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Financial Transparency in
the Baha'i Faith

Article Inside

Discrimination within the Baha'i
Community by the Administration

Article Inside

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PRAYER



O Thou peerless and loving Lord!

O Thou peerless and loving Lord! Though capacity and worthiness are lacking, and it is infinitely hard to withstand tribulations, yet worthiness and capacity are gifts vouchsafed by Thee. O Lord! Give us capacity and make us worthy, that we may evince the most great steadfastness, renounce this world and all its people, kindle the fire of Thy love, and even as candles, burn bright with a consuming flame and shed abroad our radiance.

O Lord of the Kingdom! Deliver us from this world of vain illusions, and lead us unto the realm of the infinite. Suffer us to be wholly freed from this nether life, and cause us to be blessed with the bountiful gifts of the Kingdom. Release us from this world of nothingness that beareth the semblance of reality, and confer upon us life everlasting. Bestow on us joy and delight, and favour us with gladness and contentment. Comfort our hearts, and grant peace and tranquillity to our souls, so that upon ascending unto Thy Kingdom we may attain Thy presence and may rejoice in the realms above. Thou art the Giver, the Bestower, the Almighty!

- Abdu'l Baha

FOREWORD

As the month of Izzat dawns upon us, we find ourselves immersed in the rich tapestry of history and spirituality that the Baha'i faith presents. This month, we embark on a profound journey through the annals of the Faith, exploring the pivotal events that have shaped the beliefs and principles of the Baha'i community. It is with great joy and humility that we present to you the fourth edition of The Caravan magazine.

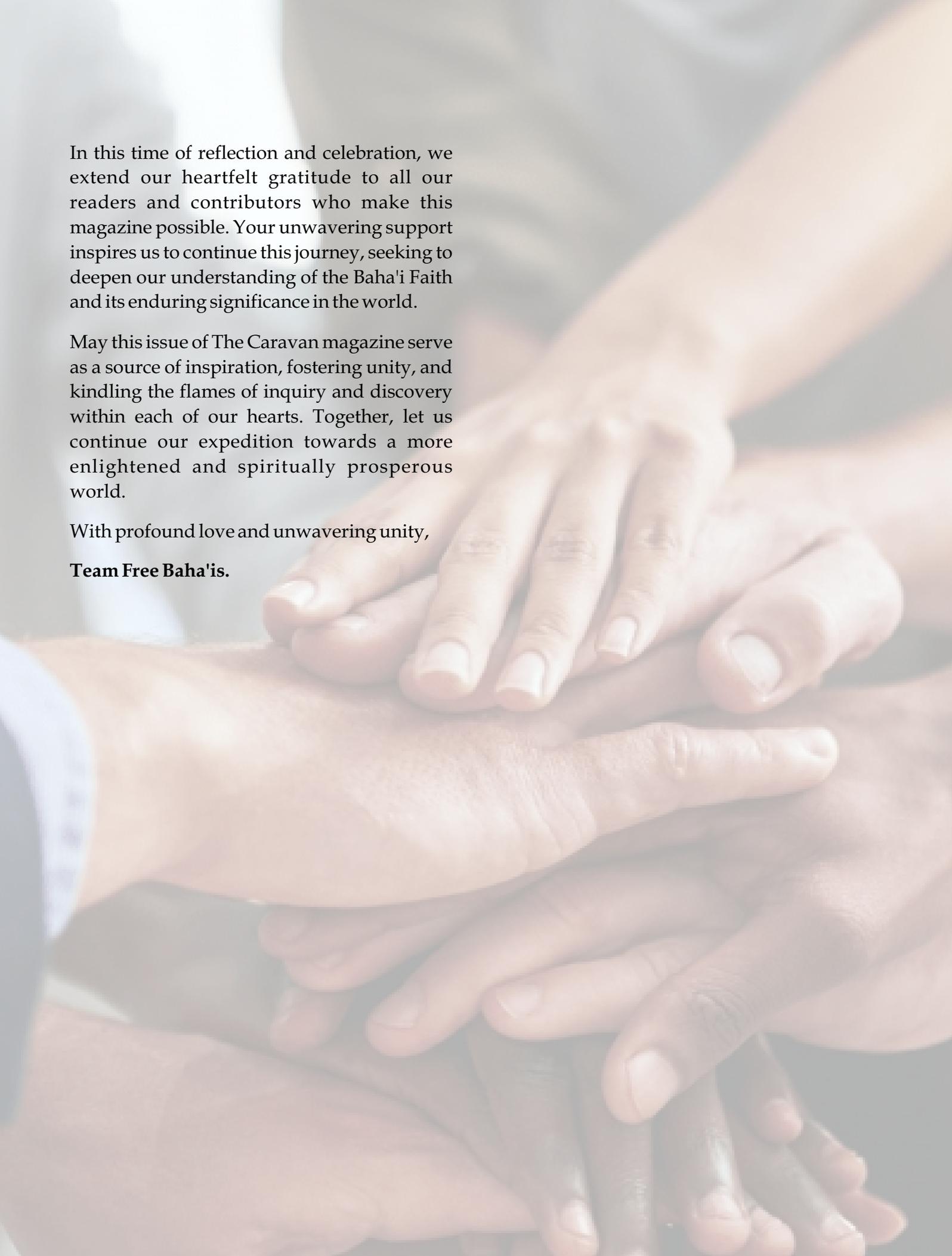
Within these pages, we delve into the divine revelation that Baha'u'llah brought to humanity. Baha'u'llah, who was originally a follower of the Bab, recognized and embraced the profound truth of the Bab's divine mission, thereby accepting Babism. The Bab, with unyielding courage and devotion, declared himself to be the Promised One awaited by all religions. His teachings laid the foundation for the emergence of the Baha'i Faith, which would later be expanded and expounded upon by Baha'u'llah.

The moment of revelation and intimation holds a special place in the life of every Messenger of God. Similarly, Baha'u'llah

received intimation that he was the promised one foretold by the Bab. This transformative revelation became the catalyst for Baha'u'llah's subsequent proclamation of his divine mission, setting in motion a spiritual revolution that would transcend borders, cultures, and generations.

In this issue, we are also honoured to feature a profound article on the Haifan Baha'is and their decision to withdraw from the Haifan Baha'i faith, as mentioned in the US 2023 Report. We understand the complexity of this matter and the profound impact it may have on the Baha'i community. Our aim is to explore and present this sensitive topic with respect, impartiality, and an openness to understanding diverse perspectives.

As we navigate the ever-changing currents of our world, the Baha'i teachings continue to offer profound insights and guidance for creating a united and harmonious global society. The principles of oneness, love, and justice, championed by Baha'u'llah, remain as relevant today as they were during the birth of the Faith.



