



BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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February 1973

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT GLOBAL PLAN

As the Bahá'í world approaches the triumphant conclusion of the Nine Year Plan it gives us the utmost gratification to see that a few National Spiritual Assemblies have already formulated plans for activity during the coming Bahá'í year.

The next global plan will be launched at Ridván 1974 and you will therefore have twelve months to prepare for it. We call upon you all to take the greatest possible advantage of that year to:

Strengthen the foundations of your achievements through developing and enriching Bahá'í community life, fostering youth activity and through all means suited to your circumstances, and

Continue expansion of the Faith, trying new openings and possibilities not fully explored when you were under the pressure of other priorities.

Obviously conditions differ in the various areas under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assemblies, and the goals which each Assembly adopts must be suited to its particular circumstances and possibilities, but, as the beloved Guardian once pointed out, "The broader the basis" of such a campaign, and "the deeper its roots, the finer the flower into which it shall eventually blossom."

We ask you to make your plans now and to send us your report of them to reach us as soon as possible and not later than 1st April 1973 so that we may present a consolidated summary to the International Convention. We feel that such a summary will be an inspiration and a source of new ideas to the delegates when they are consulting upon the challenges that lie before the Bahá'í community in the years ahead and which must be faced during the next global plan. Moreover, the achievements of the coming year, added to the great victories of the Nine Year Plan, will enable the worldwide Bahá'í community to enter with even greater assurance upon the next stage of its ever-unfolding destiny.

We pray at the Holy Shrines that the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh may guide and assist you with a fresh measure of His divine grace in the few months separating us from the glorious festivities of next Ridván.

14 January 1973

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT GLOBAL PLAN

The National Spiritual Assembly is in no doubt about the excitement which will be felt throughout the United Kingdom when the letter of 14 January from the Universal House of Justice is read.

The urgent need to formulate plans now for the year ahead is a challenge to us all. Every Bahá'í, either as an individual or as a member of a group, a committee or an Assembly, has some measure of responsibility in helping to "strengthen the foundations of our achievements", to "continue the expansion of the Faith" and to "try new openings and possibilities not fully explored. . ."

Within a few days of receiving this letter the National Assembly decided, among other things and after long discussion, on the following actions:

1. Appeal to Unit Conventions

We are sending copies of this letter to all the Unit Conventions with a request that each Convention give it its fullest consideration even to the exclusion, if necessary, of the lesser important items on the suggested Unit Convention Agenda. This will enable considered views and suggestions to flow from these Conventions to the National Assembly in time for it to prepare its final plans for the Universal House of Justice.

2. Appeal to every believer

We now call on every individual believer who has any suggestions not put forward in a Unit Convention, to send them at once to the National Assembly to reach there no later than Friday, 16 February. This is your chance to put forward an original idea which may have world-wide application.

3. National Assembly Plan

With the ideas available to us from Unit Conventions and from individuals from the length and breadth of the community, the National Assembly will, at its next meeting on 26 February, formulate the plans required in Haifa no later than 1 April. Will you all please note therefore that if you are writing as an individual or as a Unit Convention Secretary, that the deadline for your suggestions will be the **16 February**.

4. Mass Teaching Project in the Islands

With the full co-operation of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Europe, a mass teaching campaign for the northern islands will be launched by a large Project Conference in either Inverness or Aberdeen, possibly in early August. From this gathering it is hoped that waves of believers will move to their allocated areas in the various island groups around our northern shores, and start that "entry by troops" anticipated so long ago by our beloved Guardian and even more recently by the Universal House of Justice. A special subcommittee of the National Teaching Committee is being set up to work out the details of this exciting and ambitious campaign.

5. Deepening Courses

It is hoped to announce two seven to nine day "mass teaching and deepening" courses, each for about fifty participants, one near London and one in the north, immediately prior to the Project Conference. It is the wish of the National Assembly that many of those who attend these courses will then go to the Conference en route to the Islands.

6. Holidays with a difference

While the Northern Islands Project is for the whole community, none being too young nor too old, it is realised that only those with long holidays — the students, the teachers, the retired and the self employed — might be able to attend the course, then the conference and then give some weeks in the islands. We do appeal, however, to the whole Bahá'í community to participate as fully as possible by making at least a part of the project your "holiday with a difference".

7. National Advertising

After careful planning and costing by the new Public Information Committee, national advertising in the Press will be launched in the very near future and this will link closely in time with various important local and national celebrations which will take place at the end of the Nine Year Plan. Many other plans are being made by the Public Information Committee and both this committee and the National Teaching Committee have been strengthened to meet the challenge of the new phase we are now entering.

The future is indeed exciting, the Faith is really becoming known, publicity and proclamation will gradually increase, and the Bahá'í Community will continue to expand and consolidate. Pioneers are moving to their posts, the friends are praying for the goals, but a final effort has yet to be made before victory for the Plan is achieved. Some gaps still need to be closed, some Assemblies still need strengthening; teaching, travelling and pioneering must continue to accelerate. During those rare occasions when he had to leave the Holy Land to seek to refresh himself, the beloved Guardian loved to go into the mountains, and occasionally we would get a glimpse from his writings of the thrill of achievement after great physical exertion which he would share with us when calling for greater spiritual victories. In these last few weeks of the Plan we recall the words Shoghi Effendi wrote for a similar situation some twenty-four years ago. Calling first on the "newly-enrolled believers" to "active and constant participation with their veteran co-workers, in filling swiftly the still remaining gaps. . . in sacrificing, in as great a measure as possible, their resources, to facilitate the attainment of all its goals. . .", he concluded his letter.

"I entreat them, and plead as well with their older brethren who have set so momentous a Plan in motion, to arise as one soul, to exert one more superhuman effort, to fix steadily their gaze on the pinnacle they are visibly approaching and to disencumber themselves of any burden impeding their arduous climb, in a last and determined attempt to scale and conquer the summit, from which alone they can catch a glimpse of the future glory of their destiny."

National Spiritual Assembly

DRUGS

Although we have found no direct reference to marijuana in the Bahá'í writings, since this substance is derived from what is considered to be a milder form of cannabis, the species used to produce *hashish*, we can share with you a translation from the Persian of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on *hashish*:

'Regarding *hashish*, you had pointed out that some Persians have become habituated to its use. Gracious God! This is the worst of all intoxicants, and its prohibition is explicitly revealed. Its use causeth the disintegration of thought and the complete torpor of the soul. How could anyone seek this fruit of the infernal tree, and by partaking of it, be led to exemplify the qualities of a monster? How could one use this forbidden drug, and thus deprive himself of the blessings of the All-Merciful? . . .

'Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit acts of absurdity, but. . . this wicked *hashish* extinguisheth the mind, freezeth the spirit, petrifieth the soul, wasteth the body and leaveth man frustrated and lost.'

11 November 1967 THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

PROFOUNDLY SIGNIFICANT STEP

"WITH GRATEFUL JOYOUS HEARTS ANNOUNCE ENTIRE BAHÁ'Í WORLD ADOPTION PROFOUNDLY SIGNIFICANT STEP IN UNFOLDMENT MISSION SUPREME ORGAN BAHÁ'Í WORLD COMMONWEALTH THROUGH FORMULATION CONSTITUTION UNIVERSAL HOUSE JUSTICE STOP AFTER OFFERING HUMBLE PRAYERS GRATITUDE ON DAY COVENANT AT THREE SACRED THRESHOLDS BAHJI HAIFA MEMBERS GATHERED COUNCIL CHAMBER PRECINCTS HOUSE BLESSED MASTER APPENDED THEIR SIGNATURES FIXED SEAL ON INSTRUMENT ENVISAGED WRITINGS BELOVED GUARDIAN HAILED BY HIM AS MOST GREAT LAW FAITH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH STOP FULLY ASSURED MEASURE JUST TAKEN WILL FURTHER REINFORCE TIES BINDING WORLD CENTRE TO NATIONAL LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT WORLD RELEASE FRESH ENERGIES INCREASE ENTHUSIASM CONFIDENCE VALIANT WORKERS HIS DIVINE VINEYARD LABOURING ASSIDUOUSLY BRING MANKIND UNDER SHELTER HIS ALL GLORIOUS COVENANT."

Please share this joyous news with the friends. It is anticipated that the Constitution will be published at Ridván.

