

terms and ideas and practical issues of the present-day world and its problems and dilemmas, or, I am afraid, much of the advantage of this marvelous seed-time will be lost.

Too often previously, we have been confronted with that characteristic and almost pardonable distrust of the average man for the "panacea type of solution," his interest in only one segment of the problem. Today even the man in the street is becoming keenly convinced of the fundamental and wide-scale character of the difficulties underlying the present crisis. In a recent article, H. G. Wells has this to say: "It is becoming plain to us that the disaster of the Great War and our present social and economic disorder are not isolated misfortunes, but broad aspects of a now profound disharmony in the conditions of human life. A huge release of human energy through invention and discovery drives us on inexorably toward the establishment of a new type of society in which the production and distribution of necessities will be the easy task of a diminishing minority of the population, while research, new enterprise, new extensions and elaborations of living, the conquest not simply of material but of moral and intellectual power and of beauty, vitality and happiness become the occupation of an ever increasing multitude. . . . We cannot go back. Retrogression to less progressive conditions seems more difficult and dangerous now than a revolutionary advance. Either we must go on to this new state of disciplined plenty or lapse into chaotic and violent barbarism."

And of this that he calls "an imperative new world order," Mr. Wells has this interesting and challenging thing to say: "I doubt if it is in the capacity of any single human being to lead our race around this difficult corner. . . . The carry-over from the catastrophic phase of today to the new world state of freedom and abundant life must, I believe, be the work of a gathering, growing number of men inspired by a common apprehension of the needs and possibilities of the case. I am thinking of a wide, unorganized growth of understanding. . . . When that understanding develops commanding force, the new world will be made accessible, and not before."

I have cited this quotation as a representative sample of the drift of intelligent thought today upon the whole world situation. Its tone and trend show clearly just that groping toward universal and spiritual principles and forces which alone can save us. More clearly still, it reveals the demand for a social ideal of religious appeal and intensity, but at the same time sane, practical and progressive. This despair and disillusionment of the present, this bankruptcy of materialism must be seized upon constructively and positively as a God-given opportunity for teaching men where the true principles and hopes of a new and universal human order really can be found. And to do that powerfully, effectively, the Bahá'í teaching needs an inspired extension of that potent realism of 'Abdu'l-Bahá by which he crowned and fulfilled the basic idealism of Bahá'u'lláh.

2. Lessons in World Crisis

published in Bahá'í World vol. 9 (1940-1944), pp. 745-7

THE Twentieth Century seems destined to be the age of a terrestrial revelation of the essential and basic oneness of mankind. This becomes more and more manifest as the present world crisis develops and its issues deepen. Superficially viewed, as they become more and more grave, more and more divisive, they seem to point to a hopeless negation of human unity and its practical possibilities. But out of these very negative aspects comes the greatest and most practical hope; for upon the plane of practical affairs the lesson of unity must be learned from the realization on a world scale of the costly self-contradictions and the staggering futilities of disunity. Read in spiritual terms and dimensions, then, these increased and increasing tensions of racial and credal, class and political strife converge on a focal issue of basic human inter-group understanding and brotherhood which can be constructively solved only by a fundamental change of our individual and social attitudes. There is no doubt that what was once an issue merely on the plane of spiritual vision for a few prophetic minds and an intellectual conviction with a small minority of clear-sighted liberals is now a grave practical issue, recognized as such, by hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people of all classes, races, creeds, nationalities and cultures. They may not know the solution to the problem, nor agree in their ideas about its solution, but they do know it as a basic issue and vaguely sense that it represents the great impasse of our present-day civilization. And a considerable and growing number, in addition, realize that some basic spiritual reorientation is a prerequisite to the effective solution of many, if not most, of the specific political, economic and cultural issues of our time. To the extent that they do so, even vaguely, they sense that such concrete settlements depend critically on some more vital spiritual factor of general confidence, good-will and mutual respect with which to supplant and neutralize our traditional and all too prevalent group suspicions, partisan bias and monopolistic self-righteousness. All this point to what in a previous decade of effort toward world unity and international understanding was called "psychological disarmament."

