

UK BAHÁ'Í

Acts of Heroism

*Heroic service to humanity –
from the pages of history
to the pioneers of today*

**RIDVÁN MESSAGE
176 B.E.**

*New guidance
and an historic
announcement*

**THE
ESTABLISHMENT
OF WORLD
PEACE**

*One of the eternal
foundations of the
Faith of God*

**THE CALL OF THE
DIVINE BELOVED**

*New collection of
Bahá'u'lláh's mystical
Writings*

**HIS HONOUR
DANIEL JENKYN**

*The young Cornishman
who proclaimed the
New Day*





BICENTENARY

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Welcome to UK Bahá'í

Later this year, Bahá'ís throughout the world will join with their families, friends, neighbours and colleagues to celebrate the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb. Now is the time, the Universal House of Justice has told us, to recall not only the extraordinary heroism of the Martyr-Herald of the Bahá'í Faith but also the lives of His intrepid followers, "heroines and heroes whose faith was expressed in matchless, sacrificial acts that will forever adorn the annals of the Cause." The theme of this edition of UK Bahá'í is heroism — from those lionhearted Dawn-Breakers of the New Day, to the everyday heroes who serve across the United Kingdom today. Also included are two momentous messages from the Universal House of Justice. Reflection upon these will surely assist us to understand that heroic acts are not merely the preserve of history: each of us can today make a contribution that will leave traces down the ages.

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Writers in this issue: Bahá'í World News Service (BWNS), Payam Akhavan (PA), George Ballentyne (GB), Edwin Graham (EG), Sophie Gregory (SG), Barney Leith (BL), Alex Murray (AM), Naim Rastani (NR).

introduction

Acts of heroism

In their remarkable actions, the heroes of Bahá'í history displayed characteristics that remain a source of inspiration for our own day-to-day service to the Cause

IT MAY BE SAID by a superficial observer that we in the United Kingdom today have very little in common with the extraordinary figures whose exploits ennoble the annals of Bahá'í history. And they may have a point. Take for example Tahírih, the acclaimed poetess who stunned nineteenth-century Persia with her fearless announcement of the dawning of a New Day, and her appearance unveiled in public. Tahírih's life was brutally cut short when she was at the height of her fame at the age of 35. And what of Quddús, whose spirit was so ignited by the Cause that his fervour roused the enmity of the establishment? Quddús's days were ended while he was only in his twenties, in horrific circumstances. With awe, we read of Hájí Sulaymán Khán — a believer of noble stock — who refused to recant his belief under extreme torture. He was paraded through the streets of Tihrán with flickering candles inserted into deeply gouged wounds in his body, before being executed in front of a multitude.

Our reality today is clearly different from that of the believers in the Heroic Age. In this Formative Age, the completion of the first century of which is fast approaching, we are not called upon to sacrifice our lives. However, we are required to devote our time and energy to putting into practice the teachings for which those brave souls died, and inviting our friends to join us in executing those tasks.

The superficial observer may have missed a crucial point though. For in their acts, these heroes demonstrated certain characteristics that are applicable to our own day-to-day service. Tahírih evinced courage — which is exactly what is required when we teach the Faith, or invite our friends to join a study circle or attend a devotional. Quddús offers the example of steadfastness. If we are rebuffed, mocked or exhausted in service we look to him, unwavering till the last. Hájí Sulaymán Khán displayed true reliance on God. With his final breath, he was uttering a prayer. It is this reliance on the power of Divine assistance that sustains us through the inevitable challenges of service.

The actions of these heroes continue to inspire generations today. “It was hearing their stories as a little girl that confirmed my faith,” says a young Bahá'í from the Midlands. “When I feel hopeless, I remember what they did.” Another youth, from London, says their “lives were inspirational and places my service in a wider context. Remembering their sacrifices carries me through so many tests in the teaching field”.

Thus we strive to contribute whatever share we can to advancing civilization, inspired by those spiritual heroes who gave their lives for this very same Cause. The Universal House of Justice wrote at Ridván 2018: “let the same all-consuming, all-surpassing love that spurred the Báb's disciples to the diffusion of the divine light inspire you to great deeds.” NR



The Universal House of Justice

RIDVÁN 2019

TO THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE WORLD DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

AS THE MOST GREAT Festival has drawn closer, we have been transported by feelings of gratitude and anticipation—gratitude for the wonders that Bahá'u'lláh has enabled His followers to accomplish, anticipation of what the immediate future holds.

The momentum generated by the worldwide celebrations of the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh has only grown since. The accelerated development of the Bahá'í community, its rising capacity, and its ability to draw on the energies of more of its members emerge vividly from a summary

of its recent global attainments. Of these, an increase in community-building activities stands out in particular. The current Five Year Plan follows twenty years of effort by the Bahá'í world to systematically refine and multiply these activities—but remarkably, in the Plan's first two and a half years, the number of core activities alone rose by more than half. The worldwide community has shown the capacity to engage, at any given time, over a million people in such activities, helping them to explore and respond to spiritual realities. In the same short period, the number of gatherings for prayer nearly doubled—a much-needed response to humanity's growing estrangement from the Source of hope and bounty. This development holds special promise, for devotional meetings infuse a new spirit into the life of a community. Interwoven with educational efforts for all ages,

they reinforce the lofty purpose of those efforts: to foster communities distinguished by their worship of God and their service to humankind. Nowhere is this more evident than in those clusters where the participation of large numbers in Bahá'í activities is being sustained and the friends have passed the third milestone in their community's development. We are delighted to see that the number of clusters where the process of growth has advanced this far has already more than doubled since the beginning of the Plan and now stands at around five hundred.

This brief survey cannot do justice to the scale of the transformation that is under way. The outlook for the remaining two years of the Plan is bright. Much has been achieved this last year by widely disseminating lessons learned from the stronger programmes of growth in clusters that, as we hoped, have become reservoirs of knowledge and resources. The International Teaching Centre, the Counsellors, and their tireless auxiliaries have stopped at nothing to ensure that friends in all parts of the world can benefit from this acceleration in learning and apply the insights being gained to their own realities. We rejoice to see that in a growing number of clusters, and in neighbourhoods and villages within them, a nucleus of friends has emerged who through action and reflection are discovering what is required, at a particular point, for the process of growth to advance in their surroundings. They are drawing on the potent instrument of the institute, through which capacity to contribute to the spiritual and material prosperity of the community is enhanced, and as they act, the number of those joining them is increasing. Naturally, conditions vary greatly from place to place, as do the characteristics of growth. But through systematic striving, everyone can make a more and more effective contribution to the work at hand. In every setting, there is pure joy in engaging other souls in meaningful and uplifting conversations that lead, whether quickly or gradually, to the stirring of spiritual susceptibilities. The brighter the flame kindled within the heart of the believer, the greater will be the force of attraction felt by those exposed to its warmth. And to a heart consumed with love for Bahá'u'lláh, what more fitting occupation can be imagined than to seek out kindred spirits, to encourage them as they enter the path of service, to accompany them as they gain experience and—perhaps the greatest joy of all—to see souls become confirmed in their faith, arise independently, and assist others on the same journey. These are among the most cherished of all the moments that this transitory life affords.

