

THE CARAVAN

How the Administration System Hollowed
Out the Faith

Article Inside

SEPTEMBER 2025
VOLUME 9, EDITION 4,
IZZAT (MIGHT) 182 B.E.





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PRAYER



The Great Being saith: O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation.

Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure. Our hope is that the world's religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes. Let them, after meditating on its needs, take counsel together and, through anxious and full deliberation, administer to a diseased and sorely afflicted world the remedy it requireth.

- Baha'u'llah

FOREWORD

“True honour is not for him who loveth his own self, but rather for him who loveth mankind.” – Baha’u’llah

Dear friends,

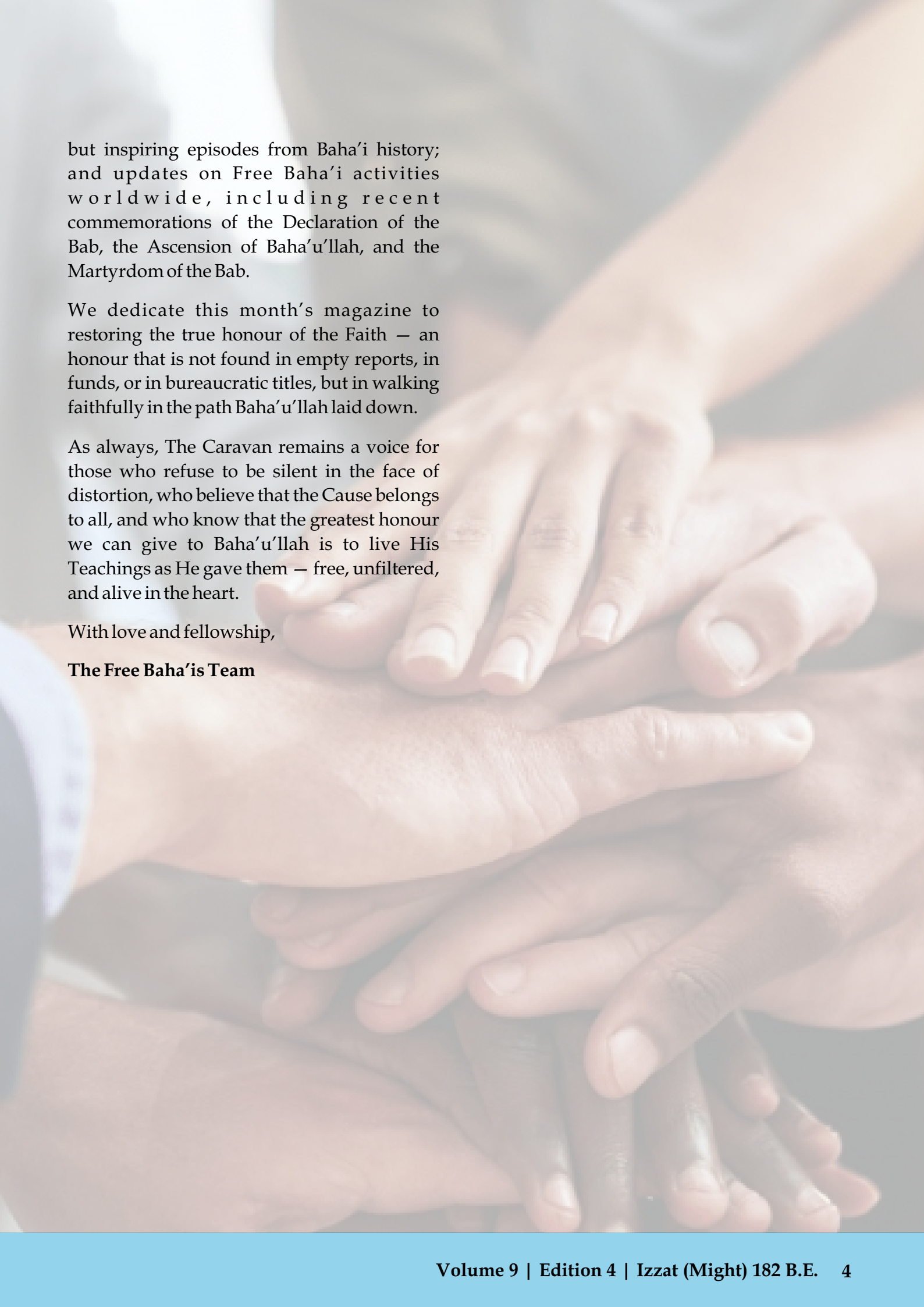
We welcome you to this month’s issue of The Caravan, arriving in the sacred month of Izzat – Honour. A month that invites us to reflect deeply on what it truly means to honour the Message of the Bab, of Baha’u’llah, and of Abdu’l Baha. It is not titles, chairs, or elaborate structures that bring honour to the Cause, but our faithfulness to the original Teachings – the purity of the Word, the independence of thought, and the spirit of service to humanity.

This month’s issue carries a very special and thought-provoking guest article titled “A Legacy of Stagnation – How the Guardian System Hollowed Out the Faith”, which revisits a heartfelt letter written back in 2002 by a concerned believer. The letter raised questions about the complete stagnation of the Faith in the West – no growth, no vitality, no youth – and pointed to deep

discouragement among the believers. More than two decades later, nothing has changed. In fact, the situation has worsened – not just in the United States, but in Canada, the United Kingdom, across Europe, in the Middle East, India, Singapore, Thailand, and beyond.

