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Nov. 10 to Dec. 2, 1931

Notes

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Bahá'ís are loyal {{p1}} to the government. Bahá'ís should seek administrative positions, but must not accept political positions, and must explain why. Some Bahá'ís hold important administrative positions in Persia. One Bahá'í is chief Magistrate of a city; one is head of an imperial bank. This kind of thing will eventually happen in America. In Persia the Cause is prominent enough so that civil authorities look to Bahá'í methods of administration as models.

Bahá'ís are not to meddle in politics. One meaning of this is that they are not to seek political office, but may, administrative. They do not hold political office because holding such office involves corrupt practices. Non interference in politics is very important (this principle is new and unique; other religious bodies make the mistake of interfering in politics). An example of the evil of interfering in politics was a Persian ('Alí-Akbar) in Moscow, the most capable Bahá'í in Russia. He was quite friendly with the chief officials of the Soviet government for a time. Finally he became involved in politics, lost favor with

the officials in power and was exiled to Siberia. Bahá'ís in Russia have been suspected by officials of having dealings with parties in Persia desiring to oppose the Soviet government. They were able to convince the government that they did not do this, and that it was a principle of their religion not to interfere in politics.

When asked whether Bahá'ís should vote he answered that it was better for them not to. If questioned about their position in this respect they have a good opportunity to explain their attitude of loyalty to the government. Their position in regard to voting is a little like that of many good people in England, who had achieved [eschewed?] party politics but voted for the national party in the last election because the country was in such a plight.

This principle of non interference in politics would be a guide in deciding such questions as whether Bahá'ís should sign the petition circulated by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Bahá'ís should question such enterprises and find whether they are political. If not, they should sign.

Bahá'ís are not conscientious objectors because the conscientious objectors disregards the good of the world and seeks only to be at peace with his own conscience. Bahá'ís, on the other hand, state their position as loyal members of the state who yet seek exemption from military service. If this is granted, good; if not, they obey the government. Bahá'ís must be wise and courageous in taking their own stand before the world. Bahá'ís will have their courage tested in such matters. The Bahá'ís should find out whether they could gain exemption from military service in something the same way as the Quakers.

There is to be another war. This will involve the world world. This is necessary, because a new political structure is needed and cannot be erected until the old structure is destroyed. The nations are not yet ready to give up their sovereignty. England is not more ready that the United States to relinquish her sovereignty, in favor of the League of Nations. Shoghi Effendi does not see any immediate prospect of war. {{p2}}

President Wilson gained the ideas for his 14 points from the Bahá'í writings, but did not advance to the point of accepting the Bahá'í Cause. He was right in trying to lead the United States into the League. The United States must give up its policy of isolation. Wilson saw this but was hindered by politicians. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that Wilson's work was the dawn of peace and Bahá'u'lláh's ascendancy would prove to be the rising sun. Bahá'ís must show their admiration for Wilson and his ideals though such ideals are unpopular in America. The Bahá'í teaching about a universal league of nations is now unpopular, but we should be loyal to it.

The Mandate Commission of the League of Nations has recommended to England expropriation of the Baghdád property. England has recommended the same to the government of 'Iráq. They recommend destruction of the houses on the property and making the land into a park. This, Shoghi Effendi deploras.

Most of the Persian representatives in foreign capitals are against the Cause and misrepresent it.

The Catholic Church is weak on the whole, but strong in America. They have just received a heavy blow in Spain. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said that eventually all the sects will scrap their differences in order to oppose the Bahá’í Cause.

A letter from Queen Marie explained how she was prevented from visiting the Holy Shrine and Shoghi Effendi, and how she regretted it. She wrote something for the Bahá’í World which will be reproduced for a frontispiece.

[^] Her sending this contribution to the Bahá’í World will be an answer to those who say that she did not wish to visit the shrines.

Bahá’u’lláh says that constitutional monarchy is the best form of government. This does not mean necessarily that all governments will adopt this form, but probably there will be a tendency this way, especially so there seems already a reaction from democracy. Some pomp is necessary in order to impress people with the majesty of kingship, but England spends too much in this way.

The principle of obedience to a just government meets something of a problem in Russia, as some might say the Russian government is not a just government. Shoghi Effendi thinks this government should be obeyed, as the Russian people and most of the other governments recognize it.

