

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ at CLARK UNIVERSITY: MAY 23, 1912

('Abdu'l-Bahá's remarks on this occasion were impromptu: apparently only a visit to Clark University had been planned, but upon receiving a very cordial welcome from a waiting assemblage of about 500 students and faculty, He responded with a brief speech. As was usually the case, His remarks were recorded by a secretary. These were later printed, in Persian, in star of the West magazine. The rendering into English which follows was done in May, 1971 by two of the Friends in Worcester, one of whom is a native Persian. The Biblical quotation used by 'Abdu'l-Bahá is apparently that found in Matthew 13:13, and the language of that verse in the King James Version has been used in the following text.)

Blessed audience, I am overjoyed to be with you here today. It had been my hope to visit this University, and now that hope has been fulfilled.

This University will be the source of great things, for science is the special merit of human beings, and is that which distinguishes man and gives him superiority over the other creatures of God.

Through the knowledge bestowed by science, human beings can discover the secrets of the Universe. With science alone can man unlock the secrets of the past and accurately forecast the shape of future events. With science he can explain the processes of nature, and can comprehend the movements of the heavenly bodies. Science glorifies man forever; it is his means of achieving honor and dignity in the world.

Science can also unlock the secrets of the Holy Books: It un covers the secret of reality. Science serves the world of reality: It can save man from the superstition of the religions of the past, revealing to him the reality of the religions of God.

Science can set man free from the captivity of nature, and diminish the power of nature's negative forces. For nature, indeed, holds all things in the Universe in captivity: The earth, with its stones, trees and animals, the sun itself in all its glory--none can make the slightest departure from nature's laws. But man--man with the aid of science can rend asunder nature's laws and produce a new law for nature itself to follow.

Science takes the sword from the hand of nature and uses it against nature in the service of man. Solid objects are made to fly through the air at man's command, or to float on or beneath the surface of the water. The power of electricity is trapped in a glass bulb; the spoken word is held and preserved; airwaves become the carriers of messages; ships sail on land; deserts become oceans; mountains are rent asunder. North is brought closer to South; West is joined to East. And although these occurrences stand outside the realm of the law of nature, man through science achieves them, bringing art and industry out of obscurity and into the light.

Unless man is free, then all the Universe is in bondage to nature's laws. Man alone has the capacity for freedom, and it is science that is the implement of his freedom. Thus, science is the highest merit of humanity: It's glory endures; it has an eternal lifetime. The role of the King is temporary; that of the scientist has enduring glory. A man, though weak physically, if wise with the power of science can discover the secret truths of the Universe and win undying fame. For the mass of men are like those drugged in sleep, and the man of science is he who is awake; the mass of men are unknown to fame, and the man of science is renowned: Science is like a candle, and the learned man like a lantern.

And so it is that I am in utmost joy to be here at this center of learning. My hope is that this University will grow and disseminate the light of science which can illuminate the whole world, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and life to those who are as dead. For as the Bible says: "... Because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." And Christ in the Holy Book says: I will heal them.

And so it is proven that the ignorant is dead where the scholar lives, the ignorant blind where the scholar is sighted, the ignorant deaf but the scholar endowed with hearing--and the noblest of all things is science.

In this country, science is established in the schools and universities. My wish is that other countries may follow your example, raising the standard of science in the cause of overthrowing superstition. The imitation of useless forms that only divide people must be rejected; prejudice must be changed to cooperation; the banner of peace for all mankind must be raised, and all the continents of the world be shaded by the pavilion of universal peace.

Science shall unite all people, making of all the nations one country, and of all the earth one homeland. All the religions shall be one, and science can reveal this reality. For all the religions come from God, and they are reality. But now mankind is shadowed by worthless superstitions, which darken the light of the sun of reality. These clouds must be dispersed, that the reality of all religions having their source in the One God may be revealed. There is only this one reality, and all of the religions must join together, banishing prejudice and enmity. Thus will the unity of the world be realized.

Therefore, since science casts out fear and reveals the Kingdom of Heaven, I ask God to raise the banner of science higher each day, to make its star shine ever brighter, until all the populations of the world attain to understanding. Let minds advance, inventions increase, let hearts expand and understanding deepen. Let mankind make progress in all his goodly endeavors, and under the shadow of Almighty God, let the utmost happiness be realized by all mankind. For all of these things are present potentially in the world of reality, and the gift of God for unleashing this potential is science.

I have come from a remote land. I have seen here gatherings of honorable men of science, who have established systems for the spreading of knowledge. I will tell of these things when I return, urging all to learn the useful arts of science and technology. And my hope is that you will welcome the people of the East--from India, China, Japan, Arabia, Armenia--that upon returning to their native soil they will propagate this innovative knowledge, until the East can equal the West in science and technology. They have the aptitude, but have no means for a formal, disciplined education. Thus it is my hope that science will flourish all the more, here in the West, that all the nations of the world may thereby be enlightened, that true communication may thereby be established, and that the potential happiness of the world of humanity may thereby be revealed. May the science of the knowledge of God flourish too in East and West, that human rights and dignities may be protected, human virtues be encouraged, and that the utmost unity and harmony may prevail. This is my utmost desire. This is my purpose in visiting America.