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Jan. 15 — Feb 11, 1956

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Notes

NOTES ON WORDS OF THE GUARDIAN

(Heard mostly at the dinner table)

[Stamped "VIRGINIA ORBISON" and dated
in handwriting "Jan. 15 - Feb 11, 1956"]

Editor's

section is 47 pages of impressions and travel diary; we have only the first 8 pages typed and proofed of this section. The second section is ten pages of notes on the words of Shoghi Effendi, which is complete.

Anyone who can help complete the remaining 39 pages is encouraged to contact webmaster@bahai-library.org.

Notes on Words of the Guardian

Virginia Orbison

Jan. 15 — Feb 11, 1956

[These ten pages of notes from an appendix to Virginia Orbison's "Diary of a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Made by Virginia Orbison, January 15 to February 11". Keyboarded by Keli Lovejoy from a good quality first-generation copy which was signed by Virginia Orbison. Proofread by Thellie Lovejoy and Vaughn Sheline. {{p1}} All notations in brackets are from the editor. — V.S.]

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

The beloved Guardian promised to pray for Spain.

Spain and Portugal shall form a Regional National Spiritual Assembly for the time being in Riḍván 1957. Although Spain has enough Local Spiritual Assemblies, Portugal has not; so they will have a Regional. Later separate National Spiritual Assemblies must be formed. (1963). If it is impossible to meet for the election of the members, the delegates may vote “in ausencia” (absentee votes). Even though the Faith is not incorporated in those two countries, the Regional N.S.A. must be formed. Even an incomplete number of persons can make a Convention, the rest voting by mail, or as well as they can.

Question: If such a meeting must be held clandestinely (and others also), do we have to observe strictly the rule of meetings, i.e. that only twenty persons can meet at a time, unless official permission is asked? And this is impossible for the Bahá'ís.

Answer: We should proceed with the meetings having as many people attending as possible without attracting attention. Later we would have instructions as to where the Convention would be held, Madrid or Lisbon, depending upon the conditions, and the number of delegates. Dr. Ugo Giachery, Hand of the Cause would attend the Iberian Convention.

INCORPORATION (Legalization of the Faith).

We must continue to try, if we can't get it done as a religion, then we should try to form some kind of society which can manage funds and properties, buy the Ḥaẓírat'ul-Quds, the Endowments, etc. When I told him of the difficulties, he counselled hiring a lawyer. However, if all this impossible for the time being, the properties could be put in the name of an individual Bahá'í or Bahá'ís; but all properties willed to an Assembly. This has been done in other places, such as Rome. In Spain this can be done too. The most important thing is that it be done as soon as possible. Later on the titles can be transferred to the Assembly.

Things will change in Spain; the Catholics who become Bahá'ís are, and will become, very faithful and devoted.

ANDALUZIA

The Guardian is very happy over the fact that Guy Murchie, the American Bahá'í author of “Song of the Sky”, is living in Malaga. He says it doesn't matter if Andalusia is settled first in Malaga or Seville. (This, because the Guardian had before mentioned Seville). {{p2}} The work in Linares interests him very much, and he is praying that the marriage of Tony and Mercedes can be effected, and that his work be fruitful.

GYPSIES

The Gypsies must be contacted. This is very important. When they become Bahá'ís, their characters will change. The "Writings" must be translated into the Gypsy languages, even if only a pamphlet to begin with. One Gypsy converted will communicate the Faith to others. It is very important to convert the Gypsies. It will be a great victory. I told the Guardian that we had some Gypsy contacts in Granada.

The Guardian, when told that the Spanish authorities had refused to renew my residence visa, and had given me eight days in which to leave the country, said that I must return to Spain. This "invitation" was later withdrawn, due to a letter from the U.S. Consul.

MARRIAGE

Whoever has gotten married in the Church, (not saying he was a Bahá'í, and participating as a member of that Church in the ceremony), and having therefore been deprived of his voting right, must simply pay the consequences. Bahá'ís cannot go against the Law and still expect to be pardoned.

Question: Is there no pardon for these people?

Answer: "It is useless to make laws if they are not obeyed."

I asked, then, what Bahá'ís should do then, as a legal marriage in Spain is impossible, unless performed in the Church. He answered that, if they could not do it legally, (according to the law of the Church, which in this case is also the law of the land), they can simply have a Bahá'í ceremony with its certificate, and wait until times change, when this will be considered legal. (In a cable to Spain, the Guardian had said, let the Spanish follow the heroic example of the Egyptian friends.)

