

“The Bahai Revelation and Reconstruction.”

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PREFACE.

This booklet, compiled from previously published Bahai writings, presents no teachings not already accessible to the reading public. It is merely a synthesis of the Bahai constructive peace propaganda as already approved and set forth in the literature of this movement.

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Washington, D. C.,

December 7, 1918.

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THE PEACE OF THE WORLD.

There is now working for the reconstruction of human relations a philosophy, a religious teaching, known as the “Bahai Movement.” The object of this movement is to further the spirit of universal religion among the peoples of the different religions and races, both Oriental and Occidental, and to form a common ground for amicable international relations and the establishment of world peace.

Many readers will recall the early history of this religion in connection with the rise of The Bab* in Persia three quarters of a century ago. Through the teaching of this remarkable and unique personage a movement was inaugurated which has encircled the world, and, though still in its infancy and not vast in numbers, it is already attracting the attention of students of comparative religious history. The Bab her-

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* Bab is the Persian and Arabic word for door or gate.

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alded the dawn of a new and a liberal age of religious thought which, breaking over the Orient, found there a very warm response among the people. This enthusiasm was intensified in fervor by the opposition of the Mohammedan priesthood, which waxed hot as the priests saw their own time-honored religious institutions crumbling and giving way before the new doctrines of The Bab. Under the most severe persecution at the hands of the fanatical Moslems in Persia — The Bab Himself and twenty or more thousands of His followers died rather than deny their faith — a spiritual force and vitality was generated which calls to mind a similar condition during the early days of Christianity, and which gave rise to the proverbial saying: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

Shortly after the martyrdom of The Bab, the principal teacher of the movement

appeared in the person of Baha'o'llah, from Whose name the Bahai Cause derives its name. Baha'o'llah taught for forty years, during which time He was subjected to long

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exile, imprisonment and suffering instigated by the Mussulman clergy. Under the influence of His teaching, as with The Bab before Him, these priests saw their power continuing to wane: therefore their decided opposition. The inevitable result was, however, that under this opposition the zealous Bahais spread their propaganda more effectually than before and their cause grew in strength and numbers. During forty years Baha'o'llah stood forth as a spiritual leader and teacher. He was imprisoned, and then sent out from His own country, an exile, to Baghdad in Asiatic Turkey, then to Constantinople, and to Adrianople, and lastly to the prison fortress of Akka in Syria, where He spent the last twenty-four years of His life as a religious exile, guilty, according to the Moslem law, of heresy.

Upon the death of Baha'o'llah in the Spring of 1892, His son Abbas, more widely known as "Abdul Baha," became the central figure of the movement. Abdul Baha was held a prisoner by the Turks for a total of forty years in the prison fortress of Akka.

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These Ottomans considered his teachings treasonable on account of their being more radical in spirit than allowed by their own religious views. However, he was freed from his years of exiled imprisonment when the Young Turks came into power in the Summer of 1908.

During the past five years of war Abdul Baha has been in the Holy Land. Recent telegraphic reports from the advancing British army in Palestine announce that he is safe and living in his home on Mount Carmel, surrounded by a group of followers. In a recent letter written to friends in Teheran, Persia, Abdul Baha portrays the present condition in Palestine in the following terms: "It has been a long time since the thread of correspondence has been entirely broken and the hearts (of the people here) have been affected with sorrow and agitation. Now praise be to God that in these days, through divine favor, the black clouds are dispersed and the light of composure and tranquillity has enlightened this region, and the tyrannous (Turkish) gov-

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ernment is done away with and followed by a just (British) administration. All the people have been delivered from the most great hardships and the most difficult afflictions. In this huge tempest and violent revolution, in which all nations of the world were caught and were involved in dire calamity, cities were destroyed, souls were slaughtered, properties were pillaged and taken as booty, the cries and lamentations of the helpless ones were raised from every prominent spot, and the tears fell from the eyes of the orphans like a flowing torrent in all the oppressed countries. * * * It has meanwhile become evident

that the holy teachings of His Holiness Baha'o'llah are the cause of the comfort and illumination of the world of humanity. In the Tablets (letters of Baha'o'llah) the justice and the administrative sagacity of the government of England have been repeatedly dwelt upon (in the Bahai writings), and now it has become clear that in reality the inhabitants of this country after untold sufferings have attained to composure and security.”*

* Translated from the Persian.

