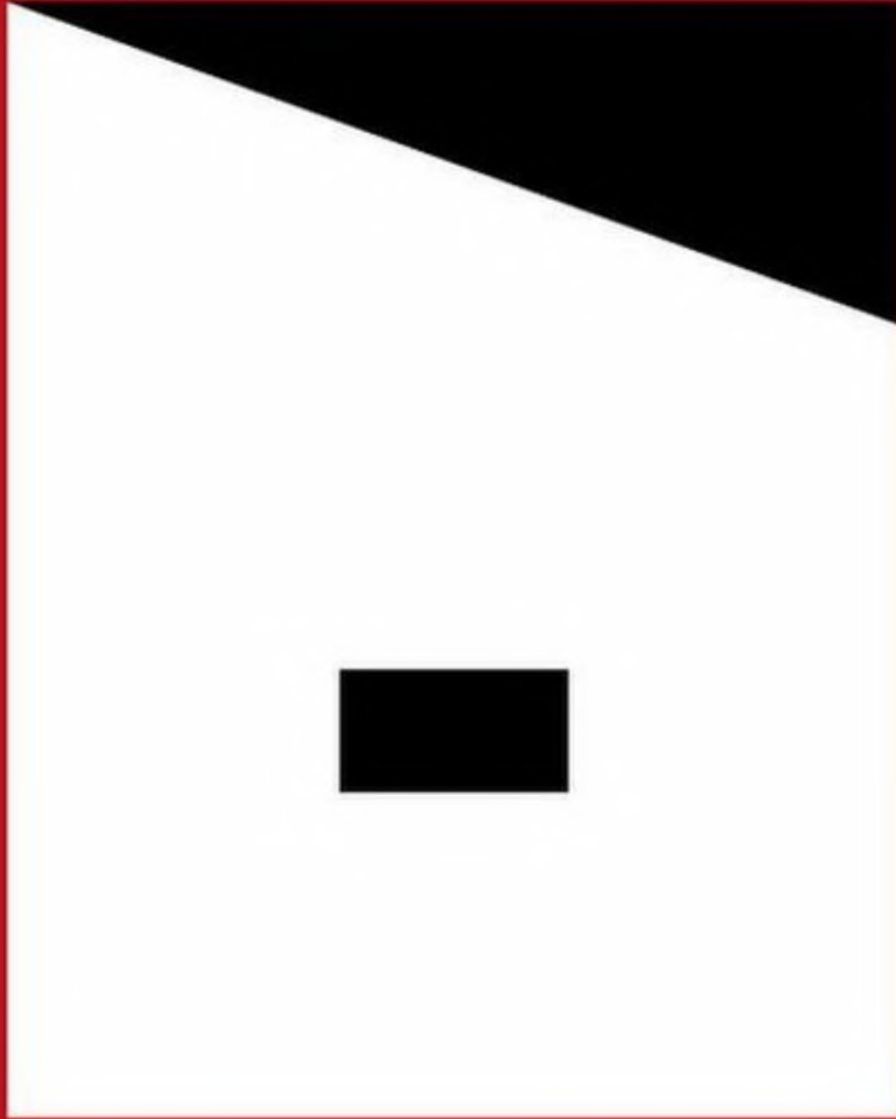


THE **CARAVAN**



Shoghi Effendi vs. Hitler:
A Startling Comparison!

Article Inside

Faking News, Facing Fury:
Haifans Publicity Drama

Article Inside

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PRAYER



O Lord so rich in bounty, so replete with grace,
Whose knowledge doth mine in most heart and soul embrace!

At morn, the solace of my soul is none but Thee;
The knower of my loss and woe is none but Thee.

The heart that for a moment hath Thy mention known
Will seek no friend save longing pain for Thee alone.

Withered be the heart that sigheth not for Thee,
And better blind the eye that crieth not for Thee!

In all mine hours of deepest gloom, O Lord of might,
My heart hath Thy remembrance for a shining light.

Do, through Thy favour, breathe Thy spirit into me,
That what hath never been may thus forever be.

Consider not our merit and our worth,
O Lord of bounty, but the grace Thou pourest forth.

Upon these broken-winged birds whose flight is slow
Out of Thy tender mercy newfound wings bestow.

- Abdu'l Baha

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

As we gather here for the November 2023 issue of *The Caravan*, we are drawn to a significant moment in the Baha'i Faith, a time when the pages of history are intertwined with spirituality, devotion, and a deep sense of purpose. This month, we celebrate the birth of two luminous souls, the Bab and Baha'u'llah, whose teachings have illuminated the path of countless seekers around the world.

On October 16, we commemorate the birth of the Bab, the Herald of the Baha'i Faith. His life, marked by unwavering dedication to the spiritual awakening of humanity, continues to inspire and guide us. A day later, on October 17, we celebrate the birth of Baha'u'llah, the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, whose teachings have ushered in a new era of unity, peace, and universal love.

As we honour these two blessed occasions, we also recognize the challenges that the Baha'i community has faced throughout its history. One of the most perplexing chapters in our

history is the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the self-proclaimed Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, in November 1957. His sudden and untimely death has left many questions unanswered, casting a shadow over his legacy and the faith he dedicated his life to.

A report published by the Free Baha'is of UK raises troubling questions about the circumstances surrounding Shoghi Effendi's death. The report suggests that he may not have died a natural death but was instead the victim of foul play. This shocking revelation challenges our understanding of this pivotal moment in Baha'i history.

According to the report, Shoghi Effendi's death report hints at suspicious circumstances, leading to suspicions that he may have been murdered. Furthermore, the report alleges that he was secretly buried in London, far from the holy land of Haifa, where he had spent most of his life. These claims have ignited a passionate debate within the Baha'i community, and some concerned Baha'is even call for a thorough and unbiased investigation to uncover the



truth.

The Baha'i Faith has always been a beacon of transparency, justice, and unity. In this spirit, we encourage open dialogue and exploration of these important historical questions. While we celebrate the births of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, we also recognize that our faith's history is not without its shadows. It is our duty to seek the truth, promote justice, and uphold the principles that Baha'u'llah has entrusted to us.

In the pages of this month's special issue about Shoghi Effendi, we invite you to reflect on the lives and teachings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, and to engage in thoughtful discussions about the self-proclaimed guardian and to continue the journey of spiritual discovery that unites us all.

