

Commentaries/Commentaires/Comentarios

COMMENTARY ON CRAIG LOEHLE'S "ON HUMAN ORIGINS: A BAHÁ'Í PERSPECTIVE"

Commentator: Iraj Ayman

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In his commentary, Dr. Iraj Ayman raises the issue of translation and the extent to which Bahá'í scholars ought not rely upon translations of the Bahá'í writings. There are many crucial concerns that bear heavily upon Ayman's ruminations. The few that I note here include the legitimacy of authorized translations of the Writings for use by Bahá'í scholars, the authoritative nature of the translations made by Shoghi Effendí, the viability of Bahá'í scholarship for those scholars not completely proficient in the three languages in which the bulwark of Bahá'í texts are written (i.e., Arabic, Persian, and English), and a possible tendency towards a linguistic elitism that could lead to very serious problems of a dogmatic interpretive and hermeneutic hegemony in relation to Bahá'í study. This final concern is the most involved and the one to which I will devote the most time. While I do not want to engage Ayman's specific criticisms of Dr. Craig Loehle's work, which appeared in *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 2.4, I do, however, want to discuss those larger issues that are of import to all Bahá'í scholars—both in their various implications for our work and in their more general philosophical considerations.

First of all, Ayman's concern regarding the importance for Bahá'í scholars to study the "two languages" of the Bahá'í Revelation (and here I assume he is referring to Persian and Arabic, although English is, as well, central to Bahá'í study) is certainly well taken. 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendí encouraged Western Bahá'ís to learn these languages. 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes, "Acquire the Persian tongue, so as to learn of the meanings of the divine words and to know the divine mysteries, to develop an eloquent speech and to translate the blessed Tablets of BAHÁ'O'LLÁH."¹ There is no question that knowledge of Persian, Arabic, and English is a prime asset for Bahá'í scholarship, but that it is a prerequisite or, as Ayman writes, a "major requirement of scholarly study of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh" (emphasis added) is by no means categorically clear. A Bahá'í scholar who might not be proficient in all of the above languages might nevertheless offer meaningful and insightful research, focusing on various aspects of the Bahá'í Faith or on other areas of work (secular and sacred) with guidance from the Bahá'í writings. Study of the languages in which the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendí spoke and wrote is important but not necessarily essential for valuable Bahá'í scholarship.

It is a dangerous precedent for us, at this early stage (or ever) in the history

1. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, vol. 2 (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1940) 306.

of the Bahá'í Faith to attempt to delineate restrictions and limitations not specified in the Bahá'í writings upon the work of Bahá'í scholars—particularly where such boundaries are less the established bounds of the Bahá'í Faith and more the individually and historically situated views of particular Bahá'ís. Furthermore, we must not forget the importance 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi placed on the translation of the Bahá'í writings. I do not think that we really want to assert that the translated Writings are acceptable for the inadequately educated Bahá'ís but not for the scholar. Are we to assume that the Bahá'ís of the world who are not proficient in Persian, Arabic, and English are incapable of meaningful insights into the Bahá'í Faith, its sacred writings, its history, and its relation to our lives and the world? I think not. Such a position is so potentially dangerous for the development of the Bahá'í Faith, its institutions, and its scholarship that further attention must be given here.

Throughout much of the history of a patriarchal, classist, and racist world, there has existed a noxious bias regarding the definition and nature of acceptable scholarship. To date, valuable scholarship has been dictated to be that which has been produced by the academic (and usually financially affluent) elite. Yet, has it not often been the uneducated and poor who led the way throughout religious and secular history? In fact, Bahá'u'lláh explicitly states that “the understanding of [God's] words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.”² Alas, all too often it is these “unlearned” individuals whose contributions are unrecognized or are appropriated without due recognition given their origins. Hence, their absence in the generally accepted histories of the world. Happily, the past three decades of scholarship have accomplished tremendous work in rediscovering, remembering, and resurrecting the achievements of these erased [others] denied the “privilege” of historical subjectivity. Here I note two cases: the apostle Peter in the Christian tradition and the untutored blacksmith whose great wisdom led the Muslim scholar Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl to investigate the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths seriously. Poignant indeed is the fact that throughout Bahá'í chronicles of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's interaction with the blacksmith, it is the lowly Bábí blacksmith who is unnamed and forgotten against the more “important” contributions of the scholar. This is not to say that Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's contributions are not momentous for the Bahá'í Faith; they certainly are. But so also might be the contributions of the unlettered, the poor, the rural—these and others whom we so readily tend to forget or, if remembered, to whom we devote little attention. It is crucial that we be increasingly vigilant not to fall prey to old world values and prejudices that still surround us. Here I want to credit the recent scholarship of feminist, working class, minority, and other members of oppressed groups who

2. Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, rev. ed. (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1950) 211.

remind us to question our axiological criteria by which we judge and evaluate the world. It is crucial that Bahá'í scholars rely heavily upon the Bahá'í writings and prayers to guide their work so that they do not succumb to the myriad pulls and enticements of the ineffectual and divisive dialectical debates and critiques that only serve to constrain and limit adversely the possibilities of current and future Bahá'í scholarship.

Ayman further raises the issue of the meanings of words, an extremely complex topic that has been a major focus of philosophers, poets (and other creative writers), linguists, literary critics, semioticians, and critical theorists, among others. While a detailed discussion of this topic is well beyond the bounds of this commentary, nevertheless a few points can be raised. One of the truly useful insights of contemporary postmodern theorists (and an insight borne out in the Bahá'í writings) is the idea that the reified boundaries around which knowledge and learning in the Western tradition have been circumscribed are neither necessarily fixed nor absolute. Scholars as diverse as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, regardless of their own idiosyncratic and biased orientations to the world, have correctly noted that knowledge, meaning, and truth (as we have inherited them) are, by and large, historical constructs that have evolved over time—not truths in some sort of absolute sense.

In Bahá'u'lláh's tablet, the *Lawh-i-Hikmat*, we are told that knowledge comes from God via the Manifestations in this world. ("The sages aforetime acquired their knowledge from the Prophets" and again "The beginning of Wisdom and the origin thereof is to acknowledge whatsoever God hath clearly set forth . . ."³). We are further informed that the representations of this knowledge are as diverse as there are individual scholars and thinkers. As Bahá'u'lláh writes, ". . . conceptions vary by reason of the divergences in men's thoughts and opinions."⁴ This divergence is not necessarily problematic. We are creatures of a transitory world; times change, and so do we. Our needs change, and so must our understandings. In the *Lawh-i-Maqṣúd* (Tablet of Maqṣúd), Bahá'u'lláh stresses that "words and utterances should be both impressive and penetrating" but that this is only possible when they are "uttered wholly for the sake of God and with due regard unto the exigencies of the occasion and the people."⁵ And finally, on this specific topic, Bahá'u'lláh further points out that our words must "be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires,"⁶ and that one evidence of the "world-wide regeneration" of God's progressively revealed faith is that "a fresh potency" has been "instilled into every word."⁷ Elsewhere, Bahá'u'lláh clarifies

3. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. Habib Taherzadeh et al. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) 144–45 and 151.

4. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 140.

5. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 172.

6. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 138.

7. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 84.

this statement in showing us that, in this day, even the meanings of words will change. For example, in his "words of Wisdom," we are presented with specific terms that are given meanings radically divergent from their meanings as commonly used today, e.g., "the essence of wealth is love for Me."⁸

