

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

**THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY)
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES)
OF AMERICA UNDER THE HEREDITARY)
GUARDIANSHIP, INC.)**

Counter-Defendant,)

Civil Action No. 64 C 1878

v.)

The Honorable Amy J. St Eve

**THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY)
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES)
OF AMERICA, INC.)**

Counterclaimant.)

**DECLARATION UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY
OF JEFFREY ALAN GOLDBERG, IN SUPPORT OF
ORTHODOX BAHÁ'Í FAITH RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE TO
MOTION FOR RULE TO SHOW CAUSE**

Jeffrey Alan Goldberg, hereby declares, under penalty of perjury, as follows:

1. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth herein, and I make this Declaration in support of the Orthodox Bahá'í Faith ("OBF") Respondents' Response to the Counterclaimant's Motion for Rule to Show Cause.

2. I am presently a member of the OBF in the United States, and I presently reside in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I have been a director and recording secretary of the Provisional National Bahá'í Council of the United States ("PNBC"), the governing body of the OBF in the United States, since October 1, 2003. I am well-versed in the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith from the perspective of both the NSA organization and the OBF organization as I was enrolled in the

NSA organization for 17 years and the OBF organization for the past 9 years. The teachings of the OBF differ from the teachings followed by the Movant, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States ("NSA") because the OBF believes there continues to be a succession of Guardians to lead our Faith after the death in 1957 of the first Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, while the NSA and its believers believe that Shoghi Effendi was unable to appoint a successor.

3. I am an attorney in private practice admitted in the State of Illinois (1990) and the State of New Mexico (2000), and I have been a member of the general bar of this Court since December, 1990.

4. At time of entry of the June 28, 1966 Judgment in the above-captioned matter (the "Judgment"), I attended William Green Elementary School in Chicago, having just completed the second grade. I was about to turn 8 years old. Attached as Exhibit 1 is a true and correct copy of my second grade school picture. I am the boy wearing a suit in the center of the back row.

5. I could not have known at the time that in a Courtroom only 10 miles away from my schoolroom, a Judgment was about to be entered that would one day be used in an effort to restrict my religious freedom and my right to express my religious views on my web sites.

6. Today, forty years later, the NSA is attempting to enforce the Judgment in order to close down two of my web domains, including one of my personal web sites, without naming and serving me as a party in the proper forum.

7. On December 19, 2001, I registered the domain name <http://www.truebahai.com> and began to create my personal web page in response to Joel B. Marangella's call for believers

to teach the Faith on the internet. Teaching the Faith to anyone interested in hearing of it is a duty of all believers according to the Bahá'í Writings.

8. On September 20, 2005, I registered the domain name <http://www.orthodoxbahai.com> and set it to point to the web site of the PNBC for the OBF in the United States (whose web address is <http://www.rt66.com/~obfusa/council.htm>). I did this because I had trouble putting the PNBC's web address in my browser and thought it would be helpful to others as well.

9. The domain registrations are a matter of public record with the Internet registry.

10. I never was a so-called Remeyite as I was never a member of any organization that followed Mason Remey. All of that was well before my time. Upon information and belief, most of my fellow Orthodox Bahá'ís never were members of any Remey organization.

11. I first declared my belief in Bahá'u'lláh in July, 1980, enrolling in the NSA's organization through the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Wilmette, Illinois.

12. I was attracted to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh because of His teachings on: oneness of humanity; elimination of prejudice and bigotry; the call for the independent investigation of truth; religion must be in harmony with science; equality of men and women; universal education; high moral rectitude, refinement and ethics; spirituality; and His comprehensive teachings on world peace, including a pattern for world government and an international tribunal to settle all international disputes through the rule of law instead of by warfare.

13. The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, like all of the revealed religions, requires more than an intellectual understanding of its teachings. Rather, the primary focus of the Faith is a direct

spiritual relationship of the individual with God, through prayer, meditation, and a life of kindness and sacrificial service to others.

14. All Bahá'ís believe that Bahá'u'lláh, the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, is the Manifestation of God for this day. The son of a Persian nobleman, Mirza Husayn Ali, took the name Bahá'u'lláh (one of the variants of the "Greatest Name" meaning Glory of God) in 1863 when He announced His Revelation. Bahá'ís believe that all of the Manifestations of God, including Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, possessed a full measure of the names and attributes of God and revealed God's Message to each age in which They appeared.

15. The OBF and NSA Bahá'ís both believe that Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest Son, `Abdu'l-Bahá, (meaning Servant of the Glory) the Center of His Covenant and the sole interpreter and Exemplar of His Teachings. By naming His successor, Bahá'u'lláh sought to avoid schism of the Faith after His passing.

16. Upon the death of `Abdu'l-Bahá, it was His Will and Testament that established the framework for the Administrative Order. Both the OBF and NSA Bahá'ís believe that their Administrative System is divinely conceived. In `Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, the Guardianship is established and the Guardian is vested with the exclusive right to interpret the Holy Writings and he is made the "sacred head" of the Universal House of Justice, the international supreme legislative body of the Faith. The OBF and NSA Bahá'ís both believe that `Abdu'l-Bahá was the Center of the Covenant and that Shoghi Effendi was the first Guardian. The OBF believes the line of Guardians has not been broken; the NSA Bahá'ís believe that the

Guardianship ended upon Shoghi Effendi's death because they believe he was unable to appoint a successor under the terms of the Will & Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá.

17. Before enrolling in 1980 with the NSA's organization, I conducted an extensive investigation of the Bahá'í Faith, including reading numerous books and attending "firesides", meetings conducted by ordinary Bahá'ís to teach the Faith and answer questions of seekers. As part of my investigation, I inquired into the Guardianship since the Writings clearly called for a continuing line of Guardians, but was told that it was impossible for Shoghi Effendi to have appointed a successor and therefore there no longer was a living Guardian, but instead the Universal House of Justice was the sole head of the Faith even though it did not have the Guardian as its "sacred head" as required by the the Will & Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá.

18. Having been told by members of the NSA's organization that there were no longer any living claimants to the Guardianship, I was satisfied with their explanation and embraced this Faith, remaining a member in good standing in that organization for a period of nearly 17 years.

19. It was not until the Fall of 1996, while surfing the Internet, did I come to the realization that there was a living claimant to the Guardianship (Joel B. Marangella) and that he had a worldwide following of believers who had accepted his Guardianship and who were following what I considered to be the true original teachings of the Faith. The NSA's organization considered them to be covenant-breakers.

20. It had been a part of the teachings of the NSA's organization that should any of us ever come across reading materials by covenant-breakers, we must not read them or have any contact with them because one could catch a spiritual disease from contact with them and their

irrational ideas. Prior to 1996, I did not know of any living covenant-breakers and therefore never gave much thought to this teaching believing it was merely an historical reference.

21. Once I came upon the web sites of the OBF and interacted with them on online bulletin boards, the prospect of "catching" irrational thought processes from these allegedly disturbed individuals did cross my mind. My intellectual curiosity compelled me to carefully review and consider their position, and I decided that if I came across any irrational ideas, I would simply stop reading their sites.

22. There was never any question in my mind that the OBF sites did not originate from the NSA. The OBF web sites contained intelligent, rational, and cogent arguments and explanations as to their version of the Faith's history of how almost all of the Hands of the Cause of God, persons appointed by Shoghi Effendi to protect the Faith, met in a secret conclave after Shoghi Effendi's death. The Hands decided that Shoghi Effendi did not and could not have appointed a successor. They later expelled Mason Remey and his followers and tried to convince the rank and file believers that no Guardian could be appointed after Shoghi Effendi, but instead to accept the Custodians, a body of their own making from among their own, and a Universal House of Justice elected without a Guardian at its head, contrary to the explicit provisions of the Will & Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá.

23. On February, 18, 1997, my wife and I resigned from the NSA's organization (a true and correct copy of our letter of February 18, 1997 is attached as Exhibit 2).

24. On that same date, I declared and enrolled with the OBF (a true and correct copy of my declaration, dated February 18, 1997, is attached as Exhibit 3). Note that my declaration of faith does not even mention Mason Remey.

25. Shortly thereafter, I received an acknowledgement of my resignation from the NSA (see letter of March 14, 1997, attached as Exhibit 4).

26. On May 27, 1997, my wife and I were declared to be covenant-breakers and all of my friends in the Faith were instructed to shun me entirely and never to have any contact with me or face the same expulsion themselves. A true and correct copy of the NSA's letter of May 27, 1997, and the front page of The American Bahá'í for June 24, 1997, are attached as Exhibit 5).

27. My wife did not join the OBF at that time but she was also expelled and shunned because she refused to take my children and divorce me as they had insisted she must.

28. The NSA organization claims that shunning us as covenant-breakers is required to maintain the unity of the Faith. The OBF believe, on the other hand, that unity in the Faith is achieved and maintained by obedience to the Center of the Cause, the living Guardian, and that a covenant-breaker is one who rejects the authority of the Guardian.

29. Only one member of my former community, the Bahá'ís of Barrington, Illinois, was willing to speak with me (Janice Franco). At first, I was reluctant to tell Ms. Franco what I had learned because I did not want her to face the same dilemma that I now faced. She insisted, however, that I explain to her what I discovered. I then carefully explained the situation using only materials officially accepted by the NSA to show her my belief that the Hands wrongfully usurped authority and that their Universal House of Justice should have the Guardian as its head. Ms. Franco was declared to be a covenant-breaker and shunned after she dared to share these arguments with the rest of the community. The other community members rejected these arguments after they were threatened by a representative of the NSA's organization that they too

would be shunned and cut off forever from many of their friends and family unless they rejected these ideas and shunned my family and I, and Ms. Franco.

30. Just before I had declared my acceptance of the Guardianship, my brother, who was not a Bahá'í at all, coincidentally became engaged to marry a believer under the NSA's organization.

31. I was not permitted to attend my brother's wedding, and my family thereafter had to hold separate family functions so that I would not be present at the same time as brother's wife who literally held the belief that I was satanic and my breath was poisonous so that mere contact with me would be dangerous.

32. After the birth of my nephew, I was not allowed to see him at all, nor does he even know of the existence of his uncle and the rest of my family.

33. My story is by no means unique. Many of my fellow believers within the OBF report similar experiences. Juan Cole, a professor of modern Middle East and Southeastern Asian history for the History department of the University of Michigan has written about the fanatical shunning behavior exhibited by the NSA and its organization, characterizing it as "cult-like." Attached as Exhibit 6 are emails written by Dr. Cole. Attached as Exhibit 7 is an article by Dr Cole detailing the shunning practices.

34. I believe that the NSA's attempt to enforce a dormant judgment entered against the long-ago defunct Remey organization has as its true purpose to stop me from expressing my ideas on my web sites. I consider their past actions to be an ongoing campaign to silence me and all other Orthodox Bahá'ís, and now I believe they hope to use the power of the federal judiciary to silence me.

35. By attempting to prevent me and others from calling ourselves Bahá'ís, that is "followers of Bahá'u'lláh", the NSA seeks to force me to recant my Faith, something that the Teachings of my Faith prohibit me from doing.

36. For the NSA to seek to prevent the OBF from using the name "Bahá'í", it would be like a Protestant Church filing suit against the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church to prevent them from calling themselves Christians. Likewise, it would be like the majority Sunni Muslims filing suit against the Shí'ites to prevent them from calling themselves Muslim. The Sunnis are the majority group who follow elected leaders known as Caliphs while the Shí'ih are in the minority, and they followed the Imams as Muhammad's appointed successors. I believe this parallels the dispute between the NSA Bahá'ís and the Orthodox Bahá'ís.

37. The NSA claims that our use of "Bahá'í" is confusing to others and that our teachings damage their reputation. There is nothing at my web domains of <http://www.truebahai.com> and <http://www.orthodoxbahai.com> that could possibly confuse anyone that our organization has anything to do with the NSA. To the contrary, one of our primary focuses is to teach the major differences between the Orthodox Bahá'ís and the NSA Bahá'ís.

38. At the top of the home page of <http://www.truebahai.com>, there is a quote from Shoghi Effendi (the OBF and the NSA agree that his writings are authorized interpretations of Bahá'í Holy Writ) setting forth the factors to decide whether a person is a "true believer" and among the factors are the "loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will" referring to the Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá, the divinely conceived Document that created the office of the Guardian and our Administrative Order. The point of the web site is

the difference between the NSA organization's beliefs and the OBF's beliefs. The reason why I named it "truebahai" was to highlight the quotation from Shoghi Effendi about a true believer to emphasize the major differences between the OBF and NSA organizations.

39. Just underneath that quotation is a welcome statement identifying the site as a "portal to the teachings of the Orthodox Bahá'í Faith" and at the bottom of that page there is the statement that it is "offered in loving service to the Third Guardian of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh Joel B. Maranagella." There is no deception or confusion about who we are.

40. Among the first links on the site is "An Introduction to Orthodox Bahá'í Faith." If you click that link, you come to a menu with the first article being "What is an Orthodox Bahá'í?" That article clearly and succinctly explains why we call ourselves Orthodox to distinguish us from the NSA Bahá'í organization, which we refer to as the "Heterodox Bahá'ís" simply to express our belief that they have strayed from the original teachings of our Faith.

41. Many of the articles on the <http://www.truebahai.com> site are about the split over authority and why we believe our Faith is true to the original teachings of the Faith. There is no way anyone would read this material and fail to understand that we are critical of the NSA Bahá'í organization, and that we are not trying to imitate them.

42. Likewise, if one were to enter the <http://www.orthodoxbahai.com> domain, the PNBC web site (<http://www.rt66.com/~obfusa/council.htm>) will appear clearly identified as an Orthodox Bahá'í web site. Many of the articles on that site deal with the Guardianship and explicitly criticise the NSA organization. There is even a section entitled "Orthodox Bahá'í Position--Statements in Contrast to Heterodox Positions."

43. In Geoffrey N. Wilson's Declaration, attached as Exhibit B to the NSA's Motion, he attaches his Bahá'í identification and implies at Paragraph 27 thereof that if a person does not have such a card and is not listed as a member in good standing on the NSA's membership rolls, that person is not recognized as a Bahá'í. I once had one of their identification cards but returned it to them at the time of my resignation from the organization (See Exhibit 2). I continue to believe in Bahá'u'lláh and therefore I am a Bahá'í, although I do not claim to be a member of the NSA's organization. There is nothing in the law, secular or Bahá'í, that remotely suggests I am not a Bahá'í simply because I oppose the NSA's organization.

44. In Mr. Wilson's Declaration, at paragraph 6, he speaks of the central teaching of the Bahá'í Faith as unity, and goes on to state that unity is achieved by the Covenant, a line of succession of authority from Bahá'u'lláh to his son, `Abdu'l-Bahá, then from `Abdu'l-Bahá to his grandson Shoghi Effendi, then to the Universal House of Justice and is intended to provide for the unity and protection of the Bahá'í Faith. The OBF agree that the Covenant was created for the unity of the Faith, and it is true that the line of succession runs from Bahá'u'lláh to Abdu'l-Bahá, Who was the Center of the Covenant. However, `Abdu'l-Bahá provided in His Will and Testament for a succession of Guardians, with each Guardian being the sacred head of the Universal House of Justice and each Guardian appointing his successor during his lifetime. The Will and Testament does appoint His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to be the first Guardian. We disagree there was a line of succession from Shoghi Effendi to their Universal House of Justice. It is undisputed that the Hands created from among their number a body called the Custodians which took authority over the Faith from 1957 until the election of their Universal House of Justice in 1963, that had no Guardian at its head (See Paragraph 8 of the Judgment).

45. The OBF agrees with the statement by Mr. Wilson in paragraph 7 of his declaration that to break the Covenant is "to reject or deliberately usurp or undermine the authority Bahá'u'lláh established while still claiming to be a Bahá'í." The OBF disagree on which authority is to be obeyed and which is to be rejected. The NSA believes in the authority of the the Hands, and after them their Universal House of Justice. The OBF believes in the authority of the Guardians (presently Joel B. Marangella).

46. Nearly all of the statements made by Mr. Wilson regarding the administrative structure of the Faith with local and national bodies answering to an international administrative body, and regarding the non-partisan and non-political character of the Faith, runs parallel to the teachings of the Orthodox Bahá'í Faith except that we call our administrative bodies "Councils" instead of "Spiritual Assemblies" to distinguish ourselves from the NSA's organization.

47. Mr. Wilson states at paragraph 30 of his declaration that the actions or doctrines of the alleged contemnors and "their venomous messages and doctrines regarding other faiths, governments, and non-governmental organizations" were to be attributed to his NSA, it would cause irreparable harm to his NSA. However, there is nothing in the NSA's Motion and exhibits that identifies a single action, doctrine, or venomous message against other faiths, governments and non-governmental organizations that originated from the Orthodox Bahá'ís.

48. Mr. Wilson generously states at paragraph 31 of his declaration that we have the right to organize and worship according our dictates, but we fail to see how we are doing anything but just that, practicing our religion and teaching our religious beliefs to anyone who wants to listen.

