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Angus Cowan, Calgary, Alberta

1956

CANADA, Anticosti Island

- “If it is impossible to settle Anticosti pick another island — not one which is really an integral part of something already existing. This island can be anywhere in the world. There are many such islands but don't forget Anticosti. If necessary settle it after the Crusade. I don't give up easily.”
*

I said that when I brought this message to the NSA it would necessarily be treated as a pilgrim's note. He replied that due to the urgency of the situation the NSA could treat this as an exception. (The message has since been confirmed in essence in a letter from Shoghi Effendi)

On another evening he was discussing Spain and asked about the gypsies. Upon learning that there are gypsies in most countries of the world he said — with a smile, and a twinkle in his eye, that he would welcome a gypsy convert who would settle in Anticosti.

Temple Grounds

He reminded me that Canada does not yet have its Temple grounds. I relayed to him a remark of one of the friends. This friend wondered if the Divine Hand of Providence were preventing us from finding Temple grounds because possibly

we were ignoring ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement as quoted by Mrs. Maxwell that the Temple would be built on the slopes of Mt. Royal.

He said that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was not necessarily referring to the National Temple of Canada. He directed that if it becomes clearly impossible to find Temple grounds in Toronto, the NSA should seek the property in Ottawa — not Montreal.

One evening he told us that he had just received good news. Italy had purchased its Temple land. He then said, with a smile as he turned to me, “Italy is off my list — only Canada remains on my list — my black one. I have two lists, a black one and a white one”.

Incorporations

“Canada has not enough incorporated assemblies. I want assemblies incorporated because only incorporated bodies can own land or hold it in trust.”

(It is my impression, although it is impossible to remember the details of the discussion, that he believes that there should be fifteen adult believers in the community before an assembly attempts to incorporate).

Canadians Other Than Anglo-Saxons

Canada, he said, must concentrate on attracting French-Canadians — that French-Canadians are doubly difficult. First, because they are Roman Catholic and second, because they are French. When I asked how their “Frenchness” made them difficult, he told me that the materialism and natural conservatism of the French make them difficult people with whom to cope.

Canada should also make a special effort to attract those residents of Canada who come from countries behind the iron curtain thus, when the time is ripe, they will be able to teach in their native lands.

He was highly pleased with the Canadian effort to proclaim the faith in the Ukrainian language.

Canada must do more work among the Eskimos.

He was displeased with the progress apparently being made among the Canadian and American Indians. During one conversation he said that Indians take preference even over Negroes.

He requested that Canada not only continue its work on the Indian languages included in the Crusade by commence to work on supplementary Indian languages.

During another conversation he said that he was sorry Canada, in particular, had not more success in teaching the Indians. I attempted to explain the position as I saw it. I told him that we had, to the greatest extent possible, been kind and loving to them; had invited them to our homes; had visited them on their

reservations; but all to no apparent avail. He said that there was a lot more to it than inviting them to our homes but did not say to what he was referring. He did, however, say that at the root of the Indian situation is the Indian's jealousy of the material progress of the whites.

During my last evening he reiterated much of what he had previously said and included it in the following message to Canada.

Canada needs:

More believers — more assemblies — more consolidated assemblies — more incorporations. It is particularly important that existing assemblies be consolidated and strengthened, thus paving the way for incorporations.

Canada must:

1. Get someone back on Franklin Island calling on U.S. help, if required.
2. Replace those who, for some reason or another, have had to leave virgin territory.
3. Have a National Children's Teaching Committee.
4. Retain its present 118 centres. Each country should settle the virgin territories assigned to it. Only when this is impossible should they be settled by another country.

PROGRESS OF THE FAITH

Future responsibility of the Assembly

In time the responsibility of the assembly will be:

- (1) To humanity
- (2) To the Faith and its propagation.
- (3) To individuals.

The assembly must not, however, allow individuals to become learners (leaders?). It must find a balance.

The assembly, until the Faith is stronger, must necessarily concentrate on the propagation of the Faith.

Financially, the responsibility of the assembly will be similar.

- (1) To humanity (through contributions to worthy causes)
- (2) To the Faith.
- (3) To individuals.

At present, however, lack of funds prevents such contribution, save to the Faith.

A View of the Future

A completely isolated Bahá'í is a Point. Around the point forms a group — the Letters. The organized assembly is the Word. The NSA is a verse made up of

Words. The International House of Justice is a book made up of verses.

