

BAHÁ'IS

STATISTICS

Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.—A general summary of the statistics for the American Bahá'is for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory.

To become a voting member of a Bahá'i community one must be a resident of the locality (city, town, or village) in which the community exists; have attained the age of 21 years; have established to the satisfaction of the local Spiritual Assembly, subject to the approval of the National Assembly, that he possesses all the qualifications of Bahá'i faith and practice.

TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR ASSEMBLIES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926; BAHÁ'IS

ITEM	Total	In urban territory ¹	In rural territory ¹	PER CENT OF TOTAL ²	
				Urban	Rural
Assemblies (local organizations).....	44	40	4		
Members.....	1,247	1,186	61	95.1	4.9
Average per assembly.....	28	30	15		

¹ Urban territory includes all cities and other incorporated places which had 2,500 inhabitants or more in 1920, the date of the last Federal census; rural territory comprises the remainder of the country.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

The data given for 1926 represent 44 fully organized local assemblies, or communities, of Bahá'is, with 1,247 voting members, having direct connection with the National Administrative Board; other communities, included in the 1906 and 1916 figures given in Table 2, with a smaller membership, not participating in the annual elections, are not reported. With regard to this membership it may also be stated that many other persons who retain their membership in other denominations attend the Bahá'i meetings and are closely identified with the movement. The membership was not reported by sex or by age, but is assumed to be 13 years of age or over. No parsonages or Sunday schools were reported.

Comparative data, 1906-1926.—Table 2 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this body for the censuses of 1926, 1916, and 1906. The change since 1916 in the character of the returns is explained by a change in the method of organization of the local assemblies and by the adoption of a more definite basis for voting membership.

TABLE 2.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1906 TO 1926: BAHÁ'IS

ITEM	1926	1916	1906
Assemblies (local organizations)	44	57	24
Increase ¹ over preceding census:			
Number.....	-13	33	
Per cent ²			
Members	1,247	2,884	1,280
Increase over preceding census:			
Number.....	(³)	1,604	
Per cent.....		125.3	
Average membership per assembly.....	28	51	53
Church edifices:			
Number.....	1	1	
Value—Churches reporting.....	1	1	
Amount reported.....	⁴ \$500,000	\$1,273	
Expenditures during year:			
Churches reporting.....		23	
Amount reported.....	⁵ \$51,000	\$6,877	
Current expenses and improvements.....		\$2,134	
Benevolences, missions, etc.....		\$3,943	
Not classified.....		\$800	
Average expenditure per church.....		\$299	
Sunday schools:			
Churches reporting.....		4	1
Officers and teachers.....		12	7
Scholars.....		123	32

¹ A minus sign (-) denotes decrease.
² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.
³ Increase not shown, as data are not comparable.
⁴ Represents the present value of the National Temple of the American Bahá'is.
⁵ Includes only the budget of the National Spiritual Assembly.

State tables.—Tables 3 and 4 present the statistics for the Bahá'is by States. Table 3 gives for each State the number and membership of the assemblies classified according to their location in urban or rural territory. Table 4 gives for selected States the number and membership of the assemblies for the three censuses from 1906 to 1926.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF ASSEMBLIES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, BY STATES, 1926: BAHÁ'IS

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF ASSEMBLIES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
United States.....	44	40	4	1,247	1,186	61
New England:						
Maine.....	1		1	25		25
Massachusetts.....	3	3		70	70	
Connecticut.....	1	1		15	15	
Middle Atlantic:						
New York.....	5	5		245	245	
New Jersey.....	3	2	1	55	43	12
Pennsylvania.....	2	2		62	62	
East North Central:						
Ohio.....	3	3		61	61	
Illinois.....	3	3		179	179	
Michigan.....	4	3	1	70	58	12
Wisconsin.....	3	3		36	36	
West North Central:						
Minnesota.....	1	1		16	16	
South Atlantic:						
Maryland.....	1	1		15	15	
District of Columbia.....	1	1		81	81	
Florida.....	2	2		42	42	
Mountain:						
Colorado.....	1	1		10	10	
Pacific:						
Washington.....	1	1		30	30	
Oregon.....	1	1		30	30	
California.....	8	7	1	205	193	12

TABLE 4.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF ASSEMBLIES, BY STATES, 1906 TO 1926: BAHÁ'IS

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more assemblies in either 1926, 1916, or 1906]

