

Ransom-Kehler and Lorol

Schopflocher. They were typed up by Lorol at Keith's dictation and the result was checked and approved by Clara Dunn and Lyle Loveday.

The comments attributed to "Lorol" in the notes are very typical of her way of expressing herself. For those not familiar with her I might note that she had a uniquely personal style of 'travel teaching.' It might be summed up by the comment of one shipboard dance companion that she had the best legs he had ever seen on a missionary. Men found her immensely attractive and she used this blatantly to get her own way.

Her approach to contact with 'public figures' may be represented by how she got to know King Feisal of Iraq (this was during the Baghdad house litigation when Shoghi Effendi had various people negotiating with Feisal's government). Lorol had heard that the king was very handsome but as he was very busy he was not receiving guests. So one afternoon she simply drove to the palace and as she approached the gates she floored the accelerator, roared past the guards, and came to a screeching halt at the palace steps. The guards rushed shouting after the car, and a group of startled men came out of the place to see what was happening. Among the latter was the king. Lorol descended from her chariot in full war gear and concern immediately focused on whether she was alright. The king took her in to take tea. And so one more success was achieved in what one might call the "Indiana Jones" technique of proclamation. [- Jackson Armstrong-Ingram, 1998]

Column 1: manuscript from the Seattle Bahá'í Archives

About:

Note at end of the text reads: "Dictated by Keith, typed by Lorol, approved by Clara Dunn and Lyle Loveday. Received at Geyserville, July 1932 by Grace Holley. Re-copied by J.A.B. Dec. 1932"

These notes are from the Seattle Bahá'í Archives; Nordquist Papers. Lorol Luther was one of the first American Bahá'ís from Washington State; Keith Ransom-Kehler was the first American martyr of the Bahá'í Faith and appointed Hand of the Cause of God posthumously (see "In Memoriam," Bahá'í World, Vol 5, p 389)

Typed by Robert Stauffer. Spelling errors are indicated. Accent marks for Arabic and Persian words did not appear in the original which is a carbon-copy.

Column 2: manuscript from the US National Bahá'í Archives

About:

Typed by Armstrong-Ingram. A carbon of these notes was preserved by Horace

Holley and was found in the Horace Holley Papers, National Bahá'í Archives. Lorol was not a perfect typist so I corrected obvious typos (e.g. "abouy" for "about"). Anything in [] is a note added by me. The notes in () are part of the original document.

The copy I am using is from Horace Holley's personal papers. The copy looks as if it has been well handled and the paragraphs have been numbered. It is not the original top copy but a carbon. I suspect that Holley's copy was being used as a study document before the arrival of the Dispensation letter in 1934. I also think it likely that the document was typed in Haifa as the four people involved in producing it were going different ways after their visit there. I have not come across any other copies of the notes but there were probably a few copies circulated. The Holley copy is on very fragile paper of a type called an office 'flimsy' which was used to make multiple copies of typed documents in those pre-photocopy days. As the paper is so fragile, it would not be surprising if other copies simply wore out if they were being handled much. It is also possible that a copy might have been kept in Haifa.

[page 1]

Shoghi Effendi said:

The Bahá'í Revelation has two Manifestations, The Bab and Bahá'u'lláh. `Abdu'l-Bahá, the perfect exemplar, the Center of the Covenant of mankind, the true interpreter of His Words, a perfect human being. To give `Abdu'l-Bahá a station comparable to Bahá'u'lláh is absolute heresy.

The whole opposition of Mohammad Ali was based upon his insistence [sic] that `Abdu'l-Bahá claimed to be the divine successor of Bahá'u'lláh, occupying a cognate station. Mohammad Ali declared: "Never so long as I live will I cease to agitate against this imposter who claims that before the expiration of one thousand years to occupy the same station as Bahá'u'lláh."

The misguided attitude of the friends in attempting to maintain `Abdu'l-Bahá in this station was the basis of the whole persecution by the covenant breakers. Again and again `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote disclaiming any station beyond that of Exemplar, Interpreter and Center of the Covenant; but Mohammad Ali said: "This was only a blind, that while openly stating this he was secretly encouraging his followers to maintain and accept him as the Manifestation." Those who overestimate the station of `Abdu'l-Bahá are quite as reprehensible and have done just as much harm as those who underestimate.

Lorol gasped:

Do you mean that those who have considered `Abdu'l-Bahá a Manifestation are equally as bad as those who have opposed and denied Him?

Shoghi Effendi replied:

Yes, that is what I mean, for they continuously furnished the enemy with proof for their false statements. when the Will and Testament was produced, various believers said Mohammad Ali could no longer deny the full import of `Abdu'l-Bahá's meaning, for surely His last document (Will) left to voice His directions and desires in perpetuity he could not have failed to claim this exalted station if all His life this had been His aim and intent. when shown the Will, Mohammad Ali said that this was negligible compared to the insidious work which had left this impression of Him in the hearts of the believers.

Keith:

Shoghi Effendi, what do we do with the Tablet of the Branch in which Bahá'u'lláh says of `Abdu'l-Bahá, "He is Myself, the Shining place of My Identity"?

[page 2]

Shoghi Effendi:

Most certainly Bahá'u'lláh is not referring to `Abdu'l-Bahá, but I must see the text.

We:

Opening the Scriptures we pointed out the passage. "He is Myself, with an asterisk and the words, "'Abdu'l-Bahá."

Keith:

It certainly reads that `Abdu'l-Bahá is the Self of God.

