

young merchant who assumed the title of the Báb (literally "the Gate") and announced that his mission was the fulfillment of past (followers of Bahá'u'lláh). They believe in one God and give equal religions and the heralding of a prophet and teacher who would homage to Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and other "Manifestations." establish a new cycle in the history-long dialogue between God and Bahá'í believe however, that religion progressively evolves and that man. Frightened by the brush-fire growth of the Bábís (followers of Bahá'u'lláh is God's spokesman for this age.

the BA), civil and religious authorities initiated a reign of terror, Far from being an exotic Eastern sect, the Bahá'í faith is uniquely martyring thousands including the Báb. But this did not damp the fire practical and it speaks with great authority to the troubled mind of of the movement which leaped from heart to heart, fueled now by the contemporary man. Scholars, scientists and royalty have embraced ancient hope that God would again speak to man through a man. the faith. It as been praised by, among others, Dowager Queen Marie Thirteen years after the martyrdom of the BA, on April 21, 1863, the of son of a Persian nobleman stood before a group in a garden in

At Bahá'í Summer School in Eliot, Maine Bahá'í youth splash in the surf. Bahá'ís condemn all forms of prejudice and superstition.

The purpose of religion, they say, is the promotion of amity and concord in this world. Founder of faith forbade use of all alcoholic beverages and exalted trades and professions "to the rank of worship."

Rumania and Tolstoi, Somalis, Laotians, Finns, Lapps, Swedes, Germans, Negroes, Englishmen, and Southern and Northern whites have found in it an image of their condition and an image of their hope.

Theology apart, the Bahá'í principle has been extraordinarily effective in shattering the barriers between men. Stressing the importance of practical improvements in the social conditions of men, Bahá'ís have been very active in

the fight against prejudice. They teach generally by demonstrating, for it is an

article of their faith that deeds are more powerful than words. Within Bahá'í communities, Negroes and whites, men and women, Asians, Africans and Europeans stand on a basis of absolute equality. Believers, moreover, are enjoined to take their creed seriously, even to the point of marriage. American Negroes play a highly important and highly visible role in Bahá'í communities,

not only as members of local and national assemblies but also as human beings who interact with other members of the faith on a human and non-racial level.

The chief principle of the faith, which is one of the fastest-growing religions in the world today, is "the oneness and the wholeness of the human race." A Bahá'í proverb says: "A rose is beautiful in whatever garden it may bloom. We

are each flowers in the great garden." The major purpose of the faith is to unite

the entire world in one religion and one social order. Among the dominant principles of the Bahá'ís are:

- 1) Independent investigation of the truth.
- 2) Essential harmony of science and religion.
- 3) Recognition of the divine foundation of all religions. 4) Universal compulsory education.
- 5) Equality of men and women.
- 6) Spiritual solution of economic problems. 7) Need for a universal auxiliary language.
- 8) Universal peace based upon a world federation of nations. 9) Elimination of At world center of Bahá'í Faith in Haifa Israel three members of House of justice, David Hofman of England Amoz Gibson of prejudice.

the U.S. and Hushman Fatheazam of Persia chat in flower 10)

Recognition of the essential unity of mankind.

gardens near beautiful, golden-domed Bahá'í Shrine.

Although the

Bahá'í faith honors the "essentials" of other religions,

In Kampala,

Uganda, Bahá'ís and

friends congregate left

on lawn after service in

modern African temple

(background).

At opening of temple

in Frankfurt Ger. Elaine

Baker c. Beth McKenty

r. of U.S. join German

Barbara Thinat.

it is neither eclectic nor syncretic. Bahá'ís have their own holy scripture and

their own laws based primarily on the life and insights of Bahá'u'lláh who was born on November 12, 1817, in Persia. The precocious son of a wealthy nobleman, Bahá'u'lláh was raised in easy circumstances which he abandoned to follow the Báb. Because of his advocacy of the new revelation, Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned, tortured, and finally exiled. While imprisoned in a vermin-infested cell, the bearded religious prophet became aware of his mission.

