

# THE BAHÁ'Í NEW WORLD ORDER

46, BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

Vol. II, No. IX.

1d.

January, 1941.

*"The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens."—Bahá'u'lláh.*

## WAR AND A NEW WORLD ORDER

by Clare Stone.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Prophet of God" in this present age visualised this earth as the kingdom of God and His Christ, and therefore often spoke of a New Order of things. Now, years after Bahá'u'lláh has vacated His earthly temple, even in these days of war (which might have been missed if the Prophet's teachings had been practised), it is the fashion to talk about a New World Order which is to be built after the War.

There is certainly need for a New Order, for we are indeed witnessing the anguish of nations. Many explanations are put forth for such a situation, but there are two obvious truths. First, every thought tends to materialise itself in act, and second, most evil conditions can be traced to self-seeking thoughts. So we are led to the conclusion that the present war is the result of inharmonious thought and self-seeking between the nations. We believe we are all appointed to learn, through this terrible war, that there is a power above the State that works for righteousness and that those who seek that power must ever stand by the eternal laws of Truth, Justice and Mercy. Do not nations as well as individuals stand in need of those deeper experiences that are born of suffering.

When the war is over, is it only the boundaries of countries that will be changed and not the boundaries of men's thoughts? Shall there emerge from unmeasured suffering no wider sympathies, or clearer vision? Surely there are signs through this struggle that a new spiritual consciousness is revealing itself. Under the shadow of sorrow and danger men are drawing together. In normal times we laid emphasis upon caste and creed instead of character, but in the supreme moments of life we are thrown back upon realities, and learn what men think and what they are prepared to do. Even in so seemingly terrible a calamity as war, we may see progress for humanity. Many forms, customs and social and

economic conventions must be broken to give place to the growing conscience of humanity.

We may liken the war to a plough that throws to the top what otherwise might remain unseen and buried. It awakens people to their needs, and as individuals awaken more fully, the power to see the ideal increases. When we learn to set a truer value on character as being the cause of outer conditions, we shall reach a socialism that is true, because it is of the Inner Life. The world is not left to itself in this matter of progress; when we think that, we are under the delusion born of our physical limitations, forgetting that the world is all the time, as Bahá'u'lláh tells us, being guided and governed with consummate wisdom, little as we may see of the scheme.

The dominant note of our western civilisation has been individualism. The key-note of the New Era must be brotherhood. A brotherhood that, applied to the great human family, allows for differences of age, of strength, capacity and power, all to be utilised and shared for the common good. We must recognize the principle of love, as a motive power. We must show that love in a practical form and apply it to the solving of our own problems, rising above the sad pages of the past, with its jealousies and rivalries. Hate always pulls to pieces. Sympathy and understanding are needed if we are to go forward, and we each must go forward into a fuller and larger life. It is in this spirit that we must face the mighty problems of the future. We need a high courage, a spirit of utter selflessness, a strong determination that we will not fail to be worthy of our trust; the trust that has been handed to us by those who have given their lives for us and for our country. It is what we *are* that leaves its mark.

Can we not learn to express our message of sym-

# The Bahá'í Faith

The Báb, The Forerunner, declaration 1844, martyrdom 1850.

Bahá'u'lláh, The Founder, declaration 1863, ascended 1892.

"Abdu'l-Bahá, The True Exemplar and Interpreter, 1844-1921.

## *The Basic Principles*

The Oneness of Mankind.

The Oneness of Religion.

The Independent Investigation of Truth.

The Relinquishing of Prejudices.

Education for Everyone.

Equal Status for Men and Women.

The Harmony of Religion and Science.

Solution of Industrial and Economic Problems.

A Universal Language. (Auxiliary.)

Universal Peace; international executive authority.

A World Commonwealth.

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pathy and understanding in thought and act, as a great uplifting power? Can we not learn the message of The Master, that great Spiritual Force, which will swiftly lift us nearer to him, so that we may become channels for the flow of His love into the world? God's will is to lift men into fuller conscious expression of beauty and happiness. We sing the lovely words of the hymn, "These things shall be, a loftier race than ere the world hath known." And why? Because man shall love man. Only as we realise our unity with each other shall we be able to take our place in the future. Man is a Soul, and since we all have life in that Great Soul, there is no real division in our interests. What is evil for anyone can never be good for all.

Bahá'u'lláh declares the common basis of all religions. The Spiritual Unity of Man (the true spirit permeating the whole Empire) gives us a glimpse of the ideal of a united world. It heralds the shaping of the World Empire, whose watchword shall be brotherhood, righteousness and service. There would be more hopefulness in many a hard life if those in positions of power and responsibility really understood that every act of theirs brought its consequence. Would they then use their power to crush those in a weaker position? All life changes its aspect when eternal truths are grasped. Each day of life becomes a page in the soul's evolution. Each joy a gleam of reflected sunshine from the Real. Each sorrow but a passing cloud. Each so-called death, the leaving of a worn-out tabernacle. The calm, serene strength of eternity grows in the heart that knows these truths,

becoming a living force, of pure, high thought and helpful service.