Shoghi Effendi:

This does not refer to `Abdu'l-Bahá. this means the Voice of God, referring to Bahá'u'lláh, not to `Abdu'l- Baha. turning to the Will and Testament we find the words of `Abdu'l-Bahá about the two Manifestations, the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh and the servitude of all else toward them.

Lorol asked:

But how does this statement come to be in the Scriptures?

Shoghi Effendi:

This book was printed without my knowledge. I was not consulted about it. Sometime after its publication I received a copy which was the first I had seen. It is full of errors, many quotations from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh have been cut out without putting the dotted line to show this had been done. Had I been consulted I certainly would not have permitted these errors to have occurred.

Keith:

How then shall we present the Master? What about the prophecy, "The Son shall come in the Glory of the Father, and that no man cometh unto the

Father save through the Son". How can Bahá'u'lláh represent the second coming of the Son?

Shoghi Effendi:

The Son, the Christ that was in [sic] Jesus has returned in Bahá'u'lláh in its fullest station, God is the Father, the essence unmanifest. Man cannot know Him nor comprehend Him. He can only be known through His Manifestation, the Son. Bahá'u'lláh, that Manifestation of the Son has come in the full glory of the Father. This idea about `Abdu'l-Bahá, that the Son is the Father and the Father the Son, is a reversion to Catholicism. These ideas are pure superstition and could have no basis in reason. You ridicule the Roman Catholics for their irrational ideas and would yourselves fall into the same error. Since Bahá'u'lláh has made `Abdu'l-Bahá the infallible interpreter of His Words, which then would have the wuperior [sic] weight?

Keith:

Bahá'u'lláh, holding the idea that since He was the Manifestation and `Abdu'l-Bahá was not, the former would then

[page 3]

be superior to the latter.

Shoghi Effendi:

Not at all, the Interpreter is the one whose words we must take for He has the power to tell us just what the speaker means. Therefore, we must turn towards the words of `abdu'l-Baha [sic] to determine this question of stations. In writing to America about the qualifications for voting I quoted from the will and Testament and referred to `Abdu'l-Bahá as the true Exemplar. What did the believers take that to mean? Of course I used the utmost delicacy for it might do great harm to have this question too suddenly projected.

Keith:

But Shoghi Effendi, we would be considered uninformed and unfit to teach in America, if we did not make the Covenant of God co-equal with the Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh.

Shoghi Effendi:

This is unwarranted. In the light of the Master's continuous denials how can the believers think this?

Keith:

Owing to the passage in question in the Scriptures, where it reads that `Abdu'l-Bahá is the Self of Bahá'u'lláh, and for another reason that it is a

universal belief among the teachers. At a New York Assembly meeting Horace Holley said, "In the Will, `Abdu'l-Bahá was presenting Bahá'u'lláh to the complete effacement of Himself, leaving no testimony and giving no divine station to Himself, which horrified Mrs. Kinney and Archbishop Barrow.

Shoghi Effendi:

Horace Holley and I are in full accord on this matter. Horace who evidently holds my view put that foot- note in the Scriptures below the Tablet of the branch, having taken it bodily from Esslemont's book. (The same evening Shoghi Effendi sent Ruhi with a copy of the Tablet of the branch in Persian to show that this passage did not occur in the original.)

Lorol:

Are you aware to what extent the American believers teach these ideas and dogmas? While we are on this subject may we have another question made clear to us, that has to do with your station?

Keith interrupted:

We are told in the Will and Testament that your shade is the shade that shadoweth all mankind, and that to dispute with you is to dispute with God, etc. Surely after reading these words we cannot consider you just an ordinary human being.

Shoghi Effendi:

But I am. I am a human being like you or anybody else, and I have no divine station. I am under the protection

[page 4]

of Bahá'u'lláh. The Master promised to protect me from error, likewise the House of Justice. No one is justified in looking upon other than human.

Keith:

According to the Will and Testament your decisions are binding and your words are binding.

Shoghi Effendi:

Only to a certain extent. How far does my independence extend with the House of Justice, and what is my relation to it?

Keith:

You are its Chairman and Interpreter of the Book of Laws, the Akdas.

Shoghi Effendi:

Yes, but as Chairman, I have only one vote as has any other member. If my vote happens to be with the minority I must cheerfully follow the will of the majority though it be contrary to my wish and conviction.

Keith:

Your word is infallible when it comes to interpreting the text.

Shoghi Effendi:

Yes, the Guardian alone can determine whether the condition is covered in the Holy text. It is promised that the Guardian is protected by God from making mistakes in these decisions. But apart from that I am like any one else.

Keith:

I have been teaching that it is wrong to think of you as a human being. I have been teaching that you know the end from the beginning and have a spiritual status that endows you with super-human knowledge.

Shoghi Effendi:

This is entirely wrong. I am a human being endowed with the unfailing protection of Bahá'u'lláh. To proclaim for me a station different from that of humanity or to consider me endowed with super-human powers is quite unjustified. For example, I have no idea what is going on in America at present. I must depend upon information for such knowledge.

Keith:

The Master tells us your utterances are infallible.

Shoghi Effendi:

Under certain explicit conditions. In many instances I give human opinions and suggestions.

Keith:

Undoubtedly you speak with unchallengeable authority and we must consider your words authoritative and infallible.

[page 5]

I leave that to your own judgement.

Keith:

If I mentioned this conversation to any of the friends who like me have looked upon you as divinely endowed, they would at once say, "How utterly lacking in spirituality she is, that Shoghi Effendi completely conceals his station from her. If she was spiritually awake he would without doubt reveal his true divinity to her. `Abdu'l-Bahá used to say the same thing to the believers. They had themselves to know His station before he confided it to them, so likewise the Guardian is testing you with his denials."

