

Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Parsons

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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25 April 1912

1700 Eighteenth Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

Notes by Joseph H. Hannen

In the world of existence the greatest bestowals of God are His teachings. The other bounties of God are limited as regards their benefits and provision. Human existence itself is a divine bestowal, but it is circumscribed with limitations. Sight and hearing are bounties of God; both are limited. And so it is with all the other bestowals; the circle of their operation is confined, restricted, whereas the sphere of the divine teachings is boundless. Centuries and ages pass away, but their efficacy continues like the spirit of life which animates the world of existence. Without the teachings of God the world of humanity is like the animal kingdom. What difference is there between the animal and man? The difference is this: that the animal is not capable of apprehending the divine teachings, whereas man is worthy of them and possesses the capacity to understand. In the animal kingdom there is no such bestowal; therefore, there is limited progression. At most, evolution in that kingdom is a development of the organism. In the beginning it is small, undeveloped; it develops, becomes larger; but its sphere of intellectual growth is limited. Therefore, the teachings of God are the bestowals specialized for man.[pg 62]

Although the divine teachings are truth and reality, yet with the passage of time thick clouds envelop and obscure them. These clouds are imitations and superstitions; they are not the fundamentals. Then the Sun of Truth, the Word of God, arises again, shines forth once more in the glory of its power and disperses the enveloping darkness.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

For a long time the divine precepts of the effulgent Word were obscured by clouds of superstition and error until Bahá'u'lláh appeared upon the horizon of humanity, rent the shadows, scattered the clouds and revealed anew the foundations of the teachings of God.

The first teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the duty incumbent upon all to investigate reality. What does it mean to investigate reality? It means that man must forget all hearsay and examine truth himself, for he does not know whether statements he hears are in accordance with reality or not. Wherever he finds truth or reality, he must hold to it, forsaking, discarding all else; for outside of reality there is naught but superstition and imagination. For example, during the days of Jesus Christ the Jews were expecting the appearance of the Messiah, praying and beseeching God day and night that the Promised One might appear. Why did they reject Him when He did appear? They denied Him absolutely, refused to believe in Him. There was no abuse and persecution which they did not heap upon Him. They reviled Him with curses, placed a crown of thorns upon His head, led Him through the streets in scorn and derision and finally crucified Him. Why did they do this? Because they did not investigate the truth or reality of Christ and were not able to recognize Him as the Messiah of God. Had they investigated sincerely for themselves, they would surely have believed in Him, respected Him and bowed before Him in reverence. They would have considered His manifestation the greatest bestowal upon mankind. They would have accepted Him as the very Savior of man; but, alas, they were veiled, they held to imitations of ancestral beliefs and hearsay and did not investigate the truth of Christ. They were submerged in the sea of superstitions and were, therefore, deprived of witnessing that glorious bounty; they were withheld from the fragrances or breaths of the Holy Spirit and suffered in themselves the greatest debasement and degradation.

Reality or truth is one, yet there are many religious beliefs, denominations, creeds and differing opinions in the world today. Why should these differences exist? Because they do not investigate and examine the fundamental unity, which is one and unchangeable. If they seek reality itself, they will agree and be united;[pg 63] for reality is indivisible and not multiple. It is evident, therefore, that there is nothing of greater importance to mankind than the investigation of truth.

The second teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every human creature is the servant of God. All have been created and reared by the power and favor of God; all have been blessed with the bounties of the same Sun of divine truth; all have quaffed from the fountain of the infinite mercy of God; and all in His estimation and love are equal as servants. He is beneficent and kind to all. Therefore, no one should glorify himself over another; no one should manifest pride or superiority toward another; no one should look upon another with scorn and contempt; and no one should deprive or oppress a fellow creature. All must be considered as submerged in the ocean of God's mercy. We must associate with all humanity in gentleness and

kindliness. We must love all with love of the heart. Some are ignorant; they must be trained and educated. One is sick; he must be healed. Another is as a child; we must assist him to attain maturity. We must not detest him who is ailing, neither shun him, scorn nor curse him, but care for him with the utmost kindness and tenderness. An infant must not be treated with disdain simply because it is an infant. Our responsibility is to train, educate and develop it in order that it may advance toward maturity.

The third teaching or principle of Bahá'u'lláh is that religion and science are in complete agreement. Every religion which is not in accordance with established science is superstition. Religion must be reasonable. If it does not square with reason, it is superstition and without foundation. It is like a mirage, which deceives man by leading him to think it is a body of water. God has endowed man with reason that he may perceive what is true. If we insist that such and such a subject is not to be reasoned out and tested according to the established logical modes of the intellect, what is the use of the reason which God has given man? The eye is the organ of sense by which we view the world of outer phenomena; hearing is the faculty for distinguishing sounds; taste senses the properties of objects, such as bitter, sweet; smell detects and differentiates odors; touch reveals attributes of matter and perfects our communication with the outer world; yet after all, the circle and range of perception by the five senses is exceedingly limited. But the intellectual faculty of man is unlimited in its sphere of action. The eye views details perhaps a mile, but the intellect can perceive the far East and West. The ear may hear tone modulations at one thousand feet, but the mind of man can detect the harmonies of the [pg 64] heavenly spheres as they swing in their courses. Mind makes geological discoveries in subterranean depths and determines the processes of creation in the earth's lowest strata. The sciences and arts, all inventions, crafts, trades and their products have come forth from the intellect of man. It is evident that within the human organism the intellect occupies the supreme station. Therefore, if religious belief, principle or creed is not in accordance with the intellect and the power of reason, it is surely superstition.

At another time I shall speak further of the principles revealed in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. [pg 65]

