

Exerpts from Agnes B Alexander's notes on the 41st
Annual Baha'i Convention

The Convention theme: "Spiritual Victory in World Crisis", for this convention was different from any other which has gone before - brought about by the changing circumstances in the world and our responsibilities as followers of Baha'u'llah

The daily sessions opened with a Devotional Meeting at 9 a.m. on Thursday April 28th 1949. The opening morning the first prayer was for the beloved guardian followed by the tablet of visitation of Abdu'l-Baha, the prayer of Baha'u'llah, Magnifide be Thy Name, O God! ... and others. Every prayer or reading of the Words of God in that Holy House seemed to be illumined with great power even as though one had never heard them before.

9:30 a.m. Dorothy Baker welcomed us to the 41st Convention. She said fresh powers was the key note of the Convention. In the East the fulfillment of prophecy and beginning of institutions. The edifice in the East, she said, rises out of a special act-martyrdom. The edifice in the West rises out of a special act allied with teaching. In the West releasing power already there. We must turn to Haifa to give the power form and life. Mrs Baker then read the message from the beloved Guardian to the 41st Convention. The last words of this message were: "Appeal entire community, through assembled delegates, in thankful recognition of the manifold blessings vouchsafed the Faith and in response to the alert sounded for the present emergency, to arise and demonstrate more conspicuously than ever before, through greater austerity at home and increasing audacity in foreign fields, both in Latin America and Europe, their grim determination at whatever cost, no matter how crucial the test, however long the period, however herculean the labor, to carry forward unremittingly their task to its triumphant conclusion."

At this point of the Convention, Mr Robarts, the chairman of the N.S.A. of Canada and Mr Wever were called on. Mr Robarts, said they could not resist the urge, on the way from their Convention in Winnipeg to stop off in Wilmette. He said they envied us in the Temple building, but they have a five year plan of their own. Mrs Baker spoke of how one Canadian had been called by the Guardian, the "Champion Temple Builder", that is, Mr W.S. Maxwell.

Robert Gulick brought to the convention table a cannon ball which was given him when he made the journey to the fort of Tabarsi. The cannon ball was found in a Moslem grave and had been used in the battle with the Baha'is there. The fort is not in Baha'i hands. Both Keith Ransom-Keller and Effie Baker had been there. Keith went on foot the last of the way out of reverence to those who had suffered there.

Sr. Jose Monge from Porto Rico was present in the Convention. He told us...there were 32 Baha'is now, in San Juan and that the Masons were interested in the Faith. Margaret Swengel and Edris Rice-Wray are teaching there.

Horace Holley: The Waves of the Covenant are rolling very high. We must look to what is happening in Europe in the Cause. One is heal-

power and the other a burning fire. Last year there were 179 Assemblies. We must aim at the soul center of a person. Word was received of the passing in New York of Mountford Mills, on April 24th, and a cable from the Guardian about him was read. During the time of the League of Nations he had gone to Baghdad and saved Baha'u'llah's house there. From that time his health had been impaired. The N.S.A. had 14 meetings this year and 41 days in session. The N.S.A. is sending paper to Germany. Dr Townsend has made his withdrawal from the church and with the Guardian's permission he told the people why he did so. The Canadian Baha'is, Mr Holley said, are making history as you and I cannot do. Canada has a symbolic unity with the King. The Canadian Baha'is have a bill before the Senate for their declaration. Properties which have been given in full to the U.S.A. are Villa Van cottage in Green Acre, Geyserville property and Mrs Collins' house in Wilmette.

