

T W E N T Y - F O U R Q U E S T I O N S A N D A N S W E R S

I N

B A H A ' I A D M I N I S T R A T I O N

(Questions taken from the Study Outline)

WHO, MAY I ASK, WHEN VIEWING THE INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE CAUSE, ITS FAR-FLUNG RAMIFICATIONS, THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF ITS AFFAIRS, THE DIVERSITY OF ITS ADHERENTS, AND THE STATE OF CONFUSION THAT ASSAILS ON EVERY SIDE THE INFANT FAITH OF GOD, CAN FOR A MOMENT QUESTION THE NECESSITY OF SOME SORT OF ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY THAT WILL INSURE, AMID THE STORM AND STRESS OF A STRUGGLING CIVILIZATION, THE UNITY OF THE FAITH, THE PRESERVATION OF ITS IDENTITY, AND THE PROTECTION OF ITS INTERESTS?

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THE BAHAI ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

Selected Questions taken from the Study Outline
with brief Answers culled from the "References"
given by the Study Outline Committee.

WHY IS AN ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NECESSARY?

"The administrative principles are not ends in themselves but are instruments for the creation of unity based upon justice. They are procedures - that is, ideal methods for handling problems and situations - and not judgments. The administrative principles are not to be altered or waived for the sake of any personality, but on the other hand their correct application means that final decisions are arrived at only when the procedure has been correctly followed. The National Assembly feels that by now all believers realize that the Baha'i administrative principles have been created for our mutual protection, and that without them we would be thrown into grievous confusion."
Baha'i News, #89, p. 9-10

"For Baha'u'llah, we should readily recognize, has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these He, as well as 'Abdu'l-Baha after Him, has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy. These are destined to be a pattern for future society, a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth..."

"...The Spirit breathed by Baha'u'llah upon the world, and which is manifesting itself with varying degrees of intensity... can never permeate and exercise an abiding influence upon mankind unless and until it incarnates itself in a visible Order, which would bear His name, wholly identify itself with His principles, and function in conformity with His laws."
World Order of Baha'u'llah, Further Considerations, p. 7

WHY IS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPARE THE BAHAI ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER WITH SYSTEMS OF THE PAST?

"The Baha'i Commonwealth of the future, of which this vast Administrative Order is the sole framework, is, both in theory and practice, not only unique in the entire history of political institutions, but can find no parallel in the annals of any of the world's recognized religious systems. No form of democratic government; no system of autocracy or of dictatorship, whether monarchical or republican; no intermediary scheme of a purely aristocratic order; nor even any of

the recognized types of theocracy, whether it be the Hebrew Commonwealth, or the various Christian ecclesiastical organizations, or the Immamate or the Caliphate in Islam - none of these can be identified or be said to conform with the Administrative Order which the master-hand of its perfect Architect has fashioned..."

"...this Order constitutes the very pattern of that divine civilization which the almighty Law of Baha'u'llah is designated to establish upon earth. The divers and ever-shifting systems of human polity, whether past or present, whether originating in the East or in the West, offer no adequate criterion wherewith to estimate the potency of its hidden virtues or to appraise the solidity of its foundations."

Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, p. 60

IN WHAT WAY IS THE BAHAI ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER DIFFERENT FROM A PURELY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM? FROM AN AUTOCRATIC? FROM AN ARISTOCRATIC?

"This Administrative Order cannot be said to have been modeled after any of these recognized systems of government, it nevertheless embodies, reconciles and assimilates within its framework such wholesome elements as are found in each of them... The admitted evils inherent in each of these systems being rigidly and permanently excluded, this unique Order, however long it may endure and however extensive its ramifications, cannot ever degenerate into any form of despotism, or oligarchy, or of demagoguery which must sooner or later corrupt the machinery of all man-made and essentially defective political institutions."

Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, p. 62

"...Moreover, he who symbolizes the hereditary principle in this Dispensation has been made the interpreter of the words of its Author, and ceases consequently, by virtue of the actual authority vested in him, to be the figurehead invariably associated with the prevailing systems of constitutional monarchies..."

p. 61

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS NEW ORDER AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF PRESENT-DAY INSTITUTIONS?