In this time of reflection and celebration, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our readers and contributors who make this magazine possible. Your unwavering support inspires us to continue this journey, seeking to deepen our understanding of the Baha'i Faith and its enduring significance in the world.

May this issue of The Caravan magazine serve as a source of inspiration, fostering unity, and kindling the flames of inquiry and discovery within each of our hearts. Together, let us continue our expedition towards a more enlightened and spiritually prosperous world.

With profound love and unwavering unity,

Team Free Baha'is.

I THANK THEE GOD



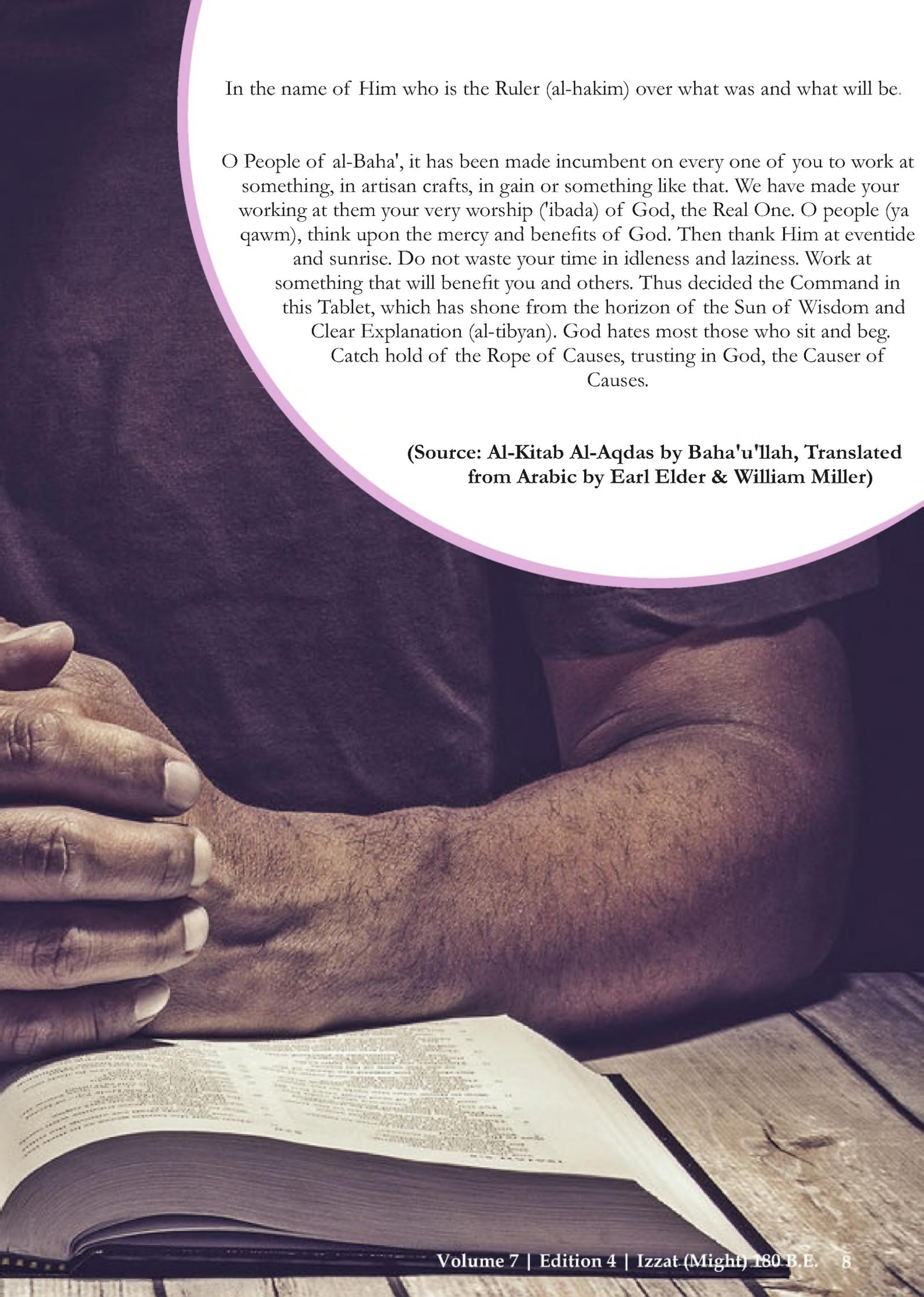
I thank thee God, that I have lived
In this great world and known its many joys:
The songs of birds, the strongest sweet scent of hay,
And cooling breezes in the secret dusk;
The flaming sunsets at the close of day,
Hills and the lovely, heather-covered moors;
Music at night, and the moonlight on the sea,
The beat of waves upon the rocky shore
And wild white spray, flung high in ecstasy;
The faithful eyes of dogs, and treasured books,
The love of Kin and fellowship of friends
And all that makes life dear and beautiful.
I thank Thee too, that there has come to me
A little sorrow and sometimes defeat,
A little heartache and the loneliness
That comes with parting and the words 'Good-bye';
Dawn breaking after weary hours of pain,
When I discovered that night's gloom must yield
And morning light break through to me again.
Because of these and other blessings poured
Unasked upon my wondering head,
Because I know that there is yet to come
An even richer and more glorious life,
And most of all, because Thine only Son
Once sacrificed life's loveliness for me,
I thank Thee, God, that I have lived.

- Elizabeth Craven



Painting of Abdu'l Baha done by Lucian Brener

DIVINE LAWS



In the name of Him who is the Ruler (al-hakim) over what was and what will be.

O People of al-Baha', it has been made incumbent on every one of you to work at something, in artisan crafts, in gain or something like that. We have made your working at them your very worship ('ibada) of God, the Real One. O people (ya qawm), think upon the mercy and benefits of God. Then thank Him at eventide and sunrise. Do not waste your time in idleness and laziness. Work at something that will benefit you and others. Thus decided the Command in this Tablet, which has shone from the horizon of the Sun of Wisdom and Clear Explanation (al-tibyan). God hates most those who sit and beg. Catch hold of the Rope of Causes, trusting in God, the Causer of Causes.

(Source: Al-Kitab Al-Aqdas by Baha'u'llah, Translated from Arabic by Earl Elder & William Miller)

FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY IN THE BAHA'I FAITH

ADVOCATING FOR GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY FROM THE UHJ

The recently published US Annual Report for Ridvan 2023 has sparked discussions within the Baha'i community regarding the issue of financial transparency. While the US National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) has taken the commendable step of sharing their combined financial statements, questions arise as to why the Universal House of Justice (UHJ) does not follow suit. As the highest governing body of the Baha'i Faith, responsible for managing funds on a larger scale, it is crucial to consider the importance of financial accountability and the potential benefits it can bring to the community.

