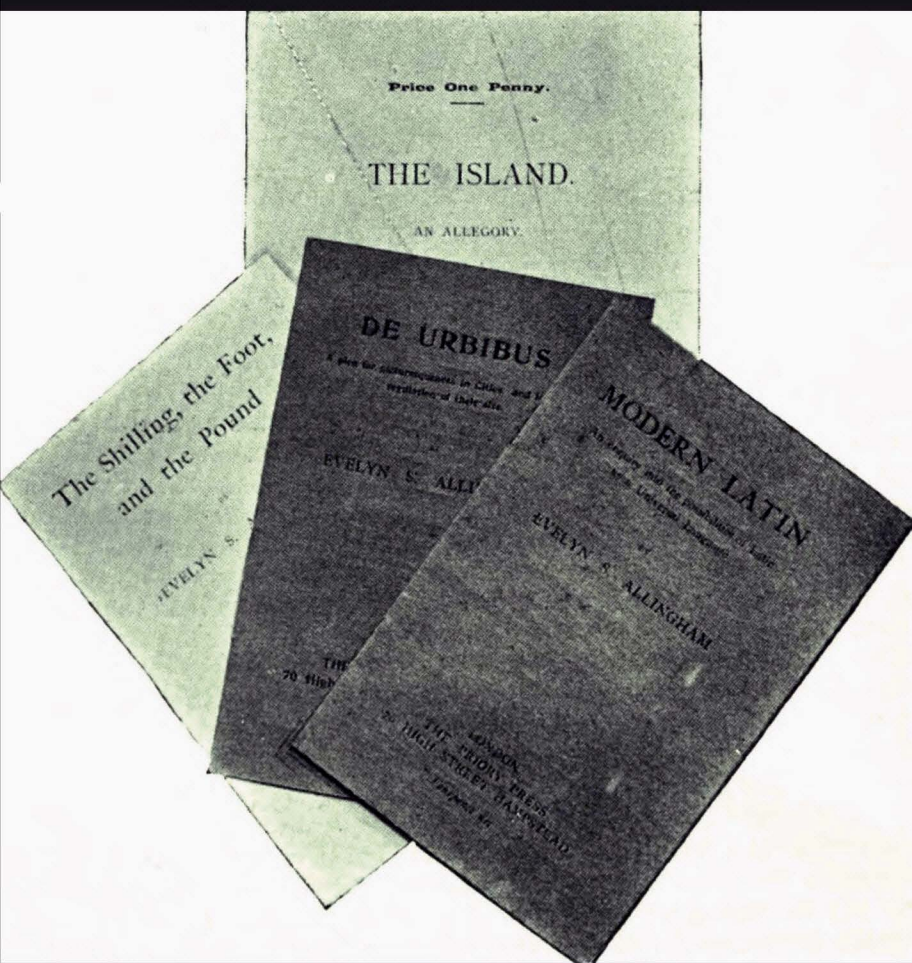




The story of the Bahai movement

Sydney Sprague

The Story of the Bahai Movement A Universal Religion

By
SYDNEY SPRAGUE

**"The people of Baha have not any aim save the
prosperity and reformation of the world and the
purifying of the nations."**

SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

THE PRIORY PRESS ♣ HAMPSTEAD

LONDON :

JOHN M. WATKINS 21 CECIL COURT ST. MARTIN'S LANE

AND

JONES & EVANS BOOKSELLERS LIMITED

77 QUEEN STREET CHEAPSIDE

1908

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THE BAHAI MOVEMENT

"PRAISE be to God that the divine cause in this Bahai dispensation is one of absolute love and of pure spirituality. It is not a worldly kingdom, for it is not war and distress, nor the oppression of one people by another. Its army is the love of God, its victory is the ecstasy of the knowledge of God; its battle is that of Truth, the exposition of the Word; its warfare is against selfishness; its patience is its reserve; its entire meekness is its conquering power, and its love for all is a glory for evermore. In a word it is spirit and it is love."

