

The Bahá'í Cause

Compiled by The Bahá'í Assembly

(Read by Mr. Mountford Mills, Canada)

MR. CHAIRMAN and friends,—Before I undertake to present in brief outline those events, persons and principles that combine to produce the significance of the Bahá'í Cause, permit me, in behalf of the Bahá'ís resident outside as well as inside the British Empire, to express a heartfelt and lasting gratitude toward those by whose vision and energy this Conference came into being. For this Conference, both in character and method, expresses that ideal of religious unity so indelibly impressed upon all the members of the Bahá'í Cause, and its very existence, under these conditions of impressive dignity and far-reaching influence, appears to us as the fulfilment of a glorious, long-cherished hope.

It may well be that in this audience there are men and women whose memory still clearly pictures that occasion when, on September 10th, 1911, from the pulpit of the City Temple in London, Abdu'l-Bahá delivered his first public address to the Western world. Summarizing as they do the spirit as well as purpose of the Bahá'í Cause, the words uttered on that day enable me to convey the inmost essence of the universal movement we are now gathered to consider.

Abdu'l-Bahá said :

O noble friends, seekers after God ! Praise be to God ! To-day the light of Truth is shining upon the world in its abundance ; the breezes of the heavenly garden are blowing throughout all regions ; the call of the Kingdom is heard in all lands, and the breath of the Holy Spirit is felt in all hearts that are faithful. The Spirit of God is giving eternal life. In this wonderful age the East is enlightened, the West is fragrant, and everywhere the soul inhales the holy perfume. The sea of the unity of mankind is lifting up its waves with joy, for there is real communication between the hearts and minds of men. The banner of the Holy Spirit is uplifted, and men see it, and are assured with the knowledge that this is a new day.

This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of the unity of the sons of men, and of the drawing together of all races and all classes. You are loosed from ancient superstitions which have kept men ignorant, destroying the foundations of true humanity.

The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the Will of God the Most Great Peace shall come ; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers.

In the days of old an instinct for warfare was developed in the struggle with wild animals. This is no longer necessary ; nay, rather co-operation and mutual understanding are seen to produce the greatest welfare of mankind. Enmity is now the result of prejudice only.

In the *Hidden Words* Bahá'u'lláh says : "*Justice is to be loved above all.*" Praise be to God, in this country the standard of justice has been raised ; a great effort is being made to give all souls an equal and a true place. This is the desire of all noble natures ; this is to-day the teaching for the East and for the West ; therefore the East and the West will understand each other and reverence each other, and embrace like long-parted lovers who have found each other.

There is one God ; mankind is one ; the foundations of religions are one. Let us worship Him, and give praise for all His great prophets and messengers who have manifested His brightness and glory.

The blessing of the Eternal One be with you in all its richness, that each soul according to his measure may take freely of Him.

Unity

As these words echo now once more in human hearts, so penetrating, so inspiring to our noblest ideals, so quickening to our mutual spiritual faith, so gracious, yet so challenging, there is no need for me, I am sure, to assert to this audience the fact that the Bahá'í Cause seeks no competitive victory among the world's religions, and lays no additional frontiers among those innumerable boundaries that already divide the body of humanity into different organized creeds.

After eighty years of existence, the particular genius inspiring the Bahá'í Cause, clearly expressed by its founder and universally accepted by all its adherents, is the ideal of *unity* consciously binding the hearts of men.

Both as a spiritual doctrine and as a living movement rooted in well-nigh incredible sacrifice and heroism, the Bahá'í Cause can best be presented in the light of the gradual working out of that ideal.

The origin of the Cause itself coincided in point of time with the beginnings of what all thoughtful people discern to be a new era in the development of mankind. Here in the West, the new era manifested itself most visibly through the abrupt industrial revolution produced by the influence of scientific discovery ; in the East, less visibly, the same ferment and universal spirit of change also had its effects in the realm of feeling and thought.

It was in that country of the Orient least touched by Western influence—that country, Persia, least known to the people of the

West and least significant to them politically, economically or morally—that country most firmly bound to its own separate tradition, and to all appearances most incapable of throwing off the fetters of the dead past—that Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Baha'i Cause, arose with a message instinct with the enthusiasm of a new day.

