

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s

1912 Howard University Speech:

A Civil War Discourse for Interracial Emancipation



Christopher Buck & Nahzy Abadi Buck
December 22, 2012
Grand Canyon Bahá'í Conference
Phoenix, Arizona

Special Thanks to:

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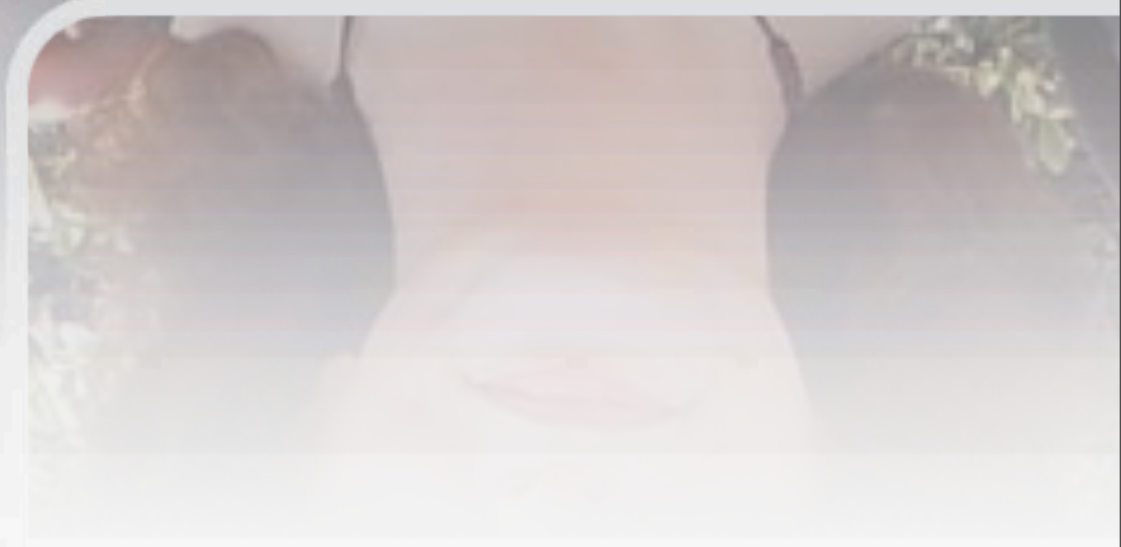
**Betty Cooper, for the book-signing, scheduled for
Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012.**

Based on Book Chapter

- Christopher Buck, “Abdu’l-Bahá’s 1912 Howard University Speech: A Civil War Myth for Interracial Emancipation.”
- In: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity. Edited by Negar Mottahedeh. **New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.** (Release date: 4 April 2013.) ISBN-10: 1137032006. ISBN-13: 978-1137032003
- Endorsement by: **Suheil Bushrui, Ph.D., Research Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland.**

Co-Presenter: Nahzy Abadi Buck

- Currently, translator for the Bahá'í World Centre.
- Work experience: Consultant in Farsi and Dari for two research projects, Carnegie Mellon University.
- Intelligence analyst; court interpreter.
- Faculty, Millikin University (Decatur, IL);
University of Foreign Studies (South Korea).
- Bahá'í pioneer to East Africa and South Korea.
- Master of Arts, International Relations, Kyung Hee University.
- Thesis: The World Into One Nation (first Master's thesis on the Bahá'í Faith in South Korea).



Co-Presenter: Christopher Buck

- Pennsylvania attorney, independent scholar.
- PhD, Study of Religion, University of Toronto, 1996; JD, Constitutional Law, 2006.
- Past professor: Michigan State University, Quincy University, Millikin University, Carleton University.
- Author: Religious Myths and Visions of America (2009); Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy (2005); Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith (1999); Symbol and Secret: Qur'an Commentary in Baha'u'llah's Kitáb-i Íqán (1995/2004).



Bahá'í Scholarship & The Five-Year Plan: *Enrich, Attract, Advance*

- ✦ **The House of Justice is fully committed to fostering the development of Bahá'í scholarly activity in all parts of the Bahá'í world. Through their scholarly endeavours believers are able to enrich the intellectual life of the Bahá'í community, to explore new insights into the Bahá'í teachings and their relevance to the needs of society, and to attract the investigation of the Faith by thoughtful people from all backgrounds. Far from being a diversion from the worldwide effort to advance the process of entry by troops, Bahá'í scholarship can be a powerful reinforcement to that endeavour and a valuable source of new enquirers.**
- ✦ **The Universal House of Justice, Letter to NSA of New Zealand (April 24, 2008).**

Overview of Presentation

1. **Part One: 'Abdu'l-Bahá & The Black Intelligentsia.**
2. **Part Two: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech: Personal Accounts.**
3. **Part Three: Press Coverage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech.**
4. **Part Four: Translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech, with reference to the Persian Original.**
5. **Part Five: The Luncheon after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech.**
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Part One

'Abdu'l-Bahá & The Black Intelligentsia

Journal of Religious History, Special Issue: Baha'i History

JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY

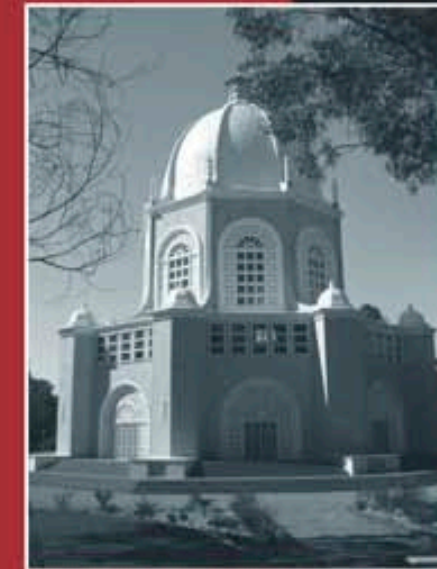
VOLUME 36 NUMBER 4 DECEMBER 2012

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JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY

BAHA'I SPECIAL ISSUE
edited by Todd Lawson

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*Journal of
Religious
History*

**Special Issue:
Baha'i History**

The Centre of the Baha'i Covenant



'Abdu'l-Baha, "Servant of the Glory," son of the founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah (d.1892), and its leader — "Center of the Covenant" — from 1892 until his death in 1921. This portrait was made during his historic visit to North America (April to December 1912) after release from prison in Ottoman Palestine by the Young Turks. (Jacob Schloss Studio, New York, 2 December 1912. First published in *Star of the West*, 10, no. 9 (20 August 1919).)

**Guest Editor: Todd
Lawson**

**Published
12/13/2012**

The Interracial “Baha’i Movement” and the Black Intelligentsia: The Case of W. E. B. Du Bois

Journal of Religious History
Vol. 36, No. 4, December 2012
doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9809.2012.01230.x

CHRISTOPHER BUCK

The Interracial “Baha’i Movement” and the Black Intelligentsia: The Case of W. E. B. Du Bois

This article surveys W. E. B. Du Bois’s encounters with the Baha’i religion, from 1910 to 1953. Sections one and two focus on Du Bois and ‘Abdu’l-Baha (1844–1921), while section three treats Du Bois’s indirect connection to the New York Baha’i community through Nina Du Bois’s documented affiliation with that group. Section four chronicles the 1937 Nashville incident involving reportedly segregated Baha’i meetings, and section five looks at Du Bois’s later Baha’i contacts, completing the trajectory. Originally attracted to Baha’i teachings on interracial unity — with Du Bois prominently featuring ‘Abdu’l-Baha with full-page photograph in Du Bois’s “Men of the Month” column — Du Bois later waxed indignant, openly criticizing the Baha’i movement in a *Pittsburgh Courier* editorial. Drawing on press reports, Baha’i records, and archival correspondence between members of the Baha’i community and Du Bois, primary sources establish that Du Bois’s righteous indignation was based on misinformation.

W. E. B. & Nina Du Bois



Alain Locke & Robert S. Abbott



'Abdu'l-Bahá on "Dr. Locke" & Convention

ḥadrat-i Daktur Lāk īn shakḥ-i jalīl fī al-ḥaqīqih sazāvār-i har sitāyish ast.
taḍarru' bi-malakūt-i ilāhī mīnamāyam kih ta'yīdī makḥṣūṣ bi-ū farmāyad.

مستوروی و بهیم مسرملات و سرین
نفوس محترمه تأیید از نفسات روح القدس دارند حضرت وکتور کن
این شخص طویل فی تحقیق نرا و ار هر ستایش است تضرع ملکوت الہی منام
که تأییدی مخصوص با و فرماید کانونشن سفید و سپاہ یقین بدان که در این
بسیار ولایات امریک است نماید کانونشن شما منزله مادر است

confirmation from the Breathes of the Holy Spirit. His honor,
Dr. Locke - his distinguished person deserves every consideration.
I implore special confirmation for him from the Divine Kingdom.

Be thou assured that this Race Convention will also
in the futre be established in the other States of America.
Your Conveion is like the Mother Convention which shall give
birth to my others. If your Convention be held in the future

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Agnes Parsons, July 26, 1921. Facsimile of Persian original from The Original Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection,
National Bahá'í Archives, United States. Translation from Leone Barnitz Papers, Box 17: Agnes Parsons correspondence/'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Salvation of Democracy



“Bahá’í Principles and the leavening of our national life with their power, is to be regarded as the salvation of democracy. In this way only can the fine professions of American ideals be realized.”

— Alain Locke, Bahá’í Congress at Green Acre, April 1925

W. E. B. Du Bois on 'Abdu'l-Bahá

“I remember Abdul Baha of Persia. He visited me personally in New York in 1912.”