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It will be recalled by some people that after his freedom Abdul Baha in 1912 visited America, where in various cities and towns he delivered addresses explaining the Bahai principles and their application to the present-day religious, social, and economic needs of humanity. Even up to so short a time as six years ago the universality of the philosophy taught by Abdul Baha was regarded by many people as far too great a step for them to take from their own well known particular and familiar religious philosophies into the unexplored universal realm of religious thinking. But the present general thinking world can, with a quickened religious perception, look back and see the potency of Abdul Baha's teaching, now realizing that he with his message was in some ways simply ahead of and beyond the understanding of the general prevailing world of thought of but six years ago. However, that time has passed and humanity is now more awake than ever before to the vital principles of progress and civilization.

The natural tendency of man is to remain

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in his own particular groove of religious feeling and thought until compelled to give this up by conditions and forces outside of himself. These years of war have witnessed great changes in the ideals of the world, and in no phase of life is this change more manifest than in religious thought and feeling. Through bloodshed and calamity peoples of different classes, nations, races and creeds have been thrown together into an intimate contact upon so vast a scale as to be quite without parallel in the pages of history, the intense hardships and sufferings freeing multitudes of hearts and minds from many time-honored superstitions and imaginations which composed the outer shell or form of religion. While men are thus being torn away from former religious limitations through the destruction of their mental fetishes — found to be untenable under the present every-day conditions of life — a spirit within the deep religious nature of the masses has been aroused, a something which is causing them to realize a condition of spiritual paucity upon their part, and of

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bewilderment, as they vainly attempt to adjust their religious ideas to the new world psychology into which they have been hurled. It is, therefore, not

surprising that people in general should be realizing, and acknowledging, themselves to be facing a new day of religious reality. Only the other day the writer, in conversation with a group of soldiers, heard one say: "Religion will never be the same after the war as it was before," whereupon another soldier responded with a confirmatory remark, while still another man in khaki bore witness to the thought with testimonials from his own experience and that of comrades in the trenches.

The influence of religion as a constructive force as well as a destructive force is very clearly seen in past history. Certain fundamentally true religious doctrines and fraternal sentiments have united peoples and have been the foundation movements of progressive civilization, while upon the other hand superstitious religious teachings and prejudices taught by religious leaders and

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preachers have had much to do with the bringing about of wars. Search the pages of history. The student will find that but few wars have been brought about quite independently of the clergy, who exert such an influence upon humanity and direct to so great an extent the destinies of men. In the war now finishing the religious leaders in the various countries have exercised so great an influence for the stimulation of the war valor that the power which they held has been recognized by the governments and to a considerable extent has been used to rally the people and to arouse their patriotism.

As religion has played so important a part and exerted such a strong influence in the formation of the policies and ideals of nations, it is timely that the world should now begin to consider what religion may have to offer toward the great international problems which now confront the nations — what constructive influence it can exert in establishing more cordial relations and a better understanding and sympathy be-

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tween peoples of the different civilizations and races from which the new great universal world civilization is to arise, and in extending its protecting justice and peace to all the peoples and countries of the world, both large and small.

The Bahai Movement is promulgating a series of teachings and principles, economic and social, calculated to form a basis of religious philosophy which will meet this present demand for a universal religion suited to the needs of all peoples of the world. The natural trend of the thought of the world is now so strong for many of these progressive principles and doctrines that it will be of interest to spiritually-minded people of broad outlook to know something of the constructive international peace policy of this comparatively new religious cause which, coming from the Orient, is now becoming known in the Western world.

The universal problem now in the minds of people is this: Is humanity to

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indefinitely this struggle between nations, with its seasons of war separated by longer or shorter periods of so-called peace, during which the nations are recuperating and renewing their engines of destruction in order to again enter into open conflict, destroying that which has taken years of labor to construct. Or has the time not come for a change from this archaic system of destruction to one of justice, co-operation, and construction between the nations — a system conducive to peace? Upon this question the world is now divided. On the one hand are the extreme militarists, who hold that the peace and prosperity of the nations can only be guaranteed by developing and maintaining the military strength of the individual nation, that the world progresses through military valor, and that peace is devitalizing to a nation, and that without war a nation becomes effeminate and decadent! Then, upon the other hand, there are those who hold a view quite opposite to that of the militarists; namely, that peace and co-operation — not military conflict and destruction

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— are the conditions under which the highest virtues of man appear and develop!

