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WARNING: THIS RELIGIOUS FAITH NOW CONTAINS HERESY

by

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The world-at-large has been shocked during the last decade at the reprehensible actions of the Iranian government toward members of the Bahá'í Faith, prompted, in the main, by the Bahá'ís' purported heresy against the Islamic religion. For although the Bahá'ís accept Muhammad, along with Christ, Moses, Buddha, and a number of other prophets, their acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh, who proclaimed a new revelation from God in 1863, proves to Muslims that the Bahá'ís have denied the general Islamic belief that God would send no prophets after Muhammad. Thus, the Islamic government in Iran has maintained that the Bahá'ís are "fighting God and His Messenger (the Muslim prophet Muhammad)" and are "creating discord among Muslims," and because the Iranian Constitution provides no protection to the Bahá'ís, they have been fair game for persecution.

Muslims and the Iranian government aren't the only ones who accuse the members of the Bahá'í Faith of heresy, though. Members of the Orthodox Bahá'í Faith have also levied heresy charges of a different sort against those whose believers have suffered

persecution in Iran. However, those within the Orthodox Faith have no intention of persecuting anybody, least of all the members of an organization that ascribes to almost every belief that they do. Besides, like the littlest kid on the block, they are in no position to beat up on anyone, for they are a minority of a minority--a small band of Bahá'ís who have separated themselves from the larger body and for some 30 years have attempted to get those whom they call "heterodox Bahá'ís" to change their heretical doctrines. Then, too, Holy War is prohibited by their Faith.

Having achieved no success in changing the minds of those who call themselves Bahá'ís but who have instead disavowed some of the fundamental verities of the Bahá'í Faith, the members of the Orthodox Faith want to tell the world about the heresy that they see WITHIN the Bahá'í Faith, and not the Faith's purported opposition to some other religion. For the belief of the Bahá'ís in Iran that has been called a heresy by the Muslims is the belief of the Orthodox Bahá'ís as well, and they, too, would be condemned by the Islamic government of Iran for it.

But no matter how many beliefs the Orthodox Bahá'ís share with the other Bahá'ís, the Orthodox believers are opposed to the unauthorized, illegitimate leadership that now heads the larger body. According to the Orthodox Bahá'ís, the world needs to recognize that the plan for a universal order that is now espoused by the heterodox Bahá'ís is suspect because of the changes that the major body is making within the Faith, the most important of which pertain to the administrative order of the Faith. The Bahá'í Administrative Order, say the Orthodox Bahá'ís, is supposed to be the pattern for a future world order, but not with the modifications being put into place by those whose present world headquarters is in Haifa, Israel. Those changes, say the Orthodox Bahá'ís, constitute a monumental heresy.

According to the Orthodox Bahá'ís, the beginnings of the heresy occurred in 1957 upon the death of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, the leader of the Faith who was known as the first Guardian. When Shoghi Effendi died, the second Guardian was to assume command of the Faith, but that didn't happen. What occurred instead was a religious coup d'etat. Despite the fact that the Bahá'í writings

explicitly call for a successor Guardian, a group of individuals-- who had recently been appointed by the first Guardian to subordinate positions directly under him--usurped command of the Faith. They claimed that they could find no evidence of an appointed successor, and they themselves fabricated a way for them to take over the Faith. Their leadership eventually won complete acceptance by almost all Bahá'ís (except for those in the Orthodox camp).

Orthodox Bahá'ís claim that the usurping subordinates, who were known as Hands of the Cause, simply did not want a Guardian and they did not look for the successor appointed by the first Guardian. The Hands, whose function was to assist the Guardian of the Faith, had made up their minds that the institution of Guardian was to be no more, so they decided amongst themselves that God had changed his mind about the necessity for such an institution. They further decided that one of the most basic writings of the Faith, the Document that had established the institution of the Guardian, was no longer operative.

They didn't divulge such decisions to the Bahá'ís at large, deciding, from their assumed position of command, to condition the believers to the absence of a Guardian. The Hands immediately revised the plans that had been developed for the Bahá'í Administrative Order by the recently deceased Guardian, and they refused to listen to anyone (at first just one of their own number) who pointed out to them that the sacred writings of the Faith made it absolutely essential that there be a Guardian.

At the time when the Hands first began to implement their heretical plans, the individual who had actually been appointed as the first Guardian's successor and who, as a Hand of the Cause himself, was in their very midst repeatedly called upon his fellow Hands to look for and to accept the second Guardian. But the other Hands were so obsessed with what they were doing that they would brook no interference with their plans from anyone, even the second Guardian of the Faith, whose appointment to office they refused to recognize.