"Might not this process of steady deterioration which is insidiously invading so many departments of human activity and thought be regarded as a necessary accompaniment to the rise of this almighty Arm of Baha'u'llah? Might we not look upon the momentous happenings which, in the course of the past twenty years, have so deeply agitated every continent on the earth, as ominous signs simultaneously proclaiming the agonies of a disintegrating civilization and birthpangs of that World Order - the Ark of human salvation - that must needs arise upon its ruins? The vitality which the organic institutions of this great,

this ever expanding Order so strongly exhibit; the obstacles...already surmounted are evidences of a power which a disillusioned and sadly shaken society can ill afford to ignore... Compare these splendid manifestations of the spirit animating this vibrant body of the Faith of Baha'u'llah with the cries and agony, the follies and vanities, the bitterness and prejudices, the wickedness and divisions of an ailing and chaotic world. Witness the fear that torments its leaders and paralyzes the action of its blind and bewildered statesmen. How fierce the hatreds, how false the ambitions, how petty the pursuits, how deeply-rooted the suspicions of its peoples! How disquieting the lawlessness, the corruption, the unbelief that are eating into the vitals of a tottering civilization!

Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, p. 63

"Let no one, while this System is still in its infancy, misconceive its character, belittle its significance or misrepresent its purpose. The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day..."

p. 64

WHAT TWO BAHAI WRITINGS CONSTITUTE THE CHIEF SOURCE OF THE BAHAI ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER?

"...certain basic principles with reference to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, which together with the Kitab-i-Aqdas, constitutes the chief depository wherein are enshrined those priceless elements of that Divine Civilization, the establishment of which is the primary mission of the Baha'i Faith. A study of the provisions of these sacred documents will reveal the close relationship that exists between them, as well as the identity of purpose and method which they inculcate..."

World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 3-4

THE WILL AND TESTAMENT OF ABDU'L-BAHA IS THE "CHARTER" OF A NEW WORLD ORDER.

"The creative energies released by the Law of Baha'u'llah, permeating and evolving within the mind of 'Abdu'l-Baha, have, by their very impact and close interaction, given birth to an Instrument which may be viewed as the Charter of the New World Order which is at once the glory and the promise of this most great Dispensation."

"The Administrative Order, which ever since 'Abdu'l-Baha's ascension has evolved and is taking shape under our very eyes in no fewer than forty countries of the world, may be considered as the framework of the Will itself, the inviolable stronghold wherein this new-born child is being nurtured and developed... It will, as its component parts, its organic institutions, begin to function with efficiency and vigor, assert its claim and demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fulness of time the whole of mankind..." Dispensation, 52

WHY CAN NOT THE SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS OF THE BAHAI FAITH BE SEPARATED FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES?

"It should be remembered by every follower of the Cause that the system of Baha'i administration is not an innovation imposed arbitrarily upon the Baha'is of the world since the Master's passing, but derives its authority from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, is specifically prescribed in unnumbered Tablets, and rests in some of its essential features upon the explicit provisions of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. It thus unifies and correlates the principles separately laid down by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, and is indissolubly bound with the essential verities of the Faith. To dissociate the administrative principles of the Cause from the purely spiritual and humanitarian teachings would be tantamount to a mutilation of the body of the Cause, a separation that can only result in the disintegration of its component parts, and the extinction of the Faith itself." World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 5

TRACE THE SUCCESSION OF AUTHORITY IN THE BAHAI FAITH.

"... Christ for instance did not appoint a center of authority and explanation. He did not say to his followers "Obey the one whom I have chosen." Upon one occasion His Holiness asked his disciples "Whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." His Holiness wishing to make firm the faith of Peter, said "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church," meaning that the faith of Peter was the true faith. It was a sanction of Peter's faith. He did not say that all should turn to Peter. He did not say "He is the branch extended from my ancient root."... This has been revealed however in all the books, writings and epistles of His Holiness Baha'u'llah regarding the appointed Center of the Covenant in this dispensation. Therefore the Baha'i Dispensation is distinguished from all others in this fact... After the departure of Christ various sects and denominations arose, each one claiming to be the true channel of Christianity but none of them possessed a written authority from Christ; none could produce proof from him; yet all claimed His sanction and approval.

