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THE CARAVAN



HUQUQU'LLAH:

THE BAHA'Í ADMINISTRATION JUST WASTED HALF A BILLION
DOLLARS OF HUQUQ'ULLAH AND YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD
ABOUT IT !!!

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PRAYERS

ARISE, AND PROCLAIM UNTO THE ENTIRE CREATION...

Arise, and proclaim unto the entire creation the tidings that He Who is the All-Merciful hath directed His steps towards the Ridvan and entered it. Guide, then, the people unto the garden of delight which God hath made the Throne of His Paradise. We have chosen thee to be our most mighty Trumpet, whose blast is to signalize the resurrection of all mankind.

Say: This is the Paradise on whose foliage the wine of utterance hath imprinted the testimony: "He that was hidden from the eyes of men is revealed, girded with sovereignty and power!" This is the Paradise, the rustling of whose leaves proclaims: "O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth! There hath appeared what hath never previously appeared. He Who, from everlasting, had concealed His Face from the sight of creation is now come." From the whispering breeze that wafteth amidst its branches there cometh the cry: "He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is made manifest. The Kingdom is God's," while from its streaming waters can be heard the murmur: "All eyes are gladdened, for He Whom none hath beheld, Whose secret no one hath discovered, hath lifted the veil of glory, and uncovered the countenance of Beauty."



Within this Paradise, and from the heights of its loftiest chambers, the Maids of Heaven have cried out and shouted: "Rejoice, ye dwellers of the realms above, for the fingers of Him Who is the Ancient of Days are ringing, in the name of the All-Glorious, the Most Great Bell, in the midmost heart of the heavens.

- Baha'u'llah



“Thou didst wish to celebrate the Day of Ridván with a feast, and to have those present on that day engage in reciting Tablets with delight and joy, and thou didst request me to send thee a letter to be read on that day. My letter is this: O ye beloved, and ye handmaids of the Merciful! This is the day when the Day-Star of Truth rose over the horizon of life, and its glory spread, and its brightness shone out with such power that it clove the dense and high-piled clouds and mounted the skies of the world in all its splendour. Hence do ye witness a new stirring throughout all created things. See how, in this day, the scope of sciences and arts hath widened out, and what wondrous technical advances have been made, and to what a high degree the mind’s powers have increased, and what stupendous inventions have appeared. This age is indeed as a hundred other ages: should ye gather the yield of a hundred ages, and set that against the accumulated product of our times, the yield of this one era will prove greater than that of a hundred gone before. Take ye, for an example, the sum total of all the books that were ever written in ages past,

and compare that with the books and treatises that our era hath produced: these books, written in our day alone, far and away exceed the total number of volumes that have been written down the ages. See how powerful is the influence exerted by the Day-Star of the world upon the inner essence of all created things! But alas, a thousand times alas! The eyes see it not, the ears are deaf, and the hearts and minds are oblivious of this supreme bestowal. Strive ye then, with all your hearts and souls, to awaken those who slumber, to cause the blind to see, and the dead to rise.” - Abdu’l Baha

Allah'u'Abha,

Dear friends and seekers of truth,

Every year, these days return. Ridvan is celebrated. The Declaration of the Bab is remembered. The Ascension of Baha'u'llah is mourned.

And every year, something essential is quietly pushed aside: the fact that these moments were never meant to become institutional rituals, managed and contained within administrative boundaries. They were acts of truth - raw, disruptive, and uncompromising.

Ridvan was not the beginning of an organization. It was the open declaration of Baha'u'llah, made without committees, without structures, without the machinery that today claims to represent Him. It was a moment where truth stood on its own authority, not on institutional endorsement.

The Declaration of the Bab did not produce an administration - it produced believers. Individuals who recognized truth independently, often at the cost of everything. There was no system to shield them, no structure to validate them. Their conviction came from clarity, not conformity.

And the Ascension of Baha'u'llah forces a question that many have learned to avoid: what was meant to continue after Him - His teachings, or a structure built in His name? This is where the line is drawn.

The Free Baha'i position does not emerge from rebellion for its own sake. It emerges from a refusal to accept that the living message of Baha'u'llah can be confined within an administrative framework that gradually replaces spiritual understanding with procedural loyalty. The issue is not organization itself - it is what happens when organization begins to overshadow revelation, when obedience to structure begins to replace obedience to truth. That shift is real. And it is visible.

What was once a Cause defined by independent search for truth has, in many spaces, become a system where questioning is quietly discouraged. What was

once a faith that demanded personal conviction now often leans toward collective agreement. And what was once centered on the words of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha is too often filtered through layers of interpretation that place the administration as the final authority.

That is not a small deviation. That is a fundamental change.

This edition of The Caravan does not approach Ridvan, the Declaration of the Bab, and the Ascension of Baha'u'llah as isolated historical events. It places them back where they belong - in direct connection with the present reality of the Cause.

Because if Ridvan represents the declaration of truth, then we have to ask: are we following that truth, or the structures built around it?

If the Bab's Declaration represents the courage to recognize truth independently, then we have to ask: are we still exercising that independence, or have we outsourced it?

And if the Ascension of Baha'u'llah marks the transition of responsibility to His followers, then we have to ask: responsibility to what - His teachings, or an administrative order that claims to speak for them?

These are not abstract questions. They define the difference between living the Faith and merely belonging to a system.

As always, The Caravan refuses to operate within safe boundaries. Some Questions Answered will address what many are hesitant to confront. The Guest Article will challenge, not reinforce. "Did You Know" will expose what is often overlooked or deliberately ignored.

None of this is written to create division. That's the easy accusation, and it avoids the real issue. The real issue is whether truth can still be approached directly, without mediation, without institutional filters, and without fear. Because if it cannot, then something has gone seriously wrong.

The early believers stood with nothing but conviction. No administrative backing, no guarantees, no safety. Just clarity of belief rooted in the words of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. That standard has not changed. Only our willingness to meet it has.

Most will pass through this season repeating what they already know.

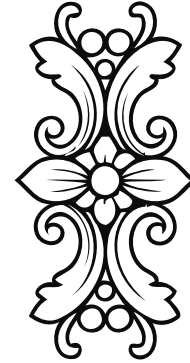
A few will stop and confront what they have been avoiding.