Should a Bahá'í marry a non-Bahá'í in the Church of the non-Bahá'í, and swear that the children of the marriage will be educated as members of that Church, the Bahá'í must be deprived of his voting rights.

ROMAN CATHOLICS

Strive to convert the Catholics. Provoke the Church with astuteness and caution. The Church will definitely begin its downfall when it persecutes the Bahá'ís. It will be the same as with the Caliphate and the Imámate. Whoever has attacked the Faith has always fallen.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAUSE

The Guardian emphasized that the Faith develops through sacrifice. The Faith develops the way a man does:

The embryo is the Revelation (Heroic Age). The child is the Social Order (Administrative — Formative Age). The adolescent is the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The mature man is the World Civilization.

And because it is a World (Global) Civilization, it is without precedent. {{p3}} The Global Civilization of Bahá'u'lláh can never decline. It can suffer setbacks, but can never decline. It will continue to progress and ascend indefinitely.

GUARDIANSHIP

Question: Is the Guardianship mentioned in the Bible prophecies?

Answer: It is mentioned only in one place, where in Isaiah it says: “A little child shall lead them.” (This was also in a letter that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote, saying that the “child” was alive.)

The “twenty-four Elders”, do not refer to the Guardians, but to the Eighteen Letters of the Living and others whose names will be known in the future.

The Guardian’s name, Shoghi, does not mean “zeal”. “My name means, ‘yearning’”, said the Guardian. (This was a very poignant moment, as indeed he is yearning — to see the Bahá’ís become Bahá’ís indeed; and he is yearning to see the Ten Year Crusade become fulfilled. Indeed, his whole life has been one of intense YEARNING.)

The “zeal of the Lord of Hosts”, refers to Bahá'u'lláh, it has nothing to do with the Guardian.

BABYLONIA

Question: Does the Babylonia of the Apocalypse (Revelation) refer to Rome and the Church?

Answer: Yes. It is Rome, but it is also all the modern cities which are materialistic — (Such as New York, Paris, etc.)

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S WIFE NAVVAB (Ayesha)

His first wife, lived after the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. She and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived in the Masra’ih and did not go to Bahjí to stay. The Greatest Holy Leaf also lived with them.

[Corrections added in Virginia Orbison’s handwriting]

“See Chosen Highway p 93-4 — Tuba Khánum daughter of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá — Navváb died before Bahá'u'lláh.”

MARRIAGE

Question: What can be done about two persons who before they became Bahá’ís lived together and had children, and who cannot legally get married? (as divorce

in Spain is not permitted).

Answer: If they are sincere believers, they can have a Bahá'í wedding and be Bahá'ís.

The marriage ceremony of the Bahá'ís must take place on the same day as the civil ceremony, where the civil ceremony is permitted. {{p4}} Consent of both parents is obligatory.

BOOK OF “THE AQDAS”

Question: What is meant by the goal of “codifying the “Aqdas” by 1963?

Answer: “The Aqdas” will be codified, that is, an index of its contents will be made. It [the goal] does not mean that it will be translated into other languages, nor be in vigor at that time. This is because many of the Laws are impossible to observe at present. Some of them are quite contrary to the laws of the nations. The Persians do not have the complete “Aqdas”, nor even a complete compilation, as it is not yet a “book”. The laws are encountered in many Tablets written by Bahá'u'lláh. For example, in a Tablet written to a certain person, He would suddenly announce a new Law. Some day, all of these will be compiled into a single book. “The Aqdas” will have to be translated by experts. The present Guardian will not do it. When the Bahá'í State is formed, “The Aqdas” will be promulgated. The Laws are few but very strict. There will be capital punishment, but mercy will be permitted. A person who commits arson will be burned — it is up to the Bahá'í Court of Justice to decide.

There are twenty-six volumes of the Tablets directed to persons, which contain parts of the “Aqdas”. These will later be included in the “Aqdas”. A person who commits adultery will suffer in this world and in the next.

The Guardian said: I have indicated some of these laws for present observance. I shall see how the people obey them and give them out gradually. Little by little the Guardian will indicate those Laws which are obligatory, binding, and those which are recommended.