Ayman criticizes Loehle for reading a particular word (translated by Shoghi Effendi, which fact alone ought to give the translated term an authoritative weight for Bahá'ís) in a way that diverges from a particular dictionary meaning of that term and from the original Persian text. Yet it is far from clear that such divergence is necessarily a problem. Rather than assuming there to be one set meaning of the phrase (only available through access to the phrase in Persian), might not there be multiple meanings and readings that change not only with the different languages in which the text might be translated but also with each reader? This diversity of meanings and readings is not only evidence of the semantic wealth of the text but also evidence of the concept of "unity in diversity" that is fundamental to the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. A semantic diversity that challenges our apparent needs for rigid boundaries surrounding our understandings of the world need not be seen as problematic. Rather, such freedom from those limits artificially imposed by our historically situated linguistic constraints can often be an asset providing a greater depth and diversity of ways by which we can perceive and engage our world and ourselves. Of course, this is not to say that all readings and interpretations are equal and correct, nor that we are doomed to wander aimlessly through an abyss of relativism and axiological angst. We do need to be careful regarding our language use, but words have many different meanings—perhaps a different meaning each time they are used and read, if one trusts much of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's later deliberations, which I do. In fact, Bahá'ís are forbidden to interpret the Bahá'í writings in such a way as to indicate a static, dogmatically narrow, or unitary reading. The Bahá'í Faith is dynamic, progressive, and evolutionary, and as such must always be flexible and responsive to the "exigencies of the occasion and the people."⁹ So must be Bahá'í scholarship.

Perhaps rather than criticizing Loehle's reading of the term "chance" as inadequate (or as the taking of liberties), we might further investigate the implications of his reading to see if there are other passages in the Bahá'í writings that would help to clarify or develop his position, or we might investigate other ways in which we may read this term to consider other possible readings and meanings. The idea of asserting the correctness of one particular reading or interpretation is dangerous for Bahá'ís and smacks of the very sort of dogmatism of old world scholarship that Bahá'ís desperately need to avoid at all costs. While I do not believe that Ayman intends to assert that we

8. Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í World Faith* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971) 141.

9. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 172.

can discern a lone true and correct interpretation of the Writings, I do feel very strongly that Bahá'í scholars must be acutely aware of the pitfalls of the many boundaries that *do* circumscribe our work, and that we strive through daily prayer and concentrated, meditative study of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh to become day-by-day ever more aware of our own scholarly biases and those of the scholars we study.

Over fifty years ago, the writer Gertrude Stein composed her circular poem, "a rose is a rose is a rose,"¹⁰ which critiques our reification of images, concepts, metaphors into rigidly defined categories. A concern expressed throughout her writings is the danger posed when academic and scholarly freedoms are severely restricted. An example she used as a metaphor for this sort of problem was the concept and condition of nouns and names—words that are often constrained by their limited definitions—words that are not given the freedom to grow and develop with their use. This is not to say that a rose is not a rose. It is, but maybe not always, and often it is much more. Were one to receive roses from an admirer or lover, would they be roses like any other roses? Certainly not. And how much greater yet again would be the distinction of rose petals that one might receive from the Bahá'í shrines in the Holy Land. As our world changes, so do languages and the meanings of words, objects, and events. Even as far back as Thucydides, this fact was known and understood. In *The Peloponnesian War*, he writes that after the Corcyrean revolution "words had to change their ordinary meaning and to take that which was now given them."¹¹ Words are powerful and can serve to paralyze, confine, and oppress as well as to renew, emancipate, and enliven. In fact, throughout the history of English (British, American, Colonial, and post-Colonial) literature, truly innovative writers such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, Gertrude Stein, and William Carlos Williams have strained against and bent the linguistic (syntactic and semantic) boundaries that they inherited. While we would probably not want to measure their works by the, perhaps, more limited standards of their times, we must be even more wary of approaching the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi by the Persian, Arabic, and English literary standards that they or we have inherited.

By means of a conclusion, I want to agree wholeheartedly with Ayman that "the Bahá'í community increasingly needs . . . learned individuals." It does, and so does the entire world community. However, perhaps Bahá'ís can begin to investigate truth and knowledge freely and independently of the biases inherited from their respective non-Bahá'í traditions and worlds. I cannot stress enough the necessity of regular and concentrated reliance upon the Bahá'í writings and prayers as the most powerful tool in the processes of study and learning. Let me

10. Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America* (New York: Random House, 1935) 231.

11. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Modern Library, 1951) 189.

conclude by telling a story told by my father many years ago. My background as a Bahá'í of Jewish descent informs much of my scholarship, particularly in the importance of stories, examples, and tales. Throughout the history of the Jewish people, learning has always been grounded in this world, in the concrete, in the particular—even in relation to the theological and divine. For the Jew, life is process, and gaining knowledge is part of that process.