Russia and Germany have each a great future. Russia will discard Sovietism. In answer to a question as to whether it will be by a gradual development or sudden change, he replied that there will be a destructive phase and new institutions will evolve. Two disruptive forces are now at work, Sovietism (extreme left) and irreligion. A reaction will come in favor of religion and against democracy. The right catchword in regard to government is: “Government of the people, for the people, by the best of the people.” The common people are not intelligent enough to make pure democracy successful. England will soon see that the seeming victory of democracy is not lasting. There will be a reaction and Labor will get in. All this will show a lack of stability in a popular electorate. England has the most democratic government in the world; i.e., the government is most immediately responsible to the electorate.

Bahá’í organization {{p3}} is not very different in form from other organization. The difference is that Bahá’ís have the principle of loyalty in greater degree than others. They have the principle spirit of faith, e.g., the Esperantists tried to spread Esperanto through the world. They didn’t succeed, but when the Master wrote one line to the Bahá’ís in Persia telling them to study Esperanto, not because it would be the universal language, but because it was a universal language, they studied it.

The supposed quotation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that the Bahá’í Cause is not an organization should be; “You cannot limit the Bahá’í Cause to an organization.” The Bahá’í Cause must be organized, just as anything must be organized. Institutions are necessary. Most institutions are now decadent, but without

institutions you have nothing but anarchy. Bahá'ís regard institutions not as ends, but as means.

Bahá'í government is neither purely democratic nor autocratic. It is half way between. The House of Justice is not responsible to the electorate but to God. The two state election diminishes the democratic element. The Guardian cannot legislate. He has only one vote in the House of Justice. He interprets the Sacred Books. The House of Justice is responsible to God and is inspired. How far this is applicable to national and local bodies is not so clear.

Some one said that some think that the N.S.A. is elected by those who vote by mail. The Guardian replied that the few days of the convention is too short a time for delegates to make acquaintance of the friends. They should seek all through the year to do this. He does not think the reading of all names voted for, an especially good procedure.

National committees should not dictate but should consult the desires and talents of individuals offering their services.

The N.S.A. is in the peculiar position of being absolutely dependent on voluntary support of the believers. Any appeal given out must be dignified.

Local Assemblies should advise believers in regard to private affairs, although Persia carries this custom too far. To the question as to whether local Assemblies should take up private problems of an individual believer without being asked, he said probably not unless the matter was affecting the interests of the Cause.

Bahá'í literature cannot go into Persia. It is kept out by the government.

In each country the Bahá'ís have an especial problem. In America it is racial. The main thing is to show the Negro in social ways that we have no prejudice. Make sure that the whole Bahá'í group in a given place is unprejudiced. Let them then determine their methods and policy. Bahá'ís are not courageous enough in this matter. Bahá'ís are really the only ones that have the ideals and sincerity. Discrimination should not be exercised on color lines, although it may be necessary on intellectual lines in such matters as appointing committees for Bahá'í work.

World Unity was one of the divisive elements in the Cause which has passed away. I asked if the failure of this experiment indicated that the indirect method of teaching should not be used. He said that in some cases one had to be cautious and not use the Bahá'í name, but generally it is better to use the name.

Keirella and Muḥammad-‘Alí headed another schism which failed. Mrs. White another. She is mentally unbalanced and Shoghi Effendi does not consider her responsible. The New History Society is another such movement. This is kept going by Mrs. Chanler's money and Aḥmad's personality. Both will pass. Schism is impossible in the Cause because Bahá'u'lláh provided against it in an unmistakable way. The New History Society does what they criticize the Bahá'ís for doing. They have much more organization than the {{p4}} Bahá'ís. Aḥmad

Sohrab is dependent on others for money. He is also clever. Mrs. Chanler was sincere at first but became too much influenced by Aḥmad. The best of the people in the New History Society will eventually learn the Truth. This episode is hard for New York and they are not over it yet. Berlin also had a very bad start. It has often happened that the Bahá'í movement has had a bad start in a given city. Shoghi Effendi was very much pleased to receive a letter signed by about fifty believers in Berlin.

Mrs. Ford is well liked in London. In other places as well.

Bahá'ís will have little to do with establishing the new world order. Of course this fact should not prevent them from serving the Cause to the utmost of their ability. Unity among the Bahá'ís of the U.S. is much better than it was seven or eight years ago. The tasks they now face are teaching the Cause and building the Temple. The new plan of Unified Action is good and practicable. The local and national assemblies are important as foundations of the new political order. Obedience to the majority must be established.

Soon there will be a chain of Bahá'í centers between Constantinople and Paris connecting East and West. Pilgrims to Haifa can visit these. Sofia, Albania, Dresden and Vienna have believers. The believers in Constantinople are timid about organizing. He asked me especially to tell the American friends about these places, so the pilgrims can plan to visit them.