STATE	NUMBER OF ASSEMBLIES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS		
	1926	1916	1906	1926	1916	1906
United States.....	44	57	24	1,247	2,884	1,230
Massachusetts.....	3	5	1	70	172	70
New York.....	5	7	2	245	295	23
New Jersey.....	3	6	2	55	98	58
Pennsylvania.....	2	3	2	62	132	52
Ohio.....	3	4	3	61	223	87
Illinois.....	3	2	1	179	562	492
Michigan.....	4	5	2	70	58	28
Wisconsin.....	3	5	3	36	165	167
Washington.....	1	3	2	30	180	39
California.....	8	5	2	205	497	110
Other States.....	9	12	4	234	502	154

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION ¹

HISTORY

For more than 80 years, the Bahá'í cause has been steadfastly presented to the world as the expression for this age of the same universal Spirit which in other ages spoke through Zoroaster, Muhammad, the Buddha, Moses, Christ; and as one Divine utterance and continuous purpose, giving forth one and the same message, albeit adapted to the conditions and human capacities of each time. Each successive revelation renews the spirit of faith and confirms the ideals of the previous prophets and messengers; but religion also progresses and each cycle discloses a new aspect of truth. In Bahá'u'lláh, according to his explicit text, the Message of God has been revealed to mankind in its fullness and universality, and the Bahá'í cause accordingly represents the fulfillment of that which was but partially revealed in previous dispensations.

The history and general principles of the Bahá'ís, as expressed in the teachings of the founder and his followers, are given in the following condensed statements:
 The first significant Bahá'í date is May 23, 1844.

At that time Western Asia was decadent. The administration of justice was inefficient; bribery and dishonesty pervaded all ranks, while education and sanitation were neglected. In Persia the dominant religious party was the Shi'ih sect of Muhammadans, who were noted for intolerance and bigotry and regarded Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and even Muhammadans of other sects, as people in error, considering it a merit to insult and revile them. Yet the life of the spirit was not extinct, and amid the prevailing worldliness and superstition could still be found some who longed for the establishment of God's Kingdom and were eagerly awaiting the coming of the promised Messenger, confident that the time of His advent was at hand.

On the date previously mentioned, there appeared in Shiraz a young man of 24, Mirzá 'Ali Muhammad, who took the title of the Báb (i. e., "Gate" or "Door"), and who bore much the same relation to Bahá'u'lláh as John the Baptist had to Christ. He publicly announced his mission and began to teach and train a band of disciples, heralding the dawn of a new era and proclaiming the coming of one greater than himself, whom he referred to as "Him Whom

¹ This statement was furnished by Horace Holley, secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada.

God Shall Manifest." From the beginning of his teaching until his martyrdom, the Báb exemplified in his life the pure spiritual destiny of the prophets and messengers of old. Through him a large portion of the Muslim population of Persia became imbued with the new faith, but against him gathered the fanatical hatred of the Muslim clergy and the desperate fear of the civil rulers. He was imprisoned, scourged, haled before tribunals, dragged from one place of confinement to another, and at last, after six years of indignities and ill-treatment, was condemned to death as a heretic to the principles of Islám. His execution took place in the city of Tabriz, where, on July 9, 1850, he was publicly shot in the barrack square together with one of his followers.

The martyrdom of the Báb fanned the flame of enthusiasm among his adherents and they grew and multiplied despite fierce persecution. Their houses were pillaged and destroyed, their wives and children carried off, many were beheaded, blown from the mouths of cannon, burned, or chopped to pieces. Over 20,000 believers gave up property, families, and lives, rather than deny their faith; yet for every one that was martyred many joined the cause.

Among the first and foremost of the Báb's supporters was Mirsá Husayn 'Alí, better known as Bahá'u'lláh (i. e., Glory of God). He was two years older than the Báb, having been born in Teheran on November 12, 1817. His family was one of the noblest and oldest in Persia and his own goodness and generosity had gained for him the title of "Father of the poor," yet this did not prevent his being thrown into prison when he espoused the cause of the Báb. When, in 1852, there arose a fresh outbreak of persecution against the Bábis, as they were called, Bahá'u'lláh became the target for all the bitterness engendered by failure to extinguish the new light of faith. Confined in a filthy underground dungeon along with murderers and other criminals, loaded with chains, bastinadoed, he was finally exiled with his family and a handful of faithful followers to Baghdad in Mesopotamia. A few months later, he withdrew into the wilderness, where he spent two years in prayer and meditation, living the simple life of the dervish. After his return his fame became greater than ever. People flocked to Baghdad to hear him and the Bábi movement grew rapidly despite all efforts of the Mullás to bring about its extinction. So he was ordered to a more distant exile, first in Constantinople, then in Adrianople, and finally confined for life in the desolate barracks of 'Akká, a Turkish penal colony on the Mediterranean, south of Beirut and facing Mount Carmel. Here he instructed a large number of disciples, some of them coming from a long distance, while he ministered to others through his writings.