Some of the laws such as abstinence from alcohol is obligatory and binding. Also, not to get married in the Church is obligatory and binding. Marriage is a law, but not obligatory. It is recommended that people marry, but not binding upon everyone to do so. Others: Obligatory prayers. There will be laws which are only for the Orient, not for the Occident. Games of chance are forbidden, but as for National Lotteries, it will be up to the International House of Justice to decide. Some to the laws cannot be observed at present.

“GOD PASSES BY”

The title indicates that God passed or is passing through the earth, or has come to the earth in the form of His Manifestation, and is recognized by few. It is

difficult to translate into some languages. The phrase has nothing to do with any Biblical passage.

VIRGIN BIRTH:

Question: There are many legends and stories about previous Prophets being born of virgins, are there any other Manifestations of God beside Jesus, born of a virgin?

Answer: The Bahá'í Writings do not mention any, therefore we consider that all other accounts can be inexact, or legendary. Every revelation (religion) has its mysteries. The mystery in Christianity is the birth of Jesus by a virgin. That of the Bahá'í Faith is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We only accept that fact that Jesus was born of a virgin, and not that Mary was exempt from sin, since original sin does not exist. {{p5}} The idea of "original sin" is the invention of men, Naturally, we do not believe in it.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom of God is not the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, but the result of its coming — which is the Global Civilization.

MY SERVANT WHO WILL CONSTRUCT THE TEMPLE

This Biblical passage does not refer to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It refers to Bahá'u'lláh. The Temple is the body — material and spiritual. The "Súratu'l-Haykal" deals with this theme. It is in the form of a five-pointed star, and is the fulfillment of prophecy. It is very badly translated into English. (In the "Bahá'í Scriptures").

THE GREATEST NAME

The Guardian says that in the Writings there is nothing about the connection between the name JEHOVAH (the Tetragrammaton, or word of Four Letters), and the Greatest Name, Abhá.

LORD OF HOSTS

When the "Lord of Hosts" is referred to in the Bible, it ALWAYS means Bahá'u'lláh.

DURATION OF THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD FAITH

Question: Have other civilizations more advanced than ours ever existed on this planet?

Answer: This (Bahá'í) civilization is the most elevated and advanced ever known on this planet, or ever to be known; as it is the first one to be GLOBAL. It is the first time that any civilization, no matter how advanced, has been completely global and united.

Question: Will the Bahá'í Cycle decline, and will future Prophets who come under the shadow of Bahá'u'lláh have to revive it as has been their function in the past?

Answer: No — There can be set-backs in its development from time to time, but IT CANNOT DECLINE. The Guardian spoke several times about this, and each time emphatically stated the above. I expressed pain at asking this question which seems to me amply and frequently answered in all the Writings, and most specifically in the Guardian's writings, but did so ask it, so as to hear from his own lips. "This is the Day which shall not be followed by night." — it is the Kingdom of God on Earth.

INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL PROPHECIES

The Guardian said that when we deal with these, we should not try to interpret them all as referring to this age, unless necessarily they are indicated as referring to it, to the Faith, etc. {{p6}} "The Churches will thank us for this!"

POWER OF SACRED DUST

Asked about the meaning of the power of the sacred dust, as mentioned in "The Íqán" in connection with the dust of the Imám Ḥusayn, the Guardian said that there exists definitely this power, but that we cannot analyze it at present, nor will he give any explanation about this statement or theory. He said, however, that the "philosophers" of the future would study the matter and explain these things.

rites and ceremonies in Bahá'í Faith

The Guardian said that there should be no kind of rites. No one is permitted to establish any special manner of doing things connected with worship. There is no special position or posture to assume while praying, excepting those indicated in the Obligatory Prayers. One can stand, kneel, prostrate oneself, as he wishes. The Báb stayed respectfully OUTSIDE of the Tomb of Ḥusayn, although His Own position was loftier.

ORIGIN OF MAN

We cannot prove scientifically that man has always been man, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, but we must accept His words as being the Interpreter.

THE LETTERS WHICH PRECEDE THE SURAS OF THE QUR'ÁN

The Guardian answered George Spendlove's question, saying that Bahá'u'lláh had written a Tablet which is not yet translated into English, which makes it very clear that the mysterious letters deciphered, indicate that 'ALÍ was truly the real successor of Muḥammad.

THE YEAR 1957

The Guardian when asked the significance of this year, said in a rather offhand way, Oh, that refers to a happening within the Cause, and not in the world outside.

