

THE

MARCH 2021
VOLUME 5, EDITION 1, BAHA (SPLENDOR) 178 B.E.

CARAVAN

**QUESTION
TO THE BAHA'IS:**

**WHY HAS THE
YOUTH LEFT
THE BAHA'I FAITH?**

KNOW MORE INSIDE.

**HOW THE
DIVINE WIND GUIDES:
A SEEKERS EXPERIENCE**

GUEST ARTICLE INSIDE!





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NAW-RUZ PRAYER



Praised be Thou, O my God, that Thou hast ordained Naw-Rúz as a festival unto those who have observed the Fast for love of Thee and abstained from all that is abhorrent unto thee. Grant, O my Lord, that the fire of Thy love and the heat produced by the Fast enjoined by Thee may inflame them in Thy Cause, and make them to be occupied with Thy praise and with remembrance of Thee.

Since thou hast adorned them, O my Lord, with the ornament of the Fast prescribed by Thee, do Thou adorn them also with the ornament of Thine acceptance, through Thy grace and bountiful favor. For the doings of men are all dependent upon Thy good-pleasure, and are conditioned by Thy behest. Shouldst Thou regard him who hath broken the Fast as one who hath observed it, such a man would be reckoned among them who from eternity had been keeping the Fast. And shouldst Thou decree that he who hath observed the Fast hath broken it, that person would be numbered with such as have caused the Robe of Thy Revelation to be stained with dust, and been far removed from the crystal waters of this living Fountain.

Thou art He through Whom the ensign “Praiseworthy art Thou in Thy works” hath been lifted up, and the standard “Obeyed art Thou in Thy behest” hath been unfurled. Make known this Thy station, O my God, unto Thy servants, that they may be made aware that the excellence of all things is dependent upon Thy

bidding and Thy word, and the virtue of every act is conditioned by Thy leave and the good pleasure of Thy will, and may recognize that the reins of men's doings are within the grasp of Thine acceptance and Thy commandment. Make this known unto them, that nothing whatsoever may shut them out from Thy Beauty, in these days whereon the Christ exclaimeth: "All dominion is Thine, O Thou the Begetter of the Spirit (Jesus)"; and Thy Friend (Muhammad) crieth out: "Glory be to Thee, O Thou the Best-Beloved, for that Thou hast uncovered Thy Beauty, and written down for Thy chosen ones what will cause them to attain unto the seat of the revelation of Thy Most Great Name, through which all the peoples have lamented except such as have detached themselves from all else except Thee, and set themselves towards Him Who is the Revealer of Thyself and the Manifestation of Thine attributes."

He Who is Thy Branch and all Thy company, O my Lord, have broken this day their fast, after having observed it within the precincts of Thy court, and in their eagerness to please Thee. Do Thou ordain for Him, and for them, and for all such as have entered Thy presence in those days all the good Thou didst destine in Thy Book. Supply them, then, with that which will profit them, in both this life and in the life beyond.

Thou, in truth, art the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

-Prayer of Baha'u'llah

FOREWORD

“O Pen of the Most High! Say: O people of the world! We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period, and at its close have designated for you Naw-Ruz as a feast.” – Baha'u'llah

The entire Free Baha'is team wishes a happy and joyous Naw-Ruz to all our readers!

Baha'is from all over the world celebrate Naw-Ruz, marking the end of the 19-day Baha'i Fast and the beginning of a new year as per the Baha'i calendar. It is celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere, with Tehran, the capital of Iran and the birthplace of Baha'u'llah, as its standard. Naw-Ruz, meaning 'New Day' and which typically falls between 20th - 22nd of March, is a time of joy and celebration for the Baha'is. It is a day of new beginnings – of change and hope.

To begin another year, one must practice different ways to forsake old habits and a pronounce change. It should be a shift from what once we believed in, a change from a popular belief to the truth. Baha'u'llah did not preach about religious conversion but change of heart. And change will only be possible

when you follow the pristine message of Baha'u'llah and the Master. The message should be clean from any prejudice and must be aloof from self-interpretations, like what was done by Shoghi Effendi after the ascension of the Master. Shoghi, the alleged Guardian not only wrongly took over the Guardianship, but also modified the teachings of Baha'u'llah to suit his personal interest. Following the path of Shoghi, even the current form of UHJ has always tried to modify the pristine message of Baha'u'llah to the best of their personal benefits. The results of these modifications can be seen in the Baha'i world today, that even the Baha'is are not keen on following the Baha'i teachings. How many Baha'is have you come across reading Kitab-i-Aqdas? How many of them read Kitab-i-Iqan? These two books were supposed to be the “Bible” or the “Koran” of the Baha'is, but are we even 5% aware of what these books has to convey to us? The UHJ wants us to be trained in a way that we only read and follow what they command, and the original Baha'i books are kept at bay, as they teach us things that goes against the interest of the Administration. It is a sad reality of the Baha'is

today, but unfortunately most of the Baha'is are not even bothered to ponder over it, and that's because we have been trained like that. Trained to not question the authority. Questioning the authority is hard, but it is important. With the start of another new year, let's challenge ourselves to question every answer. The best approach to do that is to be kind and curious rather than aggressive. You can put your point forward and be resilient about the fact if something is off beam. That's how you aim to be amongst the true followers of Baha'u'llah and the Master.

"Today is the day for steadfastness and constancy. Blessed are they that stand firm and immovable as the rock and brave the storm and stress of this tempestuous hour. They, verily, shall be the recipients of God's grace; they, verily, shall receive His divine assistance, and shall be truly victorious. They shall shine amidst mankind with a radiance which the dwellers of the Pavilion of Glory laud and magnify."

(Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l Baha, pp. 17-18)

We are proud of the fact that Free Baha'is have always stood in the face the authority and has given a tough fight to those in power and have never surrendered in front of any sort of injustice in the name of the Cause. Lady Ruth White, the first inspiration of the Free Baha'is accepted the teachings of Baha'u'llah at the hands of the Master and left Christianity only after questioning the authority. Even after becoming a Baha'i, she was more Christian than any other person who was part of that faith, because she had believed in the rightful Jesus and his true teachings, which is found in the Baha'i faith. It was never easy and will never be, but you must face the challenges yourself in order to achieve the truest belief.

May Baha'u'llah bless us to be steadfast in this mission and help us reach where he always wanted the Baha'is to be.

Presenting this new Edition on the occasion of Naw-Ruz, we take immense pride in continuing with our series of articles, the first being the Laws from Kitab-i-Aqdas, followed by the extract from the book 'The Baha'i Religion and Its Enemy, The Baha'i Organization'. These two are over and above our regular sections viz. Blast from the Past, Throwback, Did You Know, Guest Articles and Know Your Heritage. We take immense pleasure for being a voice of the faithful today and request you to continue with sharing your feedback/suggestions/queries regarding anything about the faith at info@freeBaha'is.org, and we will be happy to get in touch with you. Once again, wishing you a fabulous Naw-Ruz.

Stay blessed,

The Free Baha'i Team

This brand-new day



This brand-new day I go in faith,
But I know not what lies in wait,
So dear God, this morning I pray,
Take control and lead the way.

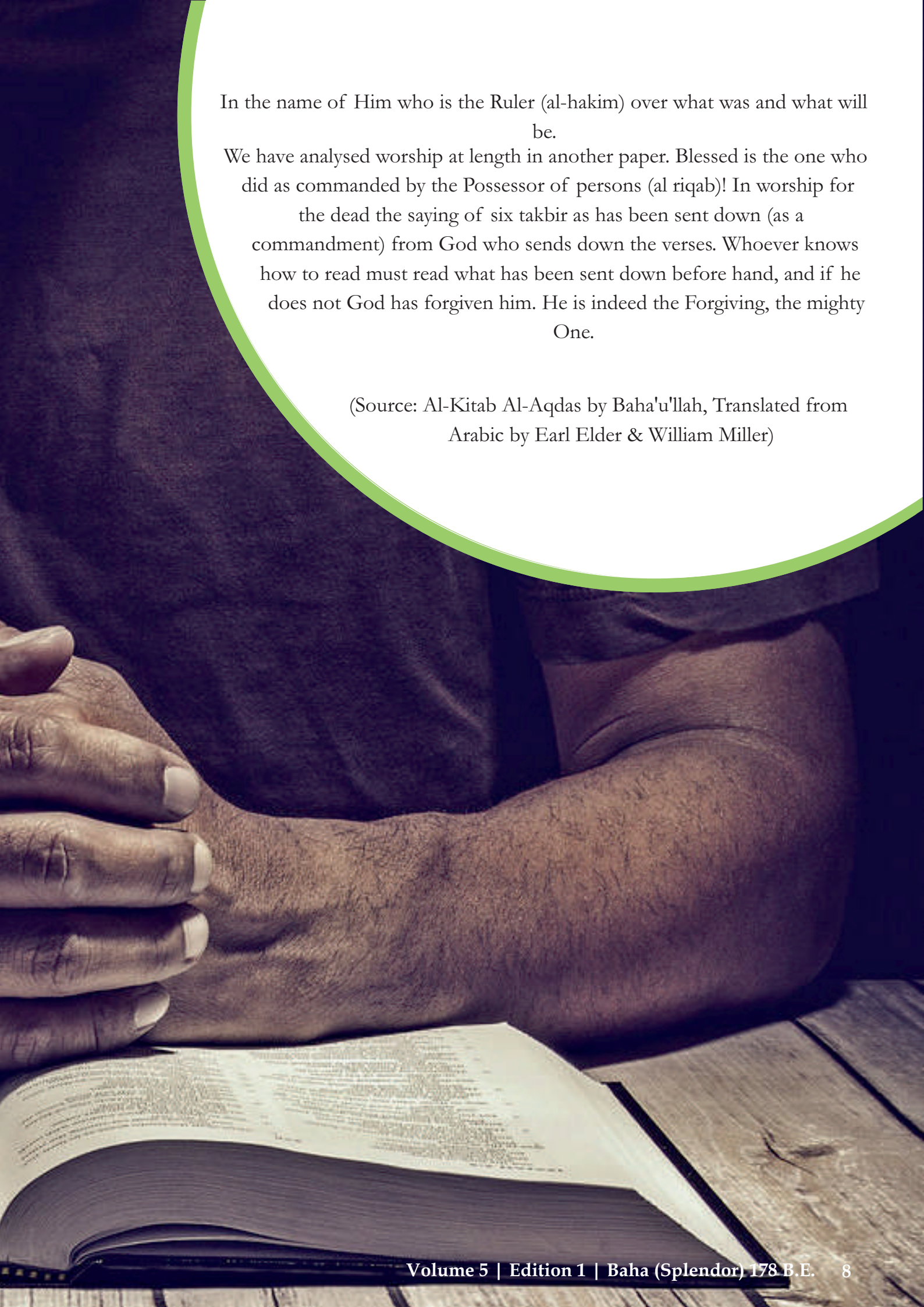
I do not see with these two eyes,
I cannot tell where danger lies.
Please, dear Lord, be my guide.
Let me not stray from Your side.