49. If the NSA believes that the OBF should be stopped from speaking out on what we believe about religious authority in the Faith because the NSA does not want its believers to be exposed to the OBF views and positions, we respectfully disagree that this is the kind of harm the Court should appropriately enjoin. The NSA should be free to tell its believers not to read our materials, while the OBF should be free to publish its materials for all to read if they wish.

50. At the end of Mr. Wilson's Declaration is attached some of the trademarks that the NSA claims to own. I note that two of these images are the Greatest Name. My personal understanding of my Faith is that the Greatest Name is one of the most sacred words or phrases. There are several variations of this Arabic phrase and symbol including "Baha" "Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá," "Bahá'u'lláh," and "Allah'u'Abhá" (meaning, respectively, "Glory," "O Thou Glory of Glories," "Glory of God," and "God the All-Glorious"). It is part of our religious teaching to recite these as sacred prayers and as part of our efforts to teach others. `Abdu'l-Bahá, from Tablets of the Divine Plan, pp. 41-42): "*O that I could travel, even though on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of "Ya Baha'u'l-Abha" in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans, promote the divine teachings. This, alas, I cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may achieve it.*"

51. Our religious teachings call upon us to recite the Greatest Name at least 95 times each day. `Abdu'l-Bahá said: "*The Greatest Name should be found upon the lips in the first awaking moment of early dawn. It should be fed upon by constant use in daily invocation, in trouble, under opposition, and should be the last word breathed when the head rests upon the pillow at night. It is the name of comfort, protection, happiness, illumination, love and unity. I hope that thou mayest become informed of the concealed mystery and recondite symbol of the*

stone of the Most Great Name ... The use of the Greatest Name and dependence upon it, cause the soul to strip itself of the husks of mortality and to step forth freed, reborn, a new creature..." (United States Supplement to *Bahá'í News*, No. 80 p. 2, October 1964, as cited in the compilation *Lights of Guidance*, p. 265).

52. Considering the sacred nature of the Greatest Name, to prevent its use by the OBF would be to effectively prevent us from practicing our religion.

53. Attached as Exhibit 8 is a true and correct printout of a web page controlled by the NSA (the Bahá'í Computer & Communication Association, which, upon information and belief, is officially sanctioned by the NSA) in which permission is granted to use the Greatest Name image on web sites.

54. In Christopher M. Dolan's Declaration, attached as Exhibit C to the NSA's Motion, paragraphs 2 through 20 make reference to actions and publications of the Bahá'ís Under the Provisions of the Covenant. That organization has nothing to with the Orthodox Bahá'ís, nor is any member of the Orthodox Bahá'í Faith responsible or liable for the content of BUPC publications. The undersigned has viewed BUPC material in the past at the time when he was investigating the OBF and considers it highly unlikely that anyone would confuse that group with the NSA or OBF organizations.

55. Paragraphs 21 through 25 of Mr. Dolan's Declaration have to do with our web sites. I see no facts that demonstrate that our sites damage the reputation of the NSA or that have the effect of causing confusion about our identity.

56. At Paragraph 23 of Mr. Dolan's Declaration, he includes screen shots of two articles written by our Guardian, Joel B. Marangella, one entitled "The Diabolical Subversion of

the Bahá'í Administrative Order" and the other entitled "The Satanic Collusion to Terminate the Institution of the Guardianship." I have reviewed the articles from that web page and printed out the attached true and correct copies of those articles as Exhibits 9 and 10 respectively. Besides their provocative titles, there is nothing in them except direct, unambiguous criticism of the NSA's organization.

57. I have searched the internet to see what other organizations of believers are in the Bahá'í Revelation. I have identified the following groups: 1) Orthodox Bahá'í Faith (the OBF Respondents, following Joel B. Marangella); 2) Bahá'ís Under Provisions of the Covenant (the other Respondents, following Leland Jensen); 3) The Bahá'í Faith or Bahá'í World Faith (the Movant NSA); 4) Tarbiyat Bahá'í Community (formerly known as Orthodox Bahá'ís Under the Regency) (Rex King group); 5) Bahá'ís Under the living Guardianship <http://guardianshipofthebahaifaith.org/index.htm> (Donald Harvey as the third Guardian and Jacques Soghomonian as the fourth Guardian), an organization that is the successor to the Remy NSA; 6) Reform Baha'is <http://www.reformbahai.org/> 7) Free Baha'is <http://freebahais.com/freebahai.htm>; 8) Unitarian Baha'is <http://members.tripod.com/ninetin/abdulbaha/contents.htm> ; and 9) John Carre (followers of Alif a Third Manifestation of God - the third letter of the Greatest Name) <http://www.metavergence.com/john/> .

58. I performed a search on the Internet to locate the corporate status of the NSA. Attached as Exhibit 11 is a true and correct copy of the resulting search on the Illinois Secretary of State web site, showing the Movant is a not for profit corporation incorporated on October 14, 1994..

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 2nd day of January, 2007, at Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Jeffrey Alan Goldberg

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**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

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|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <p>THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY) OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES) OF AMERICA UNDER THE HEREDITARY) GUARDIANSHIP, INC.)</p> |) | |
| |) | |
| Counter-Defendant, |) | Civil Action No. 64 C 1878 |
| |) | |
| v. |) | The Honorable Amy J. St Eve |
| |) | |
| <p>THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY) OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES) OF AMERICA, INC.)</p> |) | |
| |) | |
| Counterclaimant. |) | |

**EXHIBIT LIST FOR DECLARATION UNDER
PENALTY OF PERJURY OF JEFFREY ALAN GOLDBERG**

| EXHIBIT | DESCRIPTION |
|---------|--|
| 1 | School Picture December, 1965 |
| 2 | Letter to NSA dated 2-18-1997 |
| 3 | Declaration to OBF dated 2-18-1997 |
| 4 | Letter from NSA dated 3-14-1997 |
| 5 | Letter from NSA dated 5-27-1997 and front page of The American Bahá'í 6-24-1997 |
| 6 | Emails from Dr. Juan Cole |
| 7 | The Baha'i Faith in America as Panopticon, 1963-1997 by Dr. Juan Cole |

| EXHIBIT | DESCRIPTION |
|----------------|---|
| 8 | Bahá'í Computer & Communication Association web page of the Greatest Name |
| 9 | The Diabolical Subversion of the Bahá'í Administrative Order by Joel B. Marangella from bahai-guardian.com |
| 10 | The Satanic Collusion to Terminate the Institution of the Guardianship by Joel B. Marangella from bahai-guardian.com |
| 11 | Illinois Secretary of State results page for NSA |

Exhibit 1



200 GREEN SCHOOL p. 2 DEC. 1965

HEEREN
PHOTO

Exhibit 2

February 18, 1997

437 East Drury Lane
Barrington, IL 60010

Baha'i National Center
112 Linden Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091

Dear Sir or Madam:

We are writing to inform you that we wish to terminate our membership in your organization. Enclosed are our identification cards. Please remove our names from your membership and voting lists.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Goldberg



Maria Luisa S. Goldberg

cc: Kathy Yokoyama, chairperson, Baha'is of Barrington

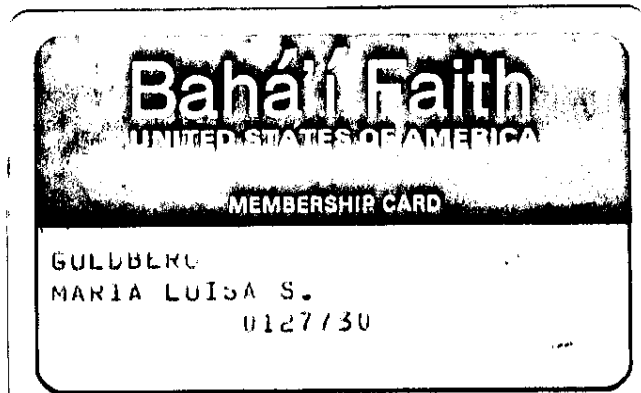
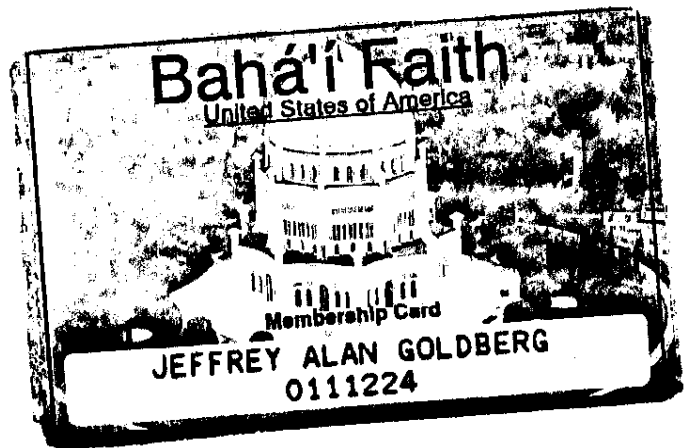


Exhibit 3

Subj: Re: Declaration
Date: 97-02-15 16:17:10 EST
From: obfusa@mack.rt66.com
To: Sharaf94@aol.com

BAHA'I DECLARATION

I hereby declare my acceptance of the Baha'i Faith and specifically affirm my belief in the following:

That the Bab was an independent Manifestation of God Who inaugurated the Baha'i Era in 1844 and the Precursor of Baha'u'llah—"He Whom God will make manifest."

That Baha'u'llah, the Author of the Baha'i Revelation, is the "Promise of All Ages," and the Supreme Manifestation.

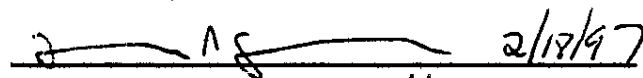
That 'Abdu'l-Baha, the eldest Son of Baha'u'llah, is the appointed Center of His Covenant with the Baha'is, the sole Interpreter of His Holy Word, the perfect Exemplar of the Faith and the Author of a divinely-conceived Will and Testament whose immutable provisions constitute the Charter of the World Order of Baha'u'llah for as long as His Dispensation shall endure.

That Shoghi Effendi was the first Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, appointed by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament, the designated Interpreter of the revealed Word of Baha'u'llah, the permanent and sacred head of the Universal House of Justice described in that Testament and the one towards whom all Baha'is were enjoined to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination in matters of the Faith.

That Shoghi Effendi appointed his successor "in his own life-time" as he was enjoined to do by the provisions of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament and the second Guardian of the Faith acceded to the Guardianship coincident with the passing of Shoghi Effendi.

That Joel Bray Marangella is the third and living Guardian of the Baha'i Faith appointed by the second Guardian "in his own life-time" in accordance with the explicit instructions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the one to whom all Baha'is faithful to the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha must turn as the "Center of the Cause."

Signature & Date:

 2/17/97

Printed name

JEFFREY A. Goldberg

Address:

437 E. Drury
Barrington, IL 60010

Send to: Mother Baha'i Council of the U.S.
3111 Futura

Exhibit 4

**NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
BAHÁ'Í'S OF THE UNITED STATES**
538 SHERIDAN ROAD, WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091-2849 • (847) 869-6039

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
EMAIL: COMMUNITY@USBNC.ORG

March 14, 1997

Jeffrey and Maria Luisa Goldberg
437 East Drury Lane
Barrington, IL 60010

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg,

The National Spiritual Assembly has received your letter of February 18, 1997 informing it of your wish to terminate your Bahá'í membership. As requested, your names, as well as those of your children, have been removed from the Bahá'í membership and mailing lists. We have also asked the Bahá'í communities in your area to honor your request not to be contacted. However, if you should change your mind at some future time, and desire to reinstate you membership, we invite you to contact the Auxiliary Board member for protection for your area.

Sincerely,



For the Office of the Secretary

Exhibit 5

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES
536 SHERIDAN ROAD, WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091-2849 • (847) 898-8038 • EMAIL: SECRETARIAT@USSNC.ORG

May 27, 1997

To All Local Spiritual Assemblies and Groups within 100 miles of the Bahá'í House of
Worship

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

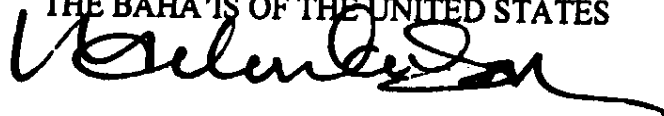
It is our sad duty to advise you that the Universal House of Justice, in consultation with the Hands of the Cause of God, has determined that Jeffrey Goldberg, Maria Goldberg and Janice Franco of Barrington, Illinois, have broken the Covenant by affiliating themselves with the group of Covenant-breakers supporting the claims of Joel Bray Marangella and actively promoting such claims.

We ask that you inform your community of this determination and remind them of the instructions of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian concerning the shunning of Covenant-breakers. In doing so, you are advised to review the guidance on Covenant-breaking contained in Section 5 of *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities: Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies*. You may also wish to seek the guidance of your Auxiliary Board member for Protection about ways to deepen the understanding and appreciation for the Covenant of the friends in your area. Should either Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg or Ms. Franco attempt to contact your Assembly or any members of your community, we ask that you inform your Auxiliary Board member for Protection.

The Universal House of Justice expresses its confidence that the reaction of the friends to this regrettable news will no doubt be characterized by a "fortitude that will increase the unity of the community and intensify concentration on efforts vital to the success of the Four Year Plan."

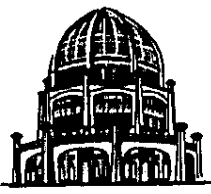
With loving Bahá'í greetings,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES



Robert C. Henderson
Secretary-General

cc: Auxiliary Board member William Wieties
Auxiliary Board member Dianne Bohannon-Letzer



Regional Bahá'í Councils to be established

To National Spiritual Assemblies
Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The expansion of the Bahá'í community and the growing complexity of the issues which are facing National Spiritual Assemblies in certain countries have brought the Cause to a new stage in its development. They have caused us in recent years to examine various aspects of the balance between centralization and decentralization. In a few countries we have authorized the National Spiritual Assemblies to establish State Bahá'í Councils or Regional Teaching and Administrative Committees. From the experience gained in the

FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

operation of these bodies, and from detailed examination of the principles set forth by Shoghi Effendi, we have reached the conclusion that the time has arrived for us to formalize a new element of Bahá'í administration, between the local and national levels, comprising institutions of a special kind, to be designated "Regional Bahá'í Councils."

Regional Bahá'í Councils will be brought into being only with our per-

mission and only in countries where conditions make this step necessary. Nevertheless, we find it desirable to inform all National Spiritual Assemblies of the nature of this historic development, and to make clear its place in the evolution of national and local Bahá'í institutions.

The institutions of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh, rooted in the provisions of His Revelation, have emerged gradually and organically, as

the Bahá'í community has grown through the power of the divine impulse imparted to humankind in this age. The characteristics and functions of each of these institutions have evolved, and are still evolving, as are the relationships between them. The writings of the beloved Guardian expound the fundamental elements of this mighty System and make it clear that the Administrative Order, although different in many ways from the World Order which it is the destiny of the Bahá'í Revelation to call into being, is both the "nucleus"

See COUNCILS page 12

National Fund goal set at \$27 million for 154 B.E.

The National Spiritual Assembly has announced a \$27 million revenue goal for the fiscal year now in progress.

While this is a financial goal, it is more than that: it is a statement of the National Assembly's assessment of our potential and responsibility in relation to the Faith's material support.

The goal amount represents a 35 percent increase over last year's total contributions, which ended the year at \$20.4 million for all Funds.

The national monthly contribution goal for the coming year would be \$2.25 million for each Gregorian month or about \$1.4 million per Bahá'í month. This compares with last year's average of \$1.1 million per Bahá'í month.

The new goal has one major difference from the goals of the past several years: It includes specific allocations for each of the Continental and International Funds of the Faith.

Prompted by the February 4 message of the Universal House of Justice stressing the needs of the International Fund, and observing the imbalance in giving for the past few years, the National Assembly felt it was time to set specific goals for each Fund that would achieve a better balance.

Out of the amounts received at the Bahá'í Na-

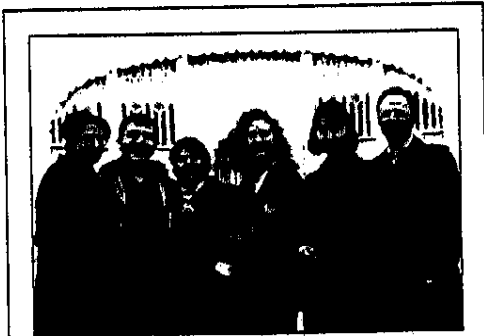
tional Center, the National Spiritual Assembly intends to allocate 19 percent, or up to \$5 million, for the Arc Projects. This total represents one-half of the worldwide goal for each year of the Four Year Plan.

An additional 7 percent of receipts, up to \$2 million, is to be allocated to the Bahá'í International Fund, up from \$706,000 at the end of last year. The Continental Fund goal is 2 percent of receipts, or up to \$500,000, which would compare favorably with the \$334,000 contributed last year.