The prospects for advancing this spiritual enterprise are made the more thrilling by the approach of the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb. Like the bicentenary that preceded it, this anniversary is a moment incalculably precious. It provides all Bahá'ís with marvellous opportunities for awakening those around them to the great Day of God, to the extraordinary effusion of heavenly grace signalled by the appearance of two Manifestations of the Divine Being, successive Luminaries Who brightened the horizon of the world. The measure of what might be possible in the coming two cycles is known to



The Shrine of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá before the golden-domed superstructure was built.

all from the experience of the bicentenary two years ago, and all that was learned on that occasion must be channelled into the plans for the Twin Holy Birthdays this year. As the two-hundred-year anniversary draws near, we will offer frequent supplications on your behalf in the Sacred Shrines, praying that your efforts to befittingly honour the Báb will succeed in advancing the Cause He foretold.

The close of the first century of the Formative Age is but two and a half years away. It will seal one hundred years of consecrated effort to consolidate and expand the foundation so sacrificially laid during the Faith's Heroic Age. At that time the Bahá'í community will also mark the centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that moment when the beloved Master was released from the confines of this world to rejoin His Father in the retreats of celestial glory. His funeral, which occurred the following day, was an event "the like of which Palestine had never seen". At its conclusion, His mortal remains were laid to rest within a vault of the Mausoleum of the Báb. However, it was envisaged by Shoghi Effendi that this would be a temporary arrangement. A Shrine was to be erected, of a character befitting the unique station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at the appropriate time.

That time has come. The Bahá'í world is being summoned to build the edifice which will forever embosom those sacred remains. It is to be constructed in the vicinity of the Riḍván Garden, on land consecrated by the footsteps of the Blessed Beauty; the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will thus lie on the crescent traced between the Holy Shrines in 'Akká and Haifa. Work on the architectural plans is advancing, and more information will be shared in the coming months.

Feelings of surpassing joy now surge within us, as we contemplate the year ahead and all that it promises. We look to every one of you—those who are occupied with rendering service to Bahá'u'lláh, labouring in every nation for the cause of peace—to fulfil your high calling.

– *The Universal House of Justice*

The establishment of world peace

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

18 January 2019

TO THE BAHÁ'Í'S OF THE WORLD
DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

HALF A CENTURY after Bahá'u'lláh summoned the kings and rulers to be reconciled among themselves and enjoined on them the establishment of peace on earth, the great powers of that era were plunged into war. It was the first conflict to be regarded as a “World War”, and it is remembered as a conflagration of horrific severity; the unprecedented scale and ferocity of the bloodshed has seared it on to the consciousness of every succeeding generation. And yet, from out the ruin and suffering, possibilities blossomed for a new order to bring stability to the world—notably at the Paris Peace Conference, which opened a hundred years ago on this day. In the years that followed, despite the repeated crises into which international affairs were thrown, Shoghi Effendi could discern “the progress, however fitful, of the forces working in harmony with the spirit of the age”. These forces have continued to move humanity towards an age of peace—not merely a peace which rules out armed conflict, but a collective state of being, manifesting unity. Notwithstanding, it remains a long journey, and it proceeds in fits and starts. We find it propitious, at this moment, to reflect on the progress made on that journey, the contemporary challenges to peace, and the contribution to its attainment that Bahá'ís are called to make.

There have been at least three historical moments in the last one hundred years when it seemed as if the human race was reaching for real, lasting peace, albeit always falling short because of weaknesses it could not overcome. The first moment, as a result of the Paris Conference, was the establishment of the League of Nations, an organization intended by its founders to secure peace at the international



Crowds gather outside the Paris Peace Conference of 1919

level. It was the means by which, for the first time in history, the system of collective security enjoined on the world's rulers by Bahá'u'lláh was “seriously envisaged, discussed and tested”. But ultimately the peace agreement that concluded the war was fatally flawed, and the League was not able to prevent a second World War, judged by historians to be the deadliest conflict in human history. Just as the first significant step towards world peace followed a period of appalling conflict, so did the second, when not only was the United Nations Organization formed from the ashes of the League, but a system of international economic institutions came into being, and historic advances were made relating to human rights and international law. In rapid succession, many territories under colonial rule became independent nations, and arrangements for regional cooperation grew markedly in depth and range. The post-war decades, however, were also characterized by an atmosphere of brooding and often open hostility between the world's two major power blocs. Known familiarly as the Cold War, it spilled over into actual wars in various regions of the world, and brought humanity



The opening of the League of Nations, November 1920

perilously close to a conflict involving nuclear weapons. Its peaceful termination, towards the end of the twentieth century, was an occasion for relief, giving rise to explicit calls for the establishment of a new global order. This was the third moment when universal peace seemed to be within grasp. Efforts to put in place new systems for international cooperation and to strengthen existing ones received great impetus, as a series of world conferences on themes of importance to humanity's future were convened by the United Nations. New opportunities for consensus emerged, and the spirit of collaboration propelling progress also found expression in the mandates given to certain international institutions charged with administering justice. This purposeful, deliberative process culminated at the turn of the century in the Millennium Forum, a meeting of representatives of over a thousand civil society organizations from more than a hundred countries, followed by the Millennium Summit, an unparalleled gathering of world leaders which led to agreement on a set of objectives representing a shared ambition of humanity. Styled the Millennium Development Goals, they became rallying points for collective action in the ensuing years. These various advances—despite their many limitations and imperfections and the horrifying conflicts that continued to unfold during this time—stand nonetheless as signs of a widespread, gradual but inexorable rise in global consciousness on the part of the earth's peoples and their attraction to universal justice, to solidarity, to collaboration, to compassion, and to equality.

As the present century opened, new challenges began to loom. With time, these intensified, leading to a retreat from the promising steps forward with which the previous century had closed. Today, many of the dominant currents in societies everywhere are pushing people apart, not drawing them together. Even as global poverty of the most extreme form has decreased, political and economic systems have enabled the enrichment of small coteries with grossly exorbitant wealth—a condition that fuels fundamental instability in world affairs. The interactions of the individual citizen, governing institutions, and society as a whole are often fraught, as those arguing for the primacy of one or the other

show more and more intransigence in their thinking. Religious fundamentalism is warping the character of communities, even nations. The failings of so many organizations and institutions of society have understandably led to a decline in public trust, but this has been systematically exploited by vested interests seeking to undermine the credibility of all sources of knowledge. Certain shared ethical principles, which seemed to be in the ascendant at the start of this century, are eroded, threatening the prevailing consensus about right and wrong that, in various arenas, had succeeded in holding humanity's basest tendencies in check. And the will to engage in international collective action, which twenty years ago represented a powerful strain of thinking among world leaders, has been cowed, assailed by resurgent forces of racism, nationalism, and factionalism.

Thus do the forces of disintegration regroup and gain ground. So be it. The unification of humanity is unstoppable by any human force; the promises made by the prophets of old and by the Author of the Cause of God Himself testify to this truth. Yet the course humanity takes to achieve its destiny may very well be tortuous. The tumult raised by the contending peoples of the earth threatens to drown out the voices of those noble-minded souls in every society who call for an end to conflict and struggle. As long as that call goes unheeded, there is no reason to doubt that the world's current state of disorder and confusion will worsen—possibly with catastrophic consequences—until a chastened humanity sees fit to take another significant step, perhaps this time decisive, towards enduring peace.