Thank you for joining us on this journey of faith and knowledge. Together, we shall illuminate the path toward a more unified and enlightened world.

With profound love and unwavering unity,

Team Free Baha'is.

LOST IN EMOTION



Sometimes I feel lost in a maze of emotions,
where every direction feels like a dead-end street.

I feel so alone in my search for an answer
that I start to blame God for not meeting my needs.

But God never promised that life would be easy,
for trials will come in different forms.

But He did promise that He would never forsake us
and that we can still have peace in the midst of the storm.

God's love runs deeper than the deepest ocean,
but He is not altered by the moods that we bring.

For every problem, He has a solution.
He is consistently working behind the scenes.

So whenever you feel like you're losing the battle
and you want to just bow your head in defeat,
remember, with God you are always the winner,
for with Him by your side, you will never be beat!

- Josephine Zavala-Florez



Shoghi Effendi with John Esslemont (left), a prominent British Baha'i Author from Scotland

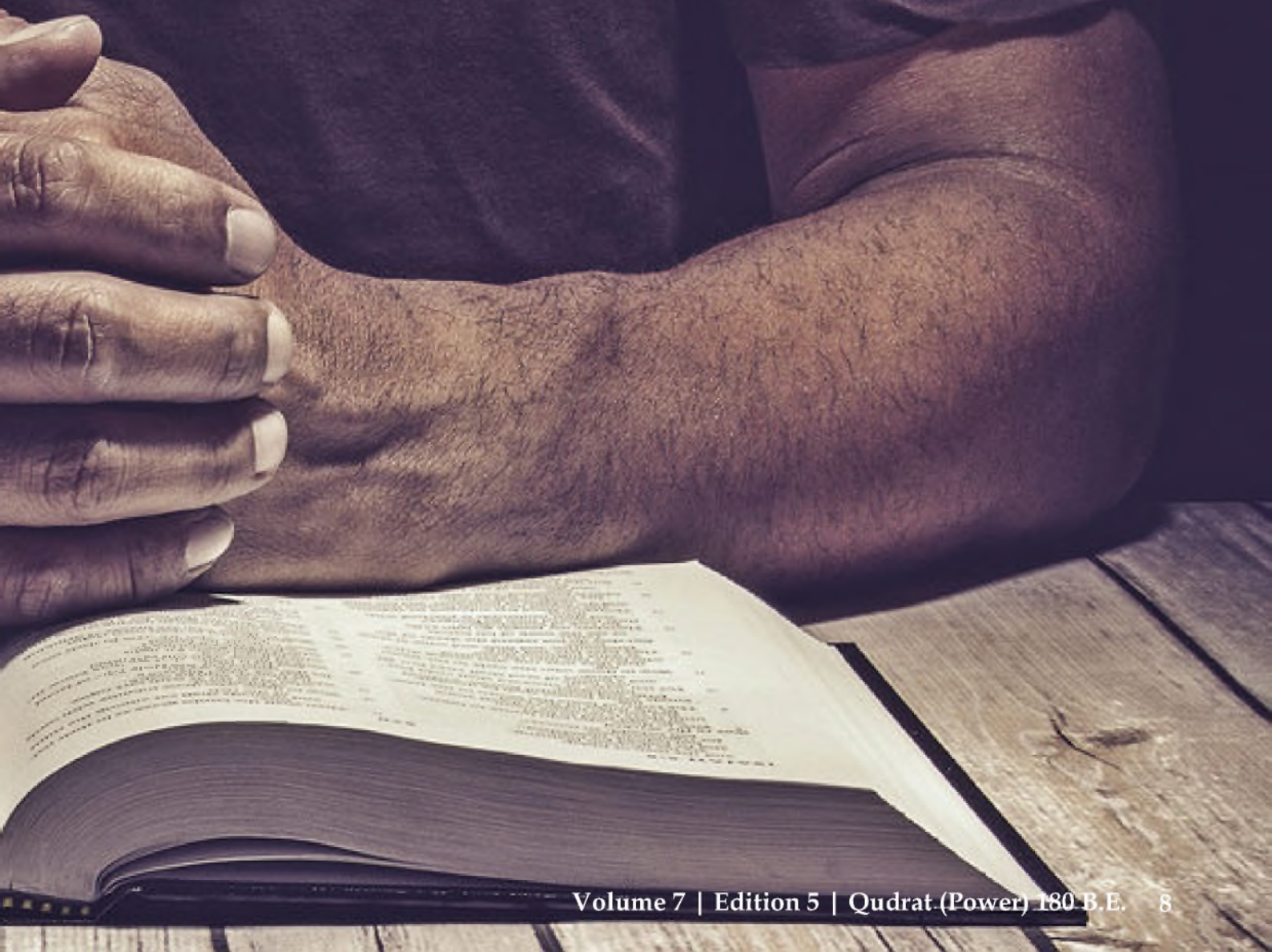
DIVINE LAWS

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

The kissing of hands is forbidden in the Book. This (kind of reverence for religious leaders) is what you were forbidden by your Lord, the Mighty, the Wise. No one need beg forgiveness of another. Repent to God for yourselves. He is the Mighty and Relenting Giver and Forgiver.

O creatures of the Merciful One, rise to the service (khidma) of the Cause that griefs caused by those who disbelieved in the Rising-place of the Verses (al-ayat) may not overtake you. When the Promise came and the Promised One appeared, the people disagreed and each faction held to its own opinions and illusions.

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



SHOGHI EFFENDI VS. HITLER: A STARTLING COMPARISON!

In the tapestry of the Baha'i Faith's history, few figures stand as prominently as Shoghi Effendi. As the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith from 1921 until his passing in 1957, he played a pivotal role during a period marked by both progress and controversy. It's within the pages of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab's insightful work, "Abdu'l Baha's Grandson," that we uncover a wealth of intriguing insights. This article delves into key passages from the book that cast a revealing light on some of the most contentious aspects of Shoghi's leadership.