In the unlikely event that contributions were to lag behind the minimum monthly amounts required to meet the expenses of the National Spiritual Assembly, these amounts might need to be revisited; on the other hand, if contributions run ahead of the targeted goal, additional amounts could be forwarded to the World Center for its use.

At the recently concluded National Convention, William Davis, the treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly, urged all of us to set aside our modest vision of the Faith and to adopt instead the exalted vision of Bahá'u'lláh.

Realizing that vision, he said, will take money: "The amounts listed here are really the minimums. We can and must do more."



Members of the newly appointed National Committee for the Advancement of Women pose in front of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois. They are (from left) Cynthia R. Thomas, Mahyar Mofidi, Maria Teresa Morales, Layli Miller Bashir, Constance M. Chen and Michael Rogell. The committee was appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly to help widely disseminate *Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men* and to promote a greater understanding for and implementation of the principle of the equality of women and men both within and outside the Bahá'í community. *Two Wings of a Bird* can now be found on the National Assembly's administrative Web site at www.usbnc.org and ordered from the Bahá'í Distribution Service, 1-800-999-9019.

Friends are reminded of policy on making contact with officials

The National Spiritual Assembly has learned in recent months of several Bahá'í efforts initiated by local Spiritual Assemblies or individuals in which Bahá'ís have made contact with governors, state legislators, and members of the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives without first seeking permission from the National Spiritual Assembly.

The National Assembly wishes to remind the friends of its long-standing policy, as stated in Section 12.5 of the local Spiritual Assembly handbook, *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, that "Bahá'í individuals and institutions must first obtain permission of the National Spiritual Assembly before contacting federal or state government

officials."

This policy is in place to avoid duplication and the impression of confusion that may result if government officials are contacted by Bahá'ís who may be working at cross-purposes. Such confusion and duplication has caused embarrassment to the Bahá'í community in the past, and the policy of checking with the National Spiritual Assembly is meant to ensure that its external affairs efforts are unified and coordinated.

To seek approval for such initiatives, Bahá'ís should contact the National Spiritual Assembly through its Secretariat for External Affairs in Washington, D.C., at 202-833-8990 (fax 202-833-8988; e-mail usna-oea@usbnc.org).

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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3 in Illinois declared Covenant-breakers

The National Spiritual Assembly has been advised with regret by the Universal House of Justice that Jeffrey Goldberg, Maria Goldberg and Janice Franco of Barrington, Illinois, have been declared Covenant-breakers, having become affiliated with the group of Covenant-breakers espousing the claims of Joel Bray Marangella and promoting such claims.

The Universal House of Justice has no doubt that your reaction to this regrettable news will be "characterized by a fortitude that will increase the unity of the community and intensify concentration on efforts vital to the success of the Four Year Plan."

For guidance on Covenant-breaking, please refer to Section 5 of *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities. Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies.*

Exhibit 6

The Baha'i Faith & Religious Freedom of Conscience

Shunning > Menu

<http://www.fglaysher.com/bahaicensorship/Shunning.htm>

From: Juan R. I. Cole <jrcole@umich.edu>
To: talisman@umich.edu <talisman@umich.edu>
Subject: New Zealand shunning of non-Baha'i
Date: Sunday, February 08, 1998 7:23 PM

You mean I never shared this with the Talismanians?

Here it is in all its glory:

cheers Juan

>National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of New Zealand
>P O Box 21551 (180 Candia Road)
>Henderson Auckland 1231
>New Zealand
>
>Telephone: (09) 837-4866
>Facsimile: (09) 837-4896
>Email: natbahaiofnz@attmail.com
>
>16 December, 1996
>Ref 1695/96
>
>To the Baha'is of New Zealand
>
>Dear Baha'i Friends
>
> Lamentable Situation Calls for Loyal Response
>
>With heavy hearts, the National Spiritual Assembly announces to the Baha'i
>community that Ms Pauline Smith, of Masterton, has broken the Covenant and
>been expelled from the Faith by the Universal House of Justice. Ms Smith has
>unfortunately not heeded the guidance and warnings she has been given over a
>period of some months, and has decided to maintain contact and association
>with known Covenant-breakers, who are some of the relatives of Shoghi
>Effendi, and in particular, Ms Parvine Afnan Shahid.
>
>Ms Smith, who had known about the Faith for some years in New Zealand, went
>to the United Kingdom where she continued learning about the Faith from
>believers she met there. While in England she also happened to meet the
>family of Covenant-breakers and became friends with them. Ms Smith later
>became a Baha'i in England and, soon afterwards, returned to New Zealand (in
>1995). Since then, there have been attempts by the institutions of the Faith
>to counsel Ms Smith about her association with Ms Shahid, who intends to
>come to live in Masterton from early 1997. The Universal House of Justice says:
>
> "It has been determined that Parvine Shahid, who is the granddaughter
> of the notorious Covenant-breaker Nayyir Afnan, is infected with the
> spirit of Covenant-breaking and should be treated as a
> Covenant-breaker." (1)
>
>Friends wishing to know more about the history of Ms Shahid's family should
>refer to a book by Mr Adib Taherzadeh, entitled *The Covenant of
>Baha'u'llah* which provides full information about this matter. A four page
>summary of relevant details is being sent to all Local Spiritual Assemblies
>and groups, and is available from the National Office on request.

>
>A fundamental principle of the Faith is that no believer can have any
>contact or association with a believer who has been deemed by the Head of
>the Faith to break the Covenant, whether by correspondence, telephone, or in
>person. Strict adherence to this rule is obligatory. The essential reason
>for this is to preserve the unity of the Baha'i Faith. It is because of
>division within themselves that the religions of the past have not fulfilled
>their purpose to unify mankind. For a further elaboration of this principle
>please see the attached extracts from a letter of the Universal House of
>Justice dated 9 December 1996, to a believer in Masterton [not supplied].
>
>Over the next few months the National Spiritual Assembly will implement, in
>collaboration with the Arm of the Learned and working through the Local
>Spiritual Assemblies and assistants, a systematic deepening programme on the
>Covenant aimed at every believer in New Zealand. In the meantime, the
>friends are urged to rededicate themselves to study of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will
>and Testament, and to familiarise themselves with guidance regarding
>firmness in the Covenant, which is found in such publications as *Lights of
>Guidance*. All communities were recently sent a copy of a publication
>entitled *The Power of the Covenant* which consists of a set of three
>booklets. This provides further reference material for any questions you may
>have about this matter. Audio cassette tapes on the subject of the Covenant
>are also available from the Audio-Visual Unit. The National Spiritual
>Assembly urges you to make a concerted effort to study deeply the subject of
>the Covenant, individually and in groups.
>
>Meeting this challenge represents a new stage in the growth of the Faith in
>New Zealand. These words of a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi
>provide reassurance of the progress that comes from a crisis:
>
> "He urges you not to be discouraged or depressed, but rest assured
> that Baha'u'llah will assist you. Every set-back this Cause receives
> is invariably a means of ensuring a future victory, for God will
> never permit His Faith to be put out or uprooted."(2)
>
>As the believers strengthen their understanding of the Covenant and more
>faithfully adhere to its provisions, such firmness will not only increase
>their own understanding of Baha'u'llah's Revelation and provide protection
>for our national community, but will also give additional impetus to
>deepening our commitment to achieving the purpose and goals of God's plan.
>
>We are fully conscious of the distress and shock that many believers will go
>through as a result of this severe test and we do not underestimate the
>severe challenge this poses.
>
>The Universal House of Justice says:
>
> "We are confident that the dearly loved New Zealand believers will
> not allow this lamentable situation to deflect them from their
> meritorious endeavours to further develop their Baha'i community and
> to maintain its unity."(3)
>
>Be assured of the ardent prayers of this institution for your reassurance,
>comfort and strength of faith.
>
>Warmest Baha'i love
>NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
>
>Suzanne Mahon
>Secretary
>
>enc: Extract from a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an
>individual believer, 9 December 1996
>
>-----
>
>1. From a letter dated 12 December 1996 from the Department of the
> Secretariat, Universal House of Justice, to the National Spiritual
> Assembly of the Baha'is of New Zealand[.]
>
>2. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated 26 January
> 1950 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Panama, quoted in The
> Compilation of Compilations: Volume 1, #323.
>
>3. From a letter of the Universal House of Justice dated 12 December
> 1996 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of New
> Zealand.

>
> ----- letter ends, fax begins -----
>
>
>
>Universal House of Justice
>Baha'i World Centre
>12 December 1996
>
>Transmitted by fax: 64-9-8374898
>The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of New Zealand
>
>Dear Baha'i friends,
>
>We regret to have to advise you of the determination which has been made, in
>consultation with the Hands of the Cause of God, that Pauline Smith of
>Masterton has broken the Covenant. You are now requested to convey this
>information to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Masterton and to the Baha'is
>within your jurisdiction, and to provide them with the necessary guidance.
>
>Before this determination was made, Pauline Smith had been counselled over
>an extended period in an attempt to assist her to understand the nature of
>the spiritual obligations undertaken by one who chooses to become a member
>of the Baha'i community. When the efforts had proven fruitless, she was
>warned of the consequences of her conduct in allying herself with those who
>have endeavoured for decades to undermine the unity of the Faith, at which
>time she submitted a resignation from the Faith in an apparent attempt to
>avoid being designated as a Covenant-breaker.
>
>We are confident that the dearly loved New Zealand believers will not allow
>this lamentable situation to deflect them from their meritorious endeavours
>to further develop their Baha'i community and to maintain its unity.
>
>With loving Baha'i greetings
>The Universal House of Justice
>
>cc: Hands of the Cause of God
> International Teaching Centre
> Board of Counsellors in Australasia (by fax)
> Counsellors David Chittleborough, Violette Haake, Bruce
> Saunders, and Heather Simpson (all by fax)

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The Baha'i Faith & Religious Freedom of Conscience

Shunning > Menu

<http://www.fglaysher.com/bahaicensorship/Shunning.htm>

From: Juan R. I. Cole <jrcole@umich.edu>
To: Mark A. Foster <owner@sociologist.com>; Talisman <talisman@umich.edu>
Cc: SManeck@berry.edu <SManeck@berry.edu>
Subject: Re: Shunning and religious tolerance
Date: Sunday, February 08, 1998 7:10 PM

The problem with Mark's statement of the situation is that Baha'is do not only shun "insiders." In New Zealand late in 1996, the universal house of justice declared a woman a non-Baha'i even though she had already resigned from the Baha'i faith, because she was in contact with a woman who had never been a registered Baha'i but was descended from Shoghi Effendi.

In the instance of the descendent of Shoghi Effendi, covenant-breaking appears now to be considered to run in blood lines and to be hereditary!

So in New Zealand, at the order of the Baha'i authorities (and I read the letter truly to relish all this in a way that struck me as sadistic), *two* non-Baha'is are being shunned by the Baha'i community. Actually, I believe this shunning may be in contravention of Anglo-Saxon libel law, and that the Baha'i authorities might well be open to a lawsuit from the non-Baha'is they have declared shunned.

But, as Milissa says, even if only "insiders" were shunned, there is no obvious difference between that and Sunnis shunning Shi'ite Muslims or Catholics shunning Protestants. This shunning business is in fact a major contradiction within the Baha'i faith, which has such high and universalistic ideals on the outside but such weird practices on the inside. And I believe it is contrary to everything Baha'u'llah himself stood for. The Aqdas incidentally says that *all* human beings are ritually pure. The language of disease, used in referring to covenant breakers, suggests the opposite, that they are ritually impure.

I think we may conclude that the Baha'i faith as a movement is multi-faceted and self-contradictory. It proclaims universalism but in some respects acts very narrowly; it proclaims universal love but in fact instills hatred toward some human beings; it proclaims the unity of science and religion but in fact insists on scriptural fundamentalism; it proclaims the value of political liberty and the advent of Reason among the people, but in fact is run like a one-party state.

The trick is to keep in view both sides of the story simultaneously. It wouldn't be fair to say that Baha'is "don't really" believe in human unity. Plenty do. It wouldn't be fair to say all Baha'is are narrow-minded, though some key leaders are. It is a complex movement with many sides to it.

And what else should we expect from the offshoot of Twelver Shi'ism via esoteric Shaykhism and messianic Babism, a religion born at the interstices of Shi'ite gnosticism and 19th century modernity? Of a religion that for most adherents in Iran became a sort of closed ethnic group? Of a religion that was for most of the 20th century practiced by only a few thousand Americans, many of them a little wacky, who established traditions of cult-like authoritarianism? The real question is whether the contradictions will strangle the religion in its cradle, or whether it can outgrow them and achieve its potential as a world religion. As long as its leaders ride roughshod over human rights, I see little chance of the latter.

The Baha'i Faith & Religious Freedom of Conscience

Shunning > Menu

<http://www.fglaysher.com/bahaicensorship/Shunning.htm>

```

From talisman-errors@umich.edu Sun Feb  8 19:41:50 1998
Received: (from root@localhost)
  by twins.rs.itd.umich.edu (8.8.6/2.5) with X.500 id WAA11499; Sun, 8 Feb 1998 22:41:46 -0500 (EST)
Received: (from root@localhost)
  by twins.rs.itd.umich.edu (8.8.6/2.5) with X.500 id WAA11497
  for talisman-members@umich.edu; Sun, 8 Feb 1998 22:41:46 -0500 (EST)
Received: from gimantis.rs.itd.umich.edu (gimantis.rs.itd.umich.edu [141.211.83.25])
  by twins.rs.itd.umich.edu (8.8.6/2.5) with ESMTMP id WAA11489
  for <talisman@umich.edu>; Sun, 8 Feb 1998 22:41:45 -0500 (EST)
Received: from pm115-18.dialip.mich.net (pm115-18.dialip.mich.net [141.211.4.88])
  by gimantis.rs.itd.umich.edu (8.8.5/2.4) with SMTP id WAA27250; Sun, 8 Feb 1998 22:41:20 -0500 (EST)
Message-Id: <199802090341.WAA27250@gimantis.rs.itd.umich.edu>
X-Sender: jrcole@j.imap.itd.umich.edu
X-Mailer: Windows Eudora Version 1.4.4
Mime-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"
Date: Sun, 08 Feb 1998 22:41:54 -0500
To: Dean Betts <fdbetts@mindspring.com>
From: jrcole@umich.edu (Juan R. I. Cole)
Subject: Re: New Zealand shunning of non-Baha'i
Cc: talisman@umich.edu

```

That's right from the point of view of the Baha'i authorities. However, there is U.S. case law on shunning, and it is not my impression that the courts would look kindly on a religious body having a non-adherent shunned, since it is probably a form of libel as traditionally defined in Anglo-Saxon law.