Universal peace is the destination towards which humanity has been moving throughout the ages under the influence of the Word of God that has been progressively imparted by the Creator to His creation. Shoghi Effendi described humanity's advance towards a new, global stage in its collective life in terms of social evolution, "an evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations." Now, with the coming of Bahá'u'lláh, the human race stands on the threshold of its maturity. World unity is finally possible. A global order that unifies the nations with the assent of humanity is the only adequate answer to the destabilizing forces that threaten the world.

However, though world unity is possible—nay, inevitable—it ultimately cannot be achieved without unreserved acceptance of the oneness of humankind, described by the Guardian as "the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve". With what insight and eloquence did he expound upon the far-reaching implications of this cardinal principle! Plainly he saw, amidst the turbulence of world affairs, how the reality that humanity is one people must be the starting point for a new order. The vast array of relations among nations—and within them—all



In 1985, *Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Ruhíyyih Khánúm* presented *The Promise of World Peace* to United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

need to be re-envisaged in this light.

The realization of such a vision will require, sooner or later, an historic feat of statesmanship from the leaders of the world. Alas, the will to attempt this feat is still wanting. Humanity is gripped by a crisis of identity, as various peoples and groups struggle to define themselves, their place in the world, and how they should act. Without a vision of shared identity and common purpose, they fall into competing ideologies and power struggles. Seemingly countless permutations of “us” and “them” define group identities ever more narrowly and in contrast to one another. Over time, this splintering into divergent interest groups has weakened the cohesion of society itself. Rival conceptions about the primacy of a particular people are peddled to the exclusion of the truth that humanity is on a common journey in which all are protagonists. Consider how radically different such a fragmented conception of human identity is from the one that follows from a recognition of the oneness of humanity. In this perspective, the diversity that characterizes the human family, far from contradicting its oneness, endows it with richness. Unity, in its Bahá'í expression, contains the essential concept of diversity, distinguishing it from uniformity. It is through love for all people, and by subordinating lesser loyalties to the best interests of humankind, that the unity of the world can be realized and the infinite expressions of human diversity find their highest fulfilment.

Fostering unity, by harmonizing disparate elements and nurturing in every heart a selfless love for humankind, is the task of religion. Great possibilities to cultivate fellowship and concord are open to religious leaders, but these same leaders can also incite violence by using their influence to stoke the fires of fanaticism and prejudice. Writing of religion, Bahá'u'lláh's words are emphatic: “... make it not”, He warns, “the cause of dissension and strife.” Peace, for “all who dwell on earth”, is one of “the principles and ordinances of God”.

A heart that has embraced love for the whole of humanity will certainly be pained when confronted by the suffering that so many endure because of disunity. But the friends of God cannot shut themselves off from the increasing turmoil of the

society that surrounds them; they must guard themselves, too, from becoming enmeshed in its conflicts or falling into its adversarial methods. No matter how bleak conditions may appear at any given time, no matter how dismal the immediate prospects for bringing about unity, there is no cause for despair. The distressing state of the world can only spur us to redouble our commitment to constructive action. “These are not days of prosperity and triumph” cautions Bahá'u'lláh. “The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills. Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine which the almighty hand of the unerring Physician hath prepared.”



The establishment of peace is a duty to which the entire human race is called. The responsibility that Bahá'ís bear to aid that process will evolve over time, but they have never been mere spectators—they lend their share of assistance to the operation of those forces leading humanity towards unity. They are summoned to be as leaven to the world. Consider Bahá'u'lláh's words:

Address yourselves to the promotion of the well-being and tranquillity of the children of men. Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that haply the dissensions that divide it may, through the power of the Most Great Name, be blotted out from its face, and all mankind become the upholders of one Order, and the inhabitants of one City.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá also emphasised the importance of the contribution that Bahá'ís are called on to make to the establishment of world peace:

...peace must first be established among individuals, until it leadeth in the end to peace among nations. Wherefore, O ye Bahá'ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.

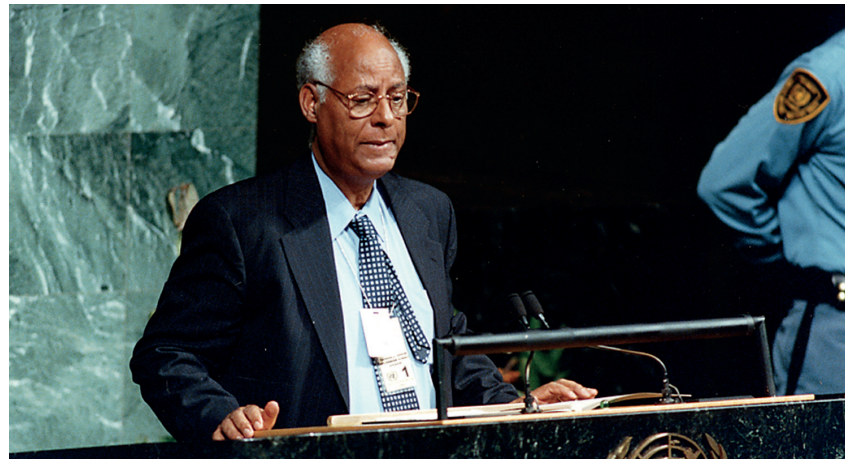
“The Promise of World Peace”, the message we addressed to the peoples of the world in 1985, set out the Bahá'í perspective on the condition of the world and the prerequisites of universal peace. It also offered the global Bahá'í community as a model for study that could reinforce hope in the possibility of uniting the human race. In the years since, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh have been patiently refining that model and working with others around them to build up and broaden a system of social organization based on His teachings. They are learning how to nurture communities that embody those prerequisites of peace we identified in 1985. They cultivate environments in which children can be raised untainted by any form of racial, national, or religious prejudice. They champion the full equality of women with men in the affairs of the community. Their programmes of education, transformative in their effects and encompassing both the material and spiritual aspects of life, welcome everyone who wishes to contribute to the community's

prosperity. In the stirrings of social action can be seen their desire to remedy the numerous ills afflicting humanity and to empower each person to become a protagonist in the building of a new world. Taking inspiration from the concept of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, they invite to their devotional meetings followers of all faiths and none. Youth, distinguished for their commitment to a society founded on peace and justice, are engaging their like-minded peers in the work of building communities on this foundation. In the institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly exists the spiritual authority and the administrative capacity to govern in servitude, to resolve conflicts, and to build unity; the electoral process through which Assemblies are formed is itself an expression of peace, in contrast to the vitriol and even violence that often accompanies elections in the wider society. Implicit in all these dimensions of an open, expanding community is the foundational recognition that all of humanity are the children of one Creator.

The friends are also developing their capacity for engaging those around them, regardless of creed, culture, class, or ethnicity, in conversations about how to bring about spiritual and material well-being through systematic application of the divine teachings. One gratifying result of this growing capacity is the community's increased ability to make meaningful contributions to various important discourses prevalent in society; in certain countries, leaders and thinkers striving to address the challenges confronting their societies increasingly show appreciation for the perspectives offered by Bahá'ís. These contributions articulate insights derived from Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, draw on the experience being generated by the believers around the world, and aim to elevate the discussion above the acrimony and contention that so often prevent discourses of society from progressing. Further, the ideas and lines of reasoning advanced by Bahá'ís are reinforced by their practice of consultation. Sensitized as they are to the importance of harmony and the fruitlessness of conflict, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh seek to cultivate those conditions that are most conducive to the emergence of unity in any setting. We are heartened to see the believers expanding their efforts to participate in the discourses of society—especially those friends who, in their professional capacity, are able to contribute to discourses directly related to peace.