"It is for us to consider how we may educate men that the darkness of ignorance and heedlessness may disappear and that the radiance of the kingdom may encompass the world; that the nations of men may be delivered from selfish ambition and strife, and be revived by the fragrance of God; that animosity and hatred may be dispersed and wholly disappear, while the attracting power of the love of God so completely unites the hearts of men, that all hearts beat as a single heart; that the arteries of all mankind may pulsate with the love of God; that contention and war may utterly pass away, while peace and reconciliation lift their standard in the midst of the earth and men become enamoured of one another; that the joys of spirituality may prevail over material pleasures; that East and West may delight in one another as lovers, and North and South embrace each other in closest affection; that the visible world may be the mirror of the world of the kingdom; that the image of the supreme

The Bahai Movement

concourse may be reflected in all gatherings of men; that the earth may be changed into the paradise of the Glorious One, and the Divine Jerusalem embrace the terrestrial globe."

THESE are the words of a great teacher, a Persian by birth, an exile from his country, and a prisoner of the Turkish Government in the little fortress town of Acre or Akka, at the foot of Mount Carmel, on the coast of Syria; a man who for over forty years has been persecuted and rejected, and endured the sufferings and privations of a prisoner's life, and yet these triumphant words, sounding a note of peace and joy, have recently fallen from his lips. Have they no significance for the Western world? Let us see if the life and teaching of this man now living but a few miles distant from Nazareth itself, and which are having such a stimulating effect throughout the Oriental world, may not be suggestive to the nations of the West. This teacher, in fact, is making his appeal for religious unity not only to the people of the East, but also to the people of the West, and is there not as much need in the West as in the East, for religious unity? It is said to-day that in the West, there is more animosity and bitterness of feeling existing between the various churches than ever before. How are such divisions to be healed?

Let us turn to India for a moment, and see what this Bahai Movement has accomplished in a very short time. When I visited the city of Rangoon a year ago, I attended a Bahai meeting, at which representatives of six of the great world religions were assembled together, united by a wonderful bond of friendship and unity. This gathering was composed chiefly of men of mature age, doctors, lawyers, government employes and others, who had been brought up as strict Mohammedans, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Zoroastrians and Christians, yet here they were conferring together.

If this Bahai spirit of love and tolerance as taught by the "Master of Akka," can penetrate to India and draw together men of hostile faiths, may it not also shed its benign influence over the people of the West? But it is not necessary

A Universal Religion

to go to India to see what the Bahai Movement has accomplished. In fact in the city of Paris it has already been uniting Catholics, Protestants, Freethinkers and Jews, and in other cities in Europe as well as in the United States and Canada, the movement has been making its influence felt and has attracted many to it.

The Bahai Movement claims to be the divine instrument for bringing religious unity into the world; and for this reason, if for no other, it deserves attention. Its claim is too vital and important to be set aside; the long roll of its martyrs; the wonderful lives of its founders; its regenerating influence in Persia; the fact that people of nearly every race, creed and sect have been attracted to it, and finally, its progress in the western world, all these things compel, if not admiration, at least interest. The birth of a great religious movement is not a thing to be ignored. Who could have imagined in the early days of Christianity, when it was teaching with great force and beauty the vital doctrine of love and unity,—now so much lost sight of,—that a few centuries later it would so powerfully affect the world. In our study of the Bahai Movement we shall find many striking points of similarity between it and the early movement of the Christian faith.

All great religious movements have been founded by some great personality, who has a divine message to deliver, and who succeeds in so changing and renewing the lives of men that they become saints and martyrs, and their blood becomes in truth "the seed of the church."

Let me set forth as briefly as possible some of the characteristics of this new religious movement known as the Bahai Revelation, and what it has accomplished, and is still accomplishing in the world to-day, together with some account of its present leader Abdul Baha (Abbas Effendi), the man and his message.

In order to understand Abbas Effendi's position in regard to this movement, I must direct you to the great founder of this religion, Baha Ullah, and his forerunner, the Bab. At the mention of the name of the Bab, there may be some who will imagine that Babism and the Bahai Faith are one and the same. But the latter is an out-growth of the former,

The Bahai Movement

and differs from it essentially on many points, as one may easily discover, either by studying the early history of Babism and comparing it with the present movement known as the Bahai Revelation, or by reading the early writings of the Bab and comparing them with those of Baha-Ullah, from whom the present movement takes its name.

