

THE BAHĀ'Ī FAITH IN AUSTRALIA, 1920-1934: SOME NOTES ON JOHN AND CLARA HYDE-DUNN.

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The story of the introduction of the Bahā'ī Faith to Australia is one of courage, strength, and devotion. John Henry and Clara Hyde-Dunn had responded to the challenge issued by 'Abdu'l-Bahā' in his "Tablets of the Divine Plan".<sup>1</sup> Hyde-Dunn has recorded:

"It was all very simple - a wave that came into our lives possessing us and satisfying every desire to serve our Beloved Cause, the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and his glorious Covenant. Mother was reading Abdu'l-Bahá's call to the United States and Canada, and his appeal was so penetrating and thrilling, it pierced our hearts. In one part it said "If only I could go in poverty and barefooted, and raise the call of Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá, but that is not now possible." Mother looked up and said "Shall we go, Father?" "Yes" was my reply, and no further discussion took place".<sup>2</sup>

Hyde-Dunn was 65 when he came to Australia, his wife Clara, 51. They arrived on the S.S. Sonoma on April 10, 1920.<sup>3</sup> They journeyed with a mission, but they were not missionaries, by the common use of the term. They had accepted their endeavour quite spontaneously, were definitely not approached to do so, and were not funded from any direction.

The Dunns had chosen to 'pioneer' for the principles they believed in. The Bahā'ī Faith, by the 1920's was established in many parts of the world. It was entering a period of further expansion, both geographic, and administrative, and its' followers were creating a world-wide network as they endeavoured to place the Bahā'ī teachings before the masses.

Hyde and Clara Dunn were thus part of a larger picture, and the themes of their career were being expanded on concurrently in other countries. The picture that emerges from correspondence to and from the Dunns is one of constant movement throughout Australia, constant nurturing of the Bahā'ī message within Australia, and constant support for the Dunns from 'Abdu'l-Bahā, then Shoghi Effendi, as well as from a growing number of Bahā'ī friends in all parts of the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahā communicated with the Dunns at least four times. The first was a telegram confirming Hyde-Dunn's offer to sail. It simply read "Highly desirable". Aboard the Sonoma the Dunns wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahā and again when they arrived in Sydney. They must surely have been encouraged by the response 'Abdu'l-Bahā made on December 9, 1920, which read:

"This journey is pregnant with great prosperity, because great results will issue therefrom. At present it is full of hardship, but later on favour, comfort and happiness will be bestowed".<sup>4</sup>

The initial period in Sydney certainly was full of hardship. Hyde-Dunn did not enjoy excellent health, and suffered an immediate setback when customs confiscated coral jewellery that he had invested in in Hawaii, to sell in Australia. His health deteriorated soon after arrival, and Clara had to find work for the first six months. After this period, Hyde-Dunn felt able to work, and later recorded:

"A voice, a mental voice spoke to me and said 'now the time is ripe for you to write the firm in Melbourne regarding a position.' The mail that night carried a letter to a good firm in Melbourne to whom I thought my experiences would be valuable and to whom I felt able to give good service...not one mail was lost, by return of post a reply arrived, and, the first words in the letter were 'your application is most opportune. The writer will be in Sydney during the week - call and see our Sydney Manager'. This of course was attended to".<sup>5</sup>

Hyde-Dunn began working as a Travelling Salesman for Nestlé's in about September 1920, his area being the whole of N.S.W. country. After one year he had topped the National sales figures. His manager was naturally pleased and asked Hyde-Dunn what favour the company could do him. "Make me an inter-state man!" was his reply.<sup>6</sup>

For a total of twelve years Hyde-Dunn travelled for Nestlé's, dedicating his time to both his work, and to informing people of the Bahā'ī teachings. Sometime in 1922, Hyde-Dunn was introduced to Oswald Whitaker in Lismore, N.S.W., who became the first Australian Bahā'ī.<sup>7</sup> Of this event Hyde-Dunn recorded:

"This pioneer was at Lismore on business and had gathered round me a few businessmen to whom we were discussing the world problems and the twelve Bahá'í principles for its solution... but they were all very skeptical, and the Bahá'í truths too hard for them to handle -- so one of them suggested that they would invite Mr Whitaker. His friends brought him along in great triumph -- he asked me one question and one question only -- which they all thought would flaw the Bahá'í Faith and Revelation.. he asked me 'can you tell me what love is?'. My reply was 'yes, the whole law and power of the Great Universe is Formulated Love in Action'. He said 'Is that what love is?'. He never asked me another question... some beautiful tablets were given him to read, which he brought back the next day and when I asked him what he thought of them his reply was 'every line is an evidence of truth'. From that day to this he has been a devout student and worker for the Cause of God, also a loving and faithful friend".<sup>8</sup>