## The Holy Spirit

The Divine Reality is unthinkable, limitless, eternal, immortal and invisible.

The world of creation is bound by natural law, finite and mortal.

The Infinite Reality cannot be said to ascend or descend. It is beyond the understanding of man and cannot be described in terms which apply to the phenomenal sphere of the created world. Man, then, is in extreme need of the only power by which he is able to receive help from the Divine Reality, that Power alone bringing him into contact with the Source of all life.

An intermediary is needed to bring two extremes into relation with each other. Riches and poverty, plenty and need; without an intermediary power there could be no relation between these pairs of opposites.

So we can say that there must be a Mediator between God and man, and this is none other than the Holy Spirit which brings the created earth into relation with the "Unthinkable One," the Divine Reality.

The Divine Reality may be likened to the sun and the Holy Spirit to the rays of the sun. As the rays of the sun bring the light and warmth of the sun to the earth, giving life to all created beings, so do the Manifestations (of God) bring the power of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Sun of Reality to give light and life to the souls of men.

The Holy Spirit is the Light from the Sun of Truth bringing, by its Infinite power, life and illumination to all mankind, flooding all souls with divine radiance, conveying the blessings of God's mercy to the whole world. The earth without the medium of the warmth and light of the rays of the sun could receive no benefits from the sun. Likewise the Holy Spirit is the very cause of the life of man; without the Holy Spirit he would have no intellect, he would be unable to acquire his scientific knowledge by which his great influence over the rest of creation is gained. The illumination of the Holy Spirit gives to man the power of thought and enables him to make discoveries by which he bends the laws of nature to his will. The Holy Spirit it is which, through the mediation of the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual virtues to man and enables him to attain eternal life. All these blessings are brought to man by the Holy Spirit; therefore we can understand that the Holy Spirit is the Intermediary between the Creator and the created; the Holy Spirit quickens the souls of men.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá.]

# MATERIALISM OR RELIGION ?

The case for materialism is presented by Milton Lucas, the answer for religion by the Editor.

## Materialism.

“We are conflicting in our ideals.”—*Karl Marx*.

The distinct difference between the religious and Marxist approach to life is essentially that religion believes consciousness to be an abstraction from human life, as something above and separate from the body, whereas materialism conceives consciousness to be the resultant product of physical contact with worldly environment, fresh sensory experience enlarging the individual's awareness. From this physical basis, consciousness is entirely an individual knowledge; materialism teaches that we are separate entities and that outside of us no consciousness can exist.

Therefore materialism rejects the idea of an incorporeal infinite God of consciousness as illogical, and the added qualities of love, eternity, perfection, as absurd abstractions. The further belief that this abstract mind has a plan of benefit to mankind, which is occasionally revealed to man through the prophets . . . this theory materialism discards as a futile, unproven superstructure of wishful thinking, which evolves inevitably from this first faulty idea of a universal conscious mind.

An eternal consciousness of universal love and perfection is an idea which, although attractive, yet remains materially impossible from a Marxist vantage point. Materialism conceives all consciousness as nervous and organic, so that the two factors of body and consciousness are held to be identical.

Each race and nation formulates qualities of God closest to its native desires, with the result that as races differ so the God qualities as a consequence vary also; thus we are led to an arena of conflicting Gods. This divergence of religious themes has led in the past to civil war and international strife, Catholic against Protestant, Christian against Muhammadan.

Each religion is fundamentally sincere in its beliefs, and convinced that its leaders alone are God inspired, yet their separate Gods activate them differently, and often in completely opposite directions. The Aztec faiths led their believers towards brutality, torture and blood sacrifice as virtuous pursuits, while Christianity holds the opposite creed of love as its motive.

Each religion, besides its genuine faith, believes that its particular creed is gaining daily further adherents, leading finally (if this belief were true) the world into four or five separate camps of distinct

## Religion.

If the Marxist definition of consciousness is true, then a stone rolling down a hill, “physical contact with worldly environment,” should produce consciousness, and if you hit a man on the head with a club this should increase his awareness (fresh sensory experience enlarging the individualist's awareness). If the stone does not produce consciousness, then it must come from somewhere else, since it is apparent in man, and this somewhere else must be outside the sphere of the stone, that is outside the realm of physical matter.

Most Christian churches teach an incarnate God. The Bahá'í Faith does not, and believes that Christ did not either. We agree that an incorporeal God is superstition. A universal conscious mind is “materially impossible” from a religious, as well as a Marxist view. The Bahá'í Faith regards God as incomprehensible, yet the source from which consciousness comes, from which energy, motion, force, proceed. After all, things don't move of themselves. Furthermore, the world is governed by law, some of which is known to science. Large masses of matter attract other masses to themselves . . . the law of gravity; rational faith is a healthy condition of the mind, unfaith is disintegrating. There are many things which are neither material, organic nor nervous; such as the law of cause and effect, law itself, darkness, wisdom.