After Bahá'u'lláh revealed himself to his followers, Turkish officials shunted him from prison to prison in an abortive effort to destroy his influence. In 1868, the troublesome religious prisoner was sent to the pestilential Turkish prison colony at 'Akká near present-day Haifa in the Holy Land. Instead of destroying Bahá'u'lláh's influence, this development expanded it, for, to the faithful, the transfer to 'Akká confirmed the ancient prophecy that "the Lord of Hosts would be manifested in the Holy Land."

Not only followers but also scholars and high state officials sought out Bahá'u'lláh for blessings and advice. Finally, Turkish officials allowed the revered prophet to take up residence in a rustic mansion at nearby Bahjí, where he died in 1892.

By all accounts, Bahá'u'lláh was an extraordinary personage. The only Westerner to interview him, Professor Edward G. Browne, the famous Cambridge University Orientalist, wrote: "The face of him on whom I gazed, I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet black hair and beard flowing down to indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá, one of three major figures of

During 40 years of exile and imprisonment, Bahá'u'lláh wrote more than the religion was eldest son of founder. 'Abdu'l- 100 books and tablets which are the basis of the Bahá'í faith. In his writings,

Bahá who died in 1921, carried message of according to Bahá'í

authorities, Bahá'u'lláh states that unity is the central

new religion to Western world laid cornerstone problem of the modern age.

Bahá'u'lláh's approach to life and religion were of American temple.

founded on two concepts: 1) unity-"the unity of God, the unity of His prophets and the oneness and wholeness of

Representatives of

American Bahá'í community

were photographed before

House of Worship at 55th

annual convention. Despite

some harassment by White

Citizens Councils the faith is

growing in the South.

Hawaii Bahá'í community

includes descendants of

several stocks. New

members are attracted by

example of members and

the activities of pioneers.

Navajo Indian couple,

Mr. and Mrs. Chester

Kahn discuss expansion

of faith with Bahá'í

member. Faith has grown

rapidly in Africa in recent

man"-and, 2) progressive revelation, the idea that is the meeting of the faithful, at a world congress in London in 1963, was evolution religion o one faith which sows different faces to a living testimonial to the reach of the faith. Some 7,000 Bahá'í different ages. In the view o contemporary Ba a Is Moses delegates of practically every race and stock attended the Buddha, Zoroaster Krishna, Jesus, Mohammad and Bahá'u'lláh convention which has been called "one of the greatest admixtures were successive "Manifestations" through whom God has of people and cultures in world history." progressively revealed the meaning of life.

From an administrative standpoint, the religion consists of a After Bahá'u'lláh's death, his message was carried to the Western series of local communities. Administrative control is centered in world by his eldest son Abdu'l-Bahá who visited in 1912 Local and National Spiritual Assemblies. Both national and local Dressed in a Persian cloak and turban and accompanied by a assemblies are composed of nine members elected for one-year racially-mixed party, Abdu'l-Bahá criss-crossed the country, terms. Local assemblies are elected by the entire adult community. sowing the seeds of the new faith. Among the groups he National Spiritual Assemblies which administer the affairs of addressed were a Howard University audience and conference national groups are elected annually by delegates from each of the fourth annual conference the NAACP. Far in advance of region. The international control center, the Universal House of his time, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said the chief problems for the age were justice, administers affairs of the faith from Haifa, Israel. Members peace an human brotherhood. The Bahá'í sage told Americans of this body are elected to five-year terms by members of the that if they could solve their major spiritual problem, the race National Spiritual Assemblies. At a 1963 meeting, four Americans problem, America's influence would be decisive in the were elected to the House of justice, including a Negro educator, formulation of a new world order. To members of his own faith Amoz Gibson.