The story or, rather, joke follows: Not so very long ago, but rather longer now than when my father recounted the joke, there was a married couple who decided to see a therapist for help with their marital troubles. Around the same time, a young student of psychology approached the therapist and asked if she might sit in on some actual sessions. The necessary permissions were obtained, and the student came to observe the initial sessions with this unhappy couple. First, the wife came in individually and lamented her situation. All the troubles were caused by her husband, and she was completely innocent. The therapist listened closely throughout the session, and at the end, he looked at the wife and said, "You're right." After she left, the husband took his turn. He bewailed his plight, pointing out that his wife was the cause of all their difficulties and that he, of course, was not to blame at all. The therapist listened to him carefully, and finally looked at the husband and said, "You're right." The student was following these two sessions quite attentively and was rather perplexed by what she had observed. After the husband left, and she and the therapist were alone, she said, "I am confused. When the wife came in and told you her story, you told her that she was right. And then when the husband came in and told you a diametrically opposite story, you told him that he was right. They both can't be right!" The therapist listened attentively to the student's concerns. When she was finished, he looked at her and said, "You're right."

My father never explained the story to us. He didn't have to, for we had been raised to understand that life, knowledge, and truth as manifested in our world are ever changing and that this is something we are to see as wonderful, not disturbing. Hence the old saying, "Two Jews, three opinions." We must be vigilant, especially those of us who are Bahá'ís, to avoid the tendency to limit our investigations and studies adversely. As the French-Egyptian (and Jewish) poet Edmond Jabès wrote, "To establish as true what is perhaps only part of the truth which warrants it, [then we and truth are] only a step nearer the edge of the abyss."¹² I agree wholeheartedly with Ayman that Bahá'í scholars must strive towards excellence and accuracy in all of our work. Let us avoid falling into the abyss of old world scholasticism that is, at best, narrow and partial and, at worst, overtly hegemonic and oppressive. Let us all strive towards new heights of scholarship as we continue to discover what it means to be *Bahá'í* scholars—

11. Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Resemblances*, trans. Rosmarie Waldrop (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1990) 41.

truly an exalted station for us to attain. I would like to end by thanking both Loehle and Ayman for providing the impetus for my own ruminations, shared herein, which might encourage other Bahá'í scholars to consider seriously the various epistemological implications involved in all of their work.

SUSAN B. BRILL

COMMENTARY ON CRAIG LOEHLE'S "ON HUMAN ORIGINS: A BAHÁ'Í PERSPECTIVE"**Commentator:** Iraj Ayman**Published:** *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 4.1 (1991): 91

Dr. Iraj Ayman raises an objection to Dr. Craig Loehle's idea that "even the prophets are somewhat subject to chance events." Loehle had supported his speculation using Bahá'u'lláh's statement that the prophets have been subjected to the "chances of this world" (*Kitáb-i-Íqán* 73). In the course of his commentary, Ayman raises two thorny issues: (1) the question of divine determinism versus chance, and (2) the problem of relying on Shoghi Effendi's translations without referring to an original-language edition of the text.

On the surface, Ayman's argument that the prophets are not subject to chance seems reasonable enough. His method of eliminating Loehle's supporting evidence in favor of his own view might also seem acceptable from the perspective of scholarly procedure. That is, Ayman points out that the original Persian of the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* can be understood as "worldly events or happenings" instead of "chances." But upon closer examination it may be that these two issues are not resolved so simply.

With regard to what is ordained by God—a decreed fate or divine determinism—it is reasonable to assume that it is "preordained" that a prophet will have to sacrifice and suffer in order to overturn the existing and corrupt patterns of society. Vehement resistance to radical change by those who have a vested interest in a system is arguably a social phenomenon inherent in human nature, and as such, opposition to and persecution of a prophet can be seen as "preordained" because of the very nature of the reform mission the prophet accepts and seeks to carry out. But it does not necessarily follow that the type and extent of such suffering is preordained or that a prophet does not have the freedom to use his inspiration creatively to respond to situations that might arise by chance (i.e., for example, the free-will decisions of those with whom he interacts) during his ministry.

