

STAR OF THE WEST

"We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; that all nations shall become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men shall be strengthened, that diversity of religion shall cease and differences of race be annulled. So it shall be; these fruitless strifes; these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come."—BAHA'O'LLAH.

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The Conformity of Science and Religion — The Universal Education of the Future

Address of JENABI FAZEL, delivered at the Bahai Congress, held in the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, Tuesday evening, April 26th, 1921
Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. Interpreter. Stenographically reported.

THE cause of His Holiness, BAHÁ'O'LLAH, is a movement, a dispensation which includes in it the dreams, the visions, the aspirations and the hopes of the past seers, prophets, thinkers and philosophers, impartially, and with an eye of justice and equanimity.

If a student studies and investigates the realities and the principles of the religion of BAHÁ'O'LLAH, he will find therein all the truth, all the realities, which are for the betterment and the refinement of character and the development of humanity.

One of the cardinal principles of this blessed dispensation is the conformity of all religious ideals with scientific deductions. If a person ponders over this great principle, he will realize that it has solved one of the greatest problems of the age; it has eradicated the source of many misunderstandings and confusions which were the causes of war and struggle in former ages.

There is no doubt whatsoever that in this universal scheme of things, in this laboratory of nature, there is no more complete, and intricate, and subtle faculty created by God than the brain and its manifold convolutions. The categories, psychological and spiritual, belong to the manifestations of the brain. No matter how you may locate it, whether in the cerebrum or cerebellum, whether in the lower or upper part of the brain—these

categories are the most wonderful, the most perfect realization of this great phenomenon called mind or brain.

The sublimity, the grandeur, and the all comprehending powers of man emanate from the mind. If man were minus the functioning powers of the mind, he would be less than the animals, or anything in the animal kingdom, save certain kinds, who manifest greater powers of instinct or characteristics than man.

The intellectual function in man is like a brilliant star or lamp deposited by the hand of the Almighty in the very center of the human being, which functioning power has the quality of revealing and discovering all the secret laws of nature and creation.

It is the manifesting of that mental power which has made possible the revelation of the mysteries of the laws of nature. It is through that intellectual power that sciences, arts, crafts, industries, and all the other instruments and channels of modern civilization, have transformed the world, and have brought to them those elements which have made life livable and comfortable in our modern civilization.

We can liken this intellectual power to a mine in the depth of which there are infinite gems and jewels. From the beginning of creation the world of humanity has been digging and digging so that these jewels and gems, hidden in

the mine of intellect may be displayed. But, how much of it have we brought into display! only, very, very, little. What we have is only a drop, and what is hidden, still, and which we must develop and explore, is like a great infinite, depthless, boundless ocean.

It is beyond a shadow of doubt, that these powers of the mind were undergoing from time immemorial great changes and transformations, and these transformations and metamorphosis lead to the expansion of the intellect, the extension of the domain of knowledge, the bringing into the world of reality those invisible laws of creation.

If we overlook the mind and its manifestations, the results, and the outcomes issuing from the activity of this intelligence, what would be man? What will we be? Only a conglomeration of flesh, muscles, bones and other materials—nothing more.

Consequently this intellectual force is a guide and an unerring companion, an inner prophet, an interior saviour deposited in the nature of man by the hand of God, that leads man from the path of wrong into the highway of righteousness, that teaches him to shun evil and hasten toward good.

In the world of science and knowledge, if we go back into the Dark Ages, medieval history, we find many seemingly scientific hypothesis and theories which were looked upon as realities in those ages; but they are today exploded through new discoveries. How are we going to explain those phenomena? We can explain it by this fact, that those theories, looked upon as realities by our forefathers, were simply efforts of the mind, assertions of man to explain certain unexplained laws, and as man is a curious animal and he desires to know things these were his efforts to find out, and when the time passed and the necessity for those laws was obviated, greater and more perfect laws were born into the world.

The science of astronomy is the great-

est illustration. Because, there was a time when the Ptolemaic system was taught in Egypt, later on adopted by the Greeks, and then introduced into Europe—that the earth was the center of the universe and the sun, the stars, the planets, all revolve around this infinitesimal globe of ours. How ridiculous this theory seems to modern mind! And yet, for ages and ages it was taught, and anyone who departed one hair's breadth from this theory was looked upon as a heretic and a dangerous man.

Is there any intelligent being today, who would rise and say that we must still believe in that ancient, exploded theory of astronomy or astrology?

Now, here is one philosophical point that I call your attention to: Just as the sciences of the world evolve and every age has its school of science and philosophy, likewise, hand in hand with science and philosophy goes the development and the evolution of religion. Religion is an index to the science of the day, and science is an index to the religion of the day.

The prophets and the manifestations of God are the teachers in the schools of humanity; just as the teachers in our schools have to teach the children in accord with their receptivity for growth and mental acquisition, likewise, these great prophets taught the children of mankind from age to age in those lessons for which they were adapted, so that they might go through certain classes, receive their certificate, and attain to the higher and the highest classes of perfection.

We are living, today, in a universal age, in an era of universal consciousness, in an age of the discovery of the sciences, the display of imagination, the perfections and the revelation of the mystic laws, and if we study the contents of the seven books of the religions of the past, we find in them certain statements which are not in accord with the deductions of modern science. What are we going to do with them?

