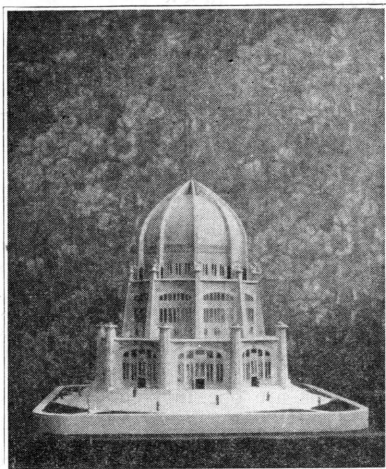


بیت‌الله

What Is the Bahá'í Faith?



Model of Bahá'í House of Worship

(Under construction at Wilmette, Ill.)

**Public Lecture Sundays, 3:30 p. m.
in Foundation Hall**

What Is the Bahá'í Faith?

IT is a movement aiming at the establishment of true religion and universal peace among mankind. It started in Persia about the middle of the nineteenth century and is spreading with wonderful rapidity, not only in the land of its birth, but throughout the world, in both Eastern and Western lands.

What Are Its Principles?

Among them are the following:

- 1 Unfettered search after truth, and the abandonment of all superstition and prejudice.
- 2 The Oneness of Mankind; all are "leaves of one tree, flowers in one garden."
- 3 Religion must be a cause of love and harmony, else it is no religion.
- 4 All religions are one in their fundamental principles.
- 5 Religion must go hand-in-hand with science. Faith and reason must be in full accord.
- 6 Universal peace: The establishment of a Universal League of Nations, of International Arbitration and an International Parliament.

- 7 The adoption of an International Language which shall be taught in all the schools of the world.
- 8 Compulsory education—especially for girls, who will be the mothers and the first educators of the next generation.
- 9 Equal opportunities of development and equal rights and privileges for both sexes.
- 10 Work for all: No idle rich and no idle poor, "Work in the spirit of service is worship."
- 11 Abolition of extremes of poverty and wealth: Care for the needy.
- 12 Recognition of the Unity of God and obedience to His Revealed Commands, as revealed through His Divine Manifestations.

How Did It Originate?

Its Fore-runner was a young man known as the **Báb** (*i.e.* Gate), who in 1844 began to herald the advent of One greater than himself, who should inaugurate a New Era in religion and civilization. After some six years of noble and disinterested effort he was martyred at the early age of thirty-one, his breast becoming the target of a thousand bullets.

Its Founder was **Bahá'u'lláh** (*i.e.* Glory of God) who, over sixty years ago, formulated the principles of the Movement and proclaimed himself as the One whose coming the Báb and all previous prophets had foretold. Like his predecessor he was bitterly opposed and persecuted. During forty years of exile and imprisonment he was chiefly engaged in committing to writing the Revelation of which he was the bearer, and in teaching and training his followers. His last place of banishment was 'Akká, in Palestine,

where he passed away in 1892 at the age of seventy-five.

Its Expounder and Promoter was '**Abdu'l-Bahá** (*i.e.* Servant of Bahá), son of Bahá'u'lláh, who was appointed by his father as the Centre to whom all Bahá'ís should turn for instruction and guidance. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the close companion and constant helper of his father, all of whose sufferings he shared. He remained a prisoner until 1908, when the old régime in Turkey was overthrown and all religious and political prisoners throughout the Empire were liberated. After that date he continued to make his home in Palestine, but made extensive teaching tours in Egypt, Europe and America, being ceaselessly engaged in explaining and exemplifying the principles of the Movement, and in inspiring and directing the activities of his friends and followers throughout the world.

He passed away in 1921 at the age of seventy-seven, leaving a will in which he appointed his eldest grandson Shoghi Effendi, as first Guardian of the Cause, and left directions for the election of an International Council, based indirectly on universal suffrage of the believers, which should in the future guide the development of the movement and co-ordinate the activities of its followers in accordance with the principles laid down by Bahá'u'lláh.

What Has It Accomplished?

