

## *What Is the Bahá'í Faith?*

**Bahá'í** is a new independent Faith, born in 1844. Only once in a thousand years is a great religion such as the Bahá'í Faith born. Its followers are called **Bahá'ís**, meaning "those who follow the light." The prime purpose of the Bahá'í Faith is to spiritualize humanity, to make religion relevant to our time, to restore its purity and vitality, and to focus and direct its energies toward the goal of creating a global society, a new world civilization based on justice, peace, and unity.

The Bahá'í Faith is the second most wide spread religion in the world, next to Christianity. The following figures, based on *The Britannica Book of the Year*, show the number of countries and territories to which various religions have spread:

- Christianity 254
- Bahá'í Faith 205
- Islam 172
- Hinduism 88
- Buddhism 86<sup>1</sup>

**Bahá'í** is a faith whose coming is promised in all sacred Scriptures. They have all foretold that, at a given point in history, when darkness and despair have spread, when "the great tribulation" has engulfed the human

race, God will send a new light for all the peoples of the world to guide them and unite them. Bahá'ís believe that light has come. You are invited to investigate it for yourself, as have other like-minded millions. The more you pursue it, the greater your astonishment will be. You will keep saying to yourself, "This faith has been around for some 150 years. Why didn't I know about it before? It has such wonderful solutions to social and spiritual problems of our time. Why don't more people look into it? Why don't our religious and political leaders adopt and apply its teachings?" If you are an open-minded and determined seeker of truth, you will derive such spiritual nourishment from your new knowledge that it will astonish you. You will say to yourself, "I had no idea I was missing so much!"

We don't know what joys we are missing until we experience them. We don't know we have been drunk until we become sober. Some years ago, the editors of *Psychology Today* sent questionnaires to their subscribers to find out what makes people happy. One subscriber wanted to see the results of the survey. "I think I am happy," he wrote. "Would you please verify?"

I have had the honor and pleasure of observing with astonishment the awakening of many seekers of truth to new horizons of hope, happiness, and harmony. I have witnessed dramatic and sudden transformations in

the attitudes and lives of men and women of all backgrounds: Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Muslim, Atheist, young, old, the sophisticated, and the simple. You now have a chance to witness it for yourself.

God's wisdom is proved by its result. Christ (Matt. 11:19)

The Bahá'í teachings remove the obstacles that prevent people from reaching their highest potential. They cultivate positive and critical thinking, self-esteem, self-actualization, and enlightened faith. Dogmatism and blind faith have no place in the Bahá'í Faith.

To manifest greatness, we need a great purpose. To attain oneness, we need one divine destiny. To cultivate our love, we need to connect to One we can all love.

By fostering the knowledge and love of God, the Bahá'í Faith reveals new dimensions of joy, peace, and harmony. In the light of its teachings, life glows with an enduring purpose, it rises from the depths of a depressive and monotonous cycle into an everlasting adventure of hope and fulfillment. Without a cosmic and eternal perspective, which can come only from knowing and loving God, life loses its luster, its enduring purpose and excitement.

Where there is no vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29:18

About two centuries ago we encountered a new frontier: learning to live in a new world expanded by an explosion of knowledge, which is now doubling approximately every ten years. Then came the second frontier: controlling and guiding that explosion for the good of the world. A third frontier now presents us with a challenge greater than we have ever encountered: learning a new way of thinking about who we are, what on earth we are doing, and where we are going; learning to live with ourselves and our neighbors in this global village. The Bahá'í Faith has come to prepare us and lead us along this latest frontier, perhaps our last.

"Everyone goes to the forest. Some go for a walk to be inspired, and others go to cut down the trees." We invite you to come for an inspiring tour through a beautiful, blooming forest filled with perfumed flowers.

When Christ came, He introduced a new paradigm, a new way of looking at things. He changed "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" into "love your enemies:"

You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Christ (Matt. 5:43-44)

That was a major paradigm shift. It required a radical change in thinking. Today the Bahá'í Faith asks us for

still another shift, one that is more far-reaching than the one Christ proclaimed. The Bahá'í paradigm includes the following:

- *The world should no longer be viewed as a divided house but as one country, and all humankind its equal citizens.* Our eyes are different from our elbows, our skin from our stomach, and our lips from our liver, yet we know them all as members of *one* body. That is how we should perceive the diverse races and cultures of the world. We must respect and appreciate one another's differences and work together in unison. "A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on." "Unity in diversity" is one of those immortal truths whose time has come.

We must set aside our prejudices and perceptions of superiority and embrace the principle of oneness. A Baptist pastor got angry at his young son for hitting his Jewish friend. He told his son, "You should be ashamed of yourself. Don't you know that Jesus was a Jew?" "Dad, I'm sorry," he replied. "I know God is a Baptist, but I didn't know that Jesus was a Jew." The age of separation and superiority is passed.

The time is ripe for unifying this fragmented and fragile planet and bringing peace to its diverse and

divided peoples. As Adlai Stevenson said, "We travel together, passengers in a little spaceship, dependent on its vulnerable supplies of air and soil...preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work, and the love, we give our fragile craft."

