

Before accepting an invitation to speak to a gathering of Bahá'ís Frank consulted the members of his family. They agreed that he could do so, and Frank was motivated by the possibility that he might convert the Bahá'ís to Islam. He spoke in a series on "Nine great religions of the World" at the Yerrinbool Winter School at Yerrinbool, in September 1947. Frank was impressed by the Bahá'ís and the Bahá'í teachings, but his understanding of Islamic teachings concerning the "day of resurrection" and the "seal of the prophets" prevented him from changing his faith. Soon after, however, the explanations of these doctrines from the Bahá'í perspective given him by Joseph Perdu, who was then travelling through Australia, dissolved his concerns.

Frank and Bibi were the first Muslims to become Bahá'ís in Australia. They declared their faith at the Yerrinbool Summer School in December 1948 and became members of the Yerrinbool Bahá'í community. The summer school committee cabled to Shoghi Effendi:

LOVING GREETINGS THIRTEENTH
SUMMER SCHOOL COMMENCED WITH MOSLEM FAMILY ACCEPTING
FAITH SUPPLICATING PRAYERS FRUITFUL ACHIEVEMENTS

To this cable Shoghi Effendi replied:

DELIGHTED ASSURE ATTENDANTS
NEWLY ENROLLED FAMILY LOVING FERVENT PRAYERS MAY SCHOOL
SESSIONS PROVE LANDMARK PROGRESS FAITH LEND TREMENDOUS
IMPETUS UNFOLDMENT PLAN DEEPEST LOVE

Upon becoming a Bahá'í Frank was ridiculed and scorned by his Muslim friends and relatives, whom he nevertheless continued to visit, and to teach the Faith. Eventually his two half-brothers became Bahá'ís. On two later occasions Frank visited his home village in Pakistan and endeavoured to teach them his new religion. On the first visit no-one was prepared to listen, but during the second visit a cousin declared in the town of Sialkote.

In the following years Frank Khan became one of Australia's most devoted and active teachers and administrators of the Bahá'í Faith. His subsequent long association with the Yerrinbool Bahá'í school as both a speaker and member of the school committee is unparalleled. He was chairman of the Yerrinbool Summer School committee from about 1950 into the mid 1960s. The existence of considerable tensions within the community as to how the school should be developed made this a testing time for Frank, and for other members of the

committee. Despite innumerable difficulties, however, Frank was proud of the fact that while he was treasurer on the committee, the Yerrinbool School made a profit on its operations.

Over a period of four decades, also, he was a source of knowledge concerning Islam and the Quran for the Australian Bahá'ís, who utilised his learning at both local and national levels. Although his mother tongue was Urdu, and English his second language, Frank learnt to read and speak Farsi and Arabic after becoming a Bahá'í, in order to read Bahá'u'lláh's words in the original. He learnt the meaning of words by comparing a text in several languages simultaneously. In the teaching field Frank was most fearless, and continued to call his Muslim brothers to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. He ordered many Bahá'í books in the Urdu language to teach fellow-Indians in Australia.

In 1950, soon after becoming a Bahá'í Frank was elected as one of two delegates from the Yerrinbool Local Assembly to National Convention. He was elected to the National Assembly and became treasurer. Dulcie Dive, the former treasurer, was appointed his assistant. Frank was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly for three consecutive years, 1950-53; and again for two years 1964-66. Frank was subsequently elected delegate to Annual convention many times.

As national treasurer in 1950 he wrote to the Australian Bahá'ís on the "lowness of the funds":

Bold decisions and large scale plannings that are required to carry forth the blasts of the Twice Blown Trumpet of This Might and World Wide Resurrection cannot be taken because the Funds in the Treasury will not permit it...

The Seed is not being scattered in the soil of the mentalities of Australian and New Zealand brothers and sisters in a way that we should if we were to discharge our obligations to our slumbering brethren on this holy soil. The day is coming, my brothers and sisters, when the Cause shall be accepted. The Supreme God, Who sent down this Mother Book, this perfect Law, is most certainly potent of having it accepted and followed. This stage that we are passing through now is but a Passing Phase. "Surely with difficulty is Ease and surely with difficulty is Ease"...