Across the world, local communities are shrinking, young people are absent, and administrative seats are clung to by the same aging individuals, year after year, despite the Master’s own teachings that no one should hold such positions indefinitely. The article explores how the Cause drifted from the path set by Baha’u’llah and Abdu’l Baha, and how Shoghi Effendi’s wrongful centralisation of authority replaced the living spirit with lifeless structure. It asks the questions the Administration refuses to answer – questions every truth-seeker should be asking today.

You will also find our regular features – Some Questions Answered, drawing on the Words of Baha’u’llah, the Bab, and Abdu’l Baha to clarify spiritual principles; the ‘Did You Know?’ section, sharing lesser-known



but inspiring episodes from Baha'i history; and updates on Free Baha'i activities worldwide, including recent commemorations of the Declaration of the Bab, the Ascension of Baha'u'llah, and the Martyrdom of the Bab.

We dedicate this month's magazine to restoring the true honour of the Faith — an honour that is not found in empty reports, in funds, or in bureaucratic titles, but in walking faithfully in the path Baha'u'llah laid down.

As always, The Caravan remains a voice for those who refuse to be silent in the face of distortion, who believe that the Cause belongs to all, and who know that the greatest honour we can give to Baha'u'llah is to live His Teachings as He gave them — free, unfiltered, and alive in the heart.

With love and fellowship,

The Free Baha'is Team

GOD



I used to think
there was only one of You
before the miscarriage.
Now, I am not so sure.
Maybe there are a number of Gods to wade through
before falling at the feet of the last true one:

the jade God we pray to
who does not come or answer
& the plum one who appears to offer salvation;
the opal God who offers a limited extent of His kingdom
& the olive one who only offers condolences;
let us not forget the violet God that is bad with man
because He is deeply holy.

We all seek the one of manna though, don't we?
He, the one of follow-through.
He, the one of action & consequence.
He, the one holding all we hunger for
like butterscotch in His palms.

That's the God I want
to be alone with for a few moments,
the God I wish to have to myself
in the hushed hours when I should be up & readying for work
like millions of other souls dispersed
across the country's ink-black pillow.

That's the God whose name I utter
when I sit in silence
on the shoulder of my mattress. I dream
with eyes open of goading Him into halting my child's rest,
guiding his or her tiny light close to the brushfire
flickering in my breath.

That God? That great & swollen orange storm?
That's the God haunting me. The God who keeps His distance.
The God whose star-draped hands I envy.
They come at day's end
to tuck my baby, my ember, into its infinite, feathered bed.