Shoghi Effendi: (positively amazed)

Do you believers believe that `Abdu'l-Baha would deliberately disavow Himself and mislead them? You must utterly disregard such casuistry on the part of the believers. (Again and again throughout the long interview he said how dangerous it would be to precipitate this discussion or release this knowledge of the station of the Covenant and

the

Guardian among the believers considering their present conception. Several times Shoghi Effendi said we must use the utmost delicacy, we must make this known very gradually, we must not publicly announce this. Similar warnings were continuously repeated.)

Shoghi Effendi:

If the House of Justice should decide that the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh would be removed to the top of Mount Carmel, the remains of `Abdu'l-Bahá must be removed from the Shrine of the Bab. `Abdu'l-Bahá Himself would feel that it was very unfitting that He should share the Shrine with a Manifestation of God. `Abdu'l-Baha's original plan was the building of nine rooms with the Bab in the center. The three new rooms for the archives complete `Abdu'l-Bahá's wish for the Shrine of the Bab. `Abdu'l-Bahá was placed in the Bab's Shrine by the decision of the Holy Household before my return from England. Undoubtedly `Abdu'l-Bahá will be removed to another resting place. (Here Shoghi Effendi described the nine terraces that would lead from the foot of Mount Carmel to the Shrine of the Bab and the nine that would lead to the top whether Bahá'u'lláh was placed there or not.)

Keith:

In the light of what you have said, `Abdu'l-Bahá I presume would be placed at the bottom.

Shoghi Effendi:

Undoubtedly that would be his wish.

Lorol:

It has always been impossible for me to believe that `Abdu'l-Bahá's station was equal to the station of Bahá'u'lláh, the Supreme Manifestation, and `Abdu'l-Bahá the teacher.

Shoghi Effendi:

Now you are going to the opposite extreme. Yesterday there was overstating, now you are understating. `Abdu'l-Bahá is

[page 6]

not a teacher, an apostle or a chosen one, for there might be others.

Abdu'l-Bahá is quite apart and different from anyone who has ever appeared on earth before. A perfect human being; can you conceive a perfect human being? The phrase that best expresses `Abdu'l-Bahá is the true Exemplar, the Center of the Covenant. It is just as grave a mistake to over-estimate `Abdu'l-Bahá as to under-estimate him. `Abdu'l-Bahá never claimed to be a Manifestation, all his life he suffered from this assumption. But we must never go to the opposite

extreme and confuse anybody else with Him or His station.

Keith:

Is that why Bahá'u'lláh calls Him the greatest mystery of God?

Shoghi Effendi:

Just so. His station is a mystery.

Lorol:

Then if he is just a human being can we evolve to the same station in time?

Shoghi Effendi:

No, no one can attain to the station of `Abdu'l-Bahá.

Lorol:

But surely humanity will sometime reach perfection.

Shoghi Effendi:

No, `Abdu'l-Bahá says that humanity will evolve and develop infinitely. To reach perfection means that advancement stops, there is nothing further to be obtained, mankind will ever continue his development towards perfection but no one will attain to or occupy the station of `Abdu'l-Bahá. If you are asked to explain this you must say that this is a mystery. A mystery is not irrational, it does not run counter to reason, it transcends reason.

Keith:

You mean just as science sees a mystery in the great primal energy becoming ninety-two chemical elements?

Shoghi Effendi:

No, the mystery of nature may later become manifest, a spiritual can never be grasped by the human mind.

Keith:

Then I have been teaching wrong all these years.

Shoghi Effendi:

It astonishes me that these ideas are so prevalent in America.

Keith:

When Elizabeth Greenleaf and I were here six years ago why was this not explained to us?

[page 7]

Shoghi Effendi:

The subject was not broached and I did not realize that these were your conclusions. You must not worry for having taught this way, it will right itself. As new believers come into the Faith this idea will be forgotten. Nothing can be done about the past. The past is over. Devote yourself to giving

the right conception to those you teach from now on. It would do incalculable harm to try to rectify this impression now.

Lorol:

The old believers would put anyone out of the Cause who dared to spread this teaching.

Shoghi Effendi:

Undoubtedly, but our eyes must be turned towards the throngs that will come into the Faith in the future, not toward the present believers. We must endeavor to teach the new generation of believers, not the present one. If the friends are not clear on this question ask them to write me. I

have so far approached this question with the utmost delicacy, as in the qualifications for voters. No one has ever questioned me about this. If they had

I should have been constrained to answer fearlessly and fully. If the friends write me I will give them the same answer I am giving you.

Keith:

Reverting to yesterday's discussion. I want to get this matter clear.

If you are a human being just as muddled, veiled, confused and groping as I am why is it that according to the Will and Testament we must obey you? Why is it when I receive a cable from you to come to Haifa I would rather throw myself into the bay than refuse? Why did I not explain this and then go down to Poona and conduct my class?

Shoghi Effendi:

In you human affairs I make suggestions and recommendations. When I interpret the Words I am guided by Bahá'u'lláh.

Keith:

Why does `Abdu'l-Bahá call down the fierce indignation of God upon those who disobey you?

Shoghi Effendi:

This is only when I insist or command, then my interpretation is infallible. The believers must distinguish between what I recommend or definitely state.

Keith:

Can you imagination [sic] the firends [sic] refusing to follow your recommendation?

Shoghi Effendi:

They must discriminate. (We then brought up the question of praying to `Abdu'l-Bahá.)

