

The HOME FRONT

A News Bulletin

No. 5.

June 1957

"MOUNT YOUR STEEDS, O HEROES OF GOD!"

Beloved Friends,

The destiny of the British Community is uppermost in our beloved Guardian's thoughts. So much we know from recent pilgrims who have seen the map of our future teaching in islands half around the world. He is eager to see us enter this new phase, but all depends on preparing the base of operations.

At this stage the work on the Home Front has top priority and is ripe for success. We are going forward on the right lines; we are "making steady and sound progress". But to bring such promise to fruit, have we not each a unique call and duty?

Our British Community is fully capable of the greatest achievements, exceeding those for which we have been so highly praised. The plans are prepared, the time is opportune, and it all depends upon the individual. Why do we tarry?

The beloved Guardian recently wrote through his Secretary:
"...Sometimes people strive all their lives to render outstanding service. Here is the time and opportunity to render historic services; in fact the most unique in history, aiding in the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecies of the Last Day, and the 1335 days, when men are to be blessed by the Glory of the Lord, covering the entire Globe. This refers to the spread of the Faith over the entire globe - which is the real goal of the Ten Year Crusade. In other words, when we fulfil the Ten Year Crusade we will have brought into fulfilment Daniel's great prophecy of: 'Blessed is he who waits and comes to the 1335 days.'
What could be more wonderful than taking part in the fulfilment of religious prophecy of over 3000 years!"

-- National Teaching Committee.

A PILGRIM MUSES

Sooner or later every explorer must reflect upon the object of his quest and the lessons of his journey. Whence comes this insatiable craving to visit our Holy Places? What is accomplished by undergoing this ordeal of stirred emotions and poignant feelings? And how do prayer and meditation within these hallowed Shrines affect us?

What surges of turbulence, joy, peace and certitude flow through us as we visit the Holy Places! Of these, perhaps the certitude is most useful for some of us. The truth of our teachings, their essential rightness and their inevitability are blazoned on the mind.

When the Guardian has explained some point of the teaching, usually with a local connection, the simplicity and clarity are so obvious that it is surprising how muddled one can become without such guidance. Even God's mysterious plans seem more accessible, and less difficult to visualize viewed as a larger plan.

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, - envisaged from the 'foot', the 'heart', and the 'head' of Carmel, - lies in its embryonic form to-day and here is the unborn infant, alluded to by the Báb, instituted by Bahá'u'lláh, and blue-printed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, now growing in the Administrative Order. This present instrument of propagation of the teachings will be born into World Order in the days to come.

Every practical effort for the Cause, every pioneer project, almost every single fireside bears its part in ordered progress, man's part in this exciting race to the glorious future of mankind.

Whilst the Bahá'í Faith is unique in having two Manifestations, little is written of 'Akká and its associated Holy Places. The blessings to the visitor to 'Akká and to those who visit the visitor are real enough; perhaps spiritual perception awakened there leads to that certitude so readily acquired in the atmosphere of love, service, and devotion at the World Centre.

Someday a great poet will express in words of beauty the joys and emotions of this blessed Spot; for most of us, such mystic art eludes us. But until that day, let us with misty eyes read and re-read the Tablets of Visitation, time and time again, with ever greater understanding and perception.

That is one lesson of the Shrines one pilgrim hopes he learned:- complete and absolute certitude. Do you think it worth the trip?

-- Ernest Gregory.

"ONE OF THREE LUMINARIES.."

Though long expected, the grievous loss of our beloved George Townshend, the first Hand of the Cause of God appointed to shelter and guide us in his own lifetime, comes as a deep-felt shock and yet as a harbinger of change and progress in our British destiny. "His death morrow publication his crowning achievement" opens who knows what doors on the future? Already a number of campaigns are taking shape in various parts of Britain, focussed on the theme of "Christ and Bahá'u'lláh", and trumpets sounded in the Cathedral city of Norwich and in Northern Ireland, as well as in a dozen other towns of Britain this spring, may echo down many an ancient and hallowed aisle.

Words addressed to us last Convention by Mr. Townshend come now to mind with special potency: "The Guardian is surrounded by the Hands of the Cause who, like planets, wheel around him...They stand for something which civilisation lacks and dies for want of - true belief in God and especially the fear of God...The first task of the Hands of the Cause is to try to drive out pride and instil humble belief and love and adoration. If we can achieve this our other tasks will come easier. But who can do it and how? All we can do is to deepen and strengthen our belief in God, and by everything in our power to spread it through this dark, unhappy generation. Let us praise God that He has chosen us to recognise the Light and let us remember the awful responsibility our knowledge imposes on us."

THE PUBLIC TEACHING OF "CHRIST AND BAHÁ'U'LLÁH"

Una Townshend has reminded us that her father's purpose in writing "Christ and Bahá'u'lláh" was "primarily to convince church people." It is important, she feels, "not to offend them and create the impression that the Faith is against their religion." His intention was "to open people's eyes to certain clear facts and gradually enable them to see through the waywardness of the churches 'with their own eyes and not through the eyes of others.'" But, he said, "if they attack us that's another matter; we must be positive."