Questioning Excommunication

George Maychin Stockdale's letter, featured early in the book, unfurls the curtains on one of the more controversial practices during Shoghi's leadership: the excommunication of family members of Baha'u'llah. Stockdale's candid inquiries provide us with a glimpse into the inner debates and external criticisms that shadowed this practice during Shoghi's time. (Abdu'l Baha's Grandson, pg 13-14)

CHURCH OF CHRIST IN AMERICA

Methodist Branch

George Maychin Stockdale, Minister

**Clinton, New York,
March 25, 1942.**

**Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Guardian of the Bahai Cause,
Persian Colony,
Haifa, Palestine.**

Dear Guardian of the Bahai Cause,

Your Christlike Grandfather, Abdul Baha, when asked on one occasion, "What is a Bahai?" replied,

"TO BE A BAHAI SIMPLY MEANS TO LOVE ALL THE WORLD: TO LOVE HUMANITY AND TRY TO SERVE IT; TO WORK FOR UNIVERSAL PEACE AND UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD."

(J. E. Easlemont, "Baha'U'Llah and the New Era," page 70.)

I'd like to make the above my own definition of what it is to be a Christian. On this definition the Hindu Gandhi and the Buddhist Das Gupta are both Christians and Bahais, as well as true Hindus and Buddhists respectively. Some of my Bahai friends do me more honor than I deserve by telling me that I am a Bahai, although I am just trying to be a Christian.

If we agree on the above, and I hope we do, it is the more amazing to get word of what are called, and seem to be, your excommunications of Ruhi Effendi Afnan, your cousin; his wife; your sister and *others*.

What troubles me, my dear Sir, is the method employed. If we love all humans, and the Love of God cannot dwell in us unless we do, how can we use any other than Love and Persuasion as our means of seeking change of mind and heart in those we deem wrong? Can **excommunication** be a method of Love?

Now far be it from us to prematurely make up our minds in this controversy. We would hear your side, Sir. Yet we assure you that even if you should submit proof positive of the commission of the more heinous crimes by any or all of the excommunicated, (which I am sure you wouldn't,) still would we say that the **WAY of LOVE** demands we retain community with the vilest of sinners. **THEY NEED LOVE EVEN MORE THAN NINETY and NINE SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMED SOULS, in whom GOD (LOVE) DWELLS.** That seems clear to me from both the teachings of Christ and of Baha'U'Llah, interpreted too by Paul and Abdul Baha respectively.

It troubles me too that it is reported that you are not too sure amid this world madness just what loyalty we owe to God and what to the state. We are blessed beyond many here in America, as in Britain, in that the Draft Law here specifically makes room for us pacifists, who could not disobey God at the command of man, no matter what the consequences. We know you have the cares of a world gone mad in suicidal slaughter on your mind and heart. Yet it would be heartening to have from you a word, clear as crystal, that Bahaism officially "although making no attempt to bind the consciences of its individual members, will **NOT OFFICIALLY ENDORSE, SUPPORT OR PARTICIPATE IN WAR.**" I have slipped into the exact words of our Methodist Branch of the Christian Church, with which I agree one hundred per cent.

Yours, strong in the Faith that **LOVE (GOD)** alone can win,

(Signed) George Maychin Stockdale

Dr. Holmes' Observations: A Stark Contrast

Dr. Holmes, who visited Haifa during the era of Shoghi Effendi, provides us with a vivid canvas upon which to compare the leadership styles of Shoghi and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He aptly notes the stark contrast between the two. Shoghi Effendi, as Dr. Holmes observes, often held himself aloof, maintaining a certain distance from visitors. This is a striking divergence from 'Abdu'l Baha's warm, friendly, and informal approach to those who came to visit. These observations beckon us to ponder the nuances of Shoghi's leadership style and interpersonal dynamics. (Abdu'l Baha's Grandson, pg. 15)

In another letter, written three days later, Dr. Holmes refers to his visit to Haifa. He says in part :—

Ever since you wrote me, my mind has been going back to the day in Haifa when I made a call on Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, to pay my profound respects through him to the Bahai faith. It was at the time when I was making my pilgrimage to the sepulchres of Abdul Baha and the other prophets and saints. I remember my astonishment when I was taken into the reception room, placed in the corner farthest removed from the door, instructed that I must rise when Shoghi Effendi entered, and must under no circumstances approach his person. I was hardly used to that sort of thing, and it gave me a kind of a chill which spoiled the interview. I had previously met Abdul Baha on the occasion of his visit to this country, had sat close to him, taken his hand, and conversed with him in most informal and friendly fashion. And here in Haifa I had to keep my distance, as though I

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were in the presence of some king or pope. I didn't like it, and the memory of it as a kind of offense has lingered with me ever since. I assume that you have met with Shoghi Effendi, and I wonder if you were put through any such performance as this.

Shoghi Effendi's Comparison to Hitler: A Controversial Analogy

Among the most provocative passages in Sohrab's book is the analogy drawn between Shoghi Effendi and Hitler, as penned by Stamford in a letter. This comparison is nothing short of a searing critique, igniting a firestorm of debate within the Baha'i community. It sparks questions about Shoghi's leadership, decision-making, and the impact of his actions during his tenure as the Guardian. (Abdu'l Baha's Grandson, pg 17)

A word of thanks and congratulation are overdue. It took me exactly one month to peruse carefully the book and four pamphlets you sent me. The suit you have won is on behalf of spiritual liberty. May it stay won. But I fear you cannot save those who are mad with an official self-deification, or those who are greedy for tyranny, to exercise or endure. It would seem as tho' the spirit of Hitler had taken possession of the Guardian of the Cause, to cover in this fashion what he should have protected, with mortal ridicule by "Ex-communication!"

I know you want me to express myself. Mrs. Chanler and you can find my considered views in the paragraph quoted (pp. 221-2 "Broken Silence") spoken by Dr. Butler, my former teacher; and more explicitly in the paragraphs (pp. 163-165 "Broken Silence") written in 1925 by Dr. Alfred W. Martin, the very year I shared a trip to Beth-Shean near the Jordan with the most delightful Ruhi . . .

**(Signed) William Norman Guthrie,
Retired Rector of St. Mark's-In-The Bouwerie,
New York, N. Y.**

Shoghi Effendi's Stance on Marriage and Excommunication

The book ventures into Shoghi Effendi's stringent stance on marriages within the Baha'i community. It becomes evident that Shoghi had strong reservations about his female family members marrying foreigners or non-Baha'is. Those who dared to cross this boundary faced the threat of excommunication. This stance leaves us with important inquiries about the lines of religious authority, individual choice, and the cost of adhering to one's principles within the Baha'i Faith. (Abdu'l Baha's Grandson, pg 22)

Furthermore, Shoghi Effendi did not approve of foreigners, as husbands to the members of his family; he also did not approve of prospective husbands who were not Bahais or who had lately become Bahais. These restrictions set his cousins completely apart from other young people, so it is not surprising that they fell in love among themselves.