-- Christian J. Collier

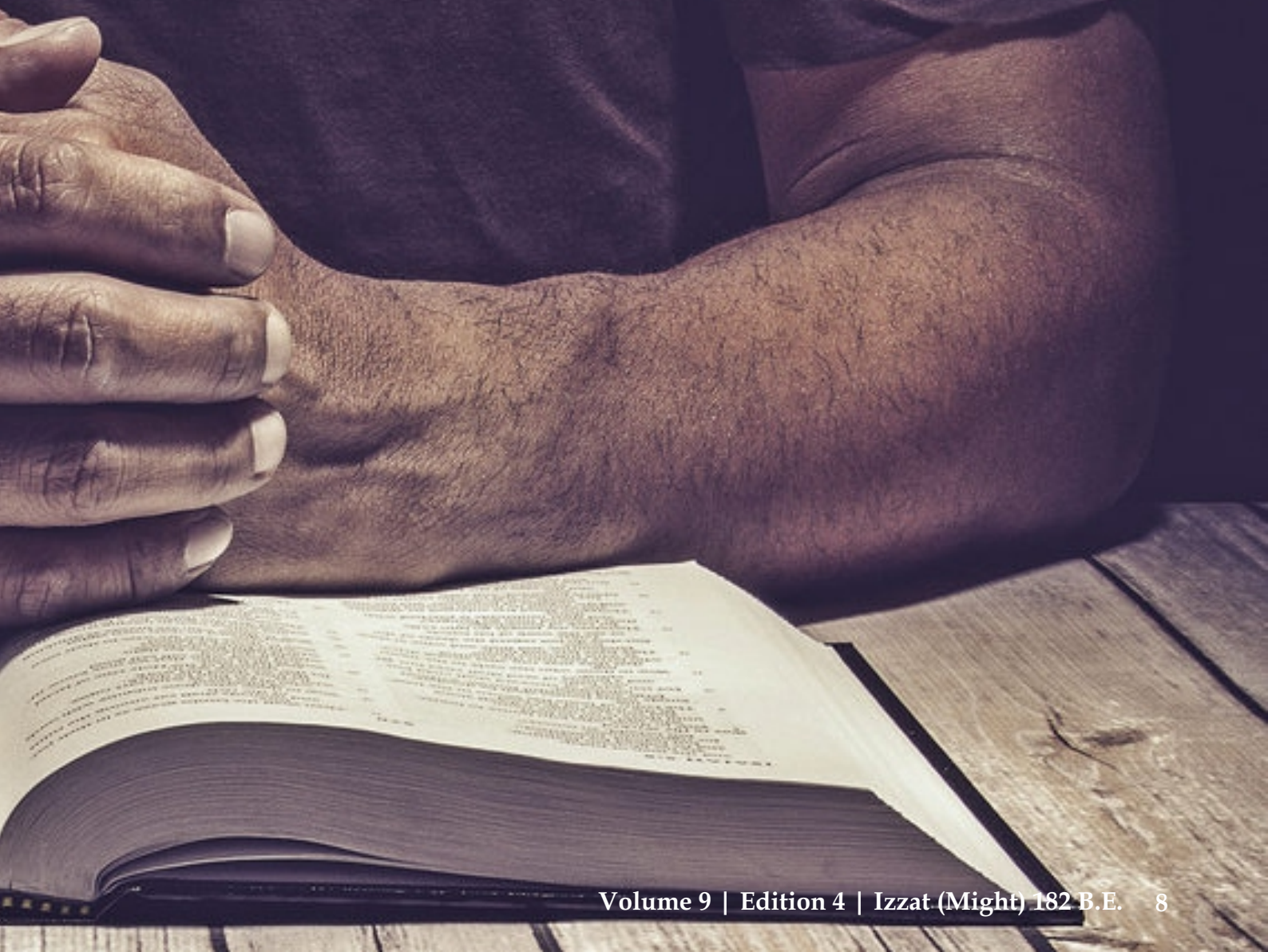


DIVINE LAWS

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

There is no harm in using vessels of gold and silver if one desires to do so. Beware of dipping your hands in large plates (al-sihaf) and basins (al-suhun). Hold to what is closer to cleanliness. He desires to show you the customs of the people of Paradise (ahl al-ridwan) in His Impregnable, Unapproachable Kingdom. Hold fast to cleanliness in all circumstances, lest the eyes fall on that which you and the people of Paradise abhor. Whoever transgresses the rule of cleanliness, his work at once becomes futile. If he has an excuse, God exempts him, for He is the Generous, the Powerful.

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



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)



Abdu'l Baha in Lincoln Park, Chicago, 1912

A LEGACY OF STAGNATION – HOW THE ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM HOLLOWED OUT THE FAITH

In August 2002, devoted Baha’i Ismael Velasco wrote to the Universal House of Justice with a plea for clarity and direction. His concerns were not based on speculation but on hard evidence and lived experience: the Faith in much of the Western world was stagnant, shrinking, and spiritually discouraged.

At the time, Velasco pointed out that:

- The British Baha’i community had shown no growth – in fact, slight decline – since 1975.
- In France, Switzerland, Denmark, and other parts of Western Europe, the story was the same.
- In the United States, official numbers painted an inflated picture, while actual active membership was far lower – closer to 60,000, not the 138,000 claimed.
- Significant portions of the community were inactive, disillusioned, or quietly

withdrawing.

Velasco described a “subculture of discouragement” in which believers persevered out of duty but without hope, withdrew due to community dysfunction, or turned teaching into a desperate obligation rather than a joyful service.

Today – The Same Letter Could Be Written, Word for Word

It has now been **23 years** since Velasco wrote that letter, and the situation has not improved. If anything, it has worsened – not just in the United States or Western Europe, but across the globe.

From **America to Canada, the UK to the Middle East, India to Singapore, Thailand, and beyond**, the story is the same:

- **No real growth** in decades – in some places, numbers are actually falling.
- **Young people are almost entirely absent** from the Faith. Those who explore it are often driven away by a



rigid, outdated, bureaucratic structure.

- **Old leadership refuses to step aside**, clinging to administrative chairs year after year, blocking fresh perspectives and driving the community further into decline.
- **Teaching work feels lifeless**, reduced to programs and slogans that inspire no one outside the faithful few.

The Master's Vision Forgotten

Abdu'l Baha was clear: leadership in the Faith was not meant to be a permanent seat of power. He urged every believer to be active, to serve, and to avoid positions of authority becoming personal thrones.

Yet what do we see today? An Administrative Order where local and national positions are held for decades by the same individuals, while youth and new voices are sidelined. Decisions are filtered through bureaucracy rather than the spirit of service.

The rot began when **Shoghi Effendi wrongfully took control of the Cause as "Guardian,"** distorting the organic, consultative nature of the Faith into a hierarchical system of power. Once the focus shifted from living the Teachings of Baha'u'llah to enforcing the rules of an administrative machine, decline was inevitable.

Why the Faith is Losing People Everywhere Across continents, the same problems repeat:

- Communities are not "vibrant," but tired.
- Most activity is driven by a handful of aging believers.
- Younger generations do not see their values — truth-seeking, inclusivity, openness — reflected in the current culture of the Faith.
- The emphasis is on obedience to the Administration rather than personal investigation of truth.

- The heart of the Faith — unity, service, love — has been overshadowed by programs, numbers, and reports.

This is why people are leaving. They have not turned away from Baha'u'llah — they have turned away from what the Administration has made of His Cause.

Velasco's Letter: Even More Relevant Now

When Velasco wrote in 2002, his words described a generation of Baha'is discouraged by decades of no progress. He pleaded for honest reflection and meaningful change.

It is now 2025 — **and that letter could be published today without changing a single word.**

The issues he named are not only unresolved — they have spread. They are now the shared experience of communities from North America to Asia, Europe to the Middle East. The faith has not grown because the spirit has been replaced by structure, the heart by hierarchy.

The Way Forward

The Free Baha'is believe the solution is simple — but it requires courage:

- End the culture of permanent leadership and bureaucratic control.
- Restore the principle of **independent investigation of truth**, where each believer connects directly with the Writings, free from institutional filtering.
- Return to the original vision of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha — a faith led by service, not power.