26 November 1972 THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

IMPORTANCE OF CONSOLIDATION

In reply to your letter of 21 December asking what period of time you could consider adequate to establish residence in a town in order to maintain the Local Spiritual Assembly, we feel you must make this decision yourselves.

As you say, the "last ditching", which served your community during the Six Year Plan, has now been abandoned and the maintenance of your Assemblies is on a surer footing than formerly. However, this is still a very great problem with your community and we note that many of the gaps which you constantly have to fill are due to lack of numbers in towns where Local Spiritual Assemblies have been established. You should give great attention to this important matter of consolidating your gains as you make them.

As already signified in our cable, we were delighted with the spirit of the National Teaching Conference and trust that the offers for pioneering and teaching made there will go a long way to achieve complete victory for the British Bahá'í community.

3 January 1973 THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

NORTHERN IRELAND

The steadfastness and dedication of the believers in Northern Ireland in face of the very difficult conditions under which they live is inspiring and an example to the friends everywhere. Please assure the friends of our admiration and love and of our prayers at the Sacred Threshold that Bahá'u'lláh will bountifully reward every effort they make to serve His Cause and will soon ease the tragic conditions prevailing in Northern Ireland.

3 January 1973 THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

PUBLICITY FOR NEXT RIDVÁN

We wish to stress that our call for publicity related only to "the completion of the Nine Year Plan and the holding of the Third International Convention at the Bahá'í World Centre in the Holy Land." We feel it would be inappropriate and possibly unwise to include the Revelation of the Most Holy Book in such a widespread publicity campaign. Would you, therefore, please ensure that no publicity is given to this centenary but that the friends be asked to observe it in their communities.

Excerpt from a letter dated

15 November 1972 THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

GRAVESTONES

We have your letter of 29 November 1972 calling attention to an inscription on the gravestones of some of the Bahá'ís buried in the vicinity of the grave of the beloved Guardian which quotes a passage ascribed to Bahá'u'lláh, but which is actually a passage quoted by Him from the Qur'án.

There is no need to change existing gravestones, but the error should not be repeated in future.

26 December 1972 THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

NOTE:

The quotation referred to is as follows:

"Verily we are God's and to Him will we return."

BAHÁ'Í ENGAGEMENTS

The law of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas that the lapse of time between engagement and marriage should not exceed ninety-five days, as all Persian Bahá'ís should know, is binding on them wherever they reside, if both parties are Persian. This law is not applicable, however, if one of the parties is a western believer.

This law, as you know, has not yet been given to the Bahá'ís of the west.

7 November 1972 THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

SOME IMPORTANT NOTES

VISITORS FROM MUSLIM COUNTRIES. Because of a case which arose in Europe recently, we would like to remind National Assemblies that there can be no deviation from the rule that a visitor from abroad must have a proper Bahá'í credential before he is accepted as a believer in good standing. This rule applies particularly to visitors from Muslim countries, where there are many enemies of the Faith. Even if the visitor comes from a country where there are difficulties and he claims it is impossible to get a credential, there is in almost every case a National Assembly responsible outside the country, which can be contacted. For example, Egypt has its difficulties, but the National Assembly of North East Africa has its office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and they can be communicated with. If there is no other possible way of getting verification, then the World Centre can be asked for advice. This matter is very important.

MEMBERSHIP OF ASSEMBLIES. National Assemblies are reminded that Counsellors are not available for election to National Assemblies. Auxiliary Board Members are eligible, but if elected must choose whether to serve on the National Assembly or to continue as a Board Member. They cannot fulfil both these functions at the same time.

However, if it should happen that there are only nine believers of adult age in a town, then a Board member may serve on the Local Assembly until there is a further believer in the community to replace him. Board members should not hold offices on the Local Assembly.

CONTINENTAL BOARD OF COUNSELLORS

EDITORIAL

As you will notice from the present issue, there is a dearth of photographs. The Editorial Committee hopes that communities which have functions will be able to send photographs of them — black and white, glossy paper and well contrasted.

We should also be most grateful if friends sending in reports could have them typed, please.

Would friends please note that the Editorial Committee does not keep an address list; envelopes for the Journal are prepared in the National Office and notification of changes of address and numbers of Journals required should be sent to 27 Rutland Gate, London SW7 and NOT to the Editor.

The deadline date for the next issue is **10 March**; material should be sent to the Editor,

Lois Hainsworth,
"Treen",
Allerton Park,
Leeds LS7 4ND.

CORRECTION

There is a grave printing error in No. 212 — July 1972: on Page Three, column one, paragraph five, line four of the letter "CONTINENTAL BOARD OF COUNSELLORS", the line should read as follows:—

"interrelated and it is not incorrect to refer to the three ranks"

It would be appreciated if you could correct your copy so that this error may not be perpetuated.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

COLOMBIA: Mr Donald Witzel, Counsellor in South America, recently wrote that teaching the masses in Colombia is bringing exciting news. In Santa Lucia and Suan ninety new believers were found in a four-day period of intensive teaching. Bayunca gained 120 new believers during a weekend of teaching work. On 26 September a seventy-two-day teaching plan was commenced, utilising mostly part-time student teachers. At the end of October the plan had produced a total of 610 new Bahá'ís. In one week of teaching in and around Aracataca, Magdalena, some 300 new believers were found. The Counsellor reported that deepening and consolidation were going hand in hand with teaching everywhere and that nightly meetings were averaging an attendance of between eighty to 350.

ECUADOR: The National Spiritual Assembly planned two teaching conferences to be held simultaneously; one in the Chibuleos and the other in La Tola.

When the teaching team who visited Chibuleos arrived they found only three believers present at the meeting held the first night. These staunch Bahá'í friends told the visiting believers that there was opposition in the village to the Faith, as some young priests had instigated fearful fancies that the Bahá'ís were invading their village with imperialistic propaganda. Another form of opposition was encountered from the people who bring contraband liquor into the area, as they had found that the Faith really transformed the lives of those who accepted it, causing liquor sales to drop dramatically. The following night there were about sixty believers who appeared for the meeting. There were still some who expressed the fear of their neighbours and admitted that the village was afraid of becoming divided by the Bahá'ís. After learning of this, the National Spiritual Assembly, with the advice of the National Teaching Committee, agreed that the believers might accept a plan to help paint the village school. The team went back on two weekends to work with all of the villagers, cleaning and painting the school, both inside and outside. The garden was also cleaned and beautified. While some of the team members were painting and cleaning others were teaching and each evening was crowned with a meeting. More activities are planned for the near future.

Meanwhile in the Province of Esmeraldas in La Tola short radio programmes giving the Bahá'í teachings and issuing invitations

to all to attend meetings were broadcast for a period of eight days. The team visited Cuerval where they taught during the day and issued invitations to a meeting in the evening. The large part of the following day was utilised in deepening with stress being put upon the Covenant. And so it went with team members and teachers riding for hours in a canoe or walking to reach the waiting souls. At the end of the teaching conference there were 110 new believers in the Province of Esmeraldas, two new villages had been opened to the Cause and a Bahá'í prayer was translated into Cayapa, an Indian language.

FIJI ISLANDS: The National Spiritual Assembly was asked to provide a guest lecturer to speak to a university class comparative religion course recently. A total of eight religions were represented in the course; the last to be presented was that brought by the latest Manifestation.

Some thirty people enrolled for the course and of these many were members of the Catholic Missions (nuns and priests).

The Bahá'í lecture was well presented and was well attended, with many questions following the talk.

One young Fijian student stated that of all the religions which were spoken about the Bahá'í Faith seemed to her the most sensible, humane and satisfying.

The entire series of lectures was recorded by a team from the South Pacific Commission with a view to editing them and sharing them with the territories throughout the South Pacific.

Through this invitation from the university, another segment of the population in Fiji has already learned of the Faith and many more souls may be reached as a result of the recorded talks.

INDIA—Bangalore: Proclamation endeavours have produced splendid results with over 300 new believers entering the fold of the Cause in Bangalore. Among the new believers are many students, doctors, lawyers and professors. One Christian priest who had held a high position in the church in Ceylon and India withdrew from church activities and embraced the Faith.

Jaipur: Proclamation activities were well received in Jaipur, also. Among the most outstanding of the many rewards bestowed by Bahá'u'lláh on the believers here was the offer by an editor of a weekly newspaper to print every week one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets.



