

Bitavhati Madinkha d'Maninaye
THE MANINAYE WORLDWIDE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITTEE
"To Promote the Unity of the People of the Religion of Light"

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10 July 2012

On the Subject of Isolation and Persecution

To our dear brethren of the Religion of Light, Shlama!

There are times in which our faith can be tested in the world that may necessitate the need to become isolated due to persecution. Persecution can come in many forms and on a variety of different levels, but we know that no matter what we may endure, it is always our responsibility to share the Message of Light with all those we come into contact. Maninaye have a great sense of responsibility for sharing the hope of liberation of light from darkness and the hope of the Kingdom of Light because we have compassion on all souls.

How do we define the term "persecution"? Some individuals may have developed the idea that general criticism of our Faith is a form of persecution, however, is the fact that someone speaks against our religious beliefs and practices a real form of persecution? Because the Manichaeen Faith believes that every individual has the right to free speech and to hold to their own religious ideals, we do not consider general criticism of our Faith to be a form of persecution. On the other hand, if a group of people or a single author continues for some time in producing anti-Manichaeen polemics, causing others to rise up against the Faith, we would consider such an act as a form of persecution, even though there may be no physical violence involved. In the same line of thought, however, it is important that we never go on a tirade in our response to anti-Manichaeen writing. We never wish to allow our emotions and zeal to get the best of us. We should always use discretion, patience and wisdom in everything we say and do if a response is needed at all. Often times, the credibility of those who write against our Faith is called into question, even by non-Manichaeans, and their claims are seen for what they are.

An extreme form of persecution may involve physical harm to a brother or sister, or to an entire congregation of Maninaye. Manichaeism has had its share of extreme persecution throughout the world. Unfortunately this persecution has often come from the hands of those who claim to be serving God. There are countless martyrs who have suffered because of their steadfast love and devotion to the Great Father. In this modern world our devotion to God and the Message of Light is no less.

Maninaye are determined to share the Message of Light, Hope and Truth with every soul in which we encounter, but in a non-confrontational manner. While we carry the sense of responsibility deep within our souls to have everyone know the hope that is upheld in the Gospel, there may be times in which we are simply unable to be as affective as we would hope. Our World Teacher has told us that the Great Father and the Third Messenger would prefer life over sacrifice; that when our life is in danger because of the message, it is important that we find other means to share the Gospel with other peoples or groups. We never stop sharing the Message of Light, but we use every practical means to do so without causing direct danger to our own lives or the lives of our family members or the members of our local congregation.

During times of extreme persecution or when faced with government policies concerning gatherings for

worship or publishing of literature, it may be necessary to work "underground." Our brethren in countries that are politically volatile (Syria, for example) are most aware of the need to work underground for the safety and well being of the Believers. Manichaeans do not return violence with violence; however, if faced with great physical harm to ourselves or to our families and members of our congregations, we are permitted, as the World Teacher has often told us, to protect ourselves by whatever means necessary with the understanding that we are simply acting in self defence. But one should never claim "self defence" if the situation does not call for it.

When worshipping in secret, out of the eyes of those who are bringing persecution against the Holy Faith, shorter forms of prayers and worship services may be called for. In some cases, a short prayer with a brief study session would be sufficient for a congregation that is facing extreme persecution. In this case, the congregation would not advertise its services to the public and would be attentive to any possible threats to the security of the brethren from within the congregation. In one country we are aware of an informant that was posing as a brother. With the latter in mind, one should still use caution, however, so as not to become suspicious of everyone whom we meet. Not everyone is out to murder us because of our religious beliefs.

If you, your family or your congregation is ever faced with extreme persecution in your particular area of the world, keeping in contact with one of your clerics is very important. If you have access to the Internet and have the ability to use it safely for email or chat in order to communicate with a cleric, this would be the preferred method. Otherwise, if you are able to write a letter on occasion while in isolation, this would also be acceptable. Whatever the situation and whatever means you are able to communicate, it is important that you use discretion. When communicating please make sure that you provide information in regards to your safety and conditions.

Governments, special interest groups, and religious sects will always attempt to place restrictions on God's people as long as they exist in the world. Manichaeans obey the laws of their secular governments as long as such laws are not in direct opposition to God's laws – in other words, as long as man's laws do not cause us to transgress God's righteous principles and bring any form of harm to the Divine Light. Manichaeans' primary responsibility is to Almighty God, not to man. We follow the dictates of heart which tell us to share our Holy Faith with others, but we also use God-given wisdom in how to disseminate the Message of Light when faced with opposition or persecution.

May we always call to mind the lives of those who suffered because of their steadfast devotion to the Great Father and their desire to share the teaching of the Prophet Mani, given to him by God. May their divine service in former times be our strength today. May we contemplate on their devotion and strengthen that of our own. In all situations make prayer a priority for not only yourself but for others throughout the world.

Whatever conditions you, your loved ones and brethren may be experiencing, please know that our heartfelt prayers are always with you as you continue to strive to serve the Great Father and to share the Message of Light with all peoples.

On behalf of the World Teacher and the Bitavhati Madinkha d'Maninaye,
your brothers, in sincerity,

The Maninaye Worldwide Organizational Committee