Persia, at the time when the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh started teaching, was in a state of the greatest decadence. Religious bigotry and fanaticism were extreme. The government was weak and corrupt. Persecution was rife. Western science and art were regarded as unclean. Women were kept in ignorance and seclusion. The Bábís and Bahá'ís were at first bitterly

opposed and tormented. Some 20,000 perished as martyrs and a great many were imprisoned, scourged, robbed of their possessions, exiled and otherwise ill-treated. Coming from different religions and sects that hated and despised each other, they joined in a great brotherhood, ready to give their lives for each other, or even for their persecutors. They are giving up their old prejudices, are establishing schools in every town and village, educating their girls, becoming enlightened, tolerant and progressive. With regard to the number of followers of the Movement in Persia, Lord Curzon of Kedleston in his book, "Persia," written in 1892, states: "The lowest estimate places the present number at half a million. I am disposed to think from conversations with persons well qualified to judge, that the total is nearer one million." In Russia, America, India, Burma and Germany, Bahá'ís are already to be numbered by the thousand, while centres are rapidly being established in several European countries, in China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Islands of the Pacific Ocean and other regions of the globe.

Christians, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Hindus, people of every religion, and people of no religion, are joining this brotherhood in large numbers, dropping their age-long prejudices and animosities in order to unite in working for the promised coming of God's Kingdom upon earth.

The Bahá'í Movement has shown its power to change men's hearts and lives, making them new creatures. It has provided a basis on which people of all religions, races, nations and classes may unite, and are uniting, into one great harmonious family. It has revealed the means by which can be built up a new civilization in which co-operation shall replace competition, amity take the place of enmity, and devotion to God's Will be substituted for selfish and worldly desires.

What Is Its Relation to Christianity and the Other Great Religions of the World?

The same relation as the fruit has to the flower and the bud—it is their development and fulfilment. Bahá'u'lláh teaches that all the great religions are parts of one Divine Plan for the education and salvation of mankind. All the great prophets and religion-founders have taught one and the same religion, which consists in the worship and service of the One and Only God, but each has presented the teaching in the form best adapted for the age and the people to whom he came. There was never want of harmony between the prophets. It is their blind followers who have fallen into quarrels and disagreements. Now, through the work of Christ and all the Holy Prophets, man has reached a stage of development at which he is ready for a Universal Teaching, which shall consummate all previous Revelations and reconcile all the different sects and denominations into which humanity has become split up. This New Revelation will inaugurate that age of "peace on earth, goodwill towards men," whose coming has been foretold in the Holy Books of all religions.

Through railways and steamships, postal system and press, telegraph and telephone, aeroplanes and wireless, the mechanical means have been provided for the unification of humanity. Through the invention of Esperanto, an easy and adequate language, medium has been provided for the communication of ideas between the people of all countries. But these things cannot of themselves bring about Unity. The change of heart is needed, which only true religion freed from man-made and erroneous accretions, can accomplish.

A new era in religion is always initiated by a Prophet or Mediator, who is the bearer of the New Divine Message to His fellowmen. Bahá'u'lláh

comes as the Prophet of the New Era on which humanity is now entering. As such he is not a rival, much less is he an enemy, to Christ or any previous Divine Messenger or Manifestation. On the contrary, he fulfills their promises and consummates their work.

Words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

"We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us stirrers up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment . . . that all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled . . . What harm is there in this?

. . . . Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and the "Most Great Peace" shall come . . . Is not this that which Christ foretold? . . . Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind. These strifes and this blood-shed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family . . . Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."
—BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

"O Son of Being! Busy not thyself with this world for with fire We assay gold, and with gold test Our servants."
—BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

"O Children of Understanding! The closing of an eyelid shutteth out the world and all that is therein; what then if the veil of evil desire blind the sight of the heart?"
—BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

"Beware of prejudice! Light is good in whatsoever lamp it is burning. A rose is beautiful in whatsoever garden it may bloom. A star has the same radiance whether it shines from the east or from the west."
—'ABDU'L-BAHÁ.

"O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation conflict and contention are in nowise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God's grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, righteousness, straightforwardness and heartfelt kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers. Nay the spirit of affection and loving-kindness must so prevail that the stranger may find himself a friend; the enemy a true companion; and every least trace of difference be removed; for universality is of God and all limitations earthly." —'ABDU'L-BAHÁ.

Bahá'í Literature

Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, by J. E. Esslemont, an introduction to the history and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. Paper, 50 cents. Leather, \$1.00.

Some Answered Questions, by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This work, by the Interpreter and Exemplar of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, explains the mission of the Prophets in awakening men to reality. \$2.00.

The Kitab-i-Iqán: The Book of Certitude. Bahá'u'lláh's illumination of the path to God. \$2.00.

The Goal of a New World Order, by Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Cause. An analysis of current social problems, upholding the ideal of a world community. 5 cents.

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