

THE BAHÁ'Í NEW WORLD ORDER

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

GOD AND THE WAR

The *News Chronicle* recently published a most interesting series of articles and letters under this heading, which disclosed three very significant facts about our religious thinking.

First was the almost unanimous agreement that our troubles are due to the decline of religious force as a directing power in human life. With this we are in complete agreement, for no social order can stand if the men and women who compose it are selfish, untrustworthy and morally weak. And no plan for a new order will ever succeed unless we all accept and discharge our obligations in all phases of life.

Secondly, we found no mention of the spiritual problem apart from Christianity. What of the hundreds of millions of Hindus, Muhammadans, Buddhists, who are in similar plight? Are we not too apt to think that the Church of England and the Non-Conformist Churches are the beginning and end of religion? In fact religion, to many people, means their parish church, which they may or may not have entered. If the *News Chronicle* series is representative of English thought, here is insularity in the highest. After all the whole Empire is involved in the war, and in that Empire Christians are in the minority.

Thirdly there was remarkable ability and agreement in diagnosing the disease, but a marked absence of constructive remedies. A "return to Christianity," or "becoming Christian" were mentioned. Why should some 300,000,000 Muhammadans become Christian when they already believe in Jesus Christ? What has Christianity, which is unable to inspire its own followers to lead the good life, to offer to the rest of mankind which would induce them to abandon their own religion? The same question applies to all the great religious systems.

Surely a single world religion is our need. Why else should the diverse races of men be brothers unless they are children of one Father, spiritually united in one

communion? This is not an impossibility; it is the promise of religion itself. "There shall be one fold and one shepherd."

In the great crises of human history, when a long established order has been breaking up, guidance has been given to man through one of the Founders of the great religions, Who claims to speak "not of himself but of Him that sent him." Is it unthinkable that to-day, when the crisis and the need is greater than ever before, another Speaker should appear? All the great religions have the promise of a Messiah, called variously the Lord of Hosts, the Fifth Buddha, the Qa'im, the Return of Christ. Surely the time is ripe and the signs fulfilled.

Such an event would hasten the breaking up of the old order, would be associated with a constructive plan for the building of the new, and above all, with a new release of that power which, we are agreed, has departed from human life. The world religion known as the Bahá'í Faith derives its existence and force from just such an event. It is modern, a continuation of previous religious teaching, purified from ecclesiasticism, and provides a successful basis for religious unity without demanding an abandonment of the religion into which you were born. Bahá'u'lláh, its Founder, wrote some seventy years ago to the rulers of the earth, urging them to establish an international government backed by collective security as a preliminary to "The Most Great Peace." He gave various practical principles such as an international auxiliary language, education for everyone, work for all and a minimum and maximum standard of income. He insisted on the equality of men and women and the agreement of religion and science. He outlined an administrative plan by which "the earth is but one country and mankind its citizens" could become a reality.

Such things are necessary, but even more vitally needed is that creative, society-building power, which

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.

impels men to put God's will first in their lives, whatever the cost. This power is released through the Founders of the great religions, but eventually, having built a civilisation, it loses its force, and the social order breaks up. Is there any other hope for mankind but a renewal of this power now?

A Prayer for Protection

by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

O God, my God! Thou seest me, Thou knowest me; Thou art my haven and my refuge. None have I sought, none will I seek but Thee. No path have I trodden, nor will I tread save the path of Thy love. In the darksome night of despair my eye turns expectant and full of hope to the moon of Thy boundless favour, and at the hour of dawn my drooping soul is refreshed and strengthened in remembrance of Thy beauty and perfection. He whom the grace of Thy mercy aideth, though but a drop, shall become a boundless ocean, and by Thy loving kindness an atom shall shine as a radiant star.

Shelter under Thy protection, O Thou Spirit of Purity, Thou Who art the all-bountiful provider, this enthralled, enkindled servant of Thine. Aid him in this world of being to remain firm and steadfast in Thy love and grant that this broken winged bird may attain a refuge and shelter in Thy divine nest, that abides upon the celestial tree.

The Federation of Mankind

(Extracts from a general letter, entitled
"The Goal of a New World Order,"
by the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.)

How confident were the assertions made in the days preceding the unification of the states of the North American continent regarding the insuperable barriers that stood in the way of their ultimate federation! Was it not widely and emphatically declared that the conflicting interests, the mutual distrust, the differences of government and habit that divided the states were such as no force, whether spiritual or temporal, could ever hope to harmonise or control? And yet how different were the conditions prevailing a hundred and fifty years ago from those that characterise present-day society! It would, indeed, be no exaggeration to say that the absence of those facilities which modern scientific progress has placed at the service of humanity in our time, made of the problem of welding the American states into a single federation, similar though they were in certain traditions, a task infinitely more complex than that which confronts a divided humanity in its efforts to achieve the unification of all mankind.