Baha'u'llah has written a Covenant and Testament with His own pen declaring that the one whom he has appointed the Center of the Covenant shall be turned to and obeyed by all. Therefore thank God that Baha'u'llah has made the pathway straight... The purpose of the Covenant was simply to ward off disunion and differences... Should any soul so clearly violate and disobey this command can he even say he is a Baha'i? If anyone disobeys the explicit command of Christ can he truthfully say he is a Christian?" Promulgation of Universal Peace, Vol. 2, p. 380

WHAT IS THE RELATION OF THE GUARDIAN TO THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE?

"Though the Guardian of the Faith has been made the permanent head of so august a body he can never, even temporarily, assume the right of exclusive legislation. He cannot override the decision of the majority of his fellow-members, but is bound to insist upon a reconsideration by them of any enactment he conscientiously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Baha'u'llah's revealed utterances. He interprets what has been specifically revealed, and cannot legislate except in his capacity as member of the Universal House of Justice. He is debarred from laying down independently the constitution that must govern the organized activities of his fellow-members, and from exercising his influence in a manner that would encroach upon the liberty of those whose sacred right is to elect the body of his collaborators."

"...the Guardian of the Faith has been made the Interpreter of the Word and that the Universal House of Justice has been invested with the function of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings... Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested."

Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, 55-58

IS THERE ANY DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CENTER OF THE COVENANT AND THE GUARDIAN?

"Exalted as is the position and vital as is the function of the institution of the Guardianship in the Administrative Order of Baha'u'llah, and staggering as must be the weight of responsibility which it carries, its importance must, whatever be the language of the Will, be in no wise over-emphasized. The Guardian of the Faith must not under any circumstances, whatever his merits or his achievements, be exalted to the rank that will make him a co-sharer with Abdu'l-Baha in the unique position which the Center of the Covenant occupies - much less to the station exclusively ordained for the Manifestation of God... There is a far, far greater distance separating the Guardian from the Center of the Covenant than there is between the Center of the Covenant and its Author..."

Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, 58-59

HOW IS THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE TO BE ELECTED?

"...concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers... By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries, a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one. Unto this body

all things must be referred. It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text.

"By this House is meant that the Universal House of Justice is to be elected from all countries, that is, from those parts in the East and West...after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England." Baha'i Administration, 10-11

DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE DOMAIN OF THE GUARDIAN AND THAT OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

"...it is made indubitably clear and evident that the Guardian of the Faith has been made the Interpreter of the Word and that the Universal House of Justice has been invested with the function of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings. The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the Universal House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgment on such laws and ordinances as Baha'u'llah has not expressly revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested..."

"Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Baha'u'llah would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as Abdu'l-Baha has written, has been invariably upheld by the Law of God." "In all the Divine Dispensations," he states... "the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright." Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered. Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn."

"Not only does Abdu'l-Baha confirm in his Will Baha'u'llah's...statement, but invests this body (Inter. H. of J.) with the additional right and power to abrogate, according to the exigencies of time, its own enactments, as well as those of a preceding House of Justice..." "This it can do because these laws form no part of the divine explicit test."
Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, 56-58

WILL THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE BE GOVERNED BY GENERAL OPINION?

"...the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should be born in mind, are not, as Baha'u'llah's utterances clearly imply, respons-

ible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them. They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience. They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision... They, and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation." Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, 61

"God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth..."
Baha'u'llah, D. B. 61

WHAT FEATURES OF THREE OTHER GOVERNMENTS ARE REPRESENTED IN THE BAHAI ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER?

"The Administrative Order of the Faith of Baha'u'llah must in no wise be regarded as purely democratic in character inasmuch as the basic assumption which requires all democracies to depend fundamentally upon getting their mandate from the people is altogether lacking in this Dispensation..."

"Nor can the Baha'i Administrative Order be dismissed as a hard and rigid system of unmitigated autocracy or as an idle imitation of any form of absolutistic ecclesiastical government, whether it be the Papacy, the Imamate or any other similar institution, for the obvious reason that upon the international elected representatives of the followers of Baha'u'llah has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the Baha'i writings..."

"Nor is this Order identified with the name of Baha'u'llah to be confused with any system of purely aristocratic government in view of the fact that it upholds, on the one hand, the hereditary principle and entrusts the Guardian of the Faith with the obligation of interpreting its teachings, and provides, on the other, for the free and direct election from among the mass of the faithful of the body that constitutes its highest legislative organ..."