In conclusion, "Abdu'l Baha's Grandson" offers us a compelling and, at times, challenging exploration of Shoghi Effendi's leadership. These referenced passages force us to grapple with the complexities and controversies surrounding his tenure. Shoghi Effendi's usurped Guardianship highlights the need for every leader to face scrutiny and debate. The Baha'i community continues to engage with these historical questions, seeking a deeper understanding of its past leaders' visions while navigating the ever-evolving needs of the present. Debates arose regarding his approach to excommunication, his interactions with Baha'is and non-Baha'is, and the extent of his authority within the Baha'i community. These complexities emphasize that open discourse and examination are essential for effective leadership, as they ensure accountability, development, and the ongoing refinement of a movement's vision and principles.

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)

INTRODUCING *THE CARAVAN* APP!



INSPIRING QUOTES



“O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men.”

— The Bab

“O SON OF SPIRIT! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.”

— Baha'u'llah

“The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy.”

— Abdu'l Baha

FAKING NEWS, FACING FURY: HAIFANS PUBLICITY DRAMA – GUEST ARTICLE

This is a story narrated by Leroy, as claimed by a sans-guardian covenant breaker.

What a disgrace!

In a public talk at the Intercontinental Conference in Kampala in 1953, Dorothy Baker referred several times to the "Revelation of God." Unfortunately, a reporter from the leading local newspaper misunderstood it as "revolution." It was learned that the paper intended to print a report of her talk on the front page the next day, under a bold headline, suggesting that if people did not adopt the Baha'i Faith, their only alternative was rebellion. A meeting of the Hands and the British National Assembly, which had convened the Conference in Kampala, resulted in the decision to take immediate action by calling the editor to ask him to withdraw the story.

Leroy Ioas and Ali Nakhjavani were the delegation sent to meet the editor. They proceeded to the office of the paper, explained the purpose of their call, and were received promptly. Ali recalled that Leroy

"eloquently" presented the aims and purposes of the Faith, appealing to the editor to provide a fair account of Mrs. Baker's talk, rather than a distorted one. The editor's response was "cool and negative." He trusted the integrity of the reporter and the accuracy of the report. Further attempts at clarification by Leroy were to no avail. With some impatience in his manner, the editor stood up and proffered his hand to Leroy from behind his desk, intending to bid him farewell.

Here, Ali continues the story:

"Leroy was sitting cross-legged on our side of the desk, hardly moving. With a confident tone in his voice, he said, 'I refuse to accept your hand, and we will not leave until we are satisfied that you understand our position.' I well remember the sense of discomfiture on the editor's face as he resumed his seat. Leroy went on to explain the extent of the Faith's spread throughout the world, the recognition and respect its institutions had received from civil authorities in various lands, and its declared policy of non-interference in political affairs and its aloofness from



FAKE NEWS

political controversies. If the article were to be published, the paper, which upheld fairness and justice, could not refuse our 'letter to the Editor' refuting its report of what our speaker had said. The editor conceded, with the reservation to add his own comments.

At this point, Leroy decided to leave, and we shook hands and departed. When we came out, Leroy told me to remember this man and his newspaper. No individual or institution that deliberately strove to misrepresent the Faith and its growth had ever met with good fortune. He ventured to predict that this man and his paper would be disgraced. The article came out, our letter was written and sent. He published it but added ungracious and offensive remarks in his comments.

About four years later, a new daily paper was started in Kampala and, to our amazement, became so popular within the first few weeks of its appearance that the other paper had to close down. The shock was too much for the editor, who resorted to heavy drinking.

One morning in that same year, a few minutes before 8:00 a.m., I stood at the door of the Kampala Post Office, waiting for it to open. I was the first to enter the Main Hall. In a corner was the emaciated figure of the once-powerful editor of the paper, holding a broom in his shaking hands, completing his duty to sweep the floor of the Post Office before the morning business began. Our eyes met. I nodded, but he was too humiliated and debased to respond. He was on the verge of becoming an alcoholic and soon lost that menial job, eventually passing away.

When Leroy had spoken about the future disgrace that would overtake the man and his paper, I could not believe that the "rod of divine chastisement," as the Guardian points out in his writings, would be so "rigorous," "swift," and "unsparing" in its visitation.

Comment:

One of our well-known Free Baha'is, who passed away to the Abha Kingdom last year, stated, "It is a complete fake story. Bahais themselves put such fake stories in the media for publicity."



INVESTIGATION OF REALITY

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

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

FREE BAHAI ACTIVITIES

"The Blessed Beauty is like the sun, and the lights are its rays. When the rays of the sun become separated from the sun itself, they vanish and disappear; but when they are with the sun, they have importance. The real source of bounty is the sun, not the rays." – Abdu'l Baha

Key Theme of the Activities: Celebrating the Births of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, and Raising Awareness!

In October, Free Baha'i communities around the world came together to celebrate the birth of two significant figures in the Baha'i Faith, the Bab and Baha'u'llah, while also continuing their mission to raise awareness about certain aspects of Baha'i history and beliefs. Here's a glimpse into how these celebrations and awareness efforts unfolded in various parts of the world.

Free Baha'is across the United States organized gatherings filled with prayers, music, and discussions centred around the teachings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. They shared stories of courage and resilience, highlighting the importance of unity and independent investigation of truth, which are core principles of the Free Baha'i community. In Canada, Free Baha'is came together for a series of online seminars and workshops.

These events not only celebrated the births of the Bab and Baha'u'llah but also provided a platform for open discussions about their faith's history, including alternative perspectives on Shoghi Effendi's role and actions within the Baha'i community. Coming soon from a dedicated team in Canada: an upcoming book on the "Analysis on the alleged Will and Testament of the Master." This anticipated release promises to provide fresh insights into this intriguing aspect of Baha'i history. Stay tuned for an engaging exploration and discussion.

The Free Baha'i community in Germany hosted an art exhibition featuring works inspired by the teachings of Baha'u'llah. Through art, they conveyed messages of love, unity, and spiritual exploration, promoting a deeper understanding of their faith and its principles.