[page 8]

We:

Many believers pray to the Master. Is this proper?

Shoghi Effendi:

Bahá'u'lláh is the source we must pray to naturally.

Keith: (insisting)

Is it wrong to pray to `Abdu'l-Bahá?

Shoghi Effendi:

No, it is not wrong to pray to `Abdu'l-Bahá in an intercessory [sic] capacity.

Keith:

Like the Roman Catholics pray to the Virgin Mary?

Shoghi Effendi:

Yes.

Keith:

Then it is not actually wrong to pray to `Abdu'l-Bahá.

Lorol:

No, if you want to be foolish enough to do so.

Keith:

Is that Shoghi Effendi?

Shoghi Effendi:

That is much too strong. It would be not be foolish to pray to the Master but the next generation will have forgotten to do it. It is only those who knew and revered `Abdu'l-Bahá who will hold to this practice, but it will later be discarded.

Lorol:

There are those who pray to you, Shoghi Effendi.

Shoghi Effendi:

This is absolutely heretical. Such things are not permissible [sic]. It is wrong to address me as Lord or Master, or Thee or Thine.

I had to send a very abrupt cable to the friends in Bombay to prevent them from celebrating by birthday. If this starts now there will be no end to it. The first

Guardian's birthday, the first Guardian's death, the tenth Guardian's accession.

they would have 400 Guardian's celebrations in 365 days. Nor must they refer to me as His Holiness. These things have no place in our Faith, they savor of popishness.

Keith:

There is a picture of you in the Bahá'í hall at Karachi labeled "His Holiness, Shoghi Effendi".

Shoghi Effendi: (emphatically)

Then they must take it down.

Keith:

Oh my, I should not have mentioned this!

[page 9]

Lorol:

Why not if it is wrong?

Shoghi Effendi:

I have requested, suggested, but now the time has come when I must insist in no unmistakable terms that those things must cease. For instance, this is what we have been speaking about when you say I am infallible, that is, when I insist. In this I am infallible.

Lorol:

When did Bahá'u'lláh declare Himself?

Shoghi Effendi:

He declared Himself three times, first as the Bab predicted in certain codes written in 1853-53 [sic], where the Bab makes veiled references to Bahá'u'lláh's station as Supreme Manifestation. You will remember in "The Son of the Wolf" how Bahá'u'lláh speaks of His first intimation that he is the Promised One. It was as if fire ran through His veins and He was consumed with a power that over-mastered Him. The second declaration was to a few friends when He was living in Baghdad, according to the Bab's second date, in 1863. then in Adrianople between 1864 and 1868 He proclaimed it to the world in His epistles to the Kings. In "Some Answered Questions" we learn that the Manifestation was chosen from birth but was not conscious of it till the time His Mission approached. Many fought against it at first. But all Manifestations went through this long struggle of preparation, such as Moses in the Burning Bush, Jesus in the Wilderness, Buddha under the Bod tree, and Bahá'u'lláh in the mountains of Suliy [sic] who spent a longer time than others because His preparation was greatest. Bahá'u'lláh spent two years in the mountains alone. He also went to leave Subi-azel [sic] free to try and establish his cause. I assign preparation for His ministry as one of the reasons for His self-imposed exile. The greatness of Bahá'u'lláh's Manifestation is shown by His having a Manifestation for the fore-runner., but He is greater than the Bab for He came for the whole world. We must never give out the impression that one Manifestation of God was greater in power or wisdom than another. They are only greater in what they manifest. (We constantly used the words Cause and Movement and Shoghi Effendi asked us to try and eliminate these words as they did not convey the deep significance of the Bahá'í Faith or World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and advised us to teach new believers to use these two expressions and never to permit anyone to use the name Bahá'ísm").

PRAYER.

Shoghi Effendi:

We can trace the evolution of the Bahá'í Faith by the terms adopted, then changed. First organization was adopted, then Administration, now it will take on "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

[page 10]

We:

In many places the believers use healing prayers continuously in regular meetings. Many object to this practice.

Shoghi Effendi:

No one in any assembly should insist upon saying healing prayers, but we must acquiesce if some one should want one. When we have general rules, we become dogmatic and inflexible. But friends who do not care to sit through long prayers regularly may go or stay as they wish. This does not determine anyone's spirituality, but there must be no criticism or controversy on the matter. Great patience is required to unite the different elements in our Faith. Time is the best healer. These differences of opinion will disappear with time. We might remember the words of St. Augustine, in essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all things charity.

GOVERNMENT.

Shoghi Effendi:

The attack that was recently published by the Soviet government has done more to spread the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith than years of teaching to disseminate. Regarding the League of Nations: The principles underlying the League of Nations will break, but the institution will develop. Whether this League or another, this change will be brought about by the coming war which is inevitable. The greatest benefit of the last war have been beneficial to humanity as they are bringing nearer the distintegration [sic] of those institutions contrary to the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Since Bahá'ís cannot purify politics you must keep out of them for they are based upon fraud, rivalry, and secrecy, which is against our principles. Their practices are foolish, childish and against our principles. Believers may hold administrative but not political posts.

Lyle:

What do we do when we are compelled to vote as honorable citizens? It is demanded of every American citizen to vote and serve the country in time of war. How can we obey the laws of the United States and not vote or fight in

case of war?

Shoghi Effendi:

The Quakers had this same non-political policy. You must ask for exemption as conscientious objectors. If a penalty is incurred such as prison or fine, then you must obey, but you must offer to serve in any capacity than actually killing your fellowmen. Apply to your government for exemption from service in case of war.