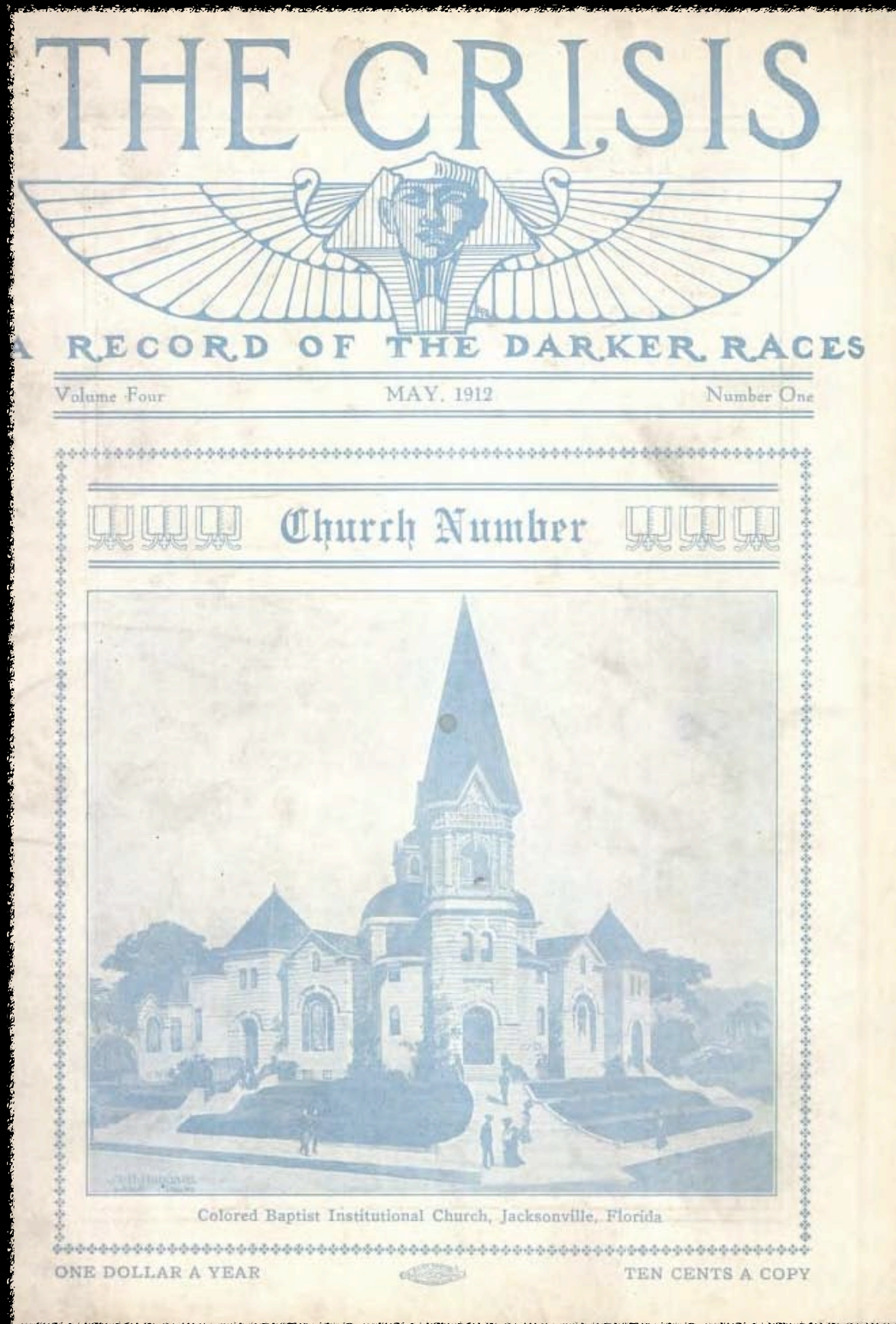
— W.E.B. Du Bois, “Forum of Fact and Opinion: The Fall of the Baha’i.” Pittsburgh Courier (30 Oct. 1937), p. 11 (“The Pittsburgh Courier’s ‘Feature Page’”).

“Two men sit high before the world today—Eugene Debs and Abdul Baha. One is free of chains which should never have bound him—the other [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] of Life which he tried to free of race and national prejudice.”

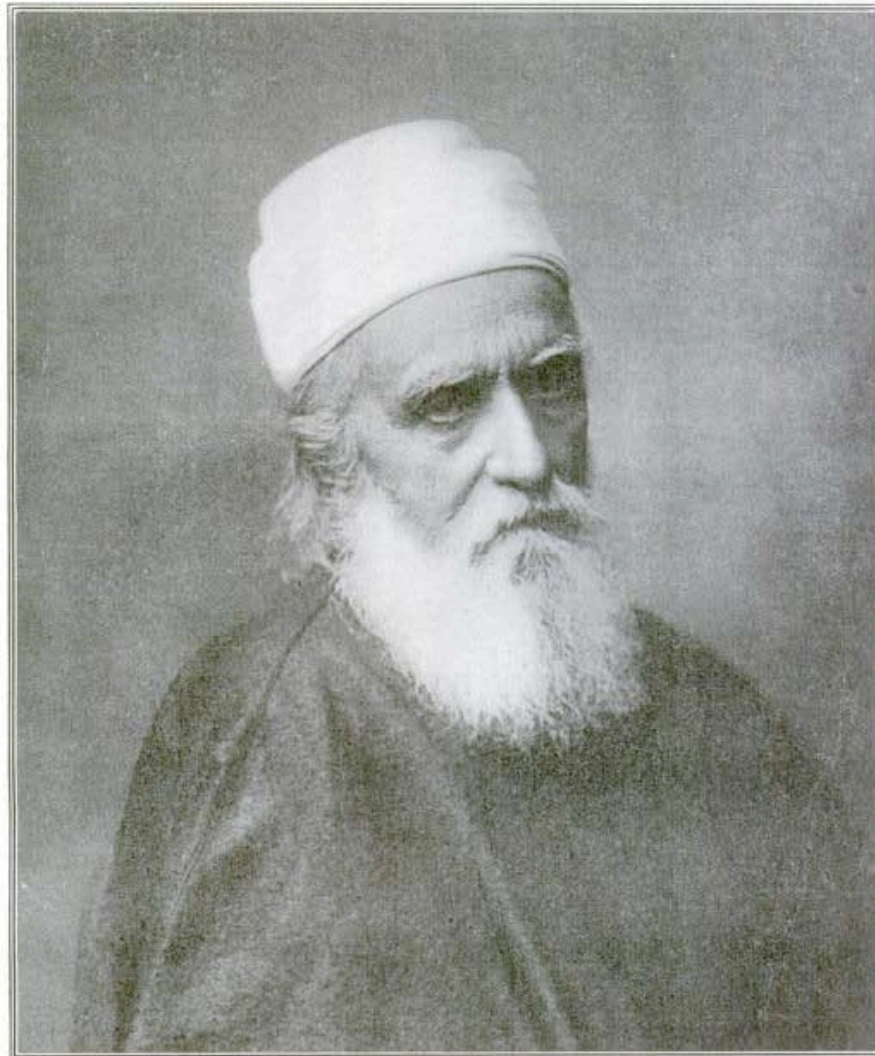
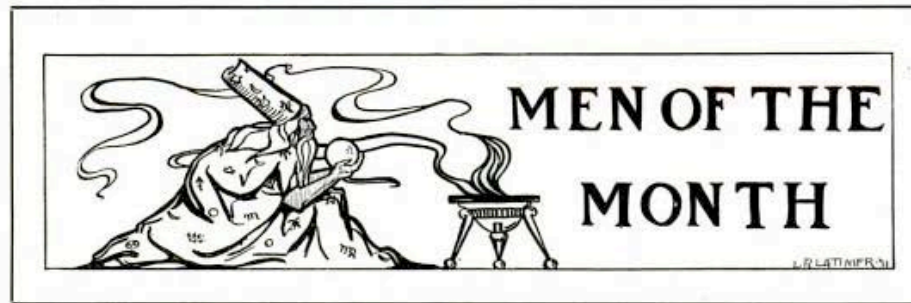
— W.E.B. Du Bois, “Opinion of W.E.B. Du Bois.” The Crisis 23.4 (February 1922): 151.



The Crisis
May 1912



'Abdu'l-Bahá Man of the Month



ABDUL BAHÁ, THE PERSIAN TEACHER OF BROTHERHOOD

The Persian Teacher of Brotherhood

'Abdu'l-Bahá's NAACP Speech

The BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

An address delivered at the Chicago Conference by ABDUL BAHÁ of Persia



OD has stated in the Bible, the Old Testament: "We have created man in our own image and likeness." This statement indicates the fact that man in some particular is of the image and likeness of God. This man who has been called the image and likeness of God: Let us find out just where and how he is the image and likeness of the Lord, and what is the standard or criterion whereby he can be measured.

If a man should possess wealth, can we call him an image and likeness of God? Or is human honor the criterion whereby he can be called the image of God? Or can we apply a color test as a criterion, and say such and such a one is colored with a certain hue and he therefore is the image of God? Can we say, for example, a man who is green in hue is an image of God? Or can we make another distinction, saying that one who is white is any more an image of God? Is simply the white color a criterion whereby man is to be judged? And shall we make a sweeping statement like that? Or is it reasonable for us to choose the dark color? Supposing we say a colored man is after all the image and likeness, just because of his color, or the red-skinned man, shall he be the image and likeness of God? Or shall we declare the yellow race to be a creation and therefore an image and likeness of God? Hence we come to the conclusion that colors are of no importance.

Colors are accidental in nature. That which is essential is the humanitarian aspect. And that is the manifestation of Divine Virtues and that is the Merciful Bestowals. That is the Eternal Life. That is the Baptism through the Holy Spirit. Therefore let it be known that color is of no importance. Man, who is the image and likeness of God, who is the Manifestation of the Bestowals of God, he is acceptable at the threshold of God whatever be his color. Let him be blue in color, or white, or green, or brown, that matters not! Man is not to be pronounced man simply because of bodily attributes. Man is to be

judged according to his intelligence and to his spirit. Because he is to be judged according to spirit and intelligence, therefore, let that be the only criterion. That is the image of God.

As regards you here in this country, there is a point of importance, namely, patriotism. That is common to both. And from the standpoint of language, you share that, both of you speak one tongue. And you have in common the same civilization. And now, with these numerous points of partnership or contact and the one point of difference, which is of the least importance, that of color, are you going to allow this least of differences, namely, that of color, to separate you?