Orthodox Bahá'ís maintain that the real heresy within the Bahá'í Faith becomes clear when one looks at the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and the "Child of the Covenant," the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-

Bahá. Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant designated His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as His successor and the interpreter of His book. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will--which was identified by Shoghi Effendi as "inseparable" from Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Laws--perpetuated the line of succession by naming his eldest grandson (Shoghi Effendi) the first Guardian of the Faith and making it incumbent upon him to appoint his successor, in his own lifetime, that "differences may not arise after his passing." 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained the importance of the Bahá'í Covenant in this manner:

As to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh--a specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past--it is the ordination and appointment of the Center of the Covenant. By this appointment and provision He has safeguarded and protected the religion of God against differences and schism, making it impossible for any one to create a new sect or faction of belief. To insure unity and agreement He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world including the Interpreter and Explainer of His teachings so that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according to his own view or opinion and thus create a sect founded upon his individual understanding of the divine words. The Book of the Covenant or Testament of Bahá'u'lláh is the means of preventing such a possibility, for whosoever shall speak from the authority of himself alone shall be degraded. Be ye informed and cognizant of this.

As to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi emphasized its importance in such statements as this: "That Bahá'u'lláh in His Book of Aqdas [the Prophet-Founder's Book of Laws], and later 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will--a document which confirms, supplements, and correlates the provisions of the Aqdas--have set forth in their entirety those essential elements for the constitution of the world Bahá'í Commonwealth, no one who has read them will deny." He characterized the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "The Charter of the New World Order," and while focusing on the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh, he said: "The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá unveiled its character, reaffirmed its

basis, supplemented its principles, asserted its indispensability, and enumerated its chief institutions."

To support the Administrative Structure, the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly establishes two institutions--twin pillars: the institution of the Guardianship (the interpreter of the Word) and the Universal House of Justice (the supreme legislative body). The Will conclusively identifies the Guardian as the "sacred head and the distinguished member for life" of the Universal House of Justice. However, when the Hands of the Faith formed their Universal House of Justice in 1963, they constituted a body without a Guardian at its head.

In the meantime, in 1960, Hand of the Cause Charles Mason Remey proclaimed himself to be the second Guardian of the Faith. A distinguished Bahá'í of long-standing, whose membership in the Faith traced back to the turn of the century, and whom, on more than one occasion 'Abdu'l-Bahá called his son, he made his proclamation on the basis of his appointment by the first Guardian to the presidency of the embryonic Universal House of Justice in 1951. In that year Shoghi Effendi had issued a proclamation of his own to signal the most important historical development in the Faith since the death of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the reading of his Will in 1921. Shoghi Effendi's proclamation announced the constitution of the First International Bahá'í Council, the embryonic Universal House of Justice. He subsequently appointed the membership of the Council and designated its officers, identifying Mason Remey as its president.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in his writings, had stated that "the embryo possesses from the first all perfections,...--in one word, all the powers--but they are not visible, and become so only by degrees." On the basis that the head of the embryo stays with the body from its conception and the fact that Shoghi Effendi had appointed him president--or head--of the embryonic Universal House of Justice, Mason Remey informed the Bahá'ís that he was Shoghi Effendi's successor, since the presidency of the Universal House of Justice and the Guardianship are synonymous. But by the time Mason Remey made his proclamation, the Hands of the Faith were entrenched in their leadership roles. Their plans were far advanced. In addition, Mason

Remey did not meet their expectations as a second Guardian. And because the Bahá'ís around the world had become so accustomed to following the lead of the Hands, when the Hands denounced him as an imposter, the great majority of Bahá'ís rejected Mason Remey's claims. Then, assuming additional powers which were not theirs to assume, the Hands cast Mason Remey and his followers out of the Faith which they now controlled.

From that point on, the majority Bahá'ís have called the followers of Mason Remey and his duly-appointed successor, Joel B. Marangella, "Covenant-breakers" (the Bahá'í term for heretics), since the Remey/Marangella followers (Orthodox Bahá'ís) refuse to accept the changes the Hands--and now their Universal House of Justice--have made in the Administrative Order that Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá originally established. As a result of the Hands' labeling the Orthodox Bahá'ís as "Covenant-breakers", the followers of the Hands and their Universal House of Justice are instructed to have nothing to do with the Orthodox Bahá'ís, and they are even forbidden to read the printed materials that the Orthodox Bahá'ís have prepared in defense of their position for the continuance of the Guardianship.

Among the arguments that the Orthodox Bahá'ís have raised with the heterodox believers is their position that Shoghi Effendi called for adherence to every clause of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament as a requirement for membership in the Faith. That requirement was subsequently included in the Declaration of Trust of all national Bahá'í bodies. But now, say the Orthodox Bahá'ís, the heterodox Bahá'ís have abandoned such requirements. Indeed, they maintain that the heterodox Bahá'ís have abandoned the Will itself.