LEAGUE AND LOYALTY.

Shoghi Effendi:

Bahá'ís must make every effort to have America enter the League of Nations, but with the rightful purpose. America must

[page 11]

uphold the League to exercise sovereign power. We must conform to the requirements of our government to the extent that the assemblies in Russia, when they were told they must give secret information, to close schools, stop printing Bahá'í literature, cease foreign correspondence. this was not disloyalty to the Bahá'í Faith, it was only a temporary dislocation and interruption. but if the believers are requested to recant or give up their Faith, this would be absolute disloyalty to the Faith, and they would rather be martyred.

AMERICA LEADING WORLD.

Shoghi Effendi:

Today the Americans are leading the Bahá'í world. The East has enthusiasm and devotion but no training. Unless the East takes on courage, directions and straightforwardness, which is what the West can teach the East, the Center may shift from the East to the West.

Lorol:

Just how is America leading the Bahá'í world?

Shoghi Effendi:

America is the first country to formulate the declaration of trust and obtain legal recognition, which is a model for all the National Spiritual Assemblies in the future to follow. Even some of your local Assemblies, like New York and Chicago, have been incorporated. It was an excellent thing for Horace Holley to have suggested, copywriting [sic] the name Bahá'í.

Keith:

Under the declaration of trust the Bahá'ís now have legal status. We can appeal to the government and receive their protection, can we not?

Shoghi Effendi:

Certainly this gives Bahá'ís recognized legal status.

Keith:

This legal status will also protect us against those who wish to proceed against the Bahá'í Faith. Meaning that if anyone tried to set up another Assembly in the same city the Bahá'ís would be protected by law against opposing persons.

PERSIA.

Shoghi Effendi:

While in Persia endeavor to impress upon the Persian believers the non-political character of the Bahá'í Faith. Prominent Persians wish to occupy high political positions. The administrative offices which we may occupy are secondary, while the Persian craves position, power, prestige, glory. They must discipline themselves and restrain these ambitions. You

[page 12]

must not be afraid to speak clearly on this subject. Courage, directness and straightforwardness is what the West must teach the East. While very tactful present these subjects with clearness, firmness and frankness. Do not mention this directly but intimate that unless the Orient can take on these characteristics the center may shift from the East to the West.

Dictated by Keith, typed by Lorol, approved by Clara Dunn and Lyle Loveday. Received at Geyserville, July 1932 by Grace Holley. Re-copied by J.A.B. Dec. 1932

[end]

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This book was printed without my knowledge. I was not consulted about it. Sometime after its publication I received a copy which was the first I had seen it. It is full of errors, many quotations from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh have been cut without putting the dotted line to show this had been done. Had I been consulted I certainly would not have permitted these errors to have occurred.

KEITH:

Then how shall we present the Master? What about the prophecy "The Son shall come in the glory of the Father, and that no man cometh unto the Father save through the Son." How can Bahá'u'lláh represent the second coming of the Son?

SHOGHI EFFENDI:

The Son, the Christ that was in Jesus has returned in Bahá'u'lláh in its fullest station. God is the Father, the essence unmanifest. Man cannot know Him or comprehend Him. He can be known only through His Manifestation the Son. Bahá'u'lláh, that Manifestation of the Son has come in the full glory of the Father. This idea about Abdul Baha, that the Son is the Father and the Father the Son, is a reversion to Catholicism. These ideas are pure superstition and could have no basis in reason. You ridicule the Roman Catholics for their irrational ideas and would yourselves fall into the same error.

SHOGHI EFFENDI:

Since Bahá'u'lláh has made Abdul Baha the infallible interpreter of His words which then should have the superior weight?

KEITH:

Bahá'u'lláh, holding the idea that since He was the Manifestation and Abdul Baha was not, the former would then be superior to the latter.

SHOGHI EFFENDI:

Not at all, the interpreter is the one whose word we must take for He has the power to tell us just what the speaker means. Therefore, we must turn to the words of Abdul Baha to determine this question of stations. In writing to America about the qualifications for voting I quoted from the Will and Testament and referred to Abdul Baha as the true exemplar. What did the believers take that to mean? Of course I used the utmost delicacy for it might do great harm to have this question too suddenly projected.

KEITH:

But Shoghi Effendi, we would be considered unlearned [uninformed?] and unfit to teach in America if we did not make the Covenant of God co-equal with the Manifestation Bahá'u'lláh.

SHOGHI EFFENDI:

This is unwarranted. In the light of the Master's continuous denials how can the believers think this?

KEITH:

Owing to the passage in question in the SCRIPTURES, where it reads that Abdul Baha is the Self of Bahá'u'lláh, and for another reason that it is a universal belief among the teachers. At a New York assembly [she probably means local community rather than LSA] meeting Horace Holley said, "In the Will Abdul Baha was presenting Bahá'u'lláh to the complete effacement of himself, leaving no testimony and giving no divine station to himself," which horrified Mrs. Kinney and Archbishop Barrow.

SHOGHI EFFENDI:

Horace and I are in full accord on this matter. Horace who evidently holds my view

put that foot-note in the scriptures below the TABLET of the Branch, having taken it bodily from Esselmont's book. (The same evening Shoghi Effendi sent Ruhi with a copy of the Branch in Persian to show that this passage did not occur in the original.)

LYLE:

Are you aware to what extent the American believers teach these ideas and dogmas? While we are on this subject may we have another question made clear to us, that has to do with your station?

