

cross, the crescent and the Jewish triangles among the various devices. The building is to be open to the people of all faiths and religions, nine great doors leading into sanctuaries of nine great world faiths. The central sanctuary under the dome is reserved for those who hold to the present limited ideas of God and divine truth. H. B. Mayoingle, president of the Architectural League of America, has pronounced the drawings for the building as the first new idea in architecture since the thirteenth century. It will cost a million and a half dollars.

The great building will be lighted by electricity at night. It will be a beacon to the sailors on the lake and also to the motorists up and down Sheridan Road, one of the leading highways into Chicago. It is planned to organize choirs of children in great musical services, and in each chapel it will be permitted to the followers of the various world religions to read their own sacred scriptures and to worship in their own particular ways. It is reported that the big building is to be offered to the Christian churches for services on occasion.

AMBITIOUS BUILDING PROJECT

About the temple, it is said, there will be erected a number of other buildings. Abdul Baha, the spiritual head of the new religion, who resides in Acca, writes thus with regard to the plan for the various buildings: "When these institutions — college, hospital, hospice and establishments for the incurables, university for the study of the higher sciences and advanced educational courses, and various philanthropic buildings — are built, the doors will be open to all the nations and to all religions. There will be drawn absolutely no line of demarkation. The charities will be dispensed irrespective of race and color. The gates will be flung wide to mankind; prejudice toward none, love for all. The central building will be devoted to the purpose of prayer and worship. Thus for the first time religion will be harmonized with science, and science will be the handmaid of religion, both showering their material and spiritual gifts on all humanity."

A student of religion naturally wants to find and become acquainted with the group which has conceived such ambitious projects. In Chicago the Bahaists meet on the eighteenth floor of the Masonic Temple where they compete for popular favor with the various other new religions which hope to supersede Christianity. Here one will find New Thought, Theosophy and many of the other cults

which have made Chicago like Athens the city where winds of new doctrine take the spiritually unaware off of their feet.

"THE SPLENDOR OF GOD"

At the Sunday afternoon meetings of the new religion a hundred people was considered a crowd until the publicity of the new building increased the crowd of curiosity seekers that attended the meetings. Dependable statistics with regard to new religions in America are notoriously hard to secure, but the best information seems to be that there are in America about two thousand adherents of the Bahaist faith, and that about two hundred of these live in Chicago. The groups in New York and Washington are said to contain some people of large means, and it has been by their generosity that the movement has been able to maintain an aggressive publicity bureau and to purchase the land upon which the new temple is to be erected. Contributions are said to be coming in from Persia for the new temple. In Chicago a paper is published called the Star of the West. It comes out every nineteen days, the first day of each Bahaist month. This peculiar chronology corresponds with the Bahaist ambition to reform the calendar and to make a new year with nineteen months of nineteen days, since nineteen is the most holy number of all those which possess religious significance. In New York is published a monthly magazine which comes out every thirty days in approved western style, and which is called Reality. It is already to be found upon the news stands in radical book stores. One may read this new magazine from cover to cover, and find nothing in it oriental. The faith is here expounded in terms of occidental idealism, indicating the wonderful adaptability of the new faith to western environment.

The group in Chicago was once very much larger, but when Baha-o'-Ullah, the Splendor of God, died at the age of 75, there came a terrible dissension over the question of the succession. In the process there were charges and counter charges of immorality, lying and other grave sins, during which the Chicago literary expounder of the Faith, Ibrahim Khieralla, was separated from his wife and (laughter and lost his authority. His books are still to be found in the public library, and have value as an exposition of the teachings of Baha-o'-Ullah.