From the standpoint of the body, you have that in common. All the five senses and tangible properties of man you share. As regards intelligence, you are both endowed therewith. Patriotism is common to both. From the standpoint of language there is a point of contact. Your civilization is one and the same. From the standpoint of religion you are one and the same. One point of distinction, and that is color. Is it meet, is it becoming, with all the points of contact, for this least point of distinction or difference should there be any separation or difference? Indeed, not! God is not pleased, nor is any intelligent man pleased, nor is any reasonable man willing to have any difference because of that.

His Holiness, Baha'o'llah, has proclaimed to the world the Oneness of the world of humanity. He has caused the various nations and divergent sects and creeds to unite, and he has declared that the difference in color in the human kingdom is similar to the differences of the flowers, the variegated flowers in a garden. If you enter a garden you will see yellow flowers, white flowers, dark, variegated flowers, the red flower, for example, in the utmost of delicacy and beauty, radiant, and each one through difference lends a charm to the other. This difference in the human kingdom is similar to that. And now were you to be ushered into a garden where all the flowers were to be of the same hue or color, how monotonous!

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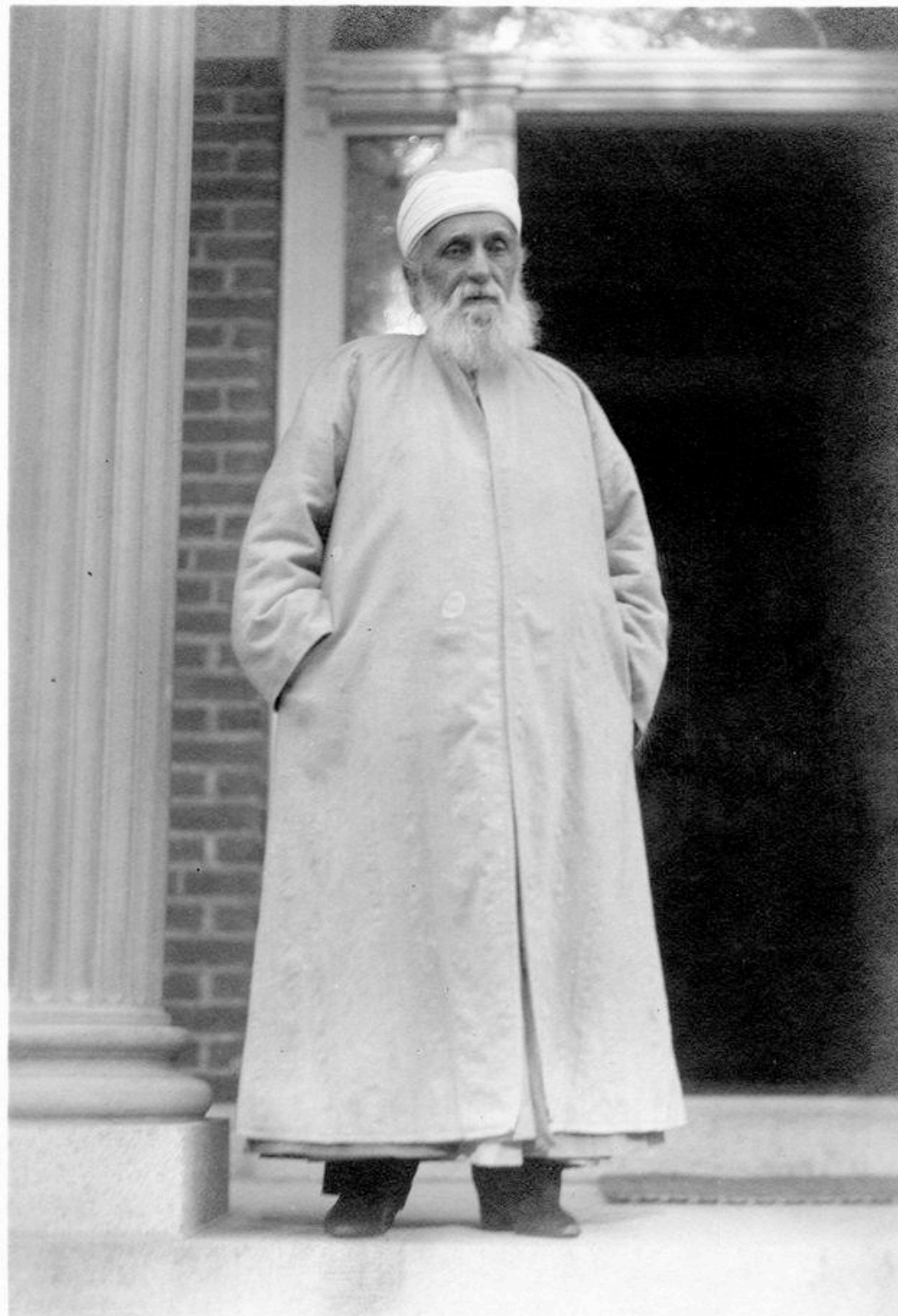
The Crisis (June 1912)



Part Two

**'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech:
Personal Accounts**

**‘Abdu’l-Bahá
April 22, 1912
The Day Before
the Speech**



FARRIS & EWING.
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**In front of the house at
1818 “R” Street, N.W.,
specially prepared by
Agnes Parsons for
‘Abdu’l-Bahá.**

PHOTOGRAPH OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ THE DAY BEFORE THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY SPEECH

- ❖ Caption: 'Abdu'l-Bahá, photo probably taken April 22, 1912 (the day before the Howard University speech), standing at the entrance of the Parsons Mansion (as the guest of the Parsons) at 1700 18th Street NW (now owned by the Transatlantic Academy), Washington, DC, built in 1910 by Arthur J. Parsons, Chief of the Prints Division, Library of Congress, to house his rare book and art collection, and whose wife, Agnes Parsons (1861-1934), was a prominent Baha'i whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in 1920, asked to organize the historic "Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races" held 19-21 May 1921 at the old First Congregational Church, 10th & G Streets NW.]

Why did 'Abdu'l-Bahá Speak on Civil War/Emancipation Proclamation

'Abdu'l-Bahá's choice of topic was timely, as it was the 50th anniversary of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

On September 28, 1912, Baltimore's *The Afro-American Ledger* reported on the "golden jubilee of the lifting of the shackles of slavery from the race" observed on September 27, during which the "principal sessions were held in the Metropolitan A. M. E. Church," where President Taft addressed the audience:

"It is a pleasure to be here," said the President, "at the celebration of the greatest act in the life of Lincoln, who life was filled with great acts. The extinction of slavery meant the extinction of a living lie, because the Declaration of Independence said that all men were free and equal." Mr. Taft went on to say that while Mr. Lincoln abhorred slavery, that he realized that it was recognized by the United States Constitution.

— "President Taft Praises Emancipator: Says 'That It Is Right That Lincoln Should be Held Up in History as the Man Chiefly Responsible for the Freedom of the Negro'." *The Chicago Defender* (September 28, 1912), 2.

Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare that hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States, and each of the States, and the people thereof, in which States that relation is, or may be, suspended or disturbed.

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave States, so called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States ^{and which States} may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits; and that the effort

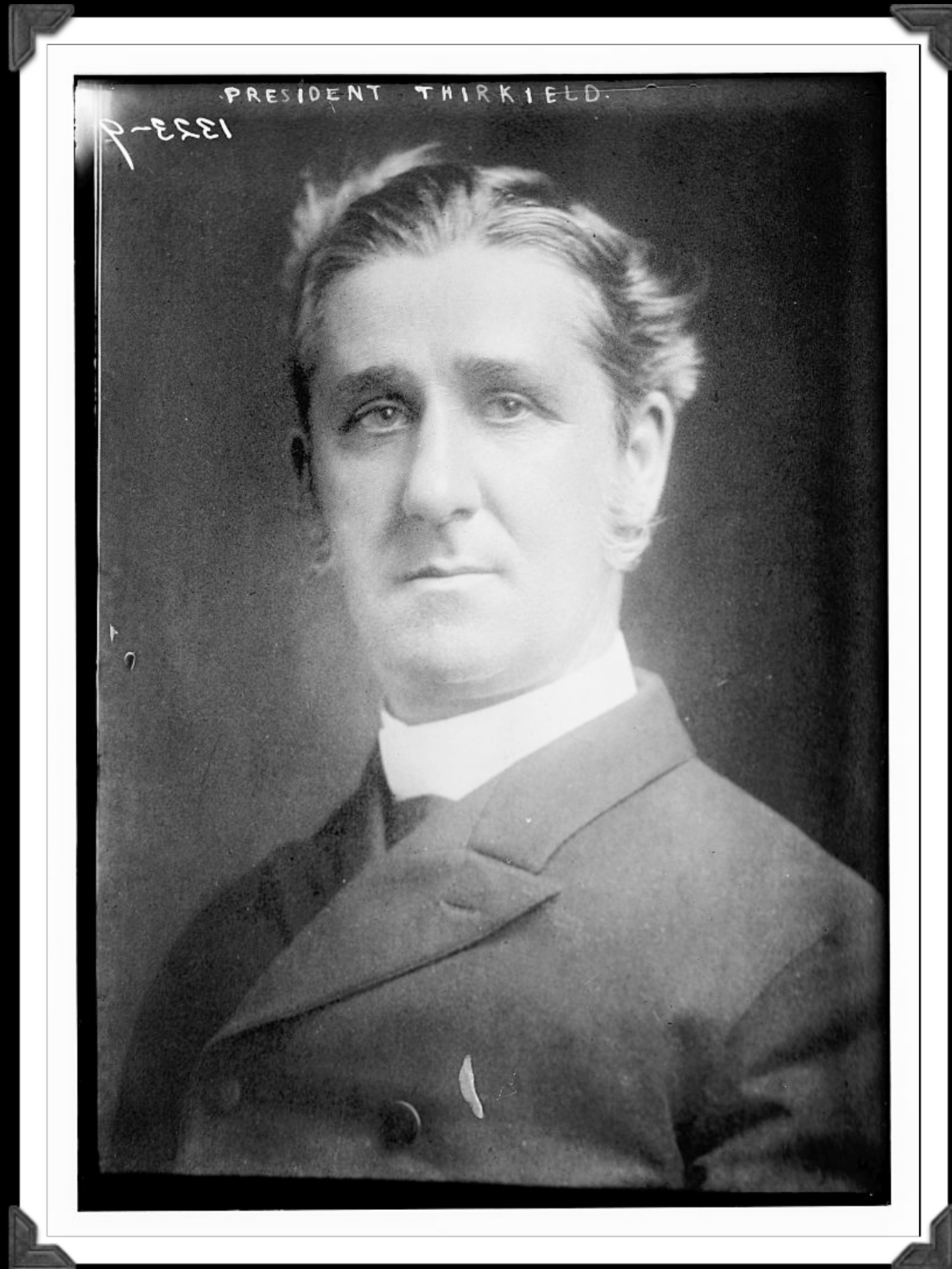
Issued by
President
Abraham
Lincoln on
September
22, 1862