Will each and

every brother and sister give this matter their most serious consideration and act now, to gladden the hearts of your brethren, the N.S.A., to put new and vigorous life into the Cause which assuredly will prevail, which you have fortunately chosen to back, which each nation is now summoned to obey, which is the Salvation of Mankind, which is the command and Cause of the Potent, the Powerful Mighty God, the Lord of the Worlds.

Humbly in His
service,

F.M. Khan.

This eloquent written appeal to the Australian Bahá'ís conveys something of the melodic quality of Frank's speaking style. He possessed a deep and resonant voice, the sound of which conveyed a conviction to match the words he uttered. He spoke words of praise for the prophets, and conveyed a love of God and of spiritual qualities at all times. He offered his services as a public speaker in the far flung cities and towns of Australia and the Pacific Islands.

On many occasions he spoke at public events held by the southern NSW communities of Mittagong, Bowral, Yerrinbool and Wollongong. For Yerrinbool's 1953 Naw Ruz celebrations held at the Bowral C.W.A. rooms, for instance, Frank read an "eloquent exposition of the Bahá'í Faith" at which was published in the local press. He was a champion lawn bowler, and through friends made in pursuit of this sport, gave innumerable talks to Apex and Rotary clubs. He was also travelled on many occasions to the cities and towns of Victoria and New South Wales.

In July 1952 Frank made the first of his visits to Fiji, where his efforts in teaching both Hindu and Muslim Indian-Fijian communities were quite successful. He gave two talks to the Literary Club of Suva, two radio broadcasts on ZJV, one in Urdu and another in English, addressed Suva's Rotary Club, and a gathering of some 40 Hindus. On another night he failed to show up to a dinner given in his honour, because the organisers forgot to invite him. Gretta Lamprill, then secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly, included in her report of 21 May 1953 to Shoghi Effendi concerning teaching activities of the Australian Bahá'ís: "The report to the N.S.A. of Mr. Fazel M. Khan on his recent teaching trip to Fiji was received by us with great happiness as Fazel feels confident that a Spiritual Assembly will be established in Suva at the beginning of Bahá'í Year 110".

Between June and August

1958 Frank worked with Bill Washington to erect the Bahá'í school in Port Vila, in the New Hebrides. A short report appeared in the Bahá'í Bulletin.

In the final three years

of the Ten Year Crusade, 1960-63, Frank travelled to most Australian States giving fireside and public meetings. In 1960 he visited Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria. In Brisbane in September Frank addressed three meetings on the fulfilment of Christian prophecy, each with an average attendance of 20, including 6 non-Bahá'ís; Speaking on the Covenant at a NSW state teaching conference in November he related firmness in the Covenant to working toward the 10 Year Crusade goals. The years until the completion of the plan were filled with efforts toward achieving the goals of the plan. In November 1961 Frank & Bibi left Australia to visit the grave of the Guardian, to make their pilgrimage in Haifa, and to visit Bahá'í communities in Europe and Asia.

In July 1962 Frank spoke

on Islam in a series organised by Bahá'ís at University of Queensland; and in October he addressed firesides and public meetings in Gawler, Salisbury, Murray Bridge, Tailem Bend, Glossop, Hoxton and Renmark, during a two week teaching trip in South Australia. While in Adelaide he and Goro Jorgic visited a mosque where he held an "animated discussion" with some 30 Muslims. He also addressed a public meeting at Glossop in the Murray Valley, attended by some 50 enquirers, mainly aboriginals. Frank and Goro moved on to NSW, where Goro spoke in Sydney, Wollongong, Blacktown and Newcastle, and Frank spoke at meetings in the goal towns of Orange and Mudgee.

