

Funds

Extract from *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Baha'i Faith*

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published by One World, 2000

Funds.

The Activities of the Baha'i Faith are financed by the voluntary contributions of Baha'is. No solicitation of contributions is allowed other than general appeals for donations. Only donations from Baha'is are accepted for support of the propagation work of the Faith, but outside assistance is allowed in funding charitable and SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT projects.

Origins.

Although the Bab referred to donations being made to himself and to the future HE WHOM GOD SHALL MAKE MANIFEST (Walbridge, Sacred 95-96), no organized funding system ever seems to have been developed by amongst the Babis. By contrast, Baha'u'llah noted 'the progress and promotion of the cause of God depended on material means' (CC1: 489), and called upon his followers voluntarily to contribute a specified proportion of their wealth. This was the HUQUQU'LLAH (established c. 1873, implemented 1878). He also referred to the future establish of an alms-tax (ZAKAT).

The Huquq was payable at first to Baha'u'llah, and later to his successors as centers of the Faith, and was used for such purposes as the support of Baha'i teachers. Its payment remained largely confined to Middle Eastern Baha'is until 1992. In addition to the Huquq, early Bahais also made gifts to Bahala and later to Abdul Baha, and expended resources on particular projects which they considered important, such as the building of local Baha'i centers and the Ashkhabad Temple (MASRIQU'L-ADHKAR). The early Western Baha'is did not pay Huquq, but they followed the example of their Middle Eastern coreligionists in making donations and supporting projects such as publishing and the planned temple near Chicago (See BAHAI TEMPLE UNITY).

Local and national funds.

The overall system of funding was regularized by Shoghi Effendi. In 1923 he directed that all local and national ASSEMBLIES should establish their own funds. These would be under their exclusive control, and should be expended as they saw fit to promote the interests of the

Faith (e.g. for TEACHING campaigns; help for the needy; EDUCATION). The funds would be administered by the assemblies' elected treasurers. The flow of contributions represented the 'lifeblood' of these institutions. All Baha'is were encouraged to support the funds 'freely and generously', and in a spirit of sacrifice. This is a source of spiritual blessings. Giving is a means whereby individuals can test the extent of their own devotion and spiritual progress. There is no limit; it is the extent of the sacrifice not the actual amount that is important. They should be 'undeterred by thoughts of poverty' and reliant on God's bounty, but also wise and not incur debts or cause suffering to others in order to donate. Local assemblies as well as individuals should support their respective national funds. All donations should be entirely voluntary, and no one should ever be psychologically pressurized into giving. It is a personal matter, and each individual should follow the dictates of his or her own conscience. They are free to make their contributions anonymously or to receive a receipt from the Treasurer. They are also free to earmark donations for specific purposes. Monies for philanthropic and strictly Baha'i administrative and teaching purposes should be differentiated, with only Baha'is being allowed to contribute to the latter (those Baha'is who have been deprived of their ADMINISTRATIVE RIGHTS were not allowed the bounty of contributing to the funds). The monies available to Baha'is are limited extent in extent, and the assemblies should ensure that the funds under their control are expended wisely and carefully. Heavy budgets should not be imposed on weak Baha'i communities. CC1: 529-50.

Since 1963 the Universal House of Justice has specified various matters of detail regarding fund-raising and disbursement (e.g. ruling that raffles and 'garage sales' were inappropriate means), and has stated that governmental and other public funds could be applied for to support the Baha'i humanitarian ventures. It has also appealed for 'universal participation' in giving; prepared guidelines for treasurers and study materials on TRUSTWORTHINESS; and directed that assemblies adopt proper measures of auditing and expenditure control. LG 249-65; MUHJ 10 no. 2.11, 26-7 no. 13, 650-2 no 419, 676-9 no. 435.

Other funds.

Shoghi Effendi designated the monies under his control as head of the faith as the International Fund. This was used for the international projects of the faith including the programme of building and land acquisition of the BAHAI WORLD CENTRE, international CONFERENCES, and the subsidy of activities and property acquisitions in poorer parts of the Baha'i world. Individuals and local and national assemblies were all encouraged to contribute to it. In 1954 instituted five continental funds to support the work of the HANDS OF THE CAUSE and the newly established AUXILIARY BOARDS (MBW 59, 63). Under the Universal House of Justice the demands of on the international fund have increased enormously (almost doubled from 1963 to 1967 alone), both because of the increasing range of activities and projects at the World Centre and the EXPANSION of Baha'i

communities in poorer countries which needed subsidy. All local and national communities have been urged to become self-supporting, but this is evidently all but impossible in some poorer countries. A number of crises have therefore developed, the most serious in the wake of the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979), when the sufferings of the Iranian Baha'i community drastically reduced what had been the major source of international funding. Nevertheless, these crises have been overcome, and an ever-increasing range of activities undertaken. The House has also established an International Deputization Fund to support PIONEERING (1965) and an Arc Fund to fund the extensive building projects of the Ark. MUHJ 26-7 no. 13, 62 no. 24.11, 97-8 no. 40, 178-9 no. 87, 412 no. 223.