Mahmúd's Diary

Today the Master went to Howard University, an educational institution for blacks. The hosts (mostly black with a few whites) had made special arrangements so that when the Master arrived He was welcomed by music from a band while the audience applauded with excitement and exuberance. It is difficult to describe the scene adequately. The president of the university was very cordial and introduced 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Prophet of Peace and the harbinger of unity and salvation. Then the Master rose from His seat and spoke on the subject of the harmony between blacks and whites and the unity of humankind. The audience repeatedly applauded Him during the talk, delighted at His words. At the conclusion, the president of the university thanked 'Abdu'l-Bahá on behalf of all those gathered. As He left the auditorium, group after group formed two lines, one on each side, all showing their highest respect by bowing and waving their hats and handkerchiefs in farewell to the beloved Master.

— Mírzá Maḥmúd Zarqání, Maḥmúd's Diary: The Diary of Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqání Chronicling 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey to America. Translated by Mohi Sobhani (Oxford: George Ronald, 1998), 55–56. Translated from the original Persian text by Mírzá Maḥmúd Zarqání, Badá-yi al-Áthár, vol. 1. Langenhain: Bahá'í Verlag, 1982. Reprint of the Bombay 1914 edition.

**Wilbur P. Thirkield,
President, Howard
University,
introduced 'Abdu'l-
Bahá on April 23,
1912.**



Joseph H. Hannen's Account

On Tuesday, April 23rd, at noon, Abdul-Baha addressed the student-body of more than 1,000, the faculty and a large number of distinguished guests, at Howard University. This was a most notable occasion, and here, as everywhere when both white and colored people were present, Abdul-Baha seemed happiest. The address was received with breathless attention by the vast audience, and was followed by a positive ovation and a recall. That evening the Bethel Literary and Historical Society, the leading colored organization in Washington, was addressed, and again the audience taxed the capacity of the edifice in which the meeting was held.

— Joseph H. Hannen, “Abdul-Baha in Washington, D. C.”
Star of the West 3.3 (April 28, 1912): 6–24 [7].



Agnes Parsons on the Speech

[Tuesday] April 23rd

On Tuesday, after seeing several people in the morning Abdul Baha and Dr. Fareed went for a short drive: stopped at Mr. and Mrs. Hannen's and afterward they went to Howard University where Abdul Baha made an address before a large audience of professors and students. He dwelt largely upon the need of love and unity between the white and black races and spoke of the gratitude which the colored people should feel for the whites, because, through them came not only freedom for their race, but it was the beginning of freedom for all slaves. He also told through education the differences between the two races would be lessened.

— Agnes Parsons, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America: Agnes Parsons' Diary, April 11, 1912–November 11, 1912, Supplemented with Episodes from Mahmúd's Diary. Edited and annotated by Richard Hollinger (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1996), 29.



When “white and colored” present, “Abdul-Baha seemed happiest”

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Part Three

Press Coverage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech

Louis Gregory arranged for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University speech.

Louis G. Gregory—Bahai Religion.

No other subject of topic but the Bahai Religion can occupy the brains of this new modern philosopher but this religion. It is Bahai, when you meet him, Bahai, when you leave him, and Bahai all the time.

— The Washington Bee (Dec. 2, 1911) Vol. XXXII, Issue 26;
Page 4.

Louis Gregory & Louisa Mathew,
first interracial Bahá'í couple,
New York, September 27, 1912
(wedding photo).



LEADER OF BAHAI MOVEMENT COMING TO CAPITAL SOON

Abdul Baha Abbas Will Ex-
pound His Philosophy
Here.

Abdul Baha Abbas, son of the founder of the Bahai movement or religion, of which Mrs. Christian Barney Hemmick and other prominent women of social America are members, will arrive in Washington within a few weeks to attend the second annual conference of the Persian-American Educational Society to be held here April 18-20.

Abdul is the present leader of the sect, and is declared to be the author of a "new and modern Rubaiyat that has come out of Persia." His booklet of Oriental philosophy which sets forth the principles and objects of his creed is entitled "The Universal Principles of the Bahai Movement, Social, Economic, Governmental." Bound in characteristic style of the Far East the little volume will be distributed in this city for several weeks prior to the arrival of the Bahai leader.

While here the Persian philosopher is scheduled to make several addresses. He will speak before the conference of the Persian-American Educational Society, and will address audiences in the Church of Our Father, and in the People's Church. He will also speak before the Woman's Alliance of All Souls' Unitarian Church.

Before returning to his native country Abdul Baha will visit many of the principal cities of the United States, and will address not only the Bahai Assemblies, but audiences of all cults and denominations as well as many college and university settlements and educational societies.

Abdul Baha's philosophy stands for the molding of "unity and universalism." He urges world peace and a universal language. The Persian teacher also argues for the blending of the world's religions and protests against the differences of creeds. Equality of sexes is also another social reform he advocates.

The visit of Abdul Baha to America, while he is not directly connected with the work of the Persian-American Educational Society is looked forward to by its officers with especial interest, as he is regarded not only as a foremost Persian, but the chief exponent of many of the ideals and purposes of the society.

Oriental Due Here



ABDUL BAHAI ABBAS,
Son of Founder of Bahai Religion.

Jealous Man's Crime.

DETROIT, Mich., April 5.—insane jealousy because Mrs. Helen Marshall, aged twenty-three, accepted the attention of other men is the reason given today for Joseph Rosasco, a young Italian business man, killing Mrs. Marshall and then committing suicide.

**THE FIRST GRAY HAIR
DON'T LOOK OLD**

Washington Times
Friday, April 5, 1912

ABDUL BAHA TO REMAIN IN CITY MOST OF WEEK

Leader of Bahai Movement
Will Speak at Howard
University.

Abdul Baha, Abbas Effendi, leader of the world-wide Bahai movement, who reached Washington Saturday and attended the closing session Saturday night of the second annual conference of the Orient-Occident Unity, will remain in the National Capital most of the present week. He will speak tomorrow afternoon before the student body of Howard University and tomorrow night he will address an audience in the Metropolitan A. M. E. Church.

Accompanied by his interpreter, Dr. Ameen Fareed, and by other members of his party, Abdul Baha yesterday afternoon visited the Church of Our Father, Universalist, and he was introduced to the congregation by the pastor, Rev. John Van Schaick, jr.

Tenets of Movement.

In an address expounding the tenets of the Bahai movement Abdul Baha said:

"It declares for the unity of all present religions, so that they may rest upon a common basis. The Bahai movement stands for the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. It is a very simple religion; it is merely a faith in God free from misrepresentations."

Following the address the aged Persian held an informal reception, in which he shook by the hand the members of the local Bahai colony and their friends.

Abdul Baha will leave Washington probably Saturday, proceeding directly to Chicago, where he is to participate in the fourth annual Bahai convention, which opens in that city the last of this week.

**ABDUL BAHA TO REMAIN IN CITY MOST OF WEEK:
Leader of the Bahai Movement Will Speak at Howard
University. Washington Star (April 22, 1912).**

“Abdul Baha on Religious Unity”

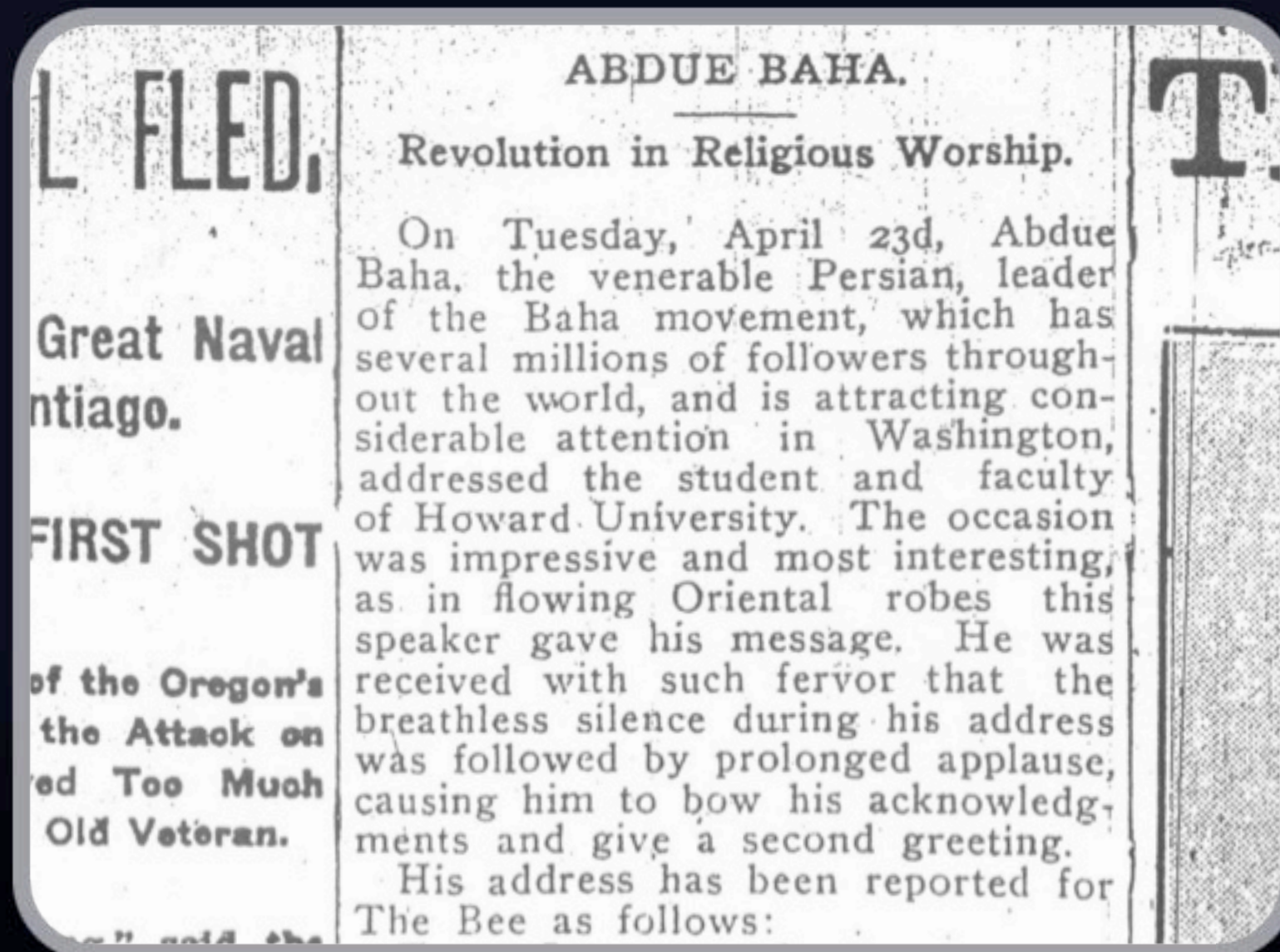
Abdul Baha Abbas, the leader of the Baha [sic] movement for the world-wide religious unity, has been in the city. Through the missionary work of Mrs. Christian D. Helmick (Mrs. A. C. Barney that was), quite a colony of colored Bahaists has been developed in Washington, and these earnest disciples gave their patron saint an especially warm reception. On Tuesday evening the venerable prophet addressed a large audience at Metropolitan A. M. E. Church, in connection with the Bethel Literary Society. At noon Tuesday, the Abdul [sic] spoke to the students of Howard University. The principal advocate of the Bahai faith in this city is Mr. Louis C. [sic] Gregory, a brilliant young lawyer and government official, whose zeal in the work was so absorbing that he made a comprehensive tour of Egypt and the Holy Land to study at first hand the history and philosophy of this remarkable cult.