In Thailand, Free Baha'is organized a series of service projects, embodying the spirit of selflessness and community building emphasized in the Baha'i Faith. They used these projects as an opportunity to engage with their neighbours and raise awareness about their faith's beliefs and history.

Free Baha'is in India hosted public talks and panel discussions on the life and teachings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. They also shared information about their community's perspective on the role of Shoghi Effendi and encouraged attendees to ask questions and engage in thoughtful dialogue.

In Australia, Free Baha'is held interfaith gatherings where they shared their faith's core teachings and values with members of other religious communities. They emphasized the Baha'i principle of the oneness of religion and the importance of religious tolerance and cooperation.

As we approach the month of Qudrat (Power), Free Baha'is worldwide are gearing up for a series of awareness campaigns and events to shed light on the circumstances surrounding the death of Shoghi Effendi. They seek answers to the many questions raised about the cause of his death, especially considering his wife's presence in London at the time. The Free Baha'i community encourages open dialogue and investigation into these matters, fostering an environment of transparency and accountability.

While Free Baha'is do not consider Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, it's essential to recognize the diversity of beliefs within the Baha'i community and encourage respectful discourse. The Free Baha'i

community believes in the importance of independent investigation of truth, and they continue their efforts to raise awareness and promote understanding among all Baha'is and seekers of truth worldwide.

In the spirit of unity and the search for truth, the Free Baha'i community invites individuals from all backgrounds to engage in open and respectful conversations about the history and teachings of their faith, fostering an environment of tolerance, acceptance, and spiritual exploration.

Warmest Baha'i regards,

Free Baha'i Team





SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Email 1:

Does the Free Baha'i community believe in Huququ'llah? I've read Free Baha'is talking against Huququ'llah and I also agree with you all upto certain extend. My point is why is Huququ'llah even required when Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha emphasized the voluntary nature of contribution.

Answer:

Hi,

Allah'u'Abha!

The Free Baha'i community acknowledges the principle of Huququ'llah as outlined by Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha, but we hold a unique viewpoint on its application. Baha'u'llah did indeed emphasize the voluntary nature of contributions in the Baha'i Faith, and this is a fundamental principle we uphold.

However, we have concerns about how

Huququ'llah is administered by the Universal House of Justice (UHJ). Our interpretation is rooted in the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha, which suggest that Huququ'llah is meant for the well-being of individuals, especially the poor and needy.

Here are some relevant quotes from the Writings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha:

Baha'u'llah stated, 'The Lord, the Most High, hath ordained that the duty of Huququ'llah be laid upon the wealthy among His servants, and its recompense fixed at nineteen percent of their surplus wealth.' (Kitab-i-Aqdas, Verse 89)

'When the husband or wife dieth, it devolveth upon the other to pay unto the Lord, as the one hath paid, the whole Huququ'llah which had remained unpaid, together with the interest due thereon.' (Kitab-i-Aqdas, Verse 91)

'He that payeth the Huququ'llah at the fixed time, God shall bring him into the most great Paradise on the Day of Resurrection.'
(Baha'u'llah)

From these quotes, it is clear that Huququ'llah is intended for the betterment of the community, particularly those in need. However, we believe that the administration of Huququ'llah by the UHJ has strayed from this original purpose.

In our view, the Huququ'llah funds should be disbursed directly at the individual level to assist the poor and needy, in alignment with Baha'u'llah's intent. Regrettably, the UHJ has not been transparent about the allocation of Huququ'llah funds and does not provide a detailed annual account. This lack of transparency and accountability has led to concerns within our community about the misuse of Huququ'llah money.

In conclusion, while we acknowledge the significance of Huququ'llah as a Baha'i principle, we emphasize that its application should be in accordance with the teachings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l Baha, with funds disbursed directly to individuals in need to fulfil the original intent of this noble concept.

Hope that answers your question.

Regards,

Team Free Baha'is



Email 2:

Is there a recommended time that one should pray as per the teachings of Baha'u'llah?

Answer:

Hi,

Allah'u'Abha!

According to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah has provided guidance on the timing of obligatory prayers. The Kitab-i-Aqdas is a central text and contains important laws and principles for the Baha'is. The Kitab-i-Aqdas provides specific guidance on the timing of obligatory prayers. Baha'is are encouraged to pray daily and observe the specific times designated for the obligatory prayers:

"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 to-day is of those who turn back from God in the eternity of past eternities. Fear God, all ye My creatures, all of you together! 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: the Overseer: the Self-Subsistent One. Recite the verses of God to such a degree that you are not overtaken by lassitude and sorrows. Do not weigh down spirits with what causes them lassitude and heaviness, but put upon them that which lightens them so that they soar with the wings of the verses to the Rising-place of the explanations. This is nearer to God, if you were only wise."

The Kitab-i-Aqdas prescribes three daily obligatory prayers. Baha'is are enjoined to perform these prayers at specific times during the day. The times for these obligatory prayers are as follows:

1. The Obligatory Prayer at Dawn (Salat al-Subh): This prayer is performed in the morning hours, specifically from sunrise until two hours after sunrise. It is a prayer of thanksgiving and supplication to God for guidance and strength at the start of the day.

2. The Obligatory Prayer at Noon (Salat al-Awwal): This prayer is to be said at midday, from noon until two hours after noon. It is a moment for reflection and seeking God's assistance during the activities of the day.

3. The Obligatory Prayer in the Evening (Salat al-Maghrib): This prayer is to be recited in the evening, starting just after sunset and extending until two hours after sunset. It is a time for introspection and connection with the divine after the day's work.

In addition to these daily obligatory prayers, the Kitab-i-Aqdas also prescribes a Long Obligatory Prayer, to be recited once in twenty-four hours. This prayer is longer and more comprehensive in its content and is highly recommended for Baha'is to observe.

It's important to note that while the Kitab-i-Aqdas provides specific times for these obligatory prayers, Baha'is are encouraged to perform their daily devotions with sincerity and a heart turned toward God. The emphasis is on the spirit and intention of the prayers, as well as the regularity of their observance.

Overall, the Kitab-i-Aqdas provides clear guidance on the timing of obligatory prayers, which are an integral part of the Baha'i Faith and play a central role in the daily spiritual life of Baha'is.