Philip Sprague: In 1946 the Guardian interpreted the Divine Plan into four groups of objectives. At different times, different emphasis on the different objectives. At one time the forming of Spiritual Assemblies, and another on Europe. Today it is the Temple the "Holiest House of Worship in the World." The bed rock is the fund. One by one the Guardian has cut the strings of various activities. (Many youth and children have entered the plan.) It is going to be necessary to sacrifice principle for some of us. Don't wait. The friends can give memorial gifts. One gave \$100,000 out of principle as a memorial gift. The period you and I are passing through to-day is a unique one. Through our Guardian comes only pure guidance from Baha'u'llah. May Maxwell stand once to Philip Sprague that we have only one life to live, The Baha'i Life. Mulla Husayn's words, "Mount your horses Oh heroes of God."

April 28th - 2 P.M. The Conventions message to the Guardian was read. Greetings were received from Anchorage; Los Angeles; Rome, Italy; Marysville, Washington; and from Laura Dreyfus-Barney from Washington, D.C. as she was returning to Paris.

Philip Sprague: \$1600 had been received from the "World Order Magazine". The Point is this: The emergency is now. The Guardian's wife wrote Philip, "Mother never lost sight of her objective."

A memorial to Qudus on May 16th was spoken of.

Ema True told of Johanna Hurg, Danish, who has sent literature to Greenland where there are 54 names. Now arranging translation into Eskimo.

Millie Collins told of the Baha'is Assembly of Indians in Macy, Nevada. There are eleven Baha'is there. They said the prayers in their own language. Some of them could not write their own names. They sent a letter to the Guardian.

Holy Days: The Guardian said even doctors should not practice except in emergency on those days.

Israel means, Followers of the Light of God. The Guardian sent a message to Israel.

Ema True: The European program. There are 14 Baha'is in ten countries. Twelve Spiritual Assemblies, one in each of the ten

countries and also in Spain and in Portugal. Baha'i miracle was witnessed. Last year at the European Conference May 22-26 for four days, the pioneers and newly declared Baha'is consulted on the Will and Testament, translations, community development, etc. There was a glorious spirit of unity. The Guardian sent a message to the European communities that a teaching conference should be held each year, but in a different country each time.

Mrs Etta Graeffe; She was the first pioneer to go to Europe. When she was to sail from New York, there was a seaman's strike, but, the steamer she was to sail on had a Norwegian crew so it departed. All work was done in time of difficulties. She spoke of Mrs Ann Lynch who has served in the International Office in Geneva for 19 years. Also Martha Root's pioneering spirit was met in all countries, as though she were standing with 'Abdu'l-Baha. In two years of well organized and systematic teaching we cannot hope for any results outside of this Plan. As Baha'is we must abide by God's bidding. As Baha'i pioneers, we stand in the spotlight and every act must reflect..... the Guardian asked her to express, "Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones." I would add that Mrs Graeffe radiated a wonderful spiritual power and strength.

Mrs Mottahedeh spoke of the United Nations Conference where 336,000 people were represented. It was the first time the Baha'is had been invited. Mrs Mottahedeh, Mr Giachery and Mrs C.M. Remey were present.

8 P.M. Paul Haney spoke explaining the Temple plans. The interior will be in a completely new concept and not like the past ecclesiastic concepts. I will not copy notes of details, cost etc. The first shipment of the interior ornamentation will be shipped not later than July 1st. The total cost is estimated at \$850,000. The structure will be completed in early 1951. 78 drawings were necessary for the interior. Mr Haney read some notes written by Shoghi Effendi in June 8, 1919, of 'Abdu'l-Baha's words concerning the Temple as follows: "The Temple that is going to be built erected in the United States will be an important and magnificent one, its influence and reaction upon the Cause will be tremendous and the impetus it shall give to the Movement irresistible."

Friday, April, 29th: The second day of the Convention, Jack arrived. Throughout the Convention I had the joy of sitting in front with Robert Imagine who was recording the convention to take back with him to Japan.