Shidan and Susan Kouchehzadeh, pioneers to Freetown, with other friends from Mambolo, Bo, Goderich and Njala at a recent weekend school.

Mangalore: The enthusiastic young Bahá'ís of Mangalore initiated an effective teaching plan in which all believers, old and young, newly enrolled and veterans were utilised. Before the start of the teaching campaign, a nine hour continuous prayer vigil was observed. All participants said special prayers for the success of the mission at 6 p.m. daily. A prayer for unity was offered by all at 9 p.m. daily. Each day one member of the community recited the prayer for the remover of difficulties 500 times. Nine people gathered at the Centre to repeat the prayer 500 times each, supplicating Bahá'u'lláh to assist them in their efforts.

This operation ended with Mangalore fulfilling all of its outstanding goals. Out of 927 people who were contacted and told of the Faith there were 199 who accepted. Fifty-nine of these are students and their enrolment has opened eight colleges to the Faith.

KENYA: In October 1972 the National Spiritual Assembly of Kenya reported that the many travelling teaching teams, local and international, who are travelling throughout Kenya, had enlisted more than 2,000 new believers in two months. The teams were opening new localities to the Faith everywhere in Kenya, working industriously to achieve a balanced representation of all tribes.

In a later report dated 16 November, one believer reported to the National Assembly that the team with which she was serving had succeeded in enlisting 1,060 new Bahá'ís, formed five new local Spiritual Assemblies, opened 152 localities to the Faith and 28 schools had been visited with enrolments taking place in each.

PANAMA: The National Spiritual Assembly of Panama received a letter in July from the National Assembly of Tonga and Cook Islands in which they were informed that the King and Queen of Tonga would be stopping in Panama. The Royal Couple had seen a photograph of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in a newspaper and had expressed a desire to visit it. The National Spiritual Assembly of Panama made arrangements with the Ambassadors of the United Kingdom and of the United States to take them (the King and Queen) on a visit to the House of Worship when their ship arrived in Panama.

Due to an eleven hour delay in the arrival of their ship this proved impossible. The ship continued through the canal and docked for three hours on the Atlantic side of the isthmus. The National Spiritual Assembly met this emergency by sending two representatives to greet their Highnesses and to express esteem and regard on behalf of the believers of that country.

The Royal Couple were obviously very pleased with this kindness and showed warmth and appreciation. This will undoubtedly strengthen the ties of unity between the believers in Tonga and those in Panama. It is also an excellent indication of the manner in which those who are privileged to have a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in their midst are assuming their responsibilities.

SOUL IS FOR EVER

by Philip Hainsworth

"Soul is a curious thing; soul is now, soul is for ever" are the words of the song writer, and how true they are. "When man allows the spirit, through his soul, to enlighten his understanding, then does he contain all Creation" said 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and continued: "Illumined by the spirit through the instrumentality of the soul, man's radiant intelligence makes him the crowning-point of Creation". On the other hand: "if the spiritual qualities of the soul, open to the Divine Spirit are never used, they become atrophied, enfeebled and at last incapable; whilst the soul's material qualities alone being exercised, they become terribly powerful — and the unhappy, misguided man becomes more savage, more unjust, more vile, more cruel, more malevolent than the lower animals themselves. . ."

The soul is like the tree, for as the tree is the intermediary between the seed and the fruit, so is the soul the intermediary between the body and the spirit. It comes into being at conception but lives for ever. It has no light of its own but is illumined by the spirit, and must therefore be trained or polished better to reflect the light of the spirit. The training, the polishing, is the very purpose of life itself. And a life cannot truly live in isolation for it is in the active relationship between people that the polishing takes place. Sometimes the association of people together is the painful process of polishing like rough stones rubbing together until they become as smooth as pebbles or polished gems, and sometimes it is training as we learn to live in harmony together.

This is why the Manifestations of God teach us how to live together and we obey Their laws for our own progress, our own polishing. Ever since we accepted Bahá'u'lláh we knew that He had "unsealed the choice Wine" and we remembered that He said "Observe My commandments for the love of My beauty". To the outside world, some of these laws may appear strange and even restrictive, and sometimes we ourselves did not realise at first why He had insisted upon certain rules of conduct. Gradually, however, we grew to appreciate that in these laws lie our greatest freedom, and the very obedience to them give us strength and courage and, indeed, purifies our lives.

Suddenly, a few months ago, we had a new challenge, a new reason, an even more pressing and important a reason, why we should obey. We were emphatically assured by the Universal House of Justice that obedience to these laws serves the greater and nobler purpose of helping to "... redeem the disorderliness, the lack of cohesion, the permissiveness, the godlessness of modern society. . .". For the first time in our history we are made aware that our growing community, by the way it functions according to Bahá'í law, can dramatically influence the world around us and help in the redemption of mankind. Our personal obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's commands, therefore, not only influences our own spiritual, mental and even physical health, but has a direct bearing on the fortunes of our fellow men. In their Ridván message, 1972, did not the Universal House of Justice write:

"... the Bahá'í moral principles and standards of dignity, decency and reverence must become deeply implanted in Bahá'í consciousness and increasingly inform and characterise this community. . ."

SOUL IS FOR EVER (Continued)

"Dignity" is distinctive and did not the Master say "I desire distinction for you"? From the dignity with which we conduct ourselves, the way we present our Faith and the way we behave generally in public, others will be impressed and drawn to Bahá'u'lláh. Our restraint when opposed; our patience when provoked; our sincere and dedicated presentation of our Faith; these are all the ingredients of that true dignity which should distinguish every loyal follower of Bahá'u'lláh.

"Reverence" is rarely seen in the world around us; it has lost its meaning. Not for law, for the learned, for parents nor for those things traditionally religious, is any reverence shown today. From the reverence that we as Bahá'ís so naturally feel and show for Bahá'u'lláh and His words, and for the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Their Writings, will the outside world see that indeed this Faith of ours is religion in its highest sense. It is a joy to witness and a precious privilege to experience.

"Decency" is possibly a key word in the passage quoted above as it embraces so many things. Our attitude to personal hygiene, to dress, to sex, to work, to drugs, to smoking, to the courtesy we show to each other and to those older and younger than ourselves, to the respect we show to parents, to our teachers and to the learned are one, and all involved in this most comprehensive of virtues.

"We verily behold your actions", wrote Bahá'u'lláh. "If We perceive from them the sweet-smelling savour of purity and holiness, We will most certainly bless you."

In the permissive and promiscuous society in which we live it is a tremendous challenge to observe the standards laid down in our Writings with such clarity and firmness. Every aspect of our individual lives should be able to bear the closest scrutiny, for there is no doubt that the time is rapidly approaching when, as the Bahá'í community emerges from its obscurity, we will be singled out for the most critical examination by those very people who want to be assured that ours is truly the Cause for which they are seeking. It is necessary again and again to remind ourselves of the powerful way in which Bahá'u'lláh Himself condemns the licence, the promiscuity, the sex before marriage, the irresponsible attitude towards parenthood and all the other vices which characterise this "godlessness of modern society". Did not the Guardian himself write in "THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE": "It demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures. . . It can tolerate no compromise with the theories, the standards, the habits, the excesses of a decadent age. Nay rather it seeks to demonstrate, through the dynamic force of its example, the pernicious character of such theories, the falsity of its standards, the hollowness of such claims, the perversity of such habits, and the sacrilegious character of such excesses." For those who have accepted this challenge, the reward is great. "Advance into the vast immensity of the realm of God," wrote Bahá'u'lláh, ". . . that the fragrance of your deeds may lead the whole of mankind to the ocean of God's unfading glory."

"Unfading glory" — yes indeed, the soul is forever, and it is a beautiful thing. Too precious it is to be left dark and unpolished, and certainly far too valuable a treasure to be prevented from having its full chance for development. This is why the delving into "physic" and "spiritualistic" matters is so dangerous and why the training and protection of the very young is so vital an obligation to parents and to society. It is also why the cutting off of a soul's experience through abortion is so strongly condemned. Quite recently the Universal House of Justice wrote to our National Assembly:

"The practice of abortion merely for the purpose of getting rid of unwanted children is absolutely prohibited in the Faith. Although there may be certain circumstances in which abortion might be justified, we do not wish to go into this question at this time. For the time being when such questions occur we leave it to the conscience of the individual doctor".