Naturally, the heterodox or sans-Guardian Bahá'ís (the majority body) maintain that the course they are following is right. They emphasize that their interpretation of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá justifies their actions. Of crucial importance to them is their claim that Mason Remey was ineligible to be a Guardian because he was not a member of Bahá'u'lláh's family. The sans-Guardian believers contend that the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls for all Guardians to be in Bahá'u'lláh's blood-line. They base their interpretation upon the provisions in the Will which say that after

the Guardian "will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants," and "should he [the first-born] not inherit of the spiritual within him (the guardian of the Cause of God)...then must he, (the guardian of the Cause of God) choose another branch to succeed him." The sans-Guardian believers interpret the word branch in the preceding sentence to refer to a member of Bahá'u'lláh's family, and since Shoghi Effendi had had no children and since all the other members of Bahá'u'lláh's family were either dead or had become Covenant-breakers, they contend no succession to the Guardianship was possible.

The Orthodox Bahá'ís, on the other hand, point to the same passage within the Will and say that the word branch refers to the spiritual family of Bahá'u'lláh: members of the Faith. They maintain that the spiritual relationship in such appointments always takes precedence over the physical, the lineage of the prophet. The Orthodox Bahá'ís accuse the sans-Guardian believers of failing to read the entire passage in which the reference to the Guardian's choosing another branch is found, for they say that when the sans-Guardian followers quote the passage they tend to leave out, or misinterpret, a critical clause. The passage reads: "should he [the child of the Guardian] not inherit of the spiritual within him (the Guardian of the Cause of God) and his glorious lineage not be matched with a goodly character, then must he, (the guardian of the Cause of God) choose another branch to succeed him." The crucial words, say the Orthodox Bahá'ís, have to do with the Guardian's lineage not being fulfilled so that he must go outside the blood-line.

The Orthodox Bahá'ís contend that a divinely-inspired spiritual institution developed to last for ten centuries or more would surely not be terminated at the end of a 36-year span on the death of the very first Guardian. They therefore have tried to get the majority body to reassess the provisions of the Document which, as Shoghi Effendi, that first Guardian, wrote, "together with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas [Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Laws], 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."

Since 1963, say the Orthodox Bahá'ís, the Hands' Universal House of Justice has been manipulating those elements to which Shoghi Effendi referred. The Hands' Universal House of Justice has now become both the Center of their Cause--the Guardian--and the supreme legislative body. Through such actions, the Universal House of Justice has completely contravened Shoghi Effendi's assertion that neither the Guardian nor the Universal House of Justice "can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other." Since the Hands' international body is without a Guardian, that body has now taken over other functions that the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes the exclusive domain of the Guardian, such as removing a member from the Universal House if he commits a "sin injurious to the common weal." Also, the Hands' Universal House of Justice now appoints those who have the same functions that were originally assigned to the Hands--individuals that the Will says are to be appointed by the Guardian. Obviously, because of the exigencies of the time, those with the functions of the Hands now serve under the Universal House rather than under the Guardian alone.

Of prime significance, according to the Orthodox Bahá'ís, is that the Universal House of the Hands has no one on the body to call them to account. The first Guardian wrote that one of the functions of the Guardian on the Universal House is "to insist upon a reconsideration by them [the fellow-members of the Universal House of Justice] of any enactment he conscientiously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's revealed utterances."

The members of the headless Universal House of Justice, though, say that a living Guardian is not needed to insure that their decisions are correct. They feel that the writings of the Faith are clear enough to dispense with a Guardian. They have written: "In attempting to understand the Writings...one must first realize that there is and can be no real contradiction in them, and in the light of this we can confidently seek the unity of meaning which they contain." Orthodox Bahá'ís point to such statements of the Hands' Universal House of Justice as evidence that the majority Bahá'í body is saying that there is now no need for the interpreter 'Abdu'l-Bahá said was essential to prevent somebody from creating "a sect founded upon his individual

understanding of the divine words." It is through such pronouncements, say the Orthodox Bahá'ís, that the Hands' Universal House of Justice continues to perpetuate the heresy within their organization.

Those who follow the Hands' Universal House of Justice maintain that the spread of their Faith is a sign that their cause is God's Cause, and they encourage all comers to join with them in developing what they say are the foundations of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

However, the Orthodox Bahá'ís are now attempting to warn others to look closely at what the majority body under the Hands' Universal House is doing. The Orthodox Bahá'ís are convinced that the larger organization has been taken over by heresy and is creating an order that will be far different from the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh that is called for in the writings of the Prophet Founder and His appointed interpreters.

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