"Whereas this Administrative Order cannot be said to have been modeled after any of these recognized systems of government, it nevertheless embodies, reconciles and assimilates within its framework such wholesome elements as are to be found in each one of them..."

Dispensation of Baha'u'llah 61-62

ORGANIZATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WHAT IS THE IMMEDIATE PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY AND
WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE?

"...it is of vital importance that in every country, where the conditions are favorable and the number of the friends has grown and reached a considerable size, such as America, Great Britain...that a National Spiritual Assembly be immediately established, representative of the friends throughout that country. The immediate purpose is to stimulate, unify and coordinate by frequent personal consultations, the manifold activities of the friends as well as the local Assemblies; and by keeping in close and constant touch with the Holy Land, initiate measures, and direct in general the affairs of the Cause in that country."

"It serves also another purpose, no less essential than the first, as in the course of time it shall evolve into the National House of Justice (referred to in Abdu'l-Baha's Will as the 'Secondary House of Justice'), which according to the explicit text of the Testament will have, in conjunction with the other National Assemblies throughout the Baha'i world, to elect directly the members of the International House of Justice, that Supreme Council that will guide, organize and unify the affairs of the Movement throughout the world." Baha'i Administration, 34

"For reasons that are not difficult to discover, it has been found advisable to bestow upon the elected representatives of the Baha'i communities throughout the world the temporary appellation of Spiritual Assemblies, a term which, as the position and aims of the Baha'i Faith are better understood and more fully recognized, will gradually be superseded by the permanent and more appropriate designation of House of Justice. Not only will the present-day Spiritual Assemblies be styled differently in future, but they will be enabled also to add to their present functions those powers, duties, and prerogatives necessitated by the recognition of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, not merely as one of the recognized religious systems of the world, but as the State Religion of an independent and Sovereign Power. And as the Baha'i Faith permeates the masses of the peoples of East and West, and its truth is embraced by the majority of the peoples of a number of the Sovereign States of the world, will the Universal House of Justice attain the plenitude of its power, and exercise, as the supreme organ of the Baha'i Commonwealth, all the rights, the duties, and responsibilities incumbent upon the world's future super-state."

"It must be pointed out, however, in this connection that, contrary to what has been confidently asserted, the establishment of the Supreme House of Justice is in no way dependent upon the adoption of the Baha'i Faith by the masses of the peoples of the world, nor does it presuppose its acceptance by the majority of the inhabitants of any one country."

ATTITUDE OF BELIEVERS TOWARD GOVERNMENT, POLITICS AND NON-
BAHA'I ORGANIZATIONS

WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE OF BAHAI'S TOWARD GOVERNMENTS?

"...we are forbidden to utter slander, are commanded to show forth peace and amity, are exhorted to rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and harmony with all the kindreds and peoples of the world. We must obey and be the well-wishers of the governments of the land."
"..Serve ye the sovereigns of the world with utmost truthfulness and loyalty. Show obedience unto them and be their well-wishers. Without their leave and permission do not meddle with political affairs, for disloyalty to the just sovereign is disloyalty to God himself. This is my counsel and the commandment of God unto you. Well is it with them that act accordingly." Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i Administration, pp 4, 10-11

WHAT IS THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD CONTROVERSIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES?

"...Theirs is the duty to demonstrate, on one hand, their unqualified loyalty and obedience to whatever is the considered judgment of their respective governments...Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen. Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them. Let them rise above particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world. It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representatives, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must necessarily involve..." Golden Age of Baha'u'llah, p. 16-17

"Recognized believers shall not run for any public office as candidate or of any political party, nor take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion of any party or party platform...Political issues of a partisan character shall not be discussed at Baha'i meetings...Believers who speak on Baha'i platforms shall refrain from making negative and critical statements about any particular Government or National policy...Every Local Spiritual Assembly shall be responsible for the carrying out of these instructions by the believers in their respective communities. Local membership lists shall include only the names of those believers who faithfully preserve the non-political character of the Faith."

Baha'i News, #69 (1932)

WITH WHAT KIND OF GROUPS MAY BAHAI'S ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES?