In about October 1922, the Dunns moved to Melbourne. A pattern was soon established, with Clara living in the city, engaged in meeting people, and inviting them home to hear of the Bahá'í teachings, while Hyde-Dunn was in the country through the week, returning home on weekends. He would then give talks, either in his own home, or before various organizations. In November 1922, Hyde-Dunn addressed a meeting of the 'New Thought' Organization. At the meeting was Miss Effie Baker, Australia's first female colour photographer who later recorded:

"I accepted the teachings after hearing Mr Hyde-Dunn speak from the platform of the "New Civilization Centre" formed by Dr Seaton Sears, of which I had become a member. He opened with a prayer and then prefaced his talk by a quotation from the 'Hidden Words': "O Son of Spirit: Free thyself from the Worldly bond, escape from the prison of self, appreciate the value of time for it will never come again or a like opportunity".(9) Having heard this I thought 'I must listen to what this speaker has to say'. He then gave the principle given to the 'World of Mankind' for this age by Bahá'u'lláh. The one that arrested my attention was 'investigate truth for yourself don't follow the blind imitation of your fore-fathers'. It suddenly dawned on me 'Why! I was born a Christian, my forebears were Christians for centuries. I certainly have never investigated truth for myself.' After the meeting closed I immediately went to Mr Dunn and declared myself as accepting the Bahá'í message." <sup>10</sup>

In December 1922 the Dunns visited New Zealand. Hyde-Dunn wrote of this trip to Fazel Māzanderānī:

"We landed, not knowing one soul -- the first night we met two, a man and his wife, they took dinner with us -- listened to the message then said 'you must meet our friend Mrs Blundell'. The next night we both went to Mrs Blundell's home, she had her room filled with friends to listen to our message of the Covenant. From that gathering, neither of us had a moment unoccupied -- we had meetings and group meetings -- private interview and appointments, the people rallied and the love for the Cause grew in their hearts, ...the night before leaving Auckland held our first Bahá'í Feast, 17 or 18 present". <sup>11</sup>

Early in 1923 Hyde-Dunn addressed a "New Thought" meeting in Adelaide. When a member of the audience Percy Almond heard what the white-haired speaker had to say, he turned to his wife Maysie and said 'this is it!', and two days later became the first Bahá'í in Adelaide. <sup>12</sup>

By July 1923 Hyde-Dunn had visited 225 towns across Australia. This means an average of one town each four and a half days since commencing work for Nestlé's. <sup>13</sup>

Early in 1924 the Dunns and Effie Baker visited Tasmania. Hyde-Dunn wrote to a friend:

"We have just arrived in Hobart and by invitation we speak on Sunday night at the Theosophical Society. This is our first in Tasmania -- there are four of us here, we have taken a small cottage and opened up a small Bahá'í home".<sup>14</sup>

At that meeting was Gretta Lamprill, who recalled:

"Mr Hyde-Dunn spoke passionately about the Faith. Then and there, with the whole of my inner and outer being, I dedicated my life to Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'í Faith".<sup>15</sup>

Later in 1924 the Dunns and Effie travelled to Perth, to greet the arrival of Martha Root, an International Bahá'í teacher, who had recently been through China. While in Perth, Hyde-Dunn addressed a Church meeting. He was using a new Bahá'í book by Dr Esslemont titled 'Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era'. A Mrs Miller, who had known Dr Esslemont as a boy turned to Mr Dunn and asked 'Did you know Dr Esslemont?'. Hyde-Dunn replied 'No, I never met him, but oh, how I love him'. From that first meeting the Millers maintained a firm Bahá'í outpost in Perth.<sup>16</sup>

### THE FIRST BAHĀ'Ī CENTRES

By 1924, there were Bahá'í centres in Sydney, Auckland, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide and Perth. From Adelaide, in October 1924 Clara wrote to a friend: "Had my first Bahá'í class yesterday -- four present... we have engaged a room downtown where Father will speak every Tuesday eve."<sup>17</sup>

A letter later in the same month said:

"Last night Father spoke in the room we have downtown. There were about 25 or 30 present -- this was our first meeting downtown..."<sup>18</sup>

The Dunns went to Melbourne in April 1923 for their second stay. In October, Hyde-Dunn wrote to Dr Esslemont saying there were:

"Some beautiful Believers, two accepted fully and from every angle, others believe, but take time to be really strong enough to be declared."<sup>19</sup>

In October, 1928, Clara wrote to a friend:

"While in Melbourne on our way from Brisbane to Adelaide -- we had just one day there -- we engaged a drawing room and forty-two came!".<sup>20</sup>

Writing of Auckland, in 1924, Clara related that:

"Some body of people billed the town telling the people to have nothing to do with the Bahá'í teachings as it was satanic -- so we all rejoiced at this as this will cause many people to look into it and see what it really is".<sup>21</sup>

Writing from Brisbane in 1926, Clara said:

"The Unity Circle offered their nice central room to hold the Bahá'í class in... the first time twenty present..."<sup>22</sup>

### BOOKS

Books and information on the Bahá'í Faith were a constant problem. Writing to a Mrs Albert in June 1923, Hyde-Dunn said: "We have scarcely a book left to work with",<sup>23</sup> and mentions a 'green book' of typed tablets and a yellow book called 'Light of the World'. A letter of September 1924 mentions a 'Lessons in Religion' by a Persian teacher<sup>24</sup>. Most material was held in the form of copies which had been typed from the original. Clara mentions to Greta Lamprill in March 1926 the book 'Episodes in the Life of Monuréh Khanúm' and 'Letters from Shoghi Effendi', and 'the Answered Questions'.<sup>25</sup>

As late as 1934 Hyde-Dunn refers to a 'little book copied and given to me by dear Thornton Chase and Lua Getsinger'.<sup>26</sup> Later still, in 1935, Hyde-Dunn wrote to a 'Bahá'í investigator' Miss Emily Eastgate "I will post you some beautiful addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America... you can return it to me when finished it is the only one I possess and is precious indeed".<sup>27</sup>

The Perth Bahá'ís saw the 'Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the first time in August 1924. In a letter to Mr and Mrs Webb Hyde-Dunn said: 'Regarding the books, you will have to do your best'. The Dunns had distributed copies to Mrs Ward and Mrs Joiner 'There is we think quite a number out, you will get them by degrees, ask them at a meeting those who have any to return them'.<sup>28</sup>

### MAGAZINES

News of the progress of the Bahá'í Faith was obtained through the American magazine 'Star of the West':

"...especially now that they have removed from Chicago to New York and have added such a fine woman to their staff. She used to edit the Bahá'í Bulletin -- you will get all the late news of the Cause in it and it will keep you abreast of the happenings of the Cause".<sup>29</sup>

At first only the Dunns subscribed to 'Star of the West' and to the American Bulletin, and arranged for their single copy to be mailed in turn to all the assemblies.<sup>30</sup>

A further source of information was the circular letter, which went by various names in the Bahā'ī World. The Haifa Spiritual Assembly sent monthly letters, full of news. The Dunns returned the favour, thanking Haifa for the news of the persecution and hardships being faced in Persia and Russia, and the progress in Turkey, giving in return news of activities in Melbourne:

"We have been here just over two months in Melbourne... every Friday night when I return from the outside towns with my wife we hold a meeting in the home of a herbalist...we often speak to 100 to 150 people... last Sunday was our first Bahá'í Feast in Melbourne -- 27 dear friends came all full of interest and love".<sup>31</sup>

In 1924 Martha Root visited all the major cities, but at present less is known of her tour than of her second one, in 1939. In 1925 Freddie Schopflocher, then a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, visited Australia, and promised to return two years later to help form the Australian National Spiritual Assembly.<sup>32</sup>

By 1925, communication between Bahā'ī centres was becoming more organized. Clara Dunn wrote constantly to the Australian Bahā'īs, suggesting they correspond with Bahā'īs in other countries. She wrote to Gretta Lamprill in Hobart with news of the Unity Letter

"They are beginning to write a letter to other assemblies all over the world and this will be a great link and bond the world round... I will enclose one from Chicago".<sup>33</sup>

Clara encouraged the Hobart Bahā'īs to write to the Guardian and to Effie Baker, especially since:

"The Guardian wanted assemblies and groups to communicate with him".<sup>34</sup>

In August, 1926, the Brewers, Sydney Bahā'īs, wrote to thank the Dunns for putting them in touch with Dr D'Develyn of California,<sup>35</sup> and at about the same time Miss Nora Lee, a Bahā'ī in Fiji, thanked the Dunns for putting her in touch with Thornton Chase.<sup>36</sup>

The Adelaide Assembly began sending typed circular letters by September 1925, mentioning they were 17 in number, and:

"Grateful this wonderful message has reached us, as it means a new spiritual life, and the birth of a New Era to us all".<sup>37</sup>

On June 15, 1926, Adelaide sent their first printed circular letter:

"Bearing in mind the express wish of Shoghi Effendi, and knowing from our own past experiences how helpful communication with other assemblies is, we arranged to send, if possible, a quarterly greeting of love to our brothers and sisters whose names are given on the Bahá'í directory. Our members much appreciate letters from Maine, Chicago, New York, Kenosha (USA); London (England); Hamburg, Karlsruhe (Germany); Shanghai (China); Haifa (Palestine); Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth (Australia); Hobart (Tasmania); and Auckland (New Zealand)."

The Auckland Bahá'ís likewise sent out letters. One dated September 1926 begins:

"We gratefully acknowledge letters from Spiritual Assemblies in many countries which are the great means of helping on the cause of unity and harmony, and for making friendships the World over", and includes the news that "The Australasian magazine 'Herald of the South' is now issued in print... suitable articles are again asked for..."

In 1925 'Herald of the South' was one of the few Bahá'í magazines in the world, others being in India, America, and Germany.<sup>38</sup>

The Dunns kept in contact with Shoghi Effendi, and shared all major items from him with the Australian Bahá'ís. In June 1925, Clara wrote to Gretta Lamprill:

"This is such a beautiful tablet sent by Shoghi Effendi and a fine letter by Dr Esslemont to Major Mcleod that we have had copies made and sent to all assemblies".<sup>39</sup>

Initial correspondence from the Guardian was for the guidance and encouragement of the Dunns. First contact was a cablegram from the Guardian dated 15/12/21, which read "PRAYING FOR GLORIOUS SUCCESS IN YOUR NOBLE ENDEAVOURS - SHOGHI". Soon after, the Guardian left Haifa for a period, and the day after his return, 16/12/22, he cabled "AWAITING LOVING GLAD-TIDINGS OF AUSTRALASIAN FRIENDS IN HOLY LAND".<sup>40</sup>

Successive correspondence centred on the direction of the direction of teaching work, development of both spiritual and administrative aspects of the Bahá'í Faith, and Shoghi Effendi expressed the hope that the Dunns could redouble their efforts and "visit the islands of the sea".<sup>41</sup>

## LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

Hyde-Dunn realized that the best way the Australian Bahā'īs could help the Guardian was through 'united action', which meant forming 'assemblies' in each centre, which could act and react autonomously, but with common purpose. In terms of administration, the goal was to form assemblies, then form a national body, a National Spiritual Assembly in line with administrative developments in other countries, notably U.S.A., India, Germany, Iraq, and Great Britain. Writing to the Australian Bahā'īs on April 21, 1925, the Dunns said:

"It is only through love and unity from the Bahá'í World will he (Shoghi Effendi) be able to function.. so let us as quickly as possible be ready to form our National Spiritual Assembly, should the word come from him to do so -- such conditions as are now arising in Persia, makes us feel the necessity of a National Spiritual Assembly that were capable to communicate and act for all Australasia as one unit".

One week later, on April 28, Hyde-Dunn wrote to all Australian Assemblies calling for action regarding the persecution and martyrdom of Persian Bahā'īs:

"With the object to mitigate and entirely subjugate these terrible conditions to which our dear brothers and sisters in Persia have been subjected -- the Melbourne Assembly of Bahá'ís have written a strong, firm letter to the British Consul at Tehran, Persia, protesting against these atrocious and continued happenings... will you kindly write a letter from your Bahá'í Assembly, putting in the same appeal of protest to the authorities".

The first Assemblies were formed upon the judgement of the Dunns. As Hyde-Dunn explained to Perth 'these assemblies in Australia at present are merely preliminary'.<sup>42</sup> In 1926 Clara explained in a letter "I will enclose Shoghi's instructions for conducting assemblies. The old way of electing officers is not the Bahá'í way and we must study the new Bahá'í law because it will hold sway in all the world later on".<sup>43</sup>

The Adelaide Assembly of 1924 had 32 Bahā'īs, the 'President' being South Australia's Nestlé's manager, and in the same year Perth had an Assembly of 7.<sup>44</sup> Although Sydney held the first Australian Bahā'í, Mr Whitaker, there was no Assembly by 1925. Clara wrote to Gretta Lamprill on May 6, 1925 that they were hoping to be sent to Sydney by Nestlé's so that they could form an Assembly, because:

"We think there are now enough firm believers there to form one, and Sydney being one of the largest cities in Australia it is time they had an active Assembly".



