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Quote:

History:
Most religious historians believe that the Bahá'í Faith arose from Islam, Christianity arose from Judaism. However, many Bahá'í's believe that it i historical connections to other faiths. It has grown to be a worldwide fai spelled Baha'i, although alternate spellings of Ba'Hai, Bahai, and Bah'ai

Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad (1819-1850 CE) assumed the title Bab which means 1844-MAY-23 He announced the "Declaration of the Bab." He explained th mission was to herald the arrival of "One greater than Himself", Who wou expectations of all the great religions. This date is regarded as the foun His followers became known as Babis. 20,000 were martyred for their bel much religious ferment. This led to His execution in 1850 by order of the the instigation of Muslim clerics, who saw His movement as a threat to o

In 1863, one of the Bab's followers, Mirza Husayn-'Ali-i-Nuri (1817-1892) Bab to Whom the Bab had given several indications of His future station, followers and to His eldest son that He was the Manifestation predicted b 1863-APR-21, He began proclaiming his station openly and publicly to th assumed title, Baha'u'llah, by which He is generally known, was the title The last forty years of Baha'u'llah's life were spent in prison or in exile. in or near Acre, then a prison city. The world headquarters of the Bahá'í Holy Land today as a result.

Baha'u'llah's son 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921), was appointed by His father movement after His father's death.

The religion came to North America in 1893. The Bahá'í Faith states that million members worldwide: about 2.5 million adherents in India and 140, Canadian census found 14,730 in Canada in 1991. There have been many mailing lists which have tended to estimate a total of 1 million members the US figure is grossly inflated, and that the number of active members Kosmin and Seymour Lachman estimated 28,000 adult US Bahá'ís in their Under God." Fredrick Glaysher estimates 26,600. 1

According to the 1992 Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year, the Ba established "significant communities" in more countries and territories th for Christianity. They are organized in 205 areas vs. 254 for Christianity World, this has increased to 235 countries and territories, including over

tribal groups. They number about 5 million members worldwide.

The official "Bahá'í Faith" web sites are at http://www.bahai.org/ for International pages are at http://www.us.bahai.org/ for Americans and http://www.ca.bahai.ca/ for Canadian.

Bahá'í faith is still looked upon by many Muslims as a breakaway sect of heavily persecuted in some countries because of this, in violation of the Declaration of Human Rights.

Beliefs:
Bahá'ís believe that there is only one God who is the source of all creat
God is transcendent and unknowable. However, He has sent, and will co prophets to humanity, through which the Holy Spirit has revealed the "Wo Manifestations of God up to this time have been:
Adam (? BCE)
Abraham (? BCE)
Moses (1456 BCE)
Krishna (1249 BCE)
Zoroaster (1000 BCE)
Buddha (757 BCE)
Jesus Christ (34 CE)
Mohammed (613 CE)
The Bab (1844 CE)
Baha'u'llah (1863 CE)

(Dates shown are common estimates from historical and Christian source approximate) A new prophet is not expected for many centuries.

The Bahá'í's believe in an essential unity of the great religions of the w not mean they believe the various religious creeds and doctrines are ide religions as having sprung from the same spiritual source. The social an religions vary due to the circumstances at the time that they were founde doctrine and belief can be attributed to later accretions, after the death
Every person has an immortal soul. Unlike everything else in creation, i decomposition. At death, the soul is freed to travel through the spirit wo "a timeless and placeless extension of our own universe--and not some p removed place."
Some of Baha'u'llah's most famous sayings are: "The best beloved of al justice,"
"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens"
"The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unl firmly established."

Bahá'í beliefs promoted major social changes when originated in the 19t gender and race equality; world government; freedom of expression and a In many ways, they were a century or more ahead of many other faiths. F

involved in promoting these concepts today. Also, unlike many other relig
scientific inquiry as essential to expand human knowledge and deepen th
feel that science needs to be guided by spiritual principle so that its app
humanity. Notably missing from the Baha'u'llah's teachings is the accep
normal, natural sexual orientation for a minority of humans. Neither the
the national web sites in Canada 19 or the U.S. 21 appear to contain any
The Canadian web site, for example, states:

"The Bahá'í teachings promote the elimination of all forms of prejudice a
and respect for all peoples, regardless of their racial, ethnic, religious o
Equality of men and women, the elimination of extremes of poverty and w
for all peoples, universal education, and the dignity of the individual are
20

However, sexual orientation is notably absent from their list of protected

Another policy, which appears to contradict the faith's promotion of gend
of women from serving on its highest religious court.

They believe that there will eventually be a single world government, to
based on the Faith's administrative framework.

Practices:
The Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel, is the global governing
out by Baha'u'llah. It is an all-male body.
National Spiritual Assemblies (NSA) supervise affairs in each country. T
in Wilmette IL at the site of a Bahá'í House of Worship, one of 7 worldwi
In each locality where there are more than nine adult believers, affairs
spiritual assemblies. Each of these institutions has nine members and is
Their functions have been defined by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha in Bah
Bahá'ís have no clergy, sacraments or rituals.
Members: pray each day
observe the 9 holy days
fast 19 days a year
work to abolish prejudice
regard work as a form of worship
make at least one pilgrimage, if they are able, to the Shrine of the Bab
Baha'u'llah lived, which are situated near the Bahá'í world headquarters.
Reflecting their origins in Shiite Islam, Bahá'ís do not consume alcohol.

