Talk by Artemus Lamb,[[1]](#footnote-1) 4 November 1953 [[2]](#footnote-2),[[3]](#footnote-3)

Informal talk by Mr Artemus Lamb before the West Hollywood Bahá’í Community on the night of the Feast of Power, 4 November 1953. Artemus Lamb lives in Costa Rica, Central America and he had just returned from a long trip including attendance at the Bahá’í International Conference held in New Delhi, India, in October and a visit at the Bahá’í International Centre in Haifa, Israel, where the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith resides.

At the Intercontinental Conference in New Delhi last month there were 500 Bahá’ís present, mostly Oriental. This was the first occasion for the Bahá’ís of Australia to enjoy contact with the Bahá’ís from the rest of the world. The sessions were held in [a] large tent adorned in a festive manner with many national flags and colourful flowers. The setting for this momentous gathering was in an oriental garden and made a picture.

English and Persian languages were the principle ones spoken as almost every one could speak one or the other. The conference lasted nine days. The spirit generated by the Persian believers was remarkable. There is no word to describe it for it is of another world. They have an understanding of the Faith that we do not have and a devotion that we do not have.

If the Guardian wants something, they give it right away. If he wants something done, they do it right away, right now. If he asks for anything, their money, their life, their home, they do it right now. A call was made for pioneers in the Asian area. Seventy-four said “Yes” at once. Of these there were 25 who offered to go at once from the Conference without going home, even those who had come unprepared. These places, many of them primitive, are regions where religious persecution abounds. Private funds for the Temple sites in New Delhi and in \_\_\_\_\_ were contributed immediately to an amount of $40,000. Immediately they came forward and made their contributions. One man gave £5.000, many left their jewels, their pens, their rings, whatever they had. A boy who had lost his father had a ring from him for remembrance. This was all he had. He gave it. Someone came forward and bought the ring and then returned it to the boy. One man arose and said that the clothes he wore had been borrowed so he could come, that all he could do would be to offer a prayer, which he did. Another said, “I pledge (so much) in this man’s name”, giving an answer to that prayer right then. This spirit was in the Conference all during the entire nine days.

Someone told about the Bahá’í school up in the mountains (in India) a place for general education, moral and spiritual training of the youth. He told about the hardships in getting the school started. The treasurer had to mortgage most of his business in order to make the down payment on the property and then they were still very short of funds. One of the believers then remarked, “If you make another call for contributions, we will have to go home in a sarong.” Then someone asked this question. “What are we to do about it?” So, they raised around $4,000 more for the school.

All the Persian Hands were there. Mason Remey was the Guardian’s representative. Mother Dunn from Australia was also there.

Question: When you were in Haifa, did it turn out to be all that you expected?

Answer: Yes, but much, much more. I often wondered why the pilgrims when they returned did not say more about the Guardian and now I think I understand. It is because one feels so inadequate. Anyone’s description of the Guardian does not and cannot do him justice. Maybe in speaking of the Guardian someone else would fit such a description, but it does not fit that of the Guardian. He is different from anyone else. You have all your meals in the Pilgrim House, and that is where you live during your visit. Mason Remey [and] Leroy Ioas live there also. Rúḥíyyih Khánum comes over for food with us and we sit around and chat and we feel very much at home. If the Guardian feels all right he comes over

for dinner. He usually spends two hours when he does come. He is tied hand and foot to his work. It is a wonderful experience when the Guardian comes for dinner, I can assure you. The first two nights he did not come. He was upset over some things. You cannot imagine how he suffers. Rúḥíyyih Khánum said that the Guardian is like a sensitive machine. Everything that happens in the Cause affects Him. The third night he came. As we went into the room to meet him, the first few minutes I did not notice his personality. All I could think of was the force dominated him. It so takes away from the personality that one does not see that. This gave me an idea of the Station of the Manifestation. How little one understands either the Station of the Guardian or that of the Manifestation. It is tremendous. As time goes on you do see his human personality. So far as he himself goes, he is the most gracious, hospitable, kind person I have ever met in my life. He treats all people exactly alike. Every single pilgrim that comes he makes feel perfectly at home immediately. As he talks to you be knows where you are from. He knows about the economic conditions as well as the Bahá’í work going on there. And usually he states what should be done and how to do it. As I see it, he knows what is going on in that country because of his study of these things. The things that are to be done, as I see it, he knows by intuition.