A further letter to Gretta, dated December 12, 1925, indicates that the Assembly had been formed.

#### THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY - THE FIRST ROUND.

Shoghi Effendi had written to the Dunns on June 15, 1925:

"I am delighted to learn of your intention to form next year a Bahá'í Convention and the first National Spiritual Assembly of Australasia".

Hyde-Dunn had been talking of the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly since early 1924:

"The time is not far distant when Australia will make her move to establish the National Spiritual Assembly for Australasia".<sup>45</sup>

Hyde-Dunn reasoned that India had had one for five years already, and the Faith had not long been established there.<sup>46</sup> He felt that a Convention could be called as soon as Brisbane formed an Assembly. He was sure that with the existence of firm Assemblies in each city, the Guardian would call for the Convention, and that call soon came. In May 1925, Clara wrote to Gretta:

"You will note the glorious news that Shoghi Effendi has promised to come to Australia and that we may form the National Spiritual Assembly this coming year".<sup>46</sup>

With the news that a Convention was to be held in 1926, the Bahá'í communities were greatly enthused. Letters were sent to all so that consultation could decide the most appropriate venue, and the nature of Bahá'í elections could be clearly understood.<sup>47</sup> This call for a 1926 Convention has two interesting aspects. Firstly, it appears to have been the wish of the Guardian, as the Convention letter states:

"You have all received the letter from our glorious Guardian dated March 19, 1925, addressed to all the beloved believers in Australasia and New Zealand", and "each Assembly and its members should carefully study our blessed Guardian's instructions, dated March 12, 1923", and "We are called to convene our Baha'í Convention and elect our National Spiritual Assembly in the Hallowed days of Ridvan - April 21 to May 2, 1926. Surely this is the fragrance of a New Springtime for Australia".

The second point of interest is that Hyde-Dunn stressed the spiritual and human side of the election, as much as its administrative function:

"We must all prove our love and obedience to the Centre of the Covenant by rallying to the call of our dear Guardian, Shoghi Effendi..."

As it turned out, the Convention was postponed, the Guardian wrote an explanatory letter to the Australasian Assemblies, and Effie Baker wrote a private letter to the Dunns, after which Clara wrote to Gretta:

"So now we know there is no need of thinking of a National Spiritual Assembly until all the Assemblies are formed and working in unison.. we must grow in inner light and spirit to set the pace for those to follow".<sup>48</sup>

### WORKING FOR NESTLÉS

Hyde-Dunn did not see his business activities as separate from his involvement in actively promoting the Bahá'í teachings. He was a devoted businessman and held great concern about correct and just business principles. So satisfactory was his method of serving the Faith that when, in 1932, the renowned American Black Bahá'í Louis Gregory was in need of an income, the Guardian advised him to take work similar to that of Hyde-Dunn in order to "both win your bread and serve the Cause".<sup>49</sup> Together with Ernest Brewer, a Sydney Bahá'í, Hyde-Dunn wrote a series of 'lecturettes' for Nestlés, designed to be broadcast. As he explained to Ernest:

"The ideas presented in the subject matter seem to have caught on and I think the time is nearly ripe to get the principles of Bahá over to them".

Hyde-Dunn's attitude to his work is set forth in the same letter:

"... just as my life is a hard life -- I find service in the Bahá'í Cause a great help in every way and my health grows stronger each day -- business is softened and the world eased in one's life -- when we are able to give out spiritual qualities to others".<sup>50</sup>

Hyde-Dunn was a successful businessman because he combined human qualities of honesty and integrity with business-like perception. These qualities are apparent in his description of the lectures to Clara:

"You will note how I have handled the language and terms, so as to not give them a strict religious aspect -- more a scientific aspect of the needs of life.. I am aiming them before the public as Nestlés' Company lectures... it is their approval I am after -- Holden I am sure will enjoy the subject matter... but whether they

allow it... to look at the industrial question as I have presented it remains to be seen".<sup>51</sup>

In 1926, Hyde-Dunn travelled through Queensland country areas. He reported "a successful time in business and Bahá'í, having some interested people already".<sup>52</sup> When he arrived in Townsville, he looked for some people he had met before, but found only their daughters. He reported the occasion to Clara:

"My own Dear Clara, Blessed Mother first you must know I have seen those two sweet girls - Phillis and Joyce - both are at school, here in Townsville - St. Annes, Church of England School. Both are boarding, their mother is in Bowen, at Grand Central Hotel. Phillis told me that their daddy has a tobacconist shop at Bowen - this means a betting place for the sports, in all probability... I took them a dear little bottle of perfume each -- a pretty wee thing with a screw top and a stopper with a plunger reaching into the bottle -- also some candies..."<sup>53</sup>

Hyde-Dunn travelled mostly by train and some idea of the pace that he moved at is indicated in this letter to his friend Ernest:

"This is a hot country, everything you touch is hot, my machine is hot, chair is hot, table is hot -- but a fairly dry heat. Tomorrow my work takes me to Richmond, about 80 miles West of here -- returning 12 o'clock Friday night and leaving again at 5.45 am. So from 6 am tomorrow I will be hustling until I reach Winton Saturday night".<sup>54</sup>

He took great interest in the products that he sold, and in the health of his friends, and children, in particular. He explained to Ernest in November 1928 that:

"Business at present time holds me close - conditions are changing and I have been watching the alteration in treatment of infants for two years -- that which I have been striving for is just about to be materialized and I want to be at my post with all attention for some time".<sup>55</sup>

When the Depression came to Australia, Hyde-Dunn worked on. He reported to Ernest that "business conditions are not good with us in Adelaide at the moment -- so many out of work".<sup>56</sup> In 1930, business became uncertain, and Hyde-Dunn, now aged 75, still could not find rest. He lamented to Ernest:

"We hope the time will come for all of us to meet again... it is hard to say as we never know when or where we may be sent next... business conditions in regard to my special work have changed and become much harder to cope with... business has taken the daylights out of me for a time".<sup>57</sup>

Further letters to Ernest in 1930 said "conditions in Australia are slipping into unsatisfactory and problematical situations -- that must take much time and care to solve",<sup>58</sup> and "business houses are all having a hard trial and Nestlé's are not exempt".<sup>59</sup>

Whatever the situation, Hyde-Dunn related it to the ideals of his Faith.

From Moree he wrote to Ernest:

"The political outlook is not too promising, because the people are depending on poor politicians... we must work and work assiduously to produce men and women with honest characters and pure hearts -- then we will get higher aims in our politicians".<sup>60</sup>

Hyde-Dunn had a strong sense of mission. Clara Dunn went on pilgrimage to Haifa, Palestine, in 1932, and writing later to the Guardian, thanking him for the 'wonderful love, care, kindness and many privileges' bestowed on her, Hyde-Dunn said he could only show his gratitude through his:

".. attempt to release more love and effort (in the remaining years of my life) imparting the true teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in Australasia and New Zealand and perhaps some of the South Seas -- this is my desire".<sup>61</sup>

In this same letter, he asked the Guardian about the accuracy of understanding of the essential teachings of the Faith. After outlining his understanding of them he said:

"My heart and soul yearn to know if these fundamental teachings are the correct essentials. Deep down in my being these realities have dwelt for the past twenty-five years -- working hard and striving to spread the Blessed Revelation - - whatever there may be wrong -- I can only pray for the truth of correction".

That Hyde-Dunn, at the age of 77, having heard of the Faith in 1905, twenty-seven years earlier, having learnt the teachings from the likes of Lua Getsinger, Thornton Chase, Louis Gregory, and one who was grouped in the same category as Isabella Brittingham, Helen S. Goodall, Martha Root, and Ali Kulī Khan, in the recollections of Marion Carpenter Yazdi,<sup>62</sup> could submit a life-time of spiritual training and perception to the youthful Guardian for correction is indeed a powerful example of complete and utter humility. Hyde-Dunn taught with the aid of charts, concerning the succession of Prophets, and the different levels of creation. These charts he obtained through Lua Getsinger, who was instructed in them by Abdu'l-Bahā. The subject of the charts was brought up by the Guardian following an article he had read in 'Herald of the South', as he expressed the concern that the teaching methods could become dogmatised, and rigid.

