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Book Reviews

## Book Reviews



### Visions of a New World Order

Photographs by Brenton Edwards

Text by Wendi Momen

Publisher: George Ronald

NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME our book review deals with two very dissimilar books whose recent publication shows the depth and diversity of Bahá'í literature and the Faith it reflects.

*Visions of a New World Order* is a large-format hardback with a wealth of colour pictures and a text that explains the history, growth and development of the Bahá'í Faith, with an emphasis on the Central Figures and the World Centre. The text is useful and informative, but it will be the photographs that will attract many. Quite simply, they are stunning. Sites familiar to many Bahá'ís are there, though often seen in a slightly different way and always impressive, but there are more. Details and small features, often overlooked by visitors, are revealed in their beauty. Of particular interest is a set showing many of the places visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His travels in the West, places which for most of us have hitherto just been names.

This is a book to savour, to go back to repeatedly, and to share with others, but more than that, it is a book that will find a particular role in showing others the scope and grandeur of our Faith. It will become THE presentation book on the Faith for a long time to come, the natural choice for those formal occasions where Bahá'ís are presenting something to dignitaries such as Mayors and Members of Parliament.

For many years that niche was occupied by *A Crown of Beauty*, whose range of pictures and light text made it the natural choice to give to a busy public figure who would never – however much we might wish it – plough through a detailed standard introductory text. *Visions of a New World Order* is a worthy successor. Its fuller text is balanced by a wider range of photographs of high quality, and it will make clear even to someone dipping into it casually that here is a religion with its own history and character, and encourage more detailed attention.

*Never Be Afraid to Dare* is an account of the life and work of Marion Jack, the distinguished early believer

dubbed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá "General Jack". A Canadian by birth, she served the Faith for more than half a century, and has special links with Europe, given her Scottish ancestry and the fact that she ended her days as a pioneer in Bulgaria, where she is buried in the capital, Sofia.



Marion Jack was an artist by training and profession, and some of her works are on display at the Bahá'í World Centre, which is appropriate given her connection with the household of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, where she lived and acted as tutor to the children. Jan Jasion has gathered much useful information about her travels (very extensive), her contacts with other early Bahá'ís, her life, and her paintings, so that for the first time we have a comprehensive picture of what she did.

She was clearly very proud of her Scottish antecedents, though some of what she says about them in memoirs quoted in the book should be taken with the proverbial pinch of salt. This reviewer was, however, particularly interested to see that her grandfather came from Cupar, in Fife, as this was his mother's birthplace. A link was established.

Perhaps the most moving parts of the book are those dealing with her pioneer life in Bulgaria. She was there throughout the Second World War and the subsequent political upheavals that had, by the time of her death in 1954 made Bulgaria a communist state. The account of her experiences, and her privations (and those of the Bulgarian people she lived among, refusing to abandon them) are genuinely affecting. Even had she not rendered decades of sterling service beforehand, these times would have qualified her to be regarded as a heroine of the Faith.

*Never Be Afraid to Dare* is another useful addition to the growing body of literature that preserves the history of the Bahá'í Faith for future generations and fittingly commemorates those early believers whose service is an

**Iain S. Palin** example to us all.

**Never Be Afraid to Dare**  
by Jan Teofil Jasion  
Publisher: George Ronald