

**THE BAHAI MOVEMENT
FOR UNIVERSAL RELIGION,
BROTHERHOOD AND PEACE**

A Sketch of its History and Teaching

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FOREWORD.

As Abdul-Baha, the leader of the Bahai Movement, has expressed his intention of visiting America in the near future, it has seemed advisable to publish this resume of the history and teaching of the movement in order that those who desire knowledge upon the subject may find it in a brief and concise form.

[Photo: Abdul Baha]

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THE BAHAI MOVEMENT.

Object.

The object of the Bahai Movement is the establishment of the universal religion which will be the foundation of inter-religious, inter-racial and international brotherhood and peace. It offers to mankind a practical basis of unity, one which is in direct line with the great world needs of this age. It is paving the way for the great universal civilization which will evolve as people of all religions, races and nations unite both spiritually and materially into one world people.

The Bab.

This movement began in Persia almost seventy years ago (1844), with the rise of a teacher known as The Báb, who proclaimed the coming of a greater teacher whose mission would be that of establishing the universal Religion, the Brotherhood of Man and universal Peace. The Bab was but the forerunner of this greater teacher who was to come, and to this promised one and to his cause The Bab and thousands of his followers testified by suffering and martyrdom inflicted upon them by the Moslems upon the charge of heresy.

Baha'o'llah.

Shortly after the martyrdom of The Bab the great teacher who was promised appeared in the person of Baha'o'llah, from whom the movement now takes its name. His mission lasted forty years, during which time he was subjected to all manner of imprisonment and suffering at the hands of Oriental despots because of his teaching which brought freedom of thought and enlightenment to all people who heard it. Baha'o'llah was sent in exile and a prisoner from one Moslem country to another until he finally was lodged in the Turkish penal colony of Akka in Syria where, after having given his great teaching to humanity, he passed naturally from this world in the year 1892.

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*** Abdul-Baha**

Abdul-Baha, the son of Baha'o'llah, was the one chosen by his father to further establish this great movement and to explain and demonstrate it before the world.

He was constantly at his father's side during the exile and imprisonment of the latter, and was in every way Baha'o'llah's chief disciple. For forty years Abdul-Baha was a prisoner in the fortress of Akka — held there by the Sultan of Turkey for no other reason than that his teaching was bringing enlightenment and freedom of thought to all who came within the radius of its power. With the fall of the old despotic regime of Turkish government and the establishment of the present constitutional rule, which occurred in the summer of 1908, he was liberated from prison, and now is free to come and go as he wills. During the past summer and fall (1911) he visited England and France, where he spent some months in teaching; and now he is expected shortly in America, where he has many friends who will welcome him.

Abdul-Baha wishes to be known as the servant of humanity. He seeks no higher station than this, yet when one understands all that this means one realizes the combination of humility and exaltation which it implies.

He has a wonderful personality. He has the power of really penetrating the souls of men, of understanding the needs of each individual soul, and of ministering to them in the most beneficial manner. He is the spiritual physician who is treating humanity.

Many beautiful and touching incidents are related in the East of the way in which, through long suffering and kindness, he has won the hearts of those who, because of their prejudices, formerly were his

* The Bab (meaning the door or gate), Baha'o'llah (meaning the glory of God) and Abdul-Baha (meaning the servant of God), are titles which have been applied to these teachers and by which they are now known.

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enemies. Caring for the sick and protecting the oppressed form a large part of his daily duties. One of the titles applied to him in the Orient is “father of the poor.”

Abdul-Baha's power is that of love. In going into his presence something within one's soul seems to respond to his soul. Thus a spiritual bond is made which is most far-reaching, for it is of the nature of divine love and always remains with one. Through his life and example, he is teaching people the life and the way of The Kingdom. He has a message for every one, and as one meets and contacts with him in spirit it is as if a new force were added to one's nature. The power of the love of God is brought very close to those who come in contact with Abdul-Baha.

TRUTH.

The Bahai philosophy is simplicity itself. It is expressed in this short quotation from one of Baha'o'llah writings, **“The root of all knowledge is the knowledge of God.”** Each of the world's great spiritual teachers has taught the same eternal Truth, revealing it in the measure and in terms applicable to the people of his time. This Truth has ever been the main spring and source of human advancement and civilization.

RELATION OF THE BAHAI MOVEMENT TO THE RELIGIONS OF THE PAST.