The present head of the new faith, Abdul Baha, visited Chicago in 1912 and during the period of his visit to

America spoke in various cities. He laid the foundation >tone of the new temple at Wilmette with a golden trowel. At that time the enterprise was shrouded in the deepest mystery. Instead of meeting with opposition, he was welcomed into many Christian pulpits and spoke at the Peace Conference at Mohonk. The Unitarians were particularly interested in Abdul Baha because he sounded as his fundamental note that of unity. It is interesting to note in the July 21 issue of the Christian Register, the most authoritative interpreter of the Unitarian faith in America, an article on the new religion which is all praise. One can understand this only when one learns that there seem to be two statements of the doctrine of the Bahaists, one for the general public and one for the esoteric group which is initiated into the mysteries of the faith. Certain non-evangelicals who have rejected the incarnation of God in Christ, have found great sympathy with a religion which holds to an incarnation of God in Baha-o'-Ullah in the nineteenth century!

However, many orthodox pulpits were also opened to the Persian visitor. Dr. Cadman of Brooklyn defended his hospitality to the visitor as exhibiting the freedom of the Christian church in hearing all religious views. Dr. Percy Stickney Grant of New York permitted the visitor to speak in his Episcopal Church of the Ascension. St. Marks-on-the-Bowery opened a room for the Sunday afternoon meetings of the Bahaist group. In England there grew up a considerable sympathy with the new religion. Dr. T. K. Cheyne, editor of the Encyclopedia Biblica, has sometimes been counted as a convert, though that is probably an over-statement of the facts. [see bahai-library.com/toy_thomas_kelly_cheyne] In no country more than in England has the new movement secured attention from the educated and elite.

CONNECTION WITH ISLAM

In order to understand the history of the Bahaists one must know something of Islam and its history. The religion of the Prophet, contrary to the usual western impression, has quite as many sects as does occidental Christianity. Particularly, the Mohammedans of Persia have no fellowship with the Turkish Caliphate. The story of these divisions is too long for the compass of the present article, but they may be found in any standard reference work, such as the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. The general distinction is that Turkish Mohammedanism has tended to be formal and materialistic, while the Persian Mohammedanism has

had in it room for a great deal of mysticism. This is of course a matter of national temperament. The Persians of the Shiah sect have always held to the doctrine of Twelve Imams, the descendants of Ali and Fatima, daughters of Mohammed. In the tenth century the twelfth Imam disappeared into a well, and it was expected he would appear as a Mahdi, a kind of Mohammedan Messiah. In 1844, Mirza Ali Mahomet took the title of the Bab, or the Gate, through whom communication might be set up with the Twelfth Iman. The career of the Bab was a brief and tragic one. Some of his disciples were charged with an attempt to assassinate the Shah. It is asserted that the Bab was innocent of any knowledge of this plan, if it existed. The story was made the excuse for a general persecution in which the Bab and many of his followers were killed in 1850. The new religion had its martyr, and this was quite as valuable as was the martyrdom of Joseph Smith to the later history of the Mormons. Before the Bab died he advanced in his claims to be the Mahdi, later to be Nukta, or the point of Divine Unity. His revelation was called the abrogation of Islam and the Koran. He may well be described as a Mohammedan Gnostic.

With the death of the Bab there was a great quarrel over succession. The Bab had appointed Subh-i-Azal as his successor, but among the variant claimants to the honors was one named Mirza Husian Ali, the son of a concubine mother, who assumed the title of Baha-o'-Ullah, "the Glory of God." Both these men were placed under police supervision on account of quarrels, the former being located on Cyprus and the latter at Acca, Syria. The division resulted in the formation of two rival religions, the Babis and the Azalis. Baha-o'-Ullah attracted most of the Babis to himself and they became Bahists. Following the death of Baha-o'-Ullah, the succession was again disputed, but it fell to the eldest son of the departed leader, and Abdul Baha, once known as Abbas Effendi, is now the leader of the cult throughout the world, not by election, but by divine revelation.