While comparing the two, we can notice the striking analogy that we have in New Testament history. We find the religious movement inaugurated by John the Baptist, differing materially from that begun by Jesus. Although John the Baptist evidently taught doctrines and a certain mode of living to his disciples, yet his only claim was that of a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for one who was to be preferred before him. So it was with the young Persian Bab, who gave to his followers certain forms and doctrines, and some rules drawn up in a book known as the "Bayan," but at the same time he continually proclaimed that he was but the Herald of one greater, who should come after him, and he told his disciples to be in constant expectation of "Him, whom God shall manifest."

The Bab had indeed inaugurated a great reform, but his movement remained more or less Persian and Mohammedan; and one feels that it could never have become universal. It remained for Baha Ullah, who came after the Bab, to give this movement its truly broad, catholic and universal spirit which it possesses to-day.

As a further elucidation, I will give a brief sketch of the movement from its beginning.

In the year 1844 of our era, which corresponds to the year 1260 in the Mohammedan calendar, there appeared in Persia a youth, Mirza Ali Mohamed by name, who called himself the Bab, that is the door or gate through which men could arrive at the knowledge of Truth or God.

The Bab began his mission as a Door by opening the people's minds to the real truths of their own religion, and he, like all great prophets, did not come to destroy but to fulfil, he did not tell his Mohammedan hearers that they had been deluded all these years by a false prophet, but he did, however, rate them soundly—as Jesus did the Pharisees—for their hypocrisy and their distortion of true religion. He

A Universal Religion

also explained to them the true meaning of their prophecies and traditions that a Mahdi should come. To quote his own words, "in the past whenever there was need, God raised up a prophet on the earth bearing a book containing a divine revelation, and he will do the same in the future whenever there is need."

The words of the Bab were naturally met with jeers and derision by the Mohammedan pharisees, and he had to endure insult and persecution culminating in his imprisonment and death. He was shot by order of the Persian government, in a public square in Tabriz.

The life of the young reformer was not sacrificed in vain ; during his life-time great numbers of earnest men and women had allied themselves to his cause and had been diligent in spreading his teachings throughout Persia, so that soon the movement had grown to such an extent that the Persian government and the Mullahs became alarmed, thinking it a serious menace to the supremacy of Islam, and believing that the movement must have some political as well as religious meaning. Orders were given to plunder and persecute the followers of the Bab, and during these dark years many thousands gave up their lives and endured the worst of tortures for their Faith. Here we find a record of heroic devotion, bravery and self-sacrifice which, as Professor E. G. Browne, of Cambridge, says, may perhaps be paralleled in history but cannot be surpassed. T. H. Huxley, Ernest Renan, and the Comte de Gobineau have also written in terms of the greatest admiration of these Persian martyrs, whom they can only compare to the early martyrs of the Christian Faith. One is tempted to dwell on these stirring events of the early days of the movement, but space does not permit more than a passing allusion to them. No account, however, should be given without at least mentioning the name of Kurratul-Ayn, that remarkable heroine who has been called the Joan of Arc of her country and age. She was the daughter of one of the leading Ullemas of Islam, a woman of culture and position, known as a poetess, philosopher, linguist and theologian ; she early became a convert to the new movement, and, leaving her home, travelled about Persia, speakingly publicly, and, it is said, converting many

The Bahai Movement

to the new Faith. Finally she was seized by the scandalized Mohammedans and cruelly martyred. This saintly woman by her great courage has led the way for her sisters in the Orient; and a new era for women has commenced, for both the Bab and Baha Ullah preached the emancipation of women. Under this teaching woman assumes her rightful position as the equal of man.

The Bab had left behind him a beautiful hope as a legacy to his followers, namely, that "He whom God shall manifest," should arrive and complete what he had only imperfectly begun.