History, that greatest of romancers, surely never played a drama of human destiny upon a stage so completely in contrast with the players or with the theme! All the machinery of daily life in Persia at that time was devised to resist change; external assistance or accidental reinforcement for the purpose of Bahá'u'lláh there was none; the idea of progress even in the economic aspects of life did not exist; arts, crafts, professions, education, creed and custom all combined to sanctify the excellence of what had been; available only to this pure spirit was the innate influence of his unswerving faith, indomitable courage, singleness of purpose, willingness to sacrifice ease, comfort, honour and life itself upon the path, and a mind able to impress other minds with the integrity of new principles and ideals.

"The Episode of the Báb"

But for the message of Bahá'u'lláh due preparation, in fact, had already been made.

Between May 23rd, 1844, and July 9th, 1850, occurred that remarkable series of events known to history as the "Episode of the Báb." Within the brief compass of six years a single youth had succeeded in shattering the age-long inertia of the country and animating thousands of people with an intense, all-encompassing expectation of an imminent fulfilment of their profoundest religious belief. The teaching had been quietly spread, even before the appearance of the Báb, that the time had come for a new spiritual leader—one who should restore the foundations of faith and open the gates to an expression of universal truth. A survey of the religious experience of other peoples would reveal the working of the same influence here and there, both in the East and West, at that time.

It was the presence of this quiet yet powerful undercurrent of hope that gave the Báb his commanding position among the people, for his teaching expressed their own inmost thought, and gave vital substance to their secret dreams. The martyrdom of the Báb in 1850, consequently, was but the extinguishing of a torch which had already communicated its flame far and wide. To extinguish the flame itself proved impossible, though the annals of the world's religions contain no records of deliberate persecution more cruelly imposed, nor suffered voluntarily by so many believers. The figure most generally accepted of Bábí and Bahá'í martyrs is in excess

of twenty thousand souls. Such was the price paid for faith in the promise of the Báb, such the spiritual heritage the Báb in passing handed on to him whom he had heralded, Bahá'u'lláh!

To take up this spiritual heritage—to arouse this vivid expectation in thousands of faithful hearts and to inspire them with permanent principles, to establish a mould of doctrine and new custom for this fluid fire—was, for Bahá'u'lláh, the descent from a position of highest material comfort and authority to the lowest degree of poverty, imprisonment, suffering and exile. All that worldly men cherish and long for Bahá'u'lláh freely sacrificed in order that his vision of God might be fulfilled and perpetuated in the conscious unity of men.

The teachings which Bahá'u'lláh gave his followers were, in large measure, written teachings—letters or "tablets" sent to individuals and groups in response to questions they were unable to address to him in person by reason of his exile; messages sent by Bahá'u'lláh from prison to the European and Oriental rulers; or works of devotion, meditation and spiritual interpretation as well as of scientific and sociological character dictated to secretaries among those who shared his prison life.

The essential distinction between religion and philosophy is perfectly illustrated by the effects which the words of Bahá'u'lláh had upon his followers. Not as mere images to be admired by the mind's eye, but as seeds to be planted in the earth of the heart—seeds to be watered with sacrifice and adoration until they produced the flower and the fruit of a *new life*—such were, and are, the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh to those who follow him. From all ranks and stations they came, all types and temperaments, all degrees of training and experience; bringing with them the innate differences of a whole humanity, but moved by a common recognition of one organic, central faith. To produce and maintain unity among these thousands of followers without offering them hope of material gain or earthly honour and well-being was in itself a superhuman accomplishment.

Bahá'u'lláh's teaching reflected no acquired learning; it was an immediate experience in the soul of one who turned wholly and directly to God. "Oneness, in its true significance," he has said, "means that God alone should be realized as the one power which animates and dominates all things, which are but manifestations of its energy."

From this fundamental concept—or, rather, *realization*—the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh flow forth with single, harmonious essence, like waters from the same spring.

To Bahá'u'lláh, those various standards of truth which sway human society—one standard in religion, another standard in science, a third standard in politics, a fourth standard in industry—this

conflict of standard is the source of all the world's ills, the spiritual ignorance which all the prophets came to remove. To Bahá'u'lláh religion is not one of life's several aspects, but the predominant spirit which expresses itself through all aspects, producing, in its purity, harmony among the diverse elements of will, imagination, feeling and thought—first in order of experience, the realization of God; then the realization of self; last of all, the realization of one's relation to his fellow-men and the world.