This is unfortunately true, and applies to individuals also, but the purpose of true religion is to counteract this ego satisfaction and to present certain universal qualities as divine. All religions agree about these qualities, although their laws and ordinances for their application to daily life may differ. Thus all agree on Justice, but one religion will advocate very severe application and another a very lenient one. It can be said that the Inquisition did the same as the Aztecs, showing that the teachings of a religion are not always a guide to the conduct of its professed followers.

Agreed, if this were true, but it isn't. Nearly all religions are *losing* followers, in spirit more than in name. The solution of the world's disharmonies is not to be found in *any* beliefs which lead to division.

and hostile creeds. Thus the solution of the world's disharmonies is not to be found in religious beliefs which lead to irrevocable division. The clear answer of materialism alone gives order to the vast muddle.

Marxism does not deny the genuineness of the religious experience, on the contrary it explains it. Materialists turn to the recorded historical fact that religions in practice have completely failed to cure the world's dilemma, as this present war proves.

In practice, large wealthy churches are built round different faiths, organizations which exploit public credulity and through it gain wealth and worldly possessions. Therefore the Marxist reasons realistically that religion has in practice failed to achieve its end, and has only added to the confusion by offering means of salvation which have in practice proved unproductive of good.

Dialectical materialism, as propounded by the Marxists, holds brotherly love as its ultimate ideal and teaches that men hate and are full of violence because of discordant environment. This social environment can be changed by controlled planning, after private privileges of ownership have been abolished. When economic struggle vanishes from social life, men will react favourably to the new harmony and become harmonious . . . thus proving that a structure based on unselfish ideals will create unselfishness amongst men. Marxism claims to eradicate the source of all discord, namely, unjust environment, and considers religion's concern to change human nature first as basically false and inverted logic.

Religion grows from an assumption of God's reality and the existence of a soul . . . two pillars of belief one must accept on faith.

Materialism bases its propositions on the carefully tried experiments and sifted evidence of science; its methods lead to simple all-embracing conclusions of practical application, whereas the many religious creeds divide into numerous camps their inspired devotees.

Finally, Marxists regard religions as attempts to solve world chaos by well-meaning individuals who are ignorant of economics and history. The two creeds of Marxism and religion are both understood to be striving for similar ends, world harmony. The means employed are distinctly opposed to one another. Religion's fundamental approach is through conversion; Marxism through economic reconstruction for general benefit.

Religion has become so corrupted, and its truths so veiled, that no man can wonder at the growth of materialism. But the remedy for a sickness is not to remove the life force, but to restore its pristine vigour. This is the purpose of Bahá'u'lláh.

The whole purpose of the Bahá'í Faith is unification, not by creed or dogmatic statements about incomprehensible things, but unity in faith.

Until to-day, revealed religion has had no definite "end"; certainly not to establish peace. All the scriptures refer this to a time beyond their own dispensation, except the Bahá'í writings, which declare *this* to be the day for world peace. But the "means of salvation" offered by religion, which is always a good and moral life (later complicated and corrupted by an established church) cannot be said to have added to the confusion.

There are men in the most favourable environment who still hate and are full of violence. But surely it is materialism which puts the cart before the horse, for how can you create a "structure based on unselfish ideals" unless men first become unselfish enough to accept such a structure. You cannot use your result for your cause.

The Bahá'í Faith does not assume God's reality, but states that the first religious hypothesis is the historical fact of the appearance of the Prophets.

What are the carefully tried experiments and sifted evidence of materialism? Marxism is not a hundred years old, and has never been in practice anywhere over a period anything like long enough to present a "carefully tried experiment." Furthermore, history records that materialism, even when disguised as religion (the later Crusades, for instance), is the mark of a decaying social order. True religious fervour, as in the rise of Islam or the foundation of the universities in Europe, is the mark of a growing society.

Does anyone really believe that by giving everyone comfort and security, the ills of the world will be cured? Greed, pride, envy, self-seeking, prejudice, cannot be cured by material means. And what a dull world if they could, for what would be the purpose of it all?

It cannot be maintained that the Founders of religion were ignorant of history or economics. The economic laws of Moses proved sound and suitable for an enormous length of time. The same is true of the laws of Muhammad dealing with taxation and social welfare. Jesus did not give specific economic laws . . . they were not required at the time. Bahá'u'lláh not only shows in His writings a profound knowledge of history, but before Darwin published his famous book, He taught the true theory of evolution. He also gives certain economic principles which are coming to be regarded as the hallmark of the new age. For instance, limitation of riches and poverty; a world currency and a world economic system; all people to share in the profits of industry; particular attention to agriculture as being in the "first station."