Show me today the journeys to make.
Steer me on the right paths to take.
Grant me grace to discern your will,
For when to strive and when to be still.

Help me to love and trust You more
And radiate Your love to my neighbor.
Then bring me back safe and sound,
And let my praise for You abound.

– Abimbola T. Alabi

DIVINE LAWS



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

We have analysed worship at length in another paper. Blessed is the one who did as commanded by the Possessor of persons (al riqab)! In worship for the dead the saying of six takbir as has been sent down (as a commandment) from God who sends down the verses. Whoever knows how to read must read what has been sent down before hand, and if he does not God has forgiven him. He is indeed the Forgiving, the mighty One.

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

HOW THE DIVINE WIND GUIDES ? - A SEEKER'S EXPERIENCE



My story begins in the year 1990, with the downfall of Communism in my small Eastern European country and the dawn of democracy. I was nine years old then and a huge fan of soccer (football). I dreamt endlessly then about my mother buying me the first issue of "Goal" - the first all colour magazine devoted to football.

Then came the day when my dream would come true. But something very astonishing occurred. While my mother was standing in front of the booth, having a friendly conversation with the booth lady, I made a rather impulsive decision - instead of the magazine of my dreams I asked my mother to buy me a small book kept next to the magazine called "A Tale about Jesus the Saviour". The main reason that this incident would be called strange and inexplicable is that no one in my family was or has ever been in any way even remotely religious.

Fast forward to 1999 around the festivities dedicated to Jesus's 2000 birthday, I had gone to see a movie about Jesus and brought home a

few free books about him. My mother makes a huge scandal out of this (not a very surprising reaction for a staunch atheist though) and declares me a religionist while tearing those books in front of me. She probably had no idea that this would only make my conviction to pursue religious knowledge stronger. After a couple of years since, I had enrolled on a University far from my city and had all the freedom I could want to the University's library and read one of the many "torn" books.

"More Than a Carpenter" was one of the books that I read which blew me away and almost made me a fanatic about Christianity. However, this infatuation did not last long. I soon begin to ask myself - "Hey, if I was born in a Muslim country, for example, wouldn't I now be a Muslim fanatic? What about other religions - how can I know which is the right one if I know only one of them?" This thought cooled my infatuation down and then began my journey exploring religions and beliefs on a more global scale. Consequently, at some



point, a book called "The Prophet" (by Khalil Gibran) came into my hands. I read the book and it instantly became my absolute favourite with no close rival ever since. Somehow, I felt that the book is inspired by a Sufi sage with an almost prophetic status called "Abdul Baha" whom the author claimed to have personally met and was greatly impressed by him. Considering the fact that the Internet in my country was quite a different thing back then this shouldn't be too much of a surprise.

Then in the summer of the year 2004, which I consider to be the most magical in my life, I went to the United States participating in a work & travel program. Then through a near-miraculous chain of events (controlled by an invisible hand) I found myself in the superyacht industry, an industry that I had no prior knowledge or experience of. I immediately fell in love with my job which allowed me to explore some of the most beautiful places on earth while being paid handsomely for what I did onboard. Then in 2005, I joined a yacht as a permanent crew

member for the first time in Monaco, but unfortunately that job did not last long and I was fired - merely 3 months after joining on account of a scandal of my own making.

The effect of this was devastating. I realised that with a single wrong move I had lowered my chances of a successful career in my dream industry by 80% on account of a bad reference from my first permanent posting. However, in 2006 I thought of giving it another go and decided to travel to the French riviera, but my heart was filled with fear. Before departing for the French Riviera, I remembered God and decided to pray in a Church (in the capital city where my University was located). This church was famous locally on account of a saint that was buried in its crypt. When I faced the magical wall in the Church's foreyard, I was surprisingly filled with a strange current of confidence which reassured me that I have every strength needed to deal with my fears and asking God for favour as low and insignificant as this job would be quite a shame. So, I remained in front of the wall not

knowing what to ask for before finally writing the following on a piece of paper:

"Dear God, from this point onwards, I put my fate in Your hands and I will let You decide what happens to me in the future!". I closed my eyes, said a quick prayer before pushing the piece of paper into a crevice in the wall. After this impromptu rite, I left from there and then completely forgot about it.

On the Riviera I found a job that was better than my previous job and learning from past mistakes I performed very well and quickly secured a pay rise. After a Few months on-board I learnt that the yacht was headed - not towards Rome, Jerusalem or any other city sacred for Christians but towards the city of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

Jeddah happens to be a boring city where the only fun thing to do is to smoke shisha which too gets boring after some time. At this point of time in my life, I had some basic familiarity with Islam and wanted to embark on a cultural trip to Mecca, but to my disappointment, I was told that only Muslims were permitted to enter Mecca. It was right there and then that I remembered that I had entrusted my fate in God's hands and I asked myself - Is it God now who sent me here? And is it His will that I become Muslim and go to Mecca? Or this is a test by Him to determine if my Christian fate is strong enough?

This dilemma lasted for more than a month had me caught in a mental state which could probably qualify as being called an existential crisis. It is prudent to mention here that a large part of the feeling may be due to the fact that my country had been ruled by the Ottoman Empire for around five centuries and it is these five centuries that are considered to be the most tragic period in the history of my country. And also, that in the year 2007, public memory was still fresh with the devastation of the 2001 twin tower attacks in New York.

One morning, seemingly out of nowhere I woke up remembering my favourite book and Abdul Baha (who I considered then to be a Sufi sage) and this memory-filled my heart with a certain mystical love that made me feel ready to go to Mecca.

Another thing to mention here is that in Saudi Arabia, at that time the only facilities good enough for a luxury yacht were found in the private seafront palaces of the royal family and it was in one of those palaces that we were docked. I feel the need to mention this due to the fact that a Saudi Princess, the youngest daughter of that owner of the palace where we were docked (A prince who was a retired Airforce General), used to frequently come on board the yacht and over time she developed a crush on me (or at least the female stewardesses onboard claimed it to be the case) and I couldn't help but indulge in the dream of becoming her husband and becoming a Saudi Prince myself. After pondering over the topic I realised what the consequences of this dream would be if this was to reach the ears of the Prince (the owner of the palace where we were docking).

Anyways, I went to a local mosque, became a Muslim (which happened to be the easiest thing in the world to do) and I changed my name to Mustafa since he was the hero of my favourite book. A week or so later I and my captain (a Turkish Muslim) were on our way to Mecca to perform the Umrah pilgrimage. Upon entering the city, I was possessed by a surprisingly pleasant feeling of "being home" which was accompanied by some beautiful soul pleasing Arabic music playing on the car's audio. This music was from one of the CD's that the young princess had given to me as a gift. As our car is navigating the city of mecca turn after turn, I grew more and more anxious to catch a sight of the Holy Mosque. Then suddenly as if out of nowhere after a sudden turn the Grand Mosque in all its

Majesty and Glory stood in front of us and I was completely unprepared for this moment. My jaw quite literally dropped and my feet started to tremble and I felt as if I am truly home, one from the 1001 Arabian nights tales.

For many, if not most, Muslims going to Mecca on a pilgrimage is a once in a lifetime event for which years go in preparing for the penultimate moment when they arrive in Mecca by studying books in great detail each one of the many rites of the Holy Mosque are described. One of those rites is stopping by the eastern corner of the Kaaba and touching a special Black Stone (possibly a meteorite) that is embedded in it. Even though there are no instructions towards kissing the stone (as opposed to simply touching it) and that violence in all forms is forbidden in Mecca, to our surprise, there was quite evidently a battle going on between some 40 or 50 pilgrims who wanted to kiss the stone.