TWELVE BASIC PRINCIPLES

The magazine, "Reality," publishes twelve basic bahai principles. These are as follows: "The oneness of mankind, independent investigation of truth, the 'foundation of all religions in one, religion must be the cause of unity, religion must be in accord with science and reason, equality between men and

women, prejudice of all kinds must be forgotten, universal peace, universal education, solution of the economic problem, an international auxiliary language, an international tribunal." These basic principles, the reader says at once, are the great underlying convictions of spiritually-minded people in the western world. If Bahaim were this and only this, most of us would be compelled to confess that we were Bahaists.

However, the history of the movement has been strangely out of accord with these principles. No religious movement in modern times has had more sectarian quarrels than has Bahaim, in spite of its principle that "religion must be the cause of unity." The principle of the equality of men and women accords splendidly with modern conviction in the occidental world, but it is strangely out of accord with the actual practice of Baha-o'-Ullah who had two wives and a concubine. He kept these secluded in a harem in accordance with oriental custom. Nor is there anything in Bahaist ethical teaching that implies opposition to bigamy, for this would at once alienate the two hundred thousand Bahaists of Persia who are numerically the main body of the new religion. The solution of the economic problem is not to be accomplished by a scientific program elaborated in the light of experience, but by the process of bringing the warring parties to the House of Justice at Wilmette where their cause will be heard. World peace is to be accomplished in the same way by the establishment of the Bahaist court to hear the disputes. In the matter of the international auxiliary language, Esperanto has been cultivated in recent years. The Chicago Sunday school used to operate in Esperanto. The teaching of the cult with regard to the intermarriage of the races has led to a great falling away in the southern states. There is no longer a Bahaist society in Atlanta, following the marriage in Washington of a Negro and an English white woman with the blessing of Abdul Baha.

The missionary approach to America by the new religion assumes that one may be at the same time a Bahaist and a Christian. The two religions are not incompatible, it is said. It is just this method of approach which makes the new faith unique among all the cults of America. It sounds so broad, and enables the new believer to proceed a long way before he burns the bridges behind him. Of course sooner or later he learns that the new scriptures of Baha-o'-Ullah supersede the old ones, and that a new Christ has taken the place of the Christ of Galilee.

One asks, what has been added to the good old religion of the New Testament? Do we not have there the doctrine of the unity of the human race? Do not women and little children get their charter of liberty there? Is not the love of the truth one of the fundamental Christian attitudes? World peace, education, economic betterment and many another good cause have gone to the scriptures of the Christian church and found their support there.

A PAPER RELIGION

An examination of the claims of the new religion must take into account that we are comparing a religious system as yet untried by the great mass of the human race with another religion which has lived through nineteen centuries and ministered in varying degree to most of the peoples of earth. Just as paper socialism always looks more attractive than the orthodox political economy as studied in the experience of the struggling mass of workers, so a paper religion has a big advantage over religions against which the mistakes of the centuries may be recounted. To be fair we must consider both Bahaimism and Christianity in the light of their claims and also in the light of their achievements.

As a means of satisfying the theological curiosity which is ever in the mind of man, the Bahaist system has much less to offer than Christianity. The God of Bahaimism is remote and unintelligible, and can be approached only through successive incarnations. The Christian prays 'Our Father which art in heaven,' while the Bahaist when he prays addresses "Baha-o'-Ullah." The gnosticism of Bahaimism is far inferior to the ethical theism of Christianity. Gnosticism, whether we find it in early Christianity, Persian Mohammedanism, Christian Science or even in the new religion of H. G. Wells has low ethical value. Bahaimism has but little to say of sin or salvation. Nineteen hundred years of history has proven that Christianity has performed a wonderful service in the world by its reinforcement of ethics with religious sanctions.

Nor is the Christ of Bahaimism the commanding figure that Christianity possesses. One need not fail in appreciation of the many excellences to be found in Baha-o'-Ullah to say confidently that the world will never place on the same plane the Christ of Galilee and that Persian religionist who quarreled with his brothers over the succession and finally won the victory over them.

