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The Central Figures

Bahá'u'lláh

Volume Three



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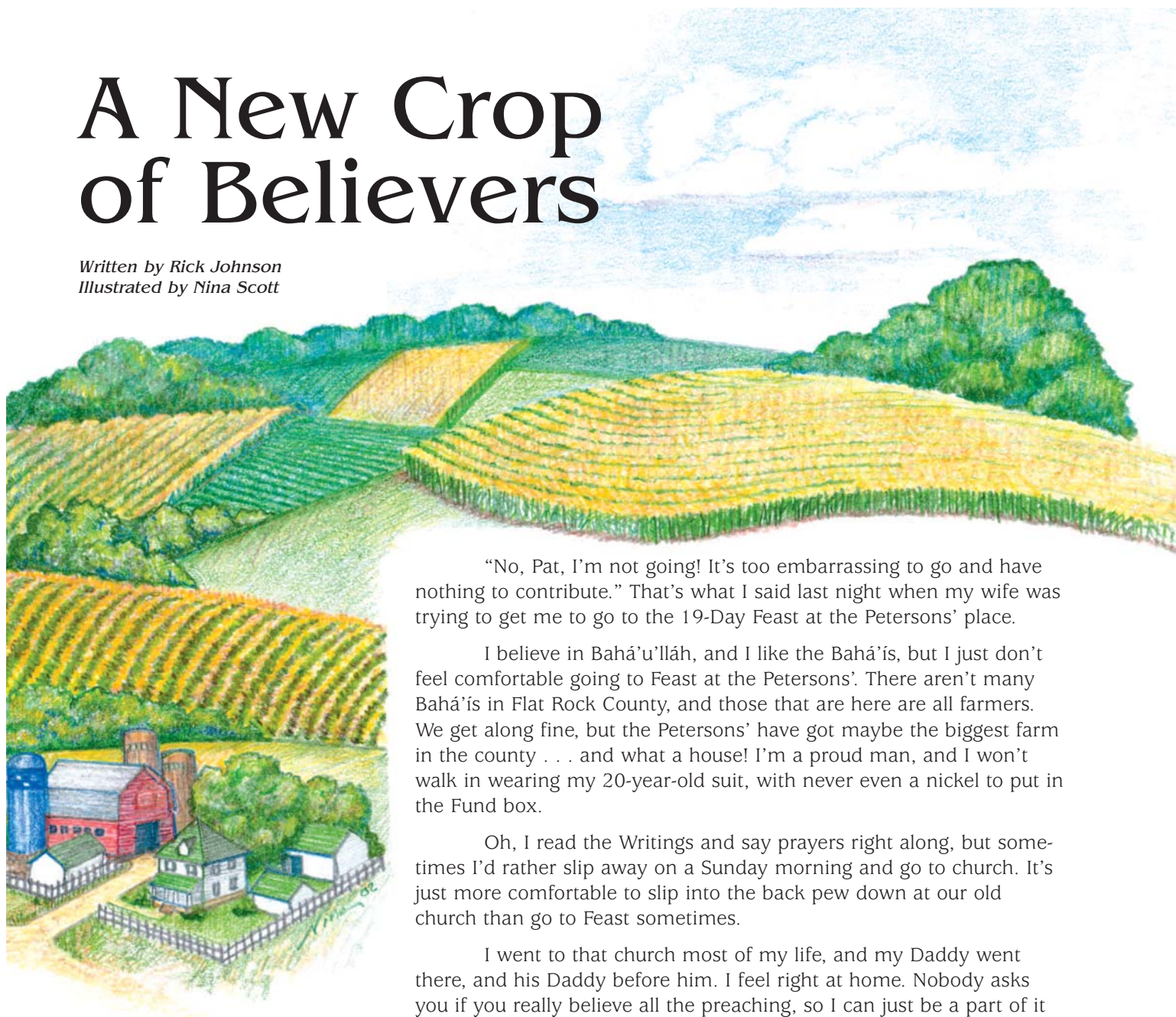
Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education • Stories

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States


Bahá'í Publishing Trust
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A New Crop of Believers

Written by Rick Johnson
Illustrated by Nina Scott



"No, Pat, I'm not going! It's too embarrassing to go and have nothing to contribute." That's what I said last night when my wife was trying to get me to go to the 19-Day Feast at the Petersons' place.

I believe in Bahá'u'lláh, and I like the Bahá'ís, but I just don't feel comfortable going to Feast at the Petersons'. There aren't many Bahá'ís in Flat Rock County, and those that are here are all farmers. We get along fine, but the Petersons' have got maybe the biggest farm in the county . . . and what a house! I'm a proud man, and I won't walk in wearing my 20-year-old suit, with never even a nickel to put in the Fund box.

Oh, I read the Writings and say prayers right along, but sometimes I'd rather slip away on a Sunday morning and go to church. It's just more comfortable to slip into the back pew down at our old church than go to Feast sometimes.

I went to that church most of my life, and my Daddy went there, and his Daddy before him. I feel right at home. Nobody asks you if you really believe all the preaching, so I can just be a part of it and keep Bahá'u'lláh right with me, too. So, why go to Feast at the Petersons'?