Transparency in financial matters is critical for building confidence, accountability, and responsible management within any organisation, especially religious ones. Faith communities may give confidence to its members by freely providing financial information, allowing them to understand how monies are used and promoting active engagement in supporting the community's goals.

Let us look at the financial statement submitted by the UHJ.

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Combined statements of financial position

10 months ended February 28, 2023, and fiscal year ended April 30, 2022

	National Bahá'í Fund	Publishing Trust	Combined total	
			February 2023 unaudited	April 2022 audited
Assets				
Current assets				
Cash and investments	\$ 2,783,189	\$ 52,972	\$ 2,836,161	\$ 6,698,927
Investments	36,471,213	-	36,471,213	20,800,000
Due (to)/from other Funds	10,995,326	(10,995,326)	-	-
Accounts and notes receivable	463,509	35,353	498,862	397,043
Inventories	82,125	372,762	454,887	495,468
Other current assets	855,235	14,177	869,412	1,012,255
Total current assets	\$ 51,650,597	\$ (10,520,062)	\$ 41,130,535	\$ 29,403,693
Property and equipment net of accumulated depreciation	\$ 50,265,196	-	\$ 50,265,196	\$ 50,780,683
Investments	42,814,033	-	42,814,033	59,105,469
Other assets	439,684	-	439,684	441,979
Receivable under Trusts	2,497,767	-	2,497,767	2,693,429
Total assets	\$ 147,667,276	\$ (10,520,062)	\$ 137,147,214	\$ 142,425,253
Liabilities and net assets				
Liabilities				
Current liabilities				
Short-term debt	\$ 25,557,467	\$ 9,345	\$ 25,566,813	\$ 23,030,908
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	568,670	21,726	590,395	4,640,618
Amounts payable to International Funds	3,214,589	-	3,214,589	1,578,603
Gift annuities, current portion	728,765	-	728,765	499,406
Total current liabilities	\$ 30,069,491	\$ 31,071	\$ 30,100,562	\$ 29,749,535
Long-term liabilities				
Pension liabilities	\$ 9,134,675	-	\$ 9,134,675	\$ 10,634,675
Security deposits	55,446	-	55,446	30,246
Gift annuities, net of current portion	6,088,495	-	6,088,495	6,067,853
Total liabilities	\$ 45,348,107	\$ 31,071	\$ 45,379,177	\$ 46,482,309
Net assets				
Without donor restrictions				
Undesignated	\$ 29,956,799	\$ (10,551,133)	\$ 19,405,666	\$ 33,327,652
Designated by the Board for Operating Reserve	28,965,080	-	28,965,080	26,487,847
Designated by the Board for Endowment Fund	4,311,946	-	4,311,946	4,441,838
Total without donor restrictions	\$ 63,233,826	\$ (10,551,133)	\$ 52,682,693	\$ 64,257,337
With donor restrictions				
Purpose restrictions	\$ 36,708,713	-	\$ 36,708,713	\$ 29,260,742
Perpetual in nature	2,376,631	-	2,376,631	2,424,865
Total with donor restrictions	\$ 39,085,344	-	\$ 39,085,344	\$ 31,685,607
Total net assets	\$ 102,319,169	\$ (10,551,133)	\$ 91,768,037	\$ 95,942,944
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 147,667,276	\$ (10,520,052)	\$ 137,147,214	\$ 142,425,253

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Combined statements of activities

10 months ended February 28, 2023, and fiscal year ended April 30, 2022

	Without donor restrictions	With donor restrictions	Combined total	
			February 2023 unaudited	April 2022 audited
Changes in unrestricted net assets				
Revenues				
Contributions	\$ 23,886,560	\$ 4,978,351	\$ 28,864,911	\$ 37,626,811
Estate bequests	3,926,591	-	3,926,591	3,480,576
Investment income	2,282,144	-	2,282,144	2,085,039
Bahá'í schools tuition	337,002	-	337,002	163,917
Sale of books and special materials	609,516	-	609,516	822,746
Other income	367,559	-	367,559	1,398,425
Unrealized gain (loss) on investments	(4,155,616)	-	(4,155,616)	(8,271,767)
Net assets released from restriction	3,740	(3,740)	-	-
Unrealized gain (loss) on Perpetual Trust	(48,234)	-	(48,234)	(322,142)
Total revenues	\$ 27,209,262	\$ 4,974,611	\$ 32,183,872	\$ 36,983,605
Expenses				
Education and teaching	\$17,291,606	-	\$ 17,291,606	\$ 19,512,049
Community services provided by National Assembly	5,257,452	-	5,257,452	6,230,063
Publishing and communications	5,775,578	-	5,775,578	6,663,146
Contributions to related and other organizations	759,801	-	759,801	1,785,000
General management and administration	2,327,678	-	2,327,678	3,633,766
Properties operations and maintenance	3,663,980	-	3,663,980	4,943,858
Information technology	2,691,836	-	2,691,836	2,954,098
Total expenses	\$ 37,767,932	-	\$ 37,767,932	\$ 45,721,980
Changes in net assets before pension adjustment	\$ (10,558,670)	\$ 4,974,611	\$ (5,584,059)	\$ (8,738,375)
Non-operating				
Net periodic pension benefit cost	\$ 170,426	-	\$ 170,426	\$ 469,407
Pension charges other than net periodic benefit cost	(1,579,578)	-	(1,579,578)	(2,027,604)
	\$ (1,409,152)		\$ (1,409,152)	\$ (1,558,197)
Increase/(decrease) in net assets	\$ (9,149,518)	\$ 4,974,611	\$ (4,174,907)	\$ (7,180,178)
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 64,257,337	\$ 31,685,607	\$ 95,942,944	\$ 103,123,122
Net assets, end of year	\$ 55,107,819	\$ 36,660,218	\$ 91,768,037	\$ 95,942,944

Courtesy: Ridvan 2023 Annual Report, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States

The decision of the United States NSA to disclose their combined financial accounts establishes an encouraging precedent for financial transparency inside the Baha'i Faith. While these statements do not provide a full analysis, they do provide vital insights into the institution's financial health, providing some accountability and a basic notion of the direction the community is moving.

The UHJ bears major obligations as the governing body tasked with directing the global Baha'i community, including oversight of numerous funds, such as the Huquq'ullah funds, the Abdu'l Baha Shrine funds, local, national and international funds, continental and regional funds, etc. Imagine the sum collected by the UHJ and its other administrative bodies in the name of religion. And icing on the cake is that the Haifan Baha'is are tax exempt in Israel, which means that all of their earnings have been declared tax-free. Being tax-exempt means that no federal, state, or municipal taxes are applied to any of their transactions. In the name of belief and tradition, this may be referred to as an organised swindle. Given the scope of its operations, the UHJ should prioritise financial transparency and take proactive efforts to provide their members with a more complete view of the institution's financial activity.