KEITH INTERRUPTED:

We are told in the Will and Testament that your shade is the shade that shadoweth all mankind, and that to dispute with you is to dispute with God etc. Surely after reading these words we cannot consider you just an ordinary human being.

SHOGHI EFFENDI:

But I am. I am a human being like you or anybody else and I have no divine station. I am under the protection of Bahá'u'lláh. The master promised to protect me from error, likewise the House of Justice. No one is justified in looking upon me as other than human.

KEITH:

According to the Will and Testament your decisions are binding and your words are binding.

SHOGHI EFFENDI:

Only to a certain extent. How far does my independence extend with the House of Justice, and what is my relation to it?

KEITH:

You are its chairman and interpreter of the Book of laws, the Akdas.

SHOGHI EFFENDI:

Yes, but as chairman I have only one vote as has any other member. If my vote happens to be with the minority I must cheerfully follow the will of the majority though it be contrary to my wish and conviction.

Keith:

Your word is infallible when it comes to interpreting the text. SHOGHI EFFENDI:

Yes, the GUARDIAN alone can determine whether any piece of legislature can be undertaken or whether the condition is covered in the holy text. It is promised that the Guardian is protected by God from making mistakes in these decisions. But apart from that I am like anyone else.

KEITH:

I have been teaching that it is wrong to think of you as a human being. I have been teaching that you know the end from the beginning and have a spiritual status that endows you with superhuman knowledge.

S.E.

This is entirely wrong. I am a human being endowed with the unfailing protection of Bahá'u'lláh. To claim for me a station different from that of humanity or to consider me endowed with superhuman powers is quite unjustified. For example I have no idea what is going on in America at present. I must depend upon information for such knowledge.

Keith:

The Master tells us your utterance[s] are infallible.

S.E.

Under certain explicit conditions. In many instances I give human opinions and suggestions.

Keith:

Undoubtedly you speak with unchallengeable authority and we must consider your words authoritative and infallible.

S.E. (Smiling)

I leave that to your own judgement.

Keith:

If I mentioned this conversation to any of the friends who like me have looked upon you as divinely endowed they would at once say "How utterly lacking in spirituality

she is, that Shoghi Effendi completely conceals his station from her. If she was spiritually awake he would without doubt reveal his true divinity to her. Abdul Baha used to say the same thing to the believers. They had themselves to know his station before he confided it to them, so likewise the Guardian is testing you with his denials."

S.E. (positively amazed)

Do the believers believe Abdul Baha would deliberately disavow himself and mislead them? When I make these statements categorically I mean them. You must utterly disregard such casuistry on the part of the believers. (Again and again throughout the long interview he said how dangerous it would be to precipitate this discussion or release this knowledge of the stations of the Covenant and the Guardian among the believers considering their present conception. Several times Shoghi Effendi said we must use the utmost delicacy; we must make this known very gradually; we must not publicly announce this. Similar warnings were continuously repeated.)

Shoghi Effendi:

If the House of Justice should decide that the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh would be removed to the top of Mount Carmel the remains of Abdul Baha must be removed from the shrine of the Bab. Abdul Baha himself would feel that it was very unfitting that he should share the shrine with a Manifestation of God. Abdul Baha's original plan was the building of nine rooms with the Bab in the center. The three new rooms for the archives completes Abdul Baha's wish for the shrine of the Bab. Abdul Baha was placed in the Bab's shrine by the decision of the holy household before my return from England. Undoubtedly Abdul Baha will be removed to another resting-place. [Note: the set of designs for the world center made under Shoghi Effendi's direction in the 1920s includes a shrine for 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the shore between Haifa and Akka as well as a shrine for the Bab on Carmel and one for Bahá'u'lláh at Bahji.] (Here Shoghi Effendi described the nine terraces that would lead from the foot of Mt. Carmel

to
the shrine of the Bab and the nine that would lead to the top whether
Bahá'u'lláh was
placed there or not.)

Keith:

In the light of what you have said Abdul Baha I presume would be placed at the
bottom.

Shoghi Effendi:

Undoubtedly that would be his wish.

Lyle:

It has always been impossible for me to believe that Abdul Baha's station was
equal
to the station of Bahá'u'lláh the Supreme Manifestation and Abdul Baha the
teacher.

Shoghi Effendi:

Now you are going to the opposite extreme. Yesterday there was over-stating,
now you
are under-stating. Abdul Baha is not a teacher, an apostle or a chosen one, for
there
might be others. Abdul Baha is quite apart and different from anyone who has
ever
appeared on earth before. A perfect human being! Can you conceive a perfect
human
being? The phrase that best expresses Abdul Baha is the true exemplar, the
Center of
the Covenant. It is just as grave a mistake to over-estimate Abdul Baha as to
under-estimate him. Abdul Baha never claimed to be a Manifestation, all his
life he
suffered from this assumption. But we must never go to the other extreme and
confuse
anybody else with Him or His station.

Keith:

Is that why Bahá'u'lláh calls him the greatest mystery of God?

S.E.

Just so. His station is a mystery.

Lorol:

Then if he is just a human being can we evolve to the same station in time?

S.E.

No, no one can attain to the station of A. B.

Lorol:

But surely humanity will sometime reach perfection.

S.E.

No. Abdul Baha says that humanity will evolve and develop infinitely. To reach perfection means that advancement stops, there is nothing further to be obtained, mankind will ever continue his development towards perfection but no one will ever attain to or occupy the station of Abdul Baha If you are asked to explain this you must say that this is a mystery. A mystery is not irrational, it does not run counter to reason, it transcends reason.