The true meaning of all history, to Bahá'u'lláh, reveals the nearness of men to the realization of God or their remoteness therefrom; he teaches that all the founders of religion are successive, co-related expressions of the will of God, identical as to purpose and function, separate and diverse only in that each founder adapted the one divine teaching to the particular needs of his time. The glory of this age, according to Bahá'u'lláh, is its capacity to understand the oneness of all religions; and his inextinguishable vision of united humanity vitalizes a method of unity based upon that understanding.

Mirrors of Sanctity

This point is essential to any consideration of the Bahá'i Cause. Let us turn to Bahá'u'lláh's own words:

God, singly and alone, abideth in His place, which is holy above space and time, mention and utterance, sign, description and definition, height and depth. God hath been, and is, everlastingly hidden in His own essence, and will be eternally concealed in His identity from the sight of eyes. Nay, there hath not been, nor will be, any connection or relation between the created beings and His Word.

Therefore God hath caused brilliant Essences of sanctity to appear from the holy worlds of the spirit, in human bodies walking among mankind, in accordance with His abundant mercy.

These Mirrors of sanctity fully reflect that Sun of existence and Essence of desire. Their knowledge expresses His knowledge, their dominion His dominion, their beauty His beauty, their power His power, and their manifestation His manifestation.

Whosoever is favoured by these shining and glorious Lights, and hath attained to these luminous, radiant Suns of truth during every manifestation, hath attained the realization of God, and entered the city of eternal life.

Those who earnestly endeavour in the way of God, after severance from all else, will become so attached to that city that they will not abandon it for an instant. This city is the revelation of God, renewed every one thousand years, more or less.

It is a fair estimate of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, I believe, to consider it as being made up almost equally of an interpretation of that which is fundamental and true to all religions alike, and of encouragement and exhortation to respond, with spirit, mind and

soul, to the new and greater religious possibilities of this age. "Know that in every age and dispensation all divine ordinances are changed, according to the requirements of the time, except the law of Love, which, like unto a fountain, flows always, and is never overtaken by change."

But it is not the experience of one soul alone which establishes a religion; rather is it the sharing of that experience with others under conditions which raise the others to the level of the experience, transmuting them while maintaining the source undefiled. The supreme test of every religion is its power of spiritual continuity after the passing of the founder himself.

Spread of the Movement

Bahá'u'lláh departed from this world in 1892, leaving among his papers a will, or testament, appointing his eldest son, Abdu'l-Bahá, the executive head of his Cause and the interpreter of his teachings. Whether or not the Bahá'i movement deserves the name "living religion" to-day is solely dependent upon the administration of Abdu'l-Bahá during the thirty years that intervened between the death of Bahá'u'lláh and his own ascension in 1921.

By 1892 the Cause had spread to India, to Egypt, to Turkestan, to Palestine. Even a sympathetic observer might readily have considered it inherently limited in its appeal to the Oriental character and tradition. But forces were already at work which eventually extended the boundary of the Cause to include adherents in Europe and America as well. A returned missionary, for example, speaking at the Congress of Religions held at the World's Fair in Chicago during 1892, made the statement that there had just passed away in Acca one whose spirit was so broad and universal that his teachings might well be studied as a means of restoring true religious faith. A number of people from America shortly afterwards visited Acca in order to investigate the teachings, with the result that in Abdu'l-Bahá they found a living manifestation of the spirit of universality they were seeking. The return of this group of students to America was, however, not the first point of contact between the Baha'i Cause and the West. Previous to this event, Edward G. Browne, Orientalist of Cambridge University, had already made his memorable journey to Persia and Acca, described in the introduction of his translation of *A Traveller's Narrative*, written to illustrate the episode of the Báb, still other European scholars who had studied the Cause being Baron Rosen of Russia and Comte de Gobineau of France.

It was directly to the influence of Abdu'l-Bahá, nevertheless, that the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh owes its acceptance by thousands of people in the West. Abdu'l-Bahá himself was their first and most valid proof

that through Bahá'u'lláh a new spiritual force had been revealed to this age; and it has been through the words and writings of Abdu'l-Bahá that the essential principles of the Cause received their direct application to problems peculiar to Western civilization.

