

Monasticism

Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi

Translated



Monasticism

*"How many a man hath secluded himself in the climes of India, denied himself the things that God hath decreed as lawful, imposed upon himself austerities and mortifications, and hath not been remembered by God, the Revealer of Verses. Make not your deeds as snares wherewith to entrap the object of your aspiration, and deprive not yourselves of this Ultimate Objective for which have ever yearned all such as have drawn nigh unto God. Say: The very life of all deeds is My good pleasure, and all things depend upon Mine acceptance. Read ye the Tablets that ye may know what hath been purposed in the Books of God, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Bounteous. He who attaineth to My love hath title to a throne of gold, to sit thereon in honour over all the world; he who is deprived thereof, though he sit upon the dust, that dust would seek refuge with God, the Lord of all Religions."*¹

*"The pious deeds of the monks and priests among the followers of the Spirit—upon Him be the peace of God—are remembered in His presence. In this Day, however, let them give up the life of seclusion and direct their steps towards the open world and busy themselves with that which will profit themselves and others. We have granted them leave to enter into wedlock that they may bring forth one who will make mention of God, the Lord of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of the Exalted Throne."*²

*"Those divines, however, who are truly adorned with the ornament of knowledge and of a goodly character are, verily, as a head to the body of the world, and as eyes to the nations. The guidance of men hath, at all times, been, and is, dependent upon such blessed souls."*³

"Say: O concourse of monks! Seclude not yourselves in your churches and cloisters. Come ye out of them by My leave, and busy, then, yourselves with what will profit you and others. Thus commandeth you He Who is the Lord of the Day of Reckoning. Seclude yourselves in the stronghold of My love. This, truly, is the seclusion that befitteth you, could ye but know it. He that secludeth himself in his house is indeed as one dead. It behoveth man to show forth that which will benefit mankind. He that bringeth forth no fruit is fit for the fire. Thus admonisheth you your Lord; He, verily, is the Mighty, the Bountiful. Enter ye into wedlock, that after you another may arise in your stead. We, verily, have forbidden you lechery, and not that which is conducive to fidelity. Have ye clung unto the promptings of your nature, and cast behind your backs the

1. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 36

2. Baha'u'llah, Glad Tidings, The Eighth Glad-Tidings

3. Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf



TRANSLATION

*statutes of God? Fear ye God, and be not of the foolish. But for man, who, on My earth, would remember Me, and how could My attributes and My names be revealed? Reflect, and be not of them that have shut themselves out as by a veil from Him, and were of those that are fast asleep. He that married not could find no place wherein to abide, nor where to lay His head, by reason of what the hands of the treacherous had wrought. His holiness consisted not in the things ye have believed and imagined, but rather in the things which belong unto Us. Ask, that ye may be made aware of His station which hath been exalted above the vain imaginings of all the peoples of the earth. Blessed are they that understand."*⁴

*"In brief, dissensions among various sects have opened the way to weakness. Each sect hath picked out a way for itself and is clinging to a certain cord. Despite manifest blindness and ignorance they pride themselves on their insight and knowledge. Among them are mystics who bear allegiance to the Faith of Islám, some of whom indulge in that which leadeth to idleness and seclusion. I swear by God! It lowereth man's station and maketh him swell with pride. Man must bring forth fruit. One who yieldeth no fruit is, in the words of the Spirit,³ like unto a fruitless tree, and a fruitless tree is fit but for the fire."*⁵

*"of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: O people of the earth! Living in seclusion or practicing asceticism is not acceptable in the presence of God. It behooveth them that are endued with insight and understanding to observe that which will cause joy and radiance. Such practices as are sprung from the loins of idle fancy or are begotten of the womb of superstition ill beseem men of knowledge. In former times and more recently some people have been taking up their abodes in the caves of the mountains while others have repaired to graveyards at night. Say, give ear unto the counsels of this Wronged One. Abandon the things current amongst you and adopt that which the faithful Counselor biddeth you. Deprive not yourselves of the bounties which have been created for your sake..."*⁶

"It must not be implied that one should give up avocation and attainment to livelihood. On the contrary, in the Cause of Baha'u'llah monasticism and asceticism are not sanctioned. In this great Cause the light of guidance is shining and radiant. Baha'u'llah has even said that occupation and labor are devotion. All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion, at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God. Baha'u'llah has thereby encouraged action and stimulated service. But the energies of the heart must not be attached to these things; the soul must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy, the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source."⁷

⁴. Baha'u'llah, Tablet to Napoleon III

⁵. Baha'u'llah, Words of Paradise

⁶. Baha'u'llah, Words of Paradise, The 10th Leaf

⁷. Abdu'l-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 187

"Many of the most valuable, enkindled and erudite teachers the Cause has possessed were formerly members of the clergy, Islamic or Christian."⁸

"How many a man hath secluded himself in the climes of India, denied himself the things that God hath decreed as lawful, imposed upon himself austerities and mortifications"

"These verses constitute the prohibition of monasticism and asceticism..."⁹



Babi Dispensation

In a letter to a questioner from Isfahan, the Bab did not approved monasticism. See Browne Manuscripts, Cambridge University Library, F21.9, pp 111-115



⁸. On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 10 May 1945, Unfolding Destiny, pp. 442

⁹. Notes to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, no. 61