“Abdul Baha on Religious Unity”

The Behai [sic] belief is that universal peace can only come through the harmony of all religions, and that all religions are basically one. Its consistent espousal of the “fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man” is causing the new faith to find considerable favor among many of our leading people. Its white devotees, even in this prejudice-ridden community, refuse to draw the color line. The informal meetings, held frequently in the fashionable mansions of the cultured society in Sheridan Circle, Dupont Circle, Connecticut and Massachusetts avenues, have been open to Negroes on terms of absolute equality. The liberality of the Behaist faith is evidenced in the fact that one can be of any known religious denomination, and yet maintain good standing as a disciple of Behai.

— “Abdul Baha on Religious Unity.” The Washington Bee Vol. 32, Iss. 47 (April 27, 1912), 1.

“Breathless silence ... prolonged applause.”



- “On Tuesday, April 23d [sic], Abdue (sic) Baha, the venerable Persian, leader of the Baha (sic) movement, ... addressed the student and faculty of Howard University. The occasion was impressive ... as in flowing oriental robes this speaker gave his message.”
- “He was received with such fervor that the breathless silence during his address was followed by prolonged applause, causing him to bow acknowledgments and give a second greeting.”

Source: *The Washington Bee*, Vol. 32, Iss. 51 (May 25, 1912): 3.

The Bee as follows:
His address has been reported for
ments and give a second greeting.
causing him to bow his acknowledg-
was followed by prolonged applause,
breathless silence during his address
received with such fervor that the
speaker gave his message. He was
as in flowing Oriental robes this

BAHAI LEADER AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY:

Head of Oriental Religious Sect Delivers Lecture to the Student Body. **FREEDOM HERE BROUGHT FREEDOM ELSEWHERE.** The Effect Of Freedom In This Country Reacted All Over The World. Afro-American Ledger (April 27, 1912), 1.

BAHAI LEADER AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Head of Oriental Religious Sect
Delivers Lecture to the
Student Body.

**FREEDOM HERE BROUGHT
FREEDOM ELSEWHERE.**

The Effect Of Freedom In This
Country Reacted All Over
The World

Washington, April 25—Abdul Bahai Abbas Effendi, oriental seer and world leader of the Bahai movement, delivered the last of his series of lectures here tonight.

In an address to the students of Howard University, he said: "Let us recall the fact that the first proclamation of liberty, of freedom from slavery, was accomplished in this continent.

The white man went into war for the sake of the colored. They were forfeiting possessions and sacrificing lives in order that the colored might be freed from bondage, and this has had tremendous effects upon the sociology of other parts.

"The colored people of Africa were in a most terrible state of bondage, and the European powers, emulating the American altruism, accomplished a proclamation of universal liberty. So you were the means here of liberating your fellow beings elsewhere. This effort on the part of the white people in America should never be lost sight of, and therefore you must be very grateful and must be very kind to the whites here. And the white people in this country should be most happy and grateful to you, so that both may develop in the degrees of altruism and humanitarianism.

"May you be further drawn together with the whites, in order that extraordinary development may be accomplished by you and in order that fellowship may become a reality, a true fact, among you. In short, you must be grateful to whites, for they were liberators of your people not only join this country, in the continent of America, but elsewhere in Africa.

"Were it not for your freedom here one can see that freedom elsewhere would not have been accomplished, and up to the present day bondage would have been present. But now, praise be to God, the bondage has passed away and the white and the colored are both free from it, and I pray in your behalf that you may develop and advance in ethics and morality; that you may achieve it in such a superlative degree that there shall be no name other than one humankind. So that one appellation may be invoked, and that is humankind."

TO BREAK THE COLOR LINE.

Abdul Baha, the Great Persian Philosopher and Teacher, Aims to Unite the Peoples of All Races and Creeds in One Great Bond of Brotherhood.

Washington, D. C., May 3.—Abdul Baha (the servant of God), the great Persian philosopher and teacher, head of the Bahaists, will reach Chicago next Monday. He comes to bring hope to the colored people.

His visit to Washington has been a triumphal march. He has met and conquered Southern prejudices. He made addresses at Metropolitan A. M. E. church, at Howard University and at many of the white churches and halls and was listened to by many thousands of people of both races, who applauded his propaganda of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

He was the guest of one of Washington's wealthiest women, one who moves in the most exclusive social circles at the capital, and yet her house has been thrown open to rich and poor and black and white. Southern people whose hearts were once filled with the most bitter prejudices against their brothers in black, have publicly acknowledged their change of heart and now they treat the colored people as brother indeed.

“TO BREAK THE COLOR LINE:

Abdul Baha, the Great Persian Philosopher and Teacher, Aims to Unite the Peoples of All Races and Creeds in One Great Bond of Brotherhood.” The Chicago Defender Vol. 7, No. 18 (Big Weekend Edition, May 4, 1912), 3.

The Chicago Defender on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Visit to DC

His visit to Washington has been a triumphal march. He has met with and conquered Southern prejudices. He made addresses at Metropolitan A. M. E. church, at Howard University and at many of the white churches and halls and was listened to by many thousands of people of both races, who applauded his propaganda of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

— “To Break The Color Line: Abdul Baha, the Great Persian Philosopher and Teacher, Aims to Unite the Peoples of All Races and Creeds in One Great Bond of Brotherhood.” The Chicago Defender Vol. 7, No. 18 (Big Weekend Edition, May 4, 1912), 3.



Part Four

**Translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech,
with Reference to the Persian Original**

The Persian Text & English Translation

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Majmū‘ih-yi Khiṭābāt Ḥadrat-i ‘Abdu’l-Bahā fī Ūrūpā va Āmrīkā* (“Collected Talks of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Europe and America”), Vol. 2 (Hofheim-Langenhain, Germany: Baha’i-Verlag, BE 127 / 1970–71; reprinted in one vol., 1984), 39–43. Online beginning at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-44.html#pg39>.
- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “23 April 1912 Talk at Howard University Washington, D.C.,” *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982), 45–46. Translated by Amin Banani, Emeritus Professor of History and Persian Literature at UCLA and former Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and Acting Director of the Center for Near Eastern Studies.

1. “There are no whites and blacks before God.”

Today I am most happy (*nahāyat-i surūr*), for I see here a gathering (*majmaʿ*) of the servants of God (*bandigān-i ilāhī*). I see white and black sitting together (*hamnishín*). There are no whites and blacks before God. All colors are one, and that is the color of servitude to God. Scent and color are not important. The heart is important. If the heart is pure, white or black or any color makes no difference. God does not look at colors; He looks at the hearts. He whose heart is pure is better. He whose character is better is more pleasing. He who turns more to the Abhá Kingdom is more advanced.

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- Let's look closely at this statement: "Today I am most happy, for I see here a gathering of the servants of God." Here, the Master's expression in Persian is *nahāyat-i surūr*, which means that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is expressing His utmost "joy" (*surūr*).
- And the cause of this joy is the sitting together (*hamnishīn*) of black and white. Here, *hamnishīn* means interacting one with another, usually in friendship, not just sitting politely, side-by-side.
- The Arabic word "gathering" (*majma'*), which means an important meeting-place, is not just a casual meeting. Blacks and whites, sitting together as equals, was a rare occurrence at that time.
- 'Abdu'l-Bahá also refers to everyone in the audience as, literally, the "slaves of God" (*bandigān-i ilāhī*).

2. “Colors are the cause of the adornment of the garden.”

In the realm of existence, colors are of no importance. Observe, in the mineral kingdom, colors are not the cause of discord (*ikhtiláf*). In the vegetable kingdom the colors of multicolored flowers are not the cause of discord (*ikhtiláf*). Rather, colors are the cause of the adornment (*zínat*) of the garden, because a single color has no appeal; but when you observe many-colored flowers, there is charm (*jilvih*) and display (*zínat*).