World conditions in this twentieth century are not what they were in past epochs. In the present time, through travel, communication, and commerce the interdependence of peoples and nations has become a recognized factor, heretofore comparatively insignificant, which now has to be considered by the world. In primitive times in sparsely populated countries, where families were separated by distances, individual feuds, quarrels and warfare were the rule. But as the lands filled up, cities were formed, and families lived in closer contact one with another; conditions changed and became so modified that co-operation between individuals became necessary and conducive to the best good of all. When the majority of the people in a land wanted law and order, they established it, and, with an adequate police force, order was forced upon the disorderly members of society. In this way life was made safe for the mass of the people. In other words, conditions

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had changed — it no longer being possible for one man to enrich himself at the expense of his neighbor through pillage and theft — men had begun to co-operate. In this new state of interdependence each found his horizon of life enlarged and his scope for development increased.

From the material standpoint a parallel may here be drawn between the development of peace between families and peace between nations. In past epochs nations and peoples were separated by geographic boundaries, not easily surmountable. In those days it was possible for the people of one country to invade the territory of another nation and enrich themselves by carrying off

booty and plunder, often in the form of bullion and slaves, and thus from the material standpoint prosper through war. But in this day those ancient conditions no longer exist. Nations are now so dependent upon one another for finances, food-stuffs, and supplies of all kinds, as well as for the output of their own products, that their welfare and prosperity no longer de-

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pend upon war but upon peace, no longer upon conquest, but upon co-operation with neighboring nations.

In this present time nations lose far more through war than they can possibly gain. A nation now at war, after gaining an overwhelming victory over an adversary, finds it quite impossible to exact sufficient tribute to recompense it for the material outlay, the loss of life, and the many terrible aftereffects of war which it suffers. Thus war has become a losing proposition, one doomed to loss even before entered upon.

This interdependence of nations and peoples is a new phase of world progress, which now for the first time needs to be reckoned with in dealing with international and military matters. The development of national military power and preparedness for war, so fervently advocated by many as a national protection and means for peace, instead of making for peace has quite the opposite effect, for it makes for war. A standing army and a large and increasing navy is not only a great economic drain

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upon a people, but such a system in itself keeps alive the spirit of war. It tends to make a people proud and overbearing, and furthers the spirit of fear and hatred between peoples, races, and nations, thus psychologically laying the foundation for strife through the mental and moral destructive influences. The system of militarism keeps the spirit of war alive, keeps the people in training for war, and places in their hands ready for use at all times the engines and instruments of destruction, thus making war possible at short notice and with little provocation. It is a recognized fact that with a large and a growing armament and a standing army in training for war the time comes when the people want to fight, and when a people wants war, like individuals under the power of the same warlike thought, sooner or later a pretext will be found and they will fight. Thus the means of war can be said to have become a cause for war, because these means exert both a conscious and an unconscious influence for conflict, increasing hatred between

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nations and races, all of which must be considered as fundamental elements in the general psychology of war, which psychology is the real underlying cause of wars of aggression.

The Bahai Religion teaches that in order to abolish the causes of war a blow must be struck at all hatred and enmity between classes, races, nations and

religions, and at the greed and avarice inherent in savage man. These disturbing causes are at root in the soul of man. As the actions of peoples as well as of individuals are but the reflection of their thought and ideals, action — national as well as individual — can be traced back to the general and personal thought of the people. The power of thought is a greater element in life than material considerations, greater than most people realize, for the actions of people are ruled by the power of their sentiments, thoughts, affections and prejudices more than by their material desires.

