

The Lesser
and the
Most Great Peace

by

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A discussion of the evolution of
World Peace from Political to
Spiritual civilization.

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THE LESSER AND THE MOST GREAT PEACE

AT a Reception by the New York Peace Society on May 13, 1912, the guest of honor, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, made the following significant statement: "Today there is no greater glory for man than that of service in the cause of the 'Most Great Peace.' Peace is light whereas war is darkness. Peace is life; war is death. Peace is guidance; war is error. Peace is the foundation of God; war is satanic institution. Peace is the illumination of the world of humanity; war is the destroyer of human foundations." During this memorable visit to America He further indicated that it would take only a spark to explode the mighty arsenals of Europe. Two years later the conflagration of war swept over the greater part of that continent, finally involving the United States in an effort to end all war. At the close of the so-called World War, certain institutions were established,

including the League of Nations, for the express purpose of settling the disputes, rivalries and differences between nations by means of arbitration, rather than a resort to armed force. And now thirty years after the utterance above quoted, the world again is hurled into a maelstrom of terror and bloodshed that is destined to eclipse all previous wars of recorded history in the destruction of life, property, liberty,—even civilization itself; for today the machinery of warfare is so perfected that entire nations can be obliterated in the span of a few days or weeks. Is it not the time to re-examine the factors that produce a civilization and to study the “science of peace” so that the energies and inventions of man will be devoted to the establishment of human brotherhood which is the basic creative law of God and His Prophets?

It is evident that some plan for World Order must be adopted if peace is to become a permanent real-

ity. The material means that have been utilized in the past have proved futile in stemming the tides of war, aggression and exploitation, due mainly to the fact that the sovereign nations after signing some peace pact, still maintain their right to do as they will by recognizing no authority greater than their own. As long as this attitude remains, national security which rests on armed strength, along with the control of markets and materials, becomes more important than collective security. Each nation will still claim the right to be judge and jury in every case involving its relationship with some other sovereign state. This attitude has greatly developed in recent years to the extent that some writers have aptly termed it the "Religion of Nationalism." It means that the interests of one country are greater than those of a group of nations united by some solemn agreement for the welfare of all. Certainly nationalism as a religion cannot be reconciled with any

traditional religion for the obvious reason that it would have to vary according to one's nationality rather than to one's faith in God.

NEED FOR WORLD CONTROL

The need for some form of world control has found serious and ever increasing consideration at the hands of many forward looking thinkers in recent years. A series of important suggestions for postwar peace are outlined by Otto Tod Mallery in his timely book, "Economic Union and Durable Peace." (Harper & Brothers 1943) In this survey six plans are presented for study; (1) The League Plan, with formulated provisions to remedy the flaws in the original Covenant of the League of Nations; (2) The Federation Plan, proposed by Clarence K. Streit in his "Union Now" which offers a federation of the existing democracies as a basis for world government with union citizenship, a defense force, a customs-free economy, union money and a postal

and communications system; (3) The Good Neighbor Plan, an informal cooperation of nations, without definite machinery, such as is found in the commissions which bind the twenty-one Republics of the Western Hemisphere; (4) The Good Will Plan, suggested by Lionel Curtis in his book "World Order", which stresses an underlying moral principle that applies to individuals and nations alike, since 'the loyalties and the spirit of cooperation, whether in family, tribe, State or nation, are the durable blocks out of which the progress of mankind is hewn,' and wherein the ideals of religion and politics are closely associated; (5) The Banking and Credit Plan, outlined by Professor Hans Heymann of Rutgers University in his "Plan for Permanent Peace", which proposes a Bank of Nations, in cooperation with a Federal World Authority, to deal with special problems of labor migration, unemployment insurance, crop insurance, raw materials and other inter-

national matters and to coordinate the economic functions of a world community with power to issue currency and create credit; (6) The Economic Union Plan projected by Mr. Mallery, which is in essence the proposal of an international commission, with limited objectives, working with other institutions now existing or which may be set up,—a union of like-minded nations rather than the whole world,—an organization based upon the threefold representation of governments, of organized labor and of organized managers with no nation excluded because of race, color, form of government, or previous condition of servitude to dictators or ideologies, and which will cooperate with defeated peoples and grant equal access to raw materials and to markets.