My Captain tried his luck and after about a minute of clamouring gives up and the two of us end up just standing at some distance watching the other pilgrims fight over it. What happened next had an unbelievable effect on me. An old man slowly passed from in front of us, probably aware of our situation, pointed to his own biceps as if to signify strength and then said – “Maa fii Muslim!” (“They are not Muslim” – those who fight are not real Muslims). On hearing that I froze for a couple of moments and was unable to move. On my “return” from Mecca I was a different, a changed person who now knew in a way everything that is needed to be known about Islam and about religion in general.

Time passed by and I learned who exactly Abdul Baha was, who the Bab and Baha'u'llah were and I began having doubts about whether I had chosen the wrong religion. However, my Meccan experience reminded me that all was well.

Almost 10 years passed and I was on another yacht, when I ended up in Thailand, realising that I actually know very little about Buddhism. I then swiftly went through a few books on the subject and was completely blown. After a few weeks of consideration, I had decided to retire from yachting in a years' time and then to spend the next decade or two in a Zen Buddhist monastery in Japan. I cut my hair in honour of Buddha's sacrifice and made a sacred promise (that I still keep) to not grow it until I am fully awakened. God then made a new turn in my fate and only 3 weeks later I and the 2/3rd of the crew got dismissed on account of being too expensive for the owners. I was happy about it and once back home I immediately began establishing a daily practice and began preparing for monastic life. While the preparation was going on 3 things occurred

1. I realised that Buddhism took a new form as it entered the West and it was more exciting to study and practice it in such a setting rather than moving to Asia.

2. I read an article, where to my surprise the Dalai Lama said that one need not become a Buddhist in order to achieve enlightenment but should instead research his own tradition and religion where he/she will no doubt find what Buddhism offers. This statement left me speechless and thoughtless since this would be the last thing one would expect from a religious leader who instead of encouraging conversion into his fold is actually asking for others to find the good in their own. I then began deep research into both Sufism and Christian mysticism only to realise that the Dalai Lama is 100% correct.

3. Through some luck (or maybe God's hand again) I discovered a teacher who had developed a unique method of teaching meditation, that had taken the best not only from Buddhism but from all mystical traditions and was built with the ambition of

bringing scientific precision in the way meditation is thought. I concluded that I had found my teacher and that once again everything had fallen into place.

I flew to the United States and spent 6 months in the mountains of Vermont studying his system in a very monastic atmosphere. Things didn't work quite as expected at the "Monastery" so I fly back home but I continued my study with him through email and web calls. After about 3 and 1/2 years of studying and working with my teacher (about a month ago) the first big breakthrough came. On day 23 of my yearly solo retreat, I decided the time had come for all boundaries to fall and that I should change my technique from guided research to one that felt and was the best – Self Enquiry.

Just by taking that decision, I felt a huge amount of potential energy in me being released and I decided that no matter what happens I will keep asking the question "Who am I?" until the answer comes. If it would not come in the 7 days that I had left to complete my yearly spiritual commitment I would continue for as long as needed no matter what it would take. During the next 24 hours, I committed myself completely to answering this question to a level that an outside observer would probably classify as insanity. I sat and wrote my own manual on how Self Enquiry should be practised and I started journaling on why "Who am I?" is the most important question in life. Suddenly an emotion of great confidence overwhelmed me and I realised that deep in my subconscious an answer has been found even though there are no words on the surface. I almost immediately felt that my room needed cleaning and I wasted no time but began doing it immediately. After about 4 hours of cleaning pleasant fatigue made me sit, smile and observe. There was no difference between the Self and the No-Self any more. No difference between meditation and non-

meditation, between retreat and non-retreat, between religion and non-religion. All that had prevented me from seeing this was now gone. I still had some trouble making a decision about what should be done next. I could see two options, one easy and one easier. I went for what was easy – continuing with my spiritual retreat.

Once my spiritual Retreat was over in the following days, I felt a strong desire to pray. Praying was also a thing that I had always resisted to do. However, fighting with myself, I learnt the short Baha'i prayer and made a daily commitment to it. I started researching this religion again and found out that like most other religions this one too had suffered from internal conflicts. But that did not disappoint me. I remembered once again - the Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdul Baha with their teachings about the unity of all religions and I realised that deep inside I have always been a party to this idea and hence I have always been a Baha'i.

I remember the beginning of my favourite poem by Hafiz:

I have learned so much from God

that I can no longer call myself a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jew...



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)



THE BAHÁ'Í RELIGION AND ITS ENEMY, THE BAHÁ'Í ORGANIZATION – PART 7

(An extract from Lady Ruth White's book)

(Discussion)

Miss T.: I brought up this fact and what Shoghi said with relation to that was that we must leave the under-standing of Baha'u'llah to the future. What I gathered from him was that we must sacrifice everything at this moment to effect unity.

The Chairman: (The chairman here referred to his willingness to sacrifice anything and everything in order that we might work together, but intimated that it would be difficult to sacrifice the station of Baha'u'llah).

Miss Thompson: He asked that I come before the Board and ask them to issue this invitation to ALL the teachers to come

together and study the teachings and reach this understanding; and he said that if they did not come through this invitation, that other means must be used. First reason by reason – and that if that does not succeed we must use some other means.

He seems to not wish at all the Baha'is to put their time and effort and money into these outside movements like the League of Nations, etc. He said that they must pour all that they have into the direct channels of the Baha'i cause.

He regretted very much that some of the prominent Baha'is joining and devoting their time to those other movements."

This faction between the National Spiritual

Assembly, on the one side, and Mrs. Ford and her group on the other, is due to the fact that the former accept Shoghi Effendi as supreme dictator, or pope, while the latter accept him, in the words of Mrs. Ford, "merely as business manager or errand boy," of the Baha'is. But it should be clear to all factions by this time that to accept him in any capacity at all, based on an unauthenticated will is equally wrong. Whether Shoghi Effendi is accepted as pope, or business manager, in either case he has been the most appalling failure and has brought chaos to the Cause. As pope he has made many divisions—the very thing the Baha'is said a successor would prevent, and he has decreased show. Despite all this, the command he issued that some of Mrs. Ford's group be appointed on the Board was evidently carried through successfully. For some of her group, who, prior to this edict, were opposed to organization, have since been elected on the Board of the Local New York Assembly.

The frightful disharmony's prevailing among the members of the Baha'i organization, and the afflictions that have befallen them individually and collectively, is the retribution for violating the teachings they purport to represent. For the spiritual law of Cause and Effect works with inexorable accuracy according to our actions and not according to what we profess to believe.

No matter how ardently we may try to promulgate a religion, if we are on the wrong path in that religion, we are not protected from the working of the Law of Cause and Effect. For religion is like a great dynamo. Only as we follow the right path in religion does our position become analogous to the expert electrician who, having learned the

laws that govern a dynamo is able light and heat houses by its beneficent power. The same laws apply to religion. If we learn how to apply its laws we receive marvellous power; but if we do not learn how to apply its laws, we are in exactly the same position as a man who, calling himself an electrician, and yet not understanding the dynamo, receives nothing but shocks and short circuits.

This is the meaning of what Paul said: "God is not mocked for whatsoever the man soweth that shall he also reap. Playing at religion is mocking God is unconscious or not. It almost always is unconscious. For a test means falling into an error that we at the time cannot see as an error, otherwise we would avoid it. It is the worldly interpretation of religion that precipitates people into the trap of test.

For a brief period, and for some inscrutable reason, God has destined that the leaders of the Baha'i organization continue in their intoxicating charade, but the dawn of the awakening is already manifest. Like children who will not learn that fire burns except by experience, so, too, are they learning by experience, or through the law of tests, that they cannot play at, or misapply religion without experiencing fearful penalties.

I asked Mr. Mountford Mills if he did not think it strange that every one of the secretaries of Shoghi Effendi, who went to Haifa from different parts of the world had all come to grief, he admitted that it was very strange indeed.

In less than five years this is what has happened to some of them: Mr. J. E. Esslemont, a young Englishman died. Mirza Mahmood, a young Persian also died. The same fate befell M. Hippolyte Dreyfus, a Frenchman. Mirza Assad'ullah (I think that

was his name) another young Persian, became completely incapacitated through paralysis of his right arm. In Mr. Mills' own case, his health became completely shattered, and the affliction which befell his wife is even worse. There are others who were equally unfortunate, but I have forgotten the details. I would not be thus personal except to show what I believe to be the workings of the law of Cause and Effect.

But to return to the subject of factions. I attended a meeting of still another faction among the Baha'is – the last lecture in a series given by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. It was as far from the Truth of the Baha'i teachings as the narrow sectarianism of the National Spiritual Assembly is at the other end. For though the lecturer tried to prove himself broad and liberal, he proved himself nothing but bewildered as far as the Baha'i teachings are concerned. One instance alone will be sufficient to show this. He said that the time would come when babies would be created in the laboratory: At this lecture Mirza Sohrab showed still further his mental confusion by stating that he had a dream a vision. And then he proceeded to recount the vision of the dry bones, related in Ezekiel, chapter xxxvii, as his own. He even quoted the very words as his own. And the audience fairly gasped at what may have been an unconscious plagiarism. He also quoted whole paragraphs of Abdul Baha as his own, without specifying, or even hinting, that they were the words of Abdul Baha.

The Baha'is do not all their activities “organization” because they know that the founders of the Baha'i Religion said it could not be organized. Therefore, they have tried to side-step this issue by calling their activities “Baha'i Administration,” as commanded by Shoghi Effendi. This despite

the fact that since the death of Abdul Baha they have not only incorporated the Baha'i religion but made it a thoroughly narrow and commercial organization as well. Some of the activities of their organization are collecting funds, part of which is paid to Shoghi Effendi, and part of which is used to finance their paid officials' their Green Acre Summer School – their lecturers and to publish The Baha'i Magazine, as well as their indirect activities, flourishing under World Unity Conferences.