On April 21, 1863, in the garden of Ridván just outside Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh had made known to a few followers that he was the one proclaimed and promised by the Báb. This announcement was made public in his famous Epistles in Adrianople, previous to the journey to 'Akká, in 1868. By this event the Bábi movement was fulfilled in the cause of Bahá'u'lláh and the streams of Christian and Jewish prophecy united with the inner reality of the Muslim religion. Bahá'u'lláh gave the glad tidings to East and West that the Day of God had dawned, that a new and universal cycle had been established—the age of brotherhood, of peace, of the knowledge of God. This message was inscribed in Tablets or Epistles, written during his 40 years of exile and imprisonment, to kings and rulers, to representatives of the several religions, to his own followers in response to questions, and in a great number of books containing the essence of universal religion, science, and philosophy. In the annals of the world, no spiritual revelation has been made under such conditions of personal oppression and hardship. The effect of Bahá'u'lláh upon his followers, even upon his enemies, was unique and indescribable. About him emanated a majesty that glorified every suffering, an awe that penetrated to the rudest soul, a consecrated love that portrayed man in his ultimate perfection.

Bahá'u'lláh ascended in 1892, leaving a testament naming as his successor his eldest surviving son, Abbás Effendi, better known as 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Servant of Bahá). From early childhood he shared his father's labors, and later became the authoritative interpreter of his teachings. By his singleness of devotion, purity of life, tireless effort, humanitarian love, and unfailing wisdom, the Bahá'i message slowly but surely spread to all parts of the world. His confinement at 'Akká, lasting 40 years, was terminated at last in 1908 by the overthrow of the old régime by the Young Turks. From 1911 to 1913 'Abdu'l-Bahá journeyed through Europe and America, unfolding before numerous audiences the spirit of the new age. In these addresses the message of Bahá'u'lláh is developed in relation to the needs of civilization, and an organic harmony is created between religion, science, economics, and social order. 'Abdu'l-Bahá expanded the religion of the spirit to include all the functions of life, destroying forever the antagonism between "religious" and "secular" matters.

During the World War communication with friends and believers outside Syria was almost completely cut off, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his followers suffered great hardships. During those dreary years the resourcefulness and sagacious philanthropy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were strikingly shown. He personally organized extensive agricultural operations near Tiberias, bringing under cultivation land which had been untilled for centuries; thus he secured a great supply of wheat by means of which famine was averted, not only for the Bahá'is, but for many of the poor of all religions, whose wants he liberally supplied. After the cessation of hostilities, a Knighthood of the British Empire was conferred upon him in recognition of these services. His manifold activities continued with little abatement until within a day or two of his passing peacefully to the life beyond, on November 28, 1921, at the age of 77. His funeral was attended by thousands of all ranks, from the Administrator-General of Palestine and the Governor of Jerusalem to the poorest beggars of Haifa. Prominent representatives of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities bore eloquent testimony to the love and admiration for his life and work, a fitting tribute for one who had labored all his days for unity of religions, of races, of tongues.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has been succeeded in the leadership of the movement by his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, who is now known as "Guardian of the Cause."

DOCTRINE

The Bahá'i religion stresses the principle of the *Oneness of Mankind*. It is in the light of this principle that all its writings are to be viewed and the purpose of the movement considered. That a spiritual power has been breathed into the soul of humanity in this age, which shall remove all causes of difference, misunderstanding, discord, and disagreement—causes resident in customs and institutions as well as in personal opinions and emotions—and establish the means and methods as well as the desire for unity, is the essence of the Bahá'i teaching and faith. This principle of oneness involves so many readjustments, mental, social, and spiritual, that the wars and strifes of these latter times have been inevitable. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave to Bahá'u'lláh's message an interpretation directly and immediately applying to the nature of these readjustments, and setting forth the following principles:

Unfettered search after truth and the abandonment of all superstition and prejudice; the oneness of mankind—all are "leaves of one tree, flowers in one garden"; religion must be a cause of love and harmony, else it is no religion; all religions are one in their fundamental principles; religion must conform with science, bringing faith and reason into full accord; and recognition of the unity of God and obedience to His commands as revealed through His Divine Manifestations.

