

Summary Statement -The World Religion

The Baha'i Faith - The World Religion

A Summary of Its Aims, Teachings and History

by Shoghi Effendi

The Revelation proclaimed by Baha'u'llah, His followers believe, is divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men. The mission of the Founder of their Faith, they conceive it to be to proclaim that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive, that the Founders of all past religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, "abide in the same Tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith." His Cause, they have already demonstrated, stands identified with, and revolves around, the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. This final stage in this stupendous evolution, they assert, is not only necessary but inevitable, that it is gradually approaching, and that nothing short of the celestial potency with which a

**divinely ordained Message can claim to be endowed
can succeed in establishing it.**

**The Baha'i Faith recognizes the unity of God and of
His Prophets, upholds the principle of an unfettered
search after truth, condemns all forms of superstition
and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose
of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it
must go hand-in-hand with science, and that it
constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, an
ordered and progressive society. It inculcates the
principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges
for both sexes, advocates compulsory education,
abolishes extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work
performed in the spirit of service to the rank of
worship, recommends the adoption of an auxiliary
international language, and provides the necessary
agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a
permanent and universal peace.**

**Born about the middle of the nineteenth century in
darkest Persia, assailed from its infancy by the forces
of religious fanaticism, the Faith has, notwithstanding
the martyrdom of its Forerunner, the repeated
banishments of its Founder, the almost life-long
imprisonment of its chief Promoter and the cruel
death of no less than twenty thousand of its devoted
followers, succeeded in diffusing quietly and steadily**

its spirit throughout both the East and the 'West, has established itself in no fewer than forty countries of the world, and has recently obtained from the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in various lands written affirmations that recognize its independent religious status.

The Forerunner of the Faith was Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad of Shiraz, known as the Bab (The Gate) Who proclaimed on May 23, 1844, His twofold mission as an independent Manifestation of God and Herald of One greater than Himself, Who would inaugurate a new and unprecedented era in the religious history of mankind. On His early life, His sufferings, the heroism of His disciples, and the circumstances of His tragic martyrdom I need not dwell, as the record of His saintly life is minutely set forth in "The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Faith". Suffice it to say that at the early age of thirty-one the Bab was publicly martyred by a military firing squad at Tabriz, Persia, on July 9, 1850. On the evening of that same day His mangled body was removed from the courtyard of the barracks to the edge of the moat outside the gate of the city whence it was carried by His fervent disciples to Tihran. There it remained concealed until such time as its transfer to the Holy Land was made possible. Faced by almost insuperable difficulties and facing the

gravest dangers a band of His disciples, acting under the instructions of 'Abdu'l-Baha succeeded in transporting overland the casket containing His remains to Haifa. In 1909, 'Abdu'l-Baha with his own hands and in the presence of the assembled representatives of various Baha'i communities deposited those remains within the vault of the Mausoleum he himself had erected for the Bab. Ever since that time countless followers of the Baha'i Faith have made the pilgrimage to this sacred spot, a spot which ever since 1921 has been further sanctified by the burial of 'Abdu'l-Baha. in an adjoining vault.

The Founder of the Faith was Baha'u'llah (Glory of God), Whose advent the Bab had foretold. He declared His mission in 1863 while an exile in Baghdad. He subsequently formulated the principles of that new and divine civilization which by His advent He claimed to have inaugurated. He too was bitterly opposed, was stripped of His property and rights, was exiled to 'Iraq, to Constantinople and Adrianople, and was eventually incarcerated in the penal colony of 'Akka where He passed away in 1892 in His seventy-fifth year. His remains are laid to rest in the Shrine at Bahji, north of 'Akka. The authorized Interpreter and Exemplar of Baha'u'llah's teachings was His eldest son 'Abdu'l-Baha (Servant of Baha) who was appointed by his Father as the Center to whom all Baha'is should

turn for instruction and guidance. 'Abdu'l-Baha ever since his childhood was the closest companion of his Father, and shared all His sorrows and sufferings. He remained a prisoner until 1908, when the old regime in Turkey was overthrown and all religious and political prisoners throughout the empire were liberated. After that he continued to make his home in Palestine but undertook extensive teaching tours in Egypt, Europe and America, being ceaselessly engaged in explaining and exemplifying the principles of his Father's Faith and in inspiring and directing the activities of his friends and followers throughout the world. He passed away in 1921 in Haifa, Palestine, and, as already stated, was buried in a vault contiguous to that of the Bab on Mount Carmel.

According to the provisions of His Will, I, as His eldest grandson, have been appointed as First Guardian of the Baha'i Faith and Head of the Universal House of Justice which must, in conjunction with me coordinate and direct the affairs of the various Baha'i communities in East and West in accordance with the principles enunciated by Baha'u'llah.

The period since 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing has been characterized by the formation and consolidation of the Local and National Assemblies, the bedrock on which the edifice of the Universal House of Justice is to

be erected. There are, according to the latest reports from Tihran, over five hundred Local Assemblies already constituted in Persia. Organized Baha'i communities are to be found in every continent of the globe. National Assemblies have already been formed and are functioning in the United States and Canada, in India and Burma, in Great Britain, in Germany, 'Iraq and Egypt. Such Assemblies are in the process of formation in Persia, Caucasus, Turkestan, and Australia. Local Assemblies and groups have been already established in France, Switzerland and Italy, in the Scandinavian countries, in Austria and the Balkans, in Turkey, Syria, Albania, Abyssinia, China, Japan, Brazil and South Africa. Christians of various denominations, Muslims of both the Sunni and Shi'ih sects of Islam, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and Buddhists, have eagerly embraced its truth, have recognized the divine origin and fundamental unity underlying the teachings of all the Founders of past religions, and have unreservedly identified themselves with both the spirit and form of its evolving institutions. All these centers function as the component parts of a single organism, of an entity the spiritual and administrative Center of which lies enshrined in the twin cities of 'Akka and Haifa.