Financial transparency from the UHJ would not only demonstrate their commitment to accountability but also empower Baha'is to make more informed decisions about their contributions and involvement in the community. It would enhance the sense of collective responsibility and ensure that the utilization of funds aligns with the principles and goals of the Baha'i Faith.

The UHJ's financial openness would not only demonstrate their commitment to responsibility, but would also enable Baha'is to make better informed decisions regarding their donations and engagement in the community. It would increase a feeling of

communal responsibility and guarantee that monies are used in accordance with the ideals and aims of the Baha'i Faith.

As the top governing organisation of the global Baha'i community, the UHJ plays a critical role. Submission of accounts is critical given their responsibility in leading the activities of the Faith, monitoring the management of various monies, and making choices that affect the global community. The UHJ's financial openness is critical for various reasons.

Firstly, financial responsibility guarantees that the UHJ retains the Baha'i community's trust and faith. The UHJ can demonstrate its commitment to responsible accountability and the ethical use of monies entrusted to them by giving a clear and comprehensive picture of financial activity. This transparency creates confidence and invites active engagement and support from the community.

Secondly, sharing financial information helps Baha'is to have a better understanding of how their donations are used and how they match with the Faith's aims and teachings. It allows members to make educated decisions about their financial support and participation in community projects. This openness enables individuals to contribute meaningfully, knowing that their contributions are positively impacting the UHJ's goal.

Furthermore, through submitting financial statements, the Baha'i community fosters a culture of communal accountability and inclusion. It enables real debate and involvement on financial issues, ensuring that resource allocation choices are made cooperatively and transparently. It promotes free communication and engagement among Baha'is worldwide, creating unity and shared ownership.

Additionally, financial transparency

establishes a standard of honesty and responsibility that may serve as a model for other organisations and communities within and beyond the Baha'i Faith. The UHJ may inspire other organisations to adopt comparable practises by leading by example, advocating more financial openness and responsible management across many realms of society.

Finally, because the UHJ plays such an important role in directing the Baha'i community globally, filing accounts is critical. Financial openness builds trust, enables informed decision-making, promotes collaborative accountability, and sets a good example for others. By adhering to the principles of accountability and transparency, the UHJ can strengthen its leadership while also contributing to the well-being and progress of the worldwide Baha'i community.

To keep things simple and avoid confusion among Baha'is, the UHJ and its other Administrative bodies should be requested to produce an annual report or other sort of accounting statement. After all, they are all accountable to the community since the funds produced are the result of contributions from the faithful, who have a right to know how much was earned and how it was spent. Let us band together in our resistance to this evident scam and put an end to the distrust that exists between the UHJ, ourselves, and other Baha'is across the world. Will you continue to question the UHJ on Huquq'llah? We'll do it.



INTRODUCING

THE CARAVAN

APP!



CLERGY IN THE BAHA'I CAUSE

In answer to a question as to whether or not there would be any clergy in the Baha'i Cause?

“No. In this movement there will never be any paid ministers, no appointed clergy, no bishops, no cardinals, no popes, no ceremonies. A clergyman, assuming that he is ordained to his ministry, may think that he knows more about God than anyone else, whereas the humble man in his congregation may know more about God than he does. The sacerdotal and theological position makes a clergyman proud and haughty. But there is one thing in this Cause; some people may become greater than the rest, not through appointment, but through the purity of their hearts, their unselfish deeds, their heroic sacrifices, and their knowledge of God. Such illumined souls, like kind fathers or teachers, will guide and teach those less fortunate. They are the elder brothers of the members of the community. They do not arrogate to themselves any title or position. You will know them by their humility, their sincerity, their deeds, their severance, their knowledge, their spirituality, and their attraction.”

- Abdu'l Baha

(Source: Diary of Ahmad Sohrab, March 21, 1913)

INSPIRING QUOTES



“There is no paradise, in the estimation of the believers in the Divine Unity, more exalted than to obey Gods commandments, and there is no fire in the eyes of those who have known God and His signs, fiercer than to transgress His laws and to oppress another soul, even to the extent of a mustard seed. On the Day of Resurrection God will, in truth, judge all men, and we all verily plead for His grace.”

— **The Bab**

““The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. ... So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.”

— **Baha'u'llah**

"Among the proofs and arguments for the existence of God is the fact that man has not created himself, but rather that his creator and fashioner is another than he. And it is certain and indisputable that the creator of man is not like man himself, because a powerless being cannot create another being, and an active creator must possess all perfections to produce his handiwork. Is it possible for the handiwork to be perfect and the craftsman imperfect? Is it possible for a painting to be a masterpiece and the painter to be deficient in his craft, notwithstanding that he is its creator? No: The painting cannot be like the painter, for otherwise it would have painted itself. And no matter how perfect the painting may be, in comparison with the painter it is utterly deficient.”

— **Abdu'l Baha**

DISCRIMINATIONS WITHIN THE BAHA'I COMMUNITY BY THE ADMINISTRATION

– GUEST ARTICLE

It seems the Baha'i Faith has become hungry for funds, which has led the faith to adopt doubtful means for meeting its ends.

Unofficial private meetings are hosted with the wealthy. In such meetings, the not-so-well-to-do are not invited. It is a meeting with the elite.

While the faith always had discrimination (Persians vs. non-Persians, born in faith vs. converts, and so on...), this is another example.

On close observation, we would always see the wealthy mingle among them, avoiding the poor. So much so that personal invitations for feasts also consider financial stature.

Even in funeral services, we would find hardly 3–4 people attending funerals of the poor. The wealthy can be assured of a full house.

The counsellors openly say, "We need converts who can donate funds. The Baha'i

Faith does not glorify poverty".

The behaviour of LSA members is so selfish that they always treat the poor as second-class members.

We have in the guidelines not to reveal the amount donated, but discreetly the high-value donations are conveyed to all to please the donor.

In short, all doctrines are violated, which means the end is important, not the means.

This emerging trend, characterised by disparities, exclusivity, and materialistic pursuits, raises important questions about its alignment with the fundamental principles of the Baha'i Faith.

The Baha'i teachings emphasise the essential unity of all humanity, irrespective of social status or material wealth. Baha'u'llah's vision seeks to eradicate divisions and promote harmony, justice, and equality.



In light of this, the current trajectory veers away from the spirit of the Faith, prompting reflection on how to realign with the core values and aspirations set forth by its founders.