For Bahá'ís, the attainment of peace is not simply an aspiration to which they are sympathetic or a goal complementary to their other aims—it has always been a central concern. In a second Tablet 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace in the Hague, He asserted that “our desire for peace is not derived merely from the intellect: It is a matter of religious belief and one of the eternal foundations of the Faith of God.” He observed that for peace to be realized in the world, it was not adequate that people should be informed about the horrors of war:



TOP: Dr Hoda Mahmoudi, holder of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland, addresses the audience at the Global Transformation Conference. ABOVE: Techeste Ahderom, principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations, speaking before the Millennium Summit, September 2001, in his capacity as co-chairman of the Millennium Forum.

Today the benefits of universal peace are recognized amongst the people, and likewise the harmful effects of war are clear and manifest to all. But in this matter, knowledge alone is far from sufficient: A power of implementation is needed to establish it throughout the world.

“It is our firm belief”, He continued, “that the power of implementation in this great endeavour is the penetrating influence of the Word of God and the confirmations of the Holy Spirit.”

Certainly, then, none who are conscious of the condition of the world can refrain from giving their utmost to this endeavour and seeking those confirmations—confirmations for which we too earnestly supplicate at the Sacred Threshold on your behalf. Beloved friends: The devoted efforts that you and your like-minded collaborators are making to build communities founded on spiritual principles, to apply those principles for the betterment of your societies, and to offer the insights arising—these are the surest ways you can hasten the fulfilment of the promise of world peace.

– *The Universal House of Justice*

national news

National Convention 176 B.E.

The consultation at this year's National Convention, held in Stoke-on-Trent from 26-28 April, was guided, inspired and uplifted by the Ridván message from the Universal House of Justice

WITH THE APPROACH of the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb, there was a keen awareness at National Convention of the “extraordinary effusion of heavenly grace”¹ pouring forth in these fleeting days. This, combined with a consciousness of the accelerating forces of disintegration in every land, imbued the consultations with a sense of urgency. The “pure joy in engaging souls in meaningful and uplifting conversations”² was particularly highlighted. The need for the friends to give more time to the work, to act and reflect frequently, and then to apply what has been learnt, was evident. “Small steps, if they are regular and rapid, add up to a great distance travelled.”³

The Ridván message of the Universal House of Justice illuminated the consultations with the exhilarating news of victories won in recent months, the thrilling prospect of momentous developments ahead — including the

construction of the Shrine of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Holy Land — and clear guidance for the immediate months before us leading up to the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb.

Early in the Convention, a letter setting out the challenges for the UK Bahá'í community was addressed to the delegates by the National Assembly. The Assembly also set out some questions about which it sought the views of the delegates. It was notable how, without exception, each contribution aimed to share or seek insights that would advance the work of the Five Year Plan. The inspirational and rich understandings and learnings shared by Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi gave essential direction to the consultation.

The election of the National Spiritual Assembly was carried out in an atmosphere of prayerful devotion. Of the 95 delegates, 94 voted and 90 were present at the Convention. The following friends were elected to the National Assembly. The officers were subsequently elected and are indicated:

Vivien Craig (Vice-Chairman), Annabel Djalili, Barney Leith, Fidelma Meehan, Wendi Momen, Patrick O'Mara (Secretary), Darren Smith (Treasurer), Olinga Tahzib (Chairman), Robert Weinberg.

Following the announcement of the election results, the National Assembly and Convention expressed their profound appreciation to Vafa Ram for his many years of service to the institution and the UK Bahá'í community.

Convention closed with a stronger commitment from all present to work with increased dedication in the next six months leading up to the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb.

1. *Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2019*

2. *ibid*

3. *Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2016*



worldwide

The Call of the Divine Beloved

A new volume of Bahá'u'lláh's mystical works is now available in print and online

THE CALL OF the Divine Beloved contains five newly published selections from Bahá'u'lláh's writings, including a poem revealed during His time in the Black Pit of Tehran. The book also contains revised translations of two of Bahá'u'lláh's best-known works, the Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys.

For the first time, an authorized English translation of one of Bahá'u'lláh's most renowned poetic works, Rashh-i-'Ama, or The Clouds of the Realms Above, is made available. Perhaps the earliest fruit of Bahá'u'lláh's pen, Rashh-i-'Ama is one of the few writings He authored in His native land of Persia. The work, composed in 1852 during His four-month imprisonment in the Black Pit, is a poetic reflection on His first intimations of His station as a Manifestation of God.

The remaining six of the publication's seven works were revealed by Bahá'u'lláh during His time in Iraq, from 1853 to 1863. After being released from His cruel and unjust imprisonment in Tehran, Bahá'u'lláh and His family were banished to Baghdad in a perilous journey through the dead of winter. For three months they traversed the snowy mountains of Western Iran, inadequately equipped for the conditions and with Bahá'u'lláh Himself physically frail from His months of imprisonment in abhorrent conditions.

In Baghdad, a small and dejected band of Bábís, whose Leader had been executed by firing squad nearly three years earlier, had fallen into a state of disarray and disunity. Bahá'u'lláh withdrew Himself from the turmoil of the community to the mountains of Kurdistan, where He lived a life of solitude, in near-constant prayer and meditation for



The Call of the Divine Beloved is available from www.bahaibooks.org.uk or to download at www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/bahauallah/call-divine-beloved/

two years—a period reminiscent of Moses' withdrawal to Mount Sinai, Christ's 40 days and nights in the wilderness, and Muhammad's retreat to the cave on Mount Hira.

Assuming the identity of a dervish and clad in humble garb, Bahá'u'lláh was at first unknown to the people of the region. Stories soon spread of a man of extraordinary wisdom and eloquence found in the mountains. Numerous religious leaders and mystics were drawn to Bahá'u'lláh, often travelling long distances to visit Him.

Two years after His withdrawal, Bahá'u'lláh, at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's request, returned to Baghdad, a moment Shoghi Effendi has described as "a turning point of the utmost significance in the history of the first Bahá'í century." Bahá'u'lláh's return revived and animated the Bábí community.

The subsequent period, Shoghi Effendi wrote, saw an "enormous expansion in the scope and volume of Bahá'u'lláh's writings...". The Sufis and clerics who had come to revere Bahá'u'lláh while He was in the mountains of Kurdistan were now flocking to Baghdad to visit Him. It was during those years that He penned some of His most renowned works, including the Seven Valleys. **BWNS**

Strive but a little to soar, that, by the grace of Him Who is the eternal King, thou mayest ascend from the dust-heap of utter non-existence unto the loftiest heights of ancient glory.

— Bahá'u'lláh



around the UK

Everyday heroes

Stories from around the United Kingdom show that everyone can make a difference in their community and begin a process of transformation

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL

SINA AND SHOLEH Hakiman have lived in their neighbourhood in Hull for a number of years. Although it is always quiet and peaceful, there is a culture of people keeping to themselves. Supported by three friends from the cluster, it was decided that they would reach out to their neighbours, to establish a feeling of unity and friendship, and to host gatherings on a regular basis.