"Bahai's should keep in touch with those progressive groups whose principles are in accord with Bahai principles. In each city, if one Bahai could keep in contact with the people of capacity in each progressive and universal group, numerous doors would be opened for Bahai service. Social Service Agencies and workers are almost always prepared soil for the seeds of a New Life.

"Attend all Conferences of an Inter-racial, Inter-religious, or International nature, endeavoring, if possible, to have Bahai's active delegates and workers in the Conference." Bahai News, #71, (1933)

WHAT ARE THE GUARDIAN'S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

"...To be a Bahai and at the same time accept membership in another religious body is simply an act of contradiction that no sincere and logically minded person can possibly accept. To follow Bahai'u'llah does not mean accepting some of His teachings and rejecting the rest. ...it is only too obvious that in most of its fundamental assumptions the Cause of Bahai'u'llah is completely at variance with outworn creeds, ceremonies and institutions." Bahai News, #93 (1935)

DIFFICULTIES THAT AROSE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF EXPLICIT DIRECTIONS
FROM CHRIST AS TO SUCCESSION AND INSTITUTIONS.

"...The fundamental reason why the unity of the Church of Christ was irretrievably shattered, and its influence was in the course of time undermined, was that the Edifice which the Fathers of the Church reared after the passing of His First Apostle (Peter) was an Edifice that rested in nowise upon the explicit directions of Christ himself. The authority and features of their administration were wholly inferred, and indirectly derived, with more or less justification, from certain vague and fragmentary references which they found scattered amongst His utterances as recorded in the Gospel. Not one of the sacraments of the Church; not one of the rites and ceremonies which the Christian Fathers have elaborately devised and ostentatiously observed; not one of the elements of the severe discipline they rigorously imposed upon the primitive Christians; none of these reposed on the direct authority of Christ...For this reason, in later generations, voices were raised in protest against the self-appointed Authority which arrogated to itself privileges and powers which did not emanate from the clear text of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and which constituted a grave departure from the spirit which that Gospel did inculcate. They argued with force and justification that the canons promulgated by the Councils

of the Church were not divinely-appointed laws, but were merely human devices which did not even rest upon the actual utterances of Jesus. Their contention centered around the fact that the vague and inconclusive words, addressed by Christ to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," could never justify the extreme measures, the elaborate ceremonials, the fettering creeds and dogmas, with which His successors have gradually burdened and obscured His Faith."

World Order of Baha'u'llah, Further Considerations, 8-9

WHAT IN THE BAHAI DISPENSATION WOULD PREVENT SIMILAR DIFFICULTIES?

"Unlike the Dispensation of Christ...unlike all Dispensations of the past, the apostles of Baha'u'llah in every land, wherever they labor and toil, have before them in clear, in unequivocal and emphatic language, the guidance, they require for the prosecution and consummation of their task. Both in the administrative provisions of the Baha'i Dispensation, and in the matter of succession, as embodied in the twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship...Therein lies the distinguishing feature of the Baha'i Revelation. Therein lies the strength of the unity of the Faith, of the validity of a Revelation that claims not to destroy or belittle previous Revelations, but to connect, unify, and fulfill them. This is the reason why Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha have both revealed and even insisted upon certain details in connection with the Divine Economy which they have bequeathed to us, their followers..."

World Order of Baha'u'llah, Further Considerations, 9-10

WHAT ELEMENTS COMMONLY FOUND IN RELIGIONS OF THE PAST HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED BY BAHAI'U'LLAH?

"Those unwarranted practises, in connection with the sacrament of baptism, of communion, of confession of sins, of asceticism, of priestly domination, of elaborate ceremonials, of holy war and of polygamy, have one and all been rigidly suppressed...whilst the rigidity and rigor of certain observances, such as fasting, which are necessary to the devotional life of the individual, have been considerably abated."

WOB, FC 10

IN WHAT RESPECT WAS THE MUHAMMEDAN REVELATION FURTHER ADVANCED THAN THE CHRISTIAN? WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THE LACK OF A LAW OF SUCCESSION?

"The Muhammedan Revelation, however, although His Faith as compared with that of Christ was, so far as the administration of His Dispensation is concerned, more complete and more specific in its provisions, yet in the matter of succession, it gave no written, binding and conclusive instructions to those whose mission was to propagate

His Cause. For the text of the Qur'an, the ordinances of which regarding prayer, fasting, marriage, divorce, inheritance, pilgrimage, and the like have after thirteen hundred years remained intact and operative, but gives no definite guidance regarding the law of succession, the source of all the dissensions, the controversies and schisms..."