The causes of this recent world war were national aggrandizement and prejudice,

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pride, hatred and fear, as well as greed, all of which causes have their root in the soul of man and arise through a lack of spiritual assurance, poise and development. Abdul Baha teaches that peace can only be permanently established by emancipating the world from this obsession of war thought, by freeing the people from greed, fear, desire of aggression, and from racial, national and religious prejudice, all of which cause strife between the nations. Because of this recent war the thinking public is alive to the need of this day, and realizes that the question of maintaining a lasting peace is by far the most important issue at present before the world. The real inner peace cannot be objectively forced upon a people or peoples. It cannot come from without. It must be born in a people, spiritually and psychologically, before it begins to be manifest in their civic and national life. And now the question is: How is this inner change to be accomplished? How are prejudice, hate, and materialism to be overcome? The Bahais meet this question with a positive

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teaching in word and deed of the divine love principle of true religion. The Bahai Movement heralds the universal religious cause of this new age. It stands for the oneness in spirit and in deed of all peoples of all religions, races and nations. It therefore deals directly and indirectly with the many attending human problems.

In the problem of international peace the Bahai teaching holds aloft a high spiritual ideal which must be realized in deeds and actions. "These are the days of faith and deeds, not the days of words and lip service." "The effects of deeds is in truth more powerful than that of words." "Deeds reveal the station of the man." Such are its maxims. Therefore, the ideal of peace upon earth is advanced not as an ethereal dream never to be realized in this world, but this ideal is made practical by the related international reforms and institutions for which the Bahais stand, and through the founding of which they believe that war and strife will cease and a constructive system of co-operation will take the place of

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the present and past discord and hatred between nations.

The Bahai Cause teaches that brotherly love is the means through which the true civilization of humanity will be realized. Prejudice and hatred, whether between peoples of different classes, nations, races or religions, are destructive factors in the world, and are the cause of the retrogression of the race. Therefore, the followers of the Bahai Movement, in order firmly to lay a foundation for human solidarity, are doing their utmost to destroy these various forms of animosity and prejudice by striving to implant in the hearts of people the principles of the love of humanity.

Pure religious truth is in perfect harmony with the reason and the science of the age, before whose light the superstitions and imaginations which have come down from the past are dispelled. In the Bahai teaching all men are exhorted to investigate, each for himself, the realities of religion, accepting nothing through tradition or hearsay. Thus by a careful search for the reality under-

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lying all religions, through the light of this present-day teaching, the fundamental oneness of all religions will be understood. This is the foundation of the universal religious ideal, from which is growing the new order of a universal spirit of faith which is the mainspring of the coming great universal civilization of mankind. Along with these high spiritual ideals must come their expression in daily life and material matters. Children of both sexes must be educated and trained, women must be given equal rights with men, and means must be devised so that neither individuals nor classes of individuals shall be deprived of their just portion of the fruits and material blessings of the earth. These reforms can only come about, and this millennial state of humanity can only be attained, through establishing in the heart of humanity the true spirit of religion. This is true civilization, for true civilization follows true religion and is produced by it. True religion, morality, and their accompanying high ideals, have always gone hand in hand with

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human uplift and progress; and, conversely, in times when irreligion and immorality have prevailed, with their inevitable lowering of all ideals, nations have retrograded, civilization has fallen and decayed, and the people have been in manifest loss.

In reading even this brief sketch of some of the Bahai principles it will be seen that each of the factors is a necessary element and a part of the real peace and prosperity of the world, so that the doctrine of universal peace very properly belongs in the Bahai philosophy and is one of its most important principles. Baha'o'llah, the principal founder of this cause said: "Let not a man glory that he loves his country, but rather let him glory that he loves his kind," and in speaking of this cause He is reported as saying: "We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; that all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men shall be strengthened; that diversity of religion shall cease, and differences of race be an-

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nulled. So it shall be. These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the Most Great Peace shall come.”

In the writings of Baha’o’llah and of His son, Abdul Baha, are numerous treatises regarding peace and unity, all of which taken together form the teaching and the attitude of the movement toward this subject, nor is the teaching indirect and vague in the methods it advances for the establishment of harmony between nations. The nations should come together and establish an international court of arbitration, supporting and enforcing its international decisions. Besides military forces in each country sufficient to maintain national order, an international police force should be instituted in order to enforce the just decrees of the international court of arbitration, so that if one nation should threaten the peace and tranquillity of the world it could be forced into line with the others without the horrors of a prolonged war. Such measures, together with the strict neutrality of those nations not implicated in the international dispute,

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and their refusal to send either munitions of war or lend financial aid to belligerent nations, would very shortly do away with the possibility of war from a material standpoint. The constructive teaching of peace principles and true religion is slowly but surely eradicating the war thought from the minds of men.