I'm afraid we are, on this terrain, a very, very long way away from Baha'u'llah's ideals of universal love and openness to all and the unity of humanity. My guess is that non-Baha'i institutions, both governmental and civil society, will eventually force the religion's leaders to start behaving in a civilized fashion if the religion ever becomes big and important enough for them to care one way or another. It is a sad thing that the impulse for open-mindedness and love and justice does not come from within the religion's leadership itself. It is even more sad that persons who engage in such invidious activities are now the primary ambassadors of Baha'u'llah to the world, giving the world a most unfortunate and inaccurate picture of the sort of ideals the latter preached.

cheers Juan

```

At 07:20 PM 2/8/98 -0500, Dean Betts wrote:
>So resigning from the Faith will not *necessarily* prevent one from being
>declared a CB.
>
>>>We regret to have to advise you of the determination which has been made, in
>>>consultation with the Hands of the Cause of God, that Pauline Smith of
>>>Masterton has broken the Covenant.
>
>>> she submitted a resignation from the Faith in an apparent attempt to
>>>avoid being designated as a Covenant-breaker.
>>>
>>
>
>*****
> Verily, He is the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, the
>Lord of all the worlds.
>
>                                     - Baha'u'llah
>*****
>
>
>
>
>

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The Baha'i Faith & Religious Freedom of Conscience

Shunning > Menu

<http://www.fglaysher.com/bahaicensorship/Shunning.htm>

From: jrcole@umich.edu <jrcole@umich.edu>

Subject: Re: Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Freedom of Conscience

Date: Friday, February 12, 1999 8:53 PM

Dear Milissa:

Shunning is the marker of a cult. It is instrumental. Leaders have people shunned to achieve their objectives, and they don't care whom they hurt. The Jehovah's Witnesses, Amish, some Mennonites, and others all do this. If Baha'is are happy to be in that company, fine and well. But **note that these are all relatively small cults and none of them will ever really amount to anything in mainstream society.**

I think shunning is a human rights abuse. It may be legal (in non-tort situations), but then, lots of human rights abuses are legal. I don't see the difference between the Mafia organizing a conspiracy to have someone's restaurant boycotted unless he pays protection money, and a religious organization threatening to prevent someone from seeing his coreligionist relatives at reunions unless he is blindly obedient to them. **Both are forms of coercion that invade privacy and detract from the autonomy and dignity of the individual.**

cheers Juan

In article <7a21l9\$olm\$1@nnrp1.dejanews.com>,
Milissa Boyer Kafes <mbkafes@bestweb.net> wrote:

> Hi Susan--
>
> when I wrote:
>
> > >The thing I don't get, however, is that if the true purpose of
shunning is
> > >protection of Baha'is, then her voluntary withdrawal should
have been
> > >sufficient.
> >
> > The problem is that if she is now under the influence of
Covenant breaking
> > ideas, she is likely to spread them to other Baha'is. Again, you
do not have
> > to deny Baha'u'llah to leave the Faith. But if your only reason
for leaving
> > is to avoid being declared CB it is possible your resignation
will not be
> > accepted on
> > those grounds.
>
> But given this definition, *anyone* can be declared a CB, can't
they? You can
> be declared one even if you leave, and even if you were never
Baha'i. Given
> this definition, what is preventing Baha'is from shunning the
Baptist minister
> and his congregation?
>

Juan Cole
History, U of Michigan
<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bahai.htm>

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Shunning > Menu

<http://www.fglaysher.com/bahaicensorship/Shunning.htm>

From: jrcole@umich.edu <jrcole@umich.edu>
Subject: Re: Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Freedom of Conscience
Date: Sunday, February 14, 1999 1:50 AM

Dear JayLiz:

My position when I was enrolled was that avoiding (not shunning) schismatics was socially justified for the sake of maintaining unity, with schismatics defined as individuals who claimed or followed those who claimed to be Guardians after Shoghi Effendi. On the other hand, I had CBs in class and I taught them just like anyone else, saw them in office hours, etc. One wrote a rather good paper on Secret of Divine Civilization. But I wouldn't have invited that student out for coffee unless I was doing so for the whole class.

Unfortunately, the very existence of a category of 'covenant breakers' and the practice of **shunning has created a dynamic where all Baha'is are always on heresy trial at the hands of the conservatives in the community**. Just as inspectors at uranium mines have geiger counters to measure radiation, these rightwing Baha'is have covenant-monitors. They constantly shine them on you and your words to detect if any covenant-breaking is coming from you. And they define covenant-breaking as thinking for yourself rather than slavish obedience to the 'institutions.'

When a conference was held at Wilmette in 1995 on the Kitab-i Aqdas, a number of Baha'i academics gave papers on it to a general Baha'i audience. A number of Baha'is accused them informally of being 'covenant breakers.' Here, the term appears to have meant that the academics' understanding of the significance of the Most Holy Book differed from that of the rightwing Baha'is. A number of the speakers were very hurt by these accusations. This sort of thing is not atypical, but rather has become routine and even taken hold in administrative practice to some extent, as we saw on the old talisman.

I consider this second use of 'covenant breaking' charges and threats of shunning against ordinary, loyal Baha'is to be pathological, and feel it is extremely damaging to the fortunes of the community. It means that the lowest common denominator defines orthodoxy, and anyone with an original idea is liable to being attacked and insulted and threatened. I think some rightwing Baha'is, like Birkland, actually make their careers on covenant-baiting, sort of the way Richard Nixon made his early career by communist-baiting. There is a very real parallel between American McCarthyism and the mindset of the covenant-infected (it is sort of a disease). I think a very large number of people have left the Baha'i faith over covenant-baiting, whether because they were victims of it or because they disapproved of it when they saw it happen to others. Since these people tend to simply disappear into the crowd, we never hear back from them about their disappointments.

It is my feeling that unless this Baha'i McCarthyism can be put aside and overcome, the Baha'i community in this country is unlikely ever to amount to much.

cheers Juan

In article <7a56o6\$9as\$1@nnrpl.dejanews.com>,
 jayliz77@my-dejanews.com wrote:
>

>
> Hello Dr. Cole,
>
> In article <7a415t\$7q\$1@nnrp1.dejanews.com>,
> jrcole@umich.edu wrote:
> >
> >
> > Dear Jayliz:
> >
> > `Abdu'l-Baha was facing a temporary and extraordinary situation in which a
> > serious and plausible schism had developed among Baha'u'llah's sons. He
> > dealt with it the only way he knew how, by urging his partisans to avoid
> > partisans of the schismatics. He did not intend for this practice to become
> > a permanent feature of Baha'i life (when's the last time you met a partisan
> > of Mirza Muhammad `Ali?)!
>
> Okay, notwithstanding the actions of certain Baha'is who may have the wrong
> idea about who exactly ought to be shunned, should actual Covenant-breakers
> today -- not those who have certain views about the Administrative Order or
> rulings about the Universal House of Justice -- still be shunned (i.e.
> 'Orthodox' Baha'is, Baha'is under the provisions of the covenant, etc., who
> we do run into frequently on the 'Net)?
>
> I mean, the House of Justice can't rule that 'Abdu'l-Baha's statement was only
> referring to a temporary situation (because that would be interpretation, no?)
> can it? And it can't rule that we no longer have to shun Covenant-breakers
> because it has explicitly been ordered in the W&T, can it?
>
> Peace,
> JayLiz
>
> -----== Posted via Deja News, The Discussion Network -----
> <http://www.dejanews.com/> Search, Read, Discuss, or Start Your Own
>

Juan Cole
History, U of Michigan
<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bahai.htm>

-----== Posted via Deja News, The Discussion Network -----
<http://www.dejanews.com/> Search, Read, Discuss, or Start Your Own

[Homepage](#)

The Baha'i Faith & Religious Freedom of Conscience

From - Tue Feb 04 07:21:29 1997
 Approved: boatright@cjnetworks.com (Rick Boatright)
 From: jrcole@j.imap.itd.umich.edu (Juan R. I. Cole)
 Subject: Re: (Fwd) Administrative and Spiritual Expulsion
 Newsgroups: soc.religion.bahai
 Message-ID: <"cUTn5C.A.6sE.O6A8y"@bounty>
 Distribution: world
 Organization: ----
 Date: Wed, 29 Jan 1997 21:15:55 -0600
 Lines: 171
 Path:
 zeus.moa.net!news2.acs.oakland.edu!newsxfer.itd.umich.edu!newsxfer3.itd.umich.edu!su-news-hub1.bbnplanet.com!news.bbnplanet.com!cpk-news-hub1.bbnplanet.com!feed1.news.erols.com!howland.erols.net!surfnnet.nl!news.unisource.nl!xs4all!newsgate.cistron.nl!news.bcca.org!not-for-mail

Bill Collins wrote:

>The implication that mere criticism of the National Spiritual Assembly
 >leads to inevitably to administrative expulsion is both demonstrably
 >>false and missing a larger context.

What I said was that believers can have their administrative rights taken away for publicly criticizing the National Spiritual Assembly or its policies or actions. Some believers have been publicly sanctioned for such speech during the past five years. That public criticism of the NSA does not always and inevitably lead to sanctions would only suggest that the system is arbitrary, and that the NSA punishes those it wishes to.

Just to keep things in the real world, imagine if the leadership of the Methodist church promulgated a rule that any Methodist who publicly disagrees with the Church leadership or criticizes the actions of any priest or bishop will be excommunicated immediately! This is the equivalent of what the Baha'i leadership is saying.

>I have known many Baha'is who have,
 >within the structures provided in the Baha'i writings, queried decisions
 >of Baha'i institutions. Many of those decisions were modified.

That is, if a believer objects to an NSA decision, the only acceptable way to criticize it is to write to the secretary of the NSA that made the decision, and ask that it be reconsidered. If the NSA refuses to reconsider it, the objecting believer must accept the decision silently and never bring it up again in public.

It would be like saying that if you did not like a law your congressman passed, and wrote him objecting, and he stuck by his guns, you were forbidden from publicly criticizing the law or the congressman forevermore. I fail to see the difference between such a system and totalitarianism.

>However, when one or more believers embark on a campaign in public
 >forums (either by letter-writing, electronic mail, telephoning, or from
 >a podium) to call into question the honesty and integrity of a Baha'i
 >institution and its members, or indeed of another individual believer,
 >sanctions are possible.

It is not only calling into question the honesty or integrity of the members of a Baha'i institution that is forbidden. It is criticizing any aspect of the policies enacted by Baha'i institutions. Speaking publicly is confused with "launching a campaign." Attempting to suggest better ways of doing things on an e-mail network is lambasted as "negative campaigning."

And what if NSA or LSA members did engage in questionable practices? How could these ever be discovered or outed? What mechanisms of accountability are there?

>"Spiritual Expulsion" is certainly a defense against schismatics. It
 >also serves as a protection from those who would wield an axe against
 >the root principles of the Baha'i Faith. One set of root principles
 >involves the divine origin of the Baha'i administrative order, the
 >legitimate authority of its institutions, and the love, support and
 >loyalty that is due them from Baha'is. When one or more believers
 >repeatedly engage in challenges to the legitimacy of the structure
 >itself, it is a departure from the covenant, and is as disruptive and
 >schismatic as any conscious attempt to create a break in the unity of
 >the Faith.

In other words, if the Baha'i administration makes a set of decisions, Baha'is must unquestioningly acquiesce to them in public or else they will be accused of disrupting the Covenant.

Think about this in other contexts. It would be like saying that no Shi'ite Muslim had the right to disagree publicly with anything that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Jurisprudent in Iran, said or did. A newspaper editorial disagreeing with one of his rulings, say, on the need to suppress the Baha'i faith, would result in the author's expulsion from Shi'ism, or perhaps in other punishments. (Actually, this is the case; do Baha'is really wish to be so much like Khomeinists?)

Or it would be like a Catholic saying that the least criticism of anything the Pope says or does is equivalent to rank heresy and the critic must be immediately expelled from the Church and damned to hell. No public discussion could occur in Catholicism of women priests, social justice, or birth control. Every Catholic would have to toe the party line exactly or be expelled. Now, there are people in Roman Catholicism who think like this--perhaps Opus Dei, e.g. However, they are generally considered right-wing wackos. That this line is becoming the *official* line of the Baha'i administration should help to situate it ideologically.

>We may see from a history of covenant-breaking that those
>who were spiritually expelled did not necessarily start off to become
>schismatics

They also started off drinking milk. I think this fact should alert us to the real danger that all Baha'is are secretly covenant breakers, since they began life drinking milk, just as did Ahmad Sohrab.

> There is a similar issue evolving now: Is it
>within the authority of the Universal House of Justice to define the
>scope of appropriate behavior, and to call to account those Baha'is who
>refuse to understand its requests for a modification in tone, a review
>of basic principles, a loyalty to legitimately-elected institutions?

The Universal House of Justice in Haifa was ordained to lead the Baha'i community by Baha'u'llah and is the ultimate legitimate authority in the religion. I say this as a historian who has studied the texts and history of the movement for a quarter of a century. The Universal House of Justice can therefore set any policy it wishes for the Baha'is, and Baha'is must obey those policies.

However, Americans, thank God, still have freedom of religion and conscience, and if we don't like those policies we are not obliged to be Baha'is. I have chosen not to be, because I believe the current Baha'i leadership, in seeking to impose blind obedience and public silence on all Baha'is and in **libelling some of its devoted followers as verbal breakers of the covenant**, is overstepping its scriptural mandate and has betrayed the spirit and promise of Baha'i universalism and liberal principles. It is confusing constructive criticism with treason, confusing freedom of speech with libel, confusing theological liberalism with heresy. A religion that is divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that Unitarian Universalism now best embodies the old Baha'i spirit, and that the Baha'i community has been taken over by hardline fundamentalists.

There is a difference between saying that the Universal House of Justice is the only legitimate leader of the religion and saying that Baha'i leaders always acts in accord with scriptural principles. It is not within the authority, by the explicit text of `Abdu'l-Baha, of Baha'i houses of justice at any level to seek to control the mere speech (as opposed to behavior) of Baha'is, about doctrinal or other issues (<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/abconsc.htm>). Contrast the current situation in the Baha'i faith, in which all publications are censored, and in which no independent magazine, and not so much as an independent, unmoderated Baha'i email forum is permitted, to what `Abdu'l-Baha dreamed of:

At the Central Congregational Church in Brooklyn on 16 June 1912, `Abdu'l-Baha said: "Just as in the world of politics there is need for free thought, likewise in the world of religion there should be the right of unrestricted individual belief. Consider what a vast difference exists between modern democracy and the old forms of despotism. Under an autocratic government the opinions of men are not free, and development is stifled, whereas in a democracy, because thought and speech are not restricted, the greatest progress is witnessed. It is likewise true in the world of religion. When freedom of conscience, liberty of thought and right of speech prevail--that is to say, when every man according to his own idealization may give expression to his beliefs--development and growth are inevitable."

At the Universalist Church Washington, D.C. on 6 Nov. 1912, he said: "Praise be to God! The standard of liberty is held aloft in this land. You enjoy political liberty; you enjoy liberty of thought and speech, religious liberty, racial and personal liberty."

Some of `Abdu'l-Baha's appreciation of American democracy was a reaction against the royal absolutism of Qajar Iran. `Abdu'l-Baha had complained in 1875 that in Iran, "Not a soul could speak out, because the governor was in absolute control."

I'm afraid that with the best of intentions and with the purest of souls, my good friends among the Baha'is who have adopted the new hard line, have transformed the beautiful Garden of which `Abdu'l-Baha dreamed into a dingy dungeon in which consciences are coerced, innocents are falsely accused with impunity, administrative rights are revoked for constructive criticism, and shunning is threatened or imposed for academic analysis. A good analysis of all this is found in the current issue of [*Gnosis* magazine \(Winter 1997\)](#).

And you wonder why there are only about 25,000 active Baha'is in this country. There are some things most Americans just won't put up with.

Your Unitarian-Universalist friend,

Juan Cole
Professor
Department of History
University of Michigan

Exhibit 7

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The Baha'i Faith in America as Panopticon, 1963-1997

Juan R. I. Cole

Despite the large literature on American religious bodies, some groups remain curiously off-limits to careful investigation. In many instances, these largely unstudied contemporary faiths carefully cultivate public images that hide important facets of their outlook and internal workings. Thus, the collapse of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's Oregon commune surprised many observers. Some of these groups have developed control mechanisms that discourage adherents and often even apostates from writing about these workings. Scientology, for instance, employs techniques of harassment against critics. Others employ shunning which can be an extremely powerful deterrent, endangering a lifetime of friendships and even family relationships. The problem with strict internal controls for missionary religions, however, is that they are most often incompatible in Western societies with significant growth. One solution to this difficulty is to attempt to control what are thought of as key pressure points—vocal intellectuals, media, prominent institutions—and to give greater leeway to ordinary believers. This solution has the further advantage of making charges of repression less plausible to the rank and file, who have not personally experienced such constraints.

Here I wish to examine social control mechanisms in the American Baha'i community. These include mandatory prepublication censorship of everything Baha'is publish about their religion, administrative expulsion, blackballing, shunning and threats of shunning. What are the ideological bases of these control mechanisms? How is power attained and managed in a lay community without a clergy? I wish to stress here that this article is not concerned with the essence or scriptures or theology of the religion, but with the actualities of its day-to-day technologies of control. Many of my remarks cannot be generalized to other national communities, and concern mainly the U.S.

Anyone familiar with the public relations literature produced by the movement will be surprised at the description of control mechanisms given above, since Baha'is are often grouped in the media with Unitarian-Universalists. Why should the Baha'i authorities wish

to project an image more liberal than the reality? First, the movement's scriptures are liberal in their orientation, and as a result even administratively conservative Baha'i leaders support the U.N. and race unity, and pay lip service to the rule of law. But when it comes to the internal governance of the religion, the same leaders wield these control mechanisms to enforce on prominent believers what might be thought of as "party discipline" in the Marxist sense. Second, Baha'i leaders are aware that if the U.S. press understood how their administration actually operates, journalists might be far less favorable to them than is now the case. Third, the Baha'i leadership and intellectual class includes some powerful liberals, and some of the contradictions between self-presentation and policy derive from conflicts among the leadership. Fourth, since the 1960s this non-Christian Iranian religion has not attracted many white evangelicals or working-class Catholics, whereas more pluralist college-educated persons have been much more open to it. Thus, an open insistence on a fundamentalist orthodoxy and a clear condemnation of human rights principles might deprive the religion of an important recruiting ground. Although antiliberals have captured the key posts, they shape the community's ideology subtly, by controlling media and silencing liberals who begin to become prominent. Because of these techniques of dissimulation, power can remain in the hands of conservatives, while liberals can continue to be recruited at the local level, and often remain unaware of how marginalized they really are.