The Caravan is not for everyone. It is for those who are willing to separate the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha from the structures that have grown around them - and to ask, honestly, which one they are truly following.

The journey is not about comfort. It is about truth. May this issue serve that purpose.

With love and steadfast hope,

The Free Baha'is Team



“ Ridván was not the beginning of an organization. It was the open declaration of truth, standing on its own authority. ”

HISTORICAL TRUTHS

A MESSAGE FROM ABDUL BAHA, HEAD OF THE BAHAIS

The Time Has Come, He Says, for Humanity to Hoist the Standard of the Oneness of the Human World, So That Dogmatic Formulas and Superstitions May End.

WITHIN the last week there has come to New York an old man, with a stern and beautiful face, who wears a long, brown gown and a white turban, and speaks the strange-sounding guttural language of Persia. On the pier he was welcomed by hundreds of people, for he is Abdul Baha, or "The Servant of God," the head of the Bahai movement, and he is known to tens of thousands of followers all over the world as the "Master."

For forty years he has been in prison, and his father, the former head of the Bahaiists, died in prison. Their offense was indeed great, for they taught a doctrine against which no autocratic power could stand. They preached the love of God and the brotherhood of man and for this the Persian Government called and the Turkish Government imprisoned them.

Four years ago, in July, 1908, the young Turks came into the control of the Government and a constitution was given to the country. Then the prison doors opened for Abdul Baha and he found himself free. He had gone into the prison a hero; he left it an old man.

He had not complained and indeed for some years it had been made easy for him by the affection of his jailers and the gradual perception, by the Government, of the fact that a man who teaches the common brotherhood of all humanity may not be personally violent; but none the less he rejoiced in his freedom. With the passing of the years his followers had grown rapidly and he had a wish to see them, especially those who lived in foreign countries.

Although he was old and had not for more than forty years gone beyond the city of Acre, in Syria, he was attracted by the thought of seeing the big world. The Bahai belief shows all things in education and in broadening the mind by contact with all nations and races, so it was emphatically consistent for Abdul Baha to go first to London and then to come to America to see the many disciples in this country.

the name of Baha Ullah, (Glory of God,) and in the early '60s he revived the persecuted faith and gathered together his scattered followers. The movement, which had seemed to be on the verge of collapse, suddenly became more vigorous than ever.

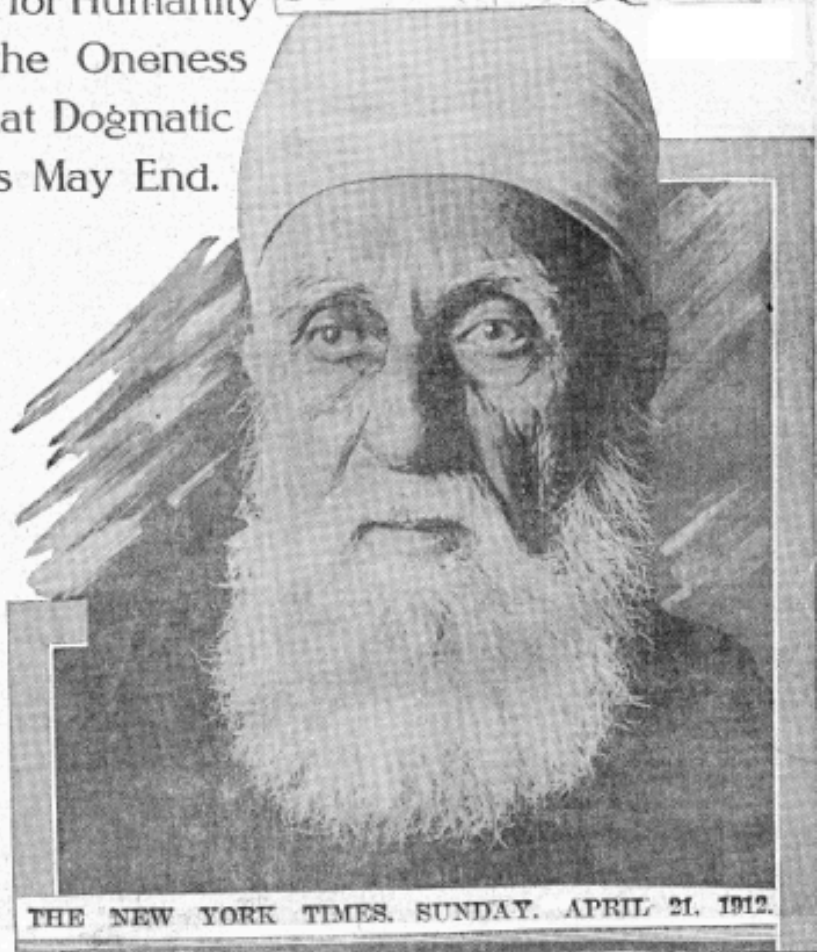
His property was promptly confiscated, and he was exiled. To be rid of his wealth was a satisfaction to Baha Ullah—"Fain would I be God," he cried, "I am now free"—but the exile entailed great hardships.

He went with his family to Bagdad, where he taught what seemed to the mind of the Government pernicious doctrines. "The army of the Bahai dispersion," he said, "is the love of God; its victory is the victory of the knowledge of God; its battle is that of truth; its warfare is against selfishness; its patience is its reserve; its entire weakness is its conquering power and its love for all is a glory for ever more." It was too much for any autocracy. He was summoned to Constantinople and then sent to the prison at Acre.

In his prison Baha Ullah wrote a book of laws which govern his followers and he simplified the teachings of the Bah and made the movement universal rather than Persian and Mohammedan. Despite his sufferings, which were great at the beginning of his confinement, he accomplished a vast deal of work and later on when his jailers had learned to love and trust him he received friends from time to time and was able to spread his teachings in that manner.

In 1892, he died and his son, Abbas Effendi now known as Abdul Baha, the Servant of God, took his place as leader. There is no tradition that the leadership should pass from father to son; there is indeed no priesthood among the Bahais. It was the spirituality of Abdul Baha which made him the person best suited to interpret the movement to the world.