Frank returned to South

Australia in December 1962 to teach in the assembly goal areas of Salisbury, Gawler and Murray Bridge. During this 10 day trip his theme was that the coming of Bahá'u'lláh is the fulfilment of the prophecies and promises recorded in the Bible and Quran. According to a report in the Bahá'í Bulletin,

As a result of the

devoted teaching work of the local communities in these areas, and the assistance of Mr. Khan and other travelling teachers, many new believers were enrolled in the Goal areas in the latter part of December, bringing them to the verge of Assembly status, which Murray Bridge subsequently achieved.

In January 1963 Frank

visited Tasmania and Victoria, giving most firesides in Hobart, Devonport and Ballarat. Once again, he spoke on Devonport's radio 7AD.

With the glorious years of the Ten Year Crusade at a close, the tasks of consolidating the existing Bahá'í communities in Australia increased, and the task of further proclaiming the message of Bahá'u'lláh continued. Frank continued throughout the Nine-Year Plan to travel in both Australia and the Islands of the Pacific.

In 1965 Frank spent three weeks in Fiji: His visit was widely publicised over the radio and two of his talks were broadcast. He spoke with Muslims at their centre in Samabula, with Sikhs in their village at Tamavua and later in their Temple; furthermore an invitation was extended to him to address the Arya Samaj sect of the Hindus. Most of his time was spent at small gatherings in the homes of some Indian believers and their contacts, the result of which was the enrolment of several believers.

In December 1967, as part of a national proclamation campaign to mark the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's addresses to the Kings, Frank addressed a meeting of Wollongong local government council for ten minutes.

Throughout the 1960s Frank continued to educate the Australian Bahá'í community through his talks at Yerrinbool Summer School. In January of both 1968 and 1960 Frank spoke on the Teachings of Islam. According to a report of his talk during the latter school:

Basing his talks on quotations from the Quran and the Gleanings, which he occasionally read or chanted beautifully in Arabic, Mr Khan conveyed not simply the teachings of Islam but also the spirit of Islam. The series showed the close and wonderful spiritual link between the Bahá'í and Moslem Dispensation, and how a true understanding and love of the Moslem Revelation gained by Bahá'ís can greatly increase our awareness of the great station of the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh and this Cause.

At Summer School in January 1970 Frank's knowledge of Islamic scriptures was "of great benefit to the friends" in a study of the Kitab-i-Iqan.

Late in 1969 Frank and Bibi travelled through Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Woolgoolga,

Lismore, Tambalgun, Brisbane, Glen Innes, Mudgee, Wellington, Parkes and Orange. Frank's report of his time in Brisbane includes:

rang the Mullah of the Mosque and asked to present the Mosque library with Bahá'í books. At first he refused, then agreed to receive us...The Mullah was there (not very friendly) and the chairman of the Islamic Society. We requested that our Bahá'í books be accepted but they refused to accept them from us and said Bahá'u'lláh is an imposter. We told him to fear God and don't say such a thing.

Although unreported, Frank was on several occasions chased out of mosques, and even threatened with beating by sticks.

Toward the end of the Nine Year Plan, as at the end of the Crusade which preceded it, Frank travelled extensively to give firesides and public meetings, particularly in country towns. In May 1971 Frank & Bibi travel teaching in Mudgee, Goulburn, Young, Orange and Parkes. In Mudgee, Frank spoke of the insurmountable barriers that exist between the religions of the world and illustrated that only through the Bahá'í Faith could any genuine unity or religion be achieved. He also stressed the unity of the prophets and their message, but highlighted the uniqueness of the Bahá'í revelation. In Orange he conducted firesides on "A New World Order" at the home of Mr & Mrs Colin Cole, using wall charts to illustrate his points. During such teaching trips Frank often discussed the long obligatory prayer with his hosts, and took delight in demonstrating for them the correct genuflections which were an important part of it.

In addition to these travels, Frank was active in his own community. He reported in October 1970 children's classes he was conducting in Wollongong, which consisted of:

1. the Founder and Principal figures of our Faith - Bahá'u'lláh, the Bab, Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi
2. About earlier prophets of God - Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, Noah, Hud, Abraham, and any stories about them all.
3. Their life stories, the places or countries they lived in, the kind of persons they were and other human interest factors

about them

4. Our laws of prayer, ablutions, the method of prayer and why, and our administrative order.

5. About God and His presence with us at all times

6. Our duties to God, to ourselves and to other people

7. Health laws of cleanliness, healthy work and play.

Late in 1971 Frank and his grandson, Peter Vohradsky, addressed forty young people at the Methodist Church, Wollongong.