In meditating on this guidance for the campaign on this book, we must also keep in mind the Guardian's assurance, through Mr. Ioas, that "very beneficial results will be achieved by this active public program...even if it stirs opposition and criticism for the time being."

THE GUARDIAN'S MESSAGE TO CONVENTION

The tremendous Message to National Conventions, with which our beloved Guardian has opened the year 114, unfolds before our eyes an astonishing picture of Bahá'í achievement. In his own words, "we cannot but marvel at the sharp contrast" between the steady unfoldment of the institutions of our Faith and the deterioration of the "bankrupt Order" of human society around us.

Bahá'is everywhere are inspired to take heart at these ever-mounting victories, and resolve with all fervour to make fresh and resounding contribution to the new victories which, in his closing lines, the Guardian promises by next Ridván - "such a harvest as will amaze its prosecutors" and "astonish the world at large."

The National Teaching Committee earnestly commends, and indeed urges, every Assembly and Goal Town to arrange for detailed study of this Convention Message by all the members of the community. We feel that not less than three sessions for study and discussion should be set aside. Only thus can we assimilate all the beloved Guardian is providing for us and equip ourselves for the great tasks ahead.

Acquiring a World Vision

It will greatly facilitate our understanding of the Guardian's record of world-wide progress, on which he lays such remarkable stress both in this Message and to all pilgrims, if a large map of the world is acquired by each community, on which the places mentioned by the Guardian can be located and marked, and the victories recorded. Such a map could be a permanent and valued exhibit in each Bahá'í Centre, throughout the course of the Ten Year Crusade.

Without doubt the beloved Guardian wishes each one of us to widen our vision. "Let your vision be world-embracing", said Bahá'u'lláh. "This handful of dust, the earth, is one home: let it be in unity." We are challenged now to lay a firm foundation of knowledge and appreciation of the World Bahá'í Community - to learn its geography, take pride in its achievements and embrace in closest bonds of Bahá'í love our fellow-believers in every part of the globe.

Teaching Has Priority

"The pre-eminent task of teaching the Faith," the Guardian emphasizes, to the multitudes who consciously or unconsciously thirst after the healing Word of God in these days - a task so dear to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; at once so sacred, so fundamental, and so urgent; primarily involving and challenging every single individual;----such a task must, in the course of this year, be accorded priority over every other Bahá'í activity."

Our goal is the Home Front - for it is strength and numbers on the Home Front which provide the key to all future attainment. The Home Front, it cannot be too often said, is the reservoir. It is the Home Front which must provide the pioneers, administrators, and resources to bring the Crusade to complete success. It "must, at whatever cost, and within as short a time as possible, be revitalised, extended and consolidated".

Moreover, what brings greater joy to any heart than to see new and radiant faces appearing in our gatherings, to hear the Words of Bahá'u'lláh read in voices carrying the accents of every part of our country, to realise the unique contributions which new souls, hailing from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and every corner of England, can bring to our glorious Faith? Such progress on the Home Front will be the assurance of the coming of the Kingdom to this particular sector of God's planet which, in His wisdom, He has entrusted to us.

The Call to Badasht

The Heart of our Guardian's message is dedication - "a solemn renewal of dedication...by the entire company of those who profess the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh." "I appeal...for a renewed dedication, at this critical hour in the fortunes of mankind, on the part of the entire company of my spiritual brethren,...be they in active service or not, of either sex, young as well as old, rich or poor, whether veteran or newly enrolled - a dedication reminiscent of the pledges which the Dawn-Breakers...assembled in conference at Badasht...willing and solemnly made..."

Projected so swiftly into the atmosphere of the Heroic Age, the Convention and all those in attendance did deeply pledge themselves. Now let the circle widen until each and every Bahá'í of the British Community stands on holy ground, and in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh solemnly lifts up his head and heart to support our beloved Faith with a new measure of love and action.

OPENING GUNS

The campaign for "Christ and Bahá'u'lláh" has been launched by a series of eleven meetings on the Home Front during May and June, using a pattern warmly approved by the beloved Guardian, combining public meeting, newspaper publicity, a book exhibit in a local bookshop, and the distribution of leaflets about the book. These meetings, already held or planned in Norwich, Cambridge, Belfast, Bangor, Edinburgh, Manchester, Reading, Leeds, Blackpool, Leicester, and Birmingham, have reached a new consistency in attracting good numbers of inquirers, as many as seventy attending in Belfast and Manchester. For the first time, undergraduates attended at Cambridge Guild Hall, and in the Goal Town of Bangor the audience exceeded thirty. David Hofman, who has so far addressed these meetings, reports a spirit of sincere inquiry and even happiness to receive the message of the coming of the Kingdom, for which so many hearts are yearning, whether consciously or unconsciously.

In addition to these eleven meetings, the Bahá'í Youth Conference in Bournemouth held a meeting on this theme in April, and the Shetland Summer School has just carried out a campaign based on "Christ and Bahá'u'lláh" - a direct answer to the recent charge of "heresy" made by a missionary and given prominence in a Lerwick newspaper.