THE CIVILIZATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Revelation (Dispensation) being the Kingdom of God on Earth, can never decline. However, there will never be a time when absolute perfection will have been attained, because if this were reached, there would be no more Prophets. Bahá'u'lláh once stated that there never would be a time when the world was without Prophets.

TEACHING

We must increase the number of believers. Teaching has three aspects:

1. Attraction.
2. Get them to sympathize with the aims of the Faith.
3. Convert them.

Endeavor to make active believers who will support the Bahá'í Institutions. More wisdom mixed with audacity is necessary. {{p7}}

TOMB OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh on Bahjí will have a very large and ornate mausoleum built over it. Larger than that of the Báb. It will be in Bahjí and not on Mount Carmel. It will always be in Bahjí. (The sarcophagus built for Bahá'u'lláh is still in storage in Egypt.)

THE TOMB OF THE BÁB

The chamber which contains the sarcophagus of the Báb is very, very deeply built into the mountain. 'Abdu'l-Bahá insisted that it be very deep, even after solid rock had been struck.

ELECTIONS

The members of the communities elect the Local Spiritual Assemblies. The Local Assemblies elect the delegates who in turn elect the National Spiritual Assemblies and they in turn elect the International House of Justice. These members can be any believer whether of a community or isolated. The International Tribunal of the International House of Justice will decide the term of office of the members of the International House of Justice.

KINGS

There will be kings, but different from what they are now. Bahá'u'lláh addressed Himself to the Kings, indicating their station, not to republics, not the presidents, saying that the kings are the shadow of God on earth — He did not say this about the presidents. However, royalty will marry commoners. (This question was asked on account of the controversy over the possibility of the marriage of Princess Margaret of Britain with a commoner.) The Guardian, however, did not elaborate on the theme.

RACIAL PREJUDICE

Racial prejudice is one of the major defects of the United States, and class prejudice that of the British.

CANADIANS

The Guardian praised the Canadian highly, said they should study the Teachings more profoundly. Although Rúhíyyih Khánum says she is American, the Guardian called her a Canadian. (Perhaps in praise of the Canadians and of her father, Hand of the Cause, William Sutherland Maxwell).

KOREA

The Guardian said that Korea had a great future. He told Bill Schmits that he should return there.

PRAYER

We should pray more. 1. Pray. 2. Meditate upon the prayers said, and think about them. 3. Study constantly the Teachings. {{p8}} 4. Put into practice what we learn — Action.

HAZIRAT'UL-QUDS

Ḥazírat'ul-Quds means, “Sacred Fold”. The Ḥazírat'ul-Quds should be devoted to Bahá'í work only and to things which pertain to the Faith. The Ḥazírat'ul-Quds is for administration.

MASHRIQ'UL-ADHKAR

The Mashriq'ul-Adhkar and its dependencies are for the people in general — for all of Humanity. During the Ten Year Crusade a few Temples will be built, but in the future all the countries will have them, and many more.

TRANSLATIONS

The Guardian made it very clear that we should not put too much confidence in translations not done by him. (He is the infallible interpreter of the Writings).

Translations made by other persons can be excellent, and be of much interest, but they are all subject to error. Only the translations made by the Guardian are considered authoritative. These are our authorities. The Guardian said that we now have all the information about the Faith necessary, and the instructions given or translated by him. Some of these are: “The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”, translated by Shoghi Effendi and Lady Blomfield; the “Dawn Breakers”; “The Administration Letters”; “God Passes By”; “The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh”; “The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf”; “The Íqán”; “Gleanings”; “Prayers and Meditations”, etc. When asked about the value [value?] of “Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era”, and “Some Answered Questions”, he said that they are recommended [recommended?], but have errors. “The Seven Valleys” is full of error, principally of interpretation, and “The Four Valleys”, impossible to understand. Many of the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh were written, addressing specialists in one field or another, such as mysticism, poetry, theology, etc.

When Bahá’ís translate Bahá’í Writings into other languages, Spanish, French, etc., they should do them as well as they can and then consult specialists in the language so as to be sure of the literary value and grammatical correctness of the translation. He said they should be as perfect as possible, first in meaning and then in style. If possible, the experts should be versed in Biblical language.