If a group of about four American Bahá'ís go to Persia they should be united, a working group. There would be advantages for any individual who should go to Persia. He or she could master the language in about a year. A study of Nabíl's Narrative will be advantageous to anyone going to Persia. A study of Persian in America is not practicable now but eventually America will have to have a teacher of Persian.

In reply to questions from a young person as to choosing a profession, Shoghi Effendi said that the ideal is to give half one's time to the Cause and half to earning one's living. He advised a young person who wishes to help in spreading the Bahá'í teachings to master the Íqán and the Answered Questions. Select passages for memorizing so as to be able to quote without referring to books. Persian teachers do this. Someone spoke about memorizing whole Tablets and all the Hidden Words. He said it was better to make selections for memorizing.

It is all right to make use of outlines in studying the teachings, but one should not make a creed of what any teacher gives out.

Nabíl's Narrative will make us more conversant with the early history than the Persians. Their knowledge is fragmentary. We should memorize the most important proper names in this book. It was written between 1890 and 1892. Bahá'u'lláh encouraged Nabíl to write it and made some suggestions about the book. 'Abdu'l-Bahá revised certain passages.

Prejudice will be overcome only through suffering.

No religion is final, not even the Bahá'í. In the Hidden Words Bahá'u'lláh says that in this revelation only two letters are given; B and H. This indicates further revelation. Progressive revelation is the basis of Bahá'í Teachings. Unity of mankind is the distinguishing feature of the Bahá'í revelation

When asked whether he felt rested after his vacation he said that he came back rested, but already begins to get tired. He has worked very hard this fall. The Bahá'í work is still highly centralized although the National Assemblies have taken {{p5}} over much. He said that the amount of service rendered by the American Bahá'ís, particularly those on the N.S.A. was remarkable when we consider that those Bahá'ís carry on their own individual professions too.

Bahá'ís should understand that there is no interdiction of marriage with non-believers. (In fact such marriage with a non-believer may be good. The Bahá'í may win his mate to be a believer..) But Bahá'ís must claim the right of their religion, must be free to exercise their religion just as members of other religious bodies are. This is very difficult in case of marriage with Catholics.

The so-called marriage Tablet in the blue prayer book is probably only a report of a talk to an individual. The ceremony for a Bahá'í marriage is in the Aqdas. When this is translated it will be required of all Bahá'ís in addition to civil marriage. Also consent of both parents must be gained for a Bahá'í marriage. This will make a testing ground in the future. On points like this, Bahá'ís will have to show their loyalty; i.e., Bahá'ís will sooner or later have to take firm stand as members of a corporate religious body.

In regard to keeping the fast in a family where some members are not Bahá'í, he said that firmness, tact, and faith would enable one to do this. The fast is of such duration. If a doctor is consulted he should be one that both people have confidence in.

Then someone asked about prayer he said; "Pour out your heart to God freely and fully. Then do something. God cannot work through you unless you act. In case of illness consult and expert doctor." One person said she prayed for a professor to become a Bahá'í. He said to pray not only that a professor but other capable people become Bahá'ís, those who are position to attract those whom we cannot. Difficult ties in a group will not be removed by prayer alone. All must rise to consult and act to remove difficulties.

Directions about obligatory prayer are as reported by Mrs. True and Mrs. Moffet. The only obligatory group praying is a burial prayer which is not yet translated.

The Bahá'í idea of God is of a personal God, not an idea of God as a blind force. A personal God is a conscious God, but not an anthropomorphic God. This came out in a discussion of Dr. Forel and his relations to the Bahá'í movement. Dr. Forel did not fully understand the Bahá'í idea of God.

Regarding someone who claimed to get messages from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the other world, Shoghi Effendi said that she should not impose her supposed messages on anyone else. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had said that most of such communications is

imagination. Psychic experiences are an especial temptation to spiritual people, and if they gain strength this way and don't impose their communications on others, it is all right. They should be willing to admit, however, that about 80% of such supposed communication is imagination. It is very hard to draw the line between psychic and spiritual. Psychic activities if carried to excess lead to bad health and insanity. The Tablet on psychic forces addressed to Anna Mason Hoar, (Star, Vol. 10, p344,) Shoghi Effendi thinks poorly translated, overstated. He would like to see the original.

Having teachers give all their time to the Cause is an exceptional occurrence. This one half time plan (of dividing one's time between service to the Cause and to one's profession) enables one to observe both kinds of worship and tends to keep one balanced.

[END]