In the past, the paucity of anything but official literature formed a difficulty in studying the approximately 60,000 adult American Baha'is, but the emergence of Baha'i electronic mail forums in the 1990s has led to the airing of Baha'i individual opinions in public. I will outline some key control mechanisms employed in the U.S., based on published literature, following email debates, and participant observation. The author has been studying the Baha'i religion for a quarter of a century, and spent much of that time as an adherent. This movement originated as a messianic offshoot of Twelver Shi'ite Islam in nineteenth-century Iran. By the time it came to the United States, in the 1890s, it was already an established religion in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East (Smith 1987). It is now among the more widely-spread religious bodies in the world, and since the mid-1980s has officially claimed about five million adherents (Smith and Momen 1989)--a number that has remained stagnant since then and which was probably somewhat exaggerated even at the time. Let us begin with a brief historical overview.

Historical Background of the American Baha'i Community

The religion was founded in the Middle East in 1863 by the Iranian prophet Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), who taught the unity of the world religions and the unity of humankind from his place of exile in Palestine (Cole 1998). It came to the U.S. in the early 1890s, and was nurtured by the religion's second leader, `Abdu'l-Baha (d. 1921) (Stockman 1985-1995). From 1921 to 1957, the world community was headed by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Baha'u'llah's great-grandson, who died childless and without a successor as "Guardian" or interpreter of the religion. After a hiatus, the Universal House of Justice, consisting of nine

men, was elected by the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world in Haifa, Israel, in 1963, in the wake of a Baha'i world congress held in London (Smith 1987). This legislative body, which had been called for by Baha'u'llah but was now elected for the first time, quickly confirmed that no further Guardians could be appointed (Universal House of Justice 1973:11). The Universal House of Justice created a new appointive institution, the Continental Boards of Counselors, to carry out the functions of propagation and protection—that is, of encouraging proselytizing and imposing orthodoxy (they are assisted by regional “auxiliary board members” and their “assistants”). Some members of the Universal House of Justice were drawn from the ranks of Americans who had served on the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly, and for a time vacancies on the UHJ tended to be filled by former secretaries-general of the U.S. body. More recently vacancies have been filled by counselors appointed by the UHJ. The Universal House of Justice presided over a vast expansion of Baha'i numbers among peasants in the global South, especially India (Smith and Momen 1989). Growth remained slight in Europe.

In 1963, the American Baha'i community had about 10,000 adherents. Here, the religion felt the impact of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, the youth counterculture, and Watergate. The late 1960s and the 1970s were for many Americans a period of profound disillusionment with their social norms and government institutions (Bellah 1976; Wuthnow 1976). This dissatisfaction significantly raised the number of potential converts to less well known religious bodies. Suddenly, the Baha'is' proselytizing ("teaching") efforts, which had had only desultory results previously, reaped tens of thousands of converts. "From 13,000 in 1969, the U.S. Baha'i community grew to 18,000 in 1970; to 31,000 in 1971; 40,000 in 1972; and 60,000 by 1974" (Stockman 1994:18). (Note, however, that Stockman is reporting all the persons who ever registered as members without formally withdrawing, whereas Baha'i authorities soon lost track of about half of them; these persons are unlikely still to be Baha'is.). There were relatively few Baha'i youth (ages 15-21) in the community in 1968, but by the early 1970s there were some 19,000. The influx of youth created frictions with the older Baha'is. Some large proportion of the converts from the youth culture subsequently withdrew (cf. Caton in Hollinger 1992:264-271). Some of those who remained went on to obtain higher degrees, giving the community for the first time a significant number of intellectuals, though these remained poorly integrated into the Baha'i milieu. The Baha'i administration was to have increasing problems with these intellectuals' “culture of critical discourse” (Gouldner, 1979) in subsequent years. By 1978, the Baha'i administration claimed 77,396 members, though it had confirmed addresses for only 48,357 of these, and the number of youth had fallen to only about 3,500 (National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S. 1979).

In the early 1970s, as a result of proselytizing by young people, thousands of rural African-Americans in South Carolina and northern Georgia adopted the Baha'i faith, attracted by its emphasis on the elimination of prejudice, though most of these converts did not give up their identification with their Christian churches (Hardesty 1993). The members of the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly (based in Wilmette, Ill.) had for the most

part become adults in the 1940s and 1950s when the Baha'is numbered only five thousand or so and constituted a relatively closed club. They appear to have worried that the previously-existing community might be swamped by the newcomers. The rolls were becoming cluttered with many declarations of faith based on misunderstandings, and newcomers often had no conception of the rules of Baha'i administration. According to one eyewitness Firuz Kazemzadeh, a longstanding member of the N.S.A. and then a professor of Russian history at Yale, was worried that the community did not have the resources, financial or human, to manage a further influx of poor southern Blacks, and felt that resources should be put into absorbing the thousands that had already come in (personal communication, 16 May 1997). Other, less conservative N.S.A. members strongly argued for allowing the chain conversion to take its course, but these lost the debate. The N.S.A. then deliberately halted the teaching campaign in the South. This is corroborated by a number of sources, including a message posted to the Talisman listserv discussion group (which was run 1994-1996 by John Walbridge, professor of Near Eastern Studies at Indiana University), in which a correspondent reported that he was told by an older African-American Baha'i who had been prominent in teaching the South Carolinian converts more about their religion that

his study of 25 years of national elections led him to think that there would be very little variability in the ethnic makeup of the N.S.A. membership, that a specific ratio of racial diversity was carefully being maintained (sort of an enhanced tokenism?), and that there were lots of fears by the powers that be that if the mass teaching in the south had been allowed to go forward at full steam that a black N.S.A. majority would probably have been elected, so the mass teaching was stopped. (Talisman, April 1996)

Of course, this is only one opinion, and may be incorrect, but the quote shows that some African-American Baha'is entertained these doubts. It does seem clear that the U.S. Baha'i authorities (unlike their Indian counterparts) chose to impose the sort of controls that might risk stagnation rather than take a chance on vast but uncontrolled growth. An eyewitness told me that House of Justice member Ali Nakhjavani deplored the decision as having set back the U.S. Baha'i community "by a generation." On the other hand, the N.S.A. did show concern to socialize the new Southern African-American converts to Baha'i values; admitted a representative of that community to the N.S.A.; and has done community service work, including setting up a radio station in South Carolina.

The next large-scale event involved the immigration to the U.S. from 1978 through the mid-1980s of some 12,000 Iranian Baha'is fleeing persecution at the hands of the Khomeinist government in Iran. The American rank and file responded to these events with active campaigns on behalf of their beleaguered Iranian co-religionists and enhanced monetary offerings. The House of Justice in Haifa, however, took a different approach. At first it was reluctant to abandon its quietism in order to protest the persecutions. Moreover, it offered no support to Iranian Baha'is attempting to flee, and even punished many who

succeeded, on the grounds that they could only have gotten out by denying their faith. In many instances it refused to certify such Baha'is as members, preventing them from being granted asylum and thereby putting them in severe difficulty and sometimes even danger. The U.S. N.S.A. also took this hard line, refusing to welcome large numbers of the escapees into the U.S. community. House of Justice member Ali Nakhjavani vocally and sternly defended these policies on trips to the U.S. The House of Justice did come to support the U.S. N.S.A. in its policy of putting pressure on the Iranian government through cooperation with human rights organizations, though it sometimes continued to balk at certifying escapees as Baha'is.

The period after 1979 was a time of big changes in the U.S. The influx of Iranians, some of whom eventually were accepted into the community, was sufficiently geographically dispersed to require Baha'i communities to come to terms with a more multi-cultural ethos, and most Baha'i communities now included white, Iranian and African-American members. South Carolina and California are the two biggest population centers, but Baha'is have made strenuous efforts to build communities in every state, having by the mid-1990s some 1300 local spiritual assemblies throughout the country and a national annual budget of around \$20 million (though contributions to the national fund in 1996 were only \$11 million and were not keeping up with inflation). The N.S.A. claims 130,000 Baha'is in the late 1990s, but this is a vast exaggeration, even if one counts the children. The N.S.A.'s own survey of 300 communities showed that only a third of members regularly attended the nineteen-day feast (National Spiritual Assembly of U.S., 1997). Wilmette insiders give a figure closer to 60,000 for adults in good standing for whom the authorities still have a confirmed address, and probably only half of these could be considered "active" or committed. After all, converts can only be removed from the rolls by writing a formal letter to the National Spiritual Assembly explicitly renouncing belief in Baha'u'llah. Most of those who leave the religion do not bother to do so. One Baha'i tells the story of how an attempt was made in the 1980s to contact the Baha'is in Compton, California. Official records showed 22 Baha'is there for which the N.S.A. had addresses. But an exhaustive search turned up only two who still considered themselves Baha'is (personal communication, May, 1997). This case cannot be typical, but it is suggestive. It is sometimes argued that those converts of whom the authorities have lost track may not have entirely given up their allegiance to the religion. In 1990 CUNY conducted a poll of 110,000 U.S. households with regard to religion, and, only finding 24 adults who reported themselves as Baha'is, estimated the size of the community as 28,000 adults. These findings, while perhaps on the low side, confirm that there are not large numbers of lost Baha'is floating about in the general population (Kosmin and Lachman 1992:17, 151, 287).

Isolating Beliefs and Practices

What are the beliefs and practices that underpin the control mechanisms practiced by Baha'i institutions? Baha'is are encouraged to relocate so as to serve as lay missionaries in a place with few Baha'is, in their own countries or abroad. Since these policies began in

the 1930s and 1940s most Baha'i communities have been small, ranging from a handful to forty members, with only a few communities much bigger. Participation in the larger communities can be quite demanding, since the Baha'i faith lacks a professional clergy and all the religion's work must be done by lay officials and by volunteers. A secondary effect of these practices is that an active Baha'i often moves far away from or is too busy to see much of non-Baha'i family and friends and is left highly dependent on Baha'i social networks, and is thus vulnerable to pressure for conformity from Baha'i institutions.

A significant way in which Baha'is are isolated from mainstream society is the ban on participation in politics. Things were not always thus. In nineteenth-century Iran Baha'is sometimes held high political office, and some Baha'i intellectuals were important in agitating for constitutionalism and an end to absolutism. `Abdu'l-Baha made a distinction between those living under absolute monarchies and those living in republics. "Now, as the government of America is a republican form of government, it is necessary that all the citizens shall take part in the elections of officers and take part in the affairs of the republic" (`Abdul-Baha 1909-1916: II, 342-343). Early U.S. Baha'is likewise were active in U.S. politics, belonged to political parties, and in some instances held civil political office.

In the 1930s Shoghi Effendi called a halt to Baha'i involvement in party politics, and his policy has hardened into a Baha'i principle (Hornsby 1982:329). He took this step in part because the Iranian community under the Pahlavi dictatorship withdrew or was excluded from public affairs, and he appears to have felt that Iranian Baha'i values should be normative world-wide. He also was concerned that partisan political disputes had polarized major Baha'i communities such as that of New York. Shoghi Effendi's secretary wrote on his behalf in 1951 that "we must do two things--shun politics like the plague, and be obedient to the Government in power in the place where we reside" (Hornsby 1982:332). Shoghi Effendi's sentiments in this regard were reaffirmed in a major encyclical addressed to African Baha'is by the House of Justice in 1970 (Universal House of Justice 1976:44-50), and remain a strong value. U.S. Baha'is typically condemn active participation in politics, and their attitudes can generally be described as "anti-liberal" (Holmes 1993), as in the following posting to an email forum: "The political culture in the U.S. is strongly influenced by these revolutionary developments and by thinkers, such as Locke, Jefferson, and Mill, that promoted them. The characteristics of this political culture include suspicion toward authority, the promotion of individualism, and the use of adversarial processes, protest and rebellion in order to check the abuse of power. So steeped are many of us in this political culture that we have difficulty imagining real change without some process of opposition or partisan conflict" (Aull 1993).

The Baha'is' inability to belong to political parties, vote in primaries that require party affiliation, contest partisan elections, contribute to political campaigns, or even express political views, detracts from their ability to participate fully in the affairs of the republic and in some important respects isolates them from the larger U.S. society. Indeed, Baha'is

are not only excluded from belonging to political parties, but also from membership in activist organizations such as Amnesty International (Universal House of Justice 1993). Baha'is do participate in some institutions of civil society, especially at the local level. But on the whole they have fewer institutional affiliations outside their religion than is common among Americans, which gives Baha'i leaders greater leverage over them.

Another way in which many Baha'is are isolated from non-Baha'i social supports is their disparagement of the institutions and values of mainstream American society. Many Baha'is exalt their own community, values and procedures, and denigrate those of what they call the "Old World Order." The U.S. Constitution and its Bill of Rights are often criticized by conservative Baha'is as embodying Old World Order values inferior to those found in Baha'i writings. Baha'i antagonism to existing American society is expressed in a number of ways. Among the symbolically most powerful is a widespread Baha'i belief in what is called the "Calamity," an apocalyptic event or set of events that will radically change American society and lay the foundation for the mass adoption of the Baha'i faith (Smith 1982; Caton in Hollinger 1992:269). Mainstream Baha'is seldom set precise dates for the Calamity, in contrast to tiny sectarian movements such as the Jensenites in Montana.

Many Baha'is believe that their ecclesiastical institutions will eventually supplant the U.S. government (and other governments), so that a Baha'i theocracy will abolish the separation of religion and state. This belief is contested by Western Baha'i liberals, but has recently been favored by the Universal House of Justice (Universal House of Justice 1996c; Haukness 1996; Watler 1996; [Johnson 1997](#)). Only Baha'is may vote in Baha'i elections, and presumably only Baha'is would be allowed to vote in the unlikely event of a theocratic Baha'i government being established in the U.S. This policy would create religious minorities with less than full civil rights, as was and sometimes still is common in the Muslim Middle East. That late twentieth-century American Baha'is should advocate theocracy is ironic, since in the nineteenth century Middle East, its founding fathers Baha'u'llah and `Abdu'l-Baha argued for a [separation of religion and state](#) and for multi-party democracy as a way of gaining more tolerance for the new religion in Shi'ite Iran (Cole 1992). The theocratic ideal is clearly a radical Middle Eastern one, and is paralleled in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Most contemporary Baha'is do not realize that the various stances taken on this issue over the period of a century by Baha'u'llah, `Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi contain some contradictions, and it is a late theocratic vision, present most radically in pilgrim's notes of remarks attributed to Shoghi Effendi in the 1950s, that many Baha'i institutions now uphold (Robarts 1993).

Baha'is invest their religious institutions with great authority, since many do not see them--as Protestants would--as a mere church, but rather as an embryonic theocracy (in this they resemble the Khomeinists). Many, perhaps most American Baha'is believe that the House of Justice in Haifa is infallible in all its doings. This belief derives from a particular understanding of the Arabic word employed by `Abdu'l-Baha to describe the institution's

authority, *ma`sum*, (which in the original means morally immaculate rather than “infallible” in the Roman Catholic sense). Many believers ignore Shoghi Effendi’s limitation of the sphere of “infallibility” of the House of Justice to legislation, which denied it the authority to engage in authoritative scriptural interpretation (Rabbani 1969:148-151). With the end of the guardianship, conservative Baha’is are eager to invest the House of Justice with de facto interpretive authority, and the House of Justice has come out vigorously against “secular humanism” and “materialist” methodologies in academic scholarship, which would appear to be interpretive issues (UHJ 1997). Many Baha’is believe they must subordinate their individual consciences to UHJ decisions and obey it implicitly, a value strongly at odds with American individualism. Baha’i liberals in the West frequently demur from this view in private, but they appear to be increasingly a minority. Belief in infallibility can act as a powerful control mechanism. A former British Baha’i describes how a vote at a national convention was overturned in the late 1970s when Philip Hainsworth, a member of the U.K. N.S.A., asked the delegates if they really desired to oppose the wishes of the infallible Universal House of Justice (private communication, Feb. 1997). Although national spiritual assemblies are not considered infallible, many American Baha’is view all Baha’i institutions as “divinely guided” under certain circumstances. Belief in divine guidance makes Baha’is especially susceptible to authoritarian control techniques on the part of Baha’i administrators, and inclines them to a “blame the victim” mindset wherein they condemn vocal victims of repression as a source of disunity (cf. Shupe 1995; Collins 1991).

Divine Elections

Many control mechanisms relate to the electoral system and the realities of power in the community. Early American Baha’is lacked a clergy, electing lay leaders. They allowed nominations to be made for Baha’i office, and also allowed campaigning for Baha’i office. When early American Baha’is asked `Abdu'l-Baha how they should conduct elections for local spiritual assemblies he replied that they should follow the rules for election common in their own country (`Abdu'l-Baha 1908-1916: I,7). Van den Hoonard points out that nominations and canvassing for Baha’i office were standard practice in North America in the time of `Abdu'l-Baha (van den Hoonard 1996:157-158). Shoghi Effendi abolished the practice of nominations and campaigning for elective Baha’i office in the early 1930s, in accordance with Iranian Baha’i practice. Although ending these practices appears to have had a basis in egalitarian ideals, as the community grew it became impossible for a large electorate to know and evaluate national candidates, and so informal mechanisms of nomination and campaigning developed, wielded especially by those already in power