Upon the consummation of this colossal, this unspeakably glorious enterprise—an enterprise that baffled the resources of Roman statesmanship and which Napoleon's desperate efforts failed to achieve—will depend the ultimate realisation of that millenium of which poets of all ages have sung and seers have long dreamed. Upon it will depend the fulfilment of the prophecies uttered by the Prophets of old when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and the lion and the lamb lie down together. It alone can usher in the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father, as anticipated by the Faith of Jesus Christ. It alone can lay the foundation for the New World Order visualised by Bahá'u'lláh—a World Order that shall reflect, however dimly upon this earthly plane, the ineffable splendours of the 'Abhá* Kingdom.

The proclamation of the Oneness of Mankind—the head corner-stone of Bahá'u'lláh's all-embracing dominion—can under no circumstances be compared with such expressions of pious hope as have been uttered in the past. His is not merely a call which He raised, alone and unaided, in the face of the relentless and combined opposition of two of the most powerful Oriental potentates of His day—while Himself an exile and prisoner in their hands. It implies at once a warning and a promise—a warning that in it lies the sole means for the salvation of a greatly suffering world, a promise that its realisation is at hand.

Uttered at a time when its possibility had not yet been seriously envisaged in any part of the world, it has, by virtue of that celestial potency which the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh has breathed into it, come to be regarded,

* Glorious.

by an increasing number of thoughtful men, not only as an approaching possibility, but as the necessary outcome of the forces now operating in the world.

Surely the world, contracted and transformed into a single highly complex organism by the marvellous progress achieved in the realm of physical science, by the world-wide expansion of commerce and industry, and struggling, under the pressure of world economic forces, amidst the pitfalls of a materialistic civilisation, stands in dire need of a restatement of the Truth underlying all the Revelation of the past in a language suited to its essential requirements. And what voice other than that of Bahá'u'lláh—the Mouthpiece of God for this age—is capable of effecting a transformation of society as radical as that which He has already accomplished in the hearts of those men and women, so diversified and seemingly irreconcilable, who constitute the body of His declared followers throughout the world?

Might not the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration* of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh mark the inauguration of so vast an era in human history?

The True Meaning of Baptism

'Abdu'l-Bahá

In the Gospel according to St. John, Christ has said: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." The priests have interpreted this into meaning that Baptism is necessary for salvation. In another Gospel it is said: "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Thus the water of Baptism and the fire are one. It cannot mean that the "water" spoken of is *physical* water, for it is the direct opposite of "fire," and one destroys the other. When in the Gospels Christ speaks of "water," He means *that which causes life*, for without water no worldly creature can live—mineral, vegetable, animal and man, one and all, depend upon water for their very being. Yes, the latest scientific discoveries prove to us that even the mineral has some form of life, and that it also needs water for its existence.

Water is the cause of life, and when Christ speaks of water, He is symbolising that which is the cause of *Everlasting Life*.

This life-giving water of which He speaks is like unto fire, for it is none other than the Love of God, and this love means life to our souls.

By the fire of the Love of God the veil is burnt which separates us from the Heavenly realities, and with clear vision we are enabled to struggle onward and upward, ever progressing in the paths of virtue and holiness, and becoming the means of light to the world.

There is nothing greater or more blessed than the Love of God! It gives healing to the sick, balm to the

* 1863.

wounded, joy and consolation to the whole world, and through it alone can man attain Life Everlasting. The *Essence* of all Religions is the Love of God, and it is the foundation of all the sacred teachings.

Character

"Good character, verily, is the best mantle for men on the part of God; by this, God adorns the temples of His friends. By My life, the light of good character surpasses the light of the sun and its effulgence. He who attains thereto is accounted as the essence of men."

(Bahá'í Scriptures.)

Someone said to the writer recently: "This is the biggest attraction of my life, therefore I must be true to my inmost self and follow it." No more false and destructive philosophy could be imagined, and yet it is one which is finding wider and wider acceptance, as the conception of duty and self-sacrifice lessens. It means that the soldier on guard would find life more attractive than death and would desert his post; the statesman would find comfort and ease more attractive than hard work and would accept the proffered bribe; the mother would abandon her children for the greater attraction of "love." Not even the most primitive society could exist on such an ethic, for it would remove trustworthiness and reliability from human life.

Man is either the victim of his instincts and desires and at the mercy of any and every force which touches him, or he can control his destiny and be master of his own soul. If the former is true as a basic fact (it seems unfortunately to be true of many individuals), then character, morals, religion, social progress, education, are so much bunkum, and all our striving simply ridiculous. If the latter be true, then there is hope and purpose and true joy in life, as well as much pain and difficulty. The difference between these two conditions, victim and master, is in strength of character . . . and since we are dealing with man, this means moral character. How are we to attain it?

