

CHURCHES NOT PLAYING PROPER ROLE IN WAR AGAINST PREJUDICE

Baha'i Movement Stands Alone as Enemy of Color Bar, Says Editor

WE are passing through the crumbling stages of a civilization apparently decadent. The history of the past four years makes a startling record of momentous events, radical changes and new world issues emerging seemingly without definite order and meaning, capable of many conflicting interpretations.

But if one observes how action is expressive of thought, how thought is moved by will and desire, and how will and desire are formed by the quality of the personal or group understanding, it will become evident that an era so profoundly revolutionary in all directions and on all planes can only be accounted for by the presence of some motive power, some new influences felt in the very soul of the world. Those who lament that this is an age of dominant materialism may well ponder the results of collective ethnic groups in their social integration.



Robert S. Abbott

Though their efforts have been sporadic and isolated, they have not failed to indicate a determination to allay the incredible suffering brought on by social antipathy. Though governments may fall, though institutions may collapse, the promotion of good will among all men, which was ushered in by the Christian era, will not be converted into a gasty mockery.

PREJUDICE IS NOT FOUGHT BY CHURCHES

All of the great thinkers and religious leaders from the time of Christ have labored toward understanding and peace. If institutions founded in their names have failed to carry out their original mandates, it is because they have fallen into the hands of unscrupulous exploiters and clever opportunists who have sought to traffic with their legacy. They may have corrupted an ideal covenant in their zeal for self-aggrandizement, but from time to time a new prophet, an impassioned disciple of the true cause will rise to reinterpret the spiritual values thereof. If, during the twenty-eight years of my journalistic career I have been relentless in my campaign against race prejudice and discrimination, it is because I know the disastrous effects upon the human souls. Race prejudice would not have marred our civilization if the churches had fought it and met the issues in true Christian spirit. Many discerning minds have testified to the profoundly significant change which has taken place during recent years in the character of popular religious thinking.

Religion has developed an entirely new emphasis, more especially for the layman, quite independent of the older sectarian divisions. Instead of considering that religion is a matter of turning toward an abstract creed, the average religionist today is concerned with the practical applications of religion to the problems of human life. Religion, in brief, after having apparently lost its influence in terms of theology, has been restored more powerfully than ever as a spirit of brotherhood, an impulse toward unity, and an ideal making for a more enlightened civilization throughout the world.

Against this background Bahalism

stands revealed as the supreme expression of all those modern religious tendencies animated by social ideals which do not repudiate the reality of spiritual experience but seek to transform it into a dynamic striving for unity. Bahalism, when clearly understood, gives the world its most potent agency for applying mystical vision or idealistic aspiration to the service of humanity. It makes visible and concrete those deeper meanings and wider possibilities of religion which could not be realized until the advent of Abdul Baha.

Many churches have dissipated their energy upon inconsequential, almost frivolous issues. Issues which by right do not fall within the domain and jurisdiction of the church. The Pope—the infallible head of the Roman Catholic church—has shown a great deal more concern about women's dresses than amity of races. The great protestant temples where eloquent white archbishops thunder their invectives, are more concerned with politics and prohibition than with prejudice and racial discrimination. Bishops have been convicted and unfrocked for participation in questionable dealings and violation of episcopal rules. If these ecclesiastes, the most high dignitaries of the protestant and catholic churches alike consecrated to the cause of humanity, spent at least as much time promoting racial good will and fighting discrimination as they spend in stealing and in politics many of the fundamental problems which affect society today would be solved.

ABDUL BAHA POINTED THE WAY

From the East again came a new redeemer in the person of Abdul Baha through the teachings of whom already enmity and hatred are being dispelled. Listen to his own words: "The differences existing between nations and peoples will soon be annulled and the fundamentals of the divine religions which are no other than the oneness and solidarity of the human race are being established. For thousands of years the human race has been at war. It is enough. Now let mankind, for a time at least, consort in amity and peace. Enmity and hatred have ruled.

Let the world for a period, exercise love. For thousands of years the nations have denied each other, considering each other as infidel and inferior. It is sufficient. We must now realize that we are the servants of one God, that we turn to one beneficent Father, live under one divine law, seek one reality, and have one desire. Thus may we live in the utmost friendship and love, and in return the favors and bounties of God shall surround us, the world of humanity will be reformed, mankind enjoy new life, eternal light will illumine and heavenly moralities become manifest." This is the doctrine which proclaims the oneness of mankind and which aims to batter down the infernal forces and pernicious influences of race prejudice and discrimination.

It is the one cult which is vitally concerned with social problems and their proper solution. The adherents to such a faith as any one informed may testify do not preach love in the one ear and whisper segregation in the other. They are opposed to social separation.