Because the priests of religions, the teachers of these sacred books, assert dogmatically that these statements must be taken literally, and not otherwise, and that their outward meanings must be accepted by the people, without any interpretation, we find an increasing number of men and women leaving their churches and religious organizations, disappointed with the kind of teachings that these teachers give and thus avoiding all religions and anything that savors of religion.

To make this matter plain—the students of religions in the past, from certain statements in their books, gained a conception of Deity which is anthropomorphic, that is, a human being sitting on a throne with a long white beard, with thousands and thousands of angels bowing down before him doing his bidings and singing songs and hallelujahs. This conception is based upon the theocratic or rather despotic Oriental idea that the king was that type, the highest in the government, with all the ministers and courtiers doing obedience or prostrating before him in every way. They got their conception of God from their idea of government.

Now, it is very well, and very good for our ancestors to have believed in this theory, because the signs of the creation inculcated and developed such thought; but what can we do today, when modern sciences have exploded that idea of heaven, that locality where this so-called God was residing? Where is that place? Science comes and tells us that this is an infinite expanse of ether; the more you ascend the more infinite it becomes and thus the place and the position of the ancient heavens are all obliterated.

Similarly, in regard to the question of the creation. It was taught that God created this world in six days; that the time will come when He will repent of His creation and He will destroy it, and all the world must come to an end. Now, the story of geology, and other similiar sciences, tells us that this world has been

created millions and millions of years; that it will run according to normal life many more millions of years. How are we going to conform these two principles or ideas?

The ancient theologians tried to find out, or locate, hell. So after much discussion, they came to this conclusion: That it was in the center of the earth—very hot—and it was a square plane, rectangular, all its angles equal to each other and that all the evil souls were thrown in the depth of that fiery lake. Geology has come and exploded this theory.

Now, these material or physical facts of nature, misinterpreted, are miraculous religious ideas without conformity with science and reason. Both these ideas are against scientific principles and must somehow, in this age, be squared, before religion can advance in the consciousness of man.

When an intelligent person presented himself before a priest and asked him questions similiar to those we have propounded in the lecture, about these matters, and asked him to explain the meaning of these things, that they were unreasonable and unscientific—all that that priest or minister had to tell them was, "You have to believe in these things blindly. Faith is the law. You must not search, you must not investigate. These are beyond your conception; just continue to believe and somehow, some day you will find it out." (Laughter.) A rather weak consolation.

This had two evil results: Firstly, a scientific mind would never believe in these metaphysical theological dogmas; and secondly, it drove away many many thousands of students who were open minded and ready to believe, but they could not be convinced because these ministers of religions were unable to explain these ideas and give to these men that religious consolation and trust which are the foundation of life.

You have only to read the development of the history of the religions and find

throughout various ages and cycles that there have been great prophets and great philosophers and scholars who tried to conform religious laws with scientific postulates; but these religious ministers, who were engrained in their fanaticism and dogmatism arose against them and ostracized them, looked upon them as heretics, burned them at the stake and thus throttled the voice of freedom and the development of conscience.

This struggle between science and religion, this conflict between faith and science went on and on, till in the appearance of BAHÁ'O'LLAH, seventy years ago, he through his divine power, through his supernal majesty, evolved that heavenly plan for the unification of science and religion which will continue throughout all the succeeding ages, with increasing blessings upon mankind.

He stated that God is reality. Religion is likewise reality, and this reality is not against science. If religious idea is against scientific ideas, it is superstition and must be thrown away.

His greatest divine service was to write spiritual interpretations of the religious books of the world explaining their meanings so that they are today in conformity with the scientific conscience of the time.

Poetically and spiritually he said, "the soul of man is like unto a bird." Just as the bird cannot soar toward the apex of heaven, likewise, the bird of the soul cannot soar or fly in the atmosphere of knowledge without two wings—the wing of science and the wing of religion.

Science without religion is similar unto a jewel which is covered with soiled and tattered cloths, or it is like unto a light which is shining through a dark, sooty,

glass. Science without religion is likened unto a very beautiful, perfect body, but lifeless; like unto a very clear glass, but lightless.

Here comes in his system of education which is based upon the development of the mind and the heart, of the intellect, of the emotions, so that side by side these two powers, religion and science, may work and advance along the highway of humanity.

Science and religion are likened unto two eyes for the body of mankind; likened unto two pillars for the erection of the palace of human brotherhood and solidarity.

Almost all the differences and dissensions existing among the religions of the world were based upon ignorance and misunderstanding of the realities of their books and when BAHÁ'O'LLAH explained those facts to them and corresponded their religious ideals with scientific or intellectual principles all the differences were removed and a great urge or surge of spiritual life appeared.

BAHÁ'O'LLAH, consequently, brought to us the essence of religion which is the reality of science and he gave to us the quintessence of signs which is the jewel of religion and thus united and harmonized the religions of the world and removed all signs and theories of conflicts and turmoils.

This is the age of illumination, this is the cycle of light, this is the era of human brotherhood, this is the time for universal peace, and we cannot—and will never—have the realities of these principles until all of us will arise and conform all our religious ideas to scientific principles. Thus these two blessings of God will transform the surface of the earth into the paradise of glory.

The Convention for "Amity between the Colored and White Races," based on Heavenly Teachings, held in Washington, D. C., May 19, 20 and 21, prompted us to publish the following compiled from the Words of BAHÁ'O'LLAH and Abdul-Baha, bearing upon this important matter.—*The Editors.*