Leaving to one side the theological satisfaction of the two religions which some today may affect to despise, but which will never be outgrown considerations in the study of any religion, one asks concerning the social ideals of the two religions. To begin with, Bahaism is a theocratic autocracy. Its leaders have one by one been self-appointed. This compares unfavorably with the evangelical section of Christianity, and even with Catholic Christianity where the pope himself must be elected by a college of cardinals. The religion that would successfully preach democracy to this modern age must be itself a democracy, and the discontent that people have nowadays with the alleged lack of democracy in the church would be multiplied a thousand times were Christianity to be superseded by Bahaism.

VISION OF PEACE

In Bahaism there has been a commendable interest in world peace and in the overcoming of all sorts of prejudice whether it rested upon racial, national or credal bases. Christianity has been an international religion ever since it burst the bonds of Judaism in the first century. Though in actual practice it has sanctioned wars and persecutions, these are coming increasingly to be felt as inconsistencies. Bahaism also in its actual history has shown a similar inconsistency between profession and practice.

In the matter of worship, Christianity seems to hold elements of great superiority. A new religion cannot create forms of worship de novo. These are the growth of the centuries, the creation of inspired genius. Unless Bahaism takes over the forms of worship of Christianity, she must confess herself for many centuries inferior. The present mood of the Bahaist is to minimize worship, just as H. G. Wells does. An approved statement of principles in the magazine Reality says: "Bahaism has no clergy, no religious ceremonial, no public prayers; its only dogma is belief in God and his Manifestations."

Ethically the new religion can hardly claim to be in the same class with Christianity. One reads with astonishment that "Monogamy is universally recommended . . ."

Here follows an ellipsis in the article in Reality. Monogamy may be recommended, but it is a fact that some of the leading lights of the new religion have been polygamists, just as many Mohammedans are. While professing to give woman an equal status in human society, the new religion if adopted in the western world would soon lower immeasurably the dignity of women. One notes with

approval that the new religion teaches that everyone must have an occupation. The education of children is enjoined and regulated. One misses, however, the fine spirit of sympathy and consideration for the rights of others which is to be found in the sermon on the mount. In all Bahaism there is no such adequate ethical principle as the golden rule, and no such masterly summarization of the meaning of all law, human and divine, as is to be found in Jesus' principle of love.

WHAT CHRISTIANS MAY LEARN

Christianity has learned something from every new religion with which she has come into contact. She may well learn from Bahaism a certain attitude of reverence for all religion, such as the Bahaist documents profess. Instead of talking of false religions, we should with Paul find God at work in even' religion to bring men to himself. Our missionaries have in most lands ceased to talk about the "heathen." They resent the old fashioned diatribes against Confucius and Buddha. Furthermore, Christianity may well emphasize more strongly her doctrine of the unity of the human race, which is also one of the cardinal tenets of Bahaism. If the new religion has originated nothing, here, it has at least served usefully in insisting that no lines shall separate the race into hostile camps.

The Bahaist dream of the religious unity of the whole world as a basis for social unity is sound. The only question is, What religion is best prepared to serve in this way? So far the response of the world to Christianity is more encouraging than the response to Bahaism. A world full of altars will hardly take for its religion a system without an altar. A world full of sorrow and sin will scarcely find its salvation in a religious system in Which ethics is subordinated to mystical speculation.

In the good providence of God, it may be that Bahaism is intended as a gate by which the Mohammendan world may come to contemplate Christianity without prejudice. The missionary approach of Christianity to the Mohammedan world has all too often failed because trinitarian speculation was obruded as fundamental to Christianity. The Mohammendan is a monotheist and he thinks the Christian is not. The worship of Mary and the saints by Catholics gave Mohammedanism its original opportunity. Bahaism gives a basis for believing in a revelation of God through human life, just as Christianity has always

taught. When the Mohammedan world is convinced that it has no real addition to religious knowledge through Baha-o'-Ullah, and in him are to be found many serious relapses, we may hope that the followers of the Prophet will add to the truth of the Koran, the larger truth of the gospel of Christ.

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