

St. John's Westminster

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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St. John's Westminster

September 17th, 1911

Introduction

On September 17th, 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the request of the venerable Archdeacon of Westminster addressed the congregation of Saint John the Divine after evening service. With a few warm words characteristic of his whole attitude Archdeacon Wilberforce introduced the revered Messenger from the East, who had crossed seas and countries on his Mission of Peace and Unity for which he had suffered forty years of captivity and persecution. The Archdeacon had the Bishop's chair placed for his Guest on the Chancel steps, and standing beside him read the translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's address himself. The Congregation was profoundly moved, and following the Archdeacon's example knelt to receive the blessing of the Servant of God — who stood with extended arms — his wonderful voice rising and falling in the silence with the power of his invocation. As the Archdeacon said: "Truly the East and the West have met in this sacred place tonight." The hymn "O God our help in ages past" was sung by the entire assembly standing, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Archdeacon passed down the aisle to the vestry hand in hand.

Outside the Church, Salvationists were holding their meeting and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was deeply impressed and touched at the sight of the men, women and children gathered together in the night, at the street corner, praying and singing.

Discourse of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O NOBLE Friends! O Seekers for the Kingdom of God! Man all over the world is seeking for God. All that exists is God; but the Reality of Divinity is holy above all understanding.

The pictures of Divinity that come to our mind are the product of our fancy; they exist in the realm of our imagination. They are not adequate to the Truth; truth in its essence cannot be put into words.

Divinity cannot be comprehended because it is comprehending.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

Man, who has also a real existence, is comprehended by God; therefore, the Divinity which man can understand is partial; it is not complete. Divinity is actual Truth and real existence, and not any representation of it. Divinity itself contains All, and is not contained.

Although the mineral, vegetable, animal and man all have actual being, yet the mineral has no knowledge of the vegetable. It cannot apprehend it. It cannot imagine nor understand it.

It is the same with the vegetable. Any progress it may make, however highly it may become developed, it will never apprehend the animal, nor understand it. It is, so to speak, without news of it. It has no ears, no sight, no understanding.

It is the same with the animal. However much it may progress in its own kingdom, however refined its feelings may become, it will have no real notion of the world of man or of his special intellectual faculties.

The animal cannot understand the roundness of the earth, nor its motion in space, nor the central position of the sun, nor can it imagine such a thing as the all-pervading ether.

Although the mineral, vegetable, animal and man himself are actual beings, the difference between their kingdoms prevents members of the lower degree from comprehending the essence and nature of those of the superior degree. This being so, how can the temporal and phenomenal comprehend the Lord of Hosts?

It is clear that this is impossible!

But the Essence of Divinity, the Sun of Truth, shines forth upon all horizons and is spreading its rays upon all things. Each creature is the recipient of some portion of that power, and man, who contains the perfection of the mineral, the vegetable and animal, as well as his own distinctive qualities, has become the noblest of created beings. It stands written that he is made in the Image of God. Mysteries that were hidden he discovers; and secrets that were concealed he brings into the light. By Science and by Art he brings hidden powers into the region of the visible world. Man perceives the hidden law in created things and co-operates with it.

Lastly the perfect man, the Prophet, is one who is transfigured, one who has the purity and clearness of a perfect mirror — one who reflects the Sun of Truth. Of such a one — of such a Prophet and Messenger — we can say that the Light of Divinity with the heavenly Perfections dwells in him.

If we claim that the sun is seen in the mirror, we do not mean that the sun itself has descended from the holy heights of his heaven and entered into the mirror! This is impossible. The Divine Nature is seen in the Manifestations and its Light and Splendor are visible in extreme glory.

Therefore, men have always been taught and led by the Prophets of God. The Prophets of God are the Mediators of God. All the Prophets and Messengers have come from One Holy Spirit and bear the Message of God, fitted to the age in which they appear. The One Light is in them and they are One with each other. But the Eternal does not become phenomenal; neither can the phenomenal become Eternal.

Saint Paul, the great Apostle, said: "We all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."



O GOD the Forgiver! O Heavenly Educator! This assembly is adorned with the mention of thy holy Name. Thy children turn their face towards thy Kingdom, hearts are made happy and souls are comforted.

Merciful God! cause us to repent of our shortcomings! Accept us in thy heavenly Kingdom and give unto us an abode where there shall be no error. Give us peace; give us knowledge, and open unto us the gates of thy heaven.

Thou art the Giver of all! Thou art the Forgiver! Thou art the Merciful! Amen.