Keith:

You mean just as science sees a mystery in the great primal energy becoming ninety-two chemical elements?

S.E.

No, the mystery of nature may later become manifest, a spiritual mystery can never be grasped by the human mind.

Keith:

Then I have been teaching wrong all these years.

S.E.

It astonishes me that these ideas are so prevalent in America.

Keith:

When Elizabeth Greenleaf and I were here six years ago why was this not explained to us?

S.E.

The subject was not broached and I did not realize that these were your conclusions.

You must not worry for having taught this way, it will right itself. As new believers come into the Faith this idea will be forgotten. Nothing can be done about the past.

The past is over. Devote yourself to giving the right conception to those you teach from now on. It would do incalculable harm to try to rectify this impression now.

Lyle:

The old believers would put any one out of the cause who dared to spread this teaching.

S.E.

Undoubtedly, but our eyes must be turned towards the throngs that will come into the Faith in future, not toward the present believers. We must endeavour the new generation of believers not the present one. If the friends are not clear on this question ask them to write me. I have so far approached this question with the utmost delicacy, as in the qualifications for voters. No one has ever questioned me about this. If they had I should have been constrained to answer fearlessly and fully. If the friends write me I will give them the same answer I am giving you.

Keith:

Reverting to yesterday's discussion I want to get this matter clear. If you are a human being just as muddled, veiled confused and groping as I am why is it that according to the Will and Testament we must obey you? Why is it when I receive a cable from you to come to Haifa would I rather throw myself into the bay than refuse? Why did I not explain this and then go down to Poona and conduct my class?

S.E.

In your human affairs I make suggestions and recommendations. When I interpret the Words I am guided by Bahá'u'lláh.

Keith:

Why does Abdul Baha call down the fierce indignation of God upon those who disobey you?

S.E.

This is only when I insist or command, then my interpretation is infallible. The believers must distinguish between what I recommend or definitely state.

Keith:

Can you imagine the friends refusing to follow your recommendation?

S.E.

They must discriminate.

(We then brought up the question of praying to Abdul Baha.)

WE:

Many believers pray to the Master. Is this proper?

S.E.

Bahá'u'lláh is the source we must pray to naturally.

Keith (insisting):

Is it wrong to pray to Abdul Baha?

S.E.

No, it is not wrong to pray to Abdul Baha in an intercessory capacity.

Keith:

Like the Roman Catholics pray to the Virgin Mary?

S.E.

Yes.

Keith:

Then it is not actually wrong to pray to Abdul Baha?

Lorol:

No, if you want to be foolish enough to do so.

Keith:

Is that true Shoghi Effendi?

Shoghi Effendi:

That is much too strong. It would not be foolish to pray to the Master but the next generation will have forgotten to do it. It is only those who knew and revered Abdul Baha who will hold to this practice, but it will later be discarded.

Lorol:

There are those who pray to you, Shoghi Effendi.

S.E.

This is absolutely heretical. Such things are not permissible. It is wrong to address me as Lord or Master, or Thee or Thine. I had to send a very abrupt cable to the friends in Bombay to prevent them from celebrating my birthday. If this starts

now

there will be no end to it. The first Guardian's birthday, the first Guardian's death, the tenth Guardian's accession. They would have 400 Guardian's celebrations in 365 days. Nor must they refer to me as His Holiness. These things have no place in our Faith, they savour of popishness.

KEITH:

There is a picture of you in the Bahai hall at Karachi labelled "His Holiness, Shoghi Effendi".

Shoghi Effendi (emphatically):

Then they must take it down.

Keith:

Oh my, I should not have mentioned this!

Lorol:

Why not if it is wrong?

Shoghi Effendi:

I have requested, suggested, but now the time has come when I must insist in no unmistakable terms that these things must cease. For instance, this is what we have been speaking about when you say I am infallible, that is when I insist. In this I am infallible.

Lorol:

When did Bahá'u'lláh declare Himself?

Shoghi E.

He declared Himself three times, first as the Bab predicted in certain odes written in 1852-53, where the Bab makes veiled references to Bahá'u'lláh's station as the Supreme Manifestation. You will remember in "The Son of the Wolf" how Bahá'u'lláh speaks of His first intimation that he is the Promised One. It was as if fire ran through His veins and He was consumed with a power that overmastered Him. the second declaration was to a few friends when He was leaving Baghdad, according to the Bab's second date, in 1863. Then in Adrianople between 1864 and 1868 He proclaimed it

to
the world in His epistles to the Kings. In "Some Answered Questions" we learn
that
the Manifestation was chosen from birth but was not conscious of it till the
time His
Mission approached. Many fought against it at first. But all Manifestations
went thru
this long struggle of preparation, such as Moses in the Burning Bush, Jesus in
the
wilderness, Buddha under the Bod tree, and Bahá'u'lláh in the mountains of
suliy
[sic] who spent a longer time than others because His preparation was greatest.
Bahá'u'lláh spent two years in the mountains alone. He also went to leave
Subhi-azel
free to try to establish his cause. I assign preparation for His ministry as
one of
the reasons for His self-imposed exile. The greatness of Bahá'u'lláh's
Manifestation
is shown by His having a Manifestation for the forerunner, but He is greater
than the
Bab for He came for the whole world. We must never give out the impression that
one
Manifestation of God was greater in power or wisdom than another. They are only
greater in what they manifest.

(We constantly used the words Cause and Movement and S.E. asked us to try and
eliminate these words as they did not convey the deep significance of the Bahai
Faith
or World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and advised us to teach new believers to use
these two
expressions and never to permit anyone to use the name "Bahatism.")