But psychological disarmament was found impossible precisely because on the political and economic plane we had no moral conviction or even insight about an integrating principle. This is not to say that, once generated elsewhere, such a principle cannot be implemented on both the political and the economic plane. But it must first spring from a recognized moral imperative such as only cultural and religious ideology can generate, and then be transplanted as a standard of right action to these practical levels of our life. Initially propagated in moral, religious and cultural soil, however, such an integrating idea will acquire pragmatic confirmation on all levels as it proceeds to demonstrate its constructive usefulness and practicality. At the present time, over various issues and at various levels, just such practical and seemingly independent discoveries are now being made of what is, at bottom, really the same central and basic principle of mankind's fundamental unity of mind, heart, and purpose.

Independent confirmations of the basic truth of this central principle constitute the most significant and encouraging symptoms in the otherwise dark and confusing welter of these times. A few deserve special, if only passing mention. In our religious life, the leading religious liberals are increasingly recognizing the imperative need for inter-faith movements on the various fronts of hitherto sectarian division and dissension. Campaigns are well under way for bridging the inter-Protestant, the Catholic-Protestant and the Judeo-Christian sectarian divides; although such effort has not as yet been adequately extended to the Muslim and Oriental religious fronts, equally if not more important for spiritual rapprochement on a world scale. In the vital field of our cultural disunity and misunderstandings, we are beginning, under the leadership of the cultural anthropologists, to realize and to be willing to admit the essential parity of cultures — a very necessary spiritual foundation for any true world order of peoples and nations. Similarly in the field of education, we seem to be on the verge of realizing that international-mindedness can only be created through some definite collective effort at mutual understanding and by developing a sense of common purpose among educators throughout the world. Finally, we now fairly generally recognize the threat of race and class cleavage within our Western societies and that no basic sense of human unity on a world scale can develop if these internal cleavages persist to curdle at the source the desirable and right human values and attitudes. All these trends, separate as they are and may seem to be, are not only in the same direction but will be seen in retrospect as a convergence of moral growth and development in the practical implementation of the "oneness of humanity."

It is highly significant that such developments as these coincide with the first Centennial of the Bahá'í revelation of these basic principles. Equally significant is it that they involve inevitably because of a cataclysmic world war, the consideration of such problems upon a world scale and within the framework of an international system of mutually reenforced equality, cooperation and justice. It was such a converging series of confirmations that seemed to warrant our initial statement that "the Twentieth Century seems destined to be the age of the terrestrial revelation of the essential and basic oneness of humanity." And if such be the case, as it seems indeed to be, the Bahá'í teaching could wish for no greater or more timely vindication of its insight or justification of its basic principles.

METADATA

Views5695 views since posted 2014-03-25; last edit 2025-03-09 15:02 UTC;

previous at archive.org.../locke_orientation_hope_crisis

Language

English

Permission

© BIC, public sharing permitted. See sources 1, 2, and 3.

History

Scanned 2013-12 by Don Calkins.

Share

Shortlink: bahai-library.com/4383

Citation: ris/4383

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

Biographies

Books

Chronologies

Compilations

Compilations-NSA

Compilations-personal

Documents

East-asia

Encyclopedia

Essays

Etc

Excerpts

Fiction

Glossaries

Guardian

Histories

Introductory

Letters

Maps

Music

Newspapers

NSA-documents

NSA-letters

Personal

Pilgrims

Poetry

Presentations

Resources

Reviews

Scripts

Software

Statistics

Study

Talks

Theses

Transcripts

Translations

[UHJ-documents](#)

[UHJ-letters](#)

[Video](#)

[Visual](#)

[Writings](#)

[home](#)

[sitemap](#)

[series](#)

[chronology](#)

[search:](#)

[author](#)

[title](#)

[date](#)

[tags](#)

[adv. search](#)

[languages](#)

[inventory](#)

[bibliography](#)

[abbreviations](#)

[links](#)

[about](#)

[contact](#)

[RSS](#)

[new](#)

— The Orientation of Hope and Lessons in World Crisis (Used by permission of the curator)