After the nine o'clock Devotional, Mrs Baker opened the session by "This is the day for Teaching". Mrs Collins, Bahiyyih Ford and Mamma Seta each spoke. There was a great power that morning. Mrs Collins spoke from the words of the Guardian quoting his cable to the 1938 Convention when he called the Baha'is to the Book, "Prayer and Meditations" Then she quoted from the advent of Divine Justice, which came in the middle of the first seven year plan, "focus attention on their own selves". Bahiyyih Ford spoke from cable from the Guardian of March 16th. She called us to look back to the Dawn Breakers. What was happening in 1849? In June that year the Bab learned of the tragedy of Tabarsi. What happened in the siege of Tabarsi? What does Qudus say to us? He comes out of the little hut (quotes). In the same year, 1849 were the 7 martyrs of Tihiran. They were leading people of the country. First was the uncle of the Bab. What does he say to us? (quotes) Then she quoted the words of Vahid "True acquiescence of the Will of God". Guardian's

words. In 1850 the Bab was martyred and two year sieges going on. She then quoted the Bab's words to the 19 letters, and added that in six and a half years they lived these words. The attributes of self sacrifice, devotion....The Dawn Breakers renewed these qualities for us. What new meaning are we going to give to these words? Bahiyyih's and Millie Collins' talks I felt were the most outstanding talks in the Convention because of the Guardian's messages to us at this time.

Mamie Seto then spoke of spiritual and material things referring to World Order May 1946; Baha'i Administration page 47 and the Will and Testament page 17.

10:30 to noon: Teaching. Winston Evans key noted the discussion. the Crisis and the Temple Fund. Our job is to wake people up. The Guardian wakes us up. He spoke of some books among them "The Robe" also, "E. Stanley Jones' "The Way", and how near they were to our Faith. The Guardian stresses the fact we must give a bolder presentation.

Mrs Alice Cox quoted words of Baha'u'llah as follows from the Gleanings: "He who walks humbly with His God in this Day and cleaveth unto Him, will find himself invested with all the honor and the glory of every goodly name and station."

Sara Kenny: We lack contacts because of our thinking. They are there. We don't use what is at hand. (other speakers will not be quoted, but may sometimes tell you something of their words.)

Mr Evans: No one can remain in the Cause unless he is active.

9 p.m.: First there was a memorial meeting for our brothers, George Latimer, Montford Mills and Mr Richardson of Chicago.

Teaching: Dr Katherine True read from notes which Leroy Loas had left for her to read. Confirmation in the Cause is a new birth. The Assembly should not act as a board of inquiry. It is the change of life which attracts.

Someone said that before talking to a person we should find out what they want to know.

3 to 4:30 p.m. : Understanding and coordinating Area and Regional Committees. The Regional is an arm of the Area Committee. Committees are for teaching. Their work is to get more Baha'is. Through consultation they work.

8:30 p.m. After the election of the N.S.A. which was at 8 p.m. there was a panel discussion of the Area committees. There is no overlapping if there is consultation.

Saturday, April 30th: the third day of the Convention. After devotions at 9:30 the Will and Testament was the subject. Charlotte Linfoot: Ruhyyih Khanum wrote it might take a 1,000 years to fully understand the Will and Testament. Baha'u'llah came to establish the Oneness of Mankind. Now we have arrived at the stage where we must function as one human family. Baha'u'llah gave to us before He left this planet a Center of His Covenant. Every movement of 'Abdu'l-Baha's life was devoted to that mission. When 'Abdu'l-Baha ascended the believers found that He had provided for them a Will and Testament.

Marguerite Bruegger: The first requisite is strict obedience to all that has been given us, for if we obey we can understand.

Philip Sprague: The Will and Testament for our generation is the most important document given to us in this Day for it is the link between the past and the present. Juliet Thompson said to him that the love of God was like the mother's milk, the more the child cries out, the more the mother's milk flows." The power is the same power which flows through the Guardian. It is something we have got to understand. God is setting up His Kingdom today and for 1,000 years the Guardian is the source.

Leroy Leas: The present source of the spirit is the Guardian of the Bahai' Faith.