S.E.

We can trace the evolution of the Bahai Faith by the terms adopted, then
changed.
First organisation was adopted, then Administration, now it will take on "The
World
Order of Bahá'u'lláh["].

WE:

In many places the believers use healing prayers continuously in regular
meetings.
Many object to this practice.

S.E.

No one in any assembly [community or meeting] should insist upon saying healing
prayers, but we must acquiesce if some one should want one. When we have

general

rules, we become dogmatic and inflexible. But friends who do not care to sit through

long prayers regularly may go or stay as they wish. This does not determine anyone's

spirituality, but there must be no criticism or controversy on the matter.

Great

patience is required to unite the differing elements in our Faith. Time is the best

healer. These differences of opinion will disappear with time. We might remember the

words of Saint Augustine, in essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all

things charity.

S.E.

The attack that was recently published by the Soviet government has done more to spread the teachings of the Bahai Faith than years of teaching to disseminate. Regarding the League of nations: The principle underlying the League of Nations will break but the institution will develop.

Whether this League or another. This change will be brought about by the coming war which is inevitable. The greatest benefit of the last was the bringing about of the League. Unlike the last war, the coming war will end war. The problems brought about by the last war have been beneficial to humanity as they are bringing nearer the disintegration of those institutions contrary to the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Since Bahais cannot purify politics you must keep out of them for they are based upon fraud, rivalry, and secrecy, which is against our principles. Their practices are foolish, childish and mischievous. Bahais cannot vote in political parties. They are against our principles. Believers may hold administrative but not political posts.

Lyle:

What do we do when we are compelled to vote as honorable citizens? It is demanded of every American citizen to vote and serve the country in time of war. How can we obey the laws of the Unites States and not vote or fight in case of war?

S.E.

The Quakers had this same non-political policy. You must ask for exemption as conscientious objectors. If a penalty is incurred such as prison or fine, then you must obey, but you must offer to serve in any capacity than actually killing your fellow-men. Apply to your government for exemption from service in case of war.

S.E.

Bahá'ís must make every effort to have America enter the League of

Nations, but with the rightful purpose. America must uphold the League to exercise sovereign power. We must conform to the requirements of our government to the extent that the assemblies in Russia, when they were told they must give secret information, to close the schools, stop printing Bahai literature, cease foreign correspondence. This was not disloyalty to the Bahai faith, it was only a temporary dislocation and interruption. But if the believers are requested to recant or give up their Faith, this would be absolute disloyalty to the Faith, and they would rather be martyred.

S.E.

Today the Americans are leading the Bahai world. The East has enthusiasm and devotion but no training. Unless the East takes on courage, directness and straightforwardness, which is what the West can teach the East, the center may shift from the East to the West.

Lorol:

Just how is America leading the Bahai world?

S.E.

America is the first country to formulate the declaration of trust and obtain legal recognition, which is a model for all the national spiritual assemblies in the future to follow. Even some of your local assemblies, like New York and Chicago, have been incorporated. It was an excellent thing for Horace Holley to have suggested copywriting [sic; obviously copywriting is meant; the idea that there could be an exclusive right to use the name Bahá'í in the USA was overturned in court action in the late 1930s] the name Bahai.

Keith:

Under the declaration of trust the Bahais now have legal status. We can appeal to the government and receive their protection, can we not?

S.E.

Certainly this gives Bahais recognized legal status.

Keith:

This legal status will also protect us against those who wish to proceed against the Bahai Faith. Meaning that if anyone tried to set up another Assembly in the same city the Bahais would be protected by law against opposing persons.

S.E. [this is presumably addressed to Keith who was going there]:

While in Persia endeavour to impress upon the Persian believers the non-political character of the Bahai Faith.

Prominent Persians wish to occupy high political positions. The

administrative offices which we may occupy are secondary, while the Persian craves position, power, prestige, glory. They must discipline themselves and restrain these ambitions. You must not be afraid to speak clearly on this subject. Courage, directness, and straight-forwardness is what the West must teach the East. While very tactful present these subjects with clearness, firmness and frankness. Do not mention this directly but intimate that unless the Orient can take on these characteristics the center may shift from the East to the West.

Lorol:

There is a general belief that you can prophesy, that you did definitely assure Mrs. Mathews or her immediate family by cable that she would recover. This at a time when all hope had been abandoned by the finest specialists in America.

S.E.

I have no knowledge of making any definite statement for Mrs. Mathews recovery. I assured them of my prayers and faith. I do not think I sent such a cable, but if they can produce it then I must have been guided. But I do not believe such a positive assurance can be produced.

Lorol:

For many reasons I have lost interest and enthusiasm in teaching and do not feel qualified to attempt again to offer myself as a teacher. Will you kindly pray for me that I may be able to overcome the antagonism I feel toward certain so-called Bahais. I feel that I cannot teach now.

S.E..

You must not allow yourself to be touched by this chatter of idle minds. You must go ahead and teach. I am deeply grateful for the unique manner in which you have served the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and will pray and supplicate that divine bounty will reassure you and lift these burdens from your heart. I shall never forget the services you have rendered the Faith and am deeply appreciative.

Lyle:

Have you any suggestions to offer regarding the future operation of Nine Gables? For instance would you advise specializing in anything or experimenting with two or three lines such as orcharding, vegetable growing or perhaps adding sheep or other cattle?

S.E.

I should advise more than one enterprise. Have you any pictures of Nine Gables? I would like very much if you took some films of N.G. and sent me some copies, also of Mount Salvat.

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