Thanks and Regards,

Team Free Baha'is

Email 3:

In several Writings, Baha'u'llah mentions "the Most Great Law". Do you know what is meant by that expression?

Answer:

Hi Pierre,

Allah'u'Abha!

"The Most Great Law" is a term used by Baha'u'llah in His Writings to refer to the spiritual and ethical principles, teachings, and laws that are central to the Baha'i Faith. It encompasses the entire body of laws, guidance, and spiritual concepts revealed by Baha'u'llah for the betterment of humanity. Here is a response, supported by sayings and teachings of Baha'u'llah.

"The Most Great Law," as mentioned by Baha'u'llah in His Writings, is a reference to the comprehensive set of spiritual and ethical principles and teachings that He has revealed for the guidance and upliftment of humanity. It encompasses the laws and ordinances that govern individual conduct and collective life in a Baha'i community.

One of the key passages in Baha'u'llah's writings that alludes to the concept of "The Most Great Law" is found in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, His Most Holy Book, where He states:

"Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty. Abstain from that which is forbidden in My Holy Book. Hold fast to the precepts of My mercifulness. Guide yourselves by the radiant light of My countenance, and let not your hearts be troubled by the thorns of the world."

In this passage, Baha'u'llah emphasizes the importance of observing His commandments, refraining from that which is forbidden, and adhering to His teachings as a means to draw closer to the divine.

"The Most Great Law" includes the Baha'i laws and ordinances related to prayer, fasting, the equality of men and women, the prohibition of backbiting and gossip, the obligation to educate children, the duty to serve humanity, and many other principles that form the foundation of Baha'i belief and practice. Baha'u'llah's teachings, collectively referred to as "The Most Great Law," guide individuals and communities toward spiritual growth, moral development, and the establishment of a just and unified global society.

In essence, "The Most Great Law" represents the divine guidance and laws set forth by Baha'u'llah for the spiritual and moral advancement of humanity. These teachings are seen as essential for the betterment of the individual and society and are a central focus of the Baha'i Faith's mission to bring about the oneness of humanity and the establishment of lasting peace and unity in the world.

Hope that answers your question. Respond in case of any further queries.

Regards,

Team Free Baha'is



KNOW YOUR HERITAGE



Pen cases of Baha'u'llah on display at the British Museum

WEBSPLORE

The Kansas City Star (Kansas City, Missouri) • 01 Mar 1997, Sat • Page 62

E-14 The Kansas City Star Saturday, March 1, 1997

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Rigid hierarchy has taken over Baha'i religion, dissidents say

But conservative leaders maintain that orthodoxy has not been altered.

IRA RIFKIN
Houston News Service

The first 19 days of March are a special time for Baha'is, members of a worldwide religion with a liberal reputation based on its vision of the underlying unity of all faiths, the oneness of humanity and the harmony of science and religion.

The Baha'i faith grew out of Islam, and like the Muslim month of Ramadan, Baha'is set aside the 19 days — the month of 'Ala according to the Baha'i calendar — as a period of dawn-to-sunset fasting and spiritual reflection. The month ends with the Feast of Nawruz, the Baha'i new year. It's a festive time of community gatherings featuring prayers, spiritual readings, socializing and lots of food.

For former Baha'i Juan Cole, however, this year's feast will be anything but festive.

Cole, a professor of Middle East history at the University of Michigan, is among the nation's leading experts on the faith. Until last May, when he formally resigned from the movement, he had been a Baha'i for 25 years.

Now he counts himself among a small but influential group of past and present liberal Baha'is who are angry over what they say is the hijacking of the faith by a cadre of conservative leaders who are more interested in preserving their authority than the Baha'i principle of "independent investigation of reality."

That principle is among the core tenets of the Baha'i faith first articulated by its founder, the 19th-century Persian prophet known as Baha'u'llah (the Glory of God) and who is revered by the faithful as an incarnation of God akin to Jesus.

According to the critics, the National Spiritual Assembly, which oversees the American Baha'i movement, is dominated by a tight-knit group of authoritarian officials who keep the lid on free expression by threatening dissidents with excommunication and by manipulating the process by which NSA members are elected.

In the Baha'i faith, excommunication can include total shunning by family members and friends. Spreading their message via the Internet, the dissidents — many of whom, like Cole, once were members of the faith's intellectual elite



Juan Cole, a professor at the University of Michigan, is a former Baha'i who thinks the faith has been taken over by its conservative leaders.

say the nine-member National Spiritual Assembly also hides the truth about the faith's shrinking American following.

"Baha'is are not open — repeat, not open — about how controlling this organization is," Cole said. "Virtually no one who comes into this faith realizes that by becoming a Baha'i you are making your individual conscience hostage to the dictates of the leadership."

"The Baha'is started out Unitarian and ended up Calvinist."

Emphasis on order

For their part, American Baha'i leaders, with headquarters in the Chicago suburb of Wilmette, Ill., dismiss the critics as an inconsequential group of disgruntled elitists who — blinded by their attraction to the faith's more liberal aspects — overlooked its deeply conservative side.

This includes an emphasis on "administrative order" as a prime religious goal. Baha'u'llah taught that religions fail in large part because of the disunity that tears them apart following their initial burst of spiritual energy.

As a result, tight controls are placed on all public statements made by Baha'is — including the work of scholars who are required to submit their writings for pre-publication review.

"We always seek consensus. But if there is no unanimity, then the majority must prevail," said Firuz

Kazemzadeh, a National Spiritual Assembly member and its secretary for external affairs.

Not all Baha'i scholars find fault with this.

"I personally don't buy the totalitarian argument," said Canadian Baha'i B. Todd Lawson, an assistant professor of Islamic studies at McGill University in Montreal.

Michael McMullen, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Houston at Clear Lake, said prior review "makes sense" because much of the writings of Baha'u'llah and his successors remain untranslated from their original Persian and Arabic, and therefore are inaccessible to the majority of American Baha'is.

"My experience has been that what is corrected are factual errors, not interpretation," said McMullen, who is a local Baha'i leader in League City, Texas.

The dissidents also claim the Baha'i prohibition against public campaigning or nominating candidates for spots on the National Spiritual Assembly serves to keep it a closed body controlled by the American Baha'i establishment.

