Religion. Mr. J. Bennett was in the chair, and Mrs. Cranmer gave the talk on the Faith. It was a very successful meeting and it has been suggested that we hold a discussion group at the Centre, when some of the members of the other Faiths will be present.

READING

World Religion Day was celebrated in Reading, with members of the outlying groups taking part. This year, it was not possible to arrange readings on the past religions by representative members, as was arranged last year. Rustum Sabit welcomed the visitors as the Chairman, Valerie Morley presented a brief account of the religions leading up to the Bahá'í Faith, and Owen Batrick spoke on the Bahá'í Faith. There was a small but interested meeting, with contacts who have followed up the meeting by visiting further meetings.

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HOME NEWS

BOURNEMOUTH

On Sunday 25th we welcomed the visit of Edgar Boyett (of Portsmouth) who gave a talk on Prescription for Living, followed by a very keen discussion. Owing to unforeseen circumstances, the meeting had to be arranged almost at the last minute and only five contacts were present, otherwise we could have invited many more.

It has been arranged that Willi Blum's large poster, 60 by 40, is to be placed in Bournemouth Central Railway Station within the next few days. It is hoped that this will attract attention especially when the Bournemouth holiday season begins.

We have to report the declaration of Dorothy Dewhirst on her re-entry into the Faith. She is now a resident of Bournemouth, after 13 years' absence. We are also looking forward to the return of Stuart Sweet, from Libya.

OBITUARY

We have learned from Newcastle the news of the passing of Evelyn Okama. A Newcastle Meeting was held for her in consultation with her near relatives on December 28th. Music and readings from the writings of Baha'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, were fittingly arranged by the friends.

CONVENTION

The dates for Convention are

April 25th, 26th and 27th