Baha’i elective institutions are not beholden to the electorate, and may decide as they please. No public criticism of Baha’i institutions is permitted, though private criticism, in the form of individual letters to the institution or comments at Baha’i-only administrative gatherings is said to be allowed (Universal House of Justice 1988, 1989). Persistent public criticism of Baha’i institutions by a Baha’i is considered a contravention of the Baha’i

“covenant,” and is often branded a “dishonest attack” on the Baha'i faith, punishable by shunning. After a vote has been taken, all the members of the Baha'i community must support the result, and defeated minorities may not continue to criticize (Hornsby 1983:31). This procedure assumes that after some time, if the adopted policy is a poor one, the community will come somehow to recognize its inadequacy, and will adopt a new policy. This theory of political behavior denies the need for checks and balances.

The placing of elected bodies above public criticism and the silencing of defeated minorities has had predictable effects at the national level. Since 1961, no member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States who has stood for reelection has been unseated. Since elections of the N.S.A. are annual and there are nine slots, over the past twenty years there have been 180 opportunities to elect a candidate. In this time there has been less than ten percent turnover, and these changes have always been the result of an incumbent not standing for reelection. Moreover, the current system seems especially open to penetration by kinship and patronage networks:

For example, [N.S.A.. Secretary Robert] Henderson's mother, Wilma Ellis, is married to [N.S.A. member Firuz] Kazemzadeh. Ellis herself is a former N.S.A. member who has held a variety of prominent Baha'i positions. Currently she is a member of the Continental Board of Counselors of the Americas, which provides advice and other services to elected Baha'i bodies throughout the hemisphere. Two other current N.S.A. members are husband and wife James and Dorothy Nelson. He is a former presiding judge of the Los Angeles Municipal Court. She is a judge of California's Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Two other members are Juana Conrad, a retired administrator for the Los Angeles Municipal Courts, and William Davis, former administrative executive of the Ninth Circuit Court. Yet another current assembly member is South Dakotan Patricia Locke, the first American-Indian woman to serve on the N.S.A.. She replaced her son Kevin Locke. [Michael] McMullen, University of Houston sociologist, acknowledged that the prohibition against nominations and campaigning has made it hard for those outside the Baha'i establishment to win election to the N.S.A. But on the local level, he added, there is a much higher leadership turnover. Moreover, on this level of authority, he said, issues, even controversial ones, are freely debated without fear of official disapproval. ([Rifkin 1997](#) [misattributed to Cole]).

Baha'i critics of the system allege that electoral results are skewed in three ways.

The National Spiritual Assembly enjoys all the advantages of incumbency, controlling the image of incumbents in the national newspaper, *The American Baha'i* (an organ of the N.S.A.), sending videotapes of the incumbents to local communities, and sending members around to conferences, which enhances their visibility (all this is paid for out of the national Baha'i fund). These advantages of incumbency are especially efficacious in a system where no campaigning for office by others is allowed. Second, they allege that

sitting members often promote close associates onto the body, “flying them around to conferences,” appointing them to high-powered national committees, and giving them prominence at important events ([personal communication, May, 1996](#)). Since speaking openly about candidates is not allowed, subtle non-verbal signals have taken on extreme importance for delegates, who seem willing to be guided by the incumbents in these indirect ways. At the very least, there is a widespread perception among some portions of the community that such subtle signals from incumbents do form a sort of nomination procedure. In the 1970s an African-American prominent in the proselytization campaign in South Carolina said that:

he was asked if he wanted to be part of an orchestration of the N.S.A. [National Spiritual Assembly] election. He said that it was understood that the people that gained visibility when chosen to read prayers on the big stage at national convention had been "blessed" by the powers that be. He told them that he was not interested in being a prayer reader. (Talisman, April 1996).

Obviously, launching a campaign for the N.S.A. involves rather more than is indicated above, but this recollection does show how the semiotics of prominence are thought by many to operate at the National Convention. Third, some grassroots campaigns are launched by unannounced candidates who go about the country giving talks. Such informal campaigning is generally permitted as long as the candidate does not criticize the National Spiritual Assembly, does not explicitly ask for votes, and waits patiently for a slot to open up on that body. The National Spiritual Assembly occasionally stops such grassroots campaigns by ordering the person's talks cancelled, or, if chairmanship of a national committee is becoming a platform for popularity, by firing the individual (Anon. 1992). Conservative Baha'is deny that there is any manipulation of elections, which they see as divinely inspired.

Control Mechanisms and Sanctions

Baha'i leaders employ a number of important control mechanisms to shape the speech and behavior of Baha'is. These include removal of voting rights, shunning, demands for conformity, accusations of “weakness in the covenant,” informing and surveillance, and various forms of censorship. Many of these tools are employed primarily against persons who are somehow prominent or appear to have leadership potential but do not seem easy for incumbents to control, or against intellectuals and some businessmen engaged in Baha'i-related businesses.

The prohibition of nominations and campaigning leads administrators to feel a need for strict controls on Baha'i discourse, and often to the avoidance of even mentioning leaders by name in public, which would be construed as “backbiting.” The ban on campaigning can become a ban on visibility or on any sort of critical thinking. A group of Californian believers began a Baha'i magazine, [Dialogue](#), in the mid-1980s. Although all the articles were submitted for prepublication censorship to the National Spiritual Assembly, a feeling

of distrust toward the magazine's left-liberal editorial line grew up in Wilmette and in Haifa. In spring of 1988 the editors proposed the publication of a 9-point reform program, "[A Modest Proposal](#)," which they submitted for censorship ([Dialogue Ed. Board 1987](#)). The article pointed to the decline in conversions, argued against continued censorship, and proposed term limits for N.S.A. members. They offered to (but did not) make the document available beforehand to delegates to the national convention. The response of N.S.A. secretary Robert Henderson and Firuz Kazemzadeh was to accuse the editors of engaging in "negative campaigning." The editors were denounced at the 1988 national convention in Wilmette, and were interrogated by N.S.A. members, who privately expressed concerns that the publication of such a document might have prevented incumbents from being reelected, and who raised suspicions that an independent magazine such as *Dialogue* might prove a vehicle for gaining popularity in the community for the editors such that they might get elected to the N.S.A. The editors, dismayed at this barrage of what they felt were false charges and violations of due process, and worried that *Dialogue* could not survive such official condemnation, closed the magazine ([Scholl 1997](#)). The ban on campaigning leads to a situation where a great deal of suspicion falls on any active intellectual or any medium of communication not directly controlled by the N.S.A.

Baha'i administrators put a high premium on enforcing relative conformity of views within the religion, taking steps to prevent the emergence of self-conscious subcultures, which are seen as "parties" and as divisive. Despite the clear ideological divide in the community between liberals and conservatives apparent on email forums, Baha'is are forbidden to label one another in this way, which effectively prevents liberals from complaining about the conservative ascendancy. Although the early Baha'i faith had a place in it for cohesive sub-groups of mystics and scholars, the contemporary American community places a premium on homogeneity. Legitimate leadership is held to be collective, though cults of personality do grow up around Baha'i officials. Great suspicion attaches to any Baha'i teacher or lecturer who is not an elected or appointed official and is thought to be "gaining a following." The story of one such popular Baha'i lecturer in the 1980s, an immigrant from Iran whose name I have disguised, is told by a friend:

Under the auspices of the California Regional Teaching Committee he began to do classes . . . on personal reading of the [sacred] Text. These were very widely attended . . . One day after about 4 or 5 months a representative of the CA RTC said that the N.S.A. was very concerned about the extreme adulation being shown to [Ibrahim], some of which was expressed in letters to the National Center. Tragically, this person said that the friends could think what they wanted to, but to please just change what they wrote to the N.S.A.. This was subterfuge, and this, combined with [Ibrahim's] silence on the matter instead of public renunciation of the adulation, was the death knell. The classes were closed down. The rumor was that it was because he was developing a following (personal communication, 16 April 1997).

While a Baptist preacher would have been rewarded for such activities with his own congregation, the collectivist ethos of the American Baha'i community demanded that this popular preacher actually be silenced for his success.

Among important control mechanisms at the disposal of Baha'i leaders is the removal of a believer's "administrative rights." By virtue of joining the Baha'i faith, all adult believers have the right to vote directly for members of their local spiritual assembly, and to vote at District Convention for their delegate to the annual National Convention, who in turn elects the members of the National Spiritual Assembly each year. Elections of local and national assemblies are conducted according to the "Australian" system, such that the nine persons garnering the most votes win. Every five years, members of the world's National Spiritual Assemblies elect the members of the Universal House of Justice. One's administrative rights also include holding elective office and attendance at the nineteen-day feast, a combination of worship service and church business meeting. Administrative rights are required for participation in a Baha'i marriage ceremony, and only those in possession of these rights may contribute money to the Baha'i faith. Many conferences, and even some email forums, such as Bahai-Discuss, are for Baha'is in good standing only. Local spiritual assemblies may not revoke a believer's administrative rights, but may recommend that the National Spiritual Assembly do so. For the most part the National Spiritual Assembly takes such a step because a believer has repeatedly broken some Baha'i law in a public way--participation in civil politics, belonging to another religious organization, drinking alcohol, gambling, having an affair, homosexuality, failure to abide by Baha'i marriage laws (which require the consent of both parties' parents), or breaking a civil law of some seriousness (Hornsby 1983: 39-51). Those whose rights are removed can no longer serve as public speakers in Baha'i settings, and, if writers, are usually unable to convince Baha'i publishers to publish them. In some instances the N.S.A. has removed rights for essentially political reasons, because a believer has publicly or even privately criticized (Baha'is would say "slandered") the National Spiritual Assembly. A debate on this issue broke out in fall, 1995 on the email network, Talisman, in which liberals pointed out that here the National Spiritual Assembly acted as both plaintiff and judge. Most participants defended the current procedures, on the grounds that Shoghi Effendi had given this prerogative only to National Spiritual Assemblies and had specified that assembly members who were party to a dispute with an individual Baha'i should not recuse themselves in deciding that person's fate.

Baha'is who publicly disagree (e.g. on email lists) with policies of the Baha'i institutions can also simply be dropped from the rolls and declared non-members, as happened to Canadian fantasy writer and editor [Michael McKenny](#) in July, 1997. The most serious sanction of all is being declared a "covenant breaker." Although Baha'u'llah himself attempted to abolish the practices of shunning and ritual pollution, contemporary Baha'is, like members of the Watchtower and other cults, shun those who are excommunicated. Only the head of the Baha'i faith can impose this punishment, so that this authority now rests with the House of Justice. Whereas loss of voting rights does not necessarily speak to

one's spiritual well-being, being declared a covenant-breaker makes one spiritually condemned. Baha'is are not to speak to or have anything to do with covenant breakers (Hornsby 1983: 148-153). Baha'i friends and family, including the spouse, cut the covenant breaker off. Rank and file Baha'is take the obligation of shunning very seriously, and being cast out from one's support network can be devastating. This punishment typically is imposed upon a Baha'i who has come into direct conflict with the head of the religion. Most often this is because the individual has put forth a competing claim and attempted to form a Baha'i sect, or because a Baha'i has chosen to join or associate with such a sect. Baha'i officials sometimes even declare ex-Baha'is covenant-breakers. In late 1996 in New Zealand a new Baha'i who refused to terminate her friendship with the daughter of a covenant breaker responded to pressure to do so by formally withdrawing from the Baha'i religion. She was nevertheless declared a covenant breaker (Universal House of Justice 1996d). Individuals can also be shunned for expressions of conscience. Recently, the House of Justice informed an American Baha'i liberal who had been critical of the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly and had urged reform of Baha'i judicial procedure that, should he continue on this path, "he and those with whom he has been closely associated" would "find themselves in direct conflict with the Covenant" (Universal House of Justice 1996b). In Baha'i terminology, they were threatening to have these Baha'is shunned if they continued publicly criticizing ("attacking and undermining") Baha'i institutions or their policies, even though they were not fomenting a schism. Threats to use shunning for this purpose have increased with the rise of cyberspace.

Although Baha'i authorities do not appear to intervene in individuals' secular businesses that are licit in Baha'i law, they do feel it their prerogative to interfere with Baha'i businesses that pursue activities directly related to the Baha'i faith. Thus, the making and marketing of Baha'i-related jewelry and decorations is strictly monitored and individuals can be ordered to desist from such activities. Music by Baha'i musicians with Baha'i lyrics must be "reviewed." The National Spiritual Assembly claims the prerogative of telling private Baha'i publishers what Baha'i-related books they may or may not publish, and even of ordering the deletion of certain passages from both secondary and primary sources (MacEoin [1992:i](#)). During the build-up to the 1991 Baha'i World Congress in New York, the National Spiritual Assembly encouraged all Baha'is to use its expensive official travel agency, and some private Baha'i travel agents report that the N.S.A. used threats of sanctions to pressure them not to offer competing, lower-priced packages (personal communication, March 8, 1996, and enclosures).

Conformity of views and behavior is a strong value, and deviation from stock phrases and ideas is looked upon with considerable suspicion ([Johnson 1997](#)). Despite the existence of New Age and liberal subcultures, the most widespread approach in the American Baha'i community to scriptural exegesis is literalism, as in fundamentalist Protestantism. Administrative practice is based largely on a literalist reading of Shogh Effendi's English-language letters concerning the development of the Western Baha'i communities. Although Baha'is supposedly believe in the "unity of science and religion," in practice

most U.S. Baha'is put a literalist interpretation of scripture above science. Recently Counselors have begun demanding assent to a literalist approach to Baha'i scripture from liberal Baha'i academics, on pain of being shunned ([Birkland 1996](#)).

The community employs a number of mechanisms to impose doctrinal and behavioral conformity. One is to charge that a speaker with whom one disagrees is weak in or actually undermining the Covenant by his or her words. This tactic was employed to disrupt an academic conference on Baha'u'llah's *Most Holy Book* held in Wilmette in March, 1995, where Baha'i intellectuals presenting other than conservative views were sniggered at by some in the audience and called, *sotto voce*, "covenant breakers" (personal communication, 1995). When, in the early 1990s, a left-liberal academic Baha'i took a job at Carleton College, Counselor Stephen Birkland of Minneapolis privately told Baha'is in the region to shun him as though he were a covenant breaker (pers. communication, July, 1997). With the rise of unmonitored email forums, where Baha'i liberals and other nonconformists are free to express themselves publicly, the difficulty of maintaining a monopoly on the media for Baha'i orthodoxy has increased. In response, the House of Justice encouraged Baha'is who hear something they think out of the ordinary to challenge the speaker to justify his or her statement with regard to the covenant (Universal House of Justice 1996a). On the Talisman email forum, for instance, an Iranian-American engineer alleged that Baha'i liberals constituted a sub-group who were "attempting to undermine the covenant" (Talisman, April 1996). This practice is similar to the Muslim principle that lay puritan volunteers should go about "enjoining the good and forbidding the bad."

Informing, which is officially encouraged, forms another important control mechanism. If accusations of covenant breaking do not cow the liberal, the conservative Baha'i will often "report" the offender to the spiritual assembly or to a member of the increasingly clergy-like Institution of the Learned. In the U.S. this body consists of four North American counselors, who command nearly 70 auxiliary board members, each of whom in turn has an average of 60 assistants. This cadre of over 4,000 persons forms a significant proportion of the active believers, and those concerned with "protection" in particular vigorously monitor the community for their superiors. An official will sometimes investigate the accused, and then meet with the offender in an attempt to persuade him or her to orthodoxy. The authorities keep files on those so reported, and sometimes blacklist them from prominent committee assignments, appointment as assistants, and from speaking at official Baha'i events and conferences.

Some anecdotes illustrate these practices. A Baha'i professional attended meetings of a special-interest group for Baha'is, in the mid-1980s. At one of these he suggested that the phrase "world government," employed by Baha'is, was off-putting to most Americans and that Baha'is should find a different terminology. (Conformity to the vocabulary of Shoghi Effendi is an especially strong value, which this individual's remark violated). He says that as a result, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly put a fellow conference participant "under secret orders" to keep an eye on him, but that the person recruited to spy

on him later confessed this to him (personal communication, 1996). It was alleged to me that this National Spiritual Assembly member maintained a network of informers nationally.

Ross Summers, a health care professional in Seattle, relates that before going on pilgrimage to the Baha'i shrines in Haifa in the 1970s, he saw a newly-issued letter from the House of Justice that discouraged Baha'is from reading covenant-breaker material, but did not absolutely forbid it. Summers then went on pilgrimage, and while in Haifa casually mentioned the letter's contents to another Baha'i pilgrim. Many Baha'is seek out and destroy covenant-breaker materials in libraries, and believe it virtually a mortal sin to possess such books or pamphlets (though the Baha'i institutions discourage such extreme measures). So the Baha'i pilgrim disbelieved Summers' remark, and was alarmed. Back in the U.S. on the East Coast, the offended pilgrim contacted a former auxiliary board member and related the content of the conversation. This man then passed the information on to a counselor. Upon his return home to Seattle, Mr. Summers was contacted by a local auxiliary board member, who sought a meeting in his home about his statement to the pilgrim in Haifa. Mr. Summers accepted, and produced for the ABM the letter from the Universal House of Justice, vindicating his remarks. Neither the ABM nor the Counselors appear to have been aware of this letter previously. Summers felt that having been essentially spied upon rather spoiled the good feelings he had otherwise taken away from his pilgrimage (personal comm., 26 April 1996). As these anecdotes suggest, to be a Baha'i is to be under constant surveillance by one's community, and to be open to being reported on if one says or does anything that seems to another Baha'i out of the ordinary. The accused has no access to such reports and no right to face his or her accuser. The system of using rank and file informers has a venerable history in the Middle East.