Careful comparison of the writings of Abdu'l-Bahá with those of Bahá'u'lláh shows no slightest divergence of essential principle. One is the religion; the other the application of the religion to a new and broader field of life. One is as a sun; the other as the circumferential rays of its light. The statement may be made without reservation that no previous religious teaching ever dealt with the innumerable problems of daily existence with such a degree of purity as Abdu'l-Bahá maintained for the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

What unique claim, one may well ask, has this message upon our attention? What element does it bring not already contained in the older religious systems of the world? How can this new Cause contribute to a solution of those world problems under which humanity staggers to-day?

"Guidance," said Bahá'u'lláh, "hath ever been by words, but now it is by deeds." True to this counsel, Abdu'l-Bahá first applied to his own life those ordinances and principles he received from the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. What Abdu'l-Bahá gave to the world in words he had previously given as established facts. Before he announced to any Western audience the principle that the foundation of all religions is one, Abdu'l-Bahá had already created a bond of sympathy and understanding between members of all religions. Before he spoke of the essential harmony of religion and science he had himself explored the world of spirit, and, with inward gaze, found the expression of love imprinted in nature and in man.

Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey

Between 1911 and 1913 Abdu'l-Bahá, but recently released from twoscore years' constant imprisonment, journeyed through Europe and America, delivering his father's message to audiences representing the Western industrial civilization in every aspect and phase. The principles developed by Abdu'l-Bahá under such conditions may fairly be considered his characteristic solution of the problems of the age.

Let us attempt a brief summary of these principles, bearing in mind, however, the essential fact that, shorn of the spirit of love with which they were uttered, and lacking the will to unity to which their appeal was made, they must remain inoperative until further suffering has purified the hearts of men.

Foremost among Abdu'l-Bahá's principles is that of the *independent investigation of truth*.

A key to this principle may be found in Abdu'l-Bahá's use of the word "imitation" where we would use such words as "superstition" or "prejudice" or "ignorance." Looking upon the minds,

Abdu'l-Bahá perceived them as merely imitating one another and the past, like those prisoners who are chained one to another in rows. Few people ever stand apart from their mental and moral environment and test its standards by any universal truth. What most of us consider "thought" is merely an adapting of the common thinking to our personal advantage. The savage obeys the law of the jungle, and we obey no less blindly the customs of our own day; and consequently, so far as true self-realization is concerned, we are merely that same savage reborn to a jungle of men rather than a jungle of beasts. True independent investigation of reality leads to the investigation of our own inmost being, and makes us realize that severance from the self of passion and desire is the supreme independence.

Unity of Mankind

Another of Abdu'l-Bahá's principles is that of the *oneness of mankind*. All that Abdu'l-Bahá expressed through utterance or action he expressed from the positive and steadfast realization that mankind, in its origin and its end, is one Spiritual Man, whose atoms, so to speak, we are. To-day, as we see and feel the immediate interaction of events and conditions throughout the world, and how no portion of humanity is independent of any other portion, we begin to realize something of the significance of this Bahá'i teaching. Thus, for the first time, one undeviating standard is available for the guidance of religions, governments, industries, education, science and art alike, and that standard is the promotion of the oneness of mankind. Whatever promotes unity is of the universal cause, and will prove fruitful and enduring; but whatever prevents unity is of limited effect, and will be rejected by the Holy Spirit, whose action is predominant over all.

Foundation of Religion

Another principle expressed by Abdu'l-Bahá is that the *foundation of all religion is one*. For by "foundation" Abdu'l-Bahá means the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, from which all the religions originally came. The Holy Spirit is at all times one, though, like the spring season, it comes and goes, for the Holy Spirit is the expression of the will of God, and God is not divided against Himself, but the people of the world are divided. It is this division of the people which causes differences in the effects of the Holy Spirit from age to age, for the Holy Spirit is perfect and complete in itself, but enters the world of humanity only according to the capacity of the time. It is an inexhaustible ocean, while the people are but small vessels that quickly overflow. Thus Moses, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, seem different beings, and founders of different religions; we see them in the mirror of the world's division and

not in the light of the Holy Spirit. In that light they are one being, one essence, one cause, one power and one foundation; and whatever they uttered is the reality, which we have seized and divided (interpreted) for our own gain, as the soldiers seized and divided the garments of Jesus. Abdu'l-Bahâ has said that when representatives of all the world's religions have gathered for a sincere investigation of the foundation of religion, their oneness will become manifest and all the secondary, man-made features of religion will utterly disappear.

