

Talk at Hotel Sacramento

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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Notes by Bijou Straun

When Christ appeared, certain blessed souls followed His example. They were with their Master, ever watching and observing His conduct, movements and thoughts. They witnessed the persecutions which were heaped upon Him and were informed of all the events appertaining to that marvelous life — recipients of His kindness and favors. After the ascension of Christ they hastened to various regions of the world, scattering broadcast the teachings and instructions which He had given them. Through their devotion and efforts other places and remote nations became informed of the principles revealed by Him.

Through their instrumentality the East was illumined, and the light which flooded the East flooded the West. This light was the cause of guiding great hosts of people. It proved to be a preventive of warfare in many instances. This is evidenced in the unification and conjoining of various nations which had formerly been hostile [pg 371] to each other — such as the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Syrians, Chaldeans and Assyrians. Through Christ the oneness of the world of humanity received its expression and proved to be the cause of spiritual illumination for mankind. The breaths of the Holy Spirit became effective in the hearts of people.

Now we have, likewise, come from the Orient, announcing the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, Who shone from the horizon of the East. We have observed His life and beheld His deeds. We have been witnesses of His ordeals and sufferings, observers of His imprisonment and exile. We are fully acquainted with the persecutions heaped



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upon His blessed Personality. Therefore, we who are His disciples have been scattered throughout the world in order that His teachings may be widespread and be heard by every ear. Thus may the people receive the glad tidings of the dawn of His great dispensation, become aware of the divine evidences manifest in Him, be informed of the wonderful episodes of His marvelous life, the greatness of His power in withstanding the kings of the Orient, the might of His spirit in upholding under all circumstances the standard of the oneness of the world of mankind. Perchance you have heard or read of Him. I will give you a brief epitome of His life in order that you may be informed of the history of His great movement and know His teachings.

Bahá'u'lláh was a Persian personage descended from prominent lineage. During His early years a Youth Whose name was 'Alí-Muhammad appeared in Persia. He was entitled the Báb, which means door or gate. The bearer of this title was a great Soul from Whom spiritual signs and evidences became manifest. He withstood the tests of time and lived contrary to the custom and usages of Persia. He revealed a new system of faith opposed to the beliefs in His country and promulgated certain principles contrary to the thoughts of the people. For this, that remarkable Personality was imprisoned by the Persian government. Eventually, by order of the government He was martyred. The account of this martyrdom, briefly stated, is as follows: He was suspended in a square as a target and shot to death. This revered Personage foreshadowed the advent of another Soul of Whom He said, "When He cometh He shall reveal greater things unto you."

Thus, after the martyrdom of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh appeared. The government arose against Him. The priesthood in Persia opposed Him, subjecting Him to severe persecution. His possessions were confiscated, His relatives and friends were killed, and He was placed in a dungeon. For a long period He was imprisoned, chained and subjected to severest suffering. Afterward, He was exiled to [pg 372] 'Iráq, or Mesopotamia, from thence to Constantinople, then transferred to Adrianople and finally to 'Akká in Syria. He spent twenty-four years in the prison of 'Akká, where He underwent the severest ordeals and privations without a day or night of relaxation and repose. Notwithstanding this imprisonment and suffering, He manifested utmost spiritual power and majesty. Although imprisoned, He withstood two tyrant kings and eventually overcame both.

Shortly after His imprisonment He addressed Epistles, or Tablets, to all the kings and rulers of the world, summoning them to universal peace, to unity and international brotherhood. Among these sovereigns was the Sháh of Persia, through whose instrumentality chiefly He had been imprisoned. In His letter to that ruler He arraigned him severely and prophesied his downfall, saying, "Thou art a tyrant; thy country will be laid waste; and thy family, humiliated and debased." He wrote to the Sulṭán of Turkey in similar terms, saying, "Thy dominion will pass away from thee." The Epistles to the kings and rulers summoning them to international peace were written by Bahá'u'lláh fifty

years ago. Everything He wrote has come to pass. These letters were published in Bombay thirty years ago and are now spread broadcast throughout the world. Briefly, Bahá'u'lláh endured forty years of vicissitudes, ordeals and hardships for the purpose of spreading His teachings, which may be mentioned as follows:

The first teaching is that man should investigate reality, for reality is contrary to dogmatic interpretations and imitations of ancestral forms of belief to which all nations and peoples adhere so tenaciously. These blind imitations are contrary to the fundamental basis of the divine religions, for the divine religions in their central and essential teaching are based upon unity, love and peace, whereas these variations and imitations have ever been productive of warfare, sedition and strife. Therefore, all souls should consider it incumbent upon them to investigate reality. Reality is one; and when found, it will unify all mankind. Reality is the love of God. Reality is the knowledge of God. Reality is justice. Reality is the oneness or solidarity of mankind. Reality is international peace. Reality is the knowledge of verities. Reality unifies humanity.

In brief, His theme was that reality underlies all the great religious systems of the world. He summoned the nations and peoples of the world to it. Hostile nations because of their acceptance of the reality of His words became unified. Strife, discord and contention among them passed away; they attained a station of utmost love. At present in Asia those who have accepted His teachings and followed His example, although formerly most hostile and bitter toward each other, now associate in brotherhood and fellowship. The strife and warfare of past times have ceased among them. Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians, Muslims and others have attained to a superlative state of love and agreement through Bahá'u'lláh. They now consort together as one family. They have investigated reality. Reality does not accept multiplicity, nor is it subject to divisibility. These irreconcilable peoples have become unified and agreed.

