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PILGRIM'S IMPRESSION OF THE WORLD CENTRE
BY

MR. BILL WASHINGTON

WHO MADE THE VISIT DURING

JAN 1957

“Foremost among my impressions of the pilgrimage, which I passed on briefly to an informal gathering of Adelaide friends, is that the beloved Guardian is at present very happy with the world crusade and the worldwide achievements of the Faith. Another pilgrim, Mr. Ḥabíbu’lláh Sabet of Ṭíhrán, commented that in the many visits he had made to Haifa, he had never seen the Guardian happier and this would be easy to conceive - as he was continually smiling, laughing and even at times joking with the pilgrims. It was really wonderful to see.

The beloved Guardian outlined the spread of the Faith during the past four years of the World Crusade. The number of centres now totals 4000 throughout 250 centuries, territories and islands. 102 islands have now been embraced in the spread of the Faith, 40 of these lying within the vast Pacific area. Of the 131 territories named in the Ten Year Plan, more than 100 were opened during the first year and now the Faith has spread to the entire world with the exception of four islands and portion of the Soviet territory. One pioneer has carried the Faith to Thule in Greenland, to a latitude of 76 degrees north and literature has been circulated among the Eskimos up to 80 degrees north. Literature has also been sent to McMurdo Island in the Antarctica, almost the same latitude south. Translations now total 220 languages.

The Faith now includes in its membership approximately 3000 members of the Black race - Negroes from Africa, and 2000 members of the brown race - Polynesians from Gilbert and Ellice and Indonesians from Mentawai. These have greatly gladdened the Guardian's heart and he Spoke many times of the spread of the Faith amongst these people - as he says, the World's population is

predominantly coloured and therefore the Faith must also comprise a majority of these people.

We have nearly finished Our Ten Year Plan in the first four years, was our Guardian's summing up. But this is only the first plan; and not the last. These nuclei must be firmly established and expanded.

The most important phase of activity at present, stressed the beloved Guardian, is the teaching of new believers. The Faith has spread over the entire globe and has proved its world-embracing scope. Now the greatest importance must be placed on increasing the number of individual believers. The individual believers are the first step and are essential in the formation of the Local Spiritual Assemblies. These assemblies are then the foundation of the Administrative Order and on this foundation will be erected the Pillars - the National (Assemblies). On these Pillars will rest the Dome of the Administrative Order - the Universal House of Justice and the World Centre of the Order of Bahá'í-

The first stone of this Dome has now been erected on Mt. Carmel this is the new Archives building, now nearing completion, which will form part of the World Centre, together with the other administrative buildings - the Universal House of Justice, Institution of Guardianship and Institution of the Hands of the Cause.

The Holy Shrine of the Báb is to be between two mighty edifices on Mt. Carmel. To the north, the Administrative Arc, circling on the Tomb gardens, with the new Archives building on the southern end of this Arc and to the south the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its dependencies on a promontory of Mt. Carmel. This will form the twin centres of the Faith - the Administrative and Spiritual.

Our Guardian spoke several times of two mighty plans operating in the world at present - God's Major Plan and the Minor Plan. He warned that God's Major Plan may interrupt our own Minor Plan but this should be no cause for worry. God's Major Plan works in very mysterious ways - ways that we cannot comprehend - and uses calamities, disasters and natural upheavals, as part of its means. It is not a thing to speculate upon because we cannot comprehend it - we must go on striving to promote the Minor Plan, and leave God's mysterious workings in His Own Hands. The mass acceptance of the Faith which must come sooner or later will be through this major Plan of God.

The beloved Guardian pictured a great spiritual future for Australia and Japan, who must work in the closest harmony, relinquishing all racial prejudices. The Faith had been firmly established, in both Australia and Japan, during the lifetime of the Master, in response to the Divine Plan and because of this, they will be the spiritual leaders of the Pacific. It is their destiny.