Religion, Science and Reason

A fourth principle which Abdu'l-Bahâ enunciated was that *religion must be in accord with science and reason*. Now, a person who is sick is limited by that sickness both physically and mentally, and he himself cannot overcome those limitations except by attaining health. In the same way there are limitations which fall upon the understanding from sickness of soul. It is spiritual sickness which makes it possible for a man to cling to a religion at variance with science and reason. He may not realize these limitations, but that is part of the disease. These limitations shut out the ray of the Spirit, as a wall shuts out the sun. Thus irrational religion does not, and cannot, become truly predominant in human affairs. Even the fanatic does not follow out his religion in all things, but his self-interest or self-gratification is served in devious ways. Without the Holy Spirit a religion cannot awaken souls, but irrational religion gains influence over material affairs through being itself material.

But this principle is binding upon science no less than upon religion. Abdu'l-Bahâ summons the man of science to spiritual religion as he summons the man of religion to an appreciation of science. If in a laboratory, by means of certain elements, an important experiment could be carried out, and thereby great human benefits obtained, what should we think of the person who, though refusing to enter the laboratory, nevertheless denied the possibility of the experiment? Yet modern science, for the most part, takes this very attitude towards religion. For the founders of all religions have indicated the elements and principles for the development of spirituality, and the people of science deny the essence of spirituality while refusing to enter the laboratory of the spirit of the infinite in their own souls.

As a matter of fact, while irrational religion and materialistic science seem outwardly opposed, inwardly they are equally conditions of being that manifest the absence of the Holy Spirit. Both are plants confined in darkness, and both are ships deprived of sails. Where the Holy Spirit obtains, all seeming antagonism between science and religion vanishes, for there is but one reality,

though this can be cognized by the several faculties on the several planes.

Equality

Abdu'l-Bahâ has also expressed as an organic, universal principle the *equality of man and woman*; emphasizing again and again the fact that the solution of our spiritual as well as social problems is dependent on the attainment of this equality.

"Humanity," he said, "has two wings, man and woman; when one wing only is available the bird cannot fly."

As to those existing inequalities between the sexes, so deeply rooted in custom and also institutions, Abdu'l-Bahâ stated that these were due, not to inequalities of capacity, but to inequalities of opportunity. Beginning with education, we may anticipate—not only for the West, but also for the East—the irresistible progress of woman toward true equality with man, a progress whose milestones will be the abolition of militarism, poverty, ignorance and disease.

"All former religions," Abdu'l-Bahâ stated on one occasion, "gave man a higher station than women, but Bahâ'u'llâh has declared that they are equal in all conditions and degrees." The importance attributed to this principle in the Bahâ'i Cause can be measured by another teaching, to the effect that parents who can afford to educate only one child should give preference to daughter over son, the reason being that mothers are the first educators of the race.

At the very dawn of the feminist movement it was a Bahâ'i—in fact, the famous poetess, Kurratyl-Ayn—who first threw off the traditional veil of the Oriental woman, and entered that extraordinary career of public teaching which led to her martyrdom by the enemies of Bahâ'u'llâh.

Religion and Economics

Another principle laid down by Abdu'l-Bahâ is that of the *solution of the economic problem*. The solution of the economic problem Abdu'l-Bahâ has declared to be a distinctive characteristic of religion in its universal aspect; for no human power, or alliance of powers, hitherto has been able to work out a solution.

Now, by the fear that is based on the idea of poverty either actual or prospective, the human soul is ever turned downward into Nature, where the predominant law is the struggle for existence; and becoming dominated by this law, and captive to it, the soul's struggles only the more heavily burden its own chains. For the struggle for existence sets off the powers of one soul against the powers of another, and this mutual division of powers means mutual defeat. Thus in this day the sciences and inventions which

shadow forth a universal order, and dumbly signify the existence of a reality whose law is co-operation, have become, through perversion, the greatest menace to the very existence of mankind.