Oh yes indeed, soul is for ever, but who would willingly deprive any soul of its chance to grow, to be trained, to be polished? Yet down through the ages people have been doing just that as an easy way out of avoiding the responsibilities of parenthood. In these days it has become so easy to lose an unwanted baby and many people of this age give that "excessive attachment" to the "trivial pleasures" that hundreds of thousands of "newly-born" souls enter the next life without ever having had the joy and pain, the vital experience, of this earthly life. It is easy to see why the Universal House of Justice write so strongly on the matter of abortion and it is clear to every believer, knowing as he does that a new soul comes into existence at conception, where his duty lies — ". . . to demonstrate, through the dynamic force of example, the . . . falsity of such standards. . ." held by the people of our time.

Bahá'u'lláh Himself speaks with words which are unmistakable,

"It behoveth the people of Bahá to die to the world and all that is therein, to be so detached from all earthly things that the inmates of Paradise may inhale from their garment the sweet smelling savour of sanctity. . . They that have tarnished the fair name of the Cause of God by following the things of the flesh — these are in palpable error!" "Purity and chastity have been, and still are, the most great ornaments for the handmaidens of God." "We, verily, have decreed in Our Book a goodly and bountiful reward to whosoever will turn away from wickedness, and lead a chaste and godly life. He, in truth, is the Great Giver, the All-Bountiful".

It is good to remember, however, that our high standard of moral conduct is not narrow and puritanical. The Guardian wrote,

"The standard inculcated by Bahá'u'lláh seeks, under no circumstances, to deny any one the legitimate right and privilege to derive the fullest advantage and benefit from the manifold joys, beauties and pleasures with which the world has been so plentifully enriched by an All-Loving Creator."

"God hath ordained" wrote Bahá'u'lláh, "every good thing, whether created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His servants as truly believe in Him. Eat ye, O people, of the good things which God hath allowed you, and deprive not yourselves from His wondrous bounties. Render thanks and praise unto Him, and be of them that are truly thankful."

"Soul is a curious thing" they sing, but we know it is there and we know how it grows. We expose it, we consult it, we believe it can have its own experiences but it can only develop in response to the exercise it receives. Prayer and meditation are vital, study of the Holy Words is essential, but these alone are valueless until action results. "Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause", was the challenge of Bahá'u'lláh. In this service lies our salvation; in it we develop the reverence, the dignity, and the decency we are called upon to demonstrate; from it will come our distinction.

"This is the day of those who have detached themselves from all but Him, the day of those who have recognised His unity, the day whereon God createth, with the hands of His power, divine beings and imperishable essences, every one of whom will cast the world and all that is therein behind him, and will wax so steadfast in the Cause of God that every wise and understanding heart will marvel. . . . These are the ones who, before the gaze of the dwellers on earth and the denizens of heaven, shall arise and, shouting aloud, acclaim the name of the Almighty, and summon the children of men to the path of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised."

(Note: With the exception of the words quoted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which were from "Paris Talks", all the other references may be found in "The Advent of Divine Justice" by Shoghi Effendi.)

IRISH SUMMER SCHOOL

This year the Irish Summer School will be held in Waterford from 17–26 August 1973. Further details will be published in a future edition of the Journal.

TEACHING CONFERENCE

DIGBETH HALL, BIRMINGHAM

30/31 December 1972

Report by Kathleen Hyett

In spite of the dense fog, almost countrywide, and a virulent 'flu germ afflicting many potential Bahá'í attenders, a count of about 220 friends was made at the opening session on Saturday, 30 December. During the weekend a peak attendance of about 400 was reached, which is very creditable in the circumstances. Friends had come from Northern Ireland, from Stornoway and the Isle of Wight and from points between.

Philip Hainsworth, NSA Vice Chairman, opened the Conference, welcomed the friends and then gave a special welcome to Owen and Jeanette Battrick (on home leave from New Caledonia), John Lester from New Zealand, John Fozdar, Chairman of the NSA of Borneo, Peter Trundle, "Harry" from the USA, Jim Bradley and David and Margaret Hines.

During the NSA Session, the National Secretary, Charles Macdonald, asked those who were the "fruits" of the Nine Year Plan to stand. A very large proportion of those present stood up! This was a practical demonstration of what had been achieved during the current Plan. The friends were impressed by the quotations Charles gave us about the very exalted station of pioneers and by his firm reminder that we could accept the Bahá'í Faith as either our Religion or as our Life. He asked us to pray every day by name for the goal areas, to search our hearts to see if we could pioneer, or at least to send special extra contributions earmarked for pioneer moves.

He presented to the friends two cables from the Universal House of Justice, which read as follows:

**RECOMMEND CALL ATTENTION TEACHING
CONFERENCE EXTRACTS FROM MESSAGES FROM
BELOVED GUARDIAN BRITISH BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY
SPECIFICALLY CONVENTION CABLE 1950
PASSAGES LETTERS FEBRUARY TWENTYFIFTH
1951 JUNE TWENTYFIFTH 1953 FINAL LETTER
AUGUST THIRTIETH 1957 STOP FULLY CONFIDENT
YOUR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEDICATION
BRITISH BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY ACHIEVE OVER-
WHELMING VICTORY DEEPEST LOVE**

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

**BRITISH BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY ENTRUSTED BY
GUARDIAN FAITH WITH GREAT HISTORIC MISSION
STANDS CROSSROADS PROGRESS TOWARDS
GLORIOUS DESTINY UNVEILED BY HIM STOP
IMPERATIVE ACHIEVE REMAINING GOALS NINE
YEAR PLAN STOP URGE FORMULATION PLANS
TEACHING CONFERENCE ENSURE COMPLETE
VICTORY APPEAL ENTIRE COMMUNITY ARISE AS
ONE SOUL JUSTIFY CONFIDENCE RESPOND LOVE
BELOVED GUARDIAN DISCHARGE OBLIGATION
POSTERITY STOP ASSURE ARDENT PRAYERS
SACRED THRESHOLD**

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

These very important messages required full consultation from the Conference, and extra time was made available later in the programme for this vital work. On the Sunday morning, therefore, a fervent pioneer appeal by Barney Leith and others was made in conjunction with an NSA session whose prime purpose was to concentrate on making plans to ensure victory. Owen and Jeanette, David Hines (who caused much amusement with his description of pioneering in the Faroes) and other pioneers and intending pioneers added their pleas. Thirty-five friends came forward in response to this urgent need — and a stream of offers came after that session from friends who wanted to embark on this sacred path.

Dr Muhajer, Hand of the Cause of God, came to Teaching Conference. The friends were delighted at his visit and although his arrival was delayed by fog, his presence among us was well worth waiting for. He told us that this was his first-ever conference in England; he exhorted the British friends to read thoroughly all the messages of the beloved Guardian to the British community: he reminded us of, and highly praised us for, our achievements in the past in Africa and elsewhere and said we could surely do it again. In 1973, Dr Muhajer said, we could achieve entry by troops in this country and that we should plan for this. Counsellor for S.E. Asia, Manucher Salmanpur, was

also with us and he gave an inspiring talk about pioneering during which he introduced lifelong pioneer, Mr Anvar from Persia. Mr Anvar had suffered imprisonment for his beliefs and he had seen, as a result of his pioneer move into the Arabian peninsula, the formation of no less than three National Assemblies in that area. This humble and great man walked slowly down the aisle of the Conference Hall with his stick, and the friends paid tribute to him with their warm applause. We were very blessed, also, to have no less than five UK Board Members with us during the weekend.

The standard of report-giving by representatives of RTCs, Departments and other committees was unusually high and each speaker gave an excellent picture of the work done by the respective committees during the year. Special mention must be made of the report given by the National Treasurer because this was presented in an entirely different way from the usual statement of the Fund situation. Betty read out to us a random selection of the sort of expenses incurred by the NSA, which ranged from the cost of a new washer on the bathroom tap at the Haziratu'l-Quds to sending a pioneer to the Pacific, and showed more effectively than anything else what are the many and varied demands on Bahá'í money. Betty said that if all the National records were destroyed at a stroke, except the cash book, then that itself would tell the full story of the work being done in this country in the name of Bahá'u'lláh.