In 1972 Frank and Bibi made their second pilgrimage and once more travelled through Iran.

April 1974 Frank gave firesides and deepenings in Orange.

Although gaining in years, Frank continued to speak regularly at Summer School. Through his many years of success in business Frank was able to become benefactor to the House of Worship, the Yerrinbool School; and through his philanthropic nature he extended assistance to individuals in need. Frank died on Wednesday 10 September 1986. His funeral was conducted at Shellharbour Cemetery on 15 September. The Universal House of Justice cabled

DEEPLY GRIEVED

LEARN PASSING DEVOTED SERVANT FAITH FRANK KHAN HIS
OUTSTANDING SERVICES CONTRIBUTIONS FAITH AUSTRALIA AND
PACIFIC UNFORGETTABLE KINDLY CONVEY MEMBERS HIS FAMILY
OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES AND ASSURANCE LOVING PRAYERS
HIS IMMORTAL SOUL ALL WORLDS GOD

ENDNOTES

Note: The footnote numbers have been lost in this online version.

. Bahá'í Quarterly
45, October 1947, 6.

. Bahá'í Quarterly,
47, April 1948, 6.

. Bahá'í News
Bulletin 10, January 1949, 2.

. At Summer school in 1948

Frank spoke on the "Seven Valleys". In January 1949

Frank gave a talk at Summer School on "The

Resurrection": Bahá'í News Bulletin 11, February

1949, 8. At Summer School in January 1951 Frank spoke on the

Koran and the Tablet of Ahmad (Bahá'í News Bulletin 36,

February 1951, 7). On the 1955 SS program. Jan 58 he spoke on

"heralds of the Day of God" and "The Seven

Valleys". At Summer School, Jan 1959 Frank spoke on

"Prayer and fasting" and the Dispensations of

Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahá'u'lláh. Joy spoke on the history and

teachings of Islam, and Peter on progressive revelation. Joy was

on the Summer school Committee.

Service on committees in 1959, 1961, 1965-67 (1967 Bibi also on committee)

. Frank wrote to NSA 25

May 1958 wishing to resign from the committee in frustration at

the control over schools still exercised by the Boltons: Frank

Khan to NSA 25 May 1958. 0241/0060.

. In July Frank spoke on

the Koran and the Bahá'í Faith at a fireside in the home of Mr

& Mrs McMiles at Caringbah: Bahá'í News Bulletin 19,

September 1949, 10.

. In May 1949 the NSA

ordered books for Frank from India: NSA (M Bolton) to F Khan 18

May 1949. 0554/0165. In June 1949 he had two Pakistani Muslim

families to dinner, and wished to send them "The Book of

Resurrection" in Urdu. He had given a book to his brother,

who he thought might declare at the next summer school (F Khan to

NSA 20 June 1949. 0554/0165). Mariette Bolton invited Frank's

friends Mr Basheer and Mr Afeef to Lang Road.

. The other delegate was

Stanley W. Bolton. During the convention Frank stressed the

importance of unity in thought, spirit and action: Bahá'í

News Bulletin 27, June 1950, 6.

. Frank received 9 votes -

Alvin Blum received the highest (15) and Gretta Lamprill was the

ninth member (7): Bahá'í News Bulletin 28, July 1950, 6.

. elected delegate with SW

Bolton in 1951, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960. Delegate 1967. As

delegate at 1956 Convention Frank recommended that the NSA

circularise the communities to explain the necessity for further

funds, and urging generous contributions; and to investigate the

procurement of ringstones and burial rings in Australia: Bahá'í

Bulletin 24, June 1956, 7.

. "Treasurers

Message", Bahá'í News Bulletin 29, August 1950, 13.