"The disease which afflicts the body of humanity is lack of love and absence of altruism," said Abdu'l-Bahâ in New York City twelve years ago. "In the hearts of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that unless their susceptibilities are awakened by some power, so that unity, love and accord develop within them, there can be no healing, no relief among mankind."

Obligation to Labour

A close study of this aspect of Abdu'l-Bahâ's teaching indicates certain fundamental elements as conditional to the solution of the economic problem. One of these elements is the *universal obligation of useful labour*. Consider how idleness is condemned by physiologist and psychologist to-day—no less vigorously than by the moralist and the student of economics. Wealth does not exempt any human being from the consequences of idleness, or even misdirected activity. These consequences are ill-health of mind as well as body, and that disordered condition whose end is impotence or insanity. Moreover, in avoiding useful labour the privileged classes and their parasites have deprived themselves of the very capacity for labour, while that capacity increases in those who cannot, or will not, avoid work. In this condition we may see perhaps one meaning of Christ's saying: "The meek shall inherit the earth."

"Laborare est Orare."

But Abdu'l-Bahâ has also stated that *useful labour, performed in the spirit of service, and with the ideal of perfection, is accounted an act of worship and a form of prayer*. Now prayer and worship, in their true signification, are not cries for assistance, nor requests for a gift, nor yet taxes paid to a spiritual overseer, but are expressions of love to God and gratitude for the supreme gift of life in the spirit that knows no death. It is this spirit of love and devotion which Abdu'l-Bahâ declares should actuate our daily labour. Moreover, work performed in this spirit is creative work, and to create is an attribute of God; so it is the worker who shews forth the Divine image and likeness on this material plane. But consider how many changes must take place in the industrial world before this creative sense can be generally expressed, and before labour is surrounded by these conditions which this conception of labour demands. Nevertheless, even this shall be; for the Holy Spirit is destroying mightily all that intervenes between man and his own reality.

Another fundamental element is that of the *voluntary sharing of wealth*.

Reflect how those who possess other forms of wealth—physical, mental, moral and spiritual—have ever obeyed this universal and wonderful law. Thus those who share their physical strength with the weak; those who strive incessantly to increase the commonwealth of beauty and of truth; those who devote their lives to the realization of greater political justice; and, above all, those who give love to whomsoever has it not, fulfil this Divine law. All the love, beauty, truth, justice and science we have on earth are the result of a voluntary sharing of wealth—a divine principle whose veils grow darker and darker as we approach the lowest degree of wealth, which is gold. But were we to estimate the sum-total of all the taxes paid to any Government within the past fifty years, and regard this total as being wealth forcibly rather than voluntarily shared, we can perceive how disastrously extravagant material selfishness is, even on its own plane. For a fraction of that sum total, given in the spirit of unity, would have obviated most of those expenses by which taxes are consumed, while in addition increasing vastly the means of producing more wealth by all and for all.

Yet, far from condemning wealth, Abdu'l-Bahâ makes its attainment through useful labour a specific advice; but the object of its possession is the promotion of the unity of mankind. By considering wealth as a talent on the material plane, the principle becomes clear. It is not the inequality of talents or possessions which produces injustice, but the spirit of separateness, in the poor as well as the rich, in the ignorant as well as in the learned. Mutual dependence is the essential foundation of love, for no one can stand alone.

An Auxiliary Language and Peace

Another principle strongly emphasized by Abdu'l-Bahâ is the *establishment of an international auxiliary language*.

As the nervous system is one throughout the body, and co-ordinates all the organs and limbs, so the body of humanity requires one universal language and writing, to be learned by all people in addition to the mother-tongue, which shall serve to interpret its needs, unite its interests and consolidate its purposes; and diversity of tongues engenders the paralysis of the body of mankind. Those who have concern for human welfare and progress will surely give this subject the attention it deserves.

But the principle by which Abdu'l-Bahâ is most widely known, and for which he has been most extensively quoted, is that of *universal peace*. The assurance that this is the century of universal peace, the age of the elimination of warfare, the day of the most mighty surging of the spiritual waves, and the full illumination of the Sun of righteousness—this assurance is Abdu'l-Bahâ's steadfast covenant with those who follow him.