- *We have reached the age of maturity.* We should no longer act like children who believe and do what their parents tell them. We should investigate the truth for ourselves and *choose* our faith rather than depend on *chance*—our religious leaders or our ancestors—to make our choices. Digging for evidence takes more time and effort than jumping to a conclusion, but it is a rewarding, uplifting, and stimulating experience.

- *Every individual needs an enduring purpose.* Without purpose, the joy of living turns into pain and suffering, like that of "the young man who went to a psychologist and said, 'Doc, I'm ready to end it all. I have nothing to live for anymore.' The doctor said, 'What do you mean you have nothing to live for? You haven't paid for your house. You haven't paid for your car. You haven't paid for your furniture. You haven't paid me for this visit. You've got plenty to live for!'"

Ours is the most painful period in history, yet it should be the most

joyful. The Bahá'í Faith is a religion of peace and contentment, of hope and vision. It has come at the most troubled time in history to make us the happiest people who have ever lived.

***Our foremost purpose in life is discovering and expressing our spiritual potential.*** That is the only way we can attain true contentment and fulfillment. Everything we do must serve that purpose.

- ***Only the Word of God can transform the heart and inspire everlasting love, peace, and happiness.*** “Our faith can make us larger than our losses, greater than our griefs, stronger than our struggles, and more powerful than our problems.”
- ***About once in a thousand years God sends a new Messenger or Redeemer to teach us new knowledge measured to our capacity.*** The City of God has been renewed in the past and will continue to be renewed in the future.
- ***The Bahá'í Faith is the glorious Gift of God for this day.*** It is the blueprint for building the City of God, a world of peace and prosperity. It is Heaven's design for creating love, hope, and happiness on this divided and depressed planet. Our job is to build the City based on the blueprint.

Bahá'is believe that, “It's better to light a small candle than to curse the darkness.” They are all over this

planet lighting little candles. At last the light of the new knowledge will transform our planet into a vast garden of blooming lights. Thousands of Bahá'is have left their countries and settled where they can make a difference. They devote their lives to helping the disadvantaged and the poor. Their efforts range from raising chickens to forming women's literacy classes; from conducting health and hygiene seminars to establishing pre-schools for village children.

A pastor lost patience with his inactive church members. To encourage action, he read this verse from the Bible, “They brought to Jesus all sick people with diverse diseases” (Matthew 4:24). He then proceeded to interpret the verse. He said, “Sometimes you go to a doctor, he checks you, and gives you the right remedy for a quick recovery. But when you have ‘Diverse Disease,’ only the Lord can cure you. Dear friends, we have seen an epidemic spread of ‘Diverse Disease’ among our people. Some dive for the door as soon as the sermon is over. Some dive under the blanket to rest when they should be up celebrating the Lord's Day. Others dive for the TV set or into their car for a cruise. Others dive into a big bag of excuses for being too busy to take on the work of the Lord. Still others dive into a flurry of fault-finding when they should be looking at their own faults. Yes, dear friends, doctors may cure you of any disease except ‘Di-

verse Disease.’ That, only the Lord can do.”

The pastor was right, there is a sickness that only God can cure: that is a “diseased soul,” one out of touch with its Creator. The Bahá'í Faith has come to restore the spiritual health of humanity.

Today, many Christians acknowledge the urgent need for a paradigm shift in our thinking from provincial to planetary, from religiosity to spirituality, the need for a fresh outpouring of the spirit that transforms and expands our vision. As Matthew Fox wrote in *The Coming of Cosmic Christ*, “It is time to move from the quest for the historical Christ to the quest for Cosmic Christ...This Cosmic Christ will... effect a change of heart, a change of culture, a change of ways... ‘By their fruits will you know them,’ Jesus advised. A true awakening to the Cosmic Christ will effect genuine result.”<sup>22</sup> He then asks, “Is it possible that our entire civilization is depressed because we lack the Cosmic Christ perspective?”<sup>23</sup> Even some secular scientists acknowledge the need for a new spiritual power. Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University declared, “Scientific analysis points, curiously, toward the need for a quasi-religious transformation of contemporary cultures.”<sup>24</sup>

President Roosevelt had a perfect vision not only of what America needs but of what the world needs:

No greater thing could come to our land today than a revival of the spirit of religion...a revival that would sweep through the homes of the nation...to their reassertion of their belief in God. I doubt if there is any problem, social, political or economic, that would not melt away before the fire of such a spiritual awakening.<sup>5</sup>

The Bahá'í Faith has come to set ablaze "the fire of spiritual awakening" in every land, and to create a Kingdom that has been the hope of humanity since the dawn of history. It is the divine Plan for the fulfillment of this prayer and prophecy:

Our Father in heaven! Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Christ (Matt. 6:9-10)

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1. Motlagh, Hushidar. *I Shall Come Again*, Mt. Pleasant, MI: Global Perspective, 1992, p. 126.
  2. Fox, Matthew. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, Harper & Row, 1980, pp. 7-8.
  3. Fox, Matthew. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, Harper and Row, 1980, p. 2.
  4. Fox, Matthew. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, Harper and Row, 1980, p. 2.
  5. Rawlings, Maurice S. M.D. *To Hell and Back*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, p. 228.



For further information, contact:

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