At 1951 convention Frank outlined to the community the NSA's resolve to send £1,000 to the Guardian in the next year (Bahá'í Bulletin 40, June 1951, 2). Frank was re-elected to the NSA (11 votes) but Dulcie Dive was elected treasurer (Bahá'í Bulletin 40, June 1951, 5. 1952).

. On 8 July 1950 Frank was

one of three speakers at a public meeting at the C.W.A. Hall in Bowral, commemorating the Centenary of the Martyrdom of the Bab. Frank Wyss spoke on "The World to Which the Bab came", Mariette Bolton spoke on the "Martyrdom of the Bab", and Frank spoke on "The world since the Bab". Joy Khan, who had just become a Bahá'í youth, provided musical items: Bahá'í News Bulletin 29, August 1950, 11. On January 21 1951 Frank spoke in Wollongong at a meeting of Yerrinbool and Wollongong communities in commemoration of World Religion Day (Bahá'í Bulletin 37, March 1951, 5).

. Bahá'í Bulletin

61, May 1953, 6. In 1953 Frank was "local public relations officer" for Yerrinbool Assembly.

. In November 1950 Frank

spoke twice by invitation of the Melbourne Community at their "Day of the Covenant" program: Bahá'í News Bulletin 35, January 1951, 8.

. On this visit, of two

weeks from 3 July 1952, Frank was the guest of the Nur Ali family: Bahá'í Bulletin 53, September 1952, 6.

. NSA (Lamprill) to

Guardian 21 May 1953. 0504/0181. Frank spoke of developments in Fiji and New Caledonia at the 1953 National Convention: Bahá'í Bulletin 62, June 1953, 2.

. Bahá'í Bulletin

50, August 1958, 7.

. Annual Report

Bahá'í Year 117 (1960-61), 10, 12, 13.

. Bahá'í Bulletin

76, November 1960, 4.

. Bahá'í Bulletin

78, Jan 1961, 5.

. In January 1961 he spoke in Mitcham, in Victoria, Hobart, and Devonport, where he received newspaper coverage in the Advocate, and an 8 minute address over 7AD radio: Bahá'í Bulletin 80, March 1961, 9.

. Their departure was noted in Bahá'í Bulletin 89, December 1961, 6.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 97, August 1962, 11.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 100, November 1962, 9.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 101, December 1962, 14.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 102, January 1963, 4.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 103, February 1963, 14.

. He visited Melbourne for World Religion Day and other firesides in January 1964. Bahá'í Bulletin 116, April 1964, 5. In November 1966 Frank visited Newcastle, visited Bahá'ís at Raymond Terrace, and spoke on "Proofs of the Bahá'í Faith": Bahá'í Bulletin 137, January 1966, 10. 1966 teacher training institute held at Hazira following convention, Frank spoke on "the significance of the Universal House of Justice".

. Bahá'í Bulletin 136, December 1965, 10. A fuller report appears in Bahá'í Bulletin 150, February 1967, 14.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 164, April 1968, 12.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 174, February 1969, 9.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 185, January 1970, 9.

. Bahá'í Bulletin 182, October 1969, 10.

. in August 1970 Frank spoke at a public meeting in Penrith: Bahá'í Bulletin 195, November 1970, 11.

. Australian Bahá'í

Bulletin 202, June 1971, 14.

. Australian Bahá'í
Bulletin 201, May 1971, 14.

. Late in 1970 Frank and
Bibi hosted barbecue for Featherstones: Australian Bahá'í
Bulletin 197, January 1971, 5.

. Bahá'í Bulletin
194, October 1970, 11.

. Bahá'í Bulletin
207, November 1971, 10,

. Australian Bahá'í
Bulletin 232, May/June 1974, 6.

. Australian Bahá'í
Bulletin 292, February/March 1980, 11. In 1982 he spoke on
proofs of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation from the Quran at a deepening
institute in Wollongong organised by Auxiliary Board Member Bizan
Vahdad, and attended also by Collis and Madge Featherstone: Australian
Bahá'í Bulletin 311, March 1982, 15.

. Australian Bahá'í
Bulletin 353, October 1986, 4.

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