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PILGRIM NOTES

OF

Charlotte Stirratt – written to the Lisbon friends

April 30, 1956

My thoughts and prayers were with you constantly during my pilgrimage – I mentioned you each individually at the Holy Shrines and prayed for the speedy victory in Portugal.

In speaking of Lisbon, the Guardian was most emphatic on this point: He said that the believers – all of them without exception – must abide by the majority vote. The decision of the Assembly must be explicitly and wholeheartedly followed. He spoke again and again about the urgency for strict discipline and obedience to Assembly decisions. He stressed that lack of obedience to any Assembly decision is one of the most serious offenses. If a believer consistently refuses to obey the majority vote, then he must be warned and warned and warned. If he persists, then sanctions must be applied and his voting privilege taken away. There is no more serious step than taking away the voting rights – in fact, this is the gravest decision that can ever be taken by an Assembly at this time. It must not be done lightly. If the believers cannot obey the administrative order which is a divine institution, he said, then they would never be able to obey the world order and laws of Bahá'u'lláh. In all the time I was there, I never saw the Guardian speak with such power and authority. His eyes snapped and the very air was charged. It was at this moment that I saw a different Guardian – no one would dare challenge his authority upon the subject under discussion. “If a decision is not just and all the believers abide by it with strict discipline, then God can change that decision.”

The Guardian then began to speak on the subject of morality. Everything he speaks about, he repeats at least three times so that there can be no misunderstanding as to what he meant. He says that any act which affects the community or harms it in any way, should be investigated by the Assembly – even though it is a personal matter. In the West, the Bahá'ís do not like to submit personal

matters to the Assembly. In Persia, they go to the opposite extreme. In America, they are too individualistic. The youth especially must exercise the greatest vigilance in regard to morality – they must have the highest moral standards in order to be an example to the world, in this day moral standards are so low. “But when any moral issue affects the community, the Assembly must interfere.” The youth must be disciplined and disciplined in their moral conduct and attitudes. If for example a believer drinks, he must be warned and warned again. If he does not heed the warnings, then his votes are taken away. Any act that harms the Community must not be tolerated.

As the Guardian spoke, one realized that this Faith is far from being just a religious organization, as we have known them in the past, but completely new and wonderful order with the highest standards of morality, the highest standards of discipline, courtesy, and behavior, and the purest motives and thoughts. Otherwise, how can there be a new race of men? and a new world order? and peace on earth? and until all the things which go to make up the Kingdom of God on earth?

The Guardian spoke on these subjects in regard to Portugal for about an hour, repeating again and again what he had said. I am sure it would be well if each of the believers would consider these words as applying to him – each search his conscience well to see if any act of his or hers could be interpreted to mean a violation of Assembly decision, or a laxity of the high moral standards of Bahá’u’lláh, or any act which is bringing harm to the Cause.

If you could have met the Guardian, looked into his eyes, heard him speak from the station of Guardianship, observed the infallibility with which he is invested in action, watched the extreme humility the effacement of his own personality, felt the power of his love and kindness – well, you would want to do everything in your power to make him happy even for a moment. His happiness is the most precious thing in all the world – it’s real, tangible, eternal, somehow. How I wish that you all might someday know him.

The Guardian said that the Spanish and Portuguese will now have to learn to work together – he seemed so pleased as he said this – anticipating next year. They should do everything possible to cement understanding and happy relationships – learn to work and think together. It is an extremely important step – one of far – reaching implications.