All friends at the Conference were given an up-to-date statement of the situation in regard to the Nine Year Plan, and all friends have been sent copies with the last Nineteen Day Newsletter. Pioneers have valiantly arisen since then to fill the goals. Let us, nevertheless, be watchful; let us keep our eyes constantly on the goal areas and on the weak areas which could cost us the Plan. Let us notice any weakness which could threaten victory and take action without delay whenever needed. Above all, let us search our hearts and see if we cannot arise ourselves in His name to ensure victory for His Plan.

A cable was sent to the Universal House of Justice, as follows:

**BLESSED LOVING PRESENCE HAND CAUSE
MUHAJER COUNSELLOR SALMANPUR DIS-
TINGUISHED OVERSEAS PIONEER VISITORS
GRATEFUL INSPIRING CABLES DETERMINED
RESPOND EVER-LIVING WORDS BELOVED
GUARDIAN ARISE UNITEDLY WIN EVERY
REMAINING GOAL STOP FORTY PIONEER TRAVEL
TEACHING OFFERS THIS TEACHING CONFERENCE
CONFIDENT MANY MORE BESEECH PRAYERS
TOTAL VICTORY.**

The following reply was received:

**DELIGHTED CABLE CONFIDENT VALOUR
CAPACITY DEARLY LOVED BRITISH BAHÁ'Í
COMMUNITY ASSURE ARDENT PRAYERS SACRED
THRESHOLD**

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

THE SECRET

At my creation
God sealed a secret
inside my heart —
a single Name —
the Title
of all Wisdom,
Knowledge,
Truth,
Through the years
it lay enshrined,
like a seed
within a garden,
until one springtime
when, lo!
it blossomed
at the mention
of that Name —
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

Jacki James

RICHARD BACKWELL

An Appreciation

Dick is one of those blessed people whose qualities were so inoffensive as to be apparent to us all *before* he had been translated to those "*other dominions*" in which the will of Bahá'u'lláh presently sustains his spiritual ascent and encourages him to assist "*the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples.*"

"While yet on earth" Dick was doing these things, and to an ever-accelerating degree, from the moment of his declaration while in India at the end of the war (1945).

First son of a fine colonial administrator (who himself accepted the Faith and rendered it very signal services), a Classics scholar at Cambridge — and possessing that rigorous curiosity as to "Why?" marking the true, the eternal student —, a cultivated poet no less than a practising philosopher, Dick augmented his contemporary reading continuously during the quarter of a century and more he was actively serving the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh on local, National and International levels. This is one reason why his presentation of the Teachings never dulled, and was always exciting; topically relevant.

He was amongst both "*the rulers and the learned in el-Bahá*", being a member of the National Spiritual Assembly in England, as well as of successive local Assemblies in the course of the British Six Year Plan; he also served on national and local Bahá'í committees. Dick was a public speaker of compelling logic who never bored; on informal occasions he was simple and acutely sensitive to an enquirer's needs. At summer schools an evocative and brilliant teacher.

After his marriage to Vida Johnson the family pioneered to (then) British Guiana in 1955 and upon return to England eight years later, Dick was again elected to the NSA prior to his appointment to membership of the Auxiliary Board for Teaching of the Hands of the Cause of God in Europe. The family moved to Northern Ireland as pioneers, and made a second move in that goal territory to reinforce another community there.

Two well-worn, often misapplied — and therefore, in our day, *démodé* — terms spring to mind: an aristocrat; a gentleman. Richard Backwell exemplified the true content of both: nobility of character and disinterestedness of service to all human beings without any exception whatsoever; and such meekness and true humility as to disarm hostility and fire even the most prudent heart.

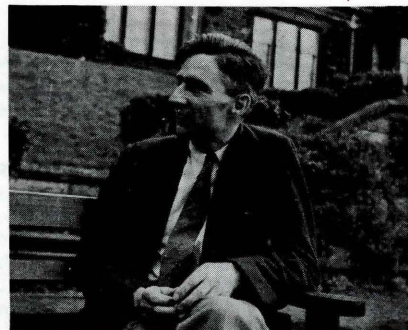
Dick's sense of humour was highly developed and impish — can one say gnomic, and imply, particularly, the classical root? — and never unkind. In consultation his patience could be — always *was* — endless with our lack of sensitivity and comprehension. Yet nothing soft: admirably versed in the Teachings, he was uncompromising and immediate when anything wobbly or unsure was propounded, courteously giving chapter and verse from the Writings to support his point.

In early post-war Britain, Dick gave unflinching support to the new-born and wildly struggling National Youth Committee. Later, by one imaginative advertisement, he produced over two dozen interested enquirers in the goal town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. As Chairman of the Consolidation Committee he assisted in laying those secure and expanded administrative foundations upon which the British Bahá'í community is now moving so rapidly and so successfully forward: towards those "*still greater heights*" promised them by the beloved Guardian.

And similarly, no little of the spiritual foundation in Guyana and of the National Assembly there, springs from the Backwells' unstinting service and example during the years they were in South America.

Besides all this activity as teacher, pioneer and administrator, Dick was the author of numerous articles and reviews, the editor of three highly important compilations, and writer of countless letters to every corner of the Bahá'í world. The immediately comparative figure in the former civilization — one who leaps to the mind — is Augustine of Hippo. Manifesting right appreciation of all passed glory, both Classical and Christian, which went into European civilization, as well as being significantly aware of the great contribution made by Islám, Dick's permanent services to the Cause of God attain their zenith in his final book, "*The Christianity of Jesus*" — of which, alas, he was only to hold a proof copy before his too-too-early death last October.

It is impossible, the Master states, for light to radiate from a sun that does not exist. Let the countless thousands who read today



Richard Backwell

— and succeeding generations of readers too — from "*The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*", "*The Pattern of Bahá'í Life*" and from "*Principles of Bahá'í Administration*", no less than from this final work, not grieve for the physical departure of one who bore an agonizing illness with ever-brightening radiance. Let us try, rather, from a study of his ever-to-be-with-us works — and any gloss these faint lines may help to provide — to gain some conception of his indomitable calm of character, now freed from Time to assist us from "*the paradise of the placeless.*"

X

"THE CHRISTIANITY OF JESUS"

by Richard Backwell

Review by W. A. M. Hellaby

This book is "an effort to see with the eye of the Author of the 'Good News' " and in his foreword Mr Backwell says, "true Christianity, freed from all irrational and superstitious elements, constitutes an unchallengeable foundation for faith, and a matchless influence for the good of humankind". It is striking that these words are written by a Bahá'í who is assisted in cutting back to the original core of the Christian Faith by using the "keen scalpel" of Bahá'u'lláh's words, "If two people dispute about religion, both are wrong".

The late Hand of the Cause, George Townshend, before him, sought to show in sure, bold strokes and on a large canvas, the relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Christianity. Our author does the same, but in more detail, using, as it were, a magnifying glass and examining closely and in detail innumerable texts of the four Gospels. His classical scholarship and, in particular, his knowledge of Greek prove keen and skilful instruments in his hands and he is thereby able to take us back behind the many translations to the language of the earliest Gospel manuscripts.

The first chapter is a most lucid and simple outline of the life of Jesus; it is an entity in itself and makes a most valuable and interesting introduction for Christian or Bahá'í. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh quoted by the author one is made to feel the oneness of love in the hearts of Christ and Bahá'u'lláh. There is a striking suggestion here that Jesus' cry of dereliction was misheard and indeed the original words, with very little change, can be translated, "My God, my God, how Thou has glorified me".

Passing to the interpretation of scripture, Mr Backwell takes words like "heaven", "spirit", "water", "fire" and shows how they all have a "primary spiritual meaning". Referring to the vital need to penetrate beneath the literal meaning of scripture he says, "How true it is that an instrument, intended like a lamp to illumine the whole house and serve the needs of all, can become in the hands of a wilful child or a blind man the means of burning the house down".

The clear light of the author's mind in his chapter "What Jesus did not Teach", stirs one to think again on matters like asceticism, celibacy, the doctrines of incarnation, infant baptism and the worship of the Virgin Mary. For example, he shows from the Gospels themselves how Jesus remained single only because He was aware of the short and tragic way He must tread; and he adds, "To advocate celibacy is to deny the very fruit of the tree of the planet itself and logically to encourage the gradual termination of the human race, the very purpose of the planet's creation".