Like his father he teaches that the love of God and man are the only things that count. To be a Bahai one does not have to give up the religion in which one has

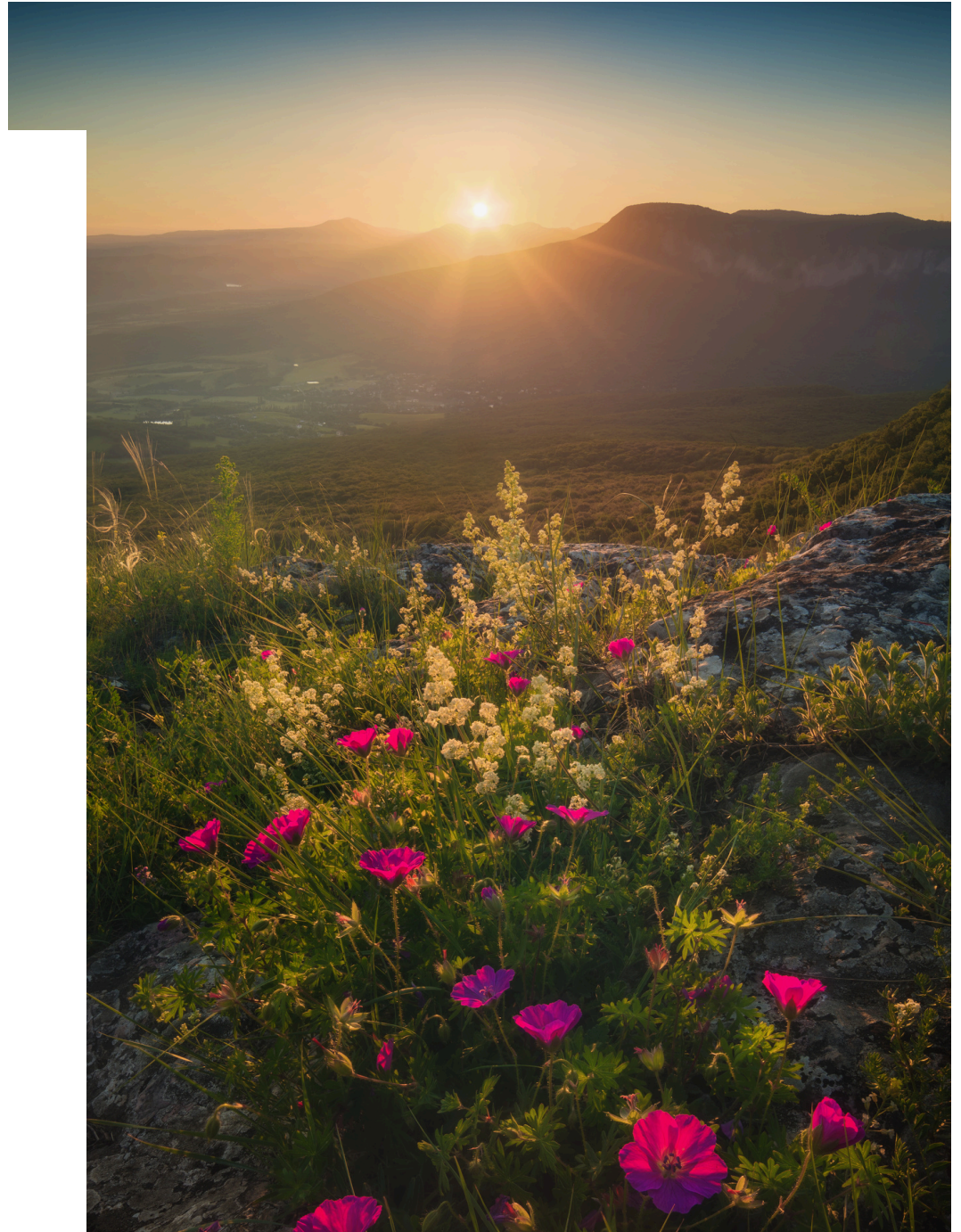


THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 1912.

1912: An article in The New York Times on April 21 describes the talks Abdu'l Baha gave while visiting the city.

EVERYDAY

*Every day
Is a Simple day
Connected
Yet different
The continued
Story
Of life
Every Day
Is a different day
New chances
The rebirth
Of the same story
Of your life
So remember
Today is
A new day*



Heker, 20/M/Minnesota

THE MOST HOLY LAWS

In the name of Him who is the Ruler (al-hakim) over what was and what will be.
Beware lest praises of glory (subuhat al-jalal) hinder you from the purity of this sweet water
(zupal hadha l-silsal).

Take the bowls of prosperity on this morning in the name of the Breaker of the Morning Dawn
(faliq al-sabah).

Then drink in remembrance of Him, the Mighty Inventor (al-badi').

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



CLERGY IN THE BAHÁ'Í CAUSE

In answer to a question as to whether or not there would be any clergy in the Bahá'í 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

Diary of Ahmad Sohrab, March 21, 1913

QUOTATION

"It is better to guide one soul than to possess all that is on earth, for as long as that guided soul is under the shadow of the Tree of Divine Unity, he and the one who hath guided him will both be recipients of God's tender mercy, whereas possession of earthly things will cease at the time of death. The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past, and shall continue to be in the future!"

The Bab

"My name is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, my identity is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, my qualification is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, my reality is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, my praise is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Thraldom to the Blessed Perfection is my glorious refulgent diadem; and servitude to all the human race is my perpetual religion."

Abdu'l Baha



"Abandon the things current amongst men and hold fast unto that which God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, hath enjoined upon you. The day is fast approaching when all the treasures of the earth shall be of no profit to you."

Baha'u'llah

THROWBACK



1920: Abdu'l Baha receiving knighthood for relief of distress and famine during the war, April 27.

THE BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION JUST WASTED HALF A BILLION DOLLARS OF HUQUQU'LLAH AND YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD ABOUT IT !!!



The Shrines of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are immovable. Their sacred geography is fixed in Israel, and no serious proposal suggests otherwise. But sacred geography is not the same thing as administrative geography. Tombs do not relocate. Payroll structures can.

The Bahá'í administrative apparatus today operates primarily in Israel, one of the world's highest-cost labour markets. If we assume approximately 600 staff at an average annual cost of \$45,000 per employee - a conservative estimate inclusive of employer obligations - the annual wage bill approaches \$27 million. Over twenty years, that amounts to more than half a billion dollars in staffing expenditure.

That number demands scrutiny.