Censorship

The Baha'i faith imposes a system of in-house censorship on all Baha'is ([Johnson 1997](#), [Rifkin 1997](#)), just as most Middle Eastern governments have practiced censorship since the rise of printing in the nineteenth century. Within the Baha'i religion, any piece of writing by a Baha'i author about the religion intended for publication is to be vetted by elected Baha'i officials at the appropriate level (local, national, international). This requirement has provoked many conflicts between Baha'i officials and writers over the years. Critics charge that it has led to a paucity of intellectually acute Baha'i literature, to a lack of independent magazines and to the withdrawal of a number of Baha'i writers. The innovative research findings of the new generation of Baha'i academics has in particular brought them into conflict with the conservatives in charge of the censorship apparatus. Although Baha'i officials insist that the censorship requirement ("literature review") is "temporary," it has already lasted nearly a century, and the House of Justice has made it clear that it intends to keep it in effect for a very long time. And although it is sometimes alleged that "review" protects Baha'i authors, in practice even work submitted for review, such as the *Dialogue* "Modest Proposal," can attract sanctions. Prepublication censorship

has been among the primary techniques by which Baha'i authors have been prevented from publishing on the controversies of contemporary Baha'i history, and it is notable that the history of the community since about 1950 has not been written about in any detail. Contemporary history is off-limits as a subject because it would involve making value judgments on present office-holders. It is often alleged by Baha'i conservatives that "literature review" does not actually impede the publication of research findings. But in 1988 the all-male House of Justice permanently suppressed an [academic paper](#) arguing that women could serve on the UHJ, insisting that only men could serve.

Although the emergence of email discussion groups and of the World Wide Web pose profound challenges to the Baha'i system of internal censorship, Baha'i institutions have moved aggressively to retain control in the new environment. For instance, the major usenet list, Soc.Religion.Bahai, which is the most prominent site for posting about the religion, is a moderated list; its editors tend to be fairly conservative; and they report to a local spiritual assembly and an auxiliary board member about policy, and sometimes receive directives from counselors. They limit the posting of criticisms of Baha'i institutions or any statements that too profoundly challenge Baha'i orthodoxy (sometimes posting a few such criticisms and then "calling a halt" to the discussion). When Baha'i Frederick Glaysher began a campaign for an unmoderated usenet list, the rank and file Soc.Religion.Bahai posters were overwhelmingly negative about the idea, and heavily voted against it. (Admittedly Glaysher, a pugnacious poster, was not the ideal publicist for the idea). One Baha'i wrote, "This is *not* a first amendment issue, I must tell you. As I understand it, the Faith, our part in the Covenant, implies that we remain silent and accept certain things that we, as Americans, are culturally trained to disobey or complain about in public."

Baha'i authorities have dealt with email forums through post-publication censorship, similar to that practiced by governments in the global South such as Singapore. Electronic mail, while it allows open discourse, is nevertheless also a useful tool in monitoring members of the religion, given that informants forward unusual messages to the authorities. Many Baha'i officials and ex-officials are given the opportunity to read these communications (some of them personal). The following description of an ex-official who monitored e-mail traffic in the community illustrates the point:

This person . . . when he was an ABM [auxiliary board member] he developed a lot of contacts who would say something like 'this situation might interest you. Do you want me to forward the info to you.' And he always said yes. And these people continue forwarding stuff to him. Consequently he claims to get scads of mail – much of which he simply doesn't even read. But he does read some, including [confidential messages] ([personal communication](#), 23 September 1996).

Active officials receive many more such forwardings of confidential material and reports. An example of how this system works concerns a woman on the email forum,

Bahai-Discuss, who argued to a believer in Florida that in the future women would serve on the currently all-male Universal House of Justice. The Florida woman faxed a copy of the offending email message along with commentary to her opponent's spiritual assembly, which passed the material on to an auxiliary board member. Officials sometimes act on such reports by summoning the offender to a meeting and silencing him or her.

Even more serious charges can be made. In April, 1996, the counselors launched charges against a number of prominent liberal posters to the Talisman@indiana.edu listserv, alleging that the posters had "made statements contrary to the Covenant" ([Johnson 1997](#)). The list had been a site for discussing issues such as the need to contextualize Baha'i scripture in Middle Eastern history in order to understand its implications, the potential limits on the infallibility of the House of Justice, the possibility of women serving on that institution, and the pros and cons of official "literature review." Criticisms were also voiced of past administration actions. The Baha'i authorities, viewing such discussions as a form of public dissent and even "slander," threatened to have these individuals shunned if they continued posting on such subjects. As a result, the list-owner closed the list down in May of that year, some of the accused withdrew from the religion (the author among them [though he maintains his private faith]), and others fell silent. A prominent academic who had posted on Talisman received a threatening letter from Counselor Stephen Birkland stating that

"the International Teaching Centre has asked me--with the knowledge of the Universal House of Justice--to warn you that your promulgation of views contrary to the Teachings was damaging to the Cause. If you were to resume in any fashion this course of action, the effect would be to bring you into direct conflict with the Covenant" (Birkland 1996).

This is a warning that the recipient will be declared a covenant breaker if he does not fall silent. The archived email messages the counselor had collected from the academic, which he sent along as examples of what would not be tolerated, included statements that Baha'i metaphysics had a Neoplatonic background, that contrary to `Abdu'l-Baha's statements Socrates had not conversed with Hebrew prophets in the Holy Land, and that the Universal House of Justice was not infallible in its choice of building materials for construction projects in Haifa. More serious was a private posting the academic had accidentally sent out making light of the Wilmette administration, expressing pleasure that it had so far not dared close down Talisman, and batting down the idea broached by one angry liberal of forming an organization. This posting was seen as evidence of a conspiracy.

Conclusion

Baha'i authorities exercise a great deal of control over discourse in the community, maintaining a virtual monopoly on mass media with a Baha'i audience. This control is felt necessary in part to prevent electioneering and coalition-forming, which are formally barred (despite the informal campaigning discussed above). It is perhaps not incidental that

the controls on electioneering and other forms of communication have the side effect of ensuring that criticism of those in power cannot achieve wide circulation, and that the incumbents who exercise that control are reelected every year. Incumbents act aggressively against Baha'i owners of media who demonstrate too much independence. They monitor the speech of individuals extensively through a system of informants, and intervene behind the scenes to silence dissidents with threats of sanctions. They require prepublication censorship of everything Baha'is write about their religion. They intervene in the private businesses of believers where they think the interests of the administration are at stake. They tell private Baha'i publishers what books and even what passages in books they may and may not publish. They employ the threats of loss of administrative rights, humiliation in the national Baha'i newspaper, and even of shunning, in order to control believers.

Having Baha'is inform on their co-believers allows the administration to discover nonconformists who might not toe the party line, and to monitor their activities. The system operates so as to maintain the "orthodox" ideology in power and prevent the election to that institution of dissenters through identifying them and ensuring that they do not become visible in the community. The practice of informing creates a panopticon, as described by Michel Foucault in his discussion of Jeremy Bentham's ideas on penal reform (Foucault 1979). Bentham argued that putting the criminal constantly under observation would deter him from further criminal acts, and would even cause him eventually to internalize the sense of constantly being watched, thus becoming permanently reformed. Conventional Baha'is often never discover the informant system, since they never trip the wire that would lead to their being informed on. The independent-minded, however, usually discover it fairly early in their Baha'i careers, and then have to decide whether they wish to live the rest of their lives in a panopticon. This practice, like many other control mechanisms, discourages spiritual entrepreneurship and keeps the religion from growing in the West.

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Exhibit 8

Ya Bahá'u'l Abha



The Greatest Name: "O Glory of the Most Glorious"

Copies of this graphic may be made for use in other WWW pages.

Last change: Sep 7, 1995

View [A Bahá'í Faith Page](#)

Exhibit 9



THE DIABOLICAL SUBVERSION OF THE BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

PERPETRATED FOLLOWING THE PASSING OF SHOGLI EFFENDI

During the concluding years of Shoghi Effendi's thirty-six year ministry he appointed twenty-seven living Hands of the Cause of God, the first contingent of twelve being appointed on 24 December 1951 and the last contingent of eight being appointed in his last message to the Bahá'í world in October 1957, dispatched one month prior to his passing on the 4th of November 1957 during a visit to London, England.

Some two weeks following his passing these Hands convened a conclave in 'Akká for the purpose of determining who had been named as his successor. After undertaking a fruitless search for a will and testament left by Shoghi Effendi which should have been foreseen, had they recalled that the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly requires the Guardian to appoint his successor "*in his own life-time*," a provision that they should have realized barred him and all future Guardians from using a testamentary type document to appoint their successors. Had they realized this fact, they then would have inevitably concluded that Shoghi Effendi must have appointed and identified his successor during his life-time in some manner that they had failed to perceive. Ignoring this fact, as they then did, and failing to take any time to re-examine past acts or significant statements made by Shoghi Effendi, which they had perhaps overlooked at the time, because he had possibly made the appointment of his successor in an indirect way, the ten Persian Hands seconded the proposal that had been immediately made by one of their number, that the Guardianship be declared "*Badah*" (meaning that God had changed His Mind about the continuance of this Institution). This proposal was then surprisingly endorsed by Rúhíyyih Khánúm, the widow of Shoghi Effendi, and ultimately by the remaining Hands of the Cause, with a single notable exception. For them to so hastily conclude on this basis that the Guardianship had ended a mere thirty-six years following the inception of an Administrative Order, that had been promised to endure for not less than a full thousand years, was not only a tragic and incredible loss of faith in the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and in the immutability of every provision of the divinely-conceived Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the "Center of the Covenant," but constituted, as well, a shameful repudiation of all that Shoghi Effendi had written concerning the divine genesis of the Administrative Order and the undeniable essentiality and indispensability of the Guardianship to that Order that had been consistently and repeatedly stressed by him in his writings. They therefore undeniably failed the severe test of continued fidelity to the Covenant with which they had been faced as a result of

the sudden and unexpected passing of Shoghi Effendi. While two of the Hands are known to have initially wavered in adhering to this decision taken by their fellow-Hands, one of them doing so for a considerable period of time, he finally fell into line, whereas it was only Mason Remey, who never wavered for a single moment in his unshakeable faith in the indestructibility of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, although he temporarily supported his fellow-Hands in the interest of preserving unity and until such time as he was able to marshal the necessary arguments and facts to prove to his fellow-Hands that they were wrong in declaring the end of the Guardianship which, in due course, he fully did, in both verbal and magnificently written appeals that remain a matter of permanent record.

These now faithless Hands, who had gained by this time great prestige and were greatly revered by the believers, found it easy, as a result, to persuade the majority of their fellow-Bahá'ís to accept their hasty decision that the Guardianship had ended, supporting this fateful decision, as they did, with patently false interpretations and specious beliefs. Moreover, these Hands were able to ignominiously and incredibly induce most of their fellow-believers to accept a flagrantly-flawed and highly-corrupted sans-Guardian administrative organization of their own making which they had the temerity to foist upon them as a pitiful substitute for *"the Administrative Order which the master-hand of its perfect Architect [‘Abdu'l-Bahá] has fashioned,"* and one founded, as Shoghi Effendi had declared, on the very *"bedrock"* of *"God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day."* Numbered amongst these patently false beliefs and interpretations initially promulgated by the Hands of the Cause (with a single notable exception, as previously mentioned) and subsequently endorsed by the current Heterodox Bahá'í organization are the following:

- That the Guardianship was "Badah," as previously mentioned above, a term not found in the Bahá'í Writings but propounded by a Persian Hand of the Cause on the very first day of their consultations in their first conclave held in ‘Akká and ultimately embraced, as discussed above, by twenty-six of the twenty-seven Hands of the Cause, following their fruitless search for a will and testament left by Shoghi Effendi. Their inordinately hasty adoption of this belief, so foreign to the Writings of the Faith and completely contrary to the writings of Shoghi Effendi concerning the Administrative Order, in effect, reduced to naught Shoghi Effendi's labors to erect *"at long last"* the supreme administrative institutions of the Faith, in complete fidelity to the provisions of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá. For the term, "Badah," that they now had the temerity to apply to the Institution of the Guardianship, meant, that they expected their fellow-believers to accept without question their incredulous conclusion, that God had changed His mind about the continuation of the Guardianship and that this Institution, which had been delineated, in the provisions of a divinely-conceived, sacred and immutable Will and Testament, and which, in effect, had been Co-authored, by both Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, had now become null and void and the Guardianship forever ended for the duration of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.
- That Shoghi Effendi had been unable to appoint a successor because only an Aghsán was eligible to be appointed as his successor and all of the Aghsán had become unfaithful to the Covenant.
- That the term Aghsán as found in the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, referred to all male descendants of Bahá'u'lláh.
- That when ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, in His Will and Testament, had provided the Guardian

with the option of choosing "*another branch*" to be his successor in the event that his eldest son was not worthy, that the word "*branch*" in this clause referred to the Aghsán.

- That, in view of their appointment as Hands of the Cause by Shoghi Effendi, they were now to be considered, as announced in their "*Unanimous Proclamation*" on 25 November 1957, "*the supreme body of the Bahá'í World Community.*"
- That the entire body of Hands of the Cause possessed approval authority over the Guardian's appointment of a successor, notwithstanding the fact that the Will and Testament states that it is only the nine Hands elected from their number to serve at the World Center under the direction of the Guardian who must give their assent to the Guardian's choice (obviously during his life-time and not afterwards) and that Shoghi Effendi had clearly explained that this "*assent*" did not denote that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had granted them veto authority over the Guardian's divinely-guided choice of a successor and their further disregard for the fact that this body of nine Hands at the World Center, for which Shoghi Effendi obviously had found no need in the early stage of development of the Faith at the World Center, had never been brought into existence during his ministry.
- That the body of "*nine Hands*" whom they stated had been elected by their fellow-Hands, following the passing of Shoghi Effendi, (not elected as falsely alleged but appointed) and given the title: "*the Custodians of the Bahá'í World Faith*" was not only to be accepted by the believers as a legitimate body but actually was to be considered as the body of nine Hands that are elected to serve under the direction of the Guardian at the World Center, which they falsely claimed had taken place "*in accordance with the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, although an obvious impossibility since they no longer accepted a living Guardian, under whose direction these Hands are required to serve. Moreover, incredulously the Hands announced in a "*Resolution*," under date of 25 November 1957, that the "*Custodians shall be deemed to succeed the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith*" and further preposterously stated in their "*Unanimous Proclamation*," on the same date, that these Custodians would exercise "*all such functions, rights and powers in succession to the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith.*" (obviously conflicting with the belief voiced by other believers that Shoghi Effendi would, in some magical way, continue to exercise undefined and obviously limited functions, at best, from the next world).
- That the International Bahá'í Council, appointed by Shoghi Effendi on 9 January 1951, was only a provisional body, even though he had proclaimed it in this message to be "*the first embryonic International Institution.*"
- That the functions of the International Bahá'í Council would continue to remain limited to matters within the Holy Land, as originally outlined by Shoghi Effendi even though he had stated in his Proclamation establishing the Council that: "*to these will be added further functions*" and, as a case in point, had specifically assigned this Council, referred to in his message of 23 November 1951 as "*the Central Body*," a future pre-eminent role in directing the "*widely ramified operations*" of National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í world in their achievement of the goals of the Ten Year Global Crusade, a role that was not only completely ignored by the Hands but a role flagrantly usurped by the body of the Custodian Hands.

- That Shoghi Effendi's appointment of Mason Remey as the President of the International Bahá'í Council was nothing more than a temporary appointment and that he would be replaced through election, similarly to the other eight members, in the future stages of the Council's evolution outlined by Shoghi Effendi.
- That the sans-Guardian Universal House of Justice, the election for which would be held, according to their plans, at Ridván 1963, would, notwithstanding the absence of the Guardian presiding as its "**sacred head**," be the same infallible Institution delineated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his Will and Testament.
- That Shoghi Effendi's plans had envisaged that the International Bahá'í Council would achieve the final efflorescent stage of its development with the election of a fully functioning Universal House of Justice at Ridván 1963, whereas this development brought about by decision of the Hands was excessively premature as Shoghi Effendi had only projected the Council's development to its second stage as the International Bahá'í Court by the end of the Ten Year Global Crusade, at which time its irremovable appointed Head, Mason Remey, would automatically assume the role of Chief Judge.
- That the establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh did not depend upon the erection of the "*twin pillars that support this mighty Administrative Structure—the institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice*"—and that this World Order could be successfully brought into being, in spite of being erected upon a single highly defective and incomplete pillar.