On the road where Sina and Sholeh live two separate elderly neighbours invited the friends into their homes. During both visits, there was a deep sense of connection. Both of the neighbours shared feelings of isolation and loneliness and were evidently touched to receive guests,

expressing their desire to know others in their community. They were reassured by the offer of being collected by the friends to walk with them to the gathering. They were also invited to bring along anything they wanted to share, and brought poems and a prayer.

There was a warm and inclusive atmosphere, and Bahá'í writings were sung in a lively atmosphere of music and joy. Those gathered also discussed how they could, as a group, invite neighbours to attend regular gatherings, share uplifting words, stories and establish stronger bonds of unity with one another. Since that meeting, both these neighbours have been visited again. One of them, who is 92, invited them in, and they shared prayers and Bible readings together. Weekly home visits are now planned.

GLASGOW

SYSTEMATIC EFFORTS to engage the Iranian population of Glasgow in teaching, community-building and fellowship activities began in 2015. Currently there are more than 45 individuals and children who are engaged in an ongoing conversation with the Bahá'í friends. Around 20 of these friends participate in a fortnightly fireside and attend Holy Days. There are three study circles, one junior youth group and two children's classes. More regularly, the team consults with the Auxiliary Board Member and local and regional institutions. One of the Bahá'í friends shared the following plans that have emerged from these consultations: "One major area of learning at present is to increase the home visits and make these structured and systematic. It is our hope that these efforts at capacity building will lead to the formation of nuclei, increase the number of devotionals, study circles, junior youth groups, local tutor encounters, and more. We are also mindful of ensuring that those who have embraced the Faith begin to integrate into the wider Bahá'í community. On a home visit yesterday, the friend being visited expressed her wish to embrace the Faith!"

BELFAST

IN BELFAST, a relationship has been cultivated over a number of years with the community development officer — a Christian — who loves the spirit of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme. Now, a few Bahá'ís also sit on the community centre committee and the conversation has extended beyond the Bahá'í programmes. The Community Development Officer's boss has also been involved in the question of how to develop the Programme in another neighbourhood close by. Recently, through these connections, Belfast City Council arranged for more than 60 children, junior youth and other friends involved in the Windsor neighbourhood activities, to be taken on a group

outing to a local ice rink.

One of the teachers wrote the following to the parents of the children in her class after the trip:

"I just wanted to say I was so proud and moved by the children on ice. I'm not a great skater and I know it takes courage, persistence and determination along with a lot of balance to go on the ice rink and stay there. None of the children gave up, they kept going and the ones who were great at skating were helping with encouraging words and a hand to get up. I will cherish this memory in my heart."

SWANSEA

A PROJECT TO TELL people in one neighbourhood about community building activities resulted in 112 conversations. After a quick explanation of who the Bahá'ís are and what they are doing, 54 people said they would like to hear more. Of these, 34 asked for the friends to go back and visit them again. From this group they are hopeful of starting a couple of study circles. In one street in particular there were many mothers interested in bringing the community together, and in children's classes in particular, so this is where the follow-up will start. Two youth from this street came to a South Wales youth gathering at the end of the week and have asked if they can help with activities for young people in the neighbourhood. Another youth gathering is planned for early June, and they now want to invite their friends to this. In one street in particular there were many mums interested in bringing the community together and in children's classes in particular, so this is where we will start our follow-up. Two youth from this street came to a South Wales youth gathering at the end of the week (which had over 20 youth from across South Wales) and have asked if they can help us with our activities for young people in the neighbourhood. Another youth gathering is planned for early June, and they now want to invite their friends to this.



HIGHLANDS

AURELIE WALKER-DEAN recently moved to a small village in the Scottish Highlands where there is a large evangelical Christian community, as well as others who don't belong to the Church. Through her daughter's school, this friend quickly made a wide circle of contacts, many of whom had not heard of the Faith. She decided to connect further with the local community during the Twin Holy Days, using the traditional Highland art of storytelling. Separated from other Bahá'ís by mountains, seas, and vast empty spaces, she called upon a friend 130 miles away who agreed to help. A Christian-led outdoor centre in the village was booked, but later cancelled the booking as its policies stated it could not be used for other religious purposes. Undeterred, the two decided to use the landscape as their venue and planned a storytelling walk along a riverside path and through the woods. Selected places along the route were chosen for the group to stop, listen to, and be inspired by the stories. Some 20 adults and 10 children took part, enjoying conversations in a special, spiritual atmosphere. The nearest community supported as well and helped to prepare a tea at the village hall. A table had been set up by a wonderfully creative junior youth, with plenty of pencils to keep the children busy as the adults chatted. Relationships and uplifting conversations have since continued. The participants, as well as other children and parents, are currently being invited to join a children's class in the village.



worldwide

Inspired by heroism

Studying the stories of the early heroes of Bábí and Bahá'í history led one friend to declare his faith

REUBEN MONDESIR from Manchester took part in a study class on The Dawn-Breakers at the North of England Summer School in 2018. The group read passages, either together or in smaller groups, pausing to reflect and share their thoughts on what had been read. This helped the group to reach a shared understanding of the text and think deeply about the inner meaning of the passages.

“Reading the acts of sacrifice these souls went through with a sense of utter bliss,” says Reuben, “followed by the stories of the friends attending the summer school who had personally — or whose families had been — afflicted by such tyranny, really aided my sense of immersion in the Faith and led to me to declaring. Further, being able to watch The Gate and performing inspired by The Dawn-Breakers only served

to enhance the overall experience.”

On returning to his home cluster of Greater Manchester, the experience of the summer school and study of the early history of the Faith propelled Reuben into a new life and a real desire to serve in whatever manner arose.

“When it was proposed to me to offer a study of The Dawn-Breakers in the neighbourhood, I was, at first, uncertain of my own capacity but leapt at the chance to be immersed in nineteenth century Persia and the stories of the Báb again,” Reuben said.

Following consultation and reflection with two other friends, a collective study of The Dawn-Breakers began on Monday evenings. It begins with a short devotional followed by participants reading through the narrative until they feel they wish to share a reflection or ask a question.

“Ideally, we read through a chapter each session, but the focus is not on finishing the book as quickly as possible,” says Reuben. “Further, having the consistent open study space has created new opportunities in the cluster for friends to participate in spiritual education. It also allows for flexibility so visiting friends can join in the study whenever possible.”

“This opportunity to study, reflect and meditate on this sacred history of the early believers of the Faith is a blessing to the community and expanding the group is an ongoing process.” AM





feature article

Going where the need is greatest

From the very inception of the Bahá'í Faith, a vital strategy has been the carrying of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to places they have not yet reached – an act known as pioneering

THE BÁB INSTRUCTED His first followers, the Letters of the Living, to disperse throughout Iran and share His Message. This was pivotal in preparing the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.

From then on, pioneering has become more systematised. Friends are either called to settle in localities not yet open to the Faith, or where those on the ground require support in establishing a new pattern of community life.

One of the areas where the need for pioneers is particularly acute today is the Balkans. Some of those friends who have recently served, or are currently serving, as pioneers in the area have been sharing their experiences.



Carly Thaggard, who pioneered in Montenegro for two years before recently returning to the United States, explained that pioneering is not just an action but an attitude where the vision of Bahá'u'lláh becomes central to reality. Carly and her husband were attracted to pioneering because they wanted to “go where the need was greatest” and where they could be of most service to the Cause. Andisheh Namvari from the United Kingdom, who has been in Montenegro for more than three years, explained that, though the opportunity to pioneer “randomly came up,” she quickly booked her flights, as her decisions “revolve around what [she] can do to serve”.