The inversion of the Baha'i teachings has taken place so gradually that many of the Baha'is are unconscious of the extent of these inversions. It is, therefore, a constant source of wonder, that, for some, to them, unaccountable reason, intelligent people shy off when they try to persuade them to come into their organization, or box. As a consequence, they have resorted to indirect methods of propaganda, and they have organized “World Unity Conferences” and a magazine called World Unity and a World Unity Foundation. Shoghi Effendi wrote to the Assemblies in 1926 as follows:

“In connection with the World Unity Conferences.

. . . as to the policy that should be adopted with regard to these conferences and other Baha'i activities.

Baha'i Administration by Shoghi Effendi, pages 114,115.

The World Unity Conferences are held in all the larger cities, but no mention is made from the platform that it is a Baha'i activity. The Baha'is flock to these meetings to do what they call “follow-up work” among those who evidence any interest. This “follow-up work” would be all right if it were not for the fact that these teachers who do “follow-up

work" try to persuade those who have just heard universal principles propounded from the platform, to accept the inverted conception of these principles. That is, they attempt to get people into a box or organization to which they must pay dues and become clan conscious, and too little by little be taught to believe that they must obey absolutely the dictates of the Spiritual Assembly and of Shoghi Effendi. In fact, the "follow-up work" really means that by a very gradual process the proselyte is led to accept Unity Conferences, and as managing editor of World Unity Magazine he represents himself as a modernist. And for promulgating these irreconcilable viewpoints he receives a salary from both sides of the organization.

In December, 1925, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada issued a pamphlet, "A Plan of Unified Action to Spread the Baha'i Cause." The object of this plan was to make a drive to raise \$400,000, as the following quotations show: The objects of the plan are, in brief, to unify the efforts and enlarge the numbers of the Cause in North America, penetrate the consciousness of the public with the spirit of Baha'u'llah, and, by the end of three years at most, accumulate, in response to the request of Shoghi Effendi, a fund of \$400,000 to construct the first unit of the superstructure of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar. at Wilmette, Illinois.

... It is the fixed and unalterable intention of the National Spiritual Assembly to so administer the affairs of the Cause, and so assist the friends, that the amount specified by the Guardian (Shoghi Effendi) — \$400,000 — can be gathered together by December 31, 1928

To carry this plan steadily forward to a

successful conclusion means that contributions must average nine dollars from every confirmed American Baha'i beginning January, 1926, and continued uninterruptedly until December, 1928.

At the end of the three-year period the condition of the fund will be laid before the Guardian of the Cause....

One of the pamphlets and a letter soliciting contributions to this fund, was mailed to me. Without remembering at the time that both Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha had forbidden soliciting, or begging in any form, I made several contributions. Shortly after this, I realized that such policies, and others that the leaders of the Baha'i organization were advocating were contrary to the principles of the Baha'i Religion, one of which was that it should be kept inviolate from money and other worldly considerations, such as paid officials and paid teachers.

Through this action of theirs I also realized that it had given me the legal right to demand of them that they send for photographs of the alleged will. For I saw that under the administration of Shoghi Effendi the Baha'i teachings had not only become more and more inverted, but more and more commercialized. I then wrote a letter on December 3, 1927, and requested of the National Spiritual Assembly that: they send for photographs of the alleged will in order to prove its validity, part of which is as follows:

December 3, 1927.

National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada.

I was asked by your organization, the N.S.A.

of the Baha'is of the U.S and Canada, which purports to represent the Baha'i Religion in America, to contribute to a fund for the support of the various activities, both direct and indirect of your organization. This National Baha'i Fund for raising money to support your organization was ratified by Shoghi Effendi. whom your organization has accepted as the successor of Abdul Baha. based on a document purporting to be the will of Abdul Baha. Typewritten copies of this document were distributed among a number of people, in 1925. But these copies bore no evidence that this will was signed, or in the handwriting of Abdul Baha nor who translated it. And this omission was doubly strange considering the fact that all Tablets of Abdul Baha coming to this country always specified that they were signed by Abdul Baha.

As you know. Abdul Baha wrote many times to different people before he passed from this world, that no document, or Tablet, purporting to come from him. even if sent, or presented by a member of his own family, should be accepted, unless they were written in his own hand, writing and signed by him. And even then, the authenticity of them must be attested to.

I request that you, in your official capacity, as one of the officers of this organization present to me legal evidence that your organization, in its acceptance of Shoghi Effendi as the successor of Abdul Baha is founded on a legal claim, by presenting to me, on or before the 19th day of January, 1928, an authentic photographic copy of this document which purports to be the will of Abdul Baha.

Yours in the service of the Cause of God,
RUTH WHITE.

MRS. H. LAWRENCE WHITE
P. O. Box 879, Grand Central Station
New York City

I sent this letter to Mr. Horace Holley, Mr. Roy C. Wilhelm, Mr. Alfred Lunt, Mr. Allen McDaniel, Mr. Carl Scheffler, Mr. Louis Gregory, Mrs. Amelia Collins, Mrs. May Maxwell, and Mrs. Florence Morton.

Four weeks later, on December 31, I received a reply from Mr. Holley, part of which is as follows:

Cable Address, Baha'i, New York.

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHAI'S OF THE

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Office of the Secretary

129 EAST TENTH STREET, NEW YORK
CITY

December 31, 1927.

My Dear Mrs. White:

Although you have indicated several points on which you desire explanation or comment, we feel that your letter raises only one fundamental question, namely, the validity of the Will and Testament of Abdu'l Baha. Since this Will appoints a Guardian to administer the administrative affairs of the Cause, and since the Guardian has approved the matters you question, it of course follows that those who really desire to conform to the wishes and instructions of Abdu'l Baha will accept His instructions concerning administrative affairs as soon as they know

what these instructions are.

We can, therefore, give you full assurance that the Will and Testament of Abdu'l Baha, a copy of which was sent you over two years ago, is a document written by Him in His own hand, the validity of which has been established by a number of well-known Baha'is from different countries...who inspected the original at Haifa.

Apart from this entirely convincing proof, it is a matter of interesting historical record that, when the custody of one of the Baha'i tombs at Haifa was questioned after the departure of Abdu'l Baha the final decision lay in the hands of the representative of the British Government administering Palestine under the mandate of the League of Nations, and after full investigation he restored the keys of the Tomb to the Guardian appointed in the Will and Testament of Abdu'l Baha.

As no photographic copies of this document exist in this country, we are unable to meet your request for such a copy. In view, of the fact that the world-wide Baha'i community naturally most concerned with establishing the completeness and accuracy of Abdu'l Baha's final instruction to His followers, has been satisfied with the verbal accuracy of His Will and Testament; and in view also of the fact that the highest civil authorities of Palestine have also accepted the Guardian as the administrative head of the Baha'i Cause, we know that you may rest assured that obedience to Abdu'l Baha at this time means obedience to the Guardian appointed by Him in all matters pertaining to the Baha'i Cause."

(Signed)

HORACE HOLLEY, Secretary.

This letter was wholly unsatisfactory, because the very point in my letter as well as in others that I sent was this very issue — that the alleged will does not express the wishes of Abdul Baha and cannot be accepted as the wishes of Abdul Baha until it is proved valid. And yet the National Spiritual Assembly incorporated part of the contents of this alleged will in their by laws, and made it an article of faith of the Baha'i Religion. As for Mr. Holley's statement: "...in view also of the fact that the highest civil authorities of Palestine have also accepted the Guardian as the administrative head of the Baha'i Cause..." it means nothing at all as far as the vital issues that I am dealing with are concerned. It merely amounts to this, that as there was no property, either personal or real, bequeathed in the alleged will, and as no one contested Shoghi Effendi's right as successor, the government's recognition of Shoghi Effendi consisted in permitting him to be the custodian of the Tombs of the Bab, and of Abdul Baha, and of Baha'u'llah. When I say that no one contested Shoghi Effendi's right as successor, I mean that no one contested it to the point of insisting upon having the alleged will put to the acid test of handwriting experts. That Mohammed Ali did not do this is very significant, or suspicious to say the least. For anyone who is familiar with the Cause knows that Mohammed- Ali has for the past thirty years left no stone unturned to control the Baha'i Religion, and the very fact that he so readily acquiesced to Shoghi Effendi's claim indicates collusion. In other words Mohammed Ali knew that he had no shadow of a chance of ever being a leader, or a successor, in the Baha'i Religion because of the fact made public that he had interpolated the writings of Baha'u'llah.. He therefore must have decided that the best way to share in the wealth and power that would come to

the family of Abdul Baha through the appointment of a successor, would be to acquiesce to the appointment. Then in order to strengthen Shoghi Effendi's claim, he put in a claim also merely as a bluff, and then when Shoghi Effendi produced the will he accepted it without a murmur. Whereas everyone familiar with his activities knows that this is not at all the thing that Mohammed Ali would do unless he had some ulterior motive.

I believe this to be the case from long and careful research of all aspects of the Baha'i Religion in its relation to the administration of Shoghi Effendi and his abettors. I base my assumption not on what Shoghi Effendi says but on what he has done, and is doing. This is the only gauge that Abdul Baha said we should use.