Question: Does he speak as he writes, rather involved?

Answer: No, he speaks more simply. His sentences are beautifully constructed and his words are perfectly chosen. He does not speak rapidly when talking ordinarily but when he speaks of the Cause he does so very rapidly and with power and it is then that you feel the force in him.

Question: We asked about the war.

Answer: He said that it would be more than a war. It will be a world upheaval, social, political and economic. It will be similar to the collapse of the Roman Empire, only it will be on a global scale. The upheaval may be so severe that it may affect the physical atmosphere and cause physical disturbances.

Question: Any indications as to the time?

Answer: It depends, the Guardian said, on the folly of the politicians. He did not indicate that it would be right at this moment. The USA would be a storm centre, he said.

Question: Did he say rich places would be affected?

Answer: The British Isles, Western Europe, the Holy Land, Persia, and the Pacific would be gravely exposed. The Guardian went on to explain that while we may [have] heard this before, it is much more clear now, and this is it: He said that there are two plans in operation. God’s Plan is one, and the other is our plan as revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. God’s Plan is the world upheaval. This Plan of God is mysterious and it is not [in] our province to know or to see how it is to be operated. Our plan, the one ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave us, is the world order: The Crusade, etc. He also said that our responsibility naturally is the carrying out of our plan. Obviously if we do not do that and if we do not obey the Guardian, we will upset the timeline. We must be confident that everything will be best for the Cause. God’s Plan may do much more for the people than our plan. We must look at it that way. [We should] not fear the World Upheaval; not stop our work for it. It does not matter. It is only temporary. We should not speculate on it. Go ahead and do what we have to do.

Question: What about the “Most Great Peace”?

Answer: As the Bahá’ís establish the New World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, the government[s] must establish the World State, which is the Lesser Peace. The World State will need a world language and this will come about in the formative period of the Faith. As the majority of the people become Bahá’ís, they will establish the Bahá’í states and eventually these states will

establish the world commonwealth and this will bring about the establishment of the “Golden Age”. The Guardian said that the entire Administrative Order, including the Universal House of Justice, will be established by 1965.

He is very happy about the World Crusade and is surprised at the response of the believers. The fact that the Guardian is not well is due to mental anguish and work, [and more] work. He gets up at dawn day after day, week after week.

Question: What about opposition to the Faith?

Answer: It is commencing and will extend to the Church of England, the Lutherans, and he said the Papacy would disappear but that some of its institutions would remain. We should regard the opposition as providential and be happy over it; as it itself will arouse the people and the power will be regenerated. The propelling power of the Cause are these crises. This is the force that makes the Cause grow.

Question: Does the Guardian have anything to say about having visitors?

Answer: It is for everyone to visit Haifa and the Guardian. Make your reservations. He treats everyone alike. Everyone in his turn.

Prime Minister Nehru of India was a representative in New Delhi.

Question: Did the Guardian speak about communism?

Answer: He really did not talk about or ask questions. An interesting statement that he made was that communism is materialistic and atheistic. The Americans are materialistic but not atheistic. You will find both of these among the Bahá’ís. We should not at the present time approach communists. In the first place they probably would not accept [the] entirety [of] the Teachings. In the second place it would arouse difficulties with the authorities. We must not do anything to arouse the authorities. We would be arousing suspicion. It would not be worth it. There are several Bahá’ís who are trying to get behind the Iron Curtain and the Guardian is encouraging this. He considers that a meritorious act.

