

Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward B. Kinney

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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Notes by Esther Foster

You are all welcome. This is a goodly assemblage. Praise be to God! The hearts are directed to the Kingdom of Abhá, and souls are rejoiced by the glad tidings of God.

I will speak to you concerning the special teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. All the divine principles announced by the tongue of [pg 454] the Prophets of the past are to be found in the words of Bahá'u'lláh; but in addition to these He has revealed certain new teachings which are not found in any of the sacred Books of former times. I shall mention some of them; the others, which are many in number, may be found in the Books, Tablets and Epistles written by Bahá'u'lláh — such as the Hidden Words, the Glad Tidings, the Words of Paradise, Tajallíyát, Ṭarázát and others. Likewise, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas there are new teachings which cannot be found in any of the past Books or Epistles of the Prophets.

A fundamental teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity. Addressing mankind, He says, “Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.” By this it is meant that the world of humanity is like a tree, the nations or peoples are the different limbs or branches of that tree, and the individual human creatures are as the fruits and blossoms thereof. In this way Bahá'u'lláh expressed the oneness of humankind, whereas in all religious teachings of the past the human world has been represented as divided into two parts: one known as the people of the Book



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of God, or the pure tree, and the other the people of infidelity and error, or the evil tree. The former were considered as belonging to the faithful, and the others to the hosts of the irreligious and infidel — one part of humanity the recipients of divine mercy, and the other the object of the wrath of their Creator. Bahá'u'lláh removed this by proclaiming the oneness of the world of humanity, and this principle is specialized in His teachings, for He has submerged all mankind in the sea of divine generosity. Some are asleep; they need to be awakened. Some are ailing; they need to be healed. Some are immature as children; they need to be trained. But all are recipients of the bounty and bestowals of God.

Another new principle revealed by Bahá'u'lláh is the injunction to investigate truth — that is to say, no man should blindly follow his ancestors and forefathers. Nay, each must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears and investigate the truth himself in order that he may follow the truth instead of blind acquiescence and imitation of ancestral beliefs.

Bahá'u'lláh has announced that the foundation of all the religions of God is one, that oneness is truth and truth is oneness which does not admit of plurality. This teaching is new and specialized to this Manifestation.

He sets forth a new principle for this day in the announcement that religion must be the cause of unity, harmony and agreement among mankind. If it is the cause of discord and hostility, if it leads[pg 455] to separation and creates conflict, the absence of religion would be preferable in the world.

Furthermore, He proclaims that religion must be in harmony with science and reason. If it does not conform to science and reconcile with reason, it is superstition. Down to the present day it has been customary for man to accept a religious teaching, even though it was not in accord with human reason and judgment. The harmony of religious belief with reason is a new vista which Bahá'u'lláh has opened for the soul of man.

He establishes the equality of man and woman. This is peculiar to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, for all other religions have placed man above woman.

A new religious principle is that prejudice and fanaticism — whether sectarian, denominational, patriotic or political — are destructive to the foundation of human solidarity; therefore, man should release himself from such bonds in order that the oneness of the world of humanity may become manifest.

Universal peace is assured by Bahá'u'lláh as a fundamental accomplishment of the religion of God — that peace shall prevail among nations, governments and peoples, among religions, races and all conditions of mankind. This is one of the special characteristics of the Word of God revealed in this Manifestation.

Bahá'u'lláh declares that all mankind should attain knowledge and acquire an education. This is a necessary principle of religious belief and observance, characteristically new in this dispensation.

He has set forth the solution and provided the remedy for the economic question. No religious Books of the past Prophets speak of this important human problem.

He has ordained and established the House of Justice, which is endowed with a political as well as a religious function, the consummate union and blending of church and state. This institution is under the protecting power of Bahá'u'lláh Himself. A universal, or international, House of Justice shall also be organized. Its rulings shall be in accordance with the commands and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and that which the Universal House of Justice ordains shall be obeyed by all mankind. This international House of Justice shall be appointed and organized from the Houses of Justice of the whole world, and all the world shall come under its administration.

As to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, a specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past: It is the ordination and appointment of the Center of the Covenant. By this appointment and provision He has safeguarded [pg 456] and protected the religion of God against differences and schisms, making it impossible for anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief. To ensure unity and agreement He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world, including the interpreter and explainer of His teachings, so that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according to his own view or opinion and thus create a sect founded upon his individual understanding of the divine Words. The Book of the Covenant or Testament of Bahá'u'lláh is the means of preventing such a possibility, for whosoever shall speak from the authority of himself alone shall be degraded. Be ye informed and cognizant of this. Beware lest anyone shall secretly question or deny this to you. There are some people of self-will and desire who do not communicate their intentions to you in clear language. They envelop their meanings in secret statements and insinuations. For instance, they praise a certain individual, saying he is wise and learned, that he was glorified in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, conveying this to you in an insidious way or by innuendoes. Be ye aware of this! Be awakened and enlightened! For Christ has said that no one hides the lamp under a bushel. The purport of my admonition is that certain people will endeavor to influence you in the direction of their own personal views and opinions. Therefore, be upon your guard in order that none may assail the oneness and integrity of Bahá'u'lláh's Cause. Praise be to God! Bahá'u'lláh left nothing unsaid. He explained everything. He left no room for anything further to be said. Yet there are some who for the sake of personal interest and prestige will attempt to sow the seeds of sedition and disloyalty among you. To protect and safeguard the religion of God from this and all other attack, the Center of the Covenant has been named and appointed by Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore, if anyone should set forth a statement in praise or recognition of another than this appointed Center, you must ask

him to produce a written proof of the authority he follows. Let him show you a trace from the pen of the Center of the Covenant Himself, substantiating his praise and support of any other than the rightful one. Inform him that you are not permitted to accept the words of everyone. Say to him, "It is possible to love and praise a person today, to accept and follow another tomorrow and still another next day. Therefore, we cannot afford to listen to this or that individual. Where are your proofs and writings? Where is your authority from the pen of the Center of the Covenant?"

My purpose is to explain to you that it is your duty to guard the religion of God so that none shall be able to assail it outwardly or inwardly. If you find harmful teachings are being set forth by some [pg 457] individual, no matter who that individual be, even though he should be my own son, know, verily, that I am completely severed from him. If anyone speaks against the Covenant, even though he should be my son, know that I am opposed to him. Those who speak falsehoods, who covet worldly things and seek to accumulate the riches of this earth are not of me. But when you find a person living up to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, following the precepts of the Hidden Words, know that he belongs to Bahá'u'lláh; and, verily, I proclaim that he is of me. If, on the other hand, you see anyone whose deeds and conduct are contrary to and not in conformity with the good pleasure of the Blessed Perfection and against the spirit of the Hidden Words, let that be your standard and criterion of judgment against him, for know that I am altogether severed from him no matter who he may be. This is the truth.

The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are boundless and illimitable. You have asked me what new principles have been revealed by Him. I have mentioned a few only. There are many others, but time does not permit their mention tonight. I, therefore, pray to God that you may be strengthened in good deeds. I pray that God may confirm you in order that you may live according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