There should be no idle rich and no idle poor; every one should have an occupation, for "work in the spirit of service is worship." Compulsory education is advocated, especially for girls who will be the mothers and the first educators of the next generation. In all walks of life, both sexes should have equal opportunities for development and equal rights and privileges.

An auxiliary international language should be adopted and taught in all the schools in order to bring men into closer fellowship and better understanding. In the interest of universal peace, there should be established a universal league of nations, in which all nations and peoples should be included, and an International Parliament to arbitrate all international disputes.

Thus the mission of Bahá'u'lláh is the spiritual unity of mankind. While he came to the East, his mission is to the West as well, and his teachings are suited to all classes and conditions of men. At present there are Bahá'is located not only in Muhammadan countries, but also throughout Europe, the United States, and Canada; and this phenomenal spread of the movement, the Bahá'is believe, is due to the fact that Bahá'u'lláh fulfilled the prophecies of all religious beliefs, both past and present; and through the power of the Bahá'i movement, there is being created a new religious unity in the world.

ORGANIZATION

The Bahá'i movement has no ecclesiastical organization. It holds that an official clergy tends to become a substitute for religion rather than an instrument for carrying spiritual influence into the world. Propaganda is carried on by means of the local Bahá'i communities or groups in which believers and inquirers meet at stated intervals for study of the "Revealed Words." The local Bahá'i community is given official recognition only after its number of adult declared believers exceeds nine. Up to this point, the community exists as a voluntary group of workers and students. This local group, involving as it does men and women in all the normal activities and relations of life, is the democratic foundation upon which rests the entire evolution of the cause.

The responsibility for and supervision of local Bahá'i affairs is vested in a body known as the Spiritual Assembly. This body is limited to nine² members and is elected annually on April 21, the first day of Ridván (the festival commemorating the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh). The local Spiritual Assemblies of a country are linked together and coordinated through another elected body of nine members, the National Spiritual Assembly. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's instructions provide for further development of Bahá'i organization through an International Spiritual Assembly (Baytu'l-'Adl, i. e., House of Justice) elected by the members of the various National Spiritual Assemblies, but this international body has not yet come into existence.

To assist the Guardian (now Shoghi Effendi) in his manifold responsibilities and duties and particularly in the promotion of the teaching work, 'Abdu'l-Bahá provided for the appointment of a group of coworkers to be known as "The Hands of the Cause of God." The selection of this body is a function of the Guardian, and these from their own number are to elect nine persons who will be closely associated with the Guardian in the discharge of his duties. It is the function of the Guardian also to appoint his own successor, this appointment to be ratified by nine Hands of the Cause.

The Bahá'is have inaugurated a new calendar, dating their era from the year of the Báb's declaration, 1844; the New Year falls at the spring equinox (March 21); and the year consists of 19 months of 19 days each, with four intercalary days.

Bahá'ism is in no sense destructive. It countenances all existing creeds, churches, societies, institutions, and governments. One may be a Bahá'i and retain active

² In Bahá'i symbology, nine is the number of perfection.

membership in another religious body. The Bahá'í teachings explicitly forbid the appointment of a professional clergy. They hold that spiritual instruction should not be sold, and their teachers have no authority over the conscience of any member of the Cause. The greatest privilege of a believer, after securing his own financial independence, is to serve voluntarily and without pay as a teacher under the supervision of a local or National Spiritual Assembly.

WORK

The Bahá'í movement works through existing institutions for their betterment and final perfection. The objects of the Bahá'í Cause are identical with the true objects of all revealed religion; to raise man from the earthly to the heavenly condition; to substitute spiritual laws and realities for natural laws and realities operating in the darkness of unfaith; to initiate a new age and era of progress and attainment in the world of mind; and to transform civilization into the glory of the Kingdom. To this end it patiently endeavors to remold the world.

The Bahá'ís in America are collecting funds to establish a national center, a temple of worship, called the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (Dawning Place of God's Praise). This is now in process of construction at Wilmette, a suburb of Chicago, and will cost \$1,200,000. The temple proper, or sanctuary for prayer and praise, will be surrounded by accessory buildings of humanitarian intent, including schools, hospitals, homes for orphans and the aged, and a university for the study of the higher sciences and arts. The relation of all these buildings one with another and with the central edifice discloses the relation of the organic functions of society with the spirit of religion. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár perfectly symbolizes the twofold nature of religion—one aspect the turning to God, the other aspect service to man.