Sacred texts:
Bahá'í scripture comprises the writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, toget
'Abdu'l-Baha. Among the better known writings of Baha'u'llah are, The Mo
Certitude, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, The Hidden Words

There are many others books of Bahá'í scripture.

Holy days:
The Bahá'ís have a new calendar. Its year begins on March 21, the sprin
seasonal days of celebration or commemoration are:

April 21, 29 & May 2: Baha'u'llah's public declaration of his mission
May 23: Bab's declaration of his mission
May 29: Passing of Baha'u'llah
July 9: Martyrdom of the Bab
October 20: Birth of Bab
November 12: Birth of Baha'u'llah

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Persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran:
There are about 350,000 Bahá'ís in Iran who are experiencing oppressive
for their religious beliefs. They are looked on as heretics, because of Ba
latest prophet of God. Mohammed, the founder of Islam, declared himself
centuries earlier.

In 1996-APR, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights expressed
of religious freedom in that country for members of the Bahá'í and other
1996-MAY-14, Reuters news service quoted the most senior judge in Iran
Yazdi, saying that the Bahá'í faith "is not a religion but an espionage es
1970's, the government of Iran has accused Bahá'ís of spying for other c
Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States stated on 1996-MA
regime took power, more than 200 Bahá'ís have been executed on accoun
thousands have been imprisoned. Bahá'ís have systematically been denie
jobs and pensions, and both personal and Bahá'í community properties ha

Freedom of expression within the Bahá'í Faith:
Although Bahá'ís have been very active in the promotion of freedom of ex
world, there are significant restrictions on freedoms of individual Baha'i
enforced through shunning or expelling non-conforming adherents. Some

Gay males and lesbians in monogamous, committed relationships who ha
recognize their partnerships have had had their religious rights removed
Baha'i couples who were married in a non-Baha'i ceremony have had thei

The Bahá'í authorities have imposed pre-publication censorship on all m
members about the Faith. Until recently, all such material has to be first
committee of the Bahá'í National Spiritual Assembly of the country in wh
published. This was a temporary policy introduced many decades ago. It
2001-JAN for U.S. materials. Censorship responsibility has been transfer
changes have been made elsewhere in the world.
The "Talisman" mailing list was closed down in 1996-MAY, after several
posters were investigated at the orders of the Baha'i World Center in Ha
the list owner, were allegedly threatened with being shunned ("coming in
Covenant") if they did not fall silent. 2 Baha'i authorities have denied th
close. Juan Cole was one of those allegedly threatened. He resigned fron
declared his private belief in Baha'u'llah in 1999-FEB. He maintains a n
The Bahá'í electoral process does not permit public nominations or disc
As a result, there has been no change in the nine person US National Sp
except for those caused by deaths, retirements, or a member leaving the
Michael McKenny, a Canadian fantasy writer was expelled from the churc
expressed in Emails.

Divisions within the Bahá'í Faith

All religions evolve. Followers of established religions break away and fo
schisms are triggered by the death of the founder of the religion, or a su
leaders of the splinter group follow most of the beliefs and practices of t
generally regard their own faith group as being the true representative o
most observers believe that the Bahá'í Faith arose from Islam, and Chris
Judaism, and the Mormons split away from Protestant Christianity. Somet
dominant group. The Bahá'í Faith itself has experienced a number of sch

The founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Baha'u'llah, selected Abdu'l-Baha to in
after his death. Some members refused to accept the authority of the new
Abdu'l-Baha, the authority passed to Shoghi Effendi, "the infallible Cento
"Center of the Cause," the generally accepted sole interpreter of the Bah
members refused to accept his authority. After his unexpected death in
over his successor. One webmaster 4 states that there are now 7 faith gr
to be the "true" Bahá'í Faith. Of the six new groups, five were created sh
Shoghi Effendi, The sixth broke off later. All of the new groups have very
compared to Bahá'í World Faith. All have been declared covenant breake
House of Justice:

The World Faith is followed by the vast majority of believers. In the Un
the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States. Aut
Shoghi Effendi is now transferred to the Universal House of Justice in Ha
Bahá'ís Under the Provisions of the Covenant who recognized Mason Rem
who succeeded Shoghi Effendi. They have organized a series of Internati
They claim a membership approaching 144,000. Their Baha'i Center is loc
Faith of God, (a.k.a. the House of Mankind and the Universal Palace of
Jamshid Ma'ani. They "are no longer active (listed as 'defunct' in Gordon
Religions)." 7

The Orthodox Bahá'í Faith," (a.k.a. Mother Bahá'í Council), who follow J
The Orthodox Baha'i Faith Under the Regency, who follow Rex King.
The Charles Mason Remey Society, who follow Donald Harvey and Franci
A dissident group organized around The Friends Newsletter.

Another group teaches that a Third Manifestation is coming in the immed