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- Here, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is comparing human beings to flowers in a garden, although the comparison is not stated directly.
- When black and white are together, they are *more* beautiful. So, each one looks better, now!
- “Charm” (*jilvih*) is usually displayed, not hidden. This “charm” *attracts* attention, rather than going unnoticed. This previously unnoticed beauty (the beauty of blacks and the beauty of whites separately) becomes quite attractive when blacks and whites are mixed together.
- And this is more than attractive in the sense of being charming in appearance. This “charm” actually *magnifies* the beauty of the garden, attracting attention to itself, so that others will notice and be affected by the display of this lovely garden. Here, the garden is the charm of blacks and whites sitting together.

3. “How often white doves fly with black ones.”

The world of humanity, too, is like a garden (*bústán*), and humankind are like the many-colored flowers. Therefore, different colors constitute an adornment (*zínat*). In the same way, there are many colors in the realm of animals. Doves (*kabútar*) are of many colors; nevertheless, they live in utmost harmony. They never look at color; instead, they look at the species (*naw'*). How often white doves fly with black ones. In the same way, other birds and varicolored animals never look at color; they look at the species.

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- In the previous paragraph. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá talked about flowers *in general*. He did not give a *specific* example, such as roses, which are very often used in Persian mystical poetry, as well as in the poetry of love. The yellow rose, in fact, was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá *favorite* flower.
- Here, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá chose a *special* kind of animal—doves (*kabútar*)—to make His point. What was His wisdom in doing so?
- Although *kabútar* is translated by Professor Banani as “doves,” this Persian word also means “pigeons.” As in English, “doves” and “pigeons” are closely related, and often the words are used interchangeably.
- Pigeons were used as messengers. So pigeons deliver messages, communicate, connect.
- As for the other meaning, “doves” signify peace, love and harmony.

4. “White and black are the descendants of the same Adam.”

Now ponder this: Animals, despite the fact that they lack reason (*'aql*) and understanding (*idrâq*), do not make colors the cause of conflict (*sabab-i ikhtilâf*). Why should man, who has reason, create conflict? This is wholly unworthy of him. Especially white and black are the descendants of the same Adam; they belong to one household. In origin, they were one; they were the same color. Adam was of one color. Eve had one color. All humanity is descended from them. Therefore, in origin they are one.

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- Here, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, while still speaking of animals by comparison, states that animals do not make color an issue. So why should people?
- Next, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that animals “lack reason (*'aql*) and understanding (*idrâq*),” which are qualities that human beings possess. This is what differentiates human beings from animals.
- Animals are irrational, being driven primarily by instinct. Yet, when people make differences in skin color a cause of division and oppression, this is worse than animals, which are irrational.
- Animals depend on a lot of things for their survival, such as scents, sounds, quick movements, etc. But skin color (or fur color) is *not* one of them.
- So, for human beings to make a distinction that animals do not make is more irrational than irrational animals! This is not worthy of human beings.

5. “These colors developed later due to climates and regions.”

These colors developed later due to climates (literally, “water” (*áb*) and regions (*iqlím*); they have no significance (*ahamíyyat*) whatsoever. Therefore, today (*imrúz*) I am very happy (*imrúz besyár masrúr-am*) that white and black have gathered together in this meeting. I hope this coming together and harmony (*ulfat*) reaches such a degree that no distinctions (*imtiyáz*) shall remain between them, and they shall be together in the utmost harmony and love (*ulfat va maḥabbat*).

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that “climate” (literally, the Persian text says “water” (*áb*)) and “regions” (*iqlím*) are the natural causes of differences in skin color.
- Although this is not meant as a “scientific” statement, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s remark not only is supported by scientific evidence, but by common sense.
- Not only that, but human experience shows this to be true as well. Laborers, farmers, and construction workers who work long hours under the sun usually have darker skin colors due to their exposure to the sun.
- Imagine the effect of long-term exposure to the sun over a period of thousands, if not millions of years.
- So difference in skin color is natural; but making a difference over skin color is not natural. It is irrational, unscientific and unreasonable to do so.

6. “How they fought and sacrificed until they freed the blacks!”

But I wish to say one thing in order that the blacks (*siyāhān*) may become grateful to the whites (*mamnūn-i sifidān shavand*) and the whites become loving (*mihrabān*) toward the blacks. If you go to Africa and see the blacks of Africa (*siyāh-hā-yi ifrīqā*), you will realize how much progress (*taraqqī*) you have made. Praise be to God! You are like the whites; there are no great distinctions left. (*al-ḥamd lillāh shumā miṣl-i sifidānīd imtiyāz chandānī dar miyān nīst.*) But the blacks of Africa are treated as servants (*khadamah*).

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement that the blacks should be “grateful” to the whites is striking. Here, the Master shifts the focus from whites as being the *cause* of enslaving the blacks to the *sacrifice* of whites during the Civil War as the cause of emancipating blacks from slavery. (I don’t see this approach being used today!)
- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá shifts the focus from the evils that whites perpetrated (in enforcing slavery) to the good that they sacrificed their lives to bring about.
- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also shifts the focus from the evils of slavery to the overall advancement of African Americans in America. Further advancement is what is needed, and that’s what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will call on the whites to do.

7. “The emancipation proclamation became universal.”

The first proclamation of emancipation for the blacks was made by the whites of America. How they fought and sacrificed until they freed the blacks! Then it spread to other places. The blacks of Africa were in complete bondage, but your emancipation led to their freedom also—that is, the European states emulated the Americans, and the emancipation proclamation became universal. It was for your sake (*bi-jahat-i shumā*) that the whites of America made such an effort. Were it not for this effort, universal emancipation (*ḥurriyyat-i ‘umūmī*) would not have been proclaimed (*i’lān nimīshud*).

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- Here, 'Abdu'l-Bahá shifts the focus from the evils of slavery to the unintended good that resulted, that is, the positive consequences.
- Through the sacrifice of African Americans who were enslaved, they eventually progressed far beyond many of the peoples in Africa, and were now a model for Africans to look up to in order that the people of Africa might advance as well.
- Here is a shift in focus from the evils of slavery to the good that resulted from slavery (not that slavery itself was good).

8. “Strive jointly to make extraordinary progress.”

Therefore, you must be very grateful to the whites of America, and the whites must become very loving toward you so that you may progress (*taraqqī*) in all human grades. Strive jointly to make extraordinary progress (*taraqqī*) and mix together completely. In short, you must be very thankful to the whites who were the cause of your freedom in America. Had you not been freed, other blacks would not have been freed either. Now—praise be to God!—everyone is free and lives in tranquillity. I pray that you attain to such a degree of good character and behavior that the names of black and white shall vanish. All shall be called human, just as the name for a flight of doves is dove. They are not called black and white. Likewise with other birds.

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mean by “progress”? The Persian word for “progress” here is *“taraqqī.”* Real “progress” is not just material. It is educational, social and spiritual advancement, as well as economic well-being.
- What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mean to help someone or some group “progress”? The Master is speaking generally here. But one thing is clear: Progress first depends on peace and harmony, which means integration in harmonious and mutually beneficial interaction.
- What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mean by “grateful”? In Persian, the expression is *“mamnūn-i sifidān shavand.”* In Persian culture, to be “grateful” means a lot more than just saying, “Thank you.” It means to show your *wholehearted* gratitude (not just showing polite appreciation) by your actions.
- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá elsewhere talks about gratitude and advancement in speaking about the interaction between youth and their elders, where the elders are encouraged to be kind, to teach the youth and become a cause of their progress, while the youth should show their appreciation toward their elders.

9. “Endeavor to promote your advancement and enhance your honor.”

I hope that you attain to such a high degree—and this is impossible except through love. You must try to create love between yourselves; and this love does not come about unless you are grateful (*mamnún*) to the whites, and the whites are loving (*mihrabán*) toward you, and endeavor to promote your advancement and enhance your honor (*dar taraqqī-i shumā bikūshand va dar ‘izzat-i shumā sa’y namāyand*). This will be the cause of love (*sabab-i maḥabbat*). Differences between black and white will be completely obliterated; indeed, ethnic and national differences will all disappear. (*bi-kullī ikhtilāf bayn-i siyāh va sifīd zā’il mīgardad balkih ikhtilāf-i jins va ikhtilāf-i vaṭan hamih az miyān mīravad.*)

Comments on the Persian Text by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- Here, this “high degree” of attainment is “impossible” unless certain conditions are met.
- The whites not only must be kind and loving toward the blacks. Although that’s good in itself, there is yet another condition, which is that whites should “endeavor to promote your advancement and enhance your honor” (*dar taraqqī-i shumā bikūshand va dar ‘izzat-i shumā sa’y namāyand*).
- When that condition is met, then—and only then—will “this ... be the cause of love” (*sabab-i muḥabbat*)—that is, the cause of reciprocal love from blacks towards whites.
- For whites to be truly loving, they must show their love and concern in their actions by helping blacks to advance and make progress, not only for their own benefit, but for the welfare of society as a whole.

10. “Be with one another in utmost harmony and love.”

I am very happy to see you and thank God that this meeting is composed of people of both races and that both are gathered in perfect love and harmony. I hope this becomes the example of universal harmony and love (*nimūnih-yi ulfat va maḥabbat-i kullī*) until no title remains except that of humanity. Such a title demonstrates the perfection of the human world and is the cause of eternal glory and human happiness. I pray that you be with one another in utmost harmony and love (*nahāyat-i ulfat va maḥabbat*) and strive to enable each other to live in comfort.