In his discussion of the Virgin Birth the author points out, in a fascinating chapter, "If Joseph was not the physical father, then Jesus was not of the seed of David, and was not wholly the fulfilment of the Jewish expectation". With scientific care he

develops his unusual argument and the reader is stabbed awake to think again about a subject that has been discussed until it has grown stale. Referring later to the priesthood, he says, "It would seem clear that Jesus expressly forbade people to be called 'Father' or 'Padre' or 'Doctor' (religious), or 'Master' (religious), and that He discouraged the use of any hierarchical title at all".

At one point in his book the author helps us to look afresh at the Gospels through the eyes of a citizen of classical Athens of the fifth century B.C.: "Our imaginary Athenian, reading the Gospels in their original Greek as well as in our modern English translations, . . . would remark that the word 'master' represented no fewer than six different Greek words each with a distinct shade of meaning . . . he might well be astounded to learn that scores of Christian churches, denominations and sects regarded any word in the English Authorised or official version as infallibly correct". Later, this Athenian, looking at the Apostles' Creed and in particular the phrase "He ascended into heaven", might comment, "But Jesus had never left heaven!" After all, Jesus had said, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven".

The book contains an especially detailed study of the Gospel of Mark, as the earliest one written, and of John's Gospel, as the latest one, in which Christ's work is seen in most mature perspective. By his systematic, nay, scientific study of these Gospels, the author is able to lay bare before the attentive reader the essential purposes of Jesus' mission. His attempts to paraphrase these in simple, lucid language are of great interest, whilst his presentation of Christ's parables in one connected statement is unique. Out of his studies a portrait of Jesus the Christ emerges: this portrait reveals a Person of keen, penetrating vision, loving, yet speaking incisively and with authority, One who "uses sharp, positive, action words to arouse and stimulate, often combined with symbolic actions of contact: 'Arise', 'Take up thy bed', 'Go thy way'".

Mr Backwell's originality of thought may be judged when he speaks of the great civilisation of David's and Solomon's days, inspired by the law and spirit of Moses. Referring especially to its literary flowering he says, "There may even be a clue here to the phenomenon of Homer, whose epic poems, the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey*, are the earliest pieces of European literature, yet by general consent rank amongst the most perfect of their time".

Finally, the author leads the reader forward, naturally and logically from all he has learned about Christ's purposes, to a consideration of His repeated promises to return at the time of the end. For the non-Bahá'í, Mr Backwell's concluding chapters must come as a startling and unexpected, if logical, conclusion. For the Bahá'í, after traversing the previous pages of quiet, incisive logic, this is a draught of the "wine of astonishment". At this point the author turns the brilliant light of the Bahá'í Revelation upon the Gospels, showing how Christ's word will find fulfilment in a new world governed by His law of love. Christianity is now seen to fall into place beside other world religions, in essential harmony with them and leading forward to a New World Order. "Like Suns of Truth in the heaven of the spirit these Educators provided a direction for men's hearts and vital food for their souls progressively intensifying the potency at each rising until with Bahá'u'lláh 'all truth' has been revealed".

This book, by its richness of reference and because it is so compact, will provide a challenging source of study and will surely inspire and guide the thoughts of many a Summer School or study group. The innumerable references to the Gospels are wisely listed in separate and very valuable appendices, so that either one may enjoy the book as a whole without using them, or, alternatively, one may make a study of the Gospels in illuminating detail.

For the committed Christian Mr Backwell offers a challenge, a release from conventional ideas and a possible way forward to a renewal of faith. For the Bahá'í of Christian background it sheds the light of Bahá'u'lláh upon his natal faith, brings it excitingly alive, makes it a real part of his present Faith and provides invaluable help in teaching his Christian colleagues.

To read this book of one so recently passed on to the 'Abhá Kingdom is an enriching and lovely experience and for those who have known this charming, devoted and scholarly man, it is to recall his illuminating and refreshing conversations. His gift to us is the fruit of many years of loving thought and is very precious.

Available from the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2 South Street, Oakham: £1.02.

OBITUARY FOR JWALA RAMSUROOP

by Jeremy Fox

Our dear brother and friend Jwala, pioneer for Bahá'u'lláh, died at his post in Glasgow at the age of thirty-two after an illness lasting two and a half months. He died during a major operation on his lung.

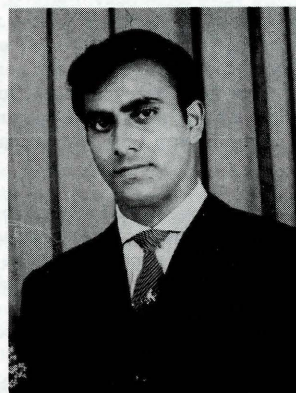
Jwala Ramsuroop, a Mauritian of Hindu background, became a Bahá'í at the age of seventeen. Largely as a result of his example his four sisters also became Bahá'ís. He left an excellent job as physiotherapist in Mauritius to train as a male nurse in Britain, enabling him to pioneer. When, in 1968, the Motherwell LSA fell below numbers, Jwala moved in from the nurses' home in Hartwood Hospital to save it. Kay, a Mauritian girl to whom he taught the Faith in Hartwood hospital, also moved in at the last minute when another vacancy arose. They were married in June of that year. In 1969 they moved to Glasgow to save the LSA there, where they have remained, pillars of that community. While in hospital, Jwala was elected chairman of the Glasgow LSA.

Jwala was truly humble and regulated his whole life by the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. He was loved and admired by his colleagues and patients alike at his work, as well as by the Bahá'ís who knew him.

It is difficult for us to think of Jwala and Kay, his wife, separately, because they epitomised 'Abdu'l-Bahá's exhortation: "Live in such harmony that others may take your lives for an example and may say to one another: 'Look how they live like two doves in one nest, in perfect love, affinity and union. It is as though from all eternity God had kneaded the very essence of their beings for the love of one another' ". Their flat was truly 'open to the faces of friends and strangers' and it was such happiness to visit that home. They understood that marriage in its highest sense is a sharing and helping in the service of the Faith and in each other's spiritual growth. The Faith always came first, and particularly in the last days of his life Jwala spoke of nothing but the friends and the Faith — in fact as his pain grew greater his faith grew deeper. He said that what he missed most was being able to say the medium obligatory prayer and participating in the Bahá'í activities, particularly the Nineteen Day Feast. When I saw him the day before he died he managed to say the Remover of Difficulties, despite great pain and difficulty in breathing, from behind his oxygen mask.

Jwala died on Thursday, 28 December, and his funeral took place on Saturday, 30 December. Despite very short notice and the fact that Teaching Conference was on in Birmingham, many Bahá'í friends, hospital colleagues and Mauritian friends were able to attend the funeral which was beautiful, with prayers in English and French. The NSA, the SRTC and neighbouring communities were represented. Jwala was buried at the Linn Cemetery next to his fellow-pioneer, Dr Aziz Tahzib.

He is now released from pain, in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, and who can estimate the spiritual bounties his presence and passing have brought and will yet bring to Scotland? Our prayers and love now go out to his family in Mauritius and especially to dear Kay who has decided to remain in her pioneering post, for which Jwala must surely be happy and proud indeed.



Jwala Ramsuroop

AYLESBURY: Wonderful results were obtained from a three day street teaching event. About a thousand people were approached and told about the Faith, and of these seven hundred accepted pamphlets. Eighteen interested contacts attended a fireside. This project culminated in a Folk Concert sponsored by Bahá'ís, advertised by over a hundred posters in shops. Money collected from the sale of tickets was given to charity. Hearty thanks to all those who came to help this project.

CHEADLE AND GATLEY: The weekend school on 21/22 October was very successful. On Saturday morning the youth went out teaching and gave out invitations for the play "Progressive Revelation". We attracted people at a bus stop by singing and playing guitars and in the afternoon we had two wonderful talks. The social in the evening included a Persian dinner and a performance by "The Valley of Love". A photographer from the local newspaper was present and took a picture which appeared in the paper a few days later. Since then we have had four declarations, three youth and one adult.