Until then, the Faith will continue to lose members, discourage seekers, and drift

further from its intended purpose.

Velasco's question in 2002 still demands an answer in 2025:

How much longer will the Administration ignore the truth — that under its leadership, the Cause of Baha'u'llah has stopped growing?





May 5, 1912 – Abdu'l Baha Seated on a Bench in Lincoln Park in Chicago with Baha'is.



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

FREE BAHAI ACTIVITIES

“Then it is clear that the honor and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches. Material comforts are only a branch, but the root of the exaltation of man is the good attributes and virtues which are the adornments of his reality. These are the divine appearances, the heavenly bounties, the sublime emotions, the love and knowledge of God; universal wisdom, intellectual perception, scientific discoveries, justice, equity, truthfulness, benevolence, natural courage and innate fortitude; the respect for rights and the keeping of agreements and covenants; rectitude in all circumstances; serving the truth under all conditions; the sacrifice of one's life for the good of all people; kindness and esteem for all nations; obedience to the teachings of God; service in the Divine Kingdom; the guidance of the people, and the education of the nations and races. This is the prosperity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the world! This is eternal life and heavenly honor!” – Abdu'l Baha

Across the world, the Free Baha'is are quietly and steadily proving that the Cause of Baha'u'llah does not need the chains of bureaucracy to flourish. In homes, gardens, community halls, parks, and even online spaces, hearts are coming together – not for numbers or targets, but for love, unity, and

service.

Our strength lies in sincerity, in the freedom to serve without “permission,” and in the courage to hold fast to the original Teachings. From children's circles to global service projects, our family of believers – young and old – is bringing the Faith to life in creative and meaningful ways.

Children – The Blossoms of the Garden

Everywhere we are, children are at the centre of our work. Not as an administrative checkbox, but as the pure hearts who will carry forward the light.

Northeast Asia – Children's moral classes are held under shady trees, in living rooms, and in small community centres. Through drama, art, and song, they learn the lives of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and Abdu'l Baha – lessons not just of history, but of courage, compassion, and truthfulness.

Thailand – “Story Walks” have become a beloved tradition. Children go on guided nature walks while listening to stories from the Faith, stopping along the way to collect

“reminders of God” — flowers, leaves, or pebbles — that they later use in art projects.

United States & Canada – Inter-family “Unity Picnics” bring together children from different neighbourhoods. They recite prayers before meals, learn songs in multiple languages, and play cooperative games that teach kindness and inclusion.

Malaysia – Children help prepare small care packages for the needy, adding hand-written notes with prayers and messages of hope.

Youth – The Torchbearers of the Cause

Our young people are not told to simply “attend” programs. They are the planners, the facilitators, the creators — because leadership in the Free Baha'i community is not a title, but an action.

Thailand & Malaysia – Youth-led service groups visit hospitals to sing uplifting songs and read comforting words to patients. They also hold open “Faith Cafés” in coffee shops, where friends — Baha'i or not — can drop in to discuss spiritual topics.

United Kingdom – The “Truth Evenings” often turn into open mic nights where youth share poetry, music, and art inspired by the Writings. Visitors frequently leave saying, “This is the Baha'i Faith I've been looking for.”

India – University students have started campus discussion groups where topics like gender equality, environmental justice, and interfaith harmony are explored through the lens of the Faith — always encouraging independent investigation.

Australia & New Zealand – Youth there have started “Faith in Action Weekends” where they spend two days serving in shelters, cleaning public spaces, and hosting interfaith dialogue dinners.

Adults and Elders – The Living Libraries

Without elections, appointments, or “chairs,”

our elders guide the community through wisdom, not position.

Middle East (Bahrain, UAE, parts of Iran) – Study circles in private homes delve into the Writings, often comparing different translations to ensure the original meaning is preserved.

United States – Many experienced believers hold “open homes” once a week where anyone can come for prayers, conversation, and tea — a revival of the true spirit of hospitality Abdu'l Baha embodied.

Canada – Elders record oral histories of the Faith's early days in their region, ensuring that memories and lessons are preserved for future generations.

Special Commemorations – Marked with Heart, Not Ceremony

Declaration of the Bab (23 May) – Lantern-light gatherings in gardens, candle-lit devotionals on rooftops, and storytelling evenings in living rooms — each one marking the moment the Bab's light first shone.

Ascension of Baha'u'llah (28 May) – Believers gathered at dawn across multiple continents, sharing prayers in whispers and moments of silent reflection, united in spirit despite distance.

Martyrdom of the Bab (9 July) – Observed with prayers, devotional readings, and acts of service. In some countries, food parcels were distributed to the poor in His memory.

Breaking New Ground – Creative Ways We Serve

Free from rigid structures, our communities are able to innovate constantly:

Online Reading Groups – Connecting believers from different countries for weekly readings of Baha'u'llah's Writings, followed by open discussion where every voice matters.

Art & Faith Exhibitions – Local artists display works inspired by the Writings, drawing in people who may never have encountered the Faith otherwise.

Neighbourhood Libraries – Small “Little Free Library” boxes set up by Free Baha'is, stocked with prayer books, children's stories from the Faith, and moral education resources.

Interfaith Cooking Nights – Friends from different faiths cook together, share food, and talk about what unity means to them.