Huququ'llah is not a commercial revenue stream. It is a sacred trust - a voluntary offering given in devotion by the rich and poor alike. When funds are entrusted in that spirit, fiduciary responsibility becomes paramount. The question is not whether staff deserve fair compensation. They do. The question is whether operating in a first-world wage environment is the most responsible use of sacred contributions when alternative jurisdictions could deliver the same administrative functions at a fraction of the cost.

Large corporations answer this question routinely. They relocate administrative hubs, back-office operations, and service centres to cost-efficient jurisdictions - not because they devalue employees, but because they recognize stewardship of capital. Cost optimization is not exploitation; it is preservation of value. Every dollar saved in overhead becomes a dollar available for growth, innovation, or reinvestment.

If 500 of the 600 administrative roles were relocated to Zambia - an English-speaking, politically stable African nation with dramatically lower labour costs - salaries could reasonably be structured at approximately \$2,000 for unskilled roles, \$5,000 for mid-level staff, and \$12,000 for senior management. The weighted average would be roughly \$4,500 per employee annually.

Under such a model, 500 staff in Zambia would cost about \$2.25 million per year. Retaining 100 essential staff in Israel for the Shrines and custodial functions would cost approximately \$4.5 million annually. Total payroll: roughly \$6.75 million.

Compared to \$27 million, that represents savings of approximately \$20 million per year.

Over twenty years, the opportunity cost approaches \$400 million to \$500 million.

Half a billion dollars.

Opportunity cost is not abstract theory. It is the measure of what could have been done instead. How many schools could have been funded? How many development initiatives launched? How many local communities strengthened? Every year that high fixed administrative overhead continues in a first-world cost environment, those alternatives remain unfunded.

Institutional inertia is powerful. Organizations inherit structures from history and gradually treat them as inevitable. But inevitability and optimality are not the same thing. The fact that administration developed around Haifa does not mean it must remain concentrated there indefinitely. Sacred sites require

permanence. Administrative systems do not.

There is also the question of equity.

African believers face substantial visa barriers when attempting to travel to Israel. Relocating the administrative centre to Zambia would not merely reduce costs; it would rebalance access. It would situate global administration closer to one of the fastest-growing and youngest regions in the world. It would signal that Africa is not peripheral to the Faith's future, but central to it.

This is not charity. It is rational decentralization.

The core issue remains fiduciary responsibility. When sacred funds are entrusted by believers, are first-world wage structures the most responsible long-term model? Is preserving historical administrative geography worth a half-billion-dollar opportunity cost over two decades? Should institutional leadership model adaptive efficiency, or accept inherited cost structures as fixed?

If such a relocation had occurred in 2005, hundreds of millions of dollars might today be available for transformative development rather than absorbed by high fixed overhead. That is not an accusation. It is arithmetic.

Why should the Huququ'llah, paid by believers from countries living in abject poverty, be used to pay American or European standard wages for the office bearers of Baha'i institutions? Why should the poor from the global south fund the first world lifestyle of the Baha'i Elite? Is this the reason why the administration does not publish detailed financial reports in the public domain listing out the payroll expenses of running the administration in an OECD High Income economy? No wonder the administration is so out of touch with the everyday Baha'i who has to bend over backwards for the gentlemen from Haifa.

Sacred geography is immutable. Administrative geography is not.

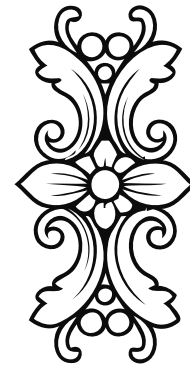
So the questions must be asked.

Will the Baha'i administration at least in principal either accept that they pay American Salaries using African Huququ'llah money or otherwise make a hard covenant to move the administration apparatus to Africa?

Can the administration quantify what development opportunities have already been lost due to this waste of \$500 million over the last two decades? The faithful should remember this each time the administration comes asking for money for a "project" they wasted \$500 Million over the last twenty years by just paying themselves more money to lead a fancier lifestyle.

Can service not happen in Zambia? On the other hand, is the Administration a rich mans club for whom Africa is beneath them?

Silence preserves comfort. Questions preserve accountability.



Operating administrative functions in high-cost countries can multiply expenses many times over—raising questions about how sacred funds like Huququ'llah are best utilized.



DID YOU KNOW?

THROWBACK



A robe worn by the Bab

WANT TO BE A CONTRIBUTOR FOR THE CARAVAN?

**WE WELCOME
THOUGHTFUL
VOICES AND
FRESH
PERSPECTIVES.**



Interested in contributing to the Caravan Magazine by writing a guest article? Kindly send us your article at 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 Thank you!

FREE BAHAI ACTIVITIES

“Thou didst wish to celebrate the Day of Ridván with a feast, and to have those present on that day engage in reciting Tablets with delight and joy, and thou didst request me to send thee a letter to be read on that day. My letter is this: O ye beloved, and ye handmaids of the Merciful! This is the day when the Day-Star of Truth rose over the horizon of life, and its glory spread, and its brightness shone out with such power that it clove the dense and high-piled clouds and mounted the skies of the world in all its splendour. Hence do ye witness a new stirring throughout all created things. See how, in this day, the scope of sciences and arts hath widened out, and what wondrous technical advances have been made, and to what a high degree the mind's powers have increased, and what stupendous inventions have appeared. This age is indeed as a hundred other ages: should ye gather the yield of a hundred ages, and set that against the accumulated product of our times, the yield of this one era will prove greater than that of a hundred gone before. Take ye, for an example, the sum total of all the books that were ever written in ages past, and compare that with the books and treatises that our era hath produced: these books, written in our day alone, far and away exceed the total number of volumes that have been written down the ages. See how powerful is the influence exerted by the Day-Star of the world upon the inner essence of all created things! But alas, a thousand times alas! The eyes see it not, the ears are deaf, and the hearts and minds are oblivious of this supreme bestowal. Strive ye then, with all your hearts and souls, to awaken those who slumber, to cause the blind to see, and the dead to rise.”

Abdu'l Baha



Across different parts of the world, Free Baha'is marked Naw-Ruz not as a routine celebration, but as a conscious return to the life and example of Baha'u'llah. Gatherings were simple, reflective, and rooted in the original teachings rather than institutional formality. In countries across Asia, Africa, and the West, believers focused on prayer, readings, and discussion centered on what it actually means to follow Baha'u'llah in action, not just in name.