For several years after the death of the Bab in 1850, the movement seemed in a very precarious condition; it had a bad reputation with the Persian government; it was looked down upon with contempt by nearly all the Persians of wealth and position; its followers could only meet together secretly, and no one dared to breathe the hated name of "Babi,"; indeed it seemed for a time as though the Mullahs had succeeded in crushing out the young Faith entirely. There was the greatest need for the coming of the Promised One to save the movement from extinction, to restore the zeal and courage of the persecuted Babis. They were not to be disappointed in their hope, for, during the early sixties, there arose one whose grand personality, wonderful powers of utterance, and inspired writings, proclaimed him to be the Manifestation for which the Babis were waiting, and indeed when Baba Ullah publicly proclaimed that he was the Promised One, whose advent the Bab had foretold, the great majority of the Babis hailed him with joy as their Lord and Redeemer. There were, it is true, a few dissenting voices, even in the Baba Ullah's own family, who were content with the doctrines of the Bab, and who did not wish to go beyond these. These grouped themselves around Subh-i-Ezel, but he never had many followers, and few of them now survive, so that their refusal to accept the teachings of Baba Ullah can hardly be called by the name of schism. The movement has outlived this little trouble, and another and more recent one, but its unity has been unimpaired, and it has emerged triumphant from these trials, showing to the world that it can preserve within itself the unity which it teaches.

A Universal Religion

Baha Ullah (the Glory of God) was born in 1817, and came of a wealthy and noble family. As a young man he became a follower of the Bab, although he had never seen him. His prominence as a teacher of the New Faith led to his imprisonment in Teheran. For some time he was kept in chains, together with several others, until finally his wealth was confiscated and he was exiled to the city of Baghdad in the Sultan of Turkey's dominions. While there he continued to teach the people, and his influence over them became very great. During two years he withdrew himself to the mountains near Baghdad, and lived apart from men, passing his time in prayer and meditation. On his return he publicly proclaimed his mission, which was that of establishing peace and religious unity in the world. He called to men, of every creed and race to come under the standard of Unity, which he had upraised, and assist him in establishing the Kingdom of God and the Brotherhood of man upon the earth. The Mohammedan Mullahs of Baghdad soon became alarmed at having a man of such influence and power in their midst, and petitioned the Ottoman government to have him removed. Baha Ullah was accordingly summoned to appear in Constantinople, and, together with his family and a little group of followers, he set out for that city. His stay in Constantinople was short, for the Turkish government decided to banish him to the city of Adrianople. From Adrianople Baha Ullah wrote those famous letters (sent later from Akka) to the Kings of Europe and the Pope, calling upon them to abandon their injustice, their thoughts of warfare, and to assist in establishing Unity. The letters also contained prophetic utterances which were soon after fulfilled. After a few years spent in Adrianople, he was again banished to a still more inaccessible spot, the little fortress town of Acre or Akka on the coast of Syria. Here Baha Ullah and his little band of followers passed some of the most terrible years of their exile, for Acre can only be described as pestilential, and it seems probable that Baha Ullah was sent there in the hopes that a fever would soon rid the world of him. For some time he and his followers were confined to two rooms in the barracks, but gradually

The Bahai Movement

more leniency was shown them, the heart of the governor becoming softened at witnessing the heroic sufferings of the little band. Baha Ullah spent most of his time in Acre in teaching those few followers who could hold communication with him* ; in writing his instructions and admonitions to the world ; in sending tablets to followers in different parts, and in writing a book known as

THE BOOK OF LAWS.

In this book Baha Ullah tells his followers that the sword must for ever be put away ; in its place the Word must arise. He proclaims Universal Peace and calls upon the nations to settle their differences by a board of arbitration ; he pleads for a broad spirit of friendship and tolerance to be shown to all the peoples of the earth ; "ye are all the fruits of one tree," as he beautifully expresses it ; he enjoins his followers to seek for a universal language ; he says, "this is the means of union, if ye knew it, and the greatest source of concord and civilization, did ye recognise it. Teach this common language to the children in all schools, that the whole world may become one land and one home" ; he tells parents that they must educate their children, boy and girl alike, giving them the best education they can afford, and that the poor must be educated by a board of Councillors to be elected in each city, for he considers that until ignorance is uprooted there can be no true progress ; and he wishes so to impress on his followers the value of education, that he says, "he who educates his own son or the son of another, it is as though he educated the Son of God." All must learn and practice some craft, trade or profession, which if practised conscientiously and diligently, will be considered as the highest act of prayer and worship toward God. There are no priests connected with this religion and

* There has just been added to the little Penny Series "Hidden Words, from the Arabic," written by Baha Ullah.

