

Talk at Home of Mr. Albert L. Hall

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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Praise be to God! This is a beautiful and radiant assemblage. It is a merciful gathering, for you have met here in the utmost love and spirituality. There are many meetings in the world, thousands of them perhaps being held at this very moment, mostly for social, political, scientific or commercial purposes; but our gathering here tonight is for God, for heavenly purposes. We are neither attached to commerce nor is our interest scientific; our spirit and motive are solely for the manifestation of divine bestowals.

Man possesses two types of virtues: One is material, and the other ideal in character. For example, the body of man expresses certain material virtues, but the spirit of man manifests virtues that are ideal. The sense of sight in man is a physical virtue; but insight, the power of inner perception, is ideal in its nature. The sense of hearing is a physical endowment, whereas memory in man is ideal. Among other human forces the power of ideation, or faculty of intellection, is material, but the power of love is spiritual. The acquisition of the realities of phenomena is an ideal virtue; likewise, the emotions of man and his ability to prove the existence of God. Realization of moral standards and the world of discovery involve virtues essentially ideal.

If we review history, we will observe that human advancement has been greatest in the development of material virtues. Civilization is the sign and evidence of this progression. Throughout the world, material civilization has attained truly wonderful heights and degrees of efficiency — that is to say, the outward powers and virtues of man have greatly developed, but the inner and ideal virtues have been



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correspondingly delayed and neglected. It is now the time in the history of the world for us to strive and give an impetus to the advancement and development of inner forces — that is to say, we must arise to service in the world of morality, for human morals are in need of readjustment. We must also render service to the world of intellectuality in order that the minds of men may increase in power and become keener in perception, assisting the intellect of man to attain its supremacy so that the ideal virtues may appear. Before a step is taken in this direction we must be able to prove Divinity from the standpoint of reason so that no doubt or objection may remain for the rationalist. Afterward, we must be able to prove the existence of the bounty of God — that the divine bounty encompasses humanity and that it is transcendental. Furthermore, we must demonstrate that the spirit of man is immortal, that it is not subject to disintegration and that it comprises the virtues of humanity.

Material virtues have attained great development, but ideal virtues have been left far behind. If you should ask a thousand persons, “What are the proofs of the reality of Divinity?” perhaps not one would be able to answer. If you should ask further, “What proofs have you regarding the essence of God?” “How do you explain inspiration and revelation?” “What are the evidences of conscious intelligence beyond the material universe?” “Can you suggest a plan and method for the betterment of human moralities?” “Can you clearly define and differentiate the world of nature and the world of Divinity?” — you would receive very little real knowledge and enlightenment upon these questions. This is due to the fact that development of the ideal virtues has been neglected. People speak of Divinity, but the ideas and beliefs they have of Divinity are, in reality, superstition. Divinity is the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, the manifestation of spiritual virtues and ideal powers. The intellectual proofs of Divinity are based upon observation and evidence which constitute decisive argument, logically proving the reality of Divinity, the effulgence of mercy, the certainty of inspiration and immortality of the spirit. This is, in reality, the science of Divinity. Divinity is not what is set forth in dogmas and sermons of the church. Ordinarily when the word Divinity is mentioned, it is associated in the minds of the hearers with certain formulas and doctrines, whereas it essentially means the wisdom and knowledge of God, the effulgence of the Sun of Truth, the revelation of reality and divine philosophy.

Philosophy is of two kinds: natural and divine. Natural philosophy seeks knowledge of physical verities and explains material phenomena, whereas divine philosophy deals with ideal verities and phenomena of the spirit. The field and scope of natural philosophy have been greatly enlarged, and its accomplishments are most praiseworthy, for it has served humanity. But according to the evidence of present world conditions divine philosophy — which has for its object the sublimation of human nature, spiritual advancement, heavenly guidance for the development of the human race, attainment to the breaths of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the verities of God — has been outdistanced and neglected. Now is the time for us to make an

effort and enable it to advance apace with the philosophy of material investigation so that awakening of the ideal virtues may progress equally with the unfoldment of the natural powers. In the same proportion that the body of man is developing, the spirit of man must be strengthened; and just as his outer perceptions have been quickened, his inner intellectual powers must be sensitized so that he need not rely wholly upon tradition and human precedent. In divine questions we must not depend entirely upon the heritage of tradition and former human experience; nay, rather, we must exercise reason, analyze and logically examine the facts presented so that confidence will be inspired and faith attained. Then and then only the reality of things will be revealed to us. The philosophers of Greece — such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and others — were devoted to the investigation of both natural and spiritual phenomena. In their schools of teaching they discoursed upon the world of nature as well as the supernatural world. Today the philosophy and logic of Aristotle are known throughout the world. Because they were interested in both natural and divine philosophy, furthering the development of the physical world of mankind as well as the intellectual, they rendered praiseworthy service to humanity. This was the reason of the triumph and survival of their teachings and principles. Man should continue both these lines of research and investigation so that all the human virtues, outer and inner, may become possible. The attainment of these virtues, both material and ideal, is conditioned upon intelligent investigation of reality, by which investigation the sublimity of man and his intellectual progress is accomplished. Forms must be set aside and renounced; reality must be sought. We must discover for ourselves where and what reality is. In religious beliefs nations and peoples today are imitators of ancestors and forefathers. If a man's father was a Christian, he himself is a Christian; a Buddhist is the son of a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian of a Zoroastrian. A gentile or an idolator follows the religious footsteps of his father and ancestry. This is absolute imitation. The requirement in this day is that man must independently and impartially investigate every form of reality.

The great question appertaining to humanity is religion. The first condition is that man must intelligently investigate its foundations. The second condition is that he must admit and acknowledge the oneness of the world of humanity. By this means the attainment of true fellowship among mankind is assured, and the alienation of races and individuals is prevented. All must be considered the servants of God; all must recognize God as the one kind Protector and Creator. In proportion to the acknowledgment of the oneness and solidarity of mankind, fellowship is possible, misunderstandings will be removed and reality become apparent. Then will the light of reality shine forth, and when reality illumines the world, the happiness of humankind will become a verity. Man must spiritually perceive that religion has been intended by God to be the means of grace, the source of life and cause of agreement. If it becomes the cause of discord, enmity and hatred, it is better that man should be without it. For in its teachings we seek the spirit of charity and love to bind the hearts of men together. If, on the contrary, we find it alienates and embitters human hearts, we are

justified in casting it aside. Therefore, when man through sincere investigation discovers the fundamental reality of religion, his former prejudices disappear, and his new condition of enlightenment is conducive to the development of the world of humanity.

The purport of our subject is that, just as man is in need of outward education, he is likewise in need of ideal refinement; just as the outer sense of sight is necessary to him, he should also possess insight and conscious perception; as he needs hearing, at the same time memory is essential; as a body is indispensable to him, likewise a mind is requisite; one is a material virtue, the other is ideal. As human creatures fitted and qualified with this dual endowment, we must endeavor through the assistance and grace of God and by the exercise of our ideal power of intellect to attain all lofty virtues, that we may witness the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, reflect the spirit of the Kingdom, behold the manifest evidences of the reality of Divinity, comprehend irrefutable proofs of the immortality of the soul, live in conscious at-one-ment with the eternal world and become quickened and awake with the life and love of God.

