

To the Friends,
Throughout the East and the West,
Through the Spiritual Assemblies.

The Baha'i Spiritual Assembly,
Haifa, Palestine.
February, 1938.

Dear Friends,

It is our great privilege to report that our Beloved Guardian is in the best of health. To the believers throughout the world, thenews of the well-being of our Beloved Guardian is always the greatest source of rejoicing and happiness.

As the Baha'i Faith spreads triumphantly, tests and trials multiply and the believers attain loftier heights of spiritual experience and confirmation by the unswerving steadfastness that they manifest under the most trying circumstances that beset them.

A communication addressed to our Beloved Guardian recently from Persia reports the humiliation and punishment inflicted upon one of the devoted followers of Baha'u'llah's Faith, Dr. 'Abdu'llah Jâwid, in Khorasan, as a result of recording himself as a Baha'i on his military identity card. The details of the case; setting forth his examination by the military authorities, are described by Dr. Jâwid as follows:

Questions.-- How did you answer to the questions in your identity booklet?
Answer. -- I wrote the truth in all my answers.

Q. -- What are these papers and magazines that you have here, with you ?

A. -- These are medical magazines to which I have subscribed and local newspapers which I read occasionally.

Q: -- You have written the word "Baha'i" in this column, under the heading of religion; have you not?

A. -- Yes, Sir.

Q. -- Why did you write the word "Baha'i" here ?

A. -- This is the name of my religion. I have written the truth.

Q. -- But don't you know that the word "Baha'i" does not denote a religion ? Who says that such a designation indicates a religious faith ?

A. -- If you will excuse me to ask you, what then is a Baha'i ?

Q. -- The term "Baha'i" does not denote a religion. It is a sect or a party. A handful of people have been deceived into forming this party.

A. -- My faith is not based on other peoples' opinions or deceptions. I have accepted this Faith after much thought, investigation and study. To me the Baha'i Faith is just as true as other Faiths. In fact, through the Baha'i Faith I can identify the truth of other religions.

Q. -- To-day, a large group of educated and enlightened people say that the Baha'i Faith is not to be included among the recognized religions and the First Man in the Land says that it is a sect and that it should not be classified with the official religions of the country.

country.

- A. -- But on the other hand, as article 3 of the rules concerning registration states, I am obliged to tell the truth. Consequently, I only wrote the truth by declaring myself to be a Baha'i.
- Q. -- Well, let us put the truth aside, now. To-day, His Majesty the King says that no one has the right to use the word "Baha'i" in the column headed by "religion". Anyone who disobeys this rule will be punished.
- A. -- I beg your pardon, but how is it possible to "put the truth aside! I fear very much the consequences of lying, but I do not entertain the slightest fear from telling the truth.
- Q. -- At any rate, I am warning you, Doctor, that your present attitude will entail the gravest consequences. I consider you an intelligent and educated young man, that is why I am advising you not to create difficulties for yourself. There are only four months left for your term of service to expire. Let these four months pass, anyhow. Then when you have completed your service and you leave us, you may practise any religion which you choose, according to your heart's desire.
- A. -- I am ready to subject myself to any kind of punishment and humiliation, but I cannot bear the moral and spiritual ignominy of having betrayed my conscience and desisted from telling the truth.

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- Q. -- But we are asking you to do is an entirely different matter. You are obliged and you will be forced, not to write the word "Baha'i" in your identity booklet. You may write down the name of any other religion which you may choose.
- A. -- In other words, you are ordering me to tell a lie ! After being taught for many years to tell the truth and refrain from lying, the result of all that training and education is this now : that we are forced to lie !
- Q. -- However that may be, Doctor, I am trying to give you good advice. We are not willing that you should lose your military grade when you have only four more months to serve; nor do we want that you should be heavily fined and thus sustain a great financial loss.
- A. -- I appreciate your kind thoughts, however I have done naught but express the truth about my religion.

" At this point," writes Dr. Jâwid, "the text of the regulations concerning the banning of the term "Baha'i" was produced and read to me. It said in part '...As the term "Baha'i" refers to a sect and is not a religion, no one should designate himself as a Baha'i. The use of this word must be strictly forbidden. This matter has often been brought to the attention of His Majesty and His Majesty has stated that "Baha'i" means a sect, it is not a recognized religion. Army officers must refrain from the use of the word "Baha'i". There are four official religions recognized by the government of Persia : Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. Those officers who record their names as Baha'is

money spent on them by the Government during their term of service. Should they be officers on duty, then they would, in addition to the payment they will have to make, be demoted to the rank of an ordinary soldier, and would have to serve in that capacity. It is also forbidden to leave the space allotted to religion (in the identity booklet) blank, as doing so will be considered a pretentious act designed to deceive and mislead.' ""

Owing to his persistent refusal to write his name down as a Moslem, Dr. Jâwid was finally summoned to the Head Quarters. He was told however, beforehand, that indeed the religion that could save the world, to-day, was the Baha'i Faith; but under the present circumstances it was not possible to express such views.

At the interview he was warned that failure to change his mind would bring on him inevitable trouble. At the same time he was praised for the candid way in which he had expressed himself and was told that the ultimate happiness of the world lied in the Baha'i Faith.

"At last, after further futile attempts to make me change my mind", writes Dr. Jâwid, the General Headquarters communicated telegraphically with my superiors to the effect that I should be demoted from the grade of officer to that of a simple soldier, at the same time losing the right of further study and research along my line of medical work.

"The order for my demotion which was issued by the War Ministry was, briefly, as follows:

'Whereas the said officer has stated his religion to be "Baha'i", and whereas we warned him concerning the grave consequences of his shortsightedness in doing so, ... therefore, in accordance with the orders of the Ministry of War, his rank of officer is lowered to that of a common soldier. He will pass the remainder of his service in the army... and from this date and on, the said soldier will be under strict observation.'

"In brief, I was taken to the army barracks and orders were given for a strict surveillance over the duties assigned to me. On the whole I am being treated as if I had been accused of rebellion or treason against the authorities.

"The foregoing order was communicated to all sections of the army throughout the country.

"I am at present carrying out my duties with great patience and resignation, bearing joyfully all the accusations and humiliations hurled against me by the dregs of society and praying humbly for divine assistance and confirmation."

Z. N. Zeine

For the Spiritual Assembly of Haifa.

