

Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Parsons

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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In the world of nature we behold the living organisms in a ceaseless struggle for existence. Everywhere we are confronted by evidences of the physical survival of the fittest. This is the very source of error and misapprehension in the opinions and theories of men who fail to realize that the world of nature is inherently defective in cause and outcome and that the defects therein must be removed by education. For example, consider man himself. If we study human beings such as the aboriginal tribes of central Africa, who have been reared in complete subjection to nature's rule, we will find them deficient indeed. They are without religious education; neither do they give evidences of any advance whatever toward civilization. They have simply grown and developed in the natural plane of barbarism. We find them bloodthirsty, immoral and animalistic in type to such an extent that they even kill and devour each other. It is evident, therefore, that the world of nature unassisted is imperfect because it is a plane upon which the struggle for physical existence expresses itself.

If a piece of ground is left in its natural state, wild weeds, thorns and trees of the jungle will grow upon it. But if we cultivate that same piece of ground, the result will be that it will rid itself of natural imperfections and become transformed into a beautiful rose garden or an orchard of fruitful trees. This is proof that the world of nature is defective. The founding of schools and establishing of educational systems in the world are intended to replace the defects of nature with virtues and perfections. If there were no



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defects, there would be no need of training, culture and education, but inasmuch as we find that children need training and schooling, it is a conclusive proof that the world of nature must be developed. Many things show this clearly. One of the basic evidences is the survival of the fittest in the animal kingdom, their ignorance, sensuality and unbridled instincts and passions. Therefore, in the natural world there is need of an Educator and Teacher for mankind. He must be universal in his powers and accomplishments. Teachers are of two kinds: universal and special. The universal Instructors are the Prophets of God, and the special teachers are the philosophers. The philosophers are capable of educating and training a limited circle of human souls, whereas the holy, divine Manifestations of God [pg 401] confer general education upon humanity. They arise to bestow universal moral training. For example, Moses was a universal Teacher. He trained and disciplined the people of Israel, enabled them to rescue themselves from the lowest abyss of despair and ignorance and caused them to attain an advanced degree of knowledge and development. They were captives and in the bondage of slavery; through Him they became free. He led them out of Egypt into the Holy Land and opened the doors of their advancement into higher civilization. Through His training this oppressed and downtrodden people, slaves and captives of the Pharaohs, established the splendor of the Solomonic sovereignty. This is an example of a universal Teacher, a universal Educator. Again, consider Christ: how that marvelous expression of unity bestowed education and ethical training upon the Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Syrian and Assyrian nations and welded together a people from them in a permanent and indissoluble bond. These nations were formerly at enmity and in a state of continual hostility and strife. He cemented them together, caused them to agree, conferred tranquillity upon humanity and established the foundations of human welfare throughout the world. Therefore, He was a real Educator, the Instructor of reality.

When we review the conditions existing in the East prior to the rise of the Prophet of Arabia, we find that throughout the Arabian peninsula intense mental darkness and the utmost ignorance prevailed among its inhabitants. Those tribal peoples were constantly engaged in war, killing and shedding blood, burning and pillaging the homes of each other and living in conditions of the utmost debasement and immorality. They were lower and more brutal than the animals. Muḥammad appeared as a Prophet among such a people. He educated these barbarous tribes, lifted them out of their ignorance and savagery and put an end to the continuous strife and hatred which had existed among them. He established agreement and reconciliation among them, unified them and taught them to look upon each other as brothers. Through His training they advanced rapidly in prestige and civilization. They were formerly ignorant; they became wise. They were barbarous; they attained refinement and culture. They were debased and brutal; He uplifted and elevated them. They were humiliated and despised; their civilization and renown spread throughout the world. This is perfect proof that Muḥammad was an Educator and Teacher.

In the nineteenth century strife and hostility prevailed among the people of the Orient. Apathy and ignorance characterized the nations. They were indeed gloomy and dark, negligent of God and [pg 402] under the subjection of the baser instincts and passions of mankind. The struggle for existence was intense and universal. At such a time as this Bahá'u'lláh appeared among them like a luminary in the heavens. He flooded the East with light. He proclaimed new principles and teachings. He laid a basis for new institutions which are the very spirit of modernism, the light of the world, the development of the body politic and eternal honor. The souls who hearkened to these teachings among the various oriental nations immediately renounced the spirit of strife and hostility and began to associate in goodwill and fellowship. From extremes of animosity they attained the acme of love and brotherhood. They had been warring and quarreling; now they became loving and lived together in complete unity and agreement. Among them today you will find no religious, political or patriotic prejudice; they are friendly, loving and associate in the greatest happiness. They have no part in the war and strife which take place in the East; their attitude toward all men is that of goodwill and loving-kindness. A standard of universal peace has been unfurled among them. The light of guidance has flooded their souls. It is light upon light, love upon love. This is the education and training of Bahá'u'lláh. He has led these souls to this standard and given them teachings which ensure eternal illumination. Anyone who becomes well versed in His teachings will say, "Verily, I declare that these words constitute the illumination of humanity, that this is the everlasting honor, that these are heavenly precepts and the cause of never-ending life among men."