Carl Scheffler: Badi'u'llah (spoken of in the Will and Testament) three times violated and three times 'Abdu'l-Baha forgave him. 'Abdu'l-Baha said that if he violated again, He would forgive him. If we obey the Guardian, then we have made the link with 'Abdu'l-Baha and through Him with the Kingdom of God.

10:15 to:45: Youth Activities: Beware that there are children in your community. They can comprehend the Will and Testament. Develop a security in the minds of the children.

10:45 noon: Inter-America Teaching: There are 24 Assemblies in South America, and 18 in Central America totaling 42. there are dramatic stories of the forming of these Assemblies. There is a National Teaching Committee in both South and Central America. There is one Regional Committee to every Country Millie Collins spoke of the false gods of today which we must emancipate the people from and center them in the Covenant of Today.

Every day at the noon hour Mrs Baker asked the Convention to rise and face the East, then each one silently said the noon day prayer in his place.

3 p.m. Greetings were read from Norway; Beverly, Mass. Bern, Switzerland; Edinburgh, Scotland; England and Honolulu.

Elsie Austin spoke on Work shops. Her talk was so outstanding that the Conventions voted to have it published in the Baha'i News in two installments. I took a few notes as follows: what does a work shop accomplish? In a work shop we aim to bring out the differences among people. Then we can go forward. People like to belong to a group in which they are a part or share. The leader of the workshop must draw out the different opinions, among the group. Draw them out, what do you think? All this must be short and just enough to bring people out. The last thing to bring out is that we must not get heated. Then it must be summarized. We must always strive to bring out the truth.

3:15 5:15 Workshop sessions: there were four different work shops, and each one could choose which to go to. I went to the one Public Relations and Publicity which Mr Wm C. Henning led. The summaries were given the next day.

8 p.m.: Ridvan Feast. There were three speakers: Mr Wm Sears, Marzieh Gail, and Mr Carl Scheffler.

Sunday May 1 : After the Devotions at 9:30 a.m., Mrs Baker read to the Convention the postscript which had come on a letter from the Guardian. You will have had this already.

9:30 am 10:30 a.m. Summaries and Evaluations of Workshops
Mr Wm Hemming : Public Relations summary: Public Relations begins with each Baha'i. It contains publicity, contacts etc. It is very important that all secretaries should pass the materials on to the publicity Chairman as it is for the time. He spoke of the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha which are published in the Baha'i Peace Program, 1927 "Oneness of MANKIND of Public Opinion."

Mrs Wendler (grand niece of Utie) Public Meetings and Firesides: (She had a very fine summary and I asked if I could get copies of it so it may be I can later) Slides, black board, maps, projectors etc. Use Film strips and strips edited by the Committee.

Mrs Matthieson: Suggestions: During the meetings one should not whisper nor look to the door when someone enters. Rather pray for the speaker. You are just as important in your seat as the speaker on the rostrum.

We should place our speakers before other organizations, but in the radio join with other organizations.

Kenneth Christian: Summary of workshop Experiment: Groups of six were given two questions to discuss and gave summary of the group. The first question was: What is the best thing that can be done to improve the State Conventions? Points of agreement were: Need better attendance and better plans. The second question was: What chief additional material is needed by the Baha'is? Answer: Study of the history of the Faith with Visual Aid.

Youth Workshops: Do not limit youth to youth Committees. Let some one else confirm your child. Suggested youth programs.

Child Education Work Shop: Mrs Finches books were suggested. Let the child express himself in pictures. Baha'i children should be trained in their responsibilities. Children can work on projects as scrap books for hospitals, etc.

The next program was Robert Imagine who told of the work in Japan. He had brought with him from Japan records of some of the Japanese friends; voices which the convention heard. He had rented a recorder in Tokyo for this, but when he arrived in the states he sold a painting and then bought a recorder to take back with him to Japan. He recorded several of the friends, and I also had this privilege of speaking into the recorder and addressing the Japanese Baha'is, the wonder of this wonderful age.