To-day, the disaster of warfare is a net thrown over the whole of humanity, like the net thrown over a gladiator about to be slain. None can emerge from this net until all emerge. But the very fact that there is no escape for one save through escape for all, and the overwhelming danger of the present situation, brings the consciousness of the oneness of humanity nearer day by day. Therefore this overshadowing calamity is feared as a net of death by those who view it with personal eyes, yet is seen to be a garment of Divine protection by those who view all things in their spiritual light.

For the effort to avoid universal warfare is binding the minds and hearts of those who have been divided during history's ten thousand years. It is creating the great agencies and institutions of the future humanity; it is destroying all agencies and institutions whose purpose is to keep humanity divided and enslaved. Consider how the world's two most powerful kings have lately been overthrown and their empires rent asunder, and the full toll of inveterate ambition and greed has not yet been taken.

Therefore the indifferent are becoming mindful, and the activities of all humanitarians are finding a common channel and a unified expression. But peace, perfect peace, must first possess the heart, through the breaths of the Holy Spirit; consequently those among the humanitarians who are wisest, while they strive to produce concrete results and discuss all possible methods, nevertheless have for their great objective the reconciling of the hearts of men. For only that which is established in the heart can ever be established in the world, and peace will never be made real, lasting or secure until the world has recognized the power of the Holy Spirit which alone can conquer and subdue the rebellious hearts or ingraft one changeless ideal in the restless, ever-divided minds. This is the Most Great Peace; this is the Peace of God.

The arch which these social principles of Abdu'l-Bahá, like pillars, are intended to support—the structure which fulfils their purpose and directs their use—is the principle of an *international tribunal*.

Abdu'l-Bahá ever visioned the world-federation wherein all men and women have part, and invokes this ideal within the minds of progressive people of all races and nations. Its cement is an international tribunal instituted through democratic selection, and given binding authority by mutual agreement and pledge. No portion of the race but will be fairly represented, therefore no portion but will be controlled by its decisions. Abdu'l-Bahá has said that when this tribunal is established all controversial problems would be brought before it, and any Government which unjustly instigated war would thus be resisted by all the nations, the chief function of this world arbitration court being to prevent war. This is the firm basis of peace, and no agreement with reservations can be substituted for it.

It is an inherent part of all Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching on the subject of tribunals and political progress that the spiritual conditions for real justice have not yet been fulfilled. He regards the function of legislation as a function of illumined minds, severed from all considerations save those of justice and truth. Just as the poet receives his visions, or the scientist his principles, through intense meditation, so will the future legislative body arrive at its structure of civic, national or international law. Order is of the essence of the manifested universe, and that order flows through, and inspires, the minds that turn to it in unity, and for the purpose of manifesting justice. Thus those who are capable of entering this unity and impersonal abstraction are to be selected by the people from their wisest men. The legislator, in fact, is placed by Abdu'l-Bahá in a high spiritual station, where the solving of great political and economic problems is dependent upon such intense meditation.

Thus, in brief, has the successor and interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh established a vital contact for his followers with the fundamental needs of the time—a contact which carries religion into the very heart of life, yet without impairing its essential sanctity and holiness. To produce a world civilization reflecting the oneness of God in the harmony of mankind—a civilization which is not merely the exploitation of nature but rather a fitting environment for the soul—such was the ideal of Abdu'l-Bahá, and the purpose inspiring his difficult and arduous journeys of teaching throughout the West. The social aspects of the Bahá'í teaching are supremely important at the present day.

A Symbolic Temple

The relationship of social service to the religious life, so strongly emphasized in the Bahá'í teachings, is perfectly symbolized in the form of the Temple, or universal House of Worship, which Bahá'u'lláh established. The Bahá'í Temple, already in process of construction at Wilmette, a suburb of Chicago, on the shores of Lake Michigan, in the United States, embodies this conception on a most impressive scale. Open to all men and women without distinction of race, class, creed or colour, this institution will, on completion, consist of a central structure devoted to meditation and prayer, surrounded by other edifices used as schools, asylums, hospitals, hostels and orphanages—the embodiment, in fact, not merely of the relationship of religion to life, but also of soul to body. The first Bahá'í Temple to be constructed is in the city of Ishkabad, Turkestan. It is a matter of interesting record that contributions for the Temple at Wilmette have been sent by representatives of every race and creed, both in the East and the West. The world contains no purer expression of the new inter-religious, inter-racial and inter-national brotherhood that is coming to fruition in this age.