Our Guardian also spoke very lovingly of Mother Dunn and said that she must be very proud of her many spiritual children, both in Australia and many far flung places.

It would be my greatest desire to convey to you the atmosphere of those Most

Holy Shrines of Haifa and Bahjí. Their physical description is simple but conveys nothing of their atmosphere - and that I am afraid, is far beyond the scope of my words.

The Holy Shrine of the Báb is much visited by the local people of Israel and even these, unacquainted as they are with the depth and significance of the Faith and the station of its three central Figures are obviously affected by the potency of that sacred spot. At first frankly curious as any Sightseer, once they have entered the Shrine of the Báb, their whole attitude is so obviously transformed, their questions come in hushed tones of reverence for a majesty they cannot comprehend and the attitude of many is one of puzzlement and awe, so much are their hearts affected by that holy atmosphere, which they cannot but feel even though they understand it little.

To me, the Holy Shrines were vastly different in atmosphere. The Shrine of the Báb filled as it seemed to be, with a feeling of sorrow, with the atmosphere of the Heroic Age and the deeds and wondrous steadfastness of the martyrs, so close. The Shrine of the Master seems to hold an air of happiness, as before your mind is the picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's smiling compassionate face and his constant exhortation to the souls sheltering under his spiritual wing, to 'be happy.'

But the Most Holy Shrine at Bahjí is pervaded with the mightiest atmosphere, far beyond the compass of any mortal word or expression, - an air; that overwhelms the pilgrim, dispells all thought of the outside world and seems to fill the heart well beyond capacity. It can only be described - and then in failing words - as an air of deep joy, beyond the confines of this world and a very deep spiritual peace. Perhaps 'peace' is the word, for was not this Bahá'u'lláh's constant longing for that Most Great Peace and it is in this Most Holy Shrine that the pilgrim realises with a certainty far too powerful and complete for expression, that the triumph of Bahá'u'lláh is already here, though still as yet forming before our eyes, and the Most Great Peace will be the consummation of that triumph."

PROFESSOR OF RELIGION WRITES ON MEETING SHOGHI EFFENDI.

Dr. Marcus Each of the School of Religion, University of Iowa, has written a book reporting his personal interviews with five religious personages. They are Therese Neumann, Shoghi Effendi, Helen Keller, Pope Pius XII and Albert Schweitzer.

The author's experience in meeting the Guardian is described with dignity and reverence. For the Bahá'í, this chapter is made additionally interesting by the author's account of his visits to the Prison in 'Akká, Bshji, and the gardens, and by his meeting with Rúhíyyih Khánum, Mrs Amelia Collins, Dr Luṭṭu'lláh, Mrs Leroy Ioas and Jessie and Ethel Revell.

Entitled "The Circle of Faith" the book is published by Hawthorn Books Inc.,

New York.

REFLECTIONS FROM A PIONEER

The following is quoted from the New Zealand Newsletter, published by the R.T.C. for New Zealand, and is an extract from a letter of a Pacific pioneer.)

“There are certain words and phrases in constant use among Bahá’ís which should be forever eliminated from our vocabulary. This is not hair-splitting over phraseology. Words clothe a thought, express an attitude or an emotion. These words and phrases, borrowed from the high-pressure salesmanship of the business world, are:- “contacts”; “handling contacts”; “making contacts”; “technique of...” etc...

Ponder over these for a while and I think you will recognise the picture they conjure up.

Then contrast this with the words of the beloved Exemplar, One Whose ways of teaching stand the test of passing years unblemished. What does He say? “Walk a little way with the friend until he has learned to love you; then will he turn and walk with you.”

“Hast thou love? Hast thou sympathy? Then all the stars will sing thy praises.”

“Look into the eyes of every soul as if he were a letter from God.”

“Consider the candle, how it weeps its life away that it may shed its light.”

“The Divine Teachings should be offered as you would offer a cup to a king.”

How different? How very, very different?