One of the most notable developments has come from Kenya, where a growing number of Baha'is have begun openly expressing their desire to return to the true teachings of Baha'u'llah. This is not passive curiosity - it is a shift in direction. Their efforts have already extended beyond their immediate circles, effectively carrying the message into a new country. More importantly, they have taken initiative by launching a blog to document and share their journey, signalling that this is not a temporary phase but an organized and conscious movement toward truth.

At the same time, preparations for Ridvan are already underway. In several regions, believers are planning to hold gatherings in gardens where possible, not out of symbolism alone, but in direct remembrance of the historical and spiritual significance of Ridvan. Where weather permits, these outdoor gatherings are expected to bring a more authentic connection to the event, rather than reducing it to a formal observance detached from its roots.

NDFs have also shown a clear shift in focus. Instead of relying on secondary interpretations or filtered narratives, there is a growing emphasis on studying the original source texts themselves. Readings from the writings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha are being prioritized, both within the Baha'i community and in outreach to others. This is a critical correction - because without direct engagement with the source, the message inevitably gets distorted.

Another major talking point has been the recent discussion around Huququ'llah. For many, this has triggered a long-overdue realization. Increasingly, Baha'is are questioning the lack of financial transparency and are choosing instead to direct their contributions toward charitable causes where the impact is visible and accountable. This shift is not just financial; it reflects a deeper demand for integrity and responsibility.

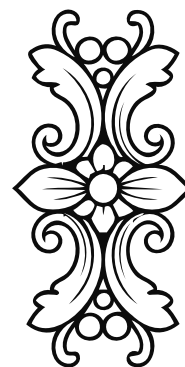
What is becoming clear is that this is no longer isolated activity. The Free Baha'i movement is gaining traction across multiple regions, and more individuals are beginning to see through the narratives that have been promoted in the name of administration.

Awareness is no longer limited to small circles - it is spreading, and with it, a growing willingness to question, to investigate, and to return to the original teachings without institutional filters.

If this trajectory continues, the coming months are unlikely to be quiet.

With steadfast love,

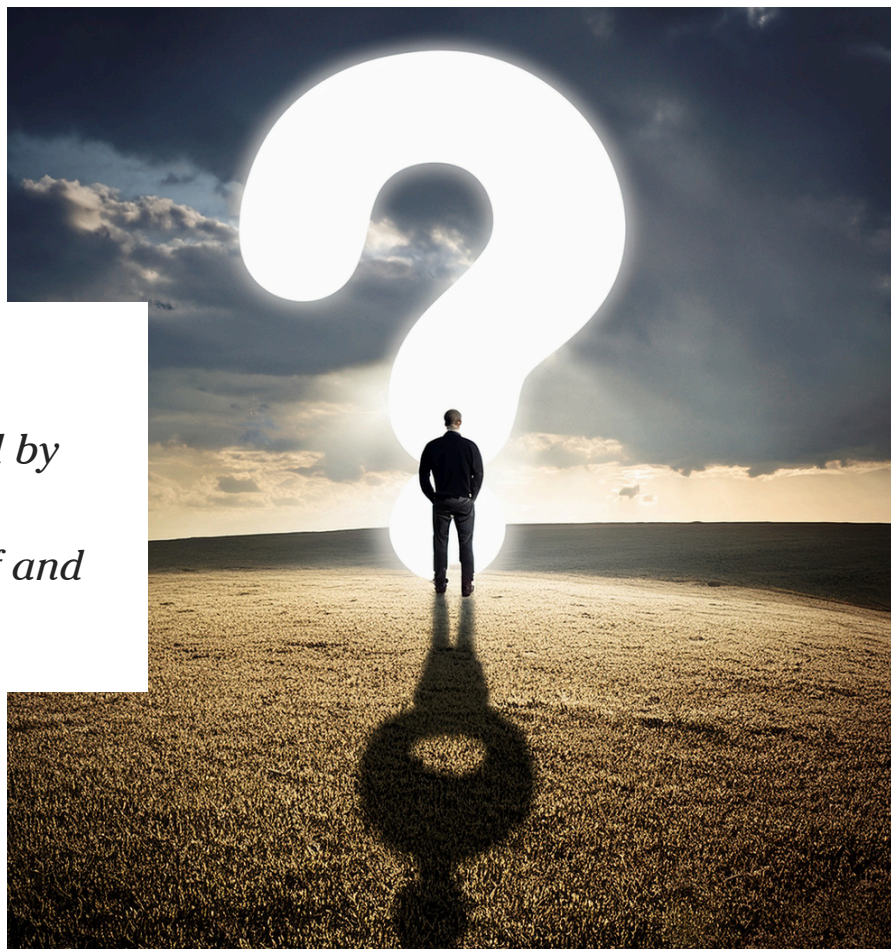
The Caravan Team, Free Baha'is



SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Here we address a few questions frequently raised by readers.

Our aim is to provide brief and thoughtful clarifications.



Good morning,

I am reaching out to you to see if you would be able to provide our students with a reference hard copy of your religion's religious texts free of charge. I am hoping to expand our library to include all religions and wanted to include a plethora of differing books and resources for our students to use and learn from.

Best,

Andrew "Andi" Walls (he/him/his)

XXX XXXX Community College

LRC Clerk

Answer:

Andrew,

Thank you for your message and for your interest in including a range of religious materials in your library.

We do not distribute printed hard copies. All of our texts are available through our official website, where they can be freely accessed and downloaded for

printing or digital use.

If your institution requires physical copies, the most practical approach would be to print them directly from the available files.

Best regards,

Team Free Baha'is

I'm so happy to find your website. I first became a Bahai in 1973 - and left because of my doubts in the true authority of the UHJ. I did try to reconnect with the faith but was very disappointed by the fundamentalist attitude of the LSA and the "brainwashing" that was being promoted under the guise of RUHI curriculum on the "Covenant of Baha'u'llah" - which I perceived as whitewashing of the failure of Shoghi Effendi to appoint a successor, as commanded in the will of Abdu'l-Baha.

Be that as it may, I still consider Baha'u'llah a true messenger of God. I considered myself a "Free Baha'i" when I was denied re-enrollment because of my views on the Administrative Order. I look to Abdu'l-Baha as the Master and have experienced His inner guidance for many years.

Please write back with information as to how to engage with the Free Baha'i movement.

