

ikhism and the Baha'i Faith: Warwick Leaflets

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Warwick Bahá'í Bookshop

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The Bahá'í Faith is a relatively new religion, which has many features and beliefs which should make it very interesting to those of Sikh background. Indeed, people from all religions and from none, have been attracted to the Bahá'í teachings. Bahá'ís believe that their Faith is the fulfilment of all previous religions, which will finally bring all mankind into one brotherhood based on spiritual values.

The Oneness of God

Bahá'ís, like Sikhs, believe that there is one God throughout the universe. Whether He is referred to as God, Waheguru, Alláh or Brahman, He is One, Unique and Unknowable. What we know of God is that which is taught by His Messengers throughout the ages. All religions should be united, because ultimately all religious truth comes from God. It is false religion if we argue over the titles and the form of God. It is His teachings, and His Holy Scriptures which should be treated with respect, because each of God's Prophets leave behind a Book, to guide us in our lives. In the Bahá'í Scriptures it says:

"God hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven."

"Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute."

Progressive Revelation

Bahá'ís believe that the Prophets or Messengers of God have each brought mankind to a new stage in the history of religion. The spiritual teachings of all religions are the same - that we should love God, love one another, and be honest and trustworthy. However, as mankind progresses, these teachings are developed and expanded upon in each age. Each Messenger of God confirms and builds upon the messages of the past. This idea is called "Progressive

Revelation". Bahá'ís believe that the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh brings the message needed for the present age, which is the unity of the entire human race.

The Oneness of Mankind

Bahá'ís believe, as Guru Nanak taught, that there should be no differences of class or caste. True believers treat all human beings with equal respect. All prejudices of race, colour or religion should be discarded, and all humankind should become as one human family:

"The world of humanity is like a garden and the various races are the flowers which constitute its adornment and decoration... The very fact that there is difference and variety lends a charm to the garden. If all (the flowers) were of the same colour the effect would be monotonous and depressing..."

As in the Sikh religion, Bahá'ís believe in the equality of men and women. In all countries, the Bahá'ís of all backgrounds work to change society so that the status of women improves. In addition, the education of girls is regarded by Bahá'ís as even more important than that of boys, as girls become the mothers, and therefore the first teachers, of the next generation.

An Upright Life

Sikhs everywhere value the importance of honesty and integrity, and the five "K"s have traditionally shown to the world the willingness of the believer to publicly identify himself or herself as a Sikh. The Bahá'í Faith also teaches the importance of living an upright life. A true believer should now be recognised by his or her character, rather than needing external signs:

"Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that you can distinguish yourselves from others." "Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: 'This... is unquestionably a Bahá'í...'"

Bahá'í Community Life

The most basic meeting of the Bahá'í community is called the "Feast", and is held once every Bahá'í month. This meeting has three essential parts. The first consists of prayers and readings from the Scriptures. The second is open and harmonious consultation of the community's affairs. The third is the sharing of fellowship and refreshments. Although some cities have Bahá'í centres, and there are several large Houses of Worship such as the one in New Delhi, India, in small communities many Bahá'í meetings take place in private homes.

In order to help promote the unity of the community, the Bahá'ís in each locality elect a body of nine people, known as the Local Spiritual Assembly. The elections take place by secret ballot in a prayerful atmosphere, and are

free from canvassing and from questions of personality. Rather, it is qualities of service which the community looks for when voting: "... consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice... the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience."

In a similar way, a National Spiritual Assembly is elected in each country, and a world body called the Universal House of Justice guides the affairs of the Bahá'ís at a global level. It is this body which Bahá'ís believe will evolve into a world government.

Bahá'í Principles

The world should nurture and care for the minority peoples and groups, and cherish everything that is positive in their cultures.

A world language should be chosen, and taught in all the schools of the world, alongside the local language.

Women should have the same rights and opportunities as men.

A form of world government should be created, which will ensure that all countries and all people are treated fairly and the environment protected.

Unity of the human race should be the guiding principle for human society, bringing the era of world peace promised by the great Teachers of the past.

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