

Talk at Assembly Hall, Hotel Sacramento

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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Notes by Bijou Straun

I have visited your Capitol and its gardens. No other Capitol has such beautiful surroundings. Just as it is imposing and distinguished above all others, so may the people of California become the most exalted and perfect altruists of the world. California is, indeed, a blessed country. The climate is temperate, the sun ever shining, the fruits abundant and delicious. All outer blessings are evident here. The Californians are a noble people; therefore, I hope they may make extraordinary progress and become renowned for their virtues.

The issue of paramount importance in the world today is international peace. The European continent is like an arsenal, a storehouse of explosives ready for ignition, and one spark will set the whole of Europe aflame, particularly at this time when the Balkan question is before the world. Even now war is raging furiously in some places, the blood of innocent people is being shed, children are made captive, women are left without support, and homes are being destroyed. Therefore, the greatest need in the world today is international peace. The time is ripe. It is time for the abolition of warfare, the unification of nations and governments. It is the time for love. It is time for cementing together the East and the West.

Inasmuch as the Californians seem peace loving and possessed of great worthiness and capacity, I hope that advocates of peace[pg 377] may daily increase among them



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until the whole population shall stand for that beneficent outcome. May the men of affairs in this democracy uphold the standard of international conciliation. Then may altruistic aims and thoughts radiate from this center toward all other regions of the earth, and may the glory of this accomplishment forever halo the history of this country. May the first flag of international peace be upraised in this state. May the first illumination of reality shine gloriously upon this soil. May this center and capital become distinguished in all degrees of accomplishment, for the virtues of humanity and the possibilities of human advancement are boundless. There is no end to them, and whatever be the degree to which humanity may attain, there are always degrees beyond. There is no attainment in the contingent realm of which it may be said, "Beyond this state of being and perfection there is no other," or "This has achieved the superlative degree." No matter how perfect it may appear, there is always a greater degree of attainment to be reached. Therefore, no matter how much humanity may advance, there are ever higher stations to be attained because virtues are unlimited. There is a consummation for everything except virtues, and although this country has achieved extraordinary progress, I hope that its attainment may be immeasurably greater, for the divine bounties are infinite and unlimited.

There are some who believe that the divine bounties are subject to cessation. For example, they think that the revelation of God, the effulgence of God and the bounties of God have ended. This is self-evidently a mistaken idea, for none of these is subject to termination. The reality of Divinity is like unto the sun, and revelation is like unto the rays thereof. If we should assert that the bounties of God are not everlasting, we are forced to believe that Divinity can come to an end, whereas the reality of Divinity enfolds all virtues and by reason of these bounties is perfect. Were it not possessed of all these perfections or virtues, it could not be Divinity. The sun is the sun because of its rays, light and heat. If it could be dispossessed of them, it would not be the sun. Therefore, if we say that the divinity or sovereignty of God is accidental and subject to termination, we must perforce think that Divinity itself is accidental, without foundation and not essential.

God is the Creator. The word creator presupposes or connotes creation. God is the Provider. The word provider implies recipients of provision. Another name for the Creator is the Resuscitator, which demands the existence of creatures to be resuscitated.[pg 378] If He be not the Provider, how could we conceive of creatures to receive His bounty? If He be not the Lord, how could we conceive of subjects? If He be not the Knower, how could we conceive of those known? If we should say that there was a time in past ages when God was not possessed of His creation or that there was a beginning for the world, it would be a denial of creation and the Creator. Or if we should declare that a time may come when there will be a cessation of divine bounties, we should virtually deny the existence of Divinity. It is as though man should conceive of a king without country, army, treasury and all that constitutes sovereignty or

kingdom. Is it possible to conceive of such a sovereign? A king must be possessed of a dominion, an army and all that appertains to sovereignty in order that his sovereignty may be a reality. It is even so with the reality of Divinity which enfolds all virtues. The sovereignty thereof is everlasting, and the creation thereof is without beginning and without end.

Among the bounties of God is revelation. Hence revelation is progressive and continuous. It never ceases. It is necessary that the reality of Divinity with all its perfections and attributes should become resplendent in the human world. The reality of Divinity is like an endless ocean. Revelation may be likened to the rain. Can you imagine the cessation of rain? Ever on the face of the earth somewhere rain is pouring down. Briefly, the world of existence is progressive. It is subject to development and growth. Consider how great has been the progress in this radiant century. Civilization has unfolded. Nations have developed. Industrialism and jurisprudence have expanded. Sciences, inventions and discoveries have increased. All of these show that the world of existence is continuously progressing and developing; and therefore, assuredly, the virtues characterizing the maturity of man must, likewise, expand and grow.

The greatest bestowal of God to man is the capacity to attain human virtues. Therefore, the teachings of religion must be reformed and renewed because past teachings are not suitable for the present time. For example, the sciences of bygone centuries are not adequate for the present because sciences have undergone reform. The industrialism of the past will not ensure present efficiency because industrialism has advanced. The laws of the past are being superseded because they are not applicable to this time. All material conditions pertaining to the world of humanity have undergone reform, have achieved development, and the institutes of the past are not to be compared with those of this age. The laws and institutes of former governments cannot be current today, for legislation [pg 379] must be in conformity with the needs and requirements of the body politic at this time.

This has been the case also with the religious teachings so long set forth in the temples and churches, because they were not based upon the fundamental principles of the religions of God. In other words, the foundation of the divine religions had become obscured and nonessentials of form and ceremony were adhered to — that is, the kernel of religion had apparently disappeared, and only the shell remained. Consequently, it was necessary that the fundamental basis of all religious teaching should be restored, that the Sun of Reality which had set should rise again, that the springtime which had refreshed the arena of life in ages gone by should appear anew, that the rain which had ceased should descend, that the breezes which had become stilled should blow once more.

Therefore, Bahá'u'lláh appeared from the horizon of the Orient and reestablished the essential foundation of the religious teachings of the world. The worn-out traditional beliefs current among men were removed. He caused fellowship and agreement to exist between the representatives of varying denominations so that love became manifest among the contending religions. He created a condition of harmony among hostile sects and upheld the banner of the oneness of the world of humanity. He established the foundation for international peace, caused the hearts of nations to be cemented together and conferred new life upon the various peoples of the East. Among those who have followed the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh no one says, "I am a Persian," "I am a Turk," "I am a Frenchman," or "I am an Englishman." No one says, "I am a Muslim, upholding the only true religion," "I am a Christian, loyal to my traditional and inherited beliefs," "I am a Jew, following talmudic interpretations," or "I am a Zoroastrian and opposed to all other religions." On the contrary, all have been rescued from religious, racial, political and patriotic prejudices and are now associating in fellowship and love to the extent that if you should attend one of their meetings you would be unable to observe any distinction between Christian and Muslim, Jew and Zoroastrian, Persian and Turk, Arab and European; for their meetings are based upon the essential foundations of religion, and real unity has been established among them. Former antagonisms have passed away; the centuries of sectarian hatred are ended; the period of aversion has gone by; the medieval conditions of ignorance have ceased to exist.

Verily, the century of radiance has dawned, minds are advancing, perceptions are broadening, realizations of human possibilities [pg 380] are becoming universal, susceptibilities are developing, the discovery of realities is progressing. Therefore, it is necessary that we should cast aside all the prejudices of ignorance, discard superannuated beliefs in traditions of past ages and raise aloft the banner of international agreement. Let us cooperate in love and through spiritual reciprocity enjoy eternal happiness and peace. [pg 381]