My reasons for believing that Mohammed Ali is one of the abettors of Shoghi Effendi are many. For instance, upon the death of Abdul Baha all the things that Mohammed Ali has always stood for began to be inculcated into the Baha'i Cause, such as the commercializing of the Baha'i Cause through extreme and narrow organization, with paid officials, etc. Even in such little things as the spelling of the sacred names, the leaders of the Baha'i organization have re-verted to Mohammed Ali's style. This latter is only a trifling thing, but it shows that even in these trifling things that the will of Mohammed Ali is being followed, functioning, of course, through the personality of Shoghi Effendi. Later in this book I will give what to me is an overwhelming proof that Mohammed Ali is the secret power behind the throne of Shoghi Effendi.

As Sir Mountford Mills was one of the "well known Baha'is" who had gone to Palestine shortly after the passing of Abdul Baha I

wrote to him asking him to give me what information he could concerning the alleged will. He answered as follows:

THE-HARVARD CLUB 27 WEST 44TH ST.

NEW YORK CITY

January 19th, 1928.

Dear Mrs. White:

I have your letter of yesterday and have also received the copies of your earlier letters to the National Spiritual Assembly and to Mr. Holley, all bearing upon the question whether the Will accepted by the National Spiritual Assembly as Abdul Baha's Last Testament is really so. Needless to say, I am glad to give you any information I can relating to the matter.

Answering more specifically the questions in your letter to me,

I have seen the Will.

It is written entirely in the Master's own hand.

It is signed by him.

Its parts, written before the Master's seat was stolen from him in this country are sealed.

It is not dated, but its approximate date appears from its contents.

It has not been probated in the sense that we use the word, as there is no provision under the laws of Islam for such a proceeding. It has, however, been officially recognized by the British Government, the Mandatory Power now governing Palestine.

I hope these answers will satisfy the doubts that have arisen in your mind concerning the

authenticity of the Will. Please let me know. I have enjoyed exceptional opportunities to learn the facts about it and do not hesitate to assure you that the document of which copies have been circulated among the Baha'is in this country is the Last Will and Testament of Abdu'l Baha and embodies his final and most sacred message to his followers.

(Sincerely yours,

(Signed) MOUNTFORD MILLS. Then upon further questioning he wrote again as follows:

THE HARVARD CLUB 27 WEST 44TH St.

January 22nd, 1928.

Dear Mrs. White:

I have your letter of yesterday.

As I wrote in my last letter, the formal standards in executing wills here required by our laws cannot be applied to the Will of Abdu'l Baha. Viewing it through the eye of custom so far as possible, however, we should consider its three parts as forming his main Will to which two codicils had been added, all three parts being his Last Will and Testament.. This is the view I took when writing you. It also seems beyond question that this was the Master's own intention. The three parts were filed together in one place by him with the evident intent that they should be read together as one document.

Answering your specific questions.

All three sections are signed by Abdu'l Baha.

The first two sections are sealed.

All three sections are in the handwriting of Abdu'l Baha.

The Master's seal was stolen during his visit

to this country in 1912.

The first two sections were thus obviously written before 1912, the last section after his return to Palestine in 1913. A closer approximation to the exact dates can be drawn from events referred to in the separate sections, but I have not this data with me here. As explained above, following our occidental terminology, there is but one Will with two codicils, the three parts having been written at different dates...

The commands of Abdu'l Baha which you quote concerning the identification of letters alleged to have been written by him were given out with special reference to Orientals who might come to this country and mingle with the Friends with the purpose of creating differences among them, and it has always been supposed that the commands were given with particular reference to Dr-----, who, as you know, did come here shortly afterwards. That these instructions could not have been intended to apply in full detail to all of the Master's Writings is clearly shown by innumerable Tablets sent to us that were almost never written in his own hand beyond the signature. However, I agree with you entirely that he would wish even more strongly that anyone feeling that he had reasonable grounds to doubt the authenticity of so gravely important a document as his Will should take every reasonable precaution to be sure.

Sincerely,
(Signed)

MOUNTFORD MILLS

In response to other letters that I wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly ,reiterating my

demand that they send for photographs of the alleged will and have it examined by handwriting experts, I received reply from Mr. Holley, asking me to meet the members of Spiritual Assembly .I accepted this invitation and met them on February 25,1928.The object of meeting on their part was, apparently, to try and make me believe that I should accept this document on verbal circumstantial evidence. I, on my part, reiterated what I had said in my letters, and, I tried to make them realize that to accept it in this manner was disobedience to the commands of Abdu'l Baha. I also asked them how they could possibly believe they were carrying out the wishes of Abdul Baha in this alleged will before they had first carried out his wishes regarding the acceptance of any document alleging to be his such as he expressed in the following:

“Any Persian... (who comes to America) ...even if it is Shoghi Effendi, or Ruhi Effendi (the two grandsons of Abdu'l Baha) the friends must demand of him before anything else, his credential letter, written in my handwriting, or signed with my signature.”

(Signed)
ABDU'L BAHHA ABBAS

From Star of the West,
October 16, 1915.

They contended that this referred to a certain relative of Abdu'l Baha's. I maintained that it referred to anyone, and that it made no difference whether the person brought the letter or a document, or sent one, alleging to be Abdul Baha's which gave him authority, this command applied equally to either case, and that it applied overwhelmingly to the case of his alleged will. For this gave Shoghi Effendi more potential authority than a king

or pope.

The very fact that Shoghi Effendi was specified in the above manner was portentous of what has happened.

This meeting was characterized by the inquisitorial methods of the dark ages as most of the activities of the leaders of the Baha'i organization are. I was questioned in this wise: “Would you accept Shoghi Effendi as the successor of Abdul Baha, and would you obey him if the will were proved to be absolutely valid?”

I replied that I would not according to their conception of obedience. For in every age people obey or disobey religious teachings according to their capacity. The fanatics who constituted themselves the custodians of Christ's teachings considered that they were the only people who were obeying Christ, and in their zeal to make others obey they resorted to inconceivable cruelty.

I might as well add here the convictions that came to me later. I would not accept the appointment of Shoghi Effendi nor obey him even if handwriting experts said the will was authentic. For this reason: Even if the instructions in the will are authentic, the instructions given by Abdul Baha during his lifetime would have to be considered side by side with those in the will. Therefore, if the instructions in the reputed will are repeated only once or twice, and the reverse of these instructions were repeated and printed hundreds of times during the lifetime of Abdul Baha and at the very time that the alleged will was already in existence, this fact far outweighs instructions found after his death, even in the incredible event of the will proving to be valid. Furthermore, Abdul Baha said that if an angel from heaven comes down and tries to change the teachings of

Baha'u'llah, do not believe him. Shoghi Effendi has changed the teachings by misapplying every fundamental principle of the Baha'i Religion. Therefore, to accept the appointment of Shoghi Effendi at all is to throw over completely the Baha'i Religion; for he has changed the Baha'i teachings from a spiritual democracy, which the founders said it was, into a theocracy, which they said very emphatically it was not.

I learned at this meeting that the photographs of the alleged will, which I had requested three months prior to this meeting, had not even been sent for. Therefore, the next day, before the session of the Spiritual Assembly adjourned I sent by special delivery a letter in which I urged that they cable to Mr. Allen McDaniel, who was then in Haifa, and request him to bring back the photographs when he returned. In response to this letter Mr. Holley wrote that the photographs had been sent for. It had taken me nearly three months of hard work to gain my first victory.

To be continued...



INSPIRING QUOTES



“O Lord! Unto Thee I repair for refuge and toward all Thy signs I set my heart. O Lord! Whether travelling or at home, and in my occupation or in my work, I place my whole trust in Thee. Grant me then Thy sufficing help so as to make me independent of all things, O Thou Who art unsurpassed in Thy mercy! Bestow upon me my portion, O Lord, as Thou pleasest, and cause me to be satisfied with whatsoever Thou hast ordained for me. Thine is the absolute authority to command.”

— The Bab

“The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace...hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence.”

— Baha'u'llah

"The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favor of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory."

— Abdu'l Baha



On Naw-Ruz in 1909, 'Abdu'l-Baha laid to rest the mortal remains of the Bab. 'Abdu'l-Baha personally placed the precious trust in its place in a building he had constructed on Mount Carmel in Haifa.

QUESTION TO THE BAHHA'IS: WHY HAS THE YOUTH LEFT THE BAHA'I FAITH?



Hi Everyone! I have been an active Baha'i my whole life (I'm 51) and I need some guidance on a gap I am seeing in our Baha'i Communities. I am speaking of our beloved youth (Baha'i and non-Baha'i). For the past 15 years, I have witnessed our communities dissolve their youth programs and workshops and even youth classes at many of the Baha'i Regional Schools. I don't understand why we took away programs that gave them the opportunity to deepen with other youth and to build those spiritual relationships that will last a lifetime?

A little background... I and my Baha'i husband of 30 years have 2 "litters" of kids. Our older children are 26 and 28 and our younger ones are 9 and 10. Keeping our older children active and engaged in the Faith was an enormous challenge during their youth years. I found myself constantly steering them towards teaching children's classes, animating junior youth or participating in Ruhi groups with a bunch of old people. Mind you, all of this was a good experience for my kids and it got them through...but what they missed was

an opportunity to really deepen on the teachings of their faith, with others they could relate to. Instead, they found themselves teaching the same children's classes year after year and the same topics to junior youth. Their other option was to participate in the adult classes at the regional schools, and they just didn't have the interest at age 16-19.