Allah-u-Abha!

Martin D; Sent from Gmail Mobile

Hi Martin,

Allah'u'Abha!

If you're serious about engaging at a deeper level, the first thing that matters is clarity - not sentiment.

You left in 1973 over doubts about the authority of the Universal House of Justice. That's not a small issue. The entire Haifan Administrative Order rests on the legitimacy of the Guardianship and the continuation of authority after Abdu'l Baha. So, let's get precise.

Before anything else, here are the questions that actually matter:

1. What exactly is your understanding of Shoghi Effendi and the Guardianship?

- Do you believe he fulfilled the provisions of the Will and Testament?
- Do you believe the line of Guardians ended legitimately with him?
- Or do you believe the Administrative Order structurally broke at that point?

2. When you say you experienced "fundamentalist attitude" in the LSA, what specifically happened?

- Were you questioned?
- Silenced?

- Accused of Covenant-breaking?
- Formally expelled?

3. On the RUHI issue - are you objecting to the pedagogy, or to the theological framing of the Covenant?

The Ruhi curriculum developed under the guidance of the UHJ reflects a very specific interpretation of authority. If your objection is that it reframes history to protect institutional continuity, then say that clearly.

Let's not be vague. The core issue always comes back to this:

- The Will of Abdu'l Baha commands the Guardian to appoint a successor.
- Shoghi Effendi died without one.
- The Universal House of Justice claims full legitimacy without a living Guardian.

That is the structural fault line.

Now here's the hard question for you:

Do you believe the Administrative Order after 1957 is divinely protected, or historically improvised?

If you believe it is improvised, then you are already outside the Haifan framework - whether they "re-

enroll” you or not.

Engaging with Free Baha’is is not about nostalgia or emotional refuge. It is about intellectual honesty and spiritual independence. There is no central enrollment system, no institutional gatekeeping, no demand for conformity. What exists is a network of individuals who:

- Accept Baha’u’llah as a Manifestation of God.
- Revere Abdu’l Baha as the authorized Interpreter.
- Reject the claim that institutional infallibility automatically transferred to the UHJ in the absence of a Guardian.
- Refuse coercive administrative control over conscience.

But here’s the uncomfortable truth:

If your position is still emotionally reactive rather than doctrinally grounded, you’ll just recreate the same conflict in a different setting.

So, before anything else - clarify your position on:

- The nature of infallibility.
- The necessity (or not) of a living Guardian.
- Whether obedience to institutions is a spiritual principle or a historical construct.

Respond with your clear views on Shoghi Effendi, succession, and authority. Without that, “engagement” is just affiliation - and affiliation is meaningless without conviction.

Regards,

Team Free Baha’is

Martin’s response to Free Baha’is email: (Questions below in bold, with responses in-line)

1. What exactly is your understanding of Shoghi Effendi and the Guardianship?

The Guardianship, by definition is a role, an office of accountability, and not primarily a personality. The role was defined by Abdu’l-Baha to protect and preserve the integrity of the faith. Its primary purpose

was to serve as a twin foundation to enforce accountability and balance - twinned with the UHJ it secured a path to ensure on-going preservation and accurate interpretation and application of the teachings. A role originally fulfilled by Abdu’l-Baha as the exemplar and interpreter of the faith given by Baha’u’llah.

- Do you believe he fulfilled the provisions of the Will and Testament?
- Do you believe the line of Guardians ended legitimately with him?
- Or do you believe the Administrative Order structurally broke at that point?

I believe that Shoghi Effendi partially fulfilled the role by accurately translating, interpreting and promulgating the teachings. He was endowed with tremendous skills in these areas. However, I also believe that he neglected to ensure a strong legacy to the key role he played in the early days.

2. When you say you experienced “fundamentalist attitude” in the LSA, what specifically happened?

- Were you questioned?
- Silenced?
- Accused of Covenant-breaking?
- Formally expelled?

I should clarify before answering that I declared as a Baha’i in 1973, but did not leave the faith (i.e. resign from membership) until almost 15 years later. My experiences with LSAs that I associated with were very close knit and in many situations they obsessed over rule-keeping and were quite distrustful of honest questions. I had much more positive experiences with sub-groups (Non LSA) of the faith in smaller group settings. Part of the situation I experienced was due, I think, to the LSA being made up of Iranian Baha’is that were born into the faith and were somewhat wary of (rightfully so in some cases) of “strangers.”

Several times during the devotional parts of Feast I was silenced by assembly members, and told to follow the “guidelines” of the Covenant. I was not formally expelled, I left of my own choice.

3. On the RUHI issue - are you objecting to the pedagogy, or to the theological framing of the Covenant?

The Ruhi curriculum developed under the guidance of the UHJ reflects a very specific interpretation of authority. If your objection is that it reframes history to protect institutional continuity, then say that clearly.

The RUHI sessions were certainly not all manipulative - but as each new RUHI curriculum was released it grew more and more dogmatic. I felt it manipulated the writings to support a pre-defined agenda to support the institutions of the faith. The opportunities for independent investigation of the truth and free discussion was discouraged. In my opinion the RUHI curriculum that focused on the Covenant definitely took the position of reframing the history of the faith after the death of Abdu'l-Baha to boost the role of Shoghi Effendi, bordering on identifying him as infallible, and suggesting that the UHJ had been solely granted that same infallibility. This was not in line with what I understood to be the original appointment of the Guardianship and UHJ as balanced accountability.

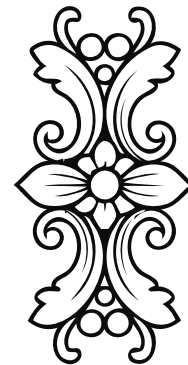
I hope this serves to clarify my position.

I don't see myself as apostate when it comes to the faith. I feel strongly that my position is more in line with the original intentions of Abdu'l-Baha as he stated to Lady Ruth White, whose doubts regarding the authenticity of the Master's Will and Testament were well intended and served to bring attention to the questionable actions of Shoghi Effendi later in his life.

Thanks for the questions - they helped me focus on the issues.

Allah-u-Abha.