Another thing the Guardian said was that the Americans have organization and drive but they lack the deeper understanding of the Faith. In speaking about materialism he brought out this point.

When the Guardian was talking about the Bahá’í World State, he said we should not mention that this will be a state within a state, from which people might get the impression that we are political, which we are not. The Bahá’í World State will [not] come about by force and not by our mingling in politics, but by conversion.

Question: Can you tell us anything about Haifa and the Shrine of the Báb?

Answer: As one approaches Haifa, either by land or by sea—by sea is even more noticeable—the first thing that greets your vision is Mount Carmel. It is a very long, low mountain and probably one thousand feet high.[[4]](#footnote-4) It arises immediately out of the Bay. One looks for the Shrine of the Báb and you see it at once. Its position is right in the heart of the mountain half way up. It is a gleaming white marble structure with a petalled, beautiful dome. You see it from everywhere, wherever you are.

Question: Do the people who visit the Shrines and gardens think they are something unusual and marvellous?

Answer: Yes, they certainly do. So many people to guide through. 1,200 on a Jewish holiday, I recall. People from Switzerland, South Africa, from just about every country. They are mainly tourists, they see it as they come into the city and naturally want to know about it.

The Guardian himself, is the essence of graciousness, kindness, goodness,

intelligence. He is not pious at all. He is humble. He is spiritual. He does not like rituals and he does not want us to establish any. The Oriental Bahá’ís are accustomed to prostrating themselves when they pray. This is all right the Guardian says. They were brought up that way before they became Bahá’ís.

Everyone should do as he feels in his heart. It is not necessary for the Occidental Bahá’í to do as the Oriental Bahá’í does. He made it clear that there is uniformity in fundamentals and diversity in the other things, this is the way ….

The Guardian’s farewell to us was exactly this: “Pray for me. Your prayers sustain me the same way that I hope mine sustain you.” He is not ill but he is tired. The power of the prayers sustain him. Praying for the Guardian brings a unity; the contact between the Guardian of the Cause and us.

Question: Did the Guardian have anything further to say about teaching those who have been in the orthodox way of life and religion?

Answer: “We should not seek out the orthodox people. We should look for the liberal element in those who are spiritually-minded.”

Those were his exact words. Anything else is a waste of time. The building of the institutions of the Cause will awaken the people and will arouse the opposition of the churches and that will be good. It is this that will awaken the people.

Question: What about teaching the Cause in Haifa?

Answer: Israel is [a] religious state. Our world centre is there and the fact that it remains there is due to the goodwill of the authorities. If they get the idea that we are converting the brown people, this would not do. The Guardian asks the friends to live the life, establish the best relations with the people, show them the Shrines, and answer their questions but not to get them to believe.

Question: What is the tourist[’s] reaction to the gardens and Shrines?

Answer: There are those who say the gardens are very beautiful, that is all. Then there are others who are profoundly affected. I remember three visitors from England who, as is the custom when one goes inside the Shrines, took off their shoes at the threshold of the Shrine of the Báb. They went inside. They were in there several minutes and when they came out one of them, a woman, said; “If it weren’t for these people holding the Light, what would happen to the world?

At the Shrine there is no need to pray or to feel the power. There is no effort involved in contacting the Spirit. IT IS.

Pilgrims to Haifa stay in the Palace of Bahjí [for] 36 hours. This is something you do not talk about. You never forget it.

1. Artemus Dwight Lamb (1905–1998) was an American Bahá’í who pioneered to South and Central America, and served as a Counsellor in Central America (1963–1980) and the Americas (1980–1985). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This document is from the Emma Maxie Jones Collection, https://bahai-library.com/emma\_maxwell\_jones\_collection , prepared by E. Jones, M. Thomas, and J. Winters (2021-2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Notes taken and transcribed by Mildred Swingle Bates, West Hollywood Bahá’í Community. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Elevations: The Shrine of the Báb 134 m (440’), the ridge behind 273 m (666’), and Mount Carmel 546 m (1,790’). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)