Part Five

The Luncheon after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech

Gayle Morrison's Commentary on the Luncheon

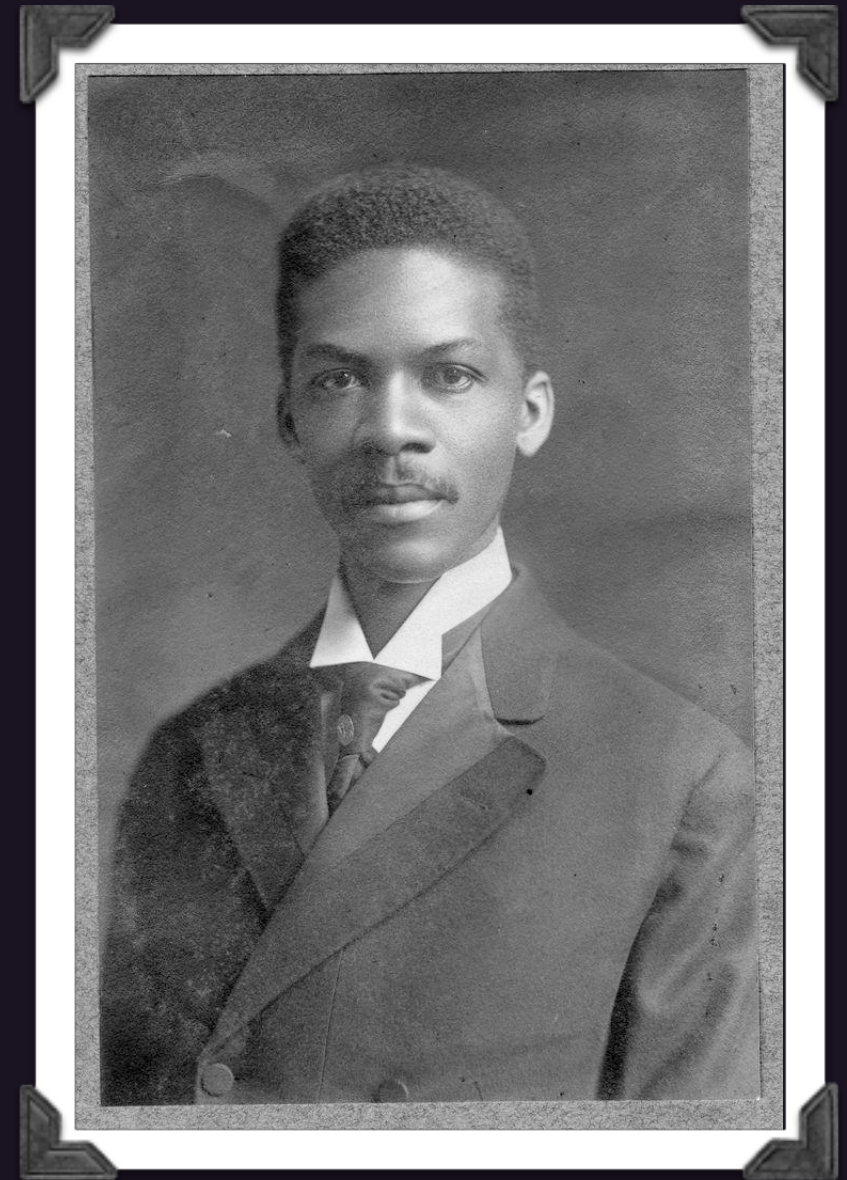
Early on that afternoon of 23 April 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sought to demonstrate His teachings on race by challenging the practice of social segregation. After His speech at Howard University, He had been invited by Ali-Kuli Khan, chargé d'affaires of the Persian Legation, and Madame Florence Breed Khan, both of whom were Bahá'ís, to attend a luncheon and a reception in His honor. About nineteen guests were present at the luncheon. Some were "very prominent in the social and political life of Washington," Mr. Gregory recalled, and others were Bahá'í friends of the Khans, individuals such as Agnes Parsons, a Washington socialite, and Juliet Thompson, a painter from New York, who were comfortable in such circles. ...

— Gayle Morrison, To Move the World: Louis Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982/1999), 52–53.

The luncheon following Abdu'l-Bahá's speech

During the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the United States in 1912 a luncheon in His honor was given in Washington by Mírzá Ali-Kuli Khan and Madame Khan, who were both Bahá'ís. Khan was at that time chargé d'affaires of the Persian Legation in the capital city. Many noted people were invited, some of whom were members of the official and social life of Washington, as well as a few Bahá'ís.

Just an hour before the luncheon 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent word to Louis Gregory that he might come to Him for the promised conference. Louis arrived at the appointed time, and the conference went on and on. 'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed to want to prolong it. When luncheon was announced, 'Abdu'l-Bahá led into the dining room, except Louis.



“Where is Mr. Gregory? Bring Mr. Gregory!”

All were seated when suddenly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stood up, looked around, and then said to Mírzá Khan, “Where is Mr. Gregory? Bring Mr. Gregory!” There was nothing for Mírzá Khan to do but find Mr. Gregory, who fortunately had not yet left the house, but was quietly waiting for a chance to do so. Finally Mr. Gregory came into the room with Mírzá Khan. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Who was really the Host (as He was wherever He was), had by this time rearranged the place setting and made room for Mr. Gregory, giving him the seat of honor at His right. He stated He was very pleased to have Mr. Gregory there, and then, in the most natural way as if nothing unusual had happened, proceeded to give a talk on the oneness of mankind.

— Agnes Parsons, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America: Agnes Parsons’ Diary, 31 and 33, n. 45, citing in The Bahá’í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume XII, 1950–1954. Comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1956), 666–669 [668].

Juliet Thompson's & Louis Gregory's Accounts

Juliet Thompson's account of the luncheon testifies to the ease with which 'Abdu'l-Bahá defied convention, as if it did not in fact exist. She wrote simply that "a colored man, Lewis [sic] Gregory, was present and the Master gave a wonderful talk on race prejudice." Mr. Gregory himself, although he undoubtedly told the full story of the luncheon to many friends, stated in his formal reminiscences only that "'Abdul Baha' made everyone feel perfectly at ease by his genial humor, wisdom and outpouring of love. ... He mentioned his address at Howard University which was made at noon that same day and indicated guidance and progress in race relations."

— Gayle Morrison, To Move the World: Louis Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982/1999), 53.

Gayle Morrison's Commentary

Gently yet unmistakably, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had assaulted the customs of a city that had been scandalized only a decade earlier by President Roosevelt's dinner invitation to Booker T. Washington. Moreover, as a friend who helped Madame Khan with the luncheon recalled, the place setting that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had rearranged so casually had been made according to the strict demands of Washington protocol. Thus, with one stroke 'Abdu'l-Bahá had swept aside both segregation by race and categorization by social rank.

— Gayle Morrison, To Move the World: Louis Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982/1999), 53–54.



Part Six

The Day after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University Speech

'Abdu'l-Bahá
April 24, 1912
The Day After
the Speech



**'Abdu'l-Bahá seated
with Marzieh Khan,
Hamideh Khan and
Rahim Khan in the
Washington D.C. home
of 'Ali Kuli Khan and
Florence Breed Khan.**

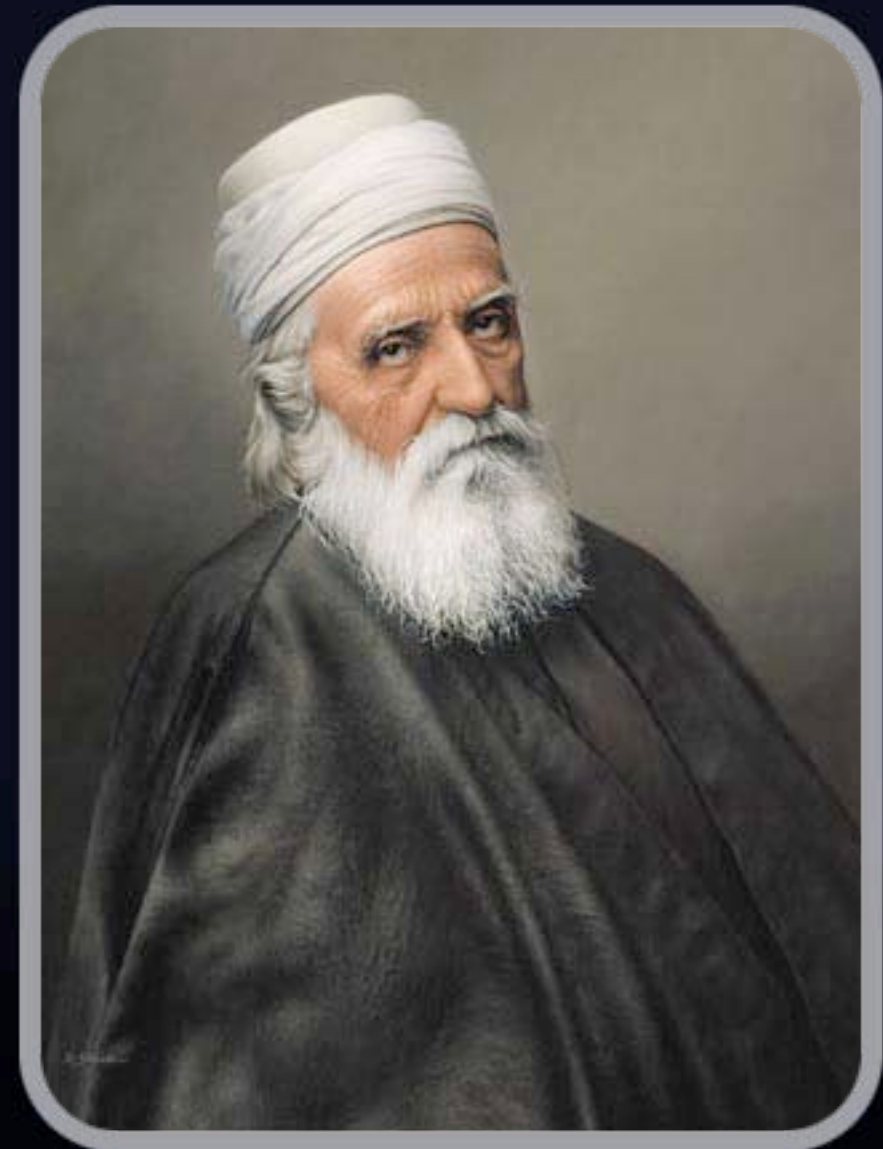
Blacks & Whites

“Rubies & Pearls”

1912

- A meeting such as this seems like a beautiful cluster of precious jewels—pearls, rubies, diamonds, sapphires. It is a source of joy and delight.
- In the clustered jewels of the races may the blacks be as sapphires and rubies and the whites as diamonds and pearls.
- How glorious the spectacle of real unity among mankind!
- This is the sign of the Most Great Peace; this is the star of the oneness of the human world.