A Universal Religion

those who teach this Faith should not receive any pay but support themselves by other means. The acquisition of science and art is commended. Marriage is advised, and celibacy and asceticism condemned. Baha Ullah wishes his religion to be one of joy and gladness. He tells his followers to associate with all the people of the world, and to show forth to others whatever good things they possess, in a word to be in the world, but not of it. He strongly condemns gambling, the use of opium, intemperance and other vices, and he lays down some interesting hygienic laws. A law is given, advocating kindness to animals, and beasts of burden are not to be ill-treated or overloaded. Baha Ullah submits this "Book of Laws," as a standard rule of conduct, and a great means of uniting the various peoples so separated by different customs, prejudices, and habits. We cannot but admire the remarkably modern and tolerant spirit that animates these laws. All the things that Western reformers are striving for to-day, find a place in his universal religion, and yet these laws were written by Baha Ullah over forty years ago, while confined in an Eastern prison.

In the following lines Baha Ullah tells his followers how religion should be taught to the world. "O Children of Baha associate with all the people of the world, with men of all religions, in concord and harmony, in the spirit of perfect joy and fragrance. Remind them also of that which is for the benefit of all, but beware lest ye make the Word of God the cause of opposition and stumbling, or the source of hatred among you. If ye have a word or an essence which another has not, say it to him with the tongue of love and kindness. If it be accepted and impressed the end is attained, if not leave him to himself and pray for him, but do not molest him. The tongue of kindness is attractive to the heart and it is the sword of the spirit; it furnishes the true relation of thought to utterance; it is as the horizon for the arising of the sun of Wisdom and Knowledge. . . . Creatures were created through love, let them live in friendship and unity."

Now the question arises, do his followers, the Bahais, carry out these laws, are they animated by the same spirit of tolerance and goodwill that breathes through these in-

The Bahai Movement

structions! I can but give my personal testimony of the lives and practices of the Bahais, as I have seen them in various parts of the Orient, together with the testimony of other men, an Englishman, an American, and a Frenchman.

Professor Browne, the author of the invaluable "History of Persian Literature," says, "The spirit which pervades the Bahais is such that it can hardly fail to affect most powerfully all subjected to its influence. Let those who have not seen disbelieve me if they will, but should that spirit once reveal itself to them they will experience an emotion they are not likely to forget."

Myron H. Phelps of New York writes, "If we analyse this spirit which pervades the Bahais, if we seek to penetrate that which marks them off from other men, the conclusion to which we are brought is that its essence is expressed in the one word Love. These men are lovers, lovers of God, of their Master and Teacher, of each other, and of all mankind."

M. Hippolyte Dreyfus of Paris, who has recently returned from Persia, writes in a French review, that "he found among the inhabitants of Teheran and other cities all those imbued with liberal and progressive views were Bahais."

Finally let me speak of those Bahais who are subjects of the British Empire, the Indian and Burmese Bahais, whom I came to know well during a recent stay in India. Every serious-minded person who visits India and is a well-wisher of that glorious country, must regret the unhappy differences that separate Indian from Indian, due chiefly to religious animosity. How one longs for a solution of this vexed problem. If only some broad faith could be found to include all the wrangling and hostile sects and creeds! Now I believe most earnestly that the solution of this difficulty lies in the Bahai Movement. I have already pointed out by an example taken from Rangoon, that it has brought about this very Unity which all are desiring. How has it been able to do this?