## CLARA DUNN

Clara Dunn, known affectionately by many of the friends as 'mother', returned from her pilgrimage in 1932 with the instruction of the Guardian to 'awaken and encourage the whole of Australasia to the importance of the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly'.<sup>63</sup>

During all the years that Hyde-Dunn was generally travelling, Clara played a no less significant role in constantly encouraging the Bahā'īs, and providing them with further access to an understanding of the Faith. In the early years, she encouraged the Bahā'īs in charity work, for example, from Brisbane, in 1926, Clara wrote to Gretta:

"We have formed a committee and are to call on the homes where the foster mothers are caring for the babies who have no fathers. At our first meeting someone suggested a fund should be started to get them better food and clothes as their mothers were mostly working girls and before we realized what was happening three pounds ten was on the table".<sup>64</sup>

When the Dunn's first came to Australia, Clara took on the role of a public speaker for the first time. Hyde-Dunn had written to a friend in September 1923:

"She had not spoken to numbers of people before -- only to individuals or a few, but now she speaks to big groups of people, who invite her and reinvite her, to hear and listen to the glad tidings of Bahá'u'lláh from her lips".<sup>65</sup>

Her early years had been filled with hardship, as some of her letters show. Gretta Lamprill was the lone Bahā'ī in Tasmania for quite some time and Clara wrote to her many letters of encouragement: "No dear, do not be discouraged. I was alone in my city for five years after I was a Bahá'í".<sup>66</sup> A year later, Clara was still writing with the same message:

"Don't be disheartened if your numbers are only few. The first essential is firmness in the covenant -- which means love and obedience -- then with head erect and heart full of love, will the teachings be diffused among all -- the Assembly will follow at the right time".<sup>67</sup>

A great boost was given to the Australian Bahā'ī community when Keith Ransom-Kehler visited in 1931 Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Auckland. From Adelaide Hyde-Dunn reported to his friend Ernest:

"Her lectures are unique -- from a spiritual and scientific standpoint -- here she is getting quite good audiences -- and the listeners are most attentive... her memory is quite remarkable -- never takes a note on any subject".<sup>68</sup>

It was Keith Ransom-Kehler who first brought the book *Bahá'í Administration* to Australia, although it was first published in 1928.<sup>69</sup>

### THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY - THE SECOND ROUND

Hyde-Dunn had hoped the National Spiritual Assembly would be formed in 1933, especially since Adelaide was working in conjunction with the other states and New Zealand towards this goal, and had even written for instructions and details for procedure.<sup>70</sup>

The National Spiritual Assembly was eventually formed in 1934. Hyde-Dunn's health began to fail. He continued to type, but he could not see the keys he was typing. In 1936 he wrote to Gretta Lamprill:

"Don't be worried Dear about having a home -- Mother and this servant have no home but are blessed with friends like you -- Nestlé's Co. considered me too old to give my services to them any longer and I had to leave them two years ago - next year sees me in my 80th year, Mother is younger, but not the strong constitution of this servant, but keeps fairly well. Our blessed friends have been most kind and hospitable to us, we are staying with our dear friends Mr and Mrs Brewer at Penhurst, just outside Sydney -- both Mother and I fortunately got the old age pension, it is not much, but such a blessing to have a little coming in -- so see how beautiful and good God has been to us -- but above all and everything the National Bahá'í Assembly for Australasia and New Zealand is established -- nothing else matters or counts".<sup>71</sup>

*First National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand, 1934. Standing (from left) Mr. P. Almond, Miss E. Blundell, Mr O. Whittaker, Mr R. Brown. Seated (from left) Mrs S. Jackman, Mrs C. Moffitt, Mr H. Hyde-Dunn, Miss M. Stevenson, Miss H. Brooks.*