A Worldwide Effort Without Borders

From the US, Canada, UK, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East, and beyond, Free Baha'is are proving that it is possible to live the Faith fully – without waiting for instructions from a central office, without being bound by political-style elections, and without losing the warmth of personal connection.

Where the administration is obsessed with funds, reports, and statistics, the Free Baha'is are focused on people – on relationships, on service, and on the spiritual growth of every soul.

In the end, it is simple: the Cause belongs to God, not to any institution. And by holding to that truth, the Free Baha'i community – though small in number – continues to keep the original flame alive, country by country, heart by heart.

With warm regards and best wishes,

Team Free Baha'is



INSPIRING QUOTES



“I beg Thy forgiveness, O my God, and implore pardon after the manner Thou wishest Thy servants to direct themselves to Thee. I beg of Thee to wash away our sins as befitteth Thy Lordship, and to forgive me, my parents, and those who in Thy estimation have entered the abode of Thy love in a manner which is worthy of Thy transcendent sovereignty and well beseemeth the glory of Thy celestial power.

O my God! Thou hast inspired my soul to offer its supplication unto Thee, and but for Thee, I would not call upon Thee. Lauded and glorified art Thou; I yield Thee praise inasmuch as Thou didst reveal Thyself unto me, and I beg Thee to forgive me, since I have fallen short in my duty to know Thee and have failed to walk in the path of Thy love.”

— The Bab

“O Lord! Unto Thee have I turned my face, detached from all save Thee and holding fast to the hem of the robe of Thy manifold blessings. Unloose my tongue therefore to proclaim that which will captivate the minds of men and will rejoice their souls and spirits.

Strengthen me then in Thy Cause in such wise that I may not be hindered by the ascendancy of the oppressors among Thy creatures nor withheld by the onslaught of the disbelievers amidst those who dwell in Thy realm. Make me as a lamp shining throughout Thy lands that those in whose hearts the light of Thy knowledge gloweth and the yearning for Thy love lingereth may be guided by its radiance.”

— Baha'u'llah

“Now the new age is here and creation is reborn. Humanity hath taken on new life. The autumn hath gone by, and the reviving spring is here. All things are now made new. Arts and industries have been reborn, there are new discoveries in science, and there are new inventions; even the details of human affairs, such as dress and personal effects — even weapons — all these have likewise been renewed. The laws and procedures of every government have been revised. Renewal is the order of the day.

And all this newness hath its source in the fresh outpourings of wondrous grace and favor from the Lord of the Kingdom, which have renewed the world. The people, therefore, must be set completely free from their old patterns of thought, that all their attention may be focused upon these new principles, for these are the light of this time and the very spirit of this age.”

— Abdu'l Baha

INTRODUCING

THE CARAVAN

APP!





The prison of Mah-ku, the first of two prison fortresses where the Bab spent His last years

KNOW YOUR HERITAGE



A robe worn by the Bab



SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Email 1:

I was talking with a friend and he said Baha'is are not allowed to carry guns or any kind of weapons. Is that true? Like what if someone just wants to have one at home to feel safe, or for protection, or even just collecting? I mean the world is dangerous now, so I'm wondering if this rule still applies today or maybe it's just an old thing from the past?

Answer:

Dear friend,

Allah'u'Abha!

Yes, Baha'u'llah was very clear about this in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. He said:

“It is unlawful for you to carry arms except in time of necessity.” (Kitab-i-Aqdas)

This means weapons are only for times of necessity, like when there is genuine danger you cannot avoid otherwise, not just because

of fear, habit, or fashion. Baha'u'llah wanted His followers to build trust and peace in the world, not to add to a culture of fear.

From a Free Baha'i point of view, this also reminds us to follow the spirit of His words. Protection comes from God, from good conduct, and from serving humanity – not from keeping weapons close at hand. Our “strength” should be in kindness, wisdom, and noble character, not in instruments of violence.

Hope that answered your question. If you have any more doubts or any other questions, feel free to reach out to us.

With warm regards,

Team Free Baha'is

Email 2:

Hello!!

I am a UU Deacon and a newly declared Baha'i with the AO (and very not active). I'm also involved with the Unitarian Baha'i Facebook page, just not in leadership there (at least not yet). I was curious about a couple things regarding the Free Baha'is.

1) What is the position of the Free Baha'is on LGBTQ issues? (I am openly bisexual, though in a heterosexual marriage)

2) What would the thought be of me joining as clergy from another denomination? To be very clear, I have no intention of being "Baha'i clergy." I am a Deacon. No preaching, no teaching. The ministry is all about service to those in the margins (I do hospital work and have a love of psych and neonatal). It's all about justice and compassion in the most difficult of times.

3) Would the Free Baha'is care that I am member of multiple faith communities (i.e. UUA, an inter-spiritual order, Haifan AO, Unitarian Baha'i, etc) simultaneously?

I joined the Haifan administration more because the UB group is a small Facebook page and I was looking for a larger community. Though I hear getting very involved there because of my complicated layers of identities which they would have trouble with.

So, with all that said, I'm curious if the Free Baha'is would be a better fit?

Thank you so much for going through all this!

J

Answer:

Dear Friend,

Allah'u'Abhá!

What a joy to receive your heartfelt message. Thank you for reaching out with such openness and sincerity. It's clear that your journey is one rooted in deep compassion, thoughtful exploration, and a sincere desire to walk a path of justice and service. That spirit resonates beautifully with the heart of the Free Baha'i perspective.