WOB, Further Considerations, 9

STATE DIFFERENCES IN AUTHORITY BEHIND THE ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM AND THE BAHAI FAITH.

"Nowhere in the sacred scriptures of any of the world's religious systems, not even in the writings of the Inaugurator of the Babi Dispensation, do we find any provisions establishing a covenant or providing for an administrative order that can compare in scope and authority with those that lie at the very basis of the Baha'i Dispensation. Has either Christianity or Islam, to take as an instance two of the most widely diffused and outstanding among the world's recognized religions, anything to offer that can measure with, or be regarded as equivalent to, either the Book of Baha'u'llah's Covenant or to the Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha? Does the text of either the Gospel or the Qur'an confer sufficient authority upon those leaders and councils that have claimed the right and assumed the function of interpreting the provisions of their sacred scriptures and of administering the affairs of their respective communities? Could Peter, the admitted chief of the Apostles, or the Imam Ali, the cousin and legitimate successor of the Prophet, produce in support of the primacy with which both had been invested written and explicit affirmations from Christ or Muhammad that could have silenced those who either among their contemporaries or in a later age have repudiated their authority and, by their action, precipitated the schisms that persist until the present day? Where, we may confidently ask, in the recorded sayings of Jesus Christ, whether in the matter of succession or in the provision of a set of specific laws and clearly defined administrative ordinances, as distinguished from purely spiritual principles, can we find anything approaching the detailed injunctions, laws and warnings that abound in the authenticated utterances of both Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha?... Therein lies the secret of its strength, its fundamental distinction, and the guarantee against disintegration and schism."

Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, 53-54

"Alone of all the Revelations gone before it this Faith has, through the explicit directions, the repeated warnings, the authenticated safeguards incorporated and elaborated in its teachings, succeed in raising a structure which the bewildered followers of bankrupt and broken creeds might well approach and critically examine, and seek, ere it is too late, the invulnerable security of its world-embracing shelter... So firm and mighty in this Covenant that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like. Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this holy cycle shall gradually appear and be made manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth and the dayspring of the revelation of the signs..."

"Fear not," are Abdu'l-Baha's reassuring words foreshadowing the rise of the Administrative Order established in his Will, "fear not if this Branch be severed from this material world and cast aside its leaves; nay, the leaves thereof shall flourish, for this Branch will grow after it is cut off from this world below, it shall reach the loftiest pinnacles of glory, and it shall bear such fruits as will perfume the world with their fragrance."

Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, 54

"To what else if not to the power and majesty which this Administrative Order - the rudiments of the future all-enfolding Baha'i Commonwealth - is destined to manifest, can these utterances of Baha'u'llah allude: 'The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System - the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.' " Dispens. of Baha'u'llah, 54

"It should also be borne in mind that the machinery of the Cause has been so fashioned that whatever is deemed necessary to incorporate into it in order to keep it in the forefront of all progressive movements, can, according to the provisions made by Baha'u'llah, be safely embodied therein." WOB, Further Considerations, 10-11

"The various Assemblies (in forty countries), local as well as national, constitute today the bedrock upon the strength of which the Universal House is in future to be firmly established and raised."

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WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE BAHAI ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER AND WHAT IS ITS WATCHWORD?

"Its guiding principles are the truths which He who is the unerring Interpreter of the teachings of our Faith has so clearly enunciated in his public addresses throughout the West. The laws that govern its operation and limit its functions are those which have been expressly ordained in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. The seat round which its spiritual, its humanitarian and administrative activities will cluster are the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar and its Dependencies. The pillars that sustain its authority and buttress its structure are the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice. The central, the underlying aim which animates it is the establishment of the New World Order as adumbrated by Baha'u'llah. The methods it employs, the standard it inculcates, incline it to neither East nor West, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither rich nor poor, neither white nor colored. Its watchword is the unification of the human race; its standard the MOST GREAT PEACE;" its consummation the advent of that golden millennium - the Day when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the Kingdom of God Himself, the Kingdom of Baha'u'llah." Shoghi Effendi,

DB 64-5 Haifa, 1934