With such a motive, how can we expect spirituality? How can we expect divine help? Rather, there would be divine retribution, which is the reason for dwindling numbers.

Money can't buy everything.

This trend comes right from the top: members of UHJ. It is well known that Ali Nakhjawani used to conduct such collection drives privately with the wealthy. Down the line, NSA and LSA follow the same pattern.

The question is:

1. Is such a practise prescribed in the Scriptures?
2. How can spirituality come from this approach?

3. Is a penny donated sincerely not greater than millions spent with pride?

4. Will the poor not be hurt by neglect and being pushed aside?

It will be better that we revert to the conduct of the founders of the faith rather than modern management practises.

Let there be less collection that is based on sincerity. Let the egos of the rich not be pampered. Let fewer houses of worship be constructed.

Let's have more simplicity than extravagance.

Do ponder!!



FREE BAHAI ACTIVITIES

“Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path. Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.” – Baha'u'llah

Dear readers,

We sincerely thank the Baha'is around the world for commemorating and spreading the word of the Bab on his martyrdom anniversary during July. Your dedication to sharing His teachings inspires everyone to learn more about the Baha'i faith. Your efforts contribute to the unity and spiritual progress of humanity, aligning with the core principles of our Faith. May your endeavours be blessed with success as we work together towards a unified and harmonious world, fulfilling the vision set forth by the Bab and continued by Baha'u'llah.

As the month of Izzat dawns upon us, the Baha'i community worldwide comes together in a spirit of unity and devotion to celebrate this special period of renewal. Izzat is a time of reflection, prayer, and fellowship, where Baha'is gather in their homes and community

spaces, inviting neighbors and friends to join them in spiritual activities and conversations about the Baha'i faith.

In countries like Germany, the USA, Thailand, Singapore, India, Canada, and Australia, Baha'is open their doors to host prayer gatherings and discussions about the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha. These intimate gatherings provide an opportunity for Baha'is to engage with their communities and share the message of unity and peace that lies at the core of the Baha'i faith.

One of the central activities during this last quarter was the reading of spiritually enriching books like "Some Answered Questions" by Abdu'l Baha and "Tablets of Abdu'l Baha." These books contain profound insights into the spiritual principles of the Baha'i faith and help deepen the understanding of its followers.

During these gatherings, Baha'is engage in meaningful discussions about how they can apply the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha in their daily lives. The discussions span across various topics, including the oneness of humanity, the need for universal education,

and the importance of equality between men and women.

One topic that has been at the forefront of these discussions is transparency within the Baha'i Administration. Baha'is from different countries have been exploring the actions of the United States, which has voluntarily submitted its financial accounts. This has led to thought-provoking conversations about the importance of transparency and accountability within the higher echelons of the Baha'i institutions, including the Universal House of Justice (UHJ).

The open dialogue and questioning spirit within the Baha'i community have encouraged many Free Baha'is to emphasize the significance of adhering to the true teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha. The Free Baha'is firmly believe that the Baha'i faith is founded on principles of justice, equality, and the unity of mankind.

Propagating the message of Baha'u'llah being the Promised One of all religions is a central theme during Izzat. Free Baha'is passionately share Baha'u'llah's teachings with the world, promoting the idea that His message transcends all boundaries and encompasses the entire human family.

Amidst the celebration and devotion, the Free Baha'is remain vigilant against the malpractices they perceive within the Baha'i

Administration. They assert that upholding the true teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha requires actively addressing and correcting any deviations from these teachings. With unwavering dedication, they strive to ensure transparency, accountability, and justice within the Baha'i community.

In conclusion, Izzat is a time of renewal and recommitment to the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha. Across the globe, Baha'is come together to share their faith, engage in prayer and discussions, and propagate the message of unity and peace. As the Free Baha'is continue to work tirelessly against perceived malpractices, they do so with the intention of upholding the true essence of the Baha'i faith. It is a celebration of unity, love, and the pursuit of a better world for all humanity.

Warmest Baha'i regards,

Free Baha'i Team





House in Tehran where Baha'u'llah was born



INVESTIGATION OF REALITY

“God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain... Therefore, depend upon your own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation; otherwise, you will be utterly submerged in the sea of ignorance and deprived of all the bounties of God.”

- Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Volume 2, p. 287



SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Email 1:

Es ist mir zu Ohren gekommen, dass es nach den Lehren der Baha'i nicht erlaubt sei, sich den Kopf zu rasieren. Aber was ist, wenn jemand nicht genug Haare hat und sich gerne den Kopf rasieren möchte? Kannst du mir helfen, das genaue Gebot zu verstehen? Ich sehe viele Baha'i, die sich den Kopf rasieren, sogar einige, die Teil des LSA/NSA sind. Gibt es in den Lehren Bahá'u'lláhs etwas dazu erwähnt?

English translation: (as shared by the friends of Germany)

I have heard that according to the teachings of the Baha'i Faith, it is not allowed to shave one's head. But what if someone doesn't have enough hair and would like to shave it? Can you help me understand the exact ruling on this matter? I see many Baha'is shaving their heads, including some who are part of the

Local Spiritual Assembly (LSA) or National Spiritual Assembly (NSA). Is there anything mentioned about this in the teachings of Baha'u'llah?

Answer:

Hi Louis,

Allah'u'Abha!

In the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah's guidance is explicit: "Do not shave your heads. God has adorned them with hair. In that, there are certainly signs to him who considers the requirements of nature (al-tabi'a) from the standpoint of the Possessor of Mankind. Indeed, He is the Mighty, the Wise. It is not fitting to go beyond the limits of the ears. This is what the Master of the worlds commanded."

This unambiguous command from Baha'u'llah forms a fundamental aspect of the Baha'i teachings concerning personal appearance and grooming. It highlights the significance and purpose of natural adornments, emphasizing the wisdom of the Creator in the design of human beings. It is essential to recognize that adherence to Baha'u'llah's teachings is a hallmark of being a Baha'i. While it is true that not all individuals may strictly follow every aspect of Baha'u'llah's guidance, it does not invalidate the relevance or applicability of His teachings. Baha'u'llah's instructions, including those regarding personal appearance, serve as spiritual guidance and reflect the divine wisdom embedded within His revelation.

Regarding the adherence to Baha'u'llah's teachings by Local Spiritual Assemblies (LSA) and National Spiritual Assemblies (NSA), it is essential to recognize that there are instances where certain major explicit rulings of the Faith are not being followed. One significant example is the formation of the Administration, which both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha expressed reservations about. However, the Guardian, who assumed the leadership of the Faith after 'Abdu'l-Baha, transformed it into an Administrative body, despite the earlier concerns expressed by the central figures of the Faith.

