

Discourse to an assembly of Theosophists. London

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Original English



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September,

THESE are wonderful days! We see an Eastern guest received with love and courtesy in the West. I have been drawn here, in spite of indisposition, by the magnet of your love and sympathy.

Some years ago an Ambassador was sent from Persia to London where he stayed five years. (His name was ‘Abdu’l-Ḥasan Ḳhán). When he returned to Persia they asked him to tell them about the English people. He answered: “I do not know the English people, although I have been in London for years I have only met the people of the Court.” This man was a great man in Persia, and was sent to England by princes, and yet he did not know the people, although he had lived among them five years. Now, I — long a prisoner, come to England for the first time, and although my visit is so short, I have already met many dear friends, and I can say I know the people. Those I have met are true souls working for peace and unity. — Think what a difference there is between this time we are living in now, and seventy years ago! Think of the progress! the progress towards unity and peace.

It is God’s will that the differences between nations should disappear. Those who help on the cause of unity are doing God’s work. Unity is the Divine Bounty for this luminous century. Praise be to God, there are today many societies and many meetings held for Unity. Enmity is not so much the cause of separation as it used to be; the cause of disunion now is mostly prejudice. For instance, years ago when Europeans visited the East they were considered unclean and were hated. Now it is different: when people of the West visit those in the East who are followers of the New Light, they are received with love and courtesy.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá holding a little child close to him said, the true Bahá’í loves the children, because Jesus says they are of the Kingdom of heaven. A simple pure heart is near to God; a child has no worldly ambitions.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

Prejudices

The Universal Races Congress was good, for it was intended for the furtherance and progress of unity among all nations and a better international understanding. The purpose was good. The causes of dispute among different nations are always due to one of the following classes of prejudice: racial, lingual, theological, personal, and prejudices of custom and tradition. It requires a universal active force to overcome these differences. A small disease needs a small remedy, but a disease which pervades the whole body needs a very strong remedy. A small lamp may light a room, a larger would light a house, a larger still might shine through the city, but the sun is needed to light the whole world.

The differences in language cause disunion between nations. There must be one universal language. The diversity in Faiths is also a cause of separation. The true foundation of all faiths must be established, the outer differences abolished. There must be a Oneness of Faith. To end all these differences is a very hard task. The whole world is sick, and needs the power of the Great Healer.

These meetings teach us that Unity is good, and that suppression (slavery under the yoke of tradition and prejudice) is the cause of disunion. To know this is not enough. All knowledge is good, but it can bear no fruit except by action. It is well to know that riches are good, but that knowledge will not make a man rich; he must work, he must put his knowledge into practice. We hope the people realize and know that unity is good, and we also hope that they will not be content to stand still in that knowledge. Do not only say that Unity, Love and Brotherhood are good; you must work for their realization.

The Czar of Russia suggested the Hague Peace Conference and proposed a decrease in armament for all nations. In this Conference it was proved that Peace was beneficial to all countries, and that war destroyed trade, etc. The Czar's words were admirable though after the conference was over he himself was the first to declare war (against Japan).

Knowledge is not enough; we hope by the Love of God we shall put it into practice. A spiritual universal Force is needed for this. Meetings are good for engendering spiritual force. To know that it is possible to reach a state of perfection, is good; to march forward on the path is better. We know that to help the poor and to be merciful is good and pleases God, but knowledge alone does not feed the starving man, nor can the poor be warmed by knowledge or words in the bitter winter; we must give the practical help of Loving-kindness.

What of the Peace Congress?

It resembles many drunkards gathered together to protest against the drinking of alcohol. They say drink is horrible and they straightway go out from the house to drink again.

Theosophy

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was asked if he recognized the good which the Theosophical Society has done, He replied:

I know it; I think a great deal of it. I know that their desire is to serve mankind. I thank this noble Society in the name of all Bahá'ís and for myself. I hope that by God's help these friends will succeed in bringing about love and unity. It is a great work and needs the effort of all the servants of God!

Peace

During the last six thousand years nations have hated one another, it is now time to stop. War must cease. Let us be united and love one another and await the result. We know the effects of war are bad. So let us try, as an experiment, peace, and if the results of peace are bad, then we can choose if it would be better to go back to the old state of war! Let us in any case make the experiment. If we see that unity brings Light we shall continue it. For six thousand years we have been walking on the left-hand path; let us walk on the right-hand path now. We have passed many centuries in darkness, let us advance towards the light.

Question. — (It was remarked, Theosophy teaches that truth in all the religions is the same): Does the task of unifying all religions have 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sympathy?

Answer. — Surely.

Question. — Can 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggest any lines on which it could best be worked out?

Answer. — Search for truth. Seek the realities in all religions. Put aside all superstitions. Many of us do not realize the Reality of all Religions.

Divine Manifestations

Question. — What is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching concerning the different Divine manifestations?