In the recent book "Problems of Lasting Peace", Mr. Herbert Hoover and Mr. Hugh Gibson stress the combining of the economic and political principles with the moral principles for international good will,

while Mr. Wendell L. Willkie offers a plan for the creation of a world wherein equality of opportunity is guaranteed for every race and every nation. Other plans have been outlined and Charters have been signed which admittedly are not binding on the governments signatory thereto, but all these plans and Charters are lacking in one or more essential ingredients. The whole question of peace resolves itself upon the establishment of a form of world order that will include all the individuals, communities and nations of the world. It has become quite evident that "no scheme which the calculations of the highest statesmanship may yet devise; no doctrine which the most distinguished exponents of economic theory may hope to advance; no principle which the most ardent of moralists may strive to inculcate, can provide, in the last resort, adequate foundations upon which the future of a distracted world can be built." (Shoghi Effendi, *The Goal of A New World*)

Order.) The League of Nations with all its good intent was only a balance of Powers, whose representatives had no authority for decision but had to refer all important matters back to their respective governments. Thus any attempt to unify the world for permanent peace can succeed only to the extent to which such effort includes all the nations of the world and inculcates the moral and spiritual values.

Mr. Mallery, stressing this point, makes the following valuable contribution: "Surely every man deeply concerned for a durable peace will feel the need of enlisting all men of good will in order to bring the Kingdom of God on earth. Therefore, the plans of religious leaders to spiritualize the inner man are as essential to any plan as mortar is to bricks."

The vision of world peace is not an illusion but its appearance in the realm of reality depends upon an impartial insight into human values,

with a stout resolution needed for its realization, for, according to Mr. H. G. Wells, (*The Common-Sense of World Peace*): "We are facing a task vast and difficult enough to tax all the gifts and resources of mankind, a task whose magnitude the majority of us—even among the most devoted—are only beginning to comprehend, and the very prevalent persuasion that a few amiable declarations, a few amiable conferences, a Pact or so and a picnic or so, will suffice to lay the foundations of a permanent world peace is a pure delusion. A permanent world peace implies a profound revolution in the nature of every existing government upon earth, and in the fundamental ideas upon which that government is based."

PROBLEMS TO BE OVERCOME

Many and diverse are the problems to be overcome before a lasting peace is possible of attainment. In the political realm, the system of the

“balance of power” bears no relationship to justice as it rests on the shifting scales of counter-alliances. Imperialism subordinates the native interests of a colony and increases the demand for greater military power to protect the lines of communication with the “mother” country. The system of competitive armaments makes it impossible to distinguish between offensive and defensive armaments. The control of the airplanes after the war must submit to some plan of collective security. Unrestricted sovereignty and the policy of isolation must accept the moral basis for international law. Likewise, political nationalism, with its exaggerated theories of racial superiority which attempt to justify the right of one people to dominate other races, thereby denying the free activity of the human spirit and the right of individual judgment in political matters, has led to governmental control of educational institutions and the agencies for news dissemination,

thereby suppressing the cultural bonds between nations.

In the economic and social fields there are such factors as high tariffs, the struggles for new "living spaces", unemployment, war debts, the tragedy of enforced displacement of large populations from their homelands, refugee children, pillage, hunger and disease, to mention only a few, which create distrust and hostility. The resultant inequality of social conditions lowers the public morale and lays the foundation for the rise of dictatorship and autocracy in government, thus sowing the seeds for future internal revolutions and more international warfare.

What then will make nations repudiate war as an instrument of national policy, adopt a legalized procedure for the settlement of disputes, and establish the priority of the moral law as a basis of conduct in their mutual efforts to create economic security, social justice and international conciliation?

MORE THAN HUMAN POWER REQUIRED

Something more than human power is necessary for the establishment of peace on earth and its counterpart, good will toward men. Great was the desire for peace after the world war. All the governments tired of war—with its huge expenditures and great loss of life, the countless orphans and the destitute widows, all yearned for peace. The representatives of the various nations assembled in Paris to lay the foundations of Universal Peace, yet 'Abdu'l-Bahá foresaw at that time, that in the atmosphere of self-interest and misunderstanding that still prevailed, no permanent peace could be established because the spiritual factor had been left out of the discussions. In a letter to the late Dr. David Buchanan, a class-mate of President Wilson, written in January, 1919, He wrote as follows: "In such an atmosphere Universal Peace will not be practicable, nay rather fresh difficulties will arise.