Even though a prophet may say a certain event is "ordained by the will of God," such a statement, like anthropomorphic symbolism, need not be taken literally. It may be understood as an inspired way of seeing events and not as an attempt to portray God as the operator of a mechanical cosmic order. As events occur, the prophet "interprets" them in order to impart guidance and uplift souls. Such interpretation is according to the inspiration given to the prophet, that is, the divine inspiration that imparts the prophet's ethical and spiritual perspective. An uninspired person could see the same events and utterly fail to grasp any spiritual or existential significance for themselves or others. The ancient belief that "nothing happens by chance" may therefore be a matter of moral and spiritual vision, a way of seeing life and sanctifying it by contemplating it in relation to the divine aim of life.

The issue of “chance” also involves a difficult question of definition. What is “chance”? If God created and ordained the natural order—even from the deist perspective of Nicolaus of Oresmes’ Clockmaker—could not chance be a part of that order, and as such even chance itself ordained by God? If chance exists in our lives, then it could—just as do poverty, afflictions, and illnesses—exist in the lives of the prophets. There is simply no way for us to *know* with certainty the nature of God’s direct or indirect role in the created order—although some will, of course, *believe* with certainty. A literal reading of the Báb’s writings can yield as rigid a determinism as that of the Calvinists.

If the concept of decreed fate or determinism is carried so far that all events, no matter how trivial or tragic, are seen as literally ordained by God—be they in the lives of the prophets or our own—no room will be left for our free will, human creativity, or the humanity of the prophets. And surely, without free will, the “ransom” made in the ministries of the Manifestations of God would be reduced to a mechanical activity carried out by biological robots.

In Bahá’í scholarship, the question of referring to the original languages (Persian and Arabic) is equally problematic. It goes without saying that knowledge of the original languages is essential to the study of Bahá’í scripture. However, the problem is complicated by the role of Shoghi Effendi as the divinely appointed interpreter of Bahá’í sacred writings. Since he translated a number of important works including the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*—and no translation can be undertaken without some degree of interpretation—it follows that Shoghi Effendi’s authoritative interpretations are integral to his translations. This fact leaves us with the problem of deciding in which instances we should emphasize our own understanding of the original language in favor of the meaning suggested by Shoghi Effendi’s translation. Which provides the clearer and more accurate meaning?

Because of the provisions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will and Testament*, Shoghi Effendi’s translations are a unique phenomenon in religious history—more significant to the Bahá’í Faith than perhaps St. Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible was to the early Christian Church. Even if English disappears as a living language, the unique role of Shoghi Effendi’s translations in the interpretive process will demand that Bahá’í scholars continue to study his English translations and other writings to understand the original Persian and Arabic texts.

Ayman’s comments suggest that Loehle made a theological mistake because he relied solely on Shoghi Effendi’s English translation, a translation that could have been clarified by referring to the original Persian. In this instance, the opposite can, however, be argued: that is, the original Persian was, in fact, clarified by Shoghi Effendi’s English translation. From this perspective, Loehle’s argument has the added benefit of Shoghi Effendi’s translation, which enabled Loehle to make an observation that might have otherwise been missed.

I have noticed a number of cases where the translations of Shoghi Effendi

seem somewhat baffling until one studies the sacred writings further. He, for example, frequently translates *torat* as *Pentateuch*, instead of *Torah*. The term *Torah* (or *torat*) is ambiguous—it could mean anything from a few Mosaic laws to the whole Hebrew Bible, rabbinic commentaries, and way of life—but *Pentateuch* means only one thing: five books, i.e., the first five books of the Bible. Students of Wellhausen's hypothesis concerning the composition of the Pentateuch—the politically correct view for most academics—will immediately see the difficulties this choice poses, but based on a broad view of how *torat* is used in the Bahá'í writings and the Qur'án, as well as its equivalent in the New Testament, it strikes me as an *interpretation* meant to be taken seriously and one which should not be dismissed by referring back to and isolating the more ambiguous Persian word *torat*.

