

Notes on the Twentieth Century

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Personal Notes from Talks by Douglas Martin
Member, Universal House of Justice

Atlanta, New York and Massachusetts in September,
2001
(compiled by Greg Watson)

What follows are notes beginning with those taken by Greg Watson from Douglas Martin's talk in Lowell, Massachusetts -- Sunday, September 22, 2001. They are incomplete, but offered in the spirit of service, however inadequate. While typing up my notes I received notes of Mr. Martin's other talks in other cities. All of these notes together offer a more complete or composite message than mine alone can offer, so I have included them also. Each set of notes contains a least one nugget that the others do not.

I arrived a little late for the talk in Lowell, and missed a section of the question and answer period, so the second set of notes is more complete than mine. One of the things I have done to enrich my section here is to look up passages that Mr. Martin either quoted from in part or referred to indirectly. They are now included with my notes. My choice of quotes represents some interpretation of what he meant in some cases, so the reader will forgive whatever shortsightedness I may have had in that regard. If you wish to skip the quotes you can use the sublinks under my notes or alternatively you could skip my notes altogether and go directly to the most complete set of notes-- those of September 28-29 (notetaker unknown).

You can jump directly to any of the various notes using the following links and their subheadings, or you can read straight through. Much of his talk was based on the document Century of Light which can be found on the web at:
<http://www.jkl.com/eBahai/html/cl.html>
(Other formats at <http://www.jkl.com/eBahai/>, including downloads.)

The links below will also serve as a limited Table of Contents of Dr. Martin's talks: (only underlines in blue are hypertext. Other underlines are only for emphasis)

Notes of Mr. Martin's talk in Lowell,
Massachusetts on Sunday, Sept. 22 (by Greg Kagira-Watson)

The Dominant Theme of the Twentieth Century

Two reciprocal processes

Tearing away old identities = "resurrection"

Forced migration became the paradigm for the whole human race

Secular changes and changes within the Bahá'í community over last century

[Letter of caution from the NSA's Office of External Affairs re: response to Sept. 11th]

Nothing is more powerful than "absolute certitude."

Significance of the Election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 (our role as an NGO)

Materialism

Sedition and oppression will envelop the earth

Some consequences of the Opening of the Terraces

God is more than a Cosmic Force

The world has already said "YES" to Bahá'u'lláh, and will continue to say "yes."

The Bahá'ís must now learn to accept the YES answer:
Our new mission in America

Change in Consciousness

Globalism and globalization

America's Mission and Destiny

Bahá'ís should not be critical of the American government

The Bab was the only true revolutionary of the 20th Century

Q & A: What is the role of the UHJ in the Lessor Peace?

Also see

<http://www.homestead.com/watsongregory/files/GlenfordMitchell.htm#supplement>

Quote from Dr. Juan Carlos Busnelli, Secretaria de Ciencia y Tecnología of Brazil

Concluding impressions

Notes of Mr. Martin's talk on Sept. 28th

and 29th (notetaker unknown).

Notes of Mr. Martin in Atlanta,
Tue, 02 Oct 2001 (by Peter Flipsen)

Notes of Mr. Martin speaking in New York City:
Mon, 01 Oct 2001 (notetaker unknown)

Notes of Mr. Martin at Boston Bahá'í
Center -- Mon., Sept. 23, 2001 (Bob Sylvester)

Another GREAT set of notes (has some
interesting points not in the others)

PREFACE

This talk came within days after the terrorists attacked and destroyed the World Trade Center. More than anything else, I felt a calming effect from Mr. Martin's talks. His confidence in the destiny and role of America was certain. He said that as soon as the Universal House of Justice heard about the terrorist attack they immediately went to the Holy Shrines and said the "Prayer for America." Most of us were moved to tears at the love we could feel that the Universal House of Justice has for the Friends in America. He assured us that we could trust in America's special destiny and pointed out that America was the only country for which a specific prayer was revealed, not to mention those found in the Tablets of the Divine Plan for the various states in the U.S.

[My comments in brackets are my conjecture from what was implied from the context of Mr. Martin's statements. Sometimes the brackets contain added relevant material, thought to help explain. Of course all of the notes here are from my own understanding or interpretation. Words in quotes are pretty much just as Mr. Martin stated them or otherwise from some text.]