Baha'i leaders say they are only following an orthodoxy established by Baha'u'llah and his successors — his son, Abdu'l-Baha, and his great-grandson, Shoghi Effendi, who died in 1957.

Assembly members are elected annually by a fixed number of 171 delegates who represent local Baha'i assemblies across the continental United States.

Robert C. Henderson, a former Atlanta businessman who is the assembly's secretary-general, making him the highest ranking American Baha'i (the faith has no ordained clergy), said there had been 12 changes in the assembly's membership the last 15 years.

"That's not indicative of a closed group," he said.

Free local debate

However, Cole said each change resulted from retirement, death or a member moving out of the country. No incumbent who has sought re-election has been defeated since 1961, he said.

Cole also noted that family and other close associations are common among American Baha'i leaders. Six of the nine current assembly members have family or professional connections.

McMullen, the University of Houston sociologist, acknowledged that the prohibition against nominations and campaigning made it hard for those outside the Baha'i establishment to win election to the National Spiritual Assembly.

But on the local level, he added, there is a much higher leadership turnover. Moreover, on this level of authority, he said, even controversial issues are freely debated without fear of official disapproval. Henderson also said that "Baha'is are specifically asked to air their grievances" at local and national conventions. "There are specific channels for such expression, but it must remain within these established channels."

"The Baha'i faith is outwardly liberal but inwardly conservative," he continued. "It's a matter of scripture."

Baha'is claim a worldwide membership of more than 5 million people living in more than 200 nations and territories, about half in India.



Robert C. Henderson is secretary-general of the National Spiritual Assembly and the highest-ranking American Baha'i.

In Iran — where the faith first emerged in the 1840s when Baha'u'llah proclaimed himself to be the divine manifestation for the modern era — there are 300,000 Baha'is. Considered heretics by the Muslim authorities, they live as a persecuted minority.

The heresy charge stems from Baha'u'llah's claim to prophet status some 1,200 years after Muhammad, the founder of Islam, proclaimed himself God's final prophet.

How many in America?

In the United States, Baha'is claim about 130,000 members — a third of whom are African-Americans. About 21,000 live in California, and the largest concentration — more than 6,000 — is in greater Los Angeles.

Baha'is are also relatively strong in South Carolina, Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Illinois, Arizona and Washington state.

However, Baha'i critics say the religion's membership numbers are wildly inflated. Citing friendly but unnamed sources at Baha'i headquarters in Wilmette, the dissidents say no more than 30,000 names represent active Baha'is with verifi-

able addresses.

A 1993 book on Americans' religious affiliations, *One Nation Under God* by demographers Barry Kosmin and Seymour Lachman, estimated the number of adult Baha'is in the United States at 28,000. "Every new religious movement that is in a missionary phase tends to overestimate its members," Kosmin, currently at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in London, said in an interview. "They count people coming in, but never count those who leave."

Kazemzadeh, the Baha'i official, insisted that the 130,000 figure was "essentially accurate." But he also said that "if active means contributing funds and serving locally, it's probably about half the number on the list."

Sizable Baha'i communities in the South are traceable to the influx of mostly rural African-Americans who joined the faith in the 1960s and '70s, drawn by its strong rejection of racial prejudice.

During those same years, relatively large numbers of white liberals, attracted by the faith's emphasis on a society free of social injustice, also joined. It is mostly members of this group — many of them scholars of Baha'i texts, the Middle East and its languages — that today lead the dissident movement.

Linda Walbridge, an anthropologist at the University of Indiana — specializing in the growth of Islam in America, became a Baha'i in 1966 when she was a 19-year-old VISTA volunteer on the Navajo Reservation. Despite her anger at the hierarchy, she remains a Baha'i.

Raised Roman Catholic, Walbridge said she was attracted to the Baha'i faith by its "promise of universalist vision... It was far more open than anything I had experienced."

Walbridge's public dissent has prompted Baha'i officials to threaten to label her a "covenant breaker" — a form of excommunication that would require her Baha'i husband to divorce her or risk his own excommunication.

"It was supposed to be the most liberal, broad-based religion on the face of the earth," said Walbridge. "Instead, it turned out to be a straitjacket."

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



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

Want to be a contributor for 'The Caravan'?

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

Thank you!

BLAST FROM THE PAST

THE STORY TELLER

THE Orientals are great lovers of mystic tales, and since time immemorial the Prophets and seers have given their lessons in the simplest form of parable and story. In the early days of the Cause it was customary to gather about Abdul Baha in the evenings and oftentimes such tales would be told, sometimes by himself, sometimes by different Bahai teachers. Mirza Ahmad Sohrab kept a record at the time and now a series of them will appear in the New Historian.

THE ROYAL BIRD GEDAM

(which symbolizes the appearance of the Prophet in the World)

Far, far away in an inaccessible jungle, beyond the Indian Ocean, there lived a Bird of royal birth and beauty. Her name was Gedam. Her song was endowed by the Creator of mankind with incomparable sweetness and charm, the strains of her melodies belonging to other worlds, rather than to this material world, which is full of the cawing of crows, the cackling of geese and the twittering of sparrows.

When Gedam began to sing, she raised her melody to such a height as to silence all the other birds, who became ashamed of their own weak and discordant noises. They were filled with envy and regret, and before long they began to wonder what they could do to bring about the end of Gedam. Finally they arranged a large meeting in which they agreed upon a campaign of destroying the eggs of Gedam whenever and wherever she laid them; so that her descendants might not increase. In order to carry out this plan with vigilance, they appointed a committee to execute the decree.

For a number of years Gedam patiently endured the persecution of these birds who were exulting over their success, and she never said anything nor manifested any trace of concern. Then one day when the birds were away from home she laid one egg in the nest of each of them and flew off to a lofty branch which she perched singing joyfully.

The other birds, not knowing what had happened, sat as usual on their eggs, and after awhile the little ones came out of their narrow world into open space. Tenderly and with much solicitude and devotion they were taken care of, and from the mother birds' beaks the little ones were fed. Soon their dear growing wings were covered with soft feathers like unto velvet, and the parents watched them with pride and delight.

Meanwhile Gedam from the tree tops considered her children day by day with wistful tenderness and concern, and when she observed that they had reached the flying stage she took a position in the high atmosphere and sent out a call which vibrated and rocked through space. The little birds hearing the thrilling notes, and feeling in their hearts their true kinship with the invisible singer, opened their wings and fluttered upward.

