

Talk at Hotel Plaza

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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Chicago, Illinois

Notes by Gertrude Buikema

In Los Angeles and San Francisco great interest was manifested in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh by the newspapers, universities and churches. Our addresses were lengthy, the message of the Cause was proclaimed and arguments and evidences advanced. There was no dissent. All heard the glad tidings with complete acquiescence, and praise was unanimous, even including the ministers.

The friends in Los Angeles and San Francisco are very firm in the Covenant. If they sense the least violation on the part of anyone, they shun him entirely; for they know that such a person is engaged in extinguishing the lamps of faith ignited by the light of the Covenant, thereby producing weakness and indifference in the divine Cause. For instance, the firm ones teach a person. Then the violators go to him and instill suspicion until he becomes lukewarm. There have been violators here in Chicago for twenty years. What have they done? Nothing. Have they been able to teach anybody? Have they been able to speak in churches or address audiences elsewhere? Have they been able to make anybody firm in the Cause? They are doing nothing except extinguishing the lamps we ignite. The friends in San Francisco are exceedingly firm. They do not receive violators in their homes. Recently a violator went to that city. The Bahá'í friends turned him away, saying, "You are not with us; why do you try to come among us?" Today the most important principle of faith is firmness in the Covenant, because firmness in the Covenant wards off differences. Therefore, you must be firm as mountains.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

After the departure of Christ many appeared who were instrumental in creating factions, schisms and discussions. It became difficult to know which one was following the right path. One of these disturbers was Nestorius, a Syrian, who proclaimed that Christ was not a Prophet of God. This created a division and sect called the Nestorians. The Catholics declared Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, even pronouncing Him to be Deity itself. The Protestants announced the doctrine that Christ embodied two elements: the human and the divine. In brief, divisions were created in the religion of God, and it was not known which was pursuing the right pathway because there was no appointed center to whom Christ referred everyone, no successor whose word was a gateway to the truth. If Christ had revealed a Covenant with some soul, commanding all to cling to his word and interpretation as correct, it would have been evident which belief and statement was valid and true.

Inasmuch as there was no appointed explainer of the Book of Christ, everyone made the claim to authority, saying, "This is the true pathway and others are not." To ward off such dissensions as these and prevent any person from creating a division or sect the Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, appointed a central authoritative Personage, declaring Him to be the expounder of the Book. This implies that the people in general do not understand the meanings of the Book, but this appointed One does understand. Therefore, Bahá'u'lláh said, "He is the explainer of My Book and the Center of My Testament." In the last verses of the Book instructions are revealed, declaring that, "After Me," you must turn toward a special Personage and "whatsoever He says is correct." In the Book of the Covenant Bahá'u'lláh declares that by these two verses this Personage is meant. In all His Books and Tablets He has praised those who are firm in the Covenant and rebuked those who are not. He said, "Verily, shun those who are shaken in the Covenant. Verily, God is the Confirmer of the firm ones." In His prayers He has said, "O God! Render those who are firm in the Covenant blessed, and degrade those who are not. O God! Be the Protector of him who protecteth Him, and confirm him who confirms the Center of the Covenant." Many utterances are directed against the violators of the Covenant, the purpose being that no dissension should arise in the blessed Cause; that no one should say, "My opinion is this"; and that all may know Who is the authoritative expounder and whatsoever He says is correct. Bahá'u'lláh has not left any possible room for dissension. Naturally, there are some who are antagonistic, some who are followers of self-desire, others who hold to their own ideas and still others who wish to create dissension in the Cause. For example, Judas Iscariot was one of the disciples, yet he betrayed Christ. Such a thing has happened in the past, but in this day the Blessed Perfection has declared, "This person is the expounder of My Book and all must turn to Him." The purpose is to ward off dissension and differences among His followers. Notwithstanding this safeguard and provision against disagreement, there are certain souls here in America and a few in 'Akká who have violated this explicit command. For twenty years these violators have accomplished nothing. Have they accomplished anything in Chicago? The friends here must be like

the friends in San Francisco. Whenever they sense the least violation from anyone, they should say, "Begone! You shall not associate with us."