The second teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the principle of the oneness of the world of humanity. God is one; His servants are, likewise, one. God has created all; He is kind to all. Inasmuch as He is such a tender Father to all, why should His children disagree? Why should they war and fight? Like the Heavenly Father we must live in love and unity. Man is the temple of God, the image and likeness of the Lord. Surely if one should destroy the temple of God, he will incur the displeasure of the Creator. For this reason, we must live together in amity and love. Bahá'u'lláh has addressed the world of humanity, saying, "Verily, ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch." This signifies that the entire world of humanity is one tree. The various nations and peoples are the branches of that tree. Individual members of mankind are represented by the twigs and blossoms. Why should these parts of the same tree manifest strife and discord toward each other?

The third teaching of Bahá'u'lláh concerns universal peace among the nations, among the religions, among the races and native lands. He has declared that so long as

prejudice — whether religious, racial, patriotic, political or sectarian — continues to exist among mankind, universal peace cannot become a reality in the world. From the earliest history of man down to the present time all the wars and bloodshed which have taken place were caused either by religious, racial, political or sectarian bias. Therefore, it is evident that so long as these prejudices continue, the world of humanity cannot attain peace and composure.

Among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is His declaration that religion must be the cause of love and fellowship, must be the source of unity in the hearts of men. If religion becomes a cause of enmity and hatred, it is evident that the abolition of religion is preferable to its promulgation; for religion is a remedy for human ills. If a remedy should be productive of disease, it is certainly advisable to abandon it.

Furthermore, the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh announce that religion must be in conformity with science and reason; otherwise, it is superstition; for science and reason are realities, and religion itself [pg 374] is the Divine Reality unto which true science and reason must conform. God has bestowed the gift of mind upon man in order that he may weigh every fact or truth presented to him and adjudge whether it be reasonable. That which conforms to his reason he may accept as true, while that which reason and science cannot sanction may be discarded as imagination and superstition, as a phantom and not reality. Inasmuch as the blind imitations or dogmatic interpretations current among men do not coincide with the postulates of reason, and the mind and scientific investigation cannot acquiesce thereto, many souls in the human world today shun and deny religion. That is to say, imitations, when weighed in the scales of reason, will not conform to its standard and requirement. Therefore, these souls deny religion and become irreligious, whereas if the reality of the divine religions becomes manifest to them and the foundation of the heavenly teachings is revealed coinciding with facts and evident truths, reconciling with scientific knowledge and reasonable proof, all may acknowledge them, and irreligion will cease to exist. In this way all mankind may be brought to the foundation of religion, for reality is true reason and science, while all that is not conformable thereto is mere superstition.

The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh also proclaim equality between man and woman, for He has declared that all are the servants of God and endowed with capacity for the attainment of virtues and bestowals. All are the manifestations of the mercy of the Lord. In the creation of God no distinction obtains. All are His servants. In the estimation of God there is no gender. The one whose deeds are more worthy, whose sayings are better, whose accomplishments are more useful is nearest and dearest in the estimation of God, be that one male or female. When we look upon creation, we find the male and female principle apparent in all phenomena of existence. In the vegetable kingdom we find the male and female fig tree, the male and female palm, the mulberry tree and so on. All plant life is characterized by this difference in gender, but no distinction or preference is evidenced. Nay, rather, there is perfect equality.

Likewise, in the animal kingdom gender obtains; we have male and female, but no distinction or preference. Perfect equality is manifest. The animal, bereft of the degree of human reason and comprehension, is unable to appreciate the questions of suffrage, nor does it assert its prerogative. Man, endowed with his higher reason, accomplished in attainments and comprehending the realities of things, will surely not be willing to allow a great part of humanity to remain defective or deprived. This would be the utmost[pg 375] injustice. The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings or parts become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. Therefore, woman must receive the same education as man and all inequality be adjusted. Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.

The evident reasons underlying this are as follows: Woman by nature is opposed to war; she is an advocate of peace. Children are reared and brought up by the mothers who give them the first principles of education and labor assiduously in their behalf. Consider, for instance, a mother who has tenderly reared a son for twenty years to the age of maturity. Surely she will not consent to having that son torn asunder and killed in the field of battle. Therefore, as woman advances toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote and control in human government, most assuredly war will cease; for woman is naturally the most devoted and staunch advocate of international peace.

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that material civilization is incomplete, insufficient and that divine civilization must be established. Material civilization concerns the world of matter or bodies, but divine civilization is the realm of ethics and moralities. Until the moral degree of the nations is advanced and human virtues attain a lofty level, happiness for mankind is impossible. The philosophers have founded material civilization. The Prophets have founded divine civilization. Christ was the Founder of heavenly civilization. Mankind receives the bounties of material civilization as well as divine civilization from the heavenly Prophets. The capacity for achieving extraordinary and praiseworthy progress is bestowed by Them through the breaths of the Holy Spirit, and heavenly civilization is not possible of attainment or accomplishment otherwise. This evidences the need of humanity for heavenly bestowals, and until these heavenly bestowals are received, eternal happiness cannot be realized.

In brief, the purport is this: The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are boundless, innumerable; time will not allow us to mention them in[pg 376] detail. The foundation of progress

and real prosperity in the human world is reality, for reality is the divine standard and the bestowal of God. Reality is reasonableness, and reasonableness is ever conducive to the honorable station of man. Reality is the guidance of God. Reality is the cause of illumination of mankind. Reality is love, ever working for the welfare of humanity. Reality is the bond which conjoins hearts. This ever uplifts man toward higher stages of progress and attainment. Reality is the unity of mankind, conferring everlasting life. Reality is perfect equality, the foundation of agreement between the nations, the first step toward international peace.