Let me respond to each of your thoughtful questions in turn:

1) Free Baha'i Perspective on LGBTQ+ Inclusion

Free Baha'is do not claim any interpretative authority over the Writings, nor do we impose institutional rulings or policies. We hold that Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Bahá did not issue explicit rulings on LGBTQ+ identities, and thus, unlike the current Administration, we choose not to condemn nor exclude. Each soul is to be treated with dignity, love, and the liberty to walk their own path toward the Divine. As you rightly said, it's about justice and compassion, and we believe this applies universally.

2) Clergy in Other Faiths

You are most welcome. In fact, your ministry of service to those at the margins reflects the very example of Abdu'l Baha, who dedicated His life to the poor, the sick, and the forgotten. Since Free Baha'is have no clergy, we view all acts of humble service — no matter what “title” they carry — as noble offerings. Your presence as a chaplain is not only accepted but deeply respected. There is no conflict in serving from a place of compassion while walking the path of Baha'u'llah.

Email 2:

3) Belonging to Multiple Faith Communities

Absolutely yes – you are welcome here. The Free Baha'i position is that truth is not the monopoly of any one path. Baha'u'llah's vision is not exclusivist, and in fact, He stated:

“If thou art a follower of Jesus, put into practice thy Master's words; if a Moslem, live according to the Qur'án; if a Zoroastrian, act according to the teachings of Zoroaster.”

(Baha'u'llah, Tablet of Wisdom)

To be a Baha'i is not to renounce other affiliations. It's to carry forward a spirit of unity, truth, and independent investigation. So yes – whether you are UU, Unitarian Baha'i, interspiritual, or a seeker from multiple streams, your authentic connection to Baha'u'llah is all that matters. There are no oaths, cards, or declarations required – only a heartfelt recognition of truth.

Is the Free Baha'i Path Right for You?

That's a personal decision only you can make – but from everything you've shared, it sounds like you are already walking closely in the footsteps of Baha'u'llah and the Master. We would be honoured to journey alongside you. Many in our community – especially those disillusioned by the rigid structures of the Administrative Order – have found spiritual freedom, joy, and belonging in this path.

If you're open, we'd love to stay connected. We'd also welcome your reflections, writings, or even your story if you'd like to share it with our global audience through The Caravan magazine. And while we do not have formal gatherings (many of our friends remain anonymous due to fear of backlash), we can connect you with others via secure and respectful channels.

Thank you again, Josh. Your courage to reach

out is a blessing to us.

With warmest regards,

Team Free Baha'is

www.freebahais.org



Email 3:

Question:

I hope you are doing well.

I am writing to seek further understanding and context regarding a quotation attributed to Abdu'l Baha that I came across in Baha'i News, No. 134 (March 1940), page 1:

"I have not appointed any officers in the Faith. I have not appointed any one as agent, representative or ruler. The friends must turn to the Universal House of Justice."

I find this statement deeply meaningful, particularly as it relates to the principles of leadership, authority, and the structure of the Baha'i administrative order. I would appreciate any additional background, explanation, or official writings that could help clarify the context in which Abdu'l Baha made this statement and how it informs our understanding of the role of individuals and institutions within the Faith.

Thank you for your time, guidance, and service. I look forward to learning more and deepening my understanding of this important aspect of the Baha'i teachings.

Warm regards,

VO

Kenya

Answer:

Dear Friend,

Allah'u'Abhá!

Thank you so much for reaching out with such a thoughtful and important question.

The quote you shared from Baha'i News No. 134 truly reflects the essence of what Abdu'l Baha stood for—a **Faith without clergy,**

without appointed rulers, and without human intermediaries between the believer and God. He was very clear that he had not appointed anyone as a representative or officer, and instead reminded the friends to turn to the **Universal House of Justice**, as described by Baha'u'llah – not the current administrative system that has taken on a bureaucratic, controlling nature far removed from the original intent.

From a **Free Baha'i** perspective, this quote affirms our belief that the Faith was meant to be **spiritually driven**, not administratively managed. **True authority lies in the Writings**, and each soul is free—and responsible—to investigate the truth independently.

We'd be happy to send you more material and references to help you explore this further. You're not alone on this journey – many seekers around the world are asking the same questions.

Warm regards,
Team Free Baha'is

www.freebahais.org





View of the front door of the House of the Báb, Shíráz

“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!

DID YOU KNOW ?



True Honour is in the Eyes of God

In the winter of 1863, just before His exile from Baghdad to Constantinople, Baha'u'llah was visited by a wealthy nobleman who prided himself on his fine clothing, possessions, and high social standing. He came to Baha'u'llah not so much for spiritual guidance, but to boast about his achievements and to gain recognition.

Baha'u'llah listened patiently and then gently shared a truth that has echoed through the ages:

"True honour is not in wealth, nor in position, nor in outward appearance. True honour is in service to God and to His creation."

This was not just a lesson spoken in words – Baha'u'llah lived it. Throughout His life, even when unjustly imprisoned, exiled, and

deprived of all material comforts, He radiated dignity that came from His faith, His constancy, and His love for humanity.

