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THE FAITHS MEN
LIVE BY

by

Charles Francis Potter



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she went to Madras, India, and established her society there. When she died, in 1891, she had one hundred thousand followers. Her disciples, now divided into two international societies, still commemorate the day of her death, May 8, as 'White Lotus Day'.

There are three divisions of American Rosicrucians, all teaching mainly theosophical doctrines. The Societas Rosicruciana has an office in New York City, the Fraternitas Rosæ Crucis has one in Quakertown, Pa., and the Ancient Mystical Order Rosæ Crucis (AMORC) one in San Jose, Cal.

Rosicrucians belong to secret fraternities and have mystic symbols, like the pyramid, the swastika, and the rosy cross. The last is sometimes represented by a cross within a circle, but the AMORC has a red rose on a golden cross. The name Rosicrucian has been traced to the symbol, but it has also been derived from the name of a German scholar and noble, Christian Rosenkreuz, said to have founded the brotherhood in 1420, after long travel and study in Damascus, Egypt, and Spain. It is asserted that the early Rosicrucians were alchemists, hypnotists, almoners, and healers of the sick.

Brothers of this order are found today in all parts of the British Commonwealth as well as in America; and some of them are still interested in such unconventional means for the relief and cure of disease as hypnotism, vegetable drugs, and coloured lights. They teach a sort of pantheism, believing that the Creator is still in every tree, plant, and rock, for the whole universe is instinct with life, according to the supreme design of the Master Mind.

Bahaism, like Theosophy, has its roots in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, especially in the Persian and Zoroastrian strains of those types of east Mediterranean mysticism. It also has elements of Sufism, the Moslem mysticism of contemplation which developed in Persia in the 11th century. But its immediate origin was in Babism, a nineteenth-century mysticism, both Persian and Moslem, when Mirza Ali Mohammed took the title of Bab ed-Din (Gate of Faith), and announced himself the successor of Moses, Christ, and Mohammed. His teaching of a combination of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Parseeism, plus Gnostic elements, aroused opposition, and he was imprisoned and finally shot, in 1850. Babism went underground, but reappeared, in 1868, as Bahaism with Baha Ullah as the Bab's successor and the next

prophet. After years in prison, where he wrote several books, he died in 1892 and was succeeded by his son, Sir Abdul Baha Bahai, who, before his death in 1921, appointed his grandson Shogi Effendi as the next Guardian of the Bahai Cause.

It was under the latter's able leadership that the Bahai Assemblies in America were organised into a National Spiritual Assembly and a large and beautiful Bahai Temple built at Wilmette, Ill., near Chicago. This Temple of Peace is a nonagon in shape, with nine great pillars of white quartz to symbolise the nine living religions of the world. Like Theosophy, Bahai emphasises the teaching of Comparative Religion. It also proclaims that the foundation of all religions is one, and teaches world peace, universal education, and the equality of the sexes. It advocates an international auxiliary language.

There are said to be 700,000 Bahais in Persia, but there are only about five thousand in the United States. A recent interesting development is the creation of the New History Society of New York, a Bahai group, of an international Caravan of East and West, a youth correspondence peace society with 1,300 chapters in thirty-seven countries and a membership of one hundred thousand.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was one of the most amazingly versatile geniuses who ever lived, a veritable Swedish Leonardo da Vinci. For the first half of his long life, he was a scholar, inventor, engineer, and an advanced scientist in the fields of physics, anatomy, physiology, economics, astronomy, paleontology, geology, and metallurgy. He anticipated several recent developments and predicted others. Kant and Laplace have been credited with being the first to adduce the nebular hypothesis theory to account for the formation of the sun and planets, but Swedenborg had published that theory in one of his books in 1734, twenty years before Kant and sixty before Laplace.

In 1747, he suddenly resigned his government position as Assessor of the Royal College of Mines which he had held for thirty years and devoted himself to theological and spiritual matters, declaring that heaven had been opened to him. First, he had been instructed in dreams, then had seen visions and heard voices. In his full illumination or theophany, after visiting heaven and hell and talking with angels and spirits, the Lord gave him full instructions as to the symbolic meaning and interpretation of the Scriptures.