I've also noticed our communities have lost countless numbers of Baha'i youth in the past 15 years and I fear this is the reason. 15/16 is such a pivotal age...they start driving, they get their first job and they start asserting their independence and for many kids, it is the first time they begin pondering their purpose.

In the past 15 years, I have witnessed so many 15-19-year-olds searching for truth and asking about the Baha'i Faith (even some Baha'i Youth asking about their Faith for the 1st time) and I was at a loss as to what to send them to. In one instance we started a Ruhi 1 for a group of youth, but when we invited them to the regional school, they were really disappointed there wasn't a youth program.



Instead, the kids their age were teaching a children's class, helping with junior youth, or sleeping through the adult classes. There was no structured program for them to bond and explore the Faith with others their age.

Please help me out. How can we start creating programs again specifically for youth, with content they want/need to study (Example- Unrestrained as the Wind was a book I studied with other youth when I was young)? I am so determined to have something ready to go for the youth in my community when they are ready (I have several COI parents of youth in a Ruhi I am hosting) and also for my younger kids when they turn 16, I just need some help figuring out where to start. Thanks!!



(We received the above as an email from a Baha'i friend. If you want to share your suggestions, feel free to write to us at info@freebahais.org)



THERE IS, OR IS THERE NOT, CLERGY IN BAHA'I FAITH?

The Baha'i faith being the youngest religion for the modern age, the core of this religion was based on 12 Principles, which attracted a lot of people from other religions towards the Baha'i faith. It is said from inception of this religion that there is no clergy in Baha'i faith. Mankind is free to make a choice as per their own 'Independent investigation of truth' and come to a derived conclusion. Let's first understand the concept of clergy in other religion, in order to understand the whole concept of clergy. Here are a few points on how clergy works.

The concept of Clergy is in almost all religion, be it Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, or Islam. Clergies are popularly known as the Popes, Rabbi, Yarmulke, or Kippa, Imams, Mullahs, or Mujtahids. A clergy has some basic responsibility towards their community, such as:

1. It looks after, invites/reminds people about their religious duties. To sort any religious issues where religious jurisdictions is required

2. To collect donations or alms or zakat and to spend it for the upliftment of the community and feed the poor and the needy

3. To perform religious rites, such as marriages, burial ceremonies, etc.

4. In case of religious disputes, their verdict has the final authority

5. They can cast out any individual or family from the religion if they are found violating the religious ruling, which is called ex-communication

6. They are interpreters of the Holy Book and define the laws of the religion

The list can go on, however for the sake of brevity I have bought down a few of them here for your understanding.

The Baha'i faith has no ministers, priests, imams, rabbis, or any other form of clergy. As per the following saying of the Master.

"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.”

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

Now, let us examine the current form of Baha'i

religion, which is run under the leadership of the UHJ, which was said to have no clergy, is now converted to an Administrative clergy. Let us compare the above mentioned 6 points with the current situation of the Baha'i faith.

1. The Baha'i teaching is changed to Ruhi curriculum by the current form of UHJ, emphasizing on the fact that every Baha'i should become a Ruhi graduate and teach it to the masses without informing that this is a conversion method. Anyone who studies a few books from the Ruhi curriculum and then labelled as a Baha'i, howsoever he has not understood or accepted the Baha'i teachings from the heart. Hence, the Baha'i population increased on paper but in fact it started decreasing on the ground level.

2. UHJ has been always collecting different funds like Huququ'llah, donations, project donations, Temple funds, Ark Projects, shrine funds, etc. in the name of religion without any accounting statements submitted to the people who in fact send out those collections for review. And trust me, you cannot ask them

about any sort of yearly statement for millions of dollars collected from the hard-earned monies of the Baha'is, else you will be sanctioned or ex-communicated. The collected monies are spent for luxury lifestyle of the immaculate UHJ members, who in return send out letters for all your problems ending with "Praying at Threshold of Baha'u'llah for solving your problem." I can bet on the fact that not 1 out of the 9 selected members even read our letters or are even aware of our problems.

3. To keep a watch and interfere in the life of every Baha'i, the ABMs for protection are appointed. They want you to accept whatever they are saying and keep giving them funds for various activities, and in return if you ask them a single question, you will be observed with a doubtful eye

4. In the name of religious disputes, the LSA would come to your house and dig out domestic issues, and instead of solving them, they would discuss and make fun of your problems. My friends and I have been witnessed to many such examples

5. Ex-communication, same as other religions, even Baha'is are witness to similar examples. The UHJ have been excommunicating people at different levels

6. The current UHJ, as the head of the Baha'i faith believes itself to be the "sole interpreter" of the Baha'i laws. Without the permission and approval of the UHJ / NSA, without going through their "review process", no one can publish anything about the Baha'i Faith! UHJ believes that it is the sole authority over the Baha'i scriptures. Even the so called "authoritative English translation" of Kitab-i-Aqdas was published by their approval in 1992! To the best of my understanding, Baha'u'llah had appointed Abdu'l Baha as his sole interpreter, don't know where did the UHJ come into the picture with an authority to

interpret the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Now, with above 6 points of comparison, anyone can say that there exists an Administrative clergy in the Baha'i faith. Comparing the above 6 points, we can conclude that there is clergy in the Baha'i Faith, but in a polished pack of Administration. In other doctrines, the sign of clergy is a cap/turban and a robe, however in the Baha'i religion it is a black Giorgio Armani Suit with a necktie. Being a Baha'i myself, the point that hurts me the most is that although it is clear in the text that there will be no clergy in the Baha'i faith, majority of the Baha'is still follow this system which is taking them away from the true teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Master.

-Humble Servant of Baha



BLAST FROM THE PAST

RIVER OF EXPLANATION

Under the title of "The River of Explanation" the New Historian will offer monthly a few drops gathered from the writings of Baha-U-Llah and Abdul Baha. It is hoped that these tiny drops will increase the thirst of the way-farers in the path of Truth and help them toward the shore of the Boundless Sea.

The darkness of this gloomy night of war shall pass away.

The sun of universal peace shall dawn from the horizons of the hearts.

Have patience, wait, but do not sit idle.

Work while you are waiting.

Smile when you are wearied with monotony.

Be firm while everything around you is being shaken.

Be hopeful while the ugly face of despair grins at you.

Speak aloud while the malevolent forces of hell try to crush your mind.

Be valiant and courageous while men all around you are cringing with fear and cowardice.

Do not yield to the overwhelming power of despotism and war.

Serve the cause of democracy, freedom and peace.

Diffuse the fragrance of the rose of reconciliation.

Continue your journey to the end.

The bright day is coming!

The nucleus of the New Race is forming!

The harbingers of the New Ideals of International brotherhood are appearing!

The trees of hope will be clothed with verdant leaves!

The copper of scorn and derision will be transmuted into the gold of honor and repute!

The desert of ignorance will be changed into the luxuriant gardens of knowledge!

The threatening clouds shall be dispelled, and the stars of peace and reconciliation will irradiate in the clear consciences of all the children of men!

ABDUL BAHÁ.

(Reference: New History Magazine, Volume I, Number 3, December 1931)

FREE BAHAI ACTIVITIES

"The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all created things may be regenerated and made new. Speak, and hold not thy peace. The day star of blissfulness shineth above the horizon of Our name, the Blissful, in as much as the kingdom of the name of God hath been adorned with the ornament of the name of thy Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Arise before the nations of the earth, and arm thyself with the power of this Most Great Name, and be not of those who tarry."
(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 27)

Dear faithful,

Allah'u'Abha!

Happy Naw-Ruz everyone! We are glad to enter 2021 on an eventful note. Friends from across the world has reported some activity happening in their neighbourhood, with message of Baha'u'llah being delivered to young and old equally. We are also proud of The Caravan team; they have made great efforts internationally with their readership reaching far and wide. Thank you all for making efforts in making it a success. May Baha'u'llah bless each of you for your efforts and may this magazine continue to grow twofold.

Looking towards the country-wise activities, Germany has been the most active community

with lots of in-house gatherings happening despite COVID cases are on a rise in the country. The photos that we had received showcased that friends were all wearing mask and maintaining social distancing while sanitizer dispensers were also seen in the pictures. We appreciate the dedication of our friends but would advise them to take proper precautions to avoid any further damage to the country. In last two months, there were a total of 21 gatherings including children and junior youth programs. Please note that the Free Baha'is were never after numbers but since our friends from Germany have shared that number, we thought of sharing it with our readers. Otherwise, we have never encouraged our friends to conduct a greater number of gatherings.

Australia has been into constant lockdown because of which the friends had to call off the Naw-Ruz celebration at a few places. The in-house programs were on-going wherein friends invite their relatives and neighbours organising feasts and discussing different issues in the light of different religion. This activity helps build a bond with the wider community and promotes unity. It also leads to subtly put the words of Baha'u'llah in the ears of Baha'is and non-Baha'is concomitantly. The same strategy has been working well even with the friends in India. Friends in India are more focused towards organising weekend gatherings, as people are mostly busy during weekdays and hence attendance are relatively

higher all through the weekends. Respected Rajnesh Guha Sir has been our backbone and is supporting the Cause by reaching out to the wider community with the message of Baha'u'llah. He has been successful in organising classes wherein he along with his friends read and explain Some Answered Questions to the junior youths. Looks like, Australia and India are going to be star performers in the coming days. We have high expectation from these two countries. Let's all keep looking forward to it.

