

THE WORLD ISSUE OF RACE

(Editorial From The World Order)

The movements of world opinion during recent months have given to the question of race relations so vital an emphasis that it must be recognized as one of the paramount issues confronting this age.

Historically, race as immediate biological or blood bond was during a long period identical with those other bonds upon which a society rests—the bond of economic interest, of cultural unity, of religious affiliation and of that common government, whether of nation or tribe, upon which internal justice and external defense directly depends.

The evolution of civilization has gradually separated the experience of blood kinship from the other social functions necessary to community existence. The modern nation has succeeded in dissolving age-long sources of separation and hostility—language, culture and race—and in a larger loyalty to the common institutions of law and order, the original organic family unit has abandoned its sense of exclusiveness and militant isolation.

The status of citizenship has in fact replaced blood relationship as the source of the individual's social personality throughout the greater part of the modern world. Nationality therefore represents a vast advance toward true civilization in comparison with that primitive tribalism which gave to language, culture, religion, government and the economic process an arbitrarily limited social area.

The race problem today reveals two different aspects: it intensifies a spirit of hostility arising not from race relations but from the conflict of states—a by-product of nationalism in its negative, aggressive manifestations; and it intensifies that antagonism among citizens of the same state whose ultimate source is economic competition. The race problem, then, stands as a major world issue for the sole reason that it supplies a constant source of instinctive hatred and jealousy, a mighty reservoir of unthinking antagonism, employed to deepen and to justify every social hostility created by the international chaos in which we live. It is one form of the primitive within

every individual and every social group springing to action when the bestial-human element is aroused.

The Baha'i approach to this problem of race relations is spiritual and therefore universal. Baha'u'llah interprets the true history of religion to mean that man's social personality, at its highest and best, derives not from one's status as a citizen but from one's status as member of one divine Faith.

Christendom, when true to the teaching of its Founder, was a community of believers who admitted one another into a relationship far more intimate and sacred than that of the biological family, far more significant than that of a common legal government, far more influential than that of a mutual trade or economic class. Faith in its purity unites the souls of men, and unites them for peace in all contacts and associations, and therefore faith is the sole human tie which can remain unbroken under the onslaught of political, economic, cultural or biological antagonism.

The Baha'is of the world, because they share one divine Faith that knows no boundry of race or creed or nation or class, have already within their own religious community, spread throughout forty countries, solved the race problem which outside this community poisons the very springs of human emotion. When one becomes a Baha'i, one enters a new and higher realm of reality where the world's traditional values have no influence. As among the early Christians, as among the pioneers of Islam, the Baha'is are members of a new body, and in their spiritual relationship they leave their artificial social relationships forever behind.

Once again the holy and incorruptible flame of faith has been enkindled in the heart of the world, lighted by the One who brings the heavenly fire to a cold and darkened earth. Once again a community of believers is created whose manners and customs are reflections of the soul and not the flesh. This new status of believer revolutionizes all human intercourse because it is only the Fatherhood of God who can establish the brotherhood of man.

H. H.