**Definition:** **Baha’i Faith** from *The Macquarie Dictionary*

1. a religion founded in 1863 by Mirza Husain Ali, titled Bahá’u’lláh (Glory of God), as a development of the Babi Faith; the world centre is in the seaport Haifa, north-western Israel.

**Summary Article:** **Baha’i Faith**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Religion founded in the 19th century from a Muslim splinter group, Babism, by the Persian Bahá'u'lláh. His message in essence was that all great religious leaders are manifestations of the unknowable God and all scriptures are sacred. There is no priesthood: all Baha'is are expected to teach, and to work towards world unification. There are about 6 million Baha'is worldwide.

Great stress is laid on equality regardless of religion, race, or gender. Drugs and alcohol are forbidden. Marriage is strongly encouraged; there is no arranged marriage, but parental approval must be given. Baha'is are expected to pray daily, but there is no set prayer. During 2–20 March, adults under 70 fast from sunrise to sunset. Administration is carried out by an elected body, the Universal House of Justice.

The Baha'i Faith claims that it incorporates what is best in all religions. Twenty thousand martyrs have given their lives rather than deny it. It has three central figures. The forerunner was Mirza Ali Muhammad, born in Shiraz in 1819, who adopted the title the Bab, meaning ‘the gate’, when he declared in 1844 that he was the ‘Mihdi’ or ‘Qa'im’ promised in the Koran to save the nations. Orthodox Muslims and the Persian State conspired to overthrow him, so that he spent most of his teaching life in prison, his followers zealously carrying on his work of proselytizing in the face of fierce persecution. He was finally shot in public at Tabriz in 1850. The body was recovered by his followers and hidden for 50 years in various places, eventually being enshrined on Mount Carmel, the chief centre of Baha'i pilgrimage.

In 1863 Husayn 'Ali, a Persian nobleman who took the name Bahá'u'lláh, meaning ‘The glory of God’, announced himself to be the One foretold not only by the Bab, but in the holy books of all religions, who will inaugurate an era of peace and spiritual well-being for mankind. As a Babi, he had already been deprived of his considerable possessions and banished to Baghdad; banishment to Constantinople, Adrianople, and the prison city of Acre followed. His writings include Kitab-i-Aqdas, Kitab-i-Iquan, and many letters, including proclamation of his claim to the chief sovereigns of the world, among them Queen Victoria. On his death in 1892, leadership passed to his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, the exemplar of the Baha'i Faith, who had shared his father's imprisonment since childhood. He was freed by the Turkish revolution of 1908, and made an extended tour of Europe and America 1911–13. He was knighted in 1920 for the part he played in averting famine in Haifa during the war, and died in 1921.

His will appointed his grandson Shoghi Effendi, then studying at Balliol College, Oxford, as guardian of the cause. Under his guidance, the administrative order of the Baha'i Faith developed. The Baha'i Faith
is based on a belief in successive progressive revelations of God, none of which is final. Thus Muhammad was a great prophet and his doctrines were revealed, but neither his revelation nor that of Baha’u’llah precludes God from revealing himself further in future ages.

The morality of the Baha’i Faith is high. The individual soul continues to exist after separation from the body and may draw even nearer to God throughout eternity. The Baha’i Faith claims to restore to mankind the power to achieve unity through love. The troubles of the present age are but a prelude to the necessary and inevitable unification of the human race. All prejudice, particularly of race, colour, class, or creed, is condemned; compulsory education, abolition of extremes of poverty and wealth, and equal status for men and women are among its social teachings. It prohibits slavery, asceticism, mendicancy, and monasticism; prescribes monogamy; and discourages, but does not prohibit, divorce. A universal auxiliary language is advocated and collective security urged as a step towards a world commonwealth.

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