The first command that is given to a Bahai by his Leader is this: "Do not antagonise or denounce any religion," he also says that "God is to every human being as great as the individual mental capacity permits one to see him." The

A Universal Religion

Bahai propagandist in India has not the difficulty that besets a Christian missionary, that of pulling down; his duty is only to build on to what is already there, for the Bahai teaches that the essence and truths of all religions are one; he sees the Hindu, Buddhist and Mohammedan with the same eye, and he reverences the prophets of each; instead of showing where they were wrong, he shows where they were right; he acknowledges the common truth in Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Christianity, and other great religions; he shows their adherents that a further revelation has come through the teaching of Baha Ullah; that its particular mission is to uncover the truth of all religion by removing prejudice and ignorance from the minds of the people, and by uniting them in thought, faith and love. The Bahai does not disdain the prophecies which have come down to us from all religions, but points out that they have all referred to the coming of a great teacher who should establish peace and harmony on the earth.

Let me say here a word about prophecy. There are many, I know, who take no interest in the subject whatever, but we must remember that prophecies exist in every religion, and they have to be reckoned with. If we are considering a universal movement to consist only of a few cultured minds, then we may perhaps dismiss prophecy altogether, but we are not; we are thinking of millions of Christians, Buddhists, Mohammedans and others, who all believe in prophecy. Unless a movement can fulfil the prophecies and expectations of these various peoples, it cannot succeed in being universal, it will only become another sect. The fact that the Bahai Faith does fulfil the prophecies of the different religions, is one of the greatest arguments in favour of its universality. Another factor in the spreading of the Bahai Religion in the East, is the marvellous spirit already referred to, which animates the Bahais, and is shown in their self-sacrificing lives.

One of the reasons why Christianity has failed to become the predominant religion in the East, is because of the prejudice against it, due to the misrepresentation of its true spirit. In a recent article by Professor Browne, he says,

The Bahai Movement

"I have often heard wonder expressed by Christian ministers at the extraordinary success of Bahai missionaries, as contrasted with the almost complete failure of their own. 'How is it,' they say, 'that the Christian Doctrine, the highest and noblest which the world has ever known, though supported by all the resources of Western civilisation, can only count its converts in Mohammedan lands by twos and threes, while Bahaism can reckon them by thousands?' The answer to my mind is as plain as the sun at mid-day. Western Christianity, save in the rarest cases, is more Western than Christian, more racial than religious; and, by dallying with doctrines plainly incompatible with the obvious meaning of its Founder's words, such as the theories of 'racial supremacy,' 'imperial destiny,' 'survival of the fittest,' and the like, grows steadily more, rather than less, material. Did Christ belong to a 'dominant race,' or even to a European or 'white' race? The dark-skinned races to whom the Christian missionaries go are not fools, and have no object in practising that curious self-deception wherewith so many excellent and well-meaning European and American Christians blind themselves to the obvious fact that they attach much more importance to race than to religion; they clearly see the inconsistency of those who, while professing to believe that the God they worship incarnated Himself in the form of an Asiatic man—for this is what it comes to—do nevertheless habitually and almost instinctively express, both in speech and action, contempt for the 'natives' of Asia."

I do not wish to enter into a controversy regarding the merits or demerits of the missionaries in the Orient, preferring simply to offer my tribute to some of those earnest and self-sacrificing ones whom I know, but I wonder how many of them really believe that there is a probability or a possibility of the many hundred millions of Mohammedans and others becoming Christians. Those who have lived in the East know that it is as rare for a Mohammedan to become a Christian, as it is for a Christian in the West to become a Mohammedan. We must remember too, that the Mohammedans and others believe just as firmly as the Christians, that their religion will become predominant, but

A Universal Religion

history itself gives the refutation to this belief. Take for instance the two great religions of Christianity and Mohammedanism. Can we say that, after all the zeal, the earnestness, the effort with which their adherents have tried to convert each other, they are any nearer being united than they were thirteen centuries ago? And among the millions of Buddhists in the world do we notice any perceptible difference of numbers caused by their defection into other religions? And Buddhists also are making converts, so it is nothing but a continual exchange without approaching any nearer to unity.

The present situation might be likened to a pyramid, one side being given to the Christians, another to the Buddhists, another to the Mohammedans, and another to the Hindus. Each one is trying to draw his neighbour over to his side of the pyramid. If instead of looking *around*, they would look *up* to the apex, they would behold the Light which they all are seeking.