After making the life-altering decision to move from their home countries, the pioneers spoke about their first experiences in their new homes. Carly neatly summarised her initial experience as “really great, and really challenging.” Eamon Fehilly, who started serving with Andisheh and

another pioneer, Alex Afnan, and has also been living in Montenegro for more than three years, echoed this. “Every new start is difficult,” he explained, “I had never visited the Balkans and had no experience or particular knowledge of the culture or people.” Andisheh said “It was daunting, moving to a new country I hadn’t even heard of — but I was also excited and glad I was going with Eamon and Alex. I don’t think I could have done it alone at the beginning.”

Initial challenges aside, the three pioneers all stressed the importance of engaging with the local community as early as possible. Pioneering, Carly said, allowed her to gain an insight into the spirituality of every human being and that “insurmountable barriers were actually superficial.”

This capacity to engage with the local community as protagonists in the community-building process was practically fostered, Eamon explained, by trying “to be part of the local community”. “We were involving locals as much as possible,” Andisheh added.

“We attended many activities organized by local NGOs and that has enabled us to meet many of our friends that ended up attending our own devotional meetings and junior youth classes,” said Eamon, who met his wife in Montenegro and now has a young son. He has truly put down roots in the community. They have established a real estate business that has “helped a lot in spreading the word about this wonderful country and all the opportunities it offers.” Even starting this business became an opportunity to share the Faith: “By growing our own business in an honest, transparent and legal way, we strive to be an example for business owners as well as young entrepreneurs in Montenegro.”

Each of the pioneers drew attention to the reality of

pioneering as being a very intense experience of crisis and victory. “Be conscious that family life is different,” Carly said, explaining one of her own personal challenges — having her baby in Montenegro, the first Bahá'í baby ever born there. “Women need to be advocated for,” she stated. However, even this difficult process was an opportunity to build capacity as she described how she began to entirely rely entirely upon Bahá'u'lláh in the face of personal tests and in the community.

When she did this, she found that opportunities presented themselves. Not knowing the language, she explains, was initially limiting, but by putting their reliance in God, they were able to meet a woman who had the skills they lacked — speaking the language and being involved with many of the junior youth in the neighbourhood already. “When it became tough,” she said, “we would pray for Bahá'u'lláh to put us in front of the right people.”

“Sustainability has been a challenge but it is something that we are focused on improving,” Eamon explained. He can also point to the growth of the community around him, with persistent effort, and the joy it brings him and the wider neighbourhood: “The transformation that the Faith and its teachings brought to so many people around me is a continuous inspiration — from our circle of friends and junior youth to children participating in our classes. This is a lasting investment we consciously make to this country and its citizens. Our six-month-old son Alexander, who was born in Montenegro, is our biggest motivation and inspiration. He is the future of Montenegro and it is in the hands of his generation to bring a new order to this country and region. I am excited to see him spread the teachings of the Faith to those around him.”

For Andisheh, one of the challenges was the attitude of Montenegrins' towards religion, which was one of suspicion, particularly towards foreigners who share it with others. However, she outlined how, with dedication, the pioneers in the area were able to establish a more systematic method of teaching. As a team, they introduced clear cycles, expansion phases and collective teaching campaigns, a devotional, two junior youth groups and a children's class.

Reflecting on the core activities and the achievement of Montenegro's first Local Spiritual Assembly, Andisheh said: “I've learnt so much, things I probably wouldn't have learned if I hadn't been dropped in at the deep end. When you're a pioneer in such a small country, you essentially have to play all the roles, you're the Area Teaching Committee (which doesn't exist yet), you're the Local Assembly, you're the animator, you plan the cycles, you plan yearly numerical goals for the country. One person wears a lot of hats so you really learn about all aspects of the institute process.” She also spoke about the more general progress for the country, seeing social and economic aspects of development considering the financial struggles in the area.

Each of the pioneers outlined the fact that they relied on one another, sharing the joys and shouldering the work of the community-building process. But these resources continue to be limited and the region will still benefit from those who

feel they can serve in this capacity. Each participant said they would encourage believers to consider pioneering if they felt inspired to do so in their hearts and were willing to pursue something difficult but always rewarding.

Andisheh finished declaring her experience by outlining that this is a “special time which will never come again. It's historic. And it's really helpful when pioneers come.” **SG**



feature article

We can be heroes... for ever and ever

The idea of the hero goes back to the very beginning of story-telling. But what kind of heroic acts are Bahá'ís called upon to perform in this day?

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA of a hero? The word, these days, is maybe used too much and valued too little. Casually tossed into private chatter or public discourse, you might be “holding out for a hero”; you may say that “not all heroes wear capes”; we see people fall from grace in the public eye, going “from hero to zero”; maybe “we don’t need another hero”. And, of course, a good evening can be spent in front of the television, working your way through a carton of Cadbury’s Heroes, perhaps watching heroes of the non-fattening kind in action: scoring a winning goal; blowing things up; turning back time to alter the course of events; saving the day; lifting the glitterball trophy at the climax of their *Strictly Come Dancing* journey.

Superhero movies are the most popular genre in the cinema, where Marvel rules the box office. To some, such films might seem trivial distractions. To others, they represent a breakthrough in depicting minorities and outliers. Many people welcome these films and the conversations they engender as contributions to public discourse — challenging stereotypes, promoting more authentic representation. It’s significant that *Black Panther* is the first superhero movie to have been nominated for Best Picture Oscar. The fact that it offers an alternate story about African culture and heritage from those usually told makes it even more important. *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse*, which won Best Animated Feature Film this year, has its teenage mixed-race hero web-slinging through an intercultural city which foregrounds images and issues about diversity and unity. These are important gains for many people who have felt themselves neglected in terms of positive stories and role models. The success of these superhero tales can change how communities see themselves — and how the rest of us see them.

Heroes exist in many senses, going back in history to the

very beginning of story-telling or in contemporary life. They may be rewarded for achievements in their field or ignored, even punished, in their own time for who they are, what they say, what they do — and how they admonish us to think and act. Their names and reputations have been tarnished down the ages by gatekeepers of knowledge, news and “truth”. This still happens with regard to individuals who lived hundreds, even thousands of years ago. Yet to those who love them and try to live in accord with their teachings, these towering figures are undoubtedly heroes.

The Bahá'í Faith has a clearly defined Heroic Age, beginning with the Declaration of the Báb in 1844 and closing with the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1921. Today, however, there are still acts of heroic sacrifice and particular service which the Bahá'ís in Iran and Yemen and other parts of the world are called upon to make. Is that the kind of heroism expected of all of us in this day? A letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi suggests otherwise:

Every day has certain needs. In those early days the Cause needed Martyrs, and people who would stand all sorts of torture and persecution in expressing their faith and spreading the message sent by God. Those days are, however, gone. The Cause at present does not need martyrs who would die for the faith, but servants who desire to teach and establish the Cause throughout the world. To live to teach in the present day is like being martyred in those early days. It is the spirit that moves us that counts, not the act through which that spirit expresses itself; and that spirit is to serve the Cause of God with our heart and soul.¹

So while some may live their life, aspiring to live the line from a 1977 David Bowie song, “We can be heroes — just for one day,” Bahá'ís are called upon to be heroes every day. **GB**

¹ From a letter dated 3 August 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer



ABOVE: Mirza 'Ali Muhammad Varqa (*right*), the prominent poet with his son, Ruhullah (*left*). Varqa was named posthumously as a Hand of the Cause of God by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi designated him as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. Ruhullah was called by Bahá'u'lláh "honourable teacher". This photograph was taken shortly before they were executed.



