

# Talk at 227 Riverside Drive, New York

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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Notes by John G. Grundy

It is only three weeks that we have been away from the New York friends, yet so great has been the longing to see you that it seems like three months. We have had no rest by day or night since we left you — either traveling, moving about or speaking — yet it was all so pleasantly done, and we have been most happy. Praise be to God! Everywhere and all the time it has been harakat, harakat, harakat (“motion, motion, motion”).

The friends in America are very good. All the people we have met here are kind and pleasant. They are polite and not antagonistic, although somewhat inquisitive. A small minority of them seem prejudiced, yet even these have their good points. The American people have a real love for advancement. They are not content to stand still. They are most energetic and progressive. When you see a tree growing and developing, be hopeful of its outcome. It will blossom and bear fruit eventually. If you see dry wood or old trees, there is no hope whatever of fruitage.

The questions asked us have been opportune and to the point. Our answers have not been utilized for controversy and argument. We met savants and learned men and satisfied them with our explanations. Important people expressed their satisfaction and pleasure at our replies to their inquiries. In brief, it would be difficult to find in the aggregate of people we met anyone who was dissatisfied. Some scholastic minds aimed only at fruitless discussion. In Chicago we met two clergymen — delivering an address at the church of one and having dinner with the other. Both manifested great love. Likewise, among all the people we met, not a single soul arose in opposition or went away disappointed.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

Yesterday in Washington we met a group of important people. One prominent in political circles came with a justice of the Supreme Court. There were many ladies of the diplomatic circle present. After we had spoken, the politician referred to raised the point that the foundation of all religions from time immemorial had been peace, love and accord — principles conducive to fellowship and unification — yet Jesus, he declared, had been “the cause of [pg 112] discord and strife and not a factor in the realization of unity.” “Therefore,” he said, “I cannot accept your statements and explanations that religion has been the source of human betterment.” After we explained further he said, “What you have stated may cause me to change my views and agree with you.” During this time the justice remained silent. Fearing he might have some feeling of dissatisfaction, we asked if anything presented had been objectionable to his opinion. He replied, “Not at all! Not at all! It’s all right! It’s all right!” This is the characteristic expression of the Occident — “All right! All right!”

There were also present at this meeting several cabinet officers, United States senators, many from the foreign diplomatic service, army and navy officials and other dignitaries. The servant of God, our hostess, experienced much trouble in preparation and entertainment but was always active and energetic in service, inviting important and influential people to the gatherings. We spoke to all from their own standpoints with most satisfactory results; we were working day and night so there was very little time for individual and private interviews.

In Washington, too, we called a meeting of the blacks and whites. The attendance was very large, the blacks predominating. At our second gathering this was reversed, but at the third meeting we were unable to say which color predominated. These meetings were a great practical lesson upon the unity of colors and races in the Bahá’í teaching.

We said in part: The black man must ever be grateful to the white man, for he has manifested great courage and self-sacrifice in behalf of the black race. Four years he fought their cause, enduring severe hardships, sacrificing life, family, treasure, all for his black brother until the great war ended in the proclamation of freedom. By this effort and accomplishment the black race throughout the world was influenced and benefited. Had this not been accomplished, the black man in Africa would still be bound by the chains of slavery. Therefore, his race should everywhere be grateful, for no greater evidence of humanism and courageous devotion could be shown than the white man has displayed. If the blacks of the United States forget this sacrifice, zeal and manhood on the part of the whites, no ingratitude could be greater or more censurable. If they could see the wretched conditions and surroundings of the black people of Africa today, the contrast would be apparent and the fact clearly evident that the black race in America enjoys incomparable advantages. The comfort and civilization under which they live here are due to the white man’s effort [pg 113] and sacrifice. Had this sacrifice not been made, they would still be in the bonds and chains of slavery, scarcely lifted out of an aboriginal condition. Therefore, always show forth

your gratitude to the white man. Eventually all differences will disappear, and you will completely win his friendship.

God maketh no distinction between the white and the black. If the hearts are pure both are acceptable unto Him. God is no respecter of persons on account of either color or race. All colors are acceptable to Him, be they white, black, or yellow. Inasmuch as all were created in the image of God, we must bring ourselves to realize that all embody divine possibilities. If you go into a garden and find all the flowers alike in form, species and color, the effect is wearisome to the eye. The garden is more beautiful when the flowers are many-colored and different; the variety lends charm and adornment. In a flock of doves some are white, some black, red, blue; yet they make no distinction among themselves. All are doves no matter what the color.

This variety in forms and colorings which is manifest in all the kingdoms is according to creative wisdom and has a divine purpose. Nevertheless, whether the creatures be all alike or all different should not be the cause of strife and quarreling among them. Especially why should man find cause for discord in the color or race of his fellow creature? No educated or illumined mind will allow that this differentiation and discord should exist or that there is any ground for it. Therefore, the whites should be just and kind to the blacks, who in turn should reflect an equal measure of appreciation and gratitude. Then will the world become as one great garden of flowering humanity, variegated and multicolored, rivaling each other only in the virtues and graces which are spiritual.