The great barrier separating Christians, Mohammedans, Buddhists, and others, is at length being broken down through the influence of this Bahai Movement, and a friendly, even a fraternal relationship is being established among them. There are not merely a few dozens so affected, but many thousands. May we not say then that perhaps the true spirit of Christianity is in this movement? We have but the words of the Christ, "Ye cannot gather figs from thistles," and "by their fruits ye shall know them."

I have written a short account of the Bahais in India, in a book entitled, "With the Bahais in India," and from this I shall quote an incident which happened while I was in Bombay. I have mentioned that Baha Ullah, in his "Book of Laws," advised that a council should be elected in each Bahai community to look after the affairs of that community. In Bombay they have such a council composed of nineteen persons, chiefly Mohammedans and Zoroastrians. These two peoples were anything but friendly in the past, but now they are working together harmoniously for the common good. One night, while I was attending a meeting of this council, a poor Zoroastrian Bahai shopkeeper

The Bahai Movement

came and told the members that affairs had been going very badly with him, and that he was on the point of failure. The council deliberated, and decided that different members should give a part of their time each day to helping him in his shop, lay in a new stock of goods and give pecuniary help if necessary. This was done, and soon the man was on his feet again. This is an example to show that the Bahais practice the fraternity which they preach.

A Mohammedan Bahai also arrived that evening in a state of much perplexity. He had just received from a Mohammedan friend a hundred lottery tickets to dispose of, the lottery being for some Mohammedan charity. "I don't know what to do with them," the man said. "In the Book of Laws, Baha Ullah has strongly forbidden gambling, but I am not sure whether a lottery would come under the head of gambling or not. If I accept and distribute these lottery tickets I may be breaking one of the laws, on the other hand, if I refuse them, I shall probably make this friend of mine, who is an influential Mohammedan, my bitter enemy." The nineteen members of the House of Justice, as the assembly is called, deliberated together as to what should be done. Finally, a Zoroastrian member saw a way out of the difficulty, and he proposed that each one of the Bahais should take a ticket, and then return them with the hundred rupees, writing that they did not care to take a chance in a lottery, but they were very glad to help a Mohammedan charity. I wonder if all who read these lines will appreciate the beauty and the greatness of this act. It shows two great results of Bahai teaching—gambling, one of the most prevalent vices of the East, being looked upon with aversion; and the feeling of animosity and hatred of Zoroastrian for Mohammedan, which has endured for centuries, becoming so modified, that they are glad to help a Mohammedan charity. Truly this is no small fruit from the Bahai tree. I wish it were possible to speak here of many other cases of noble and disinterested examples of service for the common good, which came under my notice in India.

This spirit of love and service to fellow men was exemplified in an Indian Bahai actually giving his life, on one

A Universal Religion

occasion, to save mine, and "greater love hath no man than this."

"Think," a Persian Bahai once said to me, "when I was an orthodox Mohammedan, I used to wash my hands after shaking hands with a Christian, thinking myself polluted, now I want to shake hands with all the world."

Baha Ullah had been exiled from his country in 1852, and after forty years of exile, wandering, and imprisonment, his earthly ministry came to an end.

He left word to his disciples that after his departure, they should look to his eldest son, Abbas Effendi, as their leader and teacher, the one on whose shoulders his mantle was to fall, the exponent and promulgator of his teachings to the world. Since 1892, Abbas Effendi, who, thereafter, assumed the title Abdul Baha, the servant of God, has been the leader of the Bahai Movement, and under his wise and loving guidance it has grown and expanded, until its influence has been felt in the four corners of the earth. I saw a striking example of this when I visited Acre some two years ago, and met men—from India, Burma, Persia, Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Russia, France, England and America— assembled there, to listen to the teachings of the Master, the name by which Abdul Baha is universally called. These men, belonging to various races, creeds, and sects, were gathered around one table breaking bread together, and greeting each other as friends and brothers. Can such a scene be paralleled in any other spot on earth?

Abdul Baha is more than a teacher, he is a living example to men of what the Christ-life really is; love and kindness seem to radiate from him and his daily life is an expression of service to man. He is showing to the materialistic and sceptical twentieth century, that this life is not merely an ideal, but a possibility, that we may take heart again and "turn our sight to ourselves to find God standing within us, powerful, mighty and supreme" (Baha Ullah); and that we may come into the sonship of the Kingdom of God.