Abdu'l-Bahá insisted on complete fidelity to the Bahá'í principle

The Bahá'í community has neither a priesthood nor rituals. At of unity. In a 1912 tablet, he told " American Bahá'ís: "If it be Bahá'í religious ceremonies, there are no collections or sermons. possible, gather together these two races, black and white, into The heart of the spiritual life of the community is the 19-day feast one Assembly, and put such love into their hearts that they shall which is held on the first day of every Bahá'í month (The Bahá'í not only unite rite but even intermarry. Be sure that the result of calendar has 19 months consisting of days that start at sunset this will abolish differences an disputes between black and

instead of midnight.). The 19-day feast is conducted simply and white. Moreover by the Will of God, may it be so. This is a great informally in three stages. The first part consists of readings of service to humanity."

passages from the writings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and Abdu'l-Bahá. During the ministry of Abdu'l-Bahá and his successor Shoghi Effendi the faith made enormous gains. At the death of Shoghi Effendi in 1957, there were Bahá'í communities in every major communities hold a great variety of cultural and spiritual or country in the world. Today, there are more than 14,000 Bahá'í meetings. In the absence of a professional clergy, members are centers. In America alone, there are more than 300 assemblies charged with the responsibility of deepening their faith by and some 1,700 centers of the faith. The 100th anniversary continuous study, prayer, and discussion.

Bahá'ís take their religion seriously. To a Bahá'í, there is no demarcation between religion and everyday life. The most important prayer, Bahá'ís say, is a person's daily life. Religion, in other words, is an "attitude toward God reflected in life."

According to Bahá'í writings, "All effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart

Ernest Loas, one of select Bahá'í pioneers, former As Bahá'í "pioneer" in Norway, Lucille Webster (r.), group of international insurance executive formerly of Cleveland is helping to expand the faith in stewards designated "Hands Ellsworth Blackwell and Scandinavian area. She is employed by Department of of the Cause," chats with Dr. wife Ruth settled in Port- State. Only Negro Bahá'í in Norway, she was elected Eugene Byrd (r.) au-Prince Haiti in 1960. chairman of country's Assembly.

International leader, Amoz Gibson takes sun on Haifa's Mount Carmel with wife Mary, and children Donald, Kenneth Nancy. Eldest William is studying in U.S.

In House of Justice Office

in Haifa, Gibson, a former
Washington educator, checks
correspondence with
secretary, Mrs. Braulia Caban,
formerly of New York.

National Spiritual Assembly, chief administrative body of U.S. group, holds
meeting at Wilmette Ill, head quarters. One Negro, Dr. Sarah M. Pereira c. is
member of group. Dr. David S. Ruhe (r.) is National Assembly secretary.

At Bahá'í Institute at
Green Lake Wisconsin
three Bahá'ís hold
a n i m a t e d
conversation. At
institute Youth and
adults discussed
practical ways of
implementing
brotherhood and
deepening bonds of
their faith.

B

At Bahá'í service in E GENEROUS in prosperity, and thankful in
temple in Uganda,
Catherine Kabale
adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and
reads prayer. look upon him with a bright and friendly face.
M e m b e r s h i p i s Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich,
an
granted on personal answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the
sanctity of
declaration of faith to thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy
speech.
adult men and women.
Some three hundred Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.
Americans, including Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the
many Negroes, are sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed,
an
spreading faith abroad. upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let

BAHÁ'Í FAITH Continued

integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts.
is worship if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to Be a
home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of
do service to humanity."
strength for the fugitive.
Believers must also carry out teaching activities which are Be eyes

to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the roughly comparable to the missionary activities of other faiths. In erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to local communities, Bahá'ís hold "firesides" (religious study the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a groups) in their homes and elsewhere to acquaint interested parties breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of with tenets of the faith. Thousands of Bahá'ís also leave their justice, a luminary above the horizon. of virtue, a dew to the native land and become "pioneers" in foreign countries. Bahá'í soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a "pioneers" are not called missionaries because they are not sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a supported by the faith. "Pioneers" support themselves and advance shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the faith by becoming a part of the community (as teachers, the tree of humility. doctors, medical technicians, etc.).

—BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Like the early Christians, Bahá'ís live their faith. In America, they have pioneered in creating truly integrated communities. Not only in the North but also in the South, Bahá'ís live Shoghi Author of the award-winning *Before The Mayflower: A History Effendi's injunction: "Freedom from racial prejudice, in any of its of The Negro in America 1619-1962, Lerone Bennett Jr. has long been forms, should be adopted as the watchword of the entire body of interested in the great figures of Negro history, both past and the American believers, in whatever state they reside. It should be present. consistently demonstrated in every phase of their activity and life, His newly-published biography of Martin Luther King, What in public or in private. It should be deliberately cultivated in their Manner of Man, has been acclaimed homes, their business offices, their schools and colleges, their for its perceptive assessment of the social parties and recreation grounds:" contribution being made by the To members of the faith, the Bahá'í community is a visible sign great proponent of non-violence, Dr. of the destined triumph of unity over separatism. Within the folds King. Mr. Bennett has also written a book of the faith, sharing a practical, day-to-day brotherhood, are of essays surveying the millionaires and maids, black men and white men, Southerners American civil rights' scene, The and Northerners, former Moslems, Hindus, Christians, Jews. Of Negro Mood.*

whatever station, of whatever background, Bahá'ís believe their
Born in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in
faith answers the deep hunger of modern man for wholeness.

1928, he grew up in Jackson,

Because their belief is a form of action, Bahá'ís are proving in
Mississippi, and attended Episcopal

action Bahá'u'lláh's vision: "Ye are the fruits of one tree and the
parochial school. He graduated from public high school in 1945,
leaves of one Branch..."

and as a teen-ages worked as a reporter on the Jackson Advocate
and the Mississippi Enterprise. Mr. Bennett majored in political
science and economics, graduating with honors from Morehouse
College, Atlanta, in 1949. He was editor of his school paper and
year-book. After studying political science in the graduate school
at Atlanta University for a brief period, Mr. Bennett joined the
Atlanta Daily World as a reporter.

Except for a period of service overseas with the American army
in Germany, Mr. Bennett remained with the Atlanta Daily World
until 1953, when he resigned from his position as City Editor to
become associate editor of JET magazine, with the Johnson
Publishing Company in Chicago:

Married to the former Gloria Sylvester, a journalist before her
marriage, the Bennetts are the parents of four children.

Mr. Bennett has. received the Windy City Press Club Award for
outstanding magazine writing. His hobbies include chess,
reading and collecting records.

National Center of the Faith in America

Bahá'í House of Worship, Wilmette, Illinois

EBONY

Reprinted by permission of

From _____

WHEN THE RACIAL elements of the American nation
unite in actual fellowship and accord, the lights of the
oneness of humanity will shine, the day of eternal glory
and bliss will dawn, the spirit of God encompass and the Divine
BOOKS ON BAHÁ'Í FAITH

Foundations of World Unity by `Abdu'l-Bahá.

favors descend. Under the leadership and training of God, the real
talks by the Son of the Founder of the

Public

shepherd, all will be protected and preserved. He will lead them in
green pastures of happiness and sustenance and they will attain to
Bahá'í Faith given on His historic Western
the real goal of existence. This is the blessing and benefit of unity;

journey of 1912, in churches, universities and
this is the outcome of love. at
many public gatherings.

I N THE ESTIMATION Of God there is no distinction of color;
all are one in the color and beauty of servitude to Him. Color is
not important; the heart is all-important. It matters not what
the exterior may be if the heart is pure

—`ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Thief in the Night. William Sears. Examination
of Old and New Testament prophecies relating
to the Bahá'í Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era. J. E. Esslemont.

A basic handbook on the Bahá'í Faith with
chapters on Religious Unity; The Way to Peace;

For further information or literature on Religion

and Science; Prophecy Fulfilled;

the Bahá'í Faith, please contact the Prayer;

Health and Healing, and others.

Bahá'í Center in your community. If none

listed, write Bahá'í National Center, Dept. Please

contact your local Bahá'í Center for above books.

C,112 Linden Avenue, Wilmette, IL 60091. Many are

also available in your public library, or you may
order direct from Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 415 Linden
Avenue, Wilmette, IL 60091.

— Baha'i: A Way of Life for Millions (Used by permission of the curator)