One evening in answer to questions put by a pilgrim, the Guardian said that “The Seven Valleys” had not been translated by him, and therefore was not always exact in meaning. That is why many passages were impossible to understand or interpret correctly, as the faulty translation prevented this. He also emphasized the fact that ONLY translations made by him are absolutely correct, (naturally, as he interprets as he translates). Also, if a questionable passage is referred to, the Guardian does not say that it is incorrect and then proceed to give the correct meaning. He never does this. If he wishes to give the exact translation and meaning he gets the ORIGINAL writing, and then compares it with the translation to show the difference. He does not simply read off the way it should be! This was very important. He said that we have enough works translated by him to last us as long as needed, without resorting to outside translations. Although they can be authorized, and useful, they are not to be considered as exact authorities. “Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era” still has faulty passages, and so has “Some Answered Questions”; however, they are so important and useful in their present imperfect form that they are recommended. {{p9}} There simply is no time to correct them entirely, or do new translations. “The Seven Valleys” is one which is too faulty to be considered too seriously, and “Four Valleys” simply impossible to understand at all! So the poor pilgrim had to remain unsatisfied in regard to his wish to know all the hidden meanings of “The Seven Valleys” — they are so hidden, that they shall remain so until an authorized Interpreter can translate them properly.

On one occasion a passage from, “Promulgation of Universal Peace” was quoted to him, and he said — that is not correct and in that case remarked that “Confucius was not a Prophet;” but he did not correct the passage.

BURIAL

Bahá'í prayers should be said for any Bahá'í even if the funeral must be conducted in a Church, on account of non-Bahá'í relatives. The burial stone should be used when possible, but if one is not available, then the usual Bahá'í ring is used. The body must be buried within an hour's journey. Bodies must not be cremated.

HOLY PLACES IN ORDER ARE

1. 'Akká-Bahjí, "the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world." (The Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh.)
2. The Tomb of the Báb.
3. The Most Great House, in Baghdád.
4. The house of the Báb in Shíráz.
5. The Síyáh-Chál in Tíhrán.
6. Adrianople.

INTERPLANETARY UNITY

The Guardian spoke about America's primacy — but that more suffering was needed. We are struggling to attain a world civilization and world unity. I asked: And will all this lead to interplanetary unity? "Of course," he said emphatically, "After that, interplanetary unity." I said: But we have an awful lot to do here so as to reach a unity!" "Of course — I was just about to say this!", said the Guardian. The human race will become fused into one, one color, etc.

LAWS

Not to lie is a law, but it is one that Assemblies cannot easily deal with.

Not to take alcohol is an obligatory law. Divorce is frowned upon, but permitted under certain conditions. Smoking is considered dirty, and it is undignified to smoke in a Feast. Smoking during the devotional part of the Feast should never be done, but during the social part, if one HAS to; however this is not recommended. (The Guardian naturally, does not smoke; but there are persons in the household who do, but never in the Guardian's presence. Rúhíyyih Khánúm does not smoke.)

CIVIL LAWS OF THE LAND

The Bahá'ís must obey the civil laws of the country in which they live or happen to be. If there is an investigation by the police, the Bahá'ís must not lie. They must answer truthfully what they are asked, "this is very important," he said. I asked him what we should do in case of occupation by another country, and they should ask for lists of the believers, information, etc. He answered, that God would help us when necessary, as He did in the case of the German Bahá'ís, protected from the Gestapo and the Nazis, during World War II.

Resorting to the “black market” is forbidden.

DISPERSION

Bahá’ís must disperse, so as to spread the Cause and also to be in safer places. {{p10}} New York, Paris, London, “and Madrid”, said the Guardian, with a swift and emphatic look at me!

THE GUARDIAN

A published picture of the Guardian showed him with glasses on. Only this picture shows him with them. I never saw him wear glasses, nor any sign of them. He often read things in front of us, and he did not require glasses.

POLITICS

The Guardian was very emphatic in saying that the Bahá’ís must not sympathize with any political party. We are not in accord with the materialistic countries, that is to say neither with the United States of America nor with Russia. When we mention these two countries, we must make this very clear, and mention both at the same time as materialistic. We cannot be members of any political party nor in favor of any. If our country is occupied by another, we cannot become in agreement with their ideology, but we must obey the laws of the conquering power. The Bahá’ís are not national, nor even international, they are SUPRA-NATIONAL. If they are firm, they will triumph in the end. [Signed in hand]
Virginia Orbison

[end]