LEFT: Áqá Buzurg-i-Nishapuri, known as Badí', was a rebellious youth who became an outstanding follower of Bahá'u'lláh. After delivering Bahá'u'lláh's message to the Shah of Persia, Badí' was tortured and put to death.

our spiritual heritage

“His Honour” Daniel Jenkyn

*How a young Cornishman’s dedication
captured the attention of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

IN MANY RESPECTS, Cornwall is not a quintessential English county. Its inhabitants have maintained their distinct culture. Its cuisine has won global renown. Its beauty has inspired poets and writers. The quality of its light has attracted countless artists to its shores. Little wonder, then, that from this unique part of the United Kingdom arose a spiritual hero. He is barely known today but, from the time of his acceptance of the Bahá'í Teachings to his untimely death at the age of 30, Daniel Jenkyn displayed such exemplary dedication to the Cause that he deeply impressed the Centre of the Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. But who was Daniel Jenkyn?

Surviving photographs show Daniel to have been slim and upright, with dark hair and strongly defined features. He was born in St. Ives and spent his days working as a clerk for a steamship company. In 1910, while Daniel was in his mid-twenties, he was travelling on a train to London when he encountered Dorothy Hodgson. She spoke to him of the Bahá'í teachings. Dorothy introduced Daniel to Luṭfu’lláh Ḥakím — a young Persian who was studying in Britain — who further satisfied Daniel’s inner yearning for truth.

Daniel wasted no time in promoting his new-found Faith. In the summer of 1911, he even walked the whole way from Cornwall to Liverpool, speaking en route to almost anyone who was willing to listen to him. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was staying in London, Daniel longed to see Him. Unable to take leave, he took a Saturday-night train from Cornwall bound for the capital, in a third-class carriage. Daniel had only a few hours in the Master’s presence on the Sunday morning before having to return home to resume work the following day.

Although isolated from the majority of British Bahá'ís, Daniel became close friends with a Mr. Wright, an older, unlettered, Cornish fisherman who also came to recognise the message of Bahá'u'lláh. The crowning glory of Daniel’s short life, however, was an impromptu teaching trip to the Netherlands in 1913. Having a few days left of his holiday, Daniel spent three days teaching the Faith. He used connections in the Christian Commonwealth Fellowship to meet like-minded souls. Daniel himself attests to meeting with a member of the Fellowship and having “a spiritual talk”. He proclaimed the Faith directly to other members of the Fellowship and their friends. “I... returned to my little town in Cornwall... feeling overjoyed” he reflected.

After sending a report to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – of what is possibly one of the earliest travel-teaching trips – Daniel received a Tablet. Addressing him as “his honour Daniel Jenkyn”,



ABOVE: Daniel Jenkyn (right) with Luṭfu’lláh Ḥakím (left)

'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote, "A thousand times bravo because thou didst forego the physical comfort... to proclaim the glad-tidings". "This voyage", the Master continued, "may assume the importance of the voyage of Peter and Paul when the latter went to Antioch."

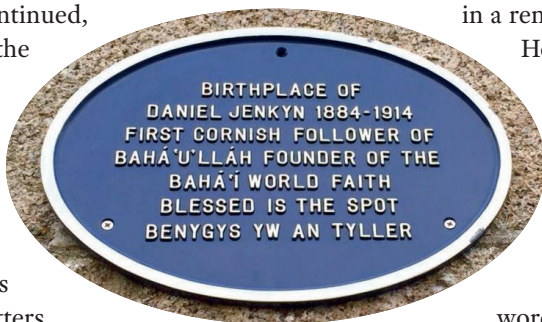
But what seemed a promising life of dedicated service was crushed in its infancy. In 1914, as the Great War ravaged Europe, Daniel was struck down by a serious case of influenza. In one of his last letters, dated 22 November 1914, he expressed his longing to travel to 'Akká and recover so that he might serve. The fever abated but then returned. Daniel Jenkyn died on 31

December 1914 at the tender age of 30.

Daniel Jenkyn was not a wealthy man. He was isolated in a remote town. He lacked family support.

He was young. There were none of the institutions or translated writings that we today have. Yet what he was inspired to do during his short life as a Bahá'í transcended material limitations. When the tests seemed too onerous, Daniel must have sought comfort in the words written to him by the beloved

Master: "I pray... that thou mayest become the proclaimer of God... mayest become lighted like a torch and bestow the light of guidance." NR



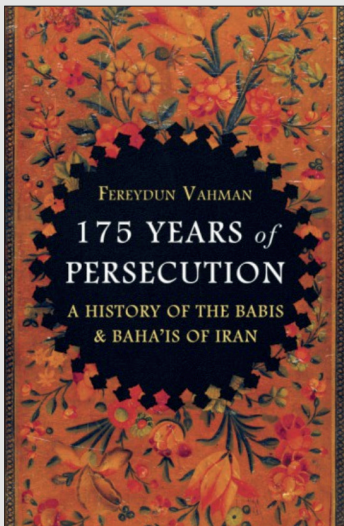
*I pray... that thou mayest become
the proclaimer of God... mayest
become lighted like a torch and
bestow the light of guidance.*

— 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Daniel Jenkyn

books

Resilience in the face of persecution

Great works of history are themselves history-making, because they transform distant occurrences from the past into a narrative about our current struggle to build a better future



**175 YEARS OF PERSECUTION
THE HISTORY OF THE BABÍ'S &
BAHÁ'ÍS OF IRAN**

BY FEREYDUN VAHMAN

IN READING THIS gripping and meticulously documented historical narrative, the reader is struck by the continuity between past and present.

175 Years of Persecution is a comprehensive and heart-breaking, infuriating but incisive, eloquent yet scholarly account of a virulent, obsessive hatred that has profoundly shaped the construction of Iran's modern identity. The surfacing, at long last, of this dark and despicable past, and the awakening of enlightened Iranian leaders of thought to this grave injustice, embody an aspiration to live in a just society in which all Iranians

enjoy equal rights, irrespective of belief.

The original Persian edition of Professor Vahman's book is now widely considered the authoritative historical source on the persecution of Iranian Bahá'ís. It has become a focal point for understanding the catastrophic consequences for all Iranians of systematic inhumanity against a peaceful and progressive community in their midst. What is perhaps most remarkable is not the more than a century-and-a-half of relentless cruelty and oppression, but the astonishing resilience of the Bahá'í community in the face of such hatred and violence. Despite so many years of unceasing efforts, the clerical establishment has failed to extinguish either the existence or the spirit of the Bahá'í community. On the contrary, the purveyors of religious hatred are confronted today with the manifest failure of their efforts, in view of an unprecedented outpouring of sympathy and support for Bahá'ís.

The book is at once a historical epic, a labour of love, and a moral challenge. Professor Vahman's dignified contribution to historical knowledge is a poignant demonstration of scholarship as resistance against oppression, a reminder that a new and better world begins with the power of words and enlightenment of minds. In this ground-breaking work, he has given us a gift for generations to come: a window into a dark past, but also a door to a bright future.

