

## BAHA'I FAITH

In the Baha'i faith there is no initiation ceremony. A Baha'i is one who believes that Baha'u'llah, the founder of the faith, is the manifestation of God for this age, and is prepared to accept his laws and teachings.

In the Baha'i faith there is no priesthood or clergy. The affairs of the faith are administered by local and national bodies of nine members, elected annually by the believers, and an international body elected every five years.

For administrative records, and so that he may take full part in the affairs of the faith, a new Baha'i is required to make known his belief in Baha'u'llah to the local assembly of the place in which he lives. If the local assembly feels he is sincere and understands the basic teachings of the faith, then he is registered as a Baha'i and joins with his fellow-believers throughout the world to work for the unity of mankind.

These basic teachings include the following:

1. That religious truth is progressive, not final.
2. That God, the Almighty Father, educates the human race through a series of prophets who have appeared throughout history and will always appear to guide the destinies of men.
3. That Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, and now Baha'u'llah are examples of these divine educators who give to the world the same fundamental teachings, but reveal laws and principles suited to the needs of the age in which they appear.

The aims and purposes of the Baha'i faith may be summarized as follows: the Baha'i faith upholds the unity of God, recognizes the unity of his prophets, and inculcates the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the entire human race. It proclaims the necessity and the inevitability of the unification of mankind, asserts that it is gradually approaching, and

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claims that nothing short of the transmuting spirit of God can ultimately succeed in bringing it about. Moreover it enjoins upon its followers the primary duty of an unfettered search for truth, condemns all manner of prejudice and superstition, declares the purpose of religion to be the promotion of amity and concord, proclaims its essential harmony with science and recognizes it as the foremost agency for the pacification and the orderly progress of human society. It unequivocally maintains the principle of equal rights, opportunities and privileges for men and women, insists on compulsory education, strict obedience to one's government, exalts any work performed in the spirit of service to the level of worship, urges either the creation or selection of an auxiliary international language, and delineates the outlines of those institutions that must establish and perpetuate the general peace of mankind.

It is further understood that the prime motive should always be the response of man to God's message, and the recognition of his Messenger. Those who can declare themselves as Baha'is should become enchanted with the beauty of the teachings and touched by the love of Baha'u'llah. The declarants need not know all the proofs, history, laws and principles of the faith, but in the process of declaring themselves they must, in addition to catching the spark of faith, become basically informed about the central figures of the faith, as well as the existence of laws they must follow and an administration they must obey.