

# The Bahai Faith—What Is It?

By MONROE IOAS

Since the Bahai Temple in Wilmette, Ill., is open for inspection, thousands of people stop and inquire as to what the Bahai faith is and what it stands for. Many are under the impression that the Bahai movement or religion is an oriental fad or cult. This misunderstanding perhaps is due to the fact that Baha'u'llah, the founder of this world-wide faith, proclaimed his mission in the East (Persia, 1863).

The fact is that all religions originated in the orient. His Holiness Jesus Christ came forth from Jerusalem; all other religious lights had their rise in the East. Therefore, why be surprised that a new messenger has come forth from those regions? Born in Persia in the year 1817, Baha'u'llah was banished from city to city and country to country in a vain endeavor to eradicate his cause, which was rapidly spreading. He was finally imprisoned in that famous old biblical city of Aeca, and it was from this prison that his teachings were spread throughout the world.

The first mention in America of this religion was made at the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in the year 1893. Since that time it has spread extensively. Although the temple in Wilmette is open, there is yet much to do. It is the hope of the Bahai executive board to have the exterior decoration of the dome completed by Nov. 30.

The Revelation, of which Baha'u'llah is the source and center, abrogates none of the religions that have preceded it, nor does it attempt, in the slightest degree, to distort their features or to belittle their value. It disclaims any intention of dwarfing any of the prophets of the past, or of whittling down the eternal verity of their teachings. It can, in no wise, conflict with the spirit that animates their claims, nor does it seek to undermine the basis of any man's allegiance to their cause.

Its declared and primary purpose is to enable every adherent of these faiths to obtain a fuller understanding of the religion with which he stands identified, and to acquire a clearer apprehension of its purpose. Its teachings revolve around the fundamental principle that religious truth is not absolute, but relative; that divine revelation is progressive, not final. Unequivocally and without the least reservation, it proclaims all established religions to be divine in origin, identical in their aims, complimentary in their functions, continuous in their purpose, indispensable in their value to mankind.

"The messengers of God," explains Baha'u'llah, "differ only in the intensity of their revelation and the comparative potency of their light." This difference is not by reason of any inherent incapacity of any one of them to reveal in a fuller measure the glory of the message with which he had been entrusted, but rather because of the immaturity and unpreparedness of the age he lived in to ap-

prehend and absorb the full potentialities latent in that faith.

It is for this reason that those who have recognized the light of God in this age in the appearance of Baha'u'llah, claim no finality for the revelation with which they stand identified, nor arrogate to the faith they have embraced powers and attributes intrinsically superior to, or essentially different from, those which have characterized any of the religious systems that preceded it.

"The revelation of which I am the bearer," Baha'u'llah explicitly declares, "is adapted to humanity's spiritual receptiveness and capacity; otherwise the light that shines within me can neither wax nor wane. Whatever I manifest is nothing more or less than the measure of the divine glory which God has bidden me reveal."

The purpose of the Bahai faith is the fulfillment of the Lord's Prayer, the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. We look to Baha'u'llah as the word of God for this day and age. He has renewed the spiritual foundations established by previous religious founders, and has brought material laws according to the exigency or requirement of this age. What is more, he brought the power and potency sufficient to establish them as law, and to usher in the day of "Peace on earth, good will toward men."

Among the laws revealed by Baha'u'llah, which are peculiar to this religion, are the following:

1. Unfettered search after truth, and the abandonment of all superstition and prejudice.
2. The oneness of mankind; all are "leaves of one tree, flowers in one garden."
3. Religion must be a cause of love and harmony, else it is no religion.
4. All religions are one in their fundamental principles.
5. Religion must go hand-in-hand with science. Faith and reason must be in full accord.
6. Universal peace: The establishment of international arbitration and an international parliament.
7. The adoption of an international secondary language, which shall be taught in all the schools of the world.
8. Compulsory education—especially for girls, who will be the mothers and the first educators of the next generation.
9. Equal opportunities of development and equal rights and privileges for both sexes.
10. Work for all: No idle rich and no idle poor; "Work in the spirit of service is worship."
11. Abolition of extremes of poverty and wealth: Care for the needy.
12. Recognition of the unity of God and obedience to His revealed commands, as revealed through His divine manifestations.