In some cases, elements are lost in the English translations, for example, what is commonly translated as "hoopie" (a species of bird) becomes "messenger" in the *Hidden Words* (Persian, no. 1). Nevertheless, the hoopie was Solomon's messenger. Other examples seem more significant, such as the abbreviated way Shoghi Effendi translates the stations of *'ayn* (vision/insight/knowledge), *haqq* (truth/justice), and *núr* (light/illumination) into the English phrase "stations of absolute certitude" (cf. *Kitáb-i-Íqán* [Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974] 196 and *Kitáb-i-Íqán* [Egypt: 1934. Persian edition. Reprinted Bahá'í Verlag, 1980]). Such varying examples suggest that we have to give attention to the problem of what is lost in translation versus what is actually clarified.

There are no simple procedures for determining where the emphasis should be placed. In the case of the passage about "chances" in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, there are several points worth considering. Shoghi Effendi, in many instances, translates passages in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* in a way much like that of Ali Kuli Khan's earlier and much more literal translation. However, when translating "*havades-i-emkaniyyih*," Shoghi Effendi renders it "chances of this world," whereas Ali Kuli Khan renders it "incidental happenings." Ayman's choice, "worldly events or happenings," is much closer to Ali Kuli Khan's than to Shoghi Effendi's later and vastly superior translation. Moreover, Steingass's *Persian-English Dictionary* indicates that "chances" is an equally possible option. Perhaps Shoghi Effendi chose "chances of this world" to dissuade us from projecting a rigid determinism onto the message of Bahá'u'lláh and so that the full impact of Bahá'u'lláh's point about divine tests could be made more evident.

M. K. ROHANI

**RESPONSE TO COMMENTARIES BY SUSAN BRILL
AND M. K. ROHANI**

I appreciate the interest that Susan Brill and M. K. Rohani have shown in my comments regarding the article "On Human Origins" and greatly value their comments as informative writings, as I do the original contribution of Dr. Craig Loehle. I had no intention of using this occasion to raise "thorny" issues (as presumed by M. K. Rohani) or to initiate an argument on matters for which we have sufficient guidance in the Bahá'í writings. It is wiser to seek the guidance of the Universal House of Justice rather than to debate these issues among ourselves. I had absolutely no intention to "criticize," "interpret," "correct," or "improve upon" the translation made by Shoghi Effendi. In my note I made no evaluative statement on the translations of Shoghi Effendi. And finally, I had specially avoided entering into any judgmental argument on questions of fate, determinism, or free will. Therefore, if the readers of *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* are interested in addressing such issues, I hope they will do so without referring to me as a source of any special claim on these matters.

The main point of my comments was a simple suggestion that "when using the translations of the holy Writings, *it would be helpful* where making inferences on the basis of *single words* to examine the original Persian or Arabic texts and study the historical usage of such words in Persian and Arabic literature" (emphasis added). There is no reference in this statement to the validity of authorized translations of the holy texts for the purpose of studies on the Bahá'í Faith. I have not argued that only those who know Arabic and Persian may be able to understand what is meant by the translated texts. In view of the fact that not every word or expression can have an exact equivalent in another language, one cannot confidently base the inference on a single word (not the whole text) in a translated text unless the exact connotations of the word in the original language are examined.

I agree that scholars can use authoritative translations without obligation to learn the languages from which the texts are translated. I also fully believe that the English translations by Shoghi Effendi are not merely a rendering of the text in English but that they contain elements of interpretation, clarification, and enlightenment. Those who want to make inferences on the basis of single words in the original Persian and Arabic texts of the Writings should refer to the translation of Shoghi Effendi, if such translation is available, to benefit from the clarification of those words provided by Shoghi Effendi.

May I also assure the readers of the *Journal* that I had absolutely no intention to promote any kind of elitism, as suggested by M. K. Rohani. The last paragraph of my comment was actually related to the last sentence of its preceding paragraph and was not a general statement by itself. Without making any dogmatic and definitive statement, I have only posed the question of

whether we can reach the conclusion that events which are not ordained by God may happen to the Manifestations of God. This observation is obviously related to their divinely ordained station and not to their station as an ordinary human being. I am sorry if the brevity of my comment has caused certain misunderstandings.

IRAJ AYMAN