Martin Davis; Sent from Gmail Mobile



Hello Team Free Baha'is,
AllahuAbha,

Some of the Baha'is I spoke to recently at the NDF told me that praying is NOT mandatory in the Baha'i Faith. And that if someone wants to pray they can, but if they don't, even that is fine. Someone even argued that one should not tell or encourage others to pray. This is strange for me coming from a Hindu background. How is this correct? If prayer is considered optional and not encouraged, how is this even a religion? How do you build your connection with God? What do the Free Baha'i writings actually say about this?

Best,
Ganesh K

Hi Ganesh,

Allah'u'Abha!

That explanation is only partially true, and it ignores the stronger obligation expressed in the original text. The teaching is not presenting prayer or recitation as a casual personal preference. It is framed as a duty tied to one's relationship with God and the spiritual life of a believer.

As stated in the Kitab-i-Aqdas by Baha'u'llah:

“Recite the verses of God every morning and evening. Whoever does not recite does not fulfill the covenant and bond of God. Whoever turns back from them today is of those who turn back from God...”

This is not language of suggestion. It explicitly connects neglecting recitation with failing a covenant. That is a serious religious obligation, not a “do it if you feel like it” option.

The passage continues by criticizing empty or mechanical worship and stressing sincerity:

“Let not the multitude of readings and acts of worship night and day make you conceited... Were one to read one of the verses with joy and sweetness, it were better for him than if he recite lazily the volumes of God...”

So the standard is not just repetition, but consistent, heartfelt engagement with the words of God. At the

same time, it also warns against turning worship into ego or performance.

Now, here's the key correction to the claim you were told:

It is false that the Baha'i writings treat prayer as irrelevant or purely optional in the sense of “doesn't matter whether you do it or not.”

What is true is that faith is not meant to be enforced socially or turned into pressure or hypocrisy. The writings emphasize sincerity over compulsion-by-people.

But that is different from saying the practice itself is optional in principle.

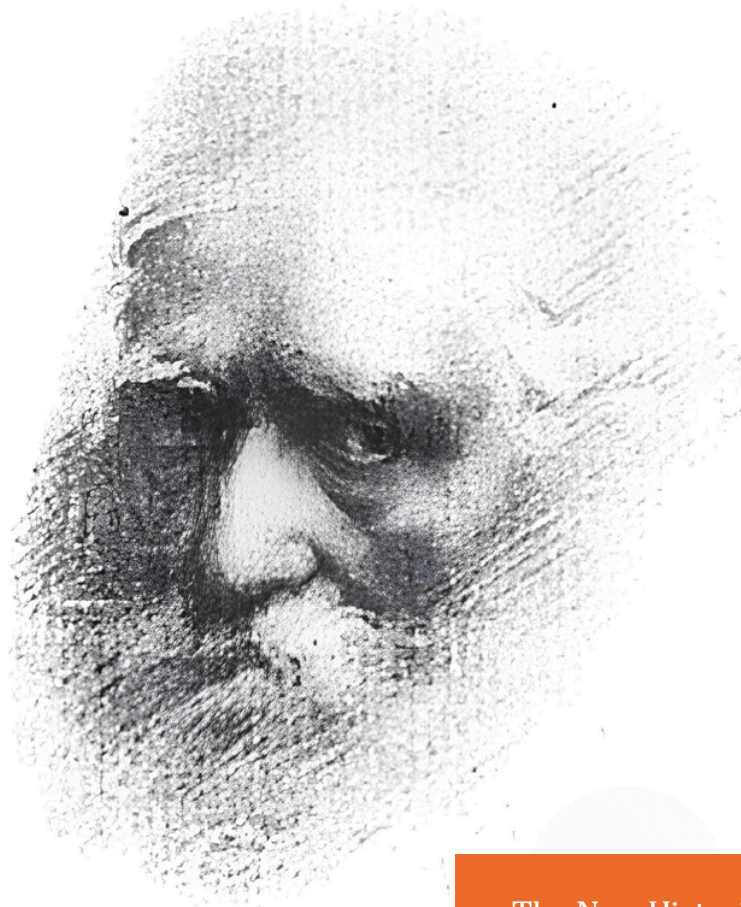
So, the structure is twofold:

1. There is a real spiritual obligation (recitation and prayer as part of covenantal life).
2. There is a warning against ritualism, pride, and forcing outward religiosity without inner sincerity.

If someone reduces this to “you can pray or not pray, it doesn't matter,” they are flattening the text and missing its core claim: a believer's relationship with God is expected to include regular, conscious remembrance. Not as decoration, but as obligation tied to the covenant itself.

Best regards,
Team Free Baha'is

BLAST FROM THE PAST



The New Historian, October 1931

THE PROPHET OF UNIVERSAL PEACE

ABDUL BAHHA, *the Servant of God* (1844-1921) was one of the outstanding figures of the East and his ideals of World Peace captured the attention of Europe and America. After 60 years of exile, he travelled in 1908 throughout Egypt, Switzerland, England, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, the United States and Canada and called on these nations to arise and band together so as to abolish war from the face of the earth.

Those who prayed for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth saw in Abdul Baha one who dwelt in that kingdom consciously, creating all the while an environment which pulsed with the serenity that passes ordinary understanding.

Heeding the Supreme Voice sounding within, he conveyed to those who came in contact with him the sense of Peace. He inspired them so completely with that imminence that they were impelled to follow the truth and became assured of that indwelling Peace and of its final enthronement in the external world.

Abdul Baha's vast love for humanity compelled others to love their fellows. By virtue of the light borne in him, he led men gently toward the Path of Peace.

May, in this day of ours, *that light* shine the brighter and the *Path of Peace* become the King's Highway on which all men may walk in a New Fellowship!

KNOW YOUR HERITAGE



The Holy Qur'an belonging to the Bab

DECLARATIONS IN THE CAUSE

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."

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?

INVESTIGATION OF REALITY



Abdu'l Baha has said,

“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

THROWBACK

Philadelphia, Pa., Inquirer.
Monday, June 10, 1912

ABDUL BAHÁ ASKS FOR WORLD PEACE

Famous Persian Mystic Ad- dresses Two Congrega- tions in Native Tongue

Favors Common Standard of Edu- cation and Ethics and Sex Equality

Clad in the garments of his native Persia, from which he was exiled because of his teachings, Abdul Bahá, head of the Baháí movement, presented the gospel of the universal brotherhood of man to two large congregations of this city yesterday. The famous Persian spoke in his native tongue, but his words, repeated in English by a clear-voiced interpreter, held his auditors in rapt attention.