The wise student of religion, however, seeking for the hidden springs of any faith, examines not merely the documents and individuals which it has produced, but also the characteristic forms devised by its followers in order to perpetuate its existence. Alone among religions, the organization of the Bahá'í Cause is evolving through forms laid down by the founder himself, forms which manifest the spirit of democracy and directly contribute to the habit of democracy among all who come under their influence.

The Assemblies

Beginning with the local community, the administrative details of Bahá'í service and teaching are in the hands of a "Spiritual Assembly" consisting of nine persons elected annually by universal suffrage of the believers. For the nation, in turn, Bahá'í administration is entrusted to a "National Spiritual Assembly" elected by representatives of the local Assemblies. Outside Persia, where the Cause has penetrated to every town and village, nearly two hundred local Assemblies exist at the present time. Of National Assemblies there are now five. In the future the National Assemblies will, in the same way, send representatives to an international Bahá'í conference, who will elect an International Assembly of nine. None of these bodies has authority or power to pass upon matters of doctrine and faith. None can, directly or indirectly, assume to come between the individual soul and God. Their province is confined to the practical affairs of life, corresponding to the function of the legislator and the executive rather than the priest. To the Bahá'ís, the text left by Bahá'u'lláh in writing, together with the commentary of Abdu'l-Bahá, likewise in writing, constitutes a religion in its fullness and maturity of expression, giving no opportunity to those superimposed creeds which arbitrarily narrow and control the gates of faith.

This outline of the form along which the Cause is now developing establishes, very obviously, a kind of moral school whose students are voluntarily practising the elementary lessons of world brotherhood. Small though it is, in comparison with the vast populations of the earth, it nevertheless must be regarded as a "working model" of that unity we all long for, and an evidence of the essential power of the vision of Bahá'u'lláh too concrete to be dismissed. As in the early days of the movement, this present development proceeds without the inducement of material reward, since the strictest injunction is laid upon Bahá'ís to abstain from political activities in or through the Cause.

In conclusion, I ask you to consider one all-important fact. Just as a lighted lamp is to be measured, not by its physical size, but rather by the area covered by its rays, so a "living religion" should be estimated, not in terms of numbers or of property, but

by the area of human experience it is able to illumine through its innate force of truth. Were we to follow, sympathetically and understandingly, those beams of conscious love that shine so brightly through the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, never again could we bring ourselves to use the term "religions," but rather should we behold successive outpourings of one same Divine Love, undivided and indivisible—infinately humble, the very spirit of meekness, outwardly soon overthrown, yet returning again and again through the ages, the teacher, the consoler, the reconciler of all mankind. None can claim that he is a follower of Bahá'u'lláh until, in spirit, he is a follower of every messenger who has brightened earth with the "glad tidings" of the victory of God. None can claim that he is a follower of Bahá'u'lláh who conceives any portion or aspect of life as non-religious, non-contributive to the eternal ascent of the soul. None can claim that he is a follower of Bahá'u'lláh whilst secret intolerance separates him from any fellow-man. Above all, none can claim that he is a follower of Bahá'u'lláh whose heart remains barren, fearful or indifferent in this present age—the day which is witness to the overthrow of the foundations of materialism, and the kindling of human hearts with the spirit of universal knowledge and love.

Permit me to close this brief, all-too-inadequate presentation of the Bahá'í Cause with a prayer uttered by Abdu'l-Bahá:

"Bring thy children together again, O Lord, by the power of Thy covenant, and gather their dispersion by the might of Thy promise, and unite their hearts by the dominion of Thy love. Make them love one another so that they may sacrifice their spirits, expend their substance and freely devote their lives for each other's sake.

"O Lord, cause to descend upon them quietness and tranquillity. Shower upon them the clouds of Thy mercy in great abundance, and make them to characterize themselves with the attributes of the Merciful!

"O Lord, make us firm in Thy noble command, and bestow upon us Thy gifts through Thy bounty, grace and munificence.

"Verily, Thou art the generous, the merciful, the willer of all good!"