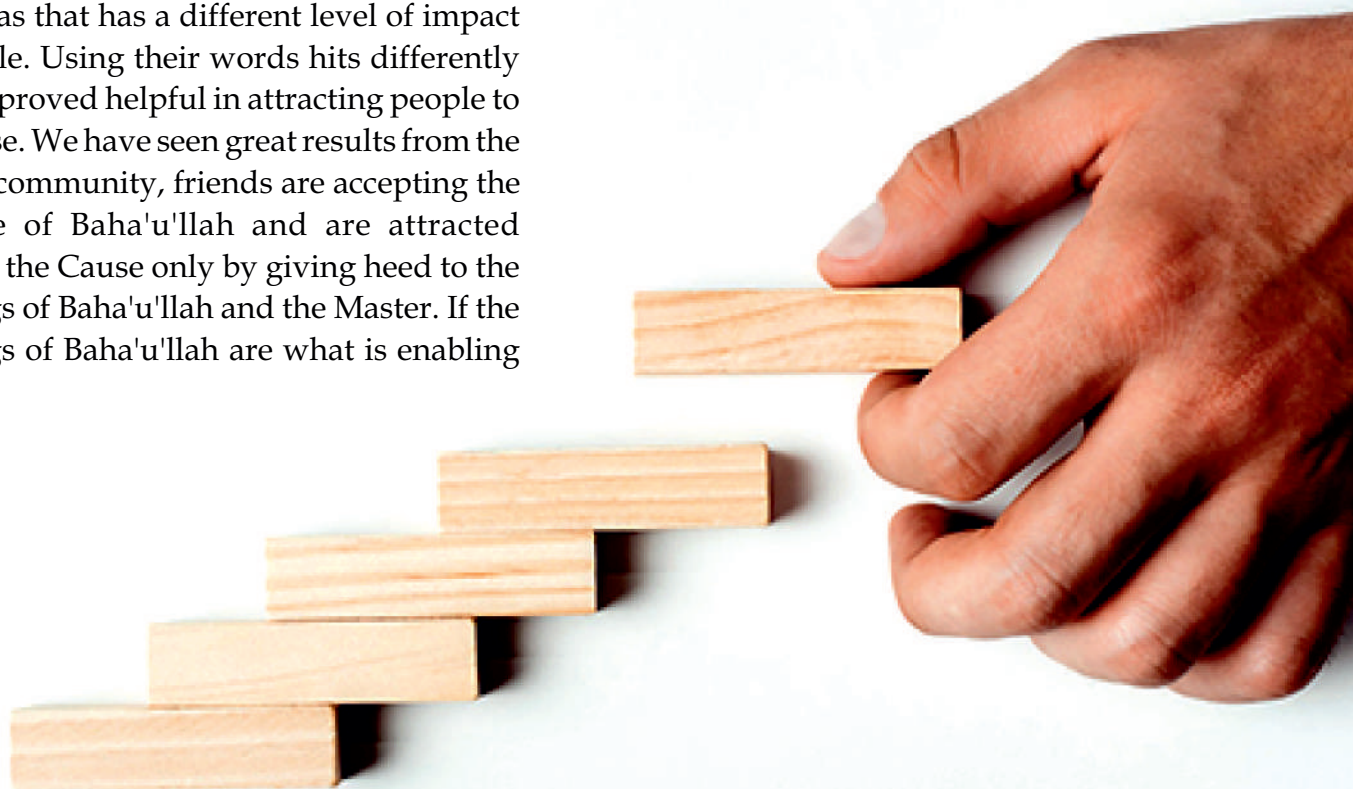
Friends from Canada had plans of launching our first book under the banner of Free Baha'i Publishing Trust, but COVID is making it difficult for them but if all goes well, our book will get published this year. Other activities in Canada are slightly slow due to COVID, however, there are a few junior youth programs that happened in the last two months and some more are planned in and around Naw-Ruz and Ridvan. Our advice to all the friends who have plans of conducting programs around these events should be to focus on the teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Master, as that has a different level of impact on people. Using their words hits differently and has proved helpful in attracting people to the Cause. We have seen great results from the Angola community, friends are accepting the message of Baha'u'llah and are attracted towards the Cause only by giving heed to the teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Master. If the teachings of Baha'u'llah are what is enabling

the humanity to advance to the highest levels, then one must search the depth of their hearts for an accurate response. What else will rescue humanity but the efforts of mankind who each make the welfare of people without being prejudice about their colour, creed, or religion. That's how you build human society, one step at a time.

With that, we would like to once again thank all our friends who are working for the cause and pray to Baha'u'llah to bless them with success and happiness. Let's aim at working towards being the best Baha'i magazine, with the objective of spreading the pristine message of Baha'u'llah and the Master. At the end, wishing you all a Happy Naw-Ruz once again. Sending loads of positive vibes this festive season. Keep rocking, stay blessed.

Warmest Baha'i regards,

Free Baha'i Team



“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!



SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Email 1:

Hello friends,

In the last addition of the Caravan Magazine, I read that Free Baha'is in the USA and Canada had met through E-Meetings, and I would like to connect with them and attend the next E-Meetings scheduled. I am living in the US. Could I reach them, possibly through email, so I can participate using this platform? Or perhaps they could contact me? Please let me know.

I appreciate all you do,

Raf

Answer:

Hi Rafael,

Thanks for your email. Good to hear from you. Are you a Free Baha'i yourself? How did you hear about us?

Regarding your question, yes, we do connect occasionally. Please provide us with your Gmail id and Skype id, and we will add you to our group, so when next time there's an online get together, we will keep you posted.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Team Free Baha'is

Email 2:

Hello, Free Bahais,

How do I get copy of the Caravan magazine? I disagree with the UHJ and any association with the United Nations. I do not believe in any authoritarianism in this religion or theocracy.

What is Huquq'ullah? Some sort of donation?

I want to read the magazine before I submit my story.

thank you

James T

poor.

Do let us know if you have any questions.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Team Free Baha'is

Answer:

Hi James,

Thanks for your response.

You can read our magazine here:
<http://freebahais.org/the-caravan-magazine/>

Regarding your question, Huququ'llah, literally means 'Right of God'. Baha'is should make a 19% voluntary payment on any wealth in excess of what is necessary to live comfortably, after the remittance of any outstanding debt. The money is used for social and economic development projects or similar philanthropic purposes. It is really unfortunate to see the Huququ'llah monies being used by the Baha'i Administrative members for travelling to different countries in the name of religion. We the Free Baha'is are extremely against any such expenses and hence advice our friends to spend their Huququ'llah monies towards the betterment of the society, particularly the needy and the



Email 3:

Hi my name is devon Atkins and I was wondering if there were any Free Baha'is in the united states? If so would it be against the Baha'i laws for Free Baha'is to gather unofficial Free Baha'i group where every one can talk about the Free Baha'i Faith, as long as it did not assume authority of the Faith?

Answer:

Hi Devon,

Allah'u'Abha!

How are you? Are you a Baha'i yourself?

Yes, we do have Free Baha'is in the United States, infact there are quite a lot of them there. We can definitely check with them and if you could pls share your contact details, we will ask them to get in touch with you.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,

Team Free Baha'is



Email 4:

Hey Free Bahai, I came across ur website and also went through ur magazine n understood that the Bahai religion has a lot of similarity with Islam. Are you a part of Islam? If yes why do Muslims do not consider Baha'is as apostates? What is your views about them?

Answer:

Hi Nikhil,

Allah'u'Abha!

Thanks for writing to us. We are glad to see your email.

Regarding your query, Baha'i is new to the world religion, emerging as a separate faith in 1866 by its founder Baha'u'llah. The Baha'i faith advanced out of Babism, which emerged out of Islam during the 1840s. Emerging from a certain religious tradition does not mean a sect retains the older faith's practices and beliefs. Christianity advanced from Judaism, but the two religions are completely distinct. Baha'i faith is even more distinct from Islam. God progressively has revealed more and more about Himself and human purpose through different manifestations, including Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Jesus, Muhammed, and Baha'u'llah. Each manifestation adds to humanity's understanding about God and the universe, according to the Baha'is. Each manifestation also deals with problems exceptional to the time and culture where he appears. Since there are newer problems arising in today's new world order, there should be new laws and solutions, and hence a new manifestation in the face of Baha'u'llah was needed.

Regarding Muslims considering Baha'is as

apostates, each and everyone has the right to form an opinion, but if they read their own books, they will be able to draw a conclusion that Baha'u'llah is the need to the era and we all must follow Him and accept Him as the new manifestation. For those who don't want to accept, it's their personal choice. But we do not label them with different titles, as that is against the teachings of Baha'u'llah. We accept them as our brothers and are ready to embrace them with open arms whenever. Just to let our readers know, we have a huge follower base who are from the Muslim community and they read our magazine and keep writing to us with their queries. We are glad that not once have we come across any hardcore criticism from a single person from that community, in fact they appreciate our work and are influenced by the teachings of Baha'u'llah. We are honoured to have them with us.

Hope that answers your questions. If you have any more queries, do write us back and we will be happy to help.

Have a great day ahead.

Regards,

Team Free Baha'is



KNOW YOUR HERITAGE



Some relics of Baha'u'llah, including His pen and pencase



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

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."