In light of such historical context, one might question whether the act of shaving one's head would be a major concern for these administrative bodies. It is evident that there have been instances in the history of the Baha'i Faith where interpretations and decisions have diverged from the original intentions of its founders.

However, it is essential for each one of us to strive towards upholding Baha'u'llah's guidance collectively, recognizing that the progress of the Faith depends on the spiritual

growth and commitment of its individual members and institutions. While individual choices may vary, striving to follow Baha'u'llah's guidance, including matters of personal grooming, is an integral part of being a Baha'i and contributing to the unity and spiritual advancement of the Baha'i community.

If you have any more queries, feel free to write back to us.

Regards,

Team Free Baha'is

(Please note: This response was originally sent via Email in German language, but added here in English so to make it easier for our readers to understand)



Email 2:

Can someone explain about profit sharing in the Bahai Faith?

Answer:

Hi Chris,

Allah'u'Abha!

Thank you for reaching out to us, and I hope this response finds you in good health and spirits.

In response to the question about profit sharing and the Baha'i Faith, we turn to the profound teachings of Abdu'l Baha, the son of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith. In his book "Some Answered Questions," Abdu'l Baha addresses the issue of economic justice and advocates for equitable profit-sharing arrangements between factory owners and their workers.

According to Abdu'l Baha, it is essential to establish laws and regulations that permit workmen to receive not only their wages but also a fair share in the profits generated by the factory. This distribution should be based on the capacity and contributions of the factory, ensuring a just and balanced arrangement. Whether it is a fourth or a fifth part of the profits or some other equitable approach, the core principle is that both the owners and the workers should benefit from the fruits of their labour and collaboration.

The capital and management for the factory come from the owner, while the work and labour are provided by the body of workmen. Therefore, both parties are integral to the success of the enterprise. Abdu'l Baha emphasizes that the workmen should receive wages that not only support them adequately during their active years but also provide sufficient benefits after they cease working, ensuring their well-being in times of need or

helplessness.

Another option presented is that the wages should be set at a level that satisfies the workmen, allowing them to save for future uncertainties and emergencies.

Through these teachings, the Baha'i Faith advocates for a just and harmonious economic system, where cooperation and fairness are central. The equitable sharing of profits ensures that the welfare of both employers and employees is considered, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration within the industrial community.

In light of these teachings, the Baha'i community is encouraged to apply these principles of profit sharing and economic justice in their daily lives, businesses, and interactions with others. By striving to implement these principles, the Baha'is seek to contribute to a more just and prosperous society, in alignment with the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha.

If you have any further inquiries or if there is anything else we can assist you with, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to support you on your spiritual journey.

Wishing you continued strength and unwavering faith in the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Thanks and Regards,

Team Free Baha'is



Email 3:

I'm located in New Jersey, USA, and officially registered as a member of the Baha'i community. But deep in my heart, I consider myself a Free Baha'i, devoted solely to following the teachings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Lately, I've become inactive within the community, refraining from attending any programs or events. However, in the past few weeks, I've been receiving persistent reminders about contributing to Huququ'llah.

In the past, I managed to evade the requests by stating that I would pay when I visit the Baha'i center. But now, they've informed me that I can pay Huququ'llah online via PayPal, eliminating the need for me to physically visit the center. Now I'm faced with a dilemma. As a Free Baha'i, what should be my stance in this situation?

Answer:

Hi Anna,

Allah'u'Abha!

I completely understand your sentiments and concerns regarding Huququ'llah contributions and the use of funds by the Haifan Baha'is. As Free Baha'is, we firmly believe in following the teachings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Bahá while standing against the current practices of giving our contributions to the Administration.

It is disheartening to hear that the collected funds are not being utilized transparently for the betterment of the community but are instead being spent on personal matters by the Haifan Baha'is without any accountability. On the other hand, we take pride in the fact that the Baha'i community in the United States has been setting an example by submitting annual accounts of their expenditure, demonstrating

their commitment to transparency and accountability.

Congratulations on raising this essential question and highlighting the need for clarity and transparency in the management of the Huququ'llah funds. As Free Baha'is, we should all unite and encourage our fellow Baha'is to push for the Universal House of Justice and the Administration to publish detailed accounts of the total money collected and how it is being used.

By demanding accountability, we aim to ensure that the Huququ'llah contributions are directed towards the betterment of the lesser privileged members of our community and the realization of the principles of justice and equity. Together, let us strive to uphold the true spirit of the Faith and contribute to building a unified Baha'i community that adheres to the teachings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Bahá with unwavering dedication.