— 24 April 1912, Talk at Home of Andrew J. Dyer,
1937 Thirteenth Street, NW, Washington, D.C.



A New Racial Discourse: Comments on the Persian by Nahzy Abadi Buck

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s secretary, Mahmúd Zarqání, in his diary entry for 24 April 1912, states:
- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked: “Before I arrived, I felt too tired to speak at this meeting. But at the sight of such genuine love and attraction between the white and the black friends (*ulfat va injizáb ahibbá-yi síyáh va sífíd*), I was so moved that I spoke with great love and likened (*tashbíh namúdam*) this union of different colored races (*ittihád-i alvân-i mukhtalifih*) to a string of gleaming pearls and rubies (*la’álí va yaqút*).
- Mahmúd Zarqání, *Mahmúd’s Diary*. Translated by M. Sobhani (Oxford: George Ronald, 1998), p. 57 (under the diary page for Wednesday, 24 April 1912).



Part Seven

The Independent's Interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá

America and World Peace

BY ABDUL BAHA ABBAS

[Abdul Baha Abbas, Persian prophet and teacher, courteously replied to the questions of a representative of THE INDEPENDENT by means of an interpreter. In spite of the lofty position ascribed to him by his followers, his interest in ordinary human affairs is keen. He was dressed in flowing robes and turban, which accorded well with his square cut gray beard. His blue eyes are frank, lively and humorous, his figure of medium height and slight, but erect and graceful in spite of his sixty-eight years. When he was in London he preached in the City Temple and in St. John's, Westminster, and in the United States he has been invited to the pulpits of various denominations. In our issues of April 11 and July 18 some account has been given of the leader of the Bahaists.—EDITOR.]

I AM very pleased with America and its people. I find religion, high ideals, broad sympathy with humanity, benevolence and kindness widespread here, and my hope is that America will lead in the movement for universal peace.

The people of this land enjoy many blessings. Day by day they are advancing and progressing, their fortunes are in their own hands, their patriotism is strong, they enjoy freedom in a superlative degree. They are not restrained by ignorance or the weight of old customs, nor are they tyrannized over by circumstances or fear of neighboring nations. In a hemisphere they are supreme, and as kindness is their natural disposition, the world will expect them to bear the banner of the peace movement.

Such leadership would be in accord with their own history and the principles on which their government is founded. Never in all the annals of the world do we find such an instance of national self-sacrifice as was displayed here during the Civil War. Americans who had never seen a weapon used in anger left their homes and peaceful pursuits, took up arms, bore utmost hardships, braved utmost dangers, gave up all they held dear, and finally their lives, in order that slaves might be free.

In Washington recently I address the students of Howard University—about fifteen hundred of them—and I told them that they must be very good to the white race of America. I told them that they must never forget to be grateful and thankful. I said to them: "If you want to know really what great service the white race here has rendered to you, go to Africa and study the condition of your own race there." But at the same time I said that the white people here must be very kind to those whom they

have freed. The white people must treat those whom they have freed with justice and firmness, but also with perfect love. America's example in freeing the slaves has been a power for freedom everywhere. Because America freed her slaves, even at the cost of one of the bloodiest wars of modern times, other nations have felt themselves bound to free slaves. America's leadership in humanitarian and altruistic matters is generally acknowledged. Instead of robbing the weak, she helps them. The nations look to America to lead them in good works.

I am here in this country making an appeal on behalf of universal peace, unity, love and brotherhood. I do not know how many Bahaists there are in America or in the world. There are no statistics in regard to this matter. If figures have been published they are without authority. Baháism has no creed, no ritual, no dogma. Its principles are:

1. Love of humanity, shown more in act than in word.
2. Kindness to all the nations of the world.
3. Service to fellowmen.
4. Day and night love for all men must be shown so that the foundations of war and strife will be utterly destroyed.
5. The Bahaist must be the embodiment of truth, sincerity and faith.
6. The Bahaist must be free from religious prejudice, patriotic prejudice, racial prejudice, national prejudice.
7. The Bahaist must consider humanity as one tree, of which the various nations are the branches, leaves and fruit.
8. The Bahaist's religion must agree with reason and the true findings of science.
9. The Bahaist must live and act in accordance with the principles and teachings of all the prophets.

If a man does and believes these things then he is a Bahaist, no matter whether he calls himself Shintoist, Confucianist, Buddhist, Hindoo, Jew, Mahometan, Zoroastrian, Parsee or Chris-

Abdul Baha Abbas,
"AMERICA AND WORLD PEACE."
The Independent 73, No. 3328 (New
York, September 5, 1912): 606—609.

Interview of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Abdul Baha Abbas, Persian prophet and teacher, courteously replied to questions of the representative of THE INDEPENDENT by means of an interpreter. In spite of the lofty position ascribed to him by his followers, is interested in ordinary human affairs is keen. He was dressed in flowing robes and turban, which accorded well with his square cut gray beard. His blue eyes are frank, lively and humorous, his figure of medium hight [sic] and slight, but erect and graceful in spite of his sixty-eight years.

Interview of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I AM very pleased with America and its people. I find religion, high ideals, broad sympathy with humanity, benevolence and kindness widespread here, and my hope is that America will lead the movement for universal peace. . . .

Such leadership would be in accord with their own history and the principles on which the government is founded. Never in all the annals of the world do we find such an instance of national self-sacrifice as was displayed here during the Civil War. Americans who had never seen a weapon used in anger left their homes and peaceful pursuits, took up arms, bore utmost hardships, braved utmost dangers, gave up all they held dear, and finally their lives, in order that slaves might be free.

Interview of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

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Interview of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The white people must treat those whom they have freed with justice and firmness, but also with perfect love. America's example of freeing the slaves has been a power for freedom everywhere. Because America freed her slaves, even at the cost of one of the bloodiest wars of modern times, other nations have felt themselves bound to free slaves. America's leadership in humanitarian and ultra-state matters is generally acknowledged.

— Abdul Baha Abbas, "America and World Peace." The Independent 73, No. 3328 (New York, September 5, 1912): 606–609.



Part Eight

Conclusions: Bahá'í Race Discourse Today



'Abdu'l-Baha with children and Lua Getsinger (r.) at home of Howard MacNutt, Brooklyn, NY (June 17, 1912).

PHOTOGRAPHIC STILL FROM FILM:
'ABDU'L-BAHÁ WITH CHILDREN

- ❖ Caption: A photographic still from the original film taken of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on June 18, 1912 by the Special Event Film Mfg. Co., New York, at the home of Howard and Mary MacNutt, 935 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn.
- ❖ On that occasion, "the Master" said: "The souls of little children are as mirrors upon which no dust has gathered."
- ❖ The film at the Hotel Ansoni taken the same day has not survived. But the voice recording voice on "Edison's Talking Machine" (cylinder phonograph) is extant. [Courtesy of the U.S. National Bahá'í Archives.]

The Need to Adapt ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Discourse on Race

- **The American nation is much more diverse than in 1938, and the friends cannot be concerned only with relations between black and white, essential as they are. The expressions of racial prejudice have transmuted into forms that are multifaceted, less blatant and more intricate, and thus more intractable.**
- **So too, the American Baha’i community has evolved significantly and is no longer at the same stage of its development; it faces a wider range of challenges but also possesses greater capabilities.**
- **The House of Justice stated that the principles Shoghi Effendi brought to the attention of the American believers more than seventy years ago are relevant today, and they will continue to be relevant to future generations. It is obvious, however, that the “long and thorny road, beset with pitfalls” upon which the friends must tread, will take them through an ever-changing landscape that requires that they adapt their approaches to varying circumstances.**

— The Universal House of Justice, Letter dated 10 April 2011.

What is “Public Discourse” in the Bahá’í Context?

Three broad areas of action currently underway in the Baha'i world include (1) the institute process; (2) social action; and (3) social discourse: "All Bahá'ís should engage in efforts to expand and consolidate the Faith. They also participate, to some extent, in social action and the discourses of society." [1] Social discourse encompasses "a number of issues—on governance, the environment, climate change, the equality of men and women, human rights, to mention a few." [2] In its Ridván 2010 message, the Universal House of Justice calls for "participation in the prevalent discourses of society," along with engaging in "social action," as a contribution that Bahá'í individuals and communities can make "to the material and spiritual progress of society." [3]

[1] Letter dated 4 January 2009 from the Universal House of Justice to the NSA of Australia. See <http://messagesbahaiworldcentre.blogspot.com/2009/12/4-january-2009-universal-house-of.html>.

[2] Id.

[3] Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010 message, par. 27. See <http://messagesbahaiworldcentre.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2010-01-01T00%3A00%3A00-08%3A00&updated-max=2011-01-01T00%3A00%3A00-08%3A00&max-results=8>.

Guidance on Bahá'í Public Discourse

- **Efforts to participate in the discourses of society constitute a third area of action in which the friends are engaged.**
- **Such participation can occur at all levels of society, from the local to the international, through various types of interactions—from informal discussions on Internet forums and attendance at seminars, to the dissemination of statements and contact with government officials.**
- **What is important is for Bahá'ís to be present in the many social spaces in which thinking and policies evolve on any one of a number of issues—on governance, the environment, climate change, the equality of men and women, human rights, to mention a few—so that they can, as occasions permit, offer generously, unconditionally and with utmost humility the teachings of the Faith and their experience in applying them as a contribution to the betterment of society. Of course, care should be exercised that the friends involved in this area of activity avoid overstating the Bahá'í experience . . .**
- **The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 4 January 2009, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia.**

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Message to the Whites

You must try to create love between yourselves; and this love does not come about unless you are grateful to the whites, **and the whites are loving toward you, and endeavor to promote your advancement and enhance your honor** (*dar taraqqī-i shumā bikūshand va dar 'izzat-i shumā sa'y namāyand*). This will be the cause of love (*sabab-i maḥabbat*). Differences between black and white will be completely obliterated; indeed, ethnic and national differences will all disappear. (*bikullī ikhtilāf bayn-i siyāh va sifīd zā'il mīgardad balkih ikhtilāf-i jins va ikhtilāf-i vaṭan hamih az miyān mīravad.*)



Part Nine

Questions & Discussion