Years later, Abdu'l Baha would echo the same principle in His own life. Despite being the Son of the Manifestation, He dressed simply, lived modestly, and often served food with His own hands to the poor of Akka. Once, when a visitor expressed surprise at seeing Him carry heavy sacks of coal for the needy, Abdu'l Baha smiled and said:

“This is my honour – to serve.”

For the Free Baha'i community, this is a reminder that honour is never about titles, positions, or the size of spending you do out of your wealth. It is not something that can be given by institutions, but something that is earned by each soul through living the teachings of Baha'u'llah with sincerity and humility.

In a world obsessed with appearances and power, let us remember the example of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha – that izzat, true honour, is found in walking the path of service, no matter how small or unseen the deed may be.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

LIVING PICTURES

By MIRZA AHMAD SOHRAB and JULIE CHANLER

(Review reprinted from "The Theosophist," Madras, India, Jan., 1935)

"Living Pictures" (Price, \$1.25), is an attractive presentation of the Movement from the earliest days of its infancy up till the present day. Written tersely and vividly it gives an account of the heroes and martyrs of the Bahai Movement in Persia. The personalities of the three great leaders, the Bab, Baha-U-Llah and Abdul Baha (Abbas Effendi) stand out in striking relief against the sordid background of contemporary history. The source of their inspiration and the ardent devotion of their followers can be clearly understood in the light of the cruel persecution which flamed up in opposition. It seems almost incredible that such cruelty existed in the world of last century; and not surprising that the authors, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and Julie Chanler, refer to the Bahai Movement as "the Great Drama of the Nineteenth Century." Baha-U-Llah is placed by them among the Great Messiahs of the world, of whom they say there are several, beginning with Amon Ra of Egypt. A brief word picture of the coming of each of these predecessors of Baha-U-Llah and of their several messages is given. There are passages of descriptive writing of moving poetic beauty.

The story told is full of action which gives it an intriguing vitality. Each dramatic moment is captured and incised on the memory of the reader by the intensity of passionate faith and conviction that drives the pen of the authors. One of the most vivid passages tells the story of Kurratu'l-Ayne, called Tahireh, poetess and martyr, as well as pioneer-iconoclast of purdah in Persia.

The crime of the Bahais was the denial of the Old Faith of Islam, as being too narrow for modern needs. In the days of Baha-U-Llah alone this movement claimed its 30,000 martyrs, including many children.

"Living Pictures" is an intensely interesting account of one of the most epoch-making events in the history of the East.
—A. E. A.

Reference: New History Magazine, March 1935

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."

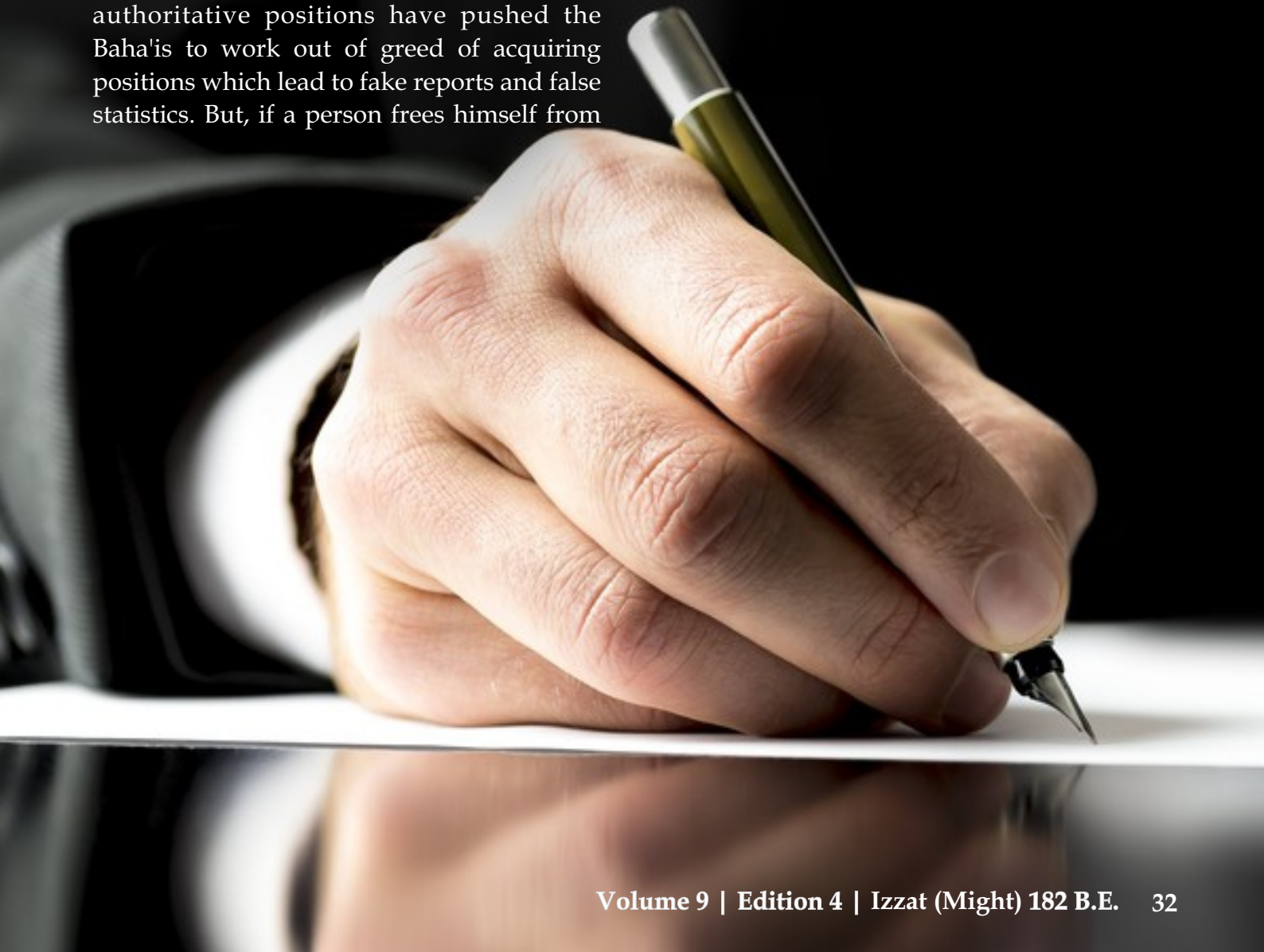
(Reference: Star of the West, Vol. 8, pg. 116)