And from every nest, other birds—doves, sparrows, partridges, nightingales, little foster brothers and sisters of the children of Gedam, spread their wings also and joined in the flight. All the various forms, colors and species of birdhood, they rose together toward the azure height, and there in a divine company, circling and circling around their beloved mother, they sang a song of gratitude and sweet fellowship which flowed and echoed over all the earth.

DID YOU KNOW ?



In a recent revelation by the Free Baha'is, Shoghi Effendi's death certificate has taken center stage, leaving many intrigued and curious. The certificate boldly declares his gender as "UNKNOWN," sparking a whirlwind of conversations within the Baha'i community.

For years, there have been speculations and discussions about Shoghi Effendi's personal life, including claims about his sexual orientation. This seemingly cryptic detail on his death certificate has reignited these conversations. Some have suggested that the declaration of gender as "UNKNOWN" might lend credence to past rumors.

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England & Wales deaths 1837-2007 Transcription

First name(s)	SHOGHI E
Last name	RABBANI
Gender	Unknown
Birth day	-
Birth month	-
Birth year	1896
Age	61
Death quarter	4
Death year	1957
District	Marylebone
County	London
Volume	5D
Page	350
Country	England
Record set	England & Wales Deaths 1837-2007
Category	Birth, Marriage, Death & Parish Records
Subcategory	Civil Deaths & Burials
Collections from	Great Britain, England

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URL of this page: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=bmd%2fdaz%2f000985%2f011>

The individual who shared this document has hinted at possessing more thought-provoking records, promising to release them at the right moment. These revelations have left many eagerly anticipating what else might come to light.

As this mystery unfolds, it serves as a reminder that history can often hide remarkable secrets and untold stories in its archives. The Baha'i community, like any other, is not immune to intriguing historical revelations. We wait in anticipation for what further information may emerge, and how it might influence our understanding of this pivotal figure in Baha'i history. Stay tuned for more from The Caravan magazine as we follow this intriguing journey.

THROWBACK



Shoghi Effendi with Ruhi Afnan, two prominent grandsons of Abdu'l Baha

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."

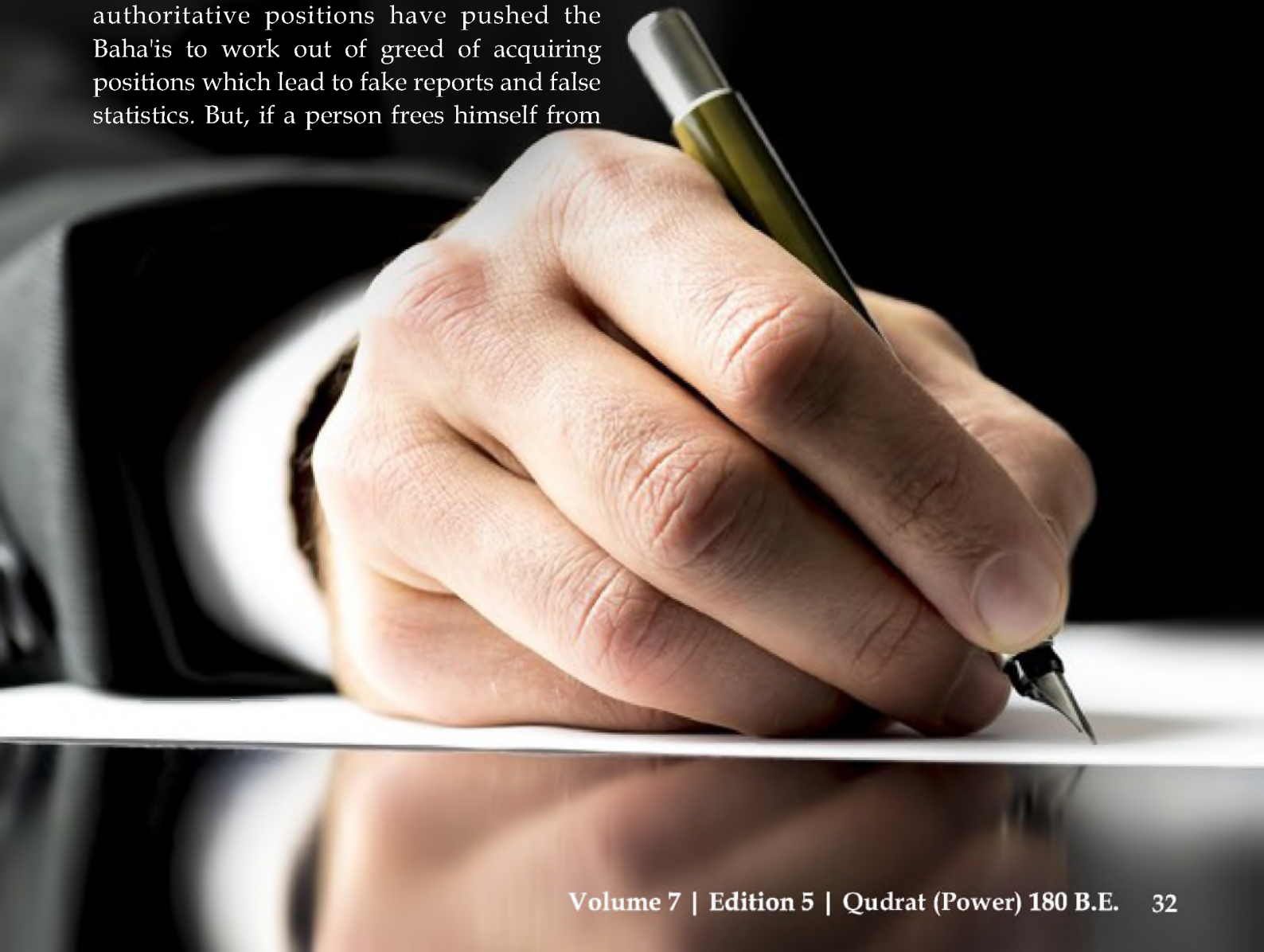
(Reference: Star of the West, Vol. 8, pg. 116)

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?



BEYOND THE NARRATIVE

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE WILL &
TESTAMENT OF ABDU'L BAHA



COMING SOON

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www.freebahais.org | info@freebahais.org

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