## □ NOTES

1. 'Abdu'l-Bahā. *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1977.
2. *The Bahá'í World*, [henceforth = BW] Vol. IX, 1940-44. (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust) 1945, p. 593.
3. The passage 'Notes Regarding History of Bahá'í Cause in Australia' is unedited but probably circa 1928. It was the basis for the 'In Memoriam' article on Hyde-Dunn in BW., IX:593, but it contains an error regarding the date of arrival in Australia, saying 1919. 'To Follow a Dreamtime' (NSA., of the Bahá'ís of Australia, n.d.) regards the date of arrival as April 18 1920, but a 'Commonwealth of Australia Collector of Customs' note, to Clara Dunn, dated July 26, 1943, gives the date of arrival as April 10, 1920. 'To Follow a Dreamtime' is based on the c.1928 'Notes', in which the '10' looks like an '18' (Hyde and Clara Dunn Papers, Australian National Bahá'í Archives).
4. 'Abdu'l-Bahā, son of the Prophet-Founder of the Bahā'í Faith, Bahā'u'llāh, became its leader, and the 'Centre of its Covenant' when his Father died in 1892. Shoghi Effendi, Grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, became the Leader, or 'Guardian' of the Bahā'í Faith at the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921. The 'Covenant' can be taken to mean the protection against schism in the Bahā'í Faith provided by the clear enunciation of successive leaders in the 'Will and Testament' of each successive leader. Clara Dunn received a 'Tablet', or letter, from 'Abdu'l-Bahā in 1919 under her former name, Clara Davis. Dates of the other Tablets were Feb. 12, 1919; Jan. 4, 1920; Jun. 25, 1920; and Dec.9, 1920.
5. BW IX, op. cit., and based on the c.1928 'Notes'.
6. From recorded conversation with Mr. H.C. Featherstone, Feb. 1982.
7. BW IX, op. cit., p. 606.
8. 'Notes...' op. cit.
9. This is the text of the translation used by Hyde-Dunn. Shoghi Effendi's translation is 'O MY SERVANT! Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more', 'The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh', (Wilmette, Illinois: BPT., 1954) but first published in this translation in the British Isles in 1929/32. [On the various publications of English translations of the 'Hidden Words' see W.P. Collins, *Bibliography*.. (Oxford:George Ronald, 1990) l.50ff. (Ed.).
10. From 'Talk on the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi' by Effie Baker", n.d. Effie E. Baker Papers, Australian National Bahá'í Archives. See also, 'In Memoriam--Effie Baker' by James Heggie, BW XIV 1963-68, pp. 320-21.
11. John Hyde-Dunn (hereafter JHD) to Fazel Mazandarani 15/7/23. All letters from Dunns are from Hyde-Dunn Papers, Australian National Bahá'í Archives. For an interesting account of the first Bahá'í in New Zealand, see 'The Australian Dawn', Graeme C. Rouhani, in 'Australian Bahá'í Bulletin', June 1980, pp. 3, 9; September 1980, p 11; and December 1982, p 10. Hyde-Dunn was in New Zealand for two weeks only, while Clara stayed for three months.

12. BW XV, op. cit., 490.
13. JHD to Mazanderani, 15/7/23.
14. JHD to Mirza Azízulláh S. Bahadu, 12/1/24.
  
15. BW XV, op. cit., 534. See also Rouhani, G. op. cit., Jun.'80, p 3, and James Heggie 'History of the Bahá'í Faith in Tasmania', n.d. Bundle 0345, Box 0133, N.A.B.A
  
16. BW VIII, op. cit, p 677.
17. Clara Dunn (hereafter CD) to (unknown), 2/10/24.
18. CD to (unknown) 8/10/24.
19. JHD to Dr Esslemont, 7/10/23.
20. CD to Annie Miller 26/10/28.
21. CD to (unknown), 2/10/24,
22. CD to Gretta Lamprill, 30/7/26.
23. JHD to Mrs Albert, 29/7/23.
24. JHD to Webb's, 14/9/24.
25. CD to Gretta Lamprill, 22/9/24.
26. JHD to Almonds, 30/10/34.
27. JHD to Miss Eastgate, 17/5/35.
28. JHD to Webb's, 14/9/24.
29. CD to Gretta Lamprill, 22/9/24.
30. JHD to (unknown), 26/8/24.
31. JHD to Haifa Spiritual Assembly, 27/6/23.
32. CD to Gretta Lamprill, 24/2/25.
33. *ibid*, 3/6/25.
  
34. *ibid* 19/3/26. Effie Baker had been persuaded by Martha Root to join the first group of pilgrims from New Zealand to visit the Guardian in Haifa, Palestine. By a favourable set of circumstances, Effie remained at Haifa for eleven and a half years, during which time, she wrote constantly to the Australian Bahá'ís, keeping them in touch with International Bahá'í events.
  
35. Brewer's to Dunn's, 29/8/26
36. Nora Lee responding to Dunn's letters of 17/12/24 & 11/1/25, 6/2/25.
37. 9/9/25.
  
38. ***Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'í Community of the British Isles.*** (London: Bahá'í Pub Trust, 1981) p. 42.
  
39. CD to Gretta Lamprill, 23/7/25.
40. Rúhiyyih Rabbaní, *The Priceless Pearl.* (London: Bahá'í Pub. Trust, 1969), p. 65.
41. JHD to Fazel Mazanderani, 15/7/23.
42. JHD to Perth Bahá'ís, 4/1/24.
43. CD to (unknown), 14/11/26.
44. CD to Gretta Lamprill, 21/12/24.
45. JHD to Perth Bahá'ís, 4/1/24.
46. CD to Gretta Lamprill, 21/12/24.
47. JHD to Australasian Bahá'ís, 30/8/25.
48. CU to Gretta Lamprill, 9/2/26. In this letter Clara calls Effie "our Ambassador at the Court".