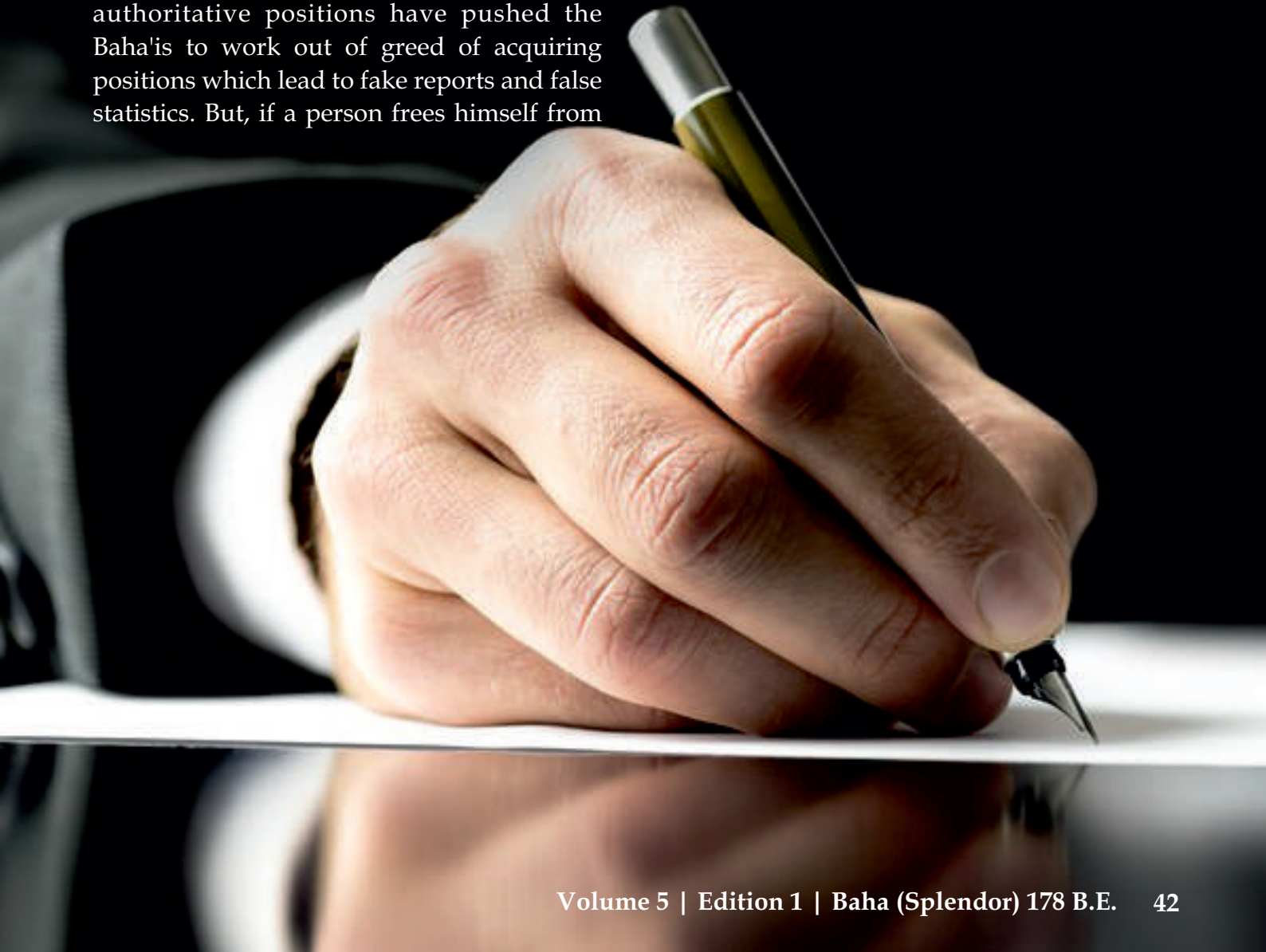
(Reference: Star of the West, Vol. 8, pg. 116)

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 fundamental theme of the Free Baha'i faith is that humanity is a single race which should now be united in one universal society. Baha'u'llah has taught us that as civilization evolved physically and adapted socially, so world unity is the final stage in the evolution of humanity. Human beings in the beginning lived in secluded family groups, then formed tribes, further moving into city states and then nations. The Free Baha'is believe that humanity must now move forward to global maturity, recreating itself as a single human family.

"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens." Baha'u'llah

The Baha'i teaching has always taught us unity and harmony. It was never focused on enmity and discord, however after the ascension of the Master, it was presented as if the Baha'i teachings were only about excommunication and separation. It all changed with the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian, based on an alleged Will and Testament of Abdu'l Baha.

"So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth." (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to

the Son of the Wolf, p. 14)

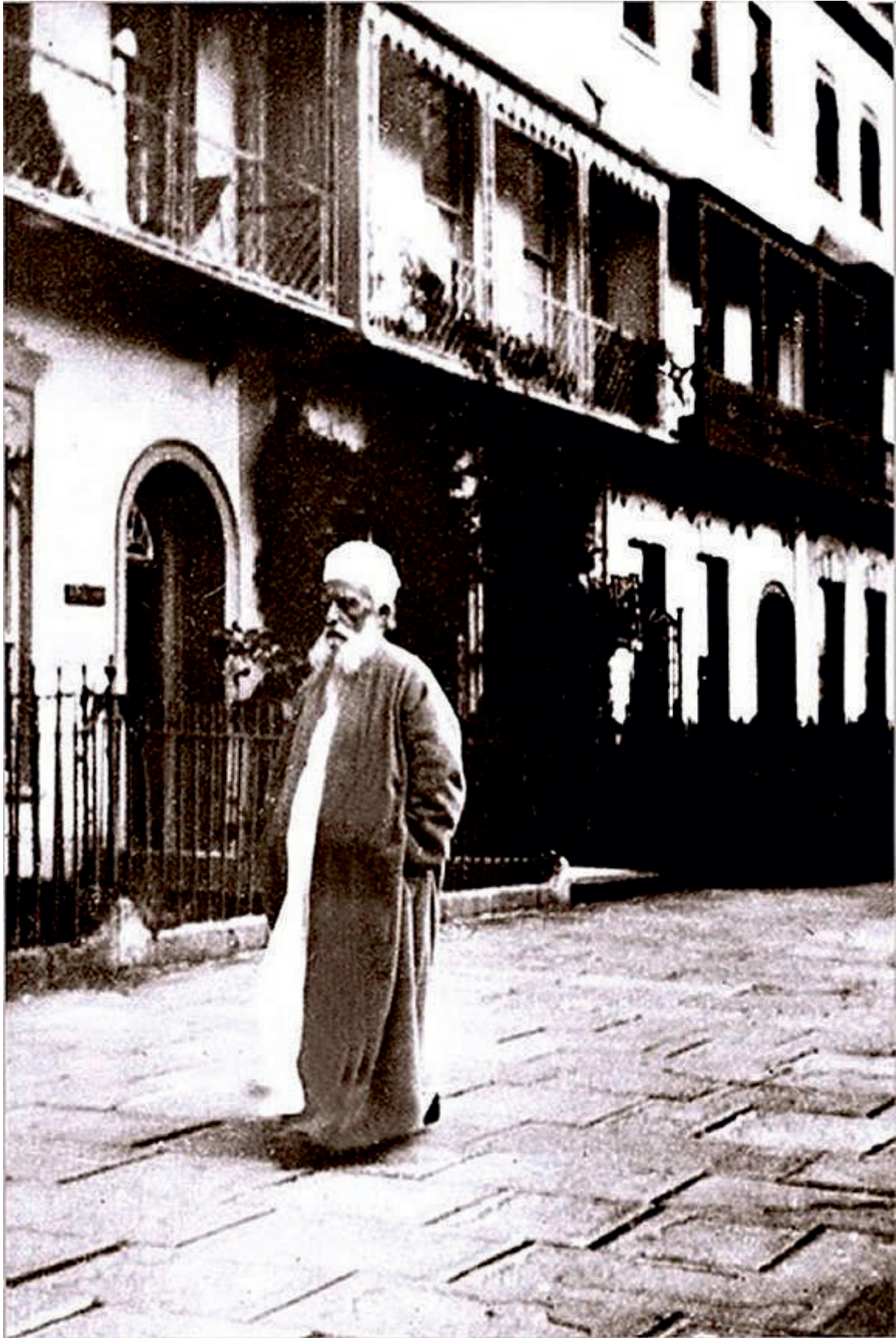
"Inasmuch as this hatred and enmity, this bigotry and intolerance are outcomes of misunderstandings, the reality of religious unity will appear when these misunderstandings are dispelled." (Abdu'l Baha, Foundations of World Unity, p. 96)

The first talks that Abdu'l Baha gave upon his arrival in America was of love and unity. He very well knew the ills and the remedy for humanity. We all know the ills and know the needs too. Then let us concern ourselves with speaking up about the remedy.

"This is a spiritual house, the home of the spirit. There is no discord here; all is love and unity. When souls are gathered together in this way, the divine bestowals descend. The purpose of the creation of man is the attainment of the supreme virtues of humanity through descent of the heavenly bestowals. The purpose of man's creation is, therefore, unity and harmony, not discord and separateness." (12 April 1912, Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Howard MacNutt, 935, Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York)

The principle that we belong to one human family is at the core of the Baha'i Faith. One must aim at achieving it, at any cost, for the sake of Baha'u'llah and his teachings. This will then provide an excellent overview to other faithful of what the Free Baha'i faith is about and where we are heading as a worldwide community.

THROWBACK



Abdu'l Baha in London

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**PUBLISHED BY THE FREE BAHÁ'Í FAITH
IN
SINGAPORE | THAILAND | USA**



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**THE CARAVAN || REVIVED EDITION
VOLUME 4 - EDITION 6**

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