- That, as Shoghi Effendi had exercised his functions without the existence of the Universal House of Justice, their sans-Guardian so called Universal House of Justice could now exercise its functions without the existence of a living Guardian, ignoring the fact that the Guardian according to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is "*the Center of the Cause*" and the Universal House of Justice is neither a complete body nor an infallible Institution without the Guardian presiding as its "**sacred head**."

The false beliefs and interpretations made by the former Hands of the Cause following the passing of Shoghi Effendi, as enumerated above, and endorsed by the present leaders of the Heterodox Bahá'í organization may be directly attributed to the following:

- A loss of faith in the indestructibility of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and the sacredness and immutability of the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- An appalling disregard for the fact that Shoghi Effendi had extolled the Will and Testament as "*the Child of the Covenant—the Heir of both the Originator [Bahá'u'lláh] and the Interpreter ['Abdu'l-Bahá] of the Law of God*" and therefore as "*their Will and Testament*," a sacred, divinely-conceived, immutable Co-authored Document, every clause of which is destined to last as long as the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh endures.
- An ignorance of the fact that Shoghi Effendi had defined the Aghsán in his writings as the Sons of Bahá'u'lláh only.
- A failure to note that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had, indicated in Part Three of His Will and

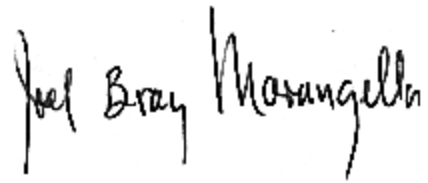
Testament, in an indirect way, that He had already put the Aghsán out of the Faith during His own ministry, as evidenced by the fact that, in contrast to Part 1 of the Will, wherein He makes it incumbent upon "*the Aghsán, the Afnan and the Hands of the Cause to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the guardian of the Cause of God,*" He conspicuously excludes reference to them in Part Three when He enjoins only the "*Afnan, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord*" to obey the Guardian and turn unto him.

- A belief that Shoghi Effendi would leave a will and testament appointing a successor, as evidenced by their announcement that they had undertaken a search for a will left by him at the beginning of their first conclave at 'Akka, which they should have realized was bound to be a fruitless one, as the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly requires the Guardian to appoint his successor "*in his own life-time*" and not by testamentary document.
- An unwarranted hasty decision, upon not finding a will left by Shoghi Effendi, naming a successor, to immediately declare the Guardianship ended without taking any time to review his writings and messages to determine if he had taken some action, or had made some pronouncement that they had obviously overlooked, when it had occurred, in which he had appointed and clearly designated his successor by name "*in his own life-time*" as required under the terms of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- An obviously false interpretation of the passage in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that makes it incumbent upon the Guardian to assure the uninterrupted continuance of the Guardianship as long as the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh endures through his appointment of "*another branch*"— not a term, as already discussed, that referred to the Aghsán as they claimed—in the event that his eldest son did not meet the required qualifications.
- A complete and appalling disregard for both the momentous significance and implications to be found in the one and only Proclamation issued by Shoghi Effendi on 9 January 1951 in which he proclaimed his "*epoch making*" decision to appoint the *International Bahá'í Council* as the "*most significant milestone in the evolution of the Administrative Order*" since the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the "*greatest event shedding lustre on the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation*" followed by his identification in his message of 2 March 1951 of Mason Remey as the one whom he had appointed as its permanent President.
- A further inexcusable disregard of the subsequent "*historic*" message dispatched by Shoghi Effendi, further confirming the tremendous importance of his Proclamation of 9 January 1951 in which he had hailed "*at long last*" the "*erection of the machinery of the highest institutions*" at the "*World Center of the Faith*" and "*around whose most holy shrines the supreme organs of its unfolding Order are in their embryonic form, unfolding.*" (emphasis added)
- An appalling ignorance (to reiterate what has been stated above) that Shoghi Effendi had defined the Aghsán as the sons of Bahá'u'lláh who had not only been written off by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in part three of His will, due to their infidelity to the Covenant, but, having long since died, were no longer alive, much less eligible for any consideration by Shoghi Effendi as a successor.

- A complete subservience and deference on the part of the Hands to Rúhíyyih Khánúm who, as the widow of Shoghi Effendi, and long-time secretarial assistant, exercised an unhealthy domineering influence over the Hands and who openly admitted that she would not countenance any one replacing Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Faith and had accordingly strongly endorsed the proposal initially advanced by the Persian Hands that the Guardianship be declared ended, in sharp contrast to her writings during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi, in which she had emphasized in the strongest terms the absolute essentiality and indispensability of the Guardianship to the Cause of God.
- An inexcusable failure to review, much less to consider, the momentous significance and implications to be found in several "*epoch-making*" and "*historic*" messages dispatched to the Bahá'í World by Shoghi Effendi during the concluding years of his ministry that provided incontrovertible proof that the International Bahá'í Council was the embryonic Universal House of Justice which should have been permitted to now function as an active Institution and which undeniably precluded any need for the Hands to appoint the illegitimate and superfluous body of the "Custodians of the Bahá'í World Faith" which had then blatantly usurped the functions that indisputably should have been performed by the Council, including those pertaining to the direction of the National Spiritual Assemblies in the achievement of their respective goals during the Ten Year Global Crusade, as clearly envisaged in Shoghi Effendi's message of 23 November 1951.

In conclusion, one may well ask how any clear-thinking and rational believer who is at all conversant with the matchless writings of Shoghi Effendi, such as those found in "*The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*" in which, for example, he quotes the following stirring passage from the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh, that emphasizes the impact upon the "*world's equilibrium*" and "*mankind's ordered life*" of His "*new World Order*" and "*this wondrous System*" can, in utter disregard for these revealed Words, subscribe to a patently faithless belief perpetrated, following the passing of Shoghi Effendi, that God had changed His mind, for some inexplicable reason, about the establishment of the divinely-conceived and sacred Bahá'í Administrative Order, bequeathed to us by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in which He designated the living Guardian as both the "*Center of the Cause*" and the "*sacred head*," of its supreme legislative Organ and therefore divinely sanctioned the establishment, in its place, of a headless, grossly deformed, defective and fallible substitute, humanly fashioned by the Hands of the Cause:

"To what else if not to the power and majesty which this Administrative Order — the rudiments of the future all-enfolding Bahá'í Commonwealth—is destined to manifest, can these utterances of Bahá'u'lláh 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.'"

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Bray Marangella". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Joel Bray Marangella
Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith

Australia,

August 2005

Exhibit 10



THE SATANIC COLLUSION TO TERMINATE THE INSTITUTION OF THE GUARDIANSHIP

BETWEEN

Ten Persian Hands of the Cause who, during the first conclave of 26 of the 27 Hands of the Cause held in 'Akká, ¹ some two weeks following the passing of Shoghi Effendi, ignominiously conspired, to put an end to the Guardianship when, immediately following what they should have realized would be a fruitless search for a will and testament in which Shoghi Effendi had appointed his successor, they inexcusably ignored the unmistakable provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that clearly preclude the appointment of a successor by testamentary document as he is specifically required to make this appointment "*in his own life-time.*" For their obviously nominated spokesman, Dr. Muhajir, took the floor at the very outset of the opening period devoted to consultation and incredulously proposed that, as Shoghi Effendi had left no will and testament appointing a successor, the Guardianship be declared "*Badah*" for the remaining duration of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh (a term, when applied in this case, meant that God had changed His mind about the continuance of the Guardianship). ²

AND

The widow of Shoghi Effendi, Rúhíyyih Khánum, a very charming, intelligent, much loved and revered person who had served for many years as a highly capable, devoted and faithful secretary to Shoghi Effendi in his correspondence with the English speaking believers, (being of Canadian birth) and who, now that he had gone, was, quite understandably, accorded a marked deference and respect by both her fellow-Hands and all of the believers, unlike that previously shown to Shoghi Effendi. As a result, when she surprisingly and immediately endorsed this hasty and diabolical proposal, to end the Guardianship, which had also been supported and seconded by the other nine Persian Hands, her endorsement inevitably served to strongly influence the remaining sixteen non-Persian Hands (one being absent for health reasons) to fall into line and to enable this proposal to be unanimously approved when put to a vote and constitute thereby, in their minds, a final and irreversible decision (although this decision, not openly opposed at the time by Mason Remey, in order to preserve unity, was never, for a single moment, really accepted by him, for good reason, as he later explained in his [Dairy](#)). However, the finality of this decision was not revealed by the Hands to the believers throughout the world at the time who were subsequently deceitfully led to believe that the question of succession would be finally decided by the Universal House of Justice whose election they planned for Ridván 1963, whereas the Hands certainly knew that such a decision

was clearly outside the province of that legislative body which according to the terms of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is solely authorized to *"enact laws"* that *"bear upon daily transactions . . . and formeth no part of the Divine Explicit Text"* —‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will being a part of that Text according to Shoghi Effendi. This endorsement by Rúhíyyih Khánúm was particularly incomprehensible as it constituted a complete reversal of her strongly expressed views in the past about the irreplaceable Institution of the Guardianship in the Bahá’í Administrative Order and a clear contradiction to statements that she had made in her past writings in which she had emphatically stressed the absolute essentiality and indispensability of the Guardianship to the Faith.

IN THIS SATANIC AND REPREHENSIBLE COLLUSION THE FOLLOWING UNDENIABLE FACTS WERE INCREDULOUSLY IGNORED:

That Shoghi Effendi would not have used a conventional testamentary document to appoint his successor, nor will any future Guardian do so, as the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes it incumbent upon the Guardian to appoint his successor *"in his own life-time"* and therefore they should have realized that they had obviously overlooked some message or pronouncement made by Shoghi Effendi during his ministry in which he would have faithfully appointed his successor in complete conformance with the provisions of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

That Shoghi Effendi had described the divine genesis of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the following words: *"The creative energies released by the Law of Baha’u’lláh, permeating and evolving within the mind of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 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 promise of this most great Dispensation . . . Being the Child of the Covenant—the Heir of both the Originator and the Interpreter of the Law of God—the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá can no more be divorced from Him Who supplied the original and motivating impulse than from the One Who ultimately conceived it"*

That Shoghi Effendi had further emphasized that the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *"together with the Kitáb-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 Bahá’í Faith."*

THE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES OF THIS COLLUSION

They had, in effect, shamelessly declared null and void the major provisions of a divinely-conceived, sacred and immutable Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, only thirty-six years after the inception of the Administrative Order to which it had given birth, and a Document that, as explained by Shoghi Effendi, had been actually co-authored by Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and therefore expressed *"their Will."* Moreover, Shoghi Effendi further emphasized the immutability and immortality of this divinely-conceived Document in stating that, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and the Will and Testament were *"not only complementary,"* but *"mutually confirm one another"* and *are inseparable parts of one complete unit."* As such, the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was therefore undeniably nothing less than a part of the **explicit Holy Text,**

whose sacred and immutable provisions shall endure unchanged for at least a full thousand years.

They had inexcusably ignored or carelessly overlooked the fact that Shoghi Effendi had proclaimed on [9 January 1951](#) the appointment of the embryonic Universal House of Justice, with the provisional name of **International Bahá'í Council**, and had identified this "*Nascent Institution*" in this Proclamation as "*this first embryonic International Institution*" and significantly had appointed Mason Remey the President thereof as the irremovable embryonic Head of this embryonic Institution which he had carefully retained as an inactively functioning body during the remaining years of his ministry, even appointing Rúhíyyih Khánum as his "*chosen liaison*" thereto, so that only upon his passing it could then be activated and become the instrumentality through which Mason Remey whose appointment he had made, as required "*in his own life-time*" would then automatically acceded to the Guardianship as his chosen successor, faithfully appointed in accordance with the terms of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which stipulate that the Guardian of the Faith is the "*sacred head*" of this Institution.

They overlooked the future pre-eminent role that Shoghi Effendi had specifically projected for the International Bahá'í Council—referred to by him, in this instance, as "**the Central Body**"—in which he had stated that this body would be directing the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world in the prosecution of their respective assigned goals during the Ten Year Global Crusade, scheduled to commence at Ridván 1953 (message of 23 November 1951)

They flagrantly usurped the rightful supreme role and functions of the International Bahá'í Council, as outlined above, which this body should have been permitted to automatically and rightfully assume upon the passing of Shoghi Effendi and established in its place an illegitimate and superfluous body comprised of nine Hands, completely outside the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, upon which they bestowed the concocted appellation: "*Custodians of the Bahá'í World Faith*"

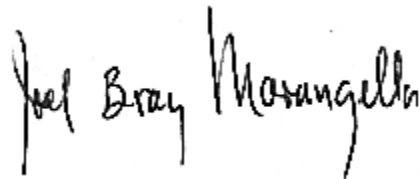
They then instructed all National Spiritual Assemblies in the world to recognize this admittedly temporary body as "*the supreme body in the Cause*" which would now assume "*all such functions, rights and powers in succession to the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith*" pending the planned election of an equally illegitimate, sans-Guardian (hence headless) so-called Universal House of Justice some six years later at Ridván 1963 and to whose equally ill-gotten authority the functions, rights and powers, which, according to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, are solely exercised by the Guardian of the Faith, would then be transferred.

As a tragic result of their decisions, plans and actions, the Hands of the Cause, (one Hand excluded) incredulously supported by Rúhíyyih Khánum, had now through the decisions and actions discussed above ignominiously, blatantly and undeniably corrupted the divinely-conceived Bahá'í Administrative Order as delineated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His sacred and immortal Will and Testament. For them the Guardian of the Faith—"*the Center of the Cause*"—no longer existed and their own Institution of the Hands as well would be no more (as they died out). The so-called Universal House, whose election they projected to take place at Ridván 1963 would be a deformed and headless body without the Guardian as its "*sacred head*," presiding over its deliberations and decisions as prescribed in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

THE ULTIMATE AND INEVITABLE OUTCOME

Future scholars of the Faith will not be influenced either by the fallen and wayward Hands of the Cause or Ruhyyih Khanum, as they will have become by that time, if at all, only a distant memory. These scholars will study the matchless writings of Shoghi Effendi in which he has so magnificently explained the divine genesis of the Administrative Order and inevitably come to recognize and truly appreciate the important significance and implications to be found in the series of "*historic*" and "*epoch-making*" messages that he had addressed to the Baha'í world in the closing years of his thirty-six year ministry in which he had announced with such elation the final fruit of his labors as he finally established the international administrative institutions of the Faith in complete accordance with the Mandate of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, culminating, as he acclaimed, at "*the World Center of the Faith where, at long last the machinery of its highest institutions has been erected and around whose most holy shrines the supreme organs of its unfolding order are in their embryonic form unfolding.*" They will certainly never embrace a man-made, deformed and pitiful replica that has been substituted for the God-given and divinely-conceived Baha'í Administrative Order delineated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In the future desolate, shattered and greatly changed world which will then surround them these future scholars will find grateful solace in and be enraptured by the supernal vision that they will inevitably gain as they study Shoghi Effendi's matchless writings that will assure them of the ultimate establishment of Bahá'u'lláh's Most Great Order, an undefiled Order that is divinely-conceived, ordained and founded on God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day. Assuredly they will then hearken with gladsome hearts to the enthralling and celestial strains that "*then and only then*" will be so beautifully warbled, by the "*Nightingale of Paradise*" firmly perched upon the glorious Tree of the Covenant.



Joel Bray Marangella

Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith

October, 2005

1. A conclave of the Hands of the Cause is not called for in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to determine the identity of the Guardian's appointed successor as he is required to make known this appointment "*in his own life-time*" and not by testamentary document. The fact that these Hands had so gathered should have alerted them to the inescapable fact that Shoghi Effendi, ever faithful to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, would unquestionably have made this appointment during his ministry in some way that they had obviously not perceived at the time and which they should now endeavor to discover.
2. Information about the proceedings and decisions made at this secret conclave are available in the Dairy of Mason Remey, titled: "[Daily Observations](#)."

Exhibit 11

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CORPORATION FILE DETAIL REPORT

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Entity Name | NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHAI'S OF THE UNITED STATES | File Number | 58023329 |
| Status | GOODSTANDING | | |
| Entity Type | CORPORATION | Type of Corp | NOT-FOR-PROFIT |
| Incorporation Date (Domestic) | 10/14/1994 | State | ILLINOIS |
| Agent Name | GEOFFREY N WILSON | Agent Change Date | 10/14/1994 |
| Agent Street Address | 1233 CENTRAL ST | President Name & Address | |
| Agent City | EVANSTON | Secretary Name & Address | |
| Agent Zip | 60204 | Duration Date | PERPETUAL |
| Annual Report Filing Date | 09/19/2006 | For Year | 2006 |
| Assumed Name | ACTIVE - BAHAI NATIONAL CENTER | | |

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