At least that's what I thought until Billy gave me something new to think about. Billy—that's my 12-year-old son—came home from Bahá'í class and told me he was going to give one of his pigs to the Bahá'í Fund. Can you believe it—give a pig to the Fund?

It's true the pig is Billy's. I've got a deal with him that we call his 'piggy bank.' I've never had any extra money to give him an allowance. But whenever one of our sows has baby pigs, he gets one to raise. He keeps some to build his herd of pigs, and he sells some. So, he's built up a little herd of pigs—they're his bank account.

Anyway, Billy asks if I could help him take a pig to the sale barn to sell. He really wants to sell the pig to have money to put in the Fund box at Feast.

He said he'd been over at Bahá'í class at the Petersons'. Their place is kind of like the Bahá'í Center for our county, because they've turned an old barn into our meeting place; what used to be granaries and pens, they've made into classrooms and a meeting room, and the hayloft has become a half-sized basketball court for the kids. Billy really likes to go there.

Billy said they were studying how Shoghi Effendi built a unified and strong Faith, although in the beginning, some Bahá'ís had a hard time letting go of the past.

"Dad," he said, "you wouldn't believe it! Do you know that when 'Abdu'l-Bahá died, some of the Bahá'ís considered themselves to be Christian Bahá'ís, or Jewish Bahá'ís, or Muslim Bahá'ís—observing the traditions and rituals of their old religions while thinking they were Bahá'ís at the same time?" Billy was amazed at the idea.

"Well, now, Billy," I replied cautiously, "why do you think they would do that?"

"They just didn't know, Dad . . . They just didn't know what it really meant to believe in Bahá'u'lláh." Billy's face was so certain that he just seemed to glow with light.

"What did they learn, Billy?" I asked. "How did they change?"

"It was the Guardian, Dad . . . They believed in the Bahá'í Faith, but they were just so used to their former religions, that it seemed impossible for them to change. But the Guardian showed them that they couldn't have it both ways."





“Now, Billy,” I said, “don’t you think the Guardian understood it was hard to do sometimes?”

“Yeah,” Billy replied, “but he just stuck to his principles and, little by little, the Bahá’ís got the point. Like me.”

“What do you mean, Billy?”

“Well, the Bahá’í Faith is something new for the world. It wants to give the world something new—and I want that to happen. I realized that I’ve mostly been talking about the Faith, but not living it in my heart . . . I think I want to try to live it more. I think the Guardian had a point.”

“And the point is that you should support the Fund?”

“The Fund is something that I figured out a way to do,” Billy replied. “What I really want to do is live like the Guardian did. He was amazing. And it’s almost like he had a vision for the world that is exactly right for me. He believed in world unity, and helping the different cultures and nations to love one another and work together, and even having a real international government to solve world problems. It’s perfect!”

At this point, I finally caught up with Billy. “Whoa, there, son—just a second . . . I thought those were Bahá’u’lláh’s Teachings . . . ”

“Yes, but it was the Guardian who put Bahá’u’lláh’s ideas into action. That’s the cool part,” Billy said. “He had a vision of how all the parts fit together, and he got all the Bahá’ís everywhere in the world to start putting Bahá’u’lláh’s Teachings into practice. He made it happen—even right here in Flat Rock County! Isn’t that just the coolest thing?”

I had to agree with him. “So contributing the pig is part of putting Bahá’u’lláh’s vision into action?” I asked.

“That’s it, Dad!” Billy laughed. “There will never be any New World Order if it doesn’t happen here in Flat Rock County. The world needs a new crop of people. And I want to be one of them. So, when we learned in Bahá’í class that the Guardian asked the Bahá’ís to develop institutions like the Feast and the Fund and local Spiritual Assemblies, I realized that he was really just a very good farmer—like you.”

“A farmer like me?” I asked.

“Just like you plant good seed, Bahá’u’lláh makes good souls inside each one of us . . . But good farmers do more than scatter seed and throw water on it. You and the Guardian both know that.”

I could barely keep myself from choking up right then. “Billy, go get the pig into the loading pen. I’ll be there with the pickup truck in a minute.”

“Thanks, Dad!” Billy ran off excitedly.

I’d never really thought before about the fact that World Order could start in Flat Rock County. I guessed Billy had a point . . . How will there ever be a New World Order like Bahá’u’lláh envisioned, if we Bahá’ís here in Flat Rock County won’t even go to Feast or give to the Fund?

Later, as I backed up the pickup to the loading pen, I noticed that Billy had picked Rufus, his favorite pig, which had just won the Grand Champion ribbon at the county fair.

I told him I was surprised to see Rufus going to the sale barn. “Well, Dad, he’s got to go soon anyway—and I want to give my best pig to Bahá’u’lláh.”

“Well,” I replied, “before we load Rufus, help me get those three pigs I was going to sell next week. We’ll take them too—it’ll be a good start to our family’s regular support of the Fund.”

Billy grinned. “Dad, do you know what?” he asked.

“No, what?”

“I think that if the Guardian were alive now, that the Flat Rock County Bahá’ís could write him a letter and tell him that things were happening here.”

“Yes, Billy,” I replied, “the Guardian has brought Bahá’u’lláh closer to us today than ever before—and that means the Faith is growing in Flat Rock County, just like he knew it would.” ★

