

Is the Bahai Faith a religion without rituals? Hardly !

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> That means: you are aware that there are no
> rites nor rituals in the Baha'i Faith, except the nominal ones
> pertaining to weddings and funerals.

Whoa! what about pilgrimages, obligatory prayer, the recitation of the greatest name, 19-day feast, giving to the fund ... The Bahai rituals are not confined to weddings and funerals !!

This idea that the Bahai faith appears quite early in western Bahai communities. One source is the Foreword to Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha Abbas:

"For Bahaism has no clergy, no religious ceremonial, no public prayers; its only dogma is belief in God and in his Manifestations (Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, et al., Baha'o'llah)." (Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha v1, p. vii)

This is not even written by a Bahai, but the information might well have come from a Bahai. It is an extract from the Nouveau Larousse Illustre (illustrated Larousse encyclopaedia), and is almost entirely incorrect. It is not the words of Abdu'l-Baha, who knew very well that the Bahai faith has religious ceremonies, public prayers and dogmas, and who never said that the Bahai faith has no clergy. The only thing correct about it is that we do believe "in God and in his Manifestations (Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, et al., Baha'o'llah.)"

When the Bahai Faith was transported to the West, it was also transformed, particularly in America. Anti-clerical, anti-dogmatic and anti-catholic attitudes and a loft of millennial expectations and apocalypticism were supposed, by the early American Bahais, to be also Bahai teachings. So many of the early Bahai books say that the Bahai faith is a religion without rituals or church, that is has no organisation, and so forth, because the people of the time were *looking* for a religion that would be pure spirituality without any organisation or ritual. But that is not what Baha'u'llah brought.

Religious rituals are the heart of the life of a religious community, and the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar or "house of worship" is both the central and the crowning institution of every Bahai community -- its very purpose is as a place where we can perform the rites of prayer, recite the adhkar, hear the Word being read (a rite in itself) and raise our voices in praise.

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