CORNWALL: A musical tour of Cornwall was arranged in October by the Musical Subcommittee of the South and West Regional Teaching Committee — two Bahá'ís from Paignton, Mrs Dowlatsahi, who played the Persian Tar, and Ruhyyih Mostafanajad, who played the Dumbak and also the piano, gave performances in Cawsands, St Austell and St Ives. Musical items were interspersed with readings, mainly from the Bahá'í Writings.

EDINBURGH: The head of the department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Edinburgh University, Professor W. Montgomery Watt, enjoys a world reputation as a scholar of the life of Muhammad and the early history of Islám. At the end of October, Lameh Fananapazir visited him to present him with a proclamation book on behalf of the Edinburgh LSA. They had a very interesting half hour's discussion, in which Professor Watt expressed his interest in the Bahá'í Faith, of which he already knew a fair amount, and spoke most highly of some individual Bahá'ís he had met and who had impressed him with the spirituality of their lives. He admitted that it was quite possible that in fifty years' time the Bahá'í Faith would be the leading religion of the world, and was most interested to hear of recent progress.

HAMILTON: On 16/17 December a weekend meeting was held to which friends came from all over southern Scotland. On Saturday afternoon there were discussion groups and on Saturday evening a Unity Feast which was attended by about sixty people. The weekend was designed to bring people together socially, as well as to serve the Cause and to study, and was successful on all counts, perhaps mainly because it provided an opportunity for scattered Bahá'ís to meet for a short time. We would highly recommend such projects to similarly placed communities.

NELSON: As reported in the December Journal, a mass teaching activity was held in Nelson on Saturday, 6 January 1973. It was a beautiful sunny day and friends from Cheadle, Chester, Heywood, Kendal, Liverpool, Manchester and Southport arrived in strength, through the fog, to help the local Bahá'ís of Burnley and Nelson. Previous to the Saturday, a twenty-four hour prayer rota was set up and prayers were said continuously throughout the day. The friends who came helped to invite shoppers in the town centre to a fireside with "The Valley of Love" at a Bahá'í home. Twenty-two youth accepted this invitation and many stayed throughout the evening and into the small hours. On the Sunday, five returned at their own request. The following Saturday, 13 January, fifteen youth came along for another social, and early on Sunday morning, three accepted the Faith. We pray that many more will follow them now that the flood gates are open. There are still 30,997 waiting souls in Nelson. The local Bahá'ís would most sincerely like to thank all those who said prayers for the success of this venture and special thanks to those who came and made it such a wonderful day in the history of the Nelson LSA. We ask, please, for your continued prayers.

NORTH BERWICK: Recently we had a visit from Rene Miller, an American travel teacher, who stayed with us for two and a half days and produced a puppet show based on Bahá'í Principles. Rene truly radiated the love of Bahá'u'lláh and has inspired us all to greater efforts in trying to bring Bahá'u'lláh's wondrous and healing Message to many more local inhabitants. Rene wherever you are, THANK YOU!

On 1 January the North Berwick friends had the great bounty of a visit from Hand of The Cause Dr Muhajir. That afternoon he and Mrs Davachi, her two daughters, sons-in-law and her nephew,

and one of the friends, gathered at the resting place of dear Mr Davachi, where prayers were said. In the evening the friends met at Mrs Davachi's home where Dr Muhajir spoke of the way in which the Faith was spreading all over the world, and some interesting discussions arose. Because of the fragrance of love which permeated this gathering, we were all spiritually recharged.



Owen and Jeannette Battrick with their daughter, Sarah

READING: Norman Bailey, baritone, and Sylvia Schulman, concert pianist, visited Reading on 8 November and gave an inspiring concert consisting of classical music for voice and piano. Between each item they spoke alternately about the Bahá'í Faith to the theme "Progressive Revelation" and the word of God for this day. The programme was much appreciated by an audience of one hundred and twenty people mainly from local musical societies. We were reminded of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words, "Through the power and charm of music the spirit of man is uplifted". After the concert over fifty people were invited to a reception where they had the opportunity of meeting Norman and Doreen Bailey, Sylvia, and the Reading Bahá'ís.

A regional deepening weekend with a difference was jointly planned on 2/3 December by the Bahá'ís of Reading and Wokingham R.D. Maximum participation was ensured by the type of programme which immediately created a workshop atmosphere. A musical devotional preceded three short talks on the Covenant and from then on it was a "do it yourself" weekend. Participants tested their own knowledge (or lack of it) at the beginning and repeated the test at the end of the school, so that they could see for themselves how much knowledge they had gained. The programme included questionnaire (question and answer) sessions, memory tests, two-minute talks for everybody; all the items were very popular and instructive. Time was allocated for practical work which included poetry, music and visual aids based on the theme of "The Covenant". On the Saturday evening light entertainment was provided by music and poetry groups. The weekend was concluded by a display of visual aids, many of which were created by the children.

After years of pioneering in the South Pacific, our dear friends Owen and Jeannette Battrick and their daughter, Sarah, revisited their old pioneer post, Reading, to meet old and new friends. With the use of slides they shared their pioneering experiences and stressed the need for French and English speaking pioneers to establish themselves on the islands, as it will be more difficult to do this once the territories become independent. They also stressed that it is unnecessary for pioneers to have university degrees or diplomas — there is a shortage of skilled motor mechanics, engineers, electricians and drivers. Following a press interview, a lengthy article with a photograph appeared in the local newspaper.

St NEOTS: The friends in the area around St Neots, Cambridge, Great Paxton, Peterborough and Northampton have found a most successful gathering for the children. At each Holy Day they are invited to come and celebrate the event, and the children, both Bahá'í and pre-Bahá'í, are deepened. It appears to be a good mixture of learning and fun. Meanwhile the adults are blending learning and socialising. Each child reads or recites prayers and is rewarded for a newly learned prayer. The lesson is put into a form of drama, either a play or an activity involving their talents and abilities. This is followed by games and slides (having to do with the Holy Day), with a take-home present which they have made.

YORK: The weekend school in December was accompanied by squalls and showers, sunshine and frost, and withdrawals by people who said they would come, both as weekend residents and as speakers.

On the Saturday the programme was changed and the Bahá'í friends from Heywood took over the Saturday meeting with an impromptu talk on "Why we need religion". Attendances on the Saturday were sparse, but the discussion incisive, keen and comprehensive.

Entertainment was provided on the Saturday evening by two friends from Eccles. A number of young people staying at the Youth Hostel were contacted, and attended a slide show, which was presented by the York friends, of the Bahá'í places in the Holy Land, and of Kampala. There were many slides showing new aspects of the Bahá'í Holy Structures and Gardens, and the whole programme was handled with expertise. Of the contacts made, many as far apart as Canada and Holland promised to make enquiries on their return home.

It was felt that for future weekend schools, maps showing the way to the meeting place, or directions, would be a special help especially to visiting speakers. However the organisers at York provided all possible amenities with charm and helpfulness, and a lot of hard work.

The Sunday meeting, with a few of the friends and which opened with a devotional at 8 a.m. was the prelude to the morning session. It was followed by a talk on "Bahá'í Life" and was attended by many more people, who, although they arrived late, provided a most attentive audience and the discussion that followed was prolonged and entered into by many participants.

The final session, presented by a speaker from Manchester, dealt with an "Introduction to Bahá'í Books", many samples of which were made available for inspection.

Altogether the Weekend School gave a chance for the younger Bahá'ís and contacts to meet the older believers to their mutual benefit.

The warden of the youth hostel was very disappointed at the attendance of residents at the school. We have booked the hostel for a weekend school on 24/25 March and the warden has told us that if we do not have a better residential attendance on this occasion he will not feel able to let us book it again. We do pray for support.

WIGAN: Copies of the "PROCLAMATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH" were recently presented to the Mayors of St Helen and Warrington. In both cases the interview was scheduled to last for five minutes but in one case lasted half an hour and in the other an hour — both received good publicity in the local Press. Copies of this book have also been presented to two medical consultants. Recently we informed some forty schools of the availability of Bahá'í speakers and have received invitations to two schools and also an invitation to speak at a church.

THE CLIMB

It's a long path up a mountain, but when the foothills are in sight one can sense the start of a journey.

The plain is vast with many wide, slow-flowing rivers to cross, and much swamp to bog down in and many forests to cut through.

The foothills are gentle and one can follow the valleys as they ease their way upwards.

