

Talk at 309 West Seventy-eighth Street, New York

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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You are very welcome, very welcome, all of you! In the divine Holy Books there are unmistakable prophecies giving the glad tidings of a certain Day in which the Promised One of all the Books would appear, a radiant dispensation be established, the banner of [pg 221] the Most Great Peace and conciliation be hoisted and the oneness of the world of humanity proclaimed. Among the various nations and peoples of the world no enmity or hatred should remain. All hearts were to be connected one with another. These things are recorded in the Torah, or Old Testament, in the Gospel, the Qur'án, the Zend-Avesta, the books of Buddha and the book of Confucius. In brief, all the Holy Books contain these glad tidings. They announce that after the world is surrounded by darkness, radiance shall appear. For just as the night, when it becomes excessively dark, precedes the dawn of a new day, so likewise when the darkness of religious apathy and heedlessness overtakes the world, when human souls become negligent of God, when materialistic ideas overshadow spirituality, when nations become submerged in the world of matter and forget God — at such a time as this shall the divine Sun shine forth and the radiant morn appear.

Consider to what a remarkable extent the spirituality of people has been overcome by materialism so that spiritual susceptibility seems to have vanished, divine civilization become decadent, and guidance and knowledge of God no longer remain. All are submerged in the sea of materialism. Although some attend churches and temples of worship and devotion, it is in accordance with the traditions and imitations of their



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fathers and not for the investigation of reality. For it is evident they have not found reality and are not engaged in its adoration. They are holding to certain imitations which have descended to them from their fathers and ancestors. They have become accustomed to passing a certain length of time in temple worship and conforming to imitations and ceremonies. The proof of this is that the son of every Jewish father becomes a Jew and not a Christian; the son of every Muslim becomes a follower of Islám; the son of every Christian proves to be a Christian; the son of every Zoroastrian is a Zoroastrian, etc. Therefore, religious faith and belief is merely a remnant of blind imitations which have descended through fathers and ancestors. Because this man's father was a Jew, he considers himself a Jew. Not that he has investigated reality and proved satisfactorily to himself that Judaism is right — nay, rather, he is aware that his forefathers have followed this course; therefore, he has held to it himself.

The purpose of this is to explain that the darkness of imitations encompasses the world. Every nation is holding to its traditional religious forms. The light of reality is obscured. Were these various nations to investigate reality, there is no doubt they would attain to it. As reality is one, all nations would then become as one nation. So long as they adhere to various imitations and are deprived [pg 222] of reality, strife and warfare will continue and rancor and sedition prevail. If they investigate reality, neither enmity nor rancor will remain, and they will attain to the utmost concord among themselves.

During the years when the darkness of heedlessness was most intense in the Orient and the people were so submerged in imitations that nations were thirsting for the blood of each other, considering each other as contaminated and refusing to associate — at such a time as this Bahá'u'lláh appeared. He arose in the Orient, uprooting the very foundations of imitations, and brought the dawn of the light of reality. Through Him various nations became united because all desired reality. Inasmuch as they investigated reality in religion, they found that all men are the servants of God, the posterity of Adam, children of one household and that the foundations of all the Prophets are one. For inasmuch as the teachings of the Prophets are reality, Their foundations are one. The enmity and strife of nations, therefore, are due to religious imitations and not to the reality which underlies the teachings of the Prophets. Through Bahá'u'lláh the nations and peoples grew to understand and comprehend this. Therefore, hearts became united, and lives were cemented together. After centuries of hatred and bitterness the Christian, Jew, Zoroastrian, Muslim and Buddhist met in fellowship, all of them in the utmost love and unity. They became welded and cemented because they had perceived reality.

The divine Prophets are conjoined in the perfect state of love. Each One has given the glad tidings of His successor's coming and each successor has sanctioned the One Who preceded Him. They were in the utmost unity, but Their followers are in strife. For instance, Moses gave the message of the glad tidings of Christ, and Christ confirmed the Prophethood of Moses. Therefore, between Moses and Jesus there is no variation or

conflict. They are in perfect unity, but between the Jew and the Christian there is conflict. Now, therefore, if the Christian and Jewish peoples investigate the reality underlying their Prophets' teachings, they will become kind in their attitude toward each other and associate in the utmost love, for reality is one and not dual or multiple. If this investigation of reality becomes universal, the divergent nations will ratify all the divine Prophets and confirm all the Holy Books. No strife or rancor will then remain, and the world will become united. Then will we associate in the reality of love. We will become as fathers and sons, as brothers and sisters living together in complete unity, love and happiness; for this century is the century of light. It is not like former centuries. Former centuries were epochs of oppression. Now[pg 223] human intellects have developed, and human intelligence has increased. Each soul is investigating reality. This is not a time when we shall wage war and be hostile toward each other. We are living at a time when we should enjoy real friendship.