While the Bahai Religion teaches these peace principles, it also teaches that vicious marauders must be restrained by force, and the weak and innocent must be protected; nevertheless, the power which will bring about a real, fundamental and a lasting peace must be a spiritual power which will strike at and overcome the root or the primal cause of war.

About forty years ago a book was written by one who was under the training of Baha’o’llah, one who was prominent in the Bahai Cause as a teacher and a philosopher. This work was published under the title of “The Mysterious Forces of Civilization,” and is an exposition of Bahai thought and ideals relative to both national and interna-

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tional affairs. Although at that time the attention of the world in general had not been called to arbitration and universal peace, nevertheless, even more than twenty years prior to that date Baha’o’llah was laying the foundation of His religion for world conciliation. The following excerpt from the book in question mentions arbitration backed up by a limited military force as an institution through which war may be eliminated:

“Yea, the true civilization will raise its banner in the center of the world, when some noble kings of high ambitions, the bright suns of the world of humanitarian enthusiasm shall, for the good and happiness of all the human race

step forth with firm resolution and keen strength of mind and hold a conference on the question of universal peace; when, keeping fast hold of the means of enforcing their views they shall establish a union of the states of the world, and conclude a definite treaty and strict alliance between them upon conditions not to be evaded. When the whole human race should have been consulted through

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their representatives and invited to corroborate this treaty, which verily should be a treaty of universal peace and would be accounted sacred by all the peoples of the earth, it would be the duty of the united powers of the world to see that this great treaty should be strengthened and should endure.

“In such a universal treaty the limits of the borders and boundaries of every state should be fixed, and the customs and laws of every government. All the agreements and the affairs of state, and the arrangements between the various governments, should be propounded and settled in due form. The size of the armaments for each government should likewise be definitely agreed upon; because, if in the case of any state there were to be an increase in the preparation for war, it would be a cause of alarm to the other states. At any rate, the basis of this powerful alliance should be so fixed that, if any of the states afterward broke any of the articles of it the rest of the nations of the world would rise up and de-

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stroy it. Yea, the whole human race would band its forces together to exterminate it.

“If so great a remedy should be applied to the sick body of the world, it would certainly be the means of continually and permanently healing its illness by the inculcation of universal moderation. Reflect that, under such conditions of life, no government or kingdom would need to prepare and accumulate war materials, or would need to pay heed to the invention of new weapons of offense for the vexation and hurt of mankind. On the contrary, they would require a few soldiers as a means of assuring the safety of the state and punishing the wicked and rebellious and preventing the growth of civil sedition. Not more than these few would be needed. In the first place, therefore, the servants of God, that is to say, all the inhabitants of a state, would be freed from bearing the burden of the tremendous expense of an army. In the second place, the many persons who now devote their lives to the invention of instruments of war would no longer waste their time upon such

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work, which only encourages ferocity and blood-thirstiness, and is repugnant to the universal ideal of humanity. On the contrary, they would then employ their natural gifts in the cause of the general well-being, and would contribute towards the peace and salvation of mankind. All the rulers of the world would then be settled on peaceful thrones amid the glory of a perfect civilization, and all the nations and peoples would rest in the cradle of peace and comfort.

“Some persons who are ignorant of the world of true humanity and its high ambitions for the general good reckon such a glorious condition of life to be very difficult; nay, rather impossible to compass, but it is not so. Far from it, for, by the grace of God, and by the testimony of the Beloved (those near to the threshold of the Creator) and by the incomparably high ambitions of the souls that are perfect, and the thoughts and opinions of the wisest men of the age, there never has been and is not now anything improbable and impossible in existence. What are required are the most re-

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solved determination and the most ardent enthusiasm. How many things, which in ancient times were regarded as impossibilities, of such a kind that the intellect could hardly conceive them, we now perceive to have become quite simple and easy. Why then should this great and important matter of universal peace, which is verily the sun amongst the lights of civilization, the cause of honor, freedom, and salvation for all, be considered as something improbable of realization.

