

Baha'i Movement Seen as Hope of Religion

New Philosophy Wipes Out All Prejudices Based on Race, Color and Creed

Wilmette Temple of Light a Thing of Surpassing Beauty

By LOUIS T. GREGORY

WILMETTE, Ill.—This beautiful village, a suburb of the great city of Chicago, brings annually together a gathering unique among the great assemblages of the earth. While the great busy world of dollars and want, bustle and traffic, business and chaos, war-like preparation, speed and accident, heedlessness and indifference to all save material values is in full swing, a band of resolute idealists meet here in earnest consultation about the state of the whole world.

They soar on wings of the spirit above the world of dust. They enter the Elysian fields of divine joyousness. They greet and comfort each other with cheering words and noble deeds. They forget their private griefs and limitations in seeking light and happiness for humanity.

This is the Baha'i annual convention and present are 35 delegates, representing communities of this religion from Maine to California and from Seattle to Miami, with a greater number of visiting friends. East and West, North and South, white, yellow, brown and black are seen in friendliness and joyous array. A majority among them represent, as is fitting, the majority group in American life. But these are most cordial and show no sense of separation from their comrades of a darker hue in American life. They reside in the world of unity and see no difference. Here is the East made practical and orderly in thought through the practical ideas of the West. Herein is the materialistic West spiritualized and idealized through the profound meditation and spiritual knowledge of the mysterious East.

The building in which this gathering meets is also unique among the many structures of the world. Its architecture is strikingly different. It has nine sides, nine doors of entry, and when completed will be approached by nine walks. It will have nine fountains flowing and will reveal the mystery of the number nine. Nine being the last of the digits is the complete, all inclusive number. It represents in symbol perfection and maturity. It shows the ideals of a world that is full grown. A world of prejudice, ignorance and strife is immature. One of justice, freedom, knowledge, kindness and the rights of men upheld, is one that has come into its own, fulfilling God's requirements for mankind. This is the plan to which we are advancing in the new cycle of light and dispensation of the day of God. And so this great temple, known as the Mashriqu'll Adhkar, or Dawning Place of the Praises of God, is its object lesson to all mankind.

HERE RELIGION AND SCIENCE JOIN HANDS

Here religion and science in their common origin support each other. Here all religions blend in their freedom from all forms of superstition, in their service to their followers in action. Here racial boundaries disappear as men gaze upon the souls and characters of their fellows and see their outward temples as but temporary abodes. Here is encouragement to all nations to learn and speak one language. Here all prejudices are cast in the dust from whence they sprang. Here women and men have the same rights and neither tries to enslave the other. Here each person must investigate and see the truth for himself, nor depend upon the blind imitation of others. Each must think for himself to realize his own. Each must dwell in amity with his neighbors. Each must seek the good of all. All must depend upon divine insight and guidance.

The specific object of the Baha'i convention is to choose the body of nine, known as the National Spiritual Assembly, which will direct Baha'i activities throughout the United States and Canada during the next year. Included in this is the plan for the completion of this unique structure now so well on its way. During the past 11 years in which this system has been in vogue, the convention has shown its freedom from prejudices by electing on seven such occasions a Colored and Jewish member of this important body and more than once an Oriental has been included. It is significant that one-third of the membership is usually of the gentler sex.

ALL RACES WELCOMED AS BAHAI MEMBERS

Baha'is are made up of all races, nationalities and religions. It was rather impressive today to see a black friend who sat at a table with a Jew and a Catholic at the midday luncheon. Such sights are now so common that they cause not the slightest excitement. Among the prominent Colored Baha'is may be mentioned Dr. Alain Locke, Rhode's scholar and professor of philosophy of Howard university; Mrs. Coralie Franklin Cook, Mrs. Shelley N. Parker of Chicago, Mrs. Lethia C. Fleming of Cleveland, Attorney A. H. Martin, Archbishop R. G. Barrow of Brooklyn, Attorney H. W. Davis of Washington and Dr. Phillips of Pasadena.

The Baha'i religion is a special bounty to the world at a time of such need. It unfolds the plan and program of God to a stricken world. It is constructive and healing. It conforms the reality of every faith. It antagonizes nothing that is good. It restates with clearness and force all the religious teachings of the past. It makes them simple and understandable and applicable to life today. It also unfolds new truth, fulfills that wonderful prophecy of Jesus Christ wherein He declared that "He, the Spirit of Truth, would come to guide us into all truth." It clarifies and explains all the mysteries of religion. It is divine education. It demolishes all superstitions, all prejudices. It has the power to unify mankind. It is divine education, authori-

tative and complete and inexhaustible.

A list of the great world characters who have been illumined and guided by this great and glorious light would be most impressive. Rulers, statesmen, poets, philosophers, professors, welfare workers, theologians, artists, scientists, people of all ranks, degrees and classes, humble and exalted, have all drawn inspiration from the veritable sun of truth. "The proof of the sun is its own light." It is therefore incumbent upon each and all to investigate and see what food God provides for his starving children.

When Prof. Edward G. Loun of Cambridge university journeyed to the Orient and discovered its great founder, Baha'ullah, in prison, the latter, kinglike in his majesty, addressed him these words:

"Behold you have come to see a prisoner and an exile. We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations. Yet they deem us a stirrer-up of strife, worthy of bonds and imprisonment. That the bonds of affection and unity among the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease and difference of race be annulled: what harm is there in this?"

Is not this what Christ prophesied? Do not you in Europe need this also?

Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of mankind than on that which is conducive to the happiness of mankind and the peace of the nations. Yet so it shall be. These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and the most great peace shall come. Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his

country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."

Abdul Baha, illustrious son of an illustrious sire, declared:

"Beware of prejudice, for light is good in whatever lamp it is burning. A rose is beautiful in whatever garden it may bloom. The star has the same radiance, whether it shines from the East or West."

Both for the oppressed and the oppressor, the day of deliverance has come!