

Religious Disputes and Enmity

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In the span of a few days in October, three hate-filled crimes shook the country. One was motivated by politics, one by race and one by religion.

When humanity is artificially divided based on race, nationality, gender, class, religion and politics, conflicts invariably arise. Religion must be the unifying force in society, but at present the religions of the world are in need of unification themselves.

In his talk on November 26, 1911 at Pastor Wagner's Church (Foyer de l'Ame) in Paris, 'Abdu'l-Bahá – the son and successor of the prophet founder of the Baha'i Faith – explained the cause of religious disputes and enmity:

"All down the ages the prophets of God have been sent into the world to serve the cause of truth—Moses brought the law of truth, and all the prophets of Israel after him sought to spread it.

"When Jesus came He lighted the flaming torch of truth and carried it aloft so that the whole world might be illumined thereby. ...

"All the holy ones of God have tried with heart and soul to spread the light of love and unity throughout the world, so that the darkness of materiality might disappear, and the light of spirituality might shine forth among the children of men. Then would hate, slander and murder disappear, and in their stead love, unity and peace would reign. ...

"Yet we, their servants, still dispute among ourselves! Why is it thus? Why do we not love one another and live in unity?

"It is because we have shut our eyes to the underlying principle of all religions, that God is one, that He is the Father of us all, that we are all immersed in the ocean of His mercy and sheltered and protected by His loving care. ...

"This loving God desires peace for all His creatures. ... God has created us, one and all—why do we act in opposition to His wishes, when we are all His children, and love the same Father?

"All these divisions we see on all sides, all these disputes and opposition, are caused because men cling to ritual and outward observances, and forget the simple, underlying truth. It is the outward practices of religion that are so different, and it is they that cause disputes and enmity—while the reality is always the same, and one. The Reality is the Truth, and truth has no division. Truth is God's guidance, it is the light of the world, it is love, it is mercy. ...

"The day is coming when all the religions of the world will unite, for in principle they are one already. There is no need for division, seeing that it is only the outward forms that separate them. ...

"Christ endured a life of sorrow, pain and grief, to bring a perfect example of love into the world—and in spite of this we continue to act in a contrary spirit one towards the other!

"Love is the fundamental principle of God's purpose for man, and He has commanded us to love each other even as He loves us. ...

“All down the ages we see how blood has stained the surface of the earth; but now a ray of greater light has come, man’s intelligence is greater, spirituality is beginning to grow, and a time is surely coming when the religions of the world will be at peace. Let us leave the discordant arguments concerning outward forms and let us join together to hasten forward the Divine Cause of unity, until all humanity knows itself to be one family, joined together in love.”