There have been some who have denied that such a personality as Jesus could have lived upon the earth. The life of Abdul Baha proves the actuality of Jesus. The true

The Bahai Movement

Bahai is also the truest Christian, he no longer speculates as to whether it was possible that so perfect a being could have trod the earth nineteen centuries ago; he looks at the life of of the "Master of Akka," and knows. Such a life is an inspiration to the whole race. It is a greater argument for the love of God and the truth of religion than all the books of theology (old or new) ever written. Men have grown tired of theories and speculations, they want to hear again that note of love, unselfishness and brotherhood, that was heard nineteen hundred years ago. Such a note is again being sounded from that same Holy Land to-day, by the servant of God, Abdul Baha, who is teaching the world the forgotten truths, and preaching the true atonement, the at-one-ment of man with man, and man with God, revealing the true love, which is another word for service, the giving of oneself for the whole. He is teaching the lesson of oneness. No doctrines are so magnified by him that their non-acceptance would shut any soul out of the Kingdom. "All else save love," he says, "is merely outwardly uttered words"; again he says, "this is a religion of deeds, not words." He is calling to men and women of every race and creed to come under the standard of Unity, which he is bearing aloft, to assist him in establishing the Kingdom of God, the Brotherhood of man on the earth here and now. Let those who are really desiring the reign of peace and goodwill to man, and not simply the triumph of their own particular sect or creed, or of their own set of opinions, listen to the appeal of this man who calls us to unity. Can we find anywhere to-day a greater instrument for bringing about this Unity and Brotherhood of man which we profess to desire, than in this Bahai Movement? It is giving to men, what some writer has said, is the best thing that any religion can give to man,—a *new heart*. It is uniting men in the only way they can be united, through love, understanding and service.

It will be thus seen that the message of the Bahai Movement is one of peace to the world, and that the Bahais consider this Manifestation as but another outpouring of Divine Truth upon the earth; that they are lovers of the Light from whatever horizon it may appear, considering the

A Universal Religion

different prophets and divine teachers of the past as lamps through which this Light shone forth and by which the world has been enlightened; therefore it considers all religions to be divine and possessing the essence of Truth which has since become obscured by the superstitions and different practices which have been added by man.

Considering the power of assimilation that the Bahai Religion has shown, its rapid growth amongst so many different races and religions, and the bond of real sympathy, affection and understanding which it is creating between East and West, may we not say that its claim to be a universal religion is not merely a beautiful ideal, but a growing reality?

What earnest observer of life can deny that the world is passing through a great upheaval of thought. The old order of things is passing away, whether we wish it or no, men are everywhere seeking for truth, and people are being tossed about by every wind of doctrine. Such is the significance of the Higher Criticism, the New Theology, the springing up of so many societies and sects, the fact that many in Protestant lands are turning towards Catholicism, and that many in Catholic lands are becoming Protestants or Free-thinkers. This is what is happening under Christian governments, but the same upheaval is occurring in other countries. What is to be the outcome of it all? There are many who recoil from the cold and unsympathetic systems of ethics put forward by certain materialists, and who at the same time are repulsed by the extremes to which certain occultists go. They feel the need of a religion, and yet the message of the churches is no longer vital to them. It is to such people that the Bahai Movement especially appeals. A religion which exalts work, education, science, and peace, should appeal to the Positivist, the Ethicist and the social reformer, and while upholding all the great social reforms, never loses grasp of the Eternal Realities. It contains that spiritual force, that vital faith, which is necessary to put these reforms into execution.

Such a religion wholly divorced from a spirit of com-

The Bahai Movement

mercialism, and whose only warfare is against selfishness, must appeal to all that is highest and best in man.

"O people of the world! The creed of God is for love and union, make it not to be a cause of discord and dissension. I enjoin you to the service of the nations and to the pacification of the world.

"O people of the world! The pavilion of Unity is raised, do not gaze upon each other with the eyes of foreigners, ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch.

"Let him not glory who loves his own country, but let him glory who loves the whole world."—(Words of BAHÁ-ULLÁH.)