He compared the elective bodies to the Shrine of the Báb. The International House of Justice is like the dome. The NSA the pillars, and the LSA the foundation.

The Lesser Peace will be established by the nations of the world, to be followed considerably later by the Golden Age brought in by the Bahá'ís.

The culmination of all is the Bahá'í World Civilization. All, right from the point of the Letters to the Word to the Verse to the Book, have to do with the ushering in of a World Civilization.

The Law of Bahá'u'lláh, coming together with Covenant bring forth a germ, which results in the embryo — the Administrative Order — on which we are now working. This will become the Child or Bahá'í Commonwealth. This Bahá'í Commonwealth will mature into the Bahá'í World Civilization — a spiritual civilization.

At the same time, an entirely different process is taking place — the harmonizing of the nations, which will be carried on outside the Faith and will result in the Lesser Peace. In due course, will come the Most Great Peace which will merge with the Bahá'í World Civilization.

He referred, as he does on page 12 of “Advent of Divine Justice”, the successive stages through which the Faith will pass — from Obscurity to repression and persecution, then emancipation, and acknowledgment as an independent faith, followed by establishment not just as a religion but as a State religion and, in due course, a Bahá'í State, culminating in the Bahá'í World Civilization, a spiritual civilization, based entirely on the laws and principles of Bahá'u'lláh.

When asked about the effect of persecution on the Friends in America he said he did not believe that such persecution would mean loss of life but it would mean confiscation of Bahá'í books, ostracism, etc.

Miscellaneous

One night he told us he had received good news from Persia that day. The government had agreed to return the Ḥazíra in Ṭíhrán within six months. I believe he also said that the authorities had agreed to return other haziras in due course but no time limit was mentioned. Before completing his remarks on this topic, however, he said “I will wait until they have kept their promise before I rejoice, I know the Persians”.

PERSONAL LIFE

Balancing Ones Activities

Below is a record of questions asked of the Guardian and his answers to them on the above subject.

Question: The individual serves God in a fourfold manner, through his vocation, his avocation, rearing his family and in his family life, and through direct service to the Cause. How does he avoid succumbing to the temptations to concentrate on the Faith and neglecting the other three.

Answer: One cannot neglect his responsibilities for his privileges.

Question: In this sense are not all of these activities privileges in that all are service to God?

Answer: One cannot neglect any, he must find the balance.

Question: If everyone were to follow that, would there be any martyrs?

Answer: Martyrdom comes only at special times, under special circumstances. We are not in that time. Sacrifice, yes — but not martyrdom.

Materialism

Patriotism is good. Excess of patriotism is wrong. It is nationalism. Liberty is good. Excess of liberty is wrong. It is license. Acquisition of material things is good. Excess of emphasis on the acquisition of material things is wrong. It is materialism.

The friends should not rationalize themselves into the position of accumulating of material things for the sake of “business promotion”. Sometimes the acquisition of material things for the sake of business is well justified and results in substantial profit but the profit should not necessarily be spent on the acquisition of more material things. A Ford will do the job as well as a Cadillac.

It’s the motive that is important. Is the acquisition of material possession truly for the promotion of business, or the inflation of the ego, and because of an excessive love of material comforts? Only the individual can decide what the true motive is.

To a prospective pioneer “Don’t be rash”. “Don’t be too calculating”.

Life After Death

Question — I understand from the teachings that it is inadvisable to attempt to communicate with, or contact, those who are in the next world. Nevertheless I have been told that there is a difference between “communicating” or “contracting” and “having communion” with those who have passed on. Is there any difference?

Answer — There is no difference. Only in very rare cases is it even possible to communicate with them. Wishful thinking, however, and imagination cause many people to imagine they can do

Result of Inactivity

One of the Friends asked whether or not the Crusade would be delayed by the inactivity of individuals. Shoghi Effendi replied that the individuals and communities concerned would lose, but the Cause would not lose.

“I desire for you distinction”

He was asked about the above statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, he said, wanted distinction for the friends in all aspects of their lives, distinction in conduct, distinction in morals, distinction in self-sacrifice and detachment, distinction in their integrity and honesty. He wanted them to have distinction in their respective occupations, provided they could do so honestly and provided they have the ability to do so.

Prayer and Meditation

One night he spoke briefly on this subject. He said that prayer and meditation although closely related are two entirely different spiritual activities, neither of which is adequate without the other and both of which are inadequate without study. Prayer, meditation and study are fruitless unless they result in action.

[END]