Answer. — The Reality of all is One. Truth is one. Religions are like the branches of one Tree. One branch is high, one is low and one in the centre, yet all draw their life from the one stem. One branch bears fruit and others are not laden so abundantly. All the Prophets are lights, they only differ in degree; they shine like brilliant heavenly bodies, each have their appointed place and time of ascension. Some are like lamps, some like the moon, some like distant stars, and a few are like the sun, shining from one end of the earth to the other. All have the same Light to give, yet they are different in degree.

Buddhism

Some referred to the teaching of Buddha. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: The real teaching of Buddha is the same as the teaching of Jesus Christ. The teachings of all the Prophets are the same in character. Now men have changed the teaching. If you look at the present practice of the Buddhist religion, you will see that there is little of the Reality left. Many worship idols although their teaching forbids it.

Buddha had disciples and he wished to send them out into the world to teach, so he asked them questions to see if they were prepared as he would have them be. "When you go to the

East and to the West,” said the Buddha, “and the people shut their doors to you and refuse to speak to you, what will you do?” — The disciples answered and said: “We shall be very thankful that they do us no harm.” — “Then if they do you harm and mock, what will you do?” — “We shall be very thankful that they do not give us worse treatment.” — “If they throw you into prison?” — “We shall still be grateful that they do not kill us.” — “What if they were to kill you?” the Master asked for the last time. “Still,” answered the disciples, “we will be thankful, for they cause us to be martyrs. What more glorious fate is there than this, to die for the glory of God?” And the Buddha said: “Well done!”

The teaching of Buddha was like a young and beautiful child, and now it has become as an old and decrepit man. Like the aged man it cannot see, it cannot hear, it cannot remember anything. Why go so far back? Consider the laws of the Old Testament: the Jews do not follow Moses as their example nor keep his commands. So it is with many other religions.

How can we get the power to follow the right path?

By putting the teaching into practice power will be given. You know which path to follow: you cannot be mistaken, for there’s a great distinction between God and evil, between Light and darkness, Truth and falsehood, Love and hatred, Generosity and meanness, Education and ignorance, Faith in God and superstition, good Laws and unjust laws.

Faith

How can one increase in faith?

You must strive. A child does not know, in learning he obtains knowledge. Search for Truth.

There are three kinds of Faith: first, that which is from tradition and birth. For example: a child is born of Muḥammadan parents, he is a Muḥammadan. This faith is weak traditional faith: second, that which comes from Knowledge, and is the faith of understanding. This is good, but there is a better, the faith of practice. This is real faith.

We hear there is an invention, we believe it is good; then we come and see it. We hear that there is wealth, we see it; we work hard for it, and become rich ourselves and so help others. We know and we see the Light, we go close to it, are warmed by it, and reflect its rays on others; this is real faith, and thus we receive power to become the eternal sons of God.

Healing

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: Disease is of two kinds: material and spiritual.

Take for instance, a cut hand; if you pray for the cut to be healed and do not stop its bleeding, you will not do much good; a material remedy is needed.

Sometimes if the nervous system is paralyzed through fear, a spiritual remedy is necessary. Madness, incurable otherwise, can be cured through prayer. It often happens that sorrow makes one ill, this can be cured by spiritual means.

Philanthropic Societies

Someone asked if the Humanitarian Society was good. — Yes all societies, all organizations, working for the betterment of the human race are good, very good. All who work for their brothers and sisters have Bahá'u'lláh's blessing. They will surely succeed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said: It makes me happy to see all the believers in London. You are all, of every race and creed, members of one family. The teaching of Bahá'u'lláh constrains you to realize your brotherhood to one another.

Man's Comprehension of God and of Higher Worlds

To man, the Essence of God is incomprehensible, so also are the worlds beyond this, and their condition. It is given to man to obtain knowledge, to attain to great spiritual perfection, to discover hidden truths and to manifest even the attributes of God; but still man cannot comprehend the Essence of God. Where the ever-widening circle of man's knowledge meets the spiritual world a Manifestation of God is sent to mirror forth His splendour.

Divine Manifestations

Is the Divine Manifestation, God?

Yes, and yet not in Essence. A Divine Manifestation is as a mirror reflecting the light of the Sun. The light is the same and yet the mirror is not the Sun. All the Manifestations of God bring the same Light; they only differ in degree, not in reality. The Truth is one. The light is the same though the lamps may be different; we must look at the Light not at the Lamp. If we accept the Light in one, we must accept the Light in all; all agree, because all are the same. The teaching is ever the same, it is only the outward forms that change.

The Manifestations of God are as the heavenly bodies. All have their appointed place and time of ascension, but the Light they give is the same. If one wishes to look for the sun rising, one does not look always at the same point because that point changes with the seasons. When one sees the sun rise further in the north one recognizes it, though it has risen at a different point.