This is because interests are conflicting and aims are at variance. We pray and beseech at the Divine Kingdom and beg for the world of humanity rest and composure. For Universal Peace will not be brought about through human power and shall not shine in full splendor unless this weighty and important matter be realized through the Word of God and be made to shine forth through the influence of the Kingdom of God. Eventually it shall be thoroughly established through the power of Bahá'u'lláh. Verily, his honor, President Wilson, is self-sacrificing in this path and is striving with heart and soul with perfect good-will in the world of humanity. Similarly, the equitable government of Great Britain is expending a great deal of effort. Undoubtedly the general condition of the people and the state of small oppressed nationalities will not remain as before. Justice and Right shall be fortified but the establishment of Universal Peace will be real-

ized fully through the power of the Word of God."

A copy of this Tablet was sent to the President's headquarters in France and its receipt acknowledged by his secretary. History has already recorded the rejection of a spiritual basis and the ultimate shattering of most of the noble ideals brought to the council chamber at Versailles, with its culmination in the present world catastrophe. Yet the great service for peace is still ahead of us, in spite of the surrounding gloom, for it is God's Will that Peace and the Unification of mankind be established in this world. In 1915, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Andrew Carnegie: "Therefore, ere long, a vast and unlimited field will be opened before your view for the display of your powers and energies. You must promote this glorious intention with the heavenly power and the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. I am praying in your behalf that you may pitch a pavilion

and unfurl a flag in the world of peace, love and eternal life."

The concept of world federation was envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh over seventy-five years ago. Shortly after His declaration that He was the Promised One of past cycles who was to establish a spiritual civilization on earth He proclaimed: "These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come!" He sent Tablets to the Rulers and Kings of the world, announcing His Mission and calling them to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, thus sowing the germinating seeds of a real and lasting federation. He warned that "the signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective." He prophesied that: "soon will the present day Order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead." His appeals were rejected and the rulers continued to increase their expendi-

tures for military preparedness and soon Europe and Asia were once more plunged into war. His final call to the sovereigns of the earth was in the following admonishment: "Now that ye have refused the Most Great Peace, hold fast unto this Lesser Peace, that haply ye may in some degree better your own condition and that of your dependents."

THE NATURE OF THE LESSER PEACE

It is evident from the above quotations that the establishment of world peace will come in two stages: The *Lesser* and the *Most Great Peace*. The Lesser Peace will be achieved when war is abolished as the method of settling quarrels and disputes between nations. To this end, Bahá'u'lláh, in the Tablet to Queen Victoria, admonishes the heads of governments to "be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and

dominions. . . . Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby the tempest of discord will be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice." This statement indicates that "some form of a world Super-State must be evolved that will establish a single code of international law" with a Supreme Tribunal whose decisions in carrying the law into effect will have a binding result upon any and all disputant parties. It calls for a World Parliament or Congress composed of elected representatives of the people with an International Executive strong enough to enforce the solemn compact entered into by the nations. Each nation will necessarily surrender its claims to make war, as well as the rights to impose certain taxes, to this supreme commonwealth. A world community will gradually be de-

veloped, thus transmuting the "Religion of Nationalism" into a lasting consciousness of responsible world citizenship. By general agreement the governments of the world will disarm, retaining only sufficient arms to preserve internal order; however, these governments will contribute a proportionate share of their army and navy to establish an international police force for the preservation of the union of all the states and the enforcement of the great treaty that will create the foundation for universal peace. This is a very brief outline of the World Federation found in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. There are one or two points of vital import which are further developed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a letter sent to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, at The Hague in 1919. One is that the national assemblies of each country should elect the choicest men of its country who are well informed concerning international laws and the relationships

between governments and who are likewise aware of the essential needs of humanity. The number of the representatives are in proportion to the number of inhabitants of each country. The election of these representatives must be confirmed by the congress or parliament of each nation, by the cabinet and by the national executive so that they truly represent the government. The members of the Supreme Tribunal will be chosen from these delegates, thus the will of the people will be fully expressed at the council chamber, and when a decision is arrived at, either unanimously or by majority-rule, there will no longer be any pretext for objection as both the plaintiff and defendant are properly represented by their duly accredited representatives.

The Bahá'í plan seeks to broaden the basis of the existing foundations of society in a changing and evolving world. "Its purpose," writes Shoghi Effendi, (*Goal of a New World*

Order) "is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other." When the organs of the human body lack coordination, disease, dissolution and finally death result. The body-politic can well be likened to the human organism. If the various members are cooperating in harmony,

life will find expression in the fullest degree, but dissention and rivalry will inevitably lead to discord and warfare, disintegration will follow and ultimate extinction will be the result.