Fifty years ago Bahá'u'lláh sent Epistles to all the kings and nations of the world, at a time when there was no mention of international peace. One of these Epistles was sent by Him to the president of the American democracy. In these communications He summoned all to international peace and the oneness of the human world. He summoned mankind to the fundamentals of the teachings of all the Prophets. Some of the European kings were arrogant. Among them was Napoleon III. Bahá'u'lláh wrote a second Epistle to him, which was published thirty years ago. The context is this: "O Napoleon! Thou hast become haughty indeed. Thou hast become proud. Thou hast forgotten God. Thou dost imagine that this majesty is permanent for thee, that this dominion is abiding for thee. A letter have we sent unto thee for acceptance with thy greatest love; but, instead, thou hast shown arrogance. Therefore, God shall uproot the edifice of thy sovereignty; thy country shall flee away from thee. Thou shalt find humiliation hastening after thee because thou didst not arise for that which was enjoined upon thee, whereas that which was a duty incumbent upon thee was the cause of life to the world. The punishment of God shall soon be dealt out to thee."

This Epistle was revealed in the year 1869, and after one year the foundations of the Napoleonic sovereignty were completely uprooted.

Among these Epistles was a very lengthy one to the Sháh of Persia. It was printed and spread broadcast throughout all the countries. This Epistle was revealed in the year 1870. In it Bahá'u'lláh admonished the Sháh of Persia to be kind to all his subjects, summoning him to dispense justice, counseling him to make no distinction between the religions, charging him to deal equally with Jew, Christian, Muslim and Zoroastrian and to remove the oppression prevailing in his country.

At that time the Jews were greatly oppressed in Persia. Bahá'u'lláh especially recommended justice for them, saying that all people are the servants of God, and in the eye of the government they should be equally estimated. "If justice is not dealt out,

if these oppressions are not removed and if thou dost not obey God, the foundations of thy government will be razed, and thou shalt become evanescent, become as nothing. Thou shouldst gather all the learned men, and then summon Me. There I shall be present. I will [pg 224] then advance proofs and evidences as to My validity. I will manifest My proof and anything that you may ask. I am ready. But if no attention is paid to this book, thou, like unto the kings who became nonexistent, shalt likewise become nonexistent." The Şháh did not answer this Epistle of the Blessed Perfection. Then God destroyed the foundations of his sovereignty.

Among those to whom Bahá'u'lláh wrote was the Sulţán of Turkey. In it He arraigned him, saying, "Verily, thou didst incarcerate and make Me a prisoner. Dost thou imagine that imprisonment is a loss to Me, that imprisonment is a humiliation for Me? This imprisonment is a glory for Me because it is in the pathway of God. I have not committed a crime. It is for the sake of God that I have received this ordeal. Therefore, I am very happy; I am exceedingly joyous. But thou must wait; God will send thee a punishment; thou shalt receive retribution. Erelong thou shalt observe how ordeals shall descend upon thee like rain, and thou shalt become nonexistent." And even so it was.

Likewise, He sent messages to the other kings and crowned heads of the earth, summoning all of them to love, equity, international peace and the oneness of humanity in order that mankind might become unified and agreed; that strife, warfare and sedition should pass away; that bitterness and enmity might cease and all arise to serve the one God.

In brief, two kings arose against Bahá'u'lláh: the Şháh of Persia and the Sulţán of Turkey. They imprisoned Him in the fortress of 'Akká in order to extinguish His light and exterminate His Cause. But Bahá'u'lláh while in prison wrote severe letters of arraignment to them. He declared that imprisonment was no obstacle to Him. He said, "This imprisonment will prove to be the means of the promotion of My Cause. This imprisonment shall be the incentive for the spreading of My teachings. No harm shall come to Me because I have sacrificed My life, I have sacrificed My blood, I have sacrificed My possessions, I have sacrificed all and for Me this imprisonment is no loss." And just as He declared, so it came to pass. In prison He hoisted His banner, and His Cause spread throughout the world. It has reached America. Now the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is extending to all nations of the earth. You go to Asia, and wherever you travel you will find Bahá'ís. You go to Africa, Europe; there you will find the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. In America it is just beginning to grow and spread.

These two kings could not do anything to withstand Bahá'u'lláh, but God through Him was capable of destroying both of them. I, [pg 225] too, was in prison. God removed the chains from my neck and placed them around the neck of 'Abdu'l-Ĥamíd. It was done suddenly — not a long time, in a moment as it were. The same hour that the Young

Turks declared liberty, the Committee of Union and Progress set me free. They lifted the chains from my neck and threw them around the neck of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd. That which he did to me was inflicted upon him. Now the position is precisely reversed. His days are spent in prison just as I passed the days in prison at 'Akká, with this difference: that I was happy in imprisonment. I was in the utmost elation because I was not a criminal. They had imprisoned me in the path of God. Every time I thought of this, that I was a prisoner in the pathway of God, the utmost elation overcame me. 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd is now suffering punishment for his deeds. Because of the sins he committed, he is now in prison. This is retribution for his acts. Every hour he is mortified anew and his ignominy revived. He is in the utmost sorrow and disappointment while I am in perfect happiness. I was happy that — praise be to God! — I was a prisoner in the Cause of God, that my life was not wasted, that it was spent in the divine service. Nobody who saw me imagined that I was in prison. They beheld me in the utmost joy, complete thankfulness and health, paying no attention to the prison.