The people of each religion look for the coming of a prophet or teacher who will fulfill the hopes of their own teaching and establish the truth in the world. The Christians look for the coming of the Christ (spirit), and the establishment of Christ's Kingdom; the Jews await the coming of their Messiah, and God's Kingdom on earth; the Moslems believe that the Mahdi will come and prepare the way for the coming of the Lord and The Kingdom; the Zoroastrians have prophecies relating to the coming of Shah Bahram, and the establishment of the divine order of things,

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all of which are foretold in their holy books; the Hindus believe that the divine spirit Krishna will speak again to the world for the enlightenment of the people; and the Buddhists look for the coming of the great Fifth Buddha whose mission will be that of bringing a general world-wide spiritual enlightenment. Now in the coming of the Bahai teachers, and the movement which they have established, the people of the various religions find the fulfillment of the sacred teachings of the past, and also the solution of the great latter day problem of religious Unity. The Bahai teaching confirms and completes all religious teachings which have gone before, and offers a practical philosophy which meets the present day spiritual needs of humanity.

The Bahai Writings.

The collective writings of the Bab are known as **The Beyan**. These treat chiefly of the coming of Baha'o'llah, containing exhortations to the people calling them to purify themselves and prepare to meet the promised one that they might be fitted to serve him.

Baha'o'llah wrote many treatises in the form of books and epistles, in which he demonstrates the oneness of the spirit of all of the former religious teachings; also treating of the present teaching in its relations to the religions of the past. Many of these writings were in reply to special questions asked by men of learning and were therefore written from various points of thought, Moslem, Jewish, Christian, etc.

The writings of Abdul-Baha are explanatory of the teachings of Baha'o'llah. In Abdul-Baha's life of service is his method of teaching rather than by his pen.

SOCIAL REFORMS, LAWS AND ORDINANCES.

In addition to the purely spiritual teachings of Baha'o'llah he ordered certain changes in the manners and customs of people, through the observance of which the world in general will be helped both

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materially and spiritually. He advises the Bahais to be tolerant, and in no way to separate themselves from other people, nor denounce those of other beliefs. All men are free to believe as they wish, but all are exhorted to unite in faith and to lay aside the prejudices and superstitions of past ages. Warfare should be abolished and international questions settled by arbitration. A universal language is favored as a means of bringing people together in unity. Legislation should be representative. The Bahais should be peaceful and law-abiding citizens. Their thought should be humanitarian before all else. Faith without works is not acceptable. One's worship should be supplemented by a pure and useful life in the world. Men and women should marry. Asceticism is discouraged. Monogamy is taught. Harshness and hatred are to be overcome by gentleness and love. Man should not use intoxicants as a beverage. Opium and kindred drug habits are denounced, as is also gambling.

The business affairs of the Bahai Movement are conducted by assemblies of consultation. Eventually there will be a general assembly of consultation composed of representatives from all parts of the world. This will be known as "The Universal House of Justice."

Baha'o'llah forbade mendacity, slavery, cruelty to animals and many other abuses which our western civilization has already remedied, so it is hardly necessary here to mention them. The following of these ordinances is already producing its good effect in the many Bahai centers throughout the world, and good fruits are coming therefrom.

Mashrak-El-Azkar.

In this cause there is no priesthood nor clergy. Each soul approaches God in prayer without sacred rite nor ceremony. Temples open to all people of all religions are to be provided for reading, meditation and prayer. These are to be surrounded by hospices,

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hospitals, asylums, schools, universities, etc., the whole group of buildings to be known as a "Mashrak-El-Azkar" which literally means "The dawning point of the mentions of God." In these institutions is symbolized both the spiritual worship and the humanitarian service as taught by Baha'o'llah.

Not long since in the city of Echabad in Russian Turkstan a Mashrak-El-Azkar was built. At present the Bahais throughout the world are uniting in the work of building the first Mashrak-El-Azkar in America, which is to be erected near the city of Chicago.

The Need of the Times.

In this day the creeds and the dogmas of the past have lost their spiritual power, and the world is reaching out for a religion which will be a living spiritual factor in the life of humanity. This demand is being supplied by the Bahai movement. This is a cause the institutions of which are not founded upon the popular thought of the day, but rather being above and beyond the natural trend of human thought they are leading and forming within the souls of men higher ideals, thought and actions, and are the beginning of a higher and a greater civilization than the world has ever seen.