NEWS BRIEFS

A generous gift of cloth-bound Esslemonts has been contributed by Mr. Granfer for placement in public libraries. If your library needs one, please apply to Mrs. Backwell, 5 Glebe Road, London, S.W.13.

The outstanding Weekend School of those so far held in Britain met at Rose Hill Conference Centre near Reading, on March 23rd-24th, thus heralding good news for the new Bahá'í year.

A short film, "Land of the Bible" has been showing in various theatres throughout Britain. It includes views of the Shrine of the Bab, and the prospectus issued on the film mentioned Bahá'í as one of Israel's four faiths. Friends in Greater Manchester have used the film as an opening for teaching.

A small supply of "Facts About the Bahá'í Faith" is held by Mrs. Pat Sinclair, M.Y. Ridván, The Bridge Boat House, Loughborough Road, Leicester, which may still be ordered at the special price of 5/- per hundred.

NEW HOPE FOR THE PIVOTAL CENTRES

The news is not that the Pivotal Centres were maintained at Ridván, as indeed they were, but that through declarations and pioneer settlements this past year, these centres appear for the first time to warrant the hope that they may soon be firmly founded and ready for incorporation. Belfast, with eleven members, and a record of teaching which no community can challenge, stood ready at Ridván to release a pioneer if needed. We are grateful we had no need to call on the volunteer, Kathleen Hornell, who may now continue her services for the consolidation of this important centre. Cardiff maintained her status, despite five removals during the year, through teaching and the declaration of Yvonne Williams being received at the eleventh hour, but in time to free Beatrice Keery who had offered to come for a short term. Cardiff now launches its campaign in Pontypridd, the first new Goal Town of Wales. Edinburgh, hard hit for Ridván, has welcomed the permanent settlement of Betty Bowd, a devoted new believer from Reading, and a year's settlement by A. Azizi - both greatly re-inforcing this promising community. Nooshin Nafiz also achieved transfer to an Edinburgh hospital, following the Guardian's personal instruction, and will come of age this summer. The ninth gap was filled by Jeannette Hattrick for a short term, accompanied by young Richard. Expected settlements include Mr. Yazdani and the sisters of Rochan Aftabi. Dublin, most difficult of British goals, has profited greatly by the Ridván call. Mr. and Mrs. Anvar have moved there hoping to settle permanently. David and Mary Beckett and four children have also moved to Dublin, where their experience of teaching in a Catholic country should open many new doors. Prayers are needed, that David will swiftly find a job and Mr. Anvar be granted a permanent visa. Aileen Beale has selflessly aided these projects on the spot, whilst temporarily filling the ninth vacancy.

WHAT CAN ASSEMBLIES DO?

In the view of this year's Convention, Local Assemblies can:

- (1) Spend more of their consultation time on teaching.
- (2) Set themselves goals for the year.
- (3) Take responsibility to quicken the pioneer spirit in their communities.

Which Assemblies will be first to take up this forward-looking programme of action?

THOUGHTS ON TEACHING

Enoch Olinga, on whom the beloved Guardian recently bestowed the new name of Abul Futúh, "Father of Conquerors", was asked in Haifa the secret of his great success in teaching the Faith in the British Cameroons, where there are now 300 Bahá'ís. "It is very simple," replied dear Enoch. "The secret is prayer".

Our dearly loved Hand of the Cause of God, George Townshend, writing in December, 1955 said: "Our national community needs the stimulation which 'Abdu'l-Bahá tried...to give his audiences, telling them with joy and spiritual power that it was an unparalleled out-pouring of power from Bahá'u'lláh that was the origin of this campaign of His. With tremendous force and spiritual triumph he got this over in his early addresses to people who half believed it was a mundane moment, as all the Western World had been believing for centuries. He got over an entirely new understanding and picture of Christ's purpose and work and must have carried all before Him with the spiritual power of His enthusiasm." I believe His teaching then should be our model. Nothing less will electrify our sober, Mammon-ridden imaginations...'Abdu'l-Bahá gives a pattern for all time."

"Those engaged in teaching the Faith must at sometime decide where their first duty lies, what is the first priority of their lives, and how far should that priority be permitted to dominate all other claims on their time and energy...Could it be that the rate of progress in teaching the Faith in this country, which has been aptly described as satisfactory and steady but not out of the ordinary, is directly connected with the value we have placed upon our priorities? Should we not examine with prayer and meditation the standards of priority which rule our lives?" (Ernest Gregory)

"We must be thoroughly convinced of our Faith and the need to give it out to others...We must feel that as it becomes our motivating force in life it must have an outlet; thus we can use this force to strengthen our community, and through this attract contacts outside...I cannot put enough stress on the necessity to feel enthusiasm to go forth for the Faith. Otherwise we will not show to outsiders any reason for taking interest...God grant that we may all go forth with renewed enthusiasm." (David Beckett, Leeds).
