

deavoring to establish brotherhood in practice as well as in preachment.

The Bahá'í Faith was the first religious group in this country to practice non-segregation. For over fifty years white and colored Bahá'ís have associated together in loving unity not only in their religious meetings and Institutes, but also educationally.

And all over the world the Bahá'í Faith is similarly bringing together in friendly and spiritual unity representatives of the most diverse, and hitherto hostile, races and creeds.

How wide is the spread of the Bahá'í Faith?

The Bahá'í Faith is already a living worldwide brotherhood, spreading thru every civilized race and religion of the world. Its adherents are to be found in every country of the world outside the Iron Curtain, in 311 sovereign states and dependencies; and its writings are already translated and printed in 397 languages. Its missionaries, self-supported always, and called "pioneers," are to be found in every race and clime from the Falkland Islands, the extreme southern settlement in the world, to the most northern settlement of Alaska.*

How is the Bahá'í Faith organized?

This is a layman's religion. There are no clergy. An executive committee of nine is elected annually in each town or city where there exist that number or more of Bahá'ís. This committee is called the "Spiritual Assembly" because it is expected to transact all its affairs—in regulation

of the life of its religious community—on a spiritual as well as a practical basis. Spiritual guidance is sought for all important decisions.

State delegates elected annually meet at the national headquarters—the beautiful Bahá'í Temple on the shores of Lake Michigan—to elect the National Spiritual Assembly of nine.

Ultimately all the countries of the world will send delegates to elect an international body with headquarters in Haifa, which will administer the world affairs of the Faith.*

Already a remarkable collection of edifices, comprising the shrines of the Báb and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the International Archives, have arisen on the slopes of Mt. Carmel. These marble buildings with their exquisite gardens and landscaping, dominating as they do a magnificent view of Haifa and the Mediterranean, constitute a most striking and beautiful architectural group in the Near East. And when the plans for the World Temple and its adjoining institutional and educational buildings are completed, this architectural assemblage with its broad terraces, flights of steps and fountains beautifully landscaped and leading down to the city of Haifa, will be without world peer or rival.

BAHA! COMMUNITY

ONE OF NORTH PLAINFIELD
*Statistical information received in 1963 the Bahá'í World Congress was held in North Plainfield, New Jersey with 7,000 representatives from most countries. Telephone 755-5955. The first Universal House of Justice, supreme administrative body of the Faith, was elected in April of 1963 with its headquarters at the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel. For further information contact Bahá'í Center in your city. If none listed, write to National Bahá'í Center, 536 Sheridan Rd., Wilmette, Illinois.)

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What is a BAHÁ'Í?



*Bahá'í House of Worship,
Wilmette, Ill.*

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An interview with
Stanwood Cobb

Is the Bahá'í Faith a new religion?

The Bahá'í Faith is a renewal of religion. The Bahá'ís believe in the universality of religion. They believe that all the great world religions are valid revelations of Truth from the Infinite Source. They believe also that religion is intended to bring unity to the world, not disunity; peace, not war; brotherhood, not hostility between creeds.

Bahá'ís believe that the founders of all world religions were inspired to reveal to man his own true nature as a spiritual being; and the nature of God as Creator, Sustainer and Goal of all existence. Without such spiritual teachings man would remain more or less on the plane of the animal. But in earnest and loyal support of such teachings man is inspired to practice equity in all human relations, to create great civilizations, and surround his life with beauty and with tranquility.

What does the Bahá'í Faith contribute to this?

Bahá'u'lláh's mission was to revive the spirit of faith in the world; to reawaken man's realization of himself as a spiritual being; and to inspire him with a more ardent love for God and for his fellow men.

But this spiritual love and unity between men the world over was to be definitely channeled into a new organization of humanity—a New World Order in which war should be abolished and all the nations of the world unite in a great Parliament of Man.

Bahá'ís are those who accept and dedicate themselves to this great mission of world peace and brotherhood—the Bahá'í Faith.

Because of those teachings Bahá'u'lláh led a life of persecution and imprisonment. From a prison in Accá—upon receiving a visit from the great Orientalist, Professor Edward G. Browne, Bahá'u'lláh stated:

“We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of nations. 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 religions 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?—These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family.”

What were other teachings of Bahá'u'lláh?

Briefly, they may be summarized as follows:—

The unity of all religions; the independent investigation of truth; religion must be the cause of unity; freedom from prejudice of all kinds—national, political, racial, religious and class; equality of men and women; universal education; reconciliation of science and religion; a universal auxiliary language; solution of the economic problem, spiritually and practically.

These principles are not new today, but they were very new in the 1860s. Now they impregnate the thinking and actions of all progressive the world over.

Bahá'u'lláh breathed the spirit of this age, which is the dawn of the age of the Commonwealth of Man.

This establishment of an effective World Federation is the most momentous step in the whole history of our planet—in the past or in the future. For once this vast problem—of diversity and conflict of peoples, of wars and rumors of wars, of exhaustive competition in armamentation—is decisively solved and the world becomes federated in as practical and effective a way as the forty-eight states of this American Union are federated, this colossal enterprise of building one world will never have to be repeated. The energies of humanity can then be all deployed to create prosperity, beauty and happiness throughout the world.

Did Bahá'u'lláh present any definite plan for the peaceful organization of society?

Yes, and some of the features of Bahá'u'lláh's structure for world civilization can already be

discerned emerging from the conflicts and upheavals of today!

This Bahá'í plan for world organization is briefly described as follows by Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.

“The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safe-guarded.

“This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature whose members will, as trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples.

“A world executive, backed by an international force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system.”

What steps are the Bahá'ís taking for the attainment of such world goals?

First, they are zealously working to spread these teachings of the Bahá'í Faith; there being no clergy in this Faith, every Bahá'í is an active missionary, so to speak. Secondly, they are en-