We should not confuse strength of character with strength of will. A strong will is necessary to good character, but not the whole of it, for a strong-willed person can be a very bad character. We must first know what good character is. And here there is no doubt, for the moral precepts of all religion are in accord on this matter, and when obeyed have led men to greatness and happiness. Loyalty, truthfulness, steadfastness, kindness, trustworthiness, are some of the attributes of good character, which must become the moral nature (or character) of the person. Character training should therefore begin in infancy, so that these attributes become ingrained and stand us in good stead throughout our lives. But even this is no guarantee against weakening in later life, for the natural man is quick to assert itself. How then, when we no longer have the training of our parents

and teachers, are we to develop our own characters? This inevitably brings us to the problem of will.

The old conception of will was of a force which we turned on or off like a tap and which varied in strength with the individual. The modern idea is different and much more understandable. The soul of man is acted upon by many forces, and if the individual is to remain in command he must have the key to the master force. Modern religion and psychology teach us not to oppose the unmoral desire directly, but to set our gaze on its moral opposite and move the whole being in that direction. As an instance, consider a man who is a drunkard. Under the old idea of will he would have to oppose his desire and fight it, setting up a great tension within himself. Under the modern idea he would fix his gaze on soberness, aiming at a positive goal and keeping his soul in motion. He would have to make soberness so attractive, desire it so much, that drunkenness would lose its hold upon him and he would develop another attribute of good character. This instance may be applied to any moral weakness.

Now, you will say, how is one to make soberness, or steadfastness, or any other quality, attractive. This brings us to religion, and particularly to the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The master force of human life is love for God, and this may be attained by prayer, good deeds, self-sacrifice, studying the lives of the Masters, seeking other people's happiness. Once we have known love for God we shall never lose it, although at times we shall feel it more strongly than at others. If, therefore, we wish to overcome a weakness in our character, we turn to the positive opposite, which must be a "name" or attribute of God, and concentrate upon its attainment. Turning the soul is the phrase 'Abdu'l-Bahá used, and in this is contained the secret of success. Just as the flower turns to the sun and receives its gifts, so man, when he turns his whole being to God, "finds sunshine everywhere." This is the action of will which we must first make . . . turning to God; then keep our gaze directed in that way, to that particular quality, and the Holy Spirit will bestow its gifts. It is a mysterious process on the spiritual plane, just as the growth of a plant is a mysterious process in the natural world.

"God has sent forth the prophets for the purpose of quickening the soul of man into higher and divine recognitions. He has revealed the heavenly books for this great purpose. For this the breaths of the Holy Spirit have been wafted through the gardens of human hearts, the doors of the divine kingdom opened to mankind and the invisible inspirations sent forth from on high. This divine and ideal power has been bestowed upon man in order that he may purify himself from the imperfections of nature and uplift his soul to the realm of might and power. God has purposed that the darkness of the world of nature shall be dispelled and the imperfect attributes of the natal self be effaced in the effulgent reflection of the Sun of Truth. The mission of the prophets of God has been

to train the souls of humanity and free them from the thralldom of natural instincts and physical desires. They are like unto gardeners, and the world of humanity is the field of their cultivation, the wilderness and untrained jungle growth wherein they proceed to labour. They cause the crooked branches to become straightened, the fruitless trees to become fruitful, and gradually transform this great, wild, uncultivated field into a beautiful orchard producing wonderful abundance and outcome."

Some Economic Principles of World Order

The Bahá'í Faith gives no cut-and-dried scheme for an economic system, but it does outline certain broad principles. These principles are the direct application to economics of the spiritual teachings of the oneness of mankind, the need for justice, striving and progress in human life.

A World Economic System

The resources and materials of the whole planet must be tapped and utilised for the benefit of the whole human race . . . not for the special benefit of any section of it. A world government must have control over such matters as tariffs, equitable access to raw material, proper co-ordination of markets, etc. There must be

A world currency.

A world banking system.

A world system of weights and measures.

All Must Work

There must be no idle rich and no idle poor. All must be taught a trade, craft, occupation, etc., and the doing of one's job in life is regarded as true worship of God. Work must be shared so that the condition of some being overworked and others unemployed will disappear.

Standard of Living

The Bahá'í Faith does not want everyone to be the same, either in material or spiritual degree. But it does teach a limitation of both riches and poverty. There must be a minimum standard of living, and a maximum income. Class barriers must be done away with . . . all must be workers with the best possible education and the fullest opportunities in life.

Co-operation in Industry

In great industrial and business enterprises there must be no more bitterness between Labour and Capital; the competition between low wages and high profits is to be eliminated by everyone engaged becoming a shareholder in the business.

"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of its Lord, as the waters cover the sea."