Oriental-Occidental Unity.

One of the greatest obstacles to overcome before universal Brotherhood and Peace can come is the natural lack of confidence and understanding between the Oriental and Occidental peoples. The Orient has been the source of the world's inspiration, while in the Occident has appeared the fruition of this inspiration in the form of a highly evolved civilization. Through the Bahai teachings this chasm between the East and the West is bridged, and for the first time in history Oriental and Occidental are meeting on a common ground of sympathy, understanding and brotherhood.

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Peace.

Religious differences have been the chief cause of warfare, while religious sympathy and understanding have always made for peace and prosperity. Prior to the beginning of the Bahai Movement, nothing was being taught nor written about Peace, Arbitration, universal Language, Suffrage nor any other universal institution. During the past half century, however, the world has awakened to the necessity for all of these institutions, and now the most enlightened people are realizing that the lack of spiritual or religious understanding, with the accompanying lack of moral perception, is the real cause of all human ills. While Baha'o'llah's teaching was ahead of the world of his day, the world of today is realizing the value of that teaching. The supply and the demand are now meeting, from which harmony and peace will result.

Science and Religion.

The imaginations and superstitions of the religious systems of the past, are against common sense and science, for these are but the thoughts of men of past ages. The Universal basic spiritual truths of the many religions are, upon the contrary, most scientific. When men understand the true principles of religion no conflict will be found between them and the material sciences.

Education.

Through a broad and liberal education along material lines, balanced by a knowledge of man's moral and spiritual duties, the Bahais believe that the superstitions of the past will disappear and with them the prejudice and ignorance which have always made for man's limitation. The Bahai Movement stands strongly for the freedom and education of woman, even going so far as to teach that it is more necessary for parents to educate their girls, than their boys. Women being the mothers and the chief teachers of the race, it is more necessary that they be educated than men.

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Economic Questions.

Cooperation is the basic principle upon which all institutions should be founded. The cooperation of all for the good of all. Laws should be so regulated that it will be impossible for one man to enrich himself at the expense of another. Through the proper adjustment of political and commercial relations between individuals and nations all will live in harmony, happiness and in plenty.

Evolution of Man.

According- to the Bahai teaching spirit or life force is of five kinds: Vegetable, animal, human, the divinely spiritual life of the soul, and the Infinite unknowable spirit of God. Man was created man, a species apart and above the vegetable and animal conditions. Through the spiritual influences of the

prophets man becomes characterized by the divinely spiritual qualities, and adds to his human nature the spiritual nature.

Growth of the Movement.

The movement under The Bab was practically confined to the Islamic countries. During the ministry of Baha'o'llah the message was taken to various other countries of the Orient and now has spread the world around. There are not only centers of Bahai teaching in China, .Japan, Burma, India, Persia. Turkistan, Caucasia, the Turkish countries and in Egypt, but there are strong Bahai centers in France, Germany, England and throughout the United States and Canada. This growth has been a comparatively slow one. It is not limited by religious nor racial conditions, which is proven by the many heterogeneous elements which this cause is assimilating and fusing into one element, which is the world type of man.

The Method of Teaching.

The teaching is given without money and without price. Teachers are self supporting, giving their

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time and services, the recompense for which is the joy and satisfaction of serving in the cause of Truth. Teaching consists of first living the principles of the cause in one's inner life and then speaking to others. All are teachers each in his own sphere. The Bahais in no way form a close sect or cult. They do not separate themselves from other people. Their work is ever out-ward and in the world where they are diffusing spiritual knowledge and serving humanity.

Results.

The universal principles of Truth which the Bahai Movement is teaching are already clearly seen in the way in which this teaching appeals to people of all religions, races, and nationalities. The moment that a soul becomes touched by the Bahai Spirit he becomes a citizen of the world, quite freed from the limitations of his former environment, while his social and religious prejudices are changed into a desire to do something toward world brotherhood through tangible service to his fellow men. In the Bahai Meetings — notably those in the East — one sees Christians, Jews, Moslems, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists mingling as brothers and eating at the same tables. It has been the writer's privilege to travel extensively and to attend many such reunions. He has spent much time in the Oriental countries and has seen the spiritual blending of the Orient and Occident, which process is being brought about by the love and devotion of the Bahais one for another. These people are really demonstrating the power of divine love, for with them it is so powerful as to overcome all religious and racial antipathy and is producing real brotherhood and Peace.