When the mountains are reached the gradient increases, the air gets thinner. The path is rough. Sometimes it is easier to retrace one's steps, but as long as the top of the mountain is kept in sight the path will be upward.

And if one falls a little but keeps the peak in sight, one can then return to the path with increased energies.

I have crossed the plain and now gaze on the foothills, and I anticipate a long hard climb.

Jon Tighe



Presentation of "The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh" to the Mayor of Wigan by Mrs Una Robinson and Mrs R. Parkes.

YOUTH WINTER SCHOOL: WISTON 22-30 December 1972

Report by Denis MacEoin

The first youth Winter School to be held on Scottish soil took place in Wiston Lodge, somewhere in the remote and lovely wilds of Lanarkshire, between 22 and 30 December. It would be hard to find a venue so perfectly combining both natural and man-made amenities: the almost monastic seclusion of the location, and the serene desertion of its surroundings contributed massively to a sense of togetherness, spirituality, and concentration. The distractions of town, beach, ski-slope, or swimming-pool were happily absent, leaving the youth free to learn, to discuss, to ponder, and to get to know one another. The purpose of our being there was to have a Winter School, and all other pursuits were given strictly second place. The outstanding feature of Wiston was a sense of maturity, responsibility, genuine love and unity, combined with a desire to deepen, to strengthen our faith, and to become more aware in our inner selves of the supreme realities of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, the better to manifest and show forth those same realities in our outer lives.

Sessions ranged from the standard talks on the lives of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the Guardian, to less common subjects, including a panel session on the three Manifestations of God — Krishna, Buddha, and Zoroaster — a talk on Moses, another on 'Christ and the Civilizing Effect of Christendom', and yet another on 'Muhammad and the spread of Learning', all of which dealt with the topics in question in a variety of unusual and stimulating ways, a healthy combination of scholarship and simplicity giving the sessions a wide appeal. Not content with merely discussing the theories of Bahá'í life and conduct, and as a practical demonstration of the principle that "work is worship", one group of youth went to Crossley Old People's Home to sing, play guitars and otherwise entertain the old folk and the staff; while a second group stayed in the hostel to clean, chop wood, and generally lend a hand.

That same evening a unique experiment was held in the form of an evening of original music, poetry, and dance, intended as a gift of our artistic talents to the Glory of God. The generally high standard of the contributions, the sensitivity of artistic feeling, and the consciousness of the supreme importance of the arts as a contribution to the fabric of the future world civilization, all helped to make this a memorably moving experience.

Apart from the programmed sessions, the late-night discussions in the library, led by Councillor Salmanpur (from West Asia), Moojan Momen and Denis MacEoin, provided a special opportunity for those who wished to plunge into the further depths of study of the history and the writings of the Faith. Mr Salmanpur's fund of stories, his vast experience, and ready wit made his contributions throughout the school a particularly valuable and sustaining feature of the week. Shahram Firoozmand's unobtrusive yet vigilant work as Chairman served as a model for any who might in future be called on to perform that exacting task. The Winter School at Wiston was an inspiring indication that many of the growing pains of the British youth are being left behind, and a new self-awareness and conscious vitality is beginning to manifest itself in the life of this new generation, born of the Nine-Year-Plan.

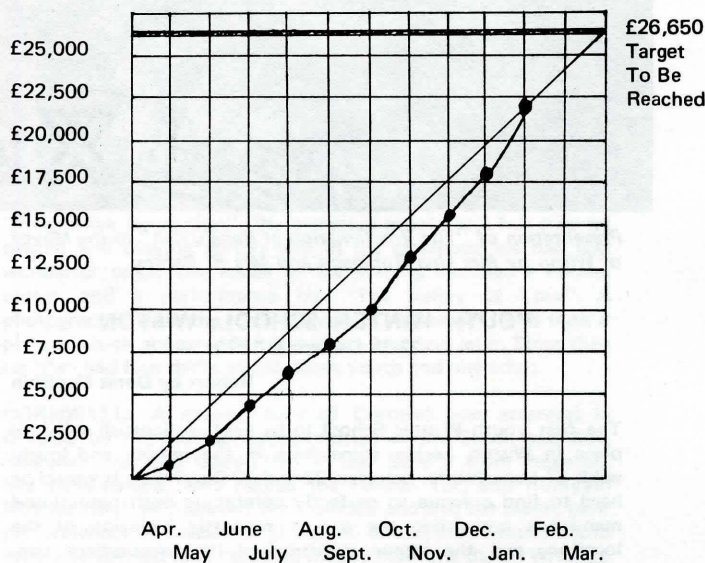
The following cable was sent to Wiston:

**HEARTS UPLIFTED NOBLE DEDICATION BAHÁ'Í
YOUTH SCOTTISH WINTER SCHOOL ASSURE
PRAYERS BOUNTIFUL REALISATION ALL HOPES
SERVICE BLESSED BEAUTY**

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

LIFEBLOOD OF THE CAUSE

Rate of Contributions



ON TARGET

It is with joy it can be reported that at the end of January donations to the Fund are at last at "target level", as follows:—

Amount required from donations for the year 129: £26,650.00
 Amount required from 21 March 1972 — 20 January 1973 £22,200.00
 Total donations to date: £22,201.00

Well done!

Two more months to go! How wonderful if by March 21, it can be shown on the graph, that contributions to the Fund have gone "over the line"!

Loving thanks to all the local Spiritual Assemblies, Groups and all the Friends who have sacrificed and helped the Fund to reach this level.

Betty Goode, Treasurer
 8 Knowle Road,
 Stafford

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

Sent to the Universal House of Justice on 15.1.73

Country Territory Island	LSAs. as of Ridván	Groups	Isolated Centres	Total Localities
1. England	68	123	231	422
2. Scotland	8	15	19	43
3. Wales	6	7	19	32
4. Northern Ireland	5	2	6	13
5. Shetland Islands	1	—	2	3
6. Orkney Islands	1	—	—	1
7. Outer Hebrides	1	—	1	2
8. Inner Hebrides	—	1	—	1
9. Isle of Man	—	—	1	1
10. Isle of Wight	1	3	4	8
11. Channel Islands	1	1	—	2
12. Gibraltar	—	—	1	1
13. Cyprus	—	2	—	2
14. Malta	—	1	—	1
15. Faroe Islands	—	1	—	1
16. TOTAL	92	156	284	533

Note: This is an extract from our regular semi-annual report to the Universal House of Justice. The details of the distribution and number of believers have been left out, but it is most encouraging to know that since January 1971 there has been an increase of 75% in the total number of believers.

National Spiritual Assembly

THE FUND

There are three ways to make contributions to the FUND

1 Directly to the National Treasurer:—

Mrs Betty Goode
 8 Knowle Road,
 Stafford
 Tel. Stafford 62157

2 By Bank Giro, directly to the Bank, which is

The National Westminster Bank
 186 Brompton Road,
 London SW3

Our account no. is 18188443

3 By Post Office Giro. Our number is 43 301 4008

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- A All cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'NSA of the Bahá'ís; please **NOT** to 'Betty Goode'.
- B They should be crossed.
- C It is not wise to send paper money or any money through the post unless it is registered.
- D Receipts are sent automatically for money sent directly to the National Treasurer, unless the donor specifically requests that one not be sent. With the increasing numbers of friends, it helps the Treasurer if a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed for the receipt. It really does save much work and is greatly appreciated. Receipts are not issued for Giro payments.

PAYMENTS BY COVENANT

These are handled by **Mr John Morphew**
 19a High Street,
 Hoddeston,
 Herts.

Please contact him directly.

FOR THE PERSIAN FRIENDS

Huqúq'u'lláh payments are handled by

Mr John Long
 2 South Street,
 Oakham,
 Rutland.

مقوق الله

در لوح علی قبل میل میفاید

از جمله حقوق الله نازل و اگر ناس با دای آن موفق شوند البته حق

جل و عز و برکت عنایت فرماید و هم آن مال نصیب خود آن شخص و ذریه او شود

چنانچه مشاهده میمانی که شری از اموال ناس نصیب ایشان شده و نمیشود و

اغیار را حق بر آن سلف میفرماید و یا وراثتی که اغیار بر ایشان ترجیح دارد حکمت با حق

الهی فوق ذکر و بیان است آن ناس شیدون تم سیکرون و یغرفون تم

یکملون .