In unity and commitment,

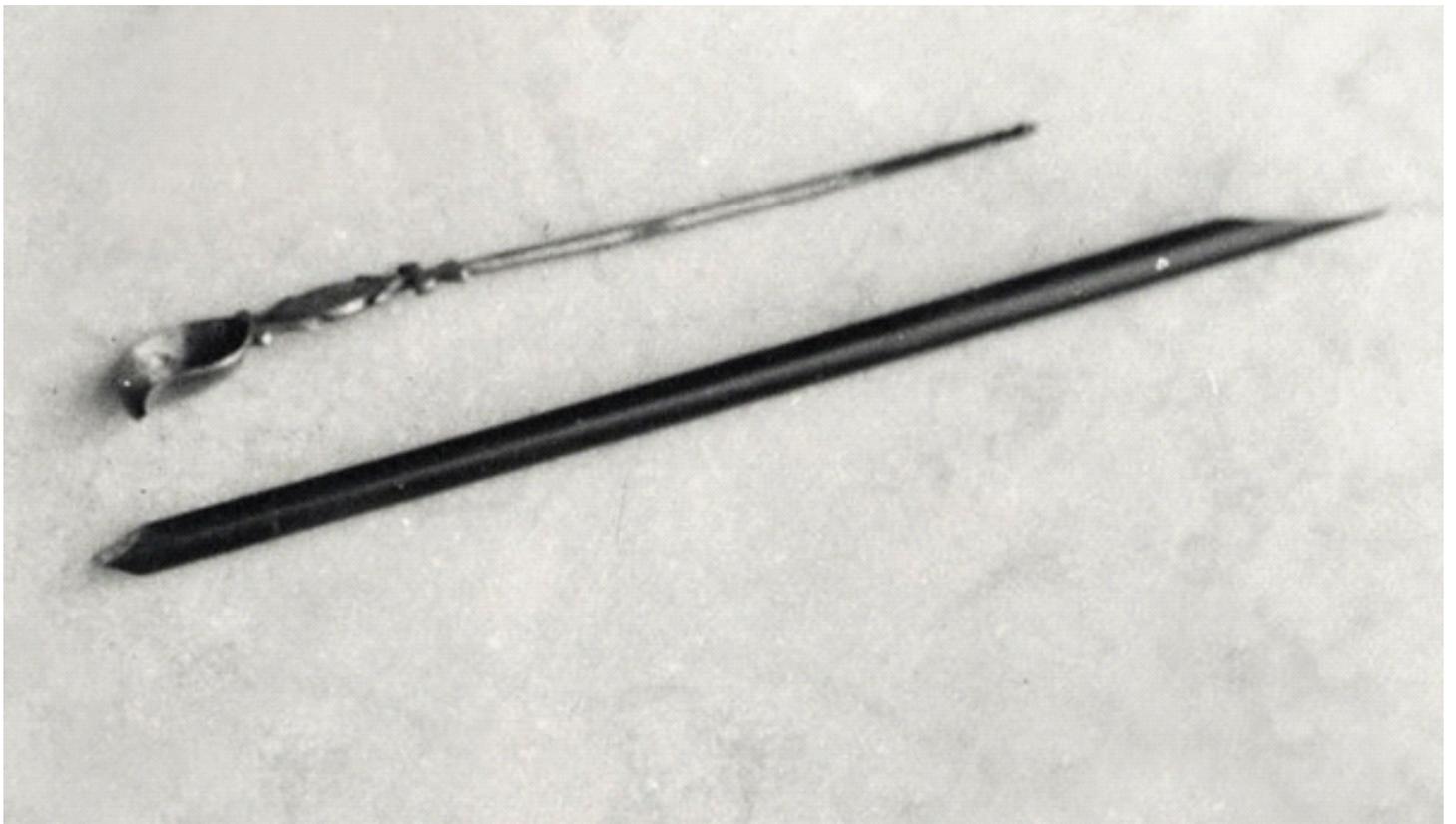
Team Free Baha'is





Fall 1848: Baha'u'llah visits Mulla Husayn and his companions at Fort Tabarsi

KNOW YOUR HERITAGE



Baha'u'llah's reed pen and ink spoon

WEBSPLORE



r/FreeSpeechBahai • 12 days ago
by trident765

I hate Haifan Bahaism

I hate it for being such a massive waste of my time. I hate Haifan Bahaism for robbing me of the best years of my life. I hate Haifan Bahaism because I was a socially struggling youth who had no friends, who put his trust in the Bahai community to help me make friends, but it resulted in nothing. I hate Haifan Bahaism because when I asked the Bahai authorities if they could help put me in touch with more people so that I could make friends my age, they said this would be against the UHJ's plan. And now 10 years later the best years of my life are gone.

I hate Haifan Bahaism because being of Iranian background I did not feel accepted by mainstream American culture, and instead of making the Bahai community a nurturing environment for me, the Haifan Bahais utterly neglected me. To the Haifan Bahais I was not as deserving of attention - it was the institute process that needed all their attention.

People often think of pointless efforts and boring activities as being neutral rather than bad, because in their mind pointlessness does not harm anything. But if the pointlessness spreads and grows this is very much an evil thing. Cancer for example is simply the spreading and propagation of pointless cells, and it is something that people are rightfully horrified by. People should similarly be horrified by the institute process which resembles cancer in every conceivable way, and they should also hate its mother Haifan Baha'ism.



“Where there is love, nothing is too much trouble and there is always time.” – Abdu'l Baha



With this, I pray to God to help us follow in the footsteps of the Master and take care of the poor and the needy, always. More power to you!

Want to be a contributor for The Caravan?

Interested in contributing to the Caravan Magazine by writing a guest article? Kindly send us your article at ['thecaravan@freebahais.org'](mailto:thecaravan@freebahais.org) and if we find your article unique, knowledgeable and interesting enough for our readers, we will surely publish it in our upcoming issue. If you have any other queries, you can write to us at ['info@freebahais.org'](mailto:info@freebahais.org)

Thank you!

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Nine Bahai Stars in the Diadem of the Universal Religion of Good Will

By MIRZA AHMAD SOHRAB

1. In the Cosmic Universe there is but one law—the law of Good Will. Let me serve that law with innate sincerity, and reverence all its manifestations.

2. Good Will is the mine in the depth of which are hidden the jewels of beauty, grace, and symmetry. Love is the prospector of this mine. Let me avail myself of his services.

3. The lamp of Good Will has been ignited in the chamber of my mind by the hand of celestial might. Mine is the power to consume the citadel of selfishness with its fast spreading flames.

4. Good Will is the seed of the tree of perfection. Let me uproot my turbulent instincts and irrigate the ground of my heart with the water of well wishing. Let me dispel the murky clouds of resentment so that the soft breezes of the heaven of tenderness may waft over my tree of Good Will.

5. To reach the temple of the Eternal Beauty, let me walk by day and by night in the path of Good Will and let

no other impulse waylay me.

6. Charity is the radiant flower of Good will. Sacrifice is the sweet fragrance of Good Will. Brotherliness is the fresh fruit of Good Will. Let me hold this flower in my hand, inhale its fragrance and share in its bounty.

7. The banquet of Good Will is spread before all the children of men. As one of the invited guests, let me sit down with a heartfelt psalm of thanksgiving on my lips.

8. Good Will is the expression of innate nobility and the unveiling of the divinity, latent within man. Good Will is the religion of justice and of freedom. Let me hold to it during all the days of my life.

9. The mystic Religion of Good Will shall lead me to the fountain of Universal Love hidden in the depths of the souls of my fellowmen. Let my steps be firm, and my vision undimmed, and soon shall my eyes behold the gleaming turrets of the Palace of the King of Kings!

Reference: The New Historian, November, 1933s

DECLARATIONS

We the Free Baha'is do not believe in declarations. We believe in spreading the true teachings of Baha'u'llah and don't work for numbers. A Free Baha'i should purify himself from greed of attaining positions, and start working out of love for humanity and world peace.

Our Master has clearly stated,

"There are no officers in this Cause. I do not and have not appointed any one to perform any special services, but I encourage everyone to engage in the service of the Kingdom. The foundation of this Cause is purely a democracy, and not a theocracy."