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

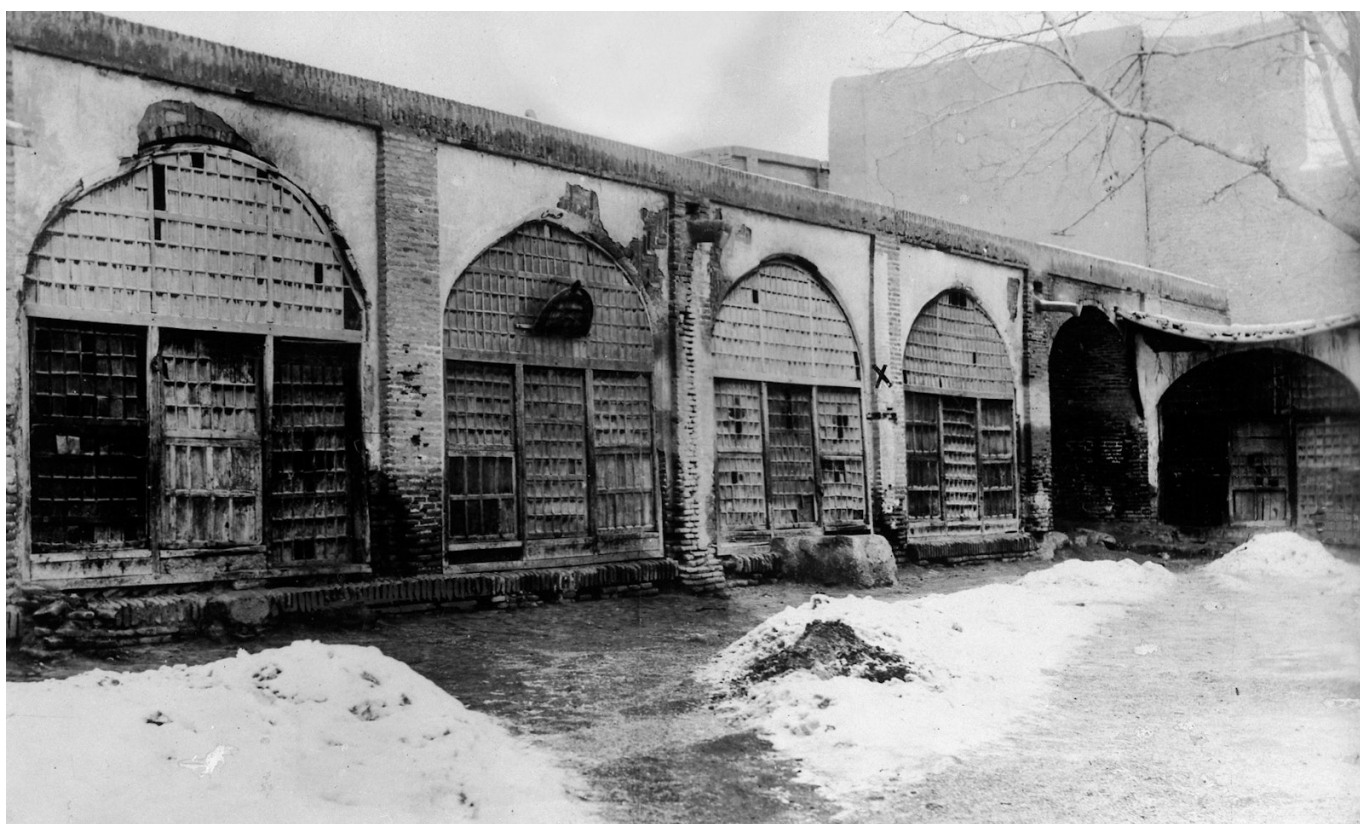
administration, he will fulfil his duties towards Baha'u'llah and not for NSA or UHJ. Thus, he will be rewarded by Baha'u'llah for his efforts. For this reason, Free Baha'is do not believe in Officers or Office Bearers and one must be the Guardian of his own faith and action.

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?



THROWBACK



Close-up view of the Barracks Square in Tabriz where the Bab was martyred. Photos taken in the dead of winter of a later year.

DISCLAIMER

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**PUBLISHED BY THE FREE BAHAI FAITH
IN
SINGAPORE | THAILAND | USA**

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**THE CARAVAN || REVIVED EDITION
VOLUME 9 - EDITION 4**



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