I cannot describe the overall nature of this undertaking any better than by borrowing from Bob Sylvester's description of the notes he took the next evening (Monday, Sept. 23) at the Bahá'í Center in Boston:

"In some cases they represent, word for word what was said. As in any case when a tape recorder is not used these notes cannot be assumed to be a totally correct record of everything that was stated. They are not a transcript of the talk or of the question and answer period. However, the points raised and sentiments expressed by the Member of the Universal House of Justice, while those of a personal nature and made in his individual capacity, were so poignant to our present challenges in the Faith and so moving in its sense of hope that I felt bound to share . . . my perceptions of his talk." (Bob Sylvester)

Rather than use quotations I have simply made summaries of his points, more or less in the order he presented them rather than grouping

them by themes. (The same theme appeared more than once.) In some cases I have used underline or bold for emphasis or to highlight the themes expressed by Mr. Martin, both in my notes and in those notes taken by others.

Perhaps it is good to remember Shoghi Effendi's criteria for classifying and distinguishing between the talks and tablets of the Master. It probably goes without saying that since the talks of Abdu'l-Bahá have no authority we know that the talks of believers also have no authority. Of course this is to say that Mr. Martin's thoughts are those of an individual, and not the institution on which he so ably serves. [Click here to read Shoghi Effendi's description of the difference between talks and tablets.](#)

Some talks fall into that class of writings known as "pilgrim's notes." The Guardian advised the Bahá'ís that "they need not be suppressed, but they should not be given prominence or official recognition." Someone once described pilgrim's notes as an "inexact rendering of a partially understood truth." Here are my "inexact" notes, followed by the notes of others. The notes of different people are surprisingly the same... even when in different cities... This overlap seems to help the reader gain a better sense and confidence of the central themes, consistent from city to city.

Enjoy,
Greg Watson

Mr. Martin's Talk on the
"Century of Light"
(A Universal House of Justice's supervised
document)

(from Greg Watson's notes)

Processes within development:

We witnessed the "emergence of the consciousness of the oneness of mankind" as the dominant theme of the twentieth century. Not possible to think back to Abdu'l-Bahá's time any more than we can imagine the vast changes that will take place in the next 100 years: In His time there was a zeal for war... racism was an embedded and accepted "fact." This was what He faced; e.g., the kinds of questions He was asked about then included "blood atonement", "original sin", etc. How do we remember or think back to this world of His time. It's GONE! There are "Neanderthal relics which extinction beckons."

Shoghi Effendi describes
two reciprocal processes:

Integration -- communication, transportation...etc. A few caught the vision (Woodrow Wilson, Eleanor Roosevelt, and even some

athletes). Disintegration: The second process has included military adventures, economic crises, and weaknesses in the hierarchy of the ecclesiastics.

One of the principal churches in Canada is being sued by "Indians" (native peoples) and is being exposed for its misdeeds. Exposure is part of the disintegration. Its own members are making this Church bankrupt. Civil Rights movement of the '60s. In the Qur'án it says, "Mountains will pass away as the clouds."

"Thou seest the mountains and thinkest them firmly fixed: but they shall pass away as the clouds pass away: (such is) the artistry of God, Who disposes of all things in perfect order..." (The Qur'an, The Ant (An-Naml), verse 88)

The Soviet Union is gone! Overnight! This was a huge mountain. This social experiment failed... must understand this was not only a whole political system and but an ideology that tried to redefine biology, economics, etc. It included vast systems and millions of brilliant minds. It was reduced to utter nonsense. It takes your breath away that this could have happened! We are unable to mentally process changes so vast, so fast. There is a tiny group of people in the world that want to go back.

["These twin processes -- the collapse of old institutions on the one hand and the blossoming of new ways of thinking on the other -- are evidence of a single trend which has been gaining momentum during the last hundred years: the trend toward ever-increasing interdependence and integration of humanity." (Bahá'í International Community, "Turning Point For All Nations")]

Bahá'u'lláh explains "resurrection" as meaning that the peoples have arisen from the graves of their limited identities and the past. This brings on fear and paralysis, bewilderment and terror. First of all we have to be "free" of these past doctrines and institutions before humanity can be brought together. So they have to crumble. Some new freedoms have been granted by legislation.

Some of our fellow human beings did not see the twentieth century the same [positive] way: They are glad the 20th Century is over because is associated with the "holocaust", two bloody world wars, and millions of refugees.

When the Blessed Beauty was sent into exile with His Family and driven from place to place -- that forced migration became the paradigm for the whole human race. The migration of the human race from place to place on the globe is unstoppable and will radically alter the sense of place and of identity everywhere in the world.

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