

# Talk at Hotel Plaza

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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According to the statement of philosophers the difference in degree of humankind from lowest to highest is due to education. The proofs they advance are these. The civilization of Europe and America is an evidence and outcome of education, whereas the semicivilized and barbarous peoples of Africa bear witness in their condition that they have been deprived of its advantages. Education makes the ignorant wise, the tyrant just, promotes happiness, strengthens the mind, develops the will and makes fruitless trees of humanity fruitful. Therefore, in the human world some have attained lofty degrees, while others grope in the abyss of despair. Nevertheless, the highest attainment is possible for every member of the human race even to the station of the Prophets. This is the statement and reasoning of the philosophers.

The Prophets of God are the first Educators. They bestow universal education upon man and cause him to rise from the lowest levels[pg 85] of savagery to the highest pinnacles of spiritual development. The philosophers, too, are educators along lines of intellectual training. At most, they have only been able to educate themselves and a limited number about them, to improve their own morals and, so to speak, civilize themselves; but they have been incapable of universal education. They have failed to cause an advancement for any given nation from savagery to civilization.

It is evident that although education improves the morals of mankind, confers the advantages of civilization and elevates man from lowest degrees to the station of sublimity, there is, nevertheless, a difference in the intrinsic or natal capacity of



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individuals. Ten children of the same age, with equal station of birth, taught in the same school, partaking of the same food, in all respects subject to the same environment, their interests equal and in common, will evidence separate and distinct degrees of capability and advancement; some will be exceedingly intelligent and progressive, some of mediocre ability, others limited and incapable. One may become a learned professor, while another under the same course of education proves dull and stupid. From all standpoints the opportunities have been equal, but the results and outcomes vary from the highest to lowest degree of advancement. It is evident, therefore, that mankind differs in natal capacity and intrinsic intellectual endowment. Nevertheless, although capacities are not the same, every member of the human race is capable of education.

Jesus Christ was an Educator of humanity. His teachings were altruistic; His bestowal, universal. He taught mankind by the power of the Holy Spirit and not through human agency, for the human power is limited, whereas the divine power is illimitable and infinite. The influence and accomplishment of Christ will attest this. Galen, the Greek physician and philosopher who lived in the second century A.D., wrote a treatise upon the civilization of nations. He was not a Christian, but he bore testimony that religious beliefs exercise an extraordinary effect upon the problems of civilization. In substance he said, "There are certain people among us, followers of Jesus, the Nazarene, who was killed in Jerusalem. These people are truly imbued with moral principles which are the envy of philosophers. They believe in God and fear Him. They have hopes in His favors; therefore, they shun all unworthy deeds and actions and incline to praiseworthy ethics and morals. Day and night they strive that their deeds may be commendable and that they may contribute to the welfare of humanity; therefore, each one of them is virtually a philosopher, for these people have attained unto that which is the essence and purport of philosophy.[pg 86] These people have praiseworthy morals, even though they may be illiterate."

The purpose of this is to show that the holy Manifestations of God, the divine Prophets, are the first Teachers of the human race. They are universal Educators, and the fundamental principles they have laid down are the causes and factors of the advancement of nations. Forms and imitations which creep in afterward are not conducive to that progress. On the contrary, these are destroyers of human foundations established by the heavenly Educators. These are clouds which obscure the Sun of Reality. If you reflect upon the essential teachings of Jesus, you will realize that they are the light of the world. Nobody can question their truth. They are the very source of life and the cause of happiness to the human race. The forms and superstitions which appeared and obscured the light did not affect the reality of Christ. For example, Jesus Christ said, "Put up thy sword into the sheath." The meaning is that warfare is forbidden and abrogated; but consider the Christian wars which took place afterward. Christian hostility and inquisition spared not even the learned; he who

proclaimed the revolution of the earth was imprisoned; he who announced the new astronomical system was persecuted as a heretic; scholars and scientists became objects of fanatical hatred, and many were killed and tortured. How do these actions conform with the teachings of Jesus Christ, and what relation do they bear to His own example? For Christ declared, "Love your enemies, ... and pray for them which ... persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." How can hatred, hostility and persecution be reconciled with Christ and His teachings?

Therefore, there is need of turning back to the original foundation. The fundamental principles of the Prophets are correct and true. The imitations and superstitions which have crept in are at wide variance with the original precepts and commands. Bahá'u'lláh has revoiced and reestablished the quintessence of the teachings of all the Prophets, setting aside the accessories and purifying religion from human interpretation. He has written a book entitled the Hidden Words. The preface announces that it contains the essences of the words of the Prophets of the past, clothed in the garment of brevity, for the teaching and spiritual guidance of the people of the world. Read it that you may understand the true foundations of religion and reflect upon the inspiration of the Messengers of God. It is light upon light.[pg 87]

We must not look for truth in the deeds and actions of nations; we must investigate truth at its divine source and summon all mankind to unity in reality itself.