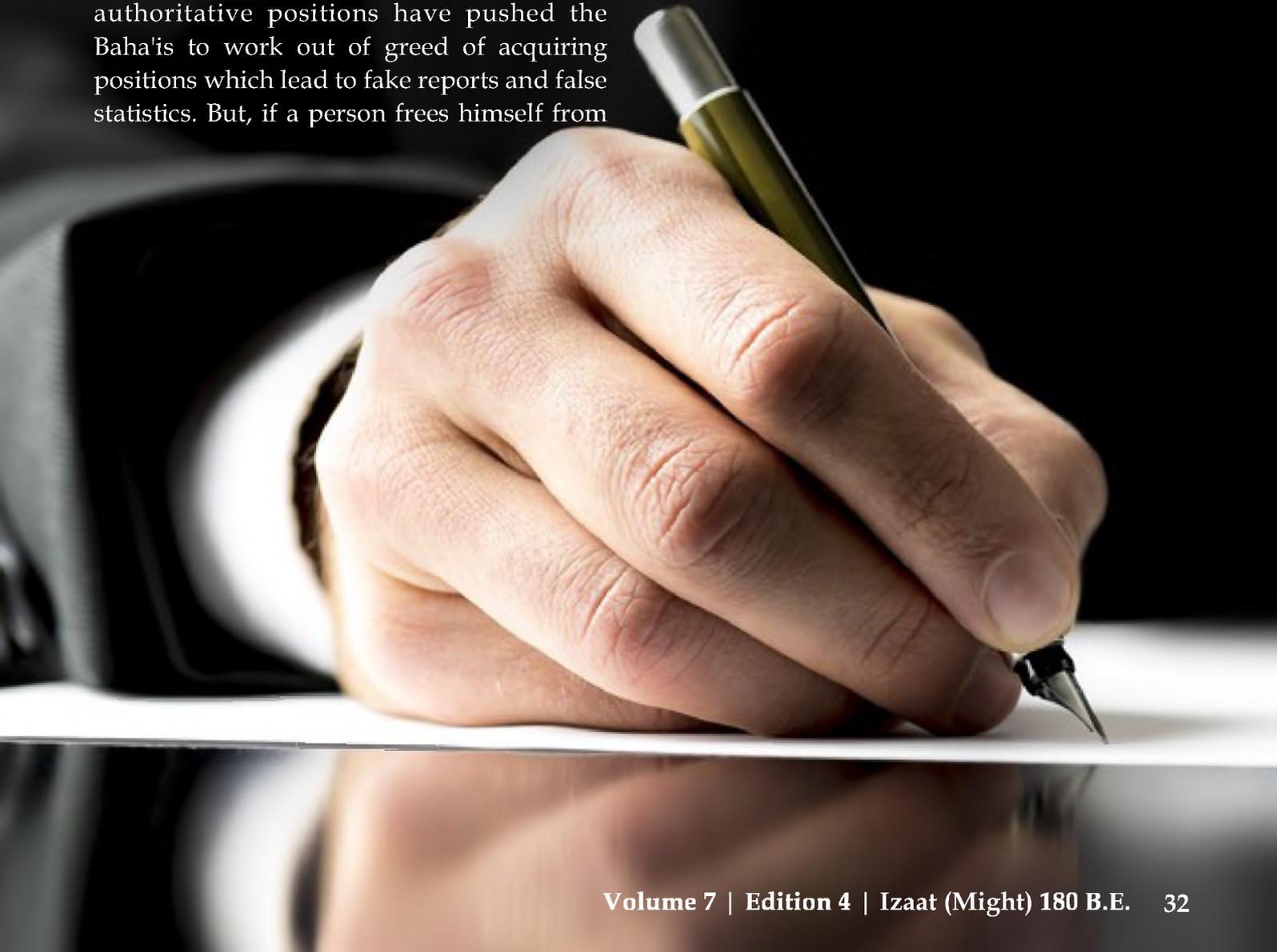
(Reference: Star of the West, Vol. 8, pg. 116)

These man-made assemblies and authoritative positions have pushed the Baha'is to work out of greed of acquiring positions which lead to fake reports and false statistics. But, if a person frees himself from

administration, he will fulfil his duties towards Baha'u'llah and not for NSA or UHJ. Thus, he will be rewarded by Baha'u'llah for his efforts. For this reason, Free Baha'is do not believe in Officers or Office Bearers and one must be the Guardian of his own faith and action.

So, anyone who would wish to work for the faith should follow the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha, serve the faith and promote world peace and harmony.

Why do you think the Baha'i Faith got split into various groups after the passing away of the Master? Don't you think the rule of the so-called guardian Shoghi Effendi and his Administration has played a very crucial role in the division and disunity of the Baha'is?



DID YOU KNOW ?

The Baha'is passionately believe that the teachings of Baha'u'llah fulfil the expectations of a Promised One, a Savior, and a great Return for every major Faith. Baha'u'llah's remarkable claim is unique in history, as He proclaims His mission to unite all people in one universal Cause and common faith. This profound vision has led the Baha'i Faith to become one of the most widespread belief systems on Earth.

Baha'u'llah emphasizes that the union of all peoples in one common faith is the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for healing the world. Such unity, He asserts, can only be achieved through the power of an all-powerful and inspired Physician.

These claims, though stupendous, should not surprise us entirely, as the Bible and other religious scriptures forewarned about the coming of a Promised One with diverse roles and responsibilities. Baha'u'llah's claim resonates with the prophecies, fulfilling the ultimate purpose of various religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and more.

The Baha'i Faith aligns with the pattern set by the Founders of all Faiths, emphasizing ancient moral

principles. It centers around Baha'u'llah as the prophetic figure, independent of scholastic learning or clerical guidance, claiming to speak with the voice of God. Baha'u'llah's message stands alone, repeating the eternal truths of all religions.

As Free Baha'is, we find solace and inspiration in the unifying and all-encompassing teachings of Baha'u'llah, bringing harmony and oneness to humanity, and embracing the essence of all previous divine revelations.

In the eyes of Free Baha'is, the mission of Baha'u'llah holds immense significance, as it seeks to unite differing religions, discern truth from falsehood, and gather a spiritual harvest. Answering Baha'u'llah's call means responding to the needs of our age and embracing the divine guidance granted by God in every dispensation.

The news of Baha'u'llah's new Faith may not reach everyone simultaneously, as this profound announcement resonates in the depths of human hearts when individuals are spiritually prepared to receive it. It is not akin to everyday news but is a revelation that finds its way to those earnestly searching for meaning and mystical reality.

Baha'u'llah's advent fulfils the longing of all peoples and religions for a Promised One. Embracing His Cause paves the way for the oneness of humanity, lifting the banner of universality and unity for all humankind.

For Free Baha'is, the teachings of Baha'u'llah are transformative, carrying the potential to completely change lives and inspire individuals to contribute to the advancement of humanity and the realization of unity among all people. This vision of unity resonates deeply with those who seek truth and a higher purpose in life, leading them to embrace the path of Baha'u'llah's divine message.

THROWBACK



Mirza Mihdi, the purest branch with Abdu'l Baha, a photograph taken in Adrianople

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