It is increasingly apparent that to achieve this "Lesser Peace," humanity will have to pass through the fire of a severe ordeal before the warring elements of present-day civilization can be welded and fused into a new alloy of international concord. The maimed from the battlefields, the bombed civilian population, the bereaved widows, the homeless orphans and the purged refugees, one and all will demand from their chastened leaders, a new world order. The institutions that will safeguard the peoples and nations of the world will arise as a phoenix from the ashes of the present conflict.

THE MOST GREAT PEACE

But from the Bahá'í viewpoint, there is yet another step to be taken,

that of the establishment of the "Most Great Peace." "This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician," asserts Bahá'u'lláh. It is the union of all the people of the world in one common Faith. The social laws and institutions established by Bahá'u'lláh cannot be separated from His moral precepts and spiritual principles. He not only called upon the Rulers of the world to establish the institutions that would prevent warfare, but He likewise exhorted them to accept His Revelation, destined to spiritualize the world and to fuse the races, creeds, classes and nations into a divinely conceived World Order. To the people who accept His Mission, He declares (*Tablet to Napoleon III*): "The sword of wisdom is sharper than the sword of steel—if ye are of those who know. Draw forth the sword in My name and power, then invade the cities of the hearts of those who are fortifying themselves in the forti-

fication of desire." Humanity is entering the stage of maturity both individually and collectively. As the individual assumes his responsibility as an apostle of the Cause of God in this day, so likewise the nations of the world must accept their collective obligation to establish a World Order based on the Word of God.

When the new spiritual forces manifest themselves, the human world will be enabled to adapt itself to a new social form wherein the justice of God will be the keynote of human affairs. The principle of justice is emphasized throughout the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. He enjoins the House of Justice, that Supreme Tribunal to be elected by universal suffrage, to direct their gaze to the revealed Word of God "for the training of the servants, for the upbuilding of countries, for the protection of men and for the preservation of human honor," for He adds, "if the lamp of Religion remain concealed agitation and anarchy would prevail,

and the orb of justice and equity and the sun of peace and tranquility would be withheld from giving light." This is the reason why He addressed powerful epistles to the rulers of the world and counseled President Ulysses S. Grant to assist with the hands of justice the broken-hearted and to adhere to the command for the Most Great Peace, "which is the greatest means for the protection of mankind" and "the main cause for the security and tranquility of the world." (Tablet of Ishráqát.)

However, with one exception, the rulers and sovereigns who held the peace and welfare of their countrymen in their hands, did not heed this summons to the court of justice and permitted the great oppressions to continue. The one sovereign responding to this call, was the late Queen Marie of Roumania who, in 1936, made the following public declaration: "More than ever today when the world is facing such a crisis of bewilderment and unrest, must we

stand firm in Faith seeking that which binds together instead of tearing asunder. To those searching for light, the Bahá'í Teachings offer a star which will lead them to deeper understanding, to assurance, peace and good will with all men."

The advent of Divine Justice and its consequent spiritualization of mankind will fuse the races, classes, creeds and nations into a great World Civilization based upon the durable structure of a World Faith. Foreseeing the efforts now being made for the settlement of international disputes by those with a vision of a wider, more inclusive loyalty, Bahá'u'lláh pointed out: "The time must come, when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace among

men." The resultant treaty must be sound, definite and inviolable and receive the sanction not only of all the rulers but of all the human race. Unity of purpose and justice for all are the standards for the new humanity. The establishment of a world commonwealth will be realized through (a process of) gradual stages.

Ultimately Universal Peace will be achieved and it will signify the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth. The "Lesser Peace" may come in the near future, while the "Most Great Peace" will eventually be realized and remain eternally effective and secure, through the potency of Divine decree. There will be a merging of the two elements—the organization of a world commonwealth and the institution of a world religion, and then Universal Peace will be fully realized, by this achievement of organic and spiritual unity. In its fullness, the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is not alone another stage in the progressive prophetic cycles

that have come to this earth, nor is it yet another spiritual revival, but it represents the founding of a world civilization and culture, with its leaders and representatives responsible to a world citizenry for the maintenance of new moral standards, new virtues, higher ideals and greater service to the common weal. It represents the growth of mankind from adolescence to maturity through a process of spiritual integration culminating in that Golden Age proclaimed by all the prophets of the past as the ultimate destiny for man on this planet.