“It is evident that the honor and greatness of man have not arisen through blood-thirstiness, the destruction of cities and kingdoms, and the ruining and murdering of armies and peoples. On the contrary, the cause of high-mindedness and prosperity is based upon the cherishing of justice and the sympathy with one’s fellow citizens, from the highest to the lowest, upon building up the kingdom, the cities and villages, the suburbs and the country, and upon the freedom and quiet of the servants of God in laying down the foundation of the principles

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of progress, and in the extension of the common weal, the increase of wealth and general prosperity. Reflect how many world-subduing kings have sat on thrones as conquerors. For example, Halakoo Khan, Ameer Taimoor Koorkan, who subjugated the great continent of Asia; Alexander the Macedonian, and Napoleon the First, who stretched the hand of tyranny over three of the five continents of the world. What advantages have resulted from these vast conquests? Was any kingdom established, or was there any gain of happiness? Was any dynasty permanently settled thereby, or did it mean merely the ending of the reign of one particular dynasty? The only result produced by the world-conquering operations of Halakoo and Jenghiz, provoking war on all sides, was that the continent of Asia became like a heap of ashes beneath the blaze of their terrible conflagration. The only outcome of the great conquest of Alexander the Macedonian was the fall of his sun from his throne as a ruler, and the passing of his dominion into the hands of

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Cassander, Seleucus, Ptolemy, and Lysimachus. Napoleon the First found no benefit in his victories over the kings of Europe, but he ruined well constituted kingdoms and well cultivated countries. He destroyed hundreds of

thousands of men, terrorized and intimidated the whole continent of Europe, and ended his life in a wretched captivity. Such were the results left behind them by these kings and their huge conquests.”

As one studies deeply into the spirit and philosophy of the Bahai Religion, one is impressed with its similarity to the principles of the teachings of Christ. Christ advocated peace, but during these nineteen centuries there has been no peace between men because that spirit of peace has not become a reality between nations, yet we are told that the stone which was rejected by the builders would become the chief corner stone of the temple. Many isolated experiences of individuals prove that the Christian philosophy of the Sermon on the Mount can be ap-

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plied with success in one's individual relations with others, and yet until now the nations as nations have rejected the actual practice of this philosophy as being unsuited to their methods of solving international problems. At this point attention is directed to the working philosophy of the Bahais, which provides a safe and an adequate connection between the spiritual ideals of religion and present day material world conditions; a system which offers a practical solution for the peace of nations, and one quite possible of an early attainment if the nations are able to carry out these high ideals and principles and bring them out from the realm of the ideal to be realized in the world.

While the mere cessation of open hostilities on the fields of battle in Europe has marked one great epoch of peace, the world has not yet attained to the real foundation of a lasting peace. This lasting world peace cannot come until international, economic, and social justice is established, and not before the psychological causes of greed, de-

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sire for national aggrandizement at the expense of other nations, hatred and animosity are wiped out from between the different classes, nations, races, and religions. Suffering humanity will surely look with sympathy, with broadness, and with far seeing vision upon a religious teaching that is diffusing through the world such a positive and constructive philosophy for the rehabilitation of society as one finds being promulgated by the followers of this movement.

The adherents of the Bahai teachings have no church organization or form of membership. They are composed of people drawn from all denominations, sects and religions who, aroused by the quickening religious spirit of this present age, are banded together and united in their efforts to infuse into all humanity these progressive religious ideals which they believe to be the fundamental principles of the great world civilization that is evolving as the spirit of internationalism grows and peoples and nations arise to co-ordinate in all their activities, thus forming an interdependent federation

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encompassing the entire world and its people.

Already these Bahai ideals are finding a warm welcome amongst Jews and Christians in various parts of the Orient and Occident, as well as among the more progressive Moslems in many parts of the Eastern world, the Hindus and Zoroastrians in India, and Buddhists in Burmah and Japan. Among the people of these divers religions the Bahai teaching does not seek to destroy their faith in the truths of their prophets; instead, this movement seeks to confirm them in the true principles of the religion which they already hold, while the universal application of these principles of religion as taught by the Bahais comes as a uniting power to draw all of these different religious elements into one great harmonious whole. The several testimonies of world travelers who have contacted with the Bahais in foreign lands assure us that this movement is embracing a multitude of heterogeneous religious elements, and that through it already many Christians, Jews,

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Moslems, Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus are united in that spirit of universal religious brotherhood which has been the hope of the prophets and religious seers down through the ages.

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