Bahá, in his address, explained the views which have for some time attracted the interest of thousands throughout the world. Using the expression, "oneness," he urged that but one religion prevail throughout the world, and that man's higher nature be developed so as to prevail over his materialistic instincts. He declared himself as favoring universal peace, a common standard of education and ethics throughout the world, and the equality of the sexes.

The visitor spoke at the First Unitarian Church, Fifteenth street and Girard avenue, in the morning, and in the evening delivered an address at the Baptist Temple, Broad and Berks streets.

In the morning address he said:

Wants Bond of Unity

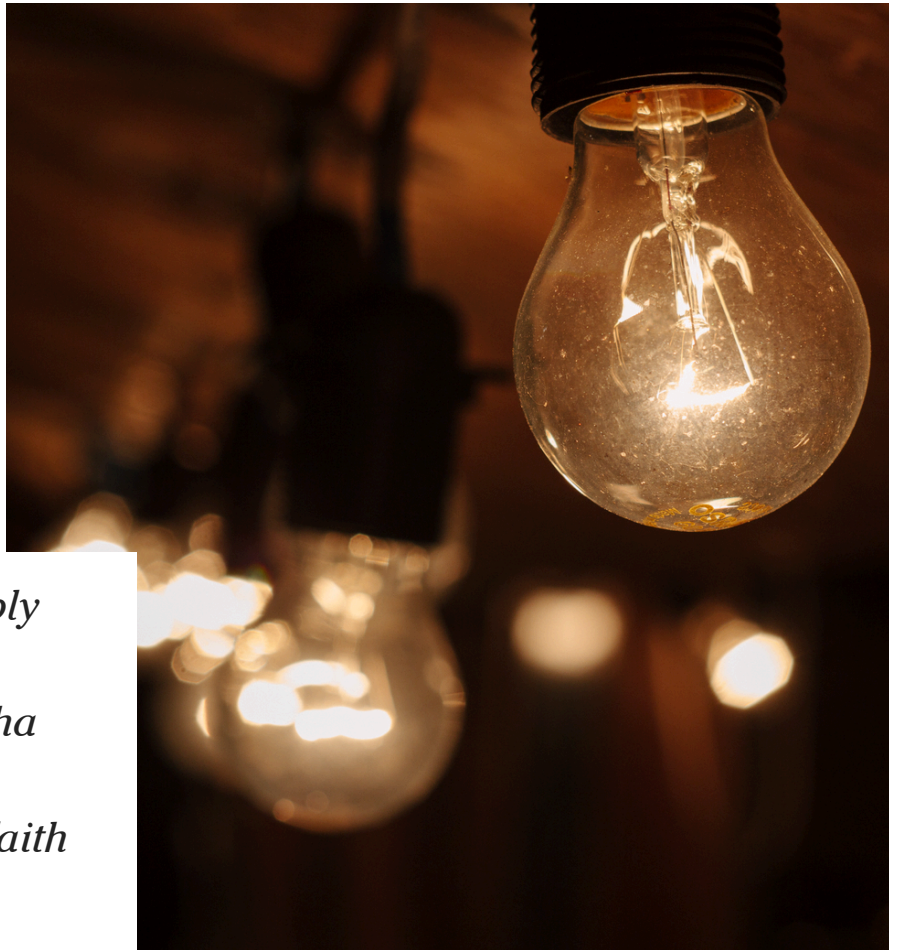
"I come here from distant countries, from the Oriental climes, from countries wherefrom the lights of heaven have ever shone forth, from climes wherein the manifestations of God have ever come forth, countries wherein the radiance and power of God have become manifest, and my intention and purpose of this visit are that perchance a bond of unity and agreement might be established between the east and the west, the divine love may encompass all, the divine radiance shall enlighten both continents, and the bounties of the heavenly spirit shall revivify all. Therefore I supplicate at the threshold of God that the orient and the occident may become as one, that these peoples shall become one people, and that all souls may become as one soul."

Bahá told in detail of the teachings of Bahá'o'llah, his father, one of the early leaders of the movement, in whose steps he is following.

"Bahá'o'llah appeared from the eastern horizon promulgating the oneness of the human kind, and the oneness of the divinity," he said, "he taught that all humanity was the servant of one God, all have come into being through the bestowal of the one Creator, who is kind to all. God provides for all, He rears all, He protects all, and He deals lovingly with all races of people. Inasmuch as God is kind to all, why should we be unkind? Inasmuch as God is loyal to all, why should we be disloyal? Inasmuch as God deals with all, in mercy, why should we deal with animosity and hatred?"

1912: The Philadelphia Inquirer reported on June 10 about two talks Abdu'l Baha delivered the previous day.

DID YOU KNOW?



Shoghi Effendi did not simply translate the writings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha into English, but effectively reshaped how the Baha'i Faith is understood worldwide?

Translation is often assumed to be neutral. In this case, it wasn't. Before Shoghi Effendi, multiple English translations existed, including those by Edward Granville Browne, reflecting different tones and interpretations. After him, that diversity disappeared. His translations became the standard, and earlier versions were set aside - consolidating a single authoritative voice in English. (Browne, 1891; Shoghi Effendi, 1935)

His style also introduced a major shift. While the original writings of Baha'u'llah are rooted in Arabic and Persian traditions, Shoghi Effendi rendered them in a tone resembling the King James Bible - "Verily...", "Say: O people!" - a stylistic layer not present in the original language. This choice reframed the Faith in a familiar biblical voice for Western readers, subtly altering how it is perceived. (Shoghi Effendi, 1976; Arberry, 1955)

He also standardized key theological terms such as

"Manifestation of God," "Administrative Order," and "World Order of Baha'u'llah," which now define Baha'i doctrine in English. These are not always direct equivalents from the original texts, but interpretive formulations that became fixed and authoritative. (Shoghi Effendi, 1938; 1944)

Finally, works like *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* are curated compilations - selected, translated, and arranged by Shoghi Effendi. Most Baha'is worldwide rely on these English texts, not the original languages. In practice, this means his wording functions as the primary lens through which the religion is understood.

At that point, the role goes beyond translation. When one individual determines how texts are presented, phrased, and conceptualized, he is shaping how an entire religion is seen.



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www.freebahais.org | info@freebahais.org



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