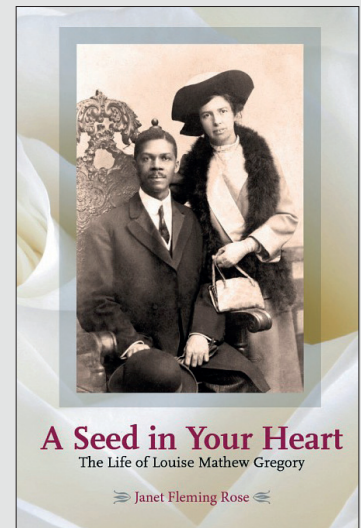
In sum, this book is a history-making work of history, an exceptional book written in an exceptional time in the modern evolution of an ancient nation. Against the backdrop of a grave, historical injustice, it is a narrative rooted in the search for redemption against overwhelming odds. **PA**

'...offers a lucid academic account of the lives of the Bahá'ís under such intolerable conditions... This book is a must-read for all interested in modern Iran.'

— Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, Professor of History, University of Toronto

Heroic agents of change

The lives of two women — one a Bahá'í and the other with Bahá'í connections — are highlighted in two fascinating new biographies



**A SEED IN YOUR HEART:
THE LIFE OF LOUISE
MATHEW GREGORY**

BY JANET FLEMING ROSE

HEROISM COMES in many guises, some of it known to many, and some of it quiet, hidden. Louise Mathew Gregory's heroism was of the latter kind. Overshadowed by her more famous husband — the Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory — Louise's life of service to humanity and to the Bahá'í Faith have not been well known up until now.

Born in Penge, Kent, Louise first encountered the Bahá'í teachings in Paris in 1909, introduced by Edith Sanderson. During that time, Louise met and became lifelong friends with Marion Jack, later to be a redoubtable Bahá'í teacher and pioneer. Having first come into the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Ramleh, Egypt, Louise made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in April 1911. It was here that she

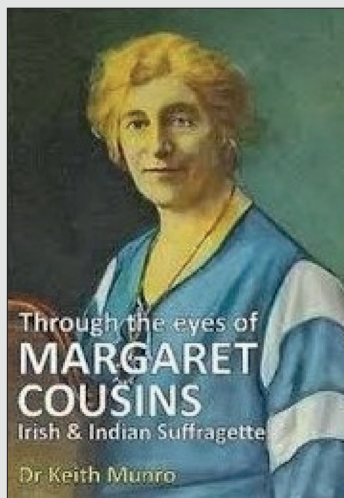
encountered Louis Gregory, whom she was later to marry with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's encouragement. At the time of the pilgrimage Louise was 45 and Louis was 36.

Marion Jack described Louise as a 'quiet little mouse'. That may be so, but she did not hesitate to suggest to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that she might accompany Him to America. He responded that she might go later, but she persisted. He told her that she could go, but warned her that she would have difficulties. Then He said: "I will strengthen you."

Both Louise and Louis were present at the laying of the foundation stone of the House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois. Around this time, 'Abdu'l-Bahá began to hint that they should marry. Neither she nor Louis, who was deeply engrossed in his work as a lawyer and his Bahá'í service, had any thoughts of marriage before this. This marriage of two such different people — one black, the other white, of different nationalities, cultures and social backgrounds — was highly improbable. And in parts of the USA it was illegal. Despite this, Louis and Louise were united by their allegiance to the Bahá'í Cause and their love for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Theirs was an enduring marriage of two soul-mates who loved each other deeply.

Louise was the first Bahá'í to teach the Faith in Luxembourg and — after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit — in Hungary. She was also the first Bahá'í pioneer to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. She, Marion Jack and Martha Root were a formidable teaching team. Louise's efforts to take the Bahá'í teachings to the Balkans earned her the praise of Shoghi Effendi, who also wrote approvingly of the "small band of women pioneers who, single-handed and with scanty resources are toiling for the advent of the Day 'Abdu'l-Bahá has foretold."

Janet Fleming Rose has rendered an important service in writing this rich and deeply researched biography of an independent-minded and adventurous woman whose heroism can now be fully appreciated. **BL**



**THROUGH THE EYES OF
MARGARET COUSINS: IRISH
AND INDIAN SUFFRAGETTE**

BY DR KEITH MUNRO

IN ITS LETTER of 18 January 2019, published at the front of this issue of UK Bahá'í, the Universal House of Justice describes how global peace can best be achieved by community building. Dr. Keith Munro's book, documenting key events in the life of his great aunt 100 years ago, demonstrates the point. Margaret "Gretta" Cousins and her husband Jim had an extraordinary relationship that propelled them to become indomitable agents of social change in Ireland and in India.

Along with others, they founded the Irish Women's Franchise League in 1908. Gretta was imprisoned in Holloway and in Tullamore for breaking windows. They left Ireland in 1915 to serve at the headquarters of the International Theosophical Society in India. She was the first non-Indian woman magistrate in India, founded both the All India Women's Conference and the All Asian Women's Conference, and in 1932 spoke publicly against the emergency powers in India that prevented freedom of speech. For this she was imprisoned for 10 months.

This book demonstrates how social change is more successfully achieved through community-building activities. Women in India received the franchise must faster than those in the United

Kingdom. It could be argued that the spectacular activities of the suffragettes created additional resistance to their cause. In India, Gretta changed her methods, becoming more suffragist in approach, without force or violence. Through the All-India Women's Conference, she empowered Indian women to articulate their priorities for change. In a very short space of time all the states in India gave women the vote, as well as addressing other priorities including education for girls and health issues.

The book will be found fascinating by those with an interest in Irish and Indian history. For Bahá'ís it has particular additional value for several reasons. It describes in detail the social milieu at the beginning of the twentieth century, covering the period when 'Abdu'l-Bahá twice visited Britain, and references many of the personages who visited the Master. There are explicit references to the Faith that describe Mrs Shirin Fozdar as an Iranian representative at the first All-Asian Women's Conference, and an account of an unexpected meeting between Gretta and Shoghi Effendi in 1932. **EG**

Where to Buy

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The History of the Babís

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A Seed in Your Heart:

The Life of Louise

Mathew Gregory

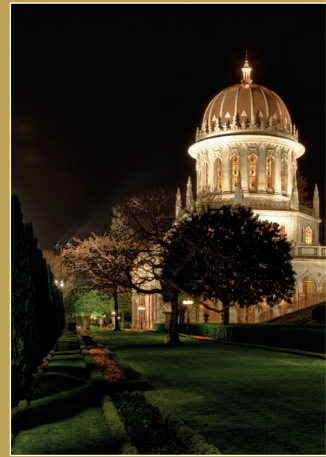
grbooks.com

Through the Eyes of
Margaret Cousins: Irish
and Indian Suffragette is
available from the author:

ckmunro@btinternet.com

*“Thus shall a sorry gnat become
an eagle in the fullness of his
strength, and a feeble sparrow
change to a royal falcon in the
heights of ancient glory.”*

– ‘Abdu’l-Bahá



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Published by the National Spiritual
Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the
United Kingdom.

Registered in England – Company
limited by guarantee No.355737,
Registered Charity (1967) 250851.

Registered with the Scottish Charity
Regulators (SC041673)

The Assembly also represents the
Bahá'í communities of the Isle of
Man and the Channel Islands.