



## It's Not All Sunshine and Roses

By Jonathan Menon

Published: May 9, 2012 | Updated: March 4, 2021

Permalink: <http://239days.com/2012/05/09/its-not-all-sunshine-and-roses/>

THE AMERICAN PRESS HAS been kind to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Dozens of articles in newspapers across the country have reported his progressive views on women's rights, international arbitration, his concept of a spiritual civilization, and his surprising position on the race issue.

But for some it's just too good to be true.

On April 12, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's second day in America, a generous but skeptical op-ed columnist wrote as much in the *Oakland Enquirer*. "It is admitted that Abdul Baha is a man of deep learning and thought," he agreed, "but he will be a wonderfully old man if he lives to see the adoption of one tongue, one religion, one line of education, one code of morals, one method of work and one government."

"We will be glad to see Abdul, but we feel that he is due to return to his Persian [sic] home a deeply disappointed advocate of advanced social, economic, educational, political and religious ideas."

Two days later, the fiery Reverend Dr. Percy Stickney Grant seated 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the chair reserved for the Bishop at the Church of the Ascension, on Fifth Avenue and 10th Street in Manhattan. It caused a sensation in church circles, because the Nineteenth Canon of the Episcopal Church prohibited any unbaptized person from sitting behind the altar rail. The next day the Bishop came to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Hotel Ansonia to apologize for the kerfuffle.

But on April 27, the Bishop of Maryland, John Gardner Murray, banned 'Abdu'l-Bahá from Episcopalian churches throughout his state. "Abdul Baha does not profess to be a Christian," the official Episcopal organ, *The Churchman*, printed. "What righ[t], then, has he to preach in a Christian church? Still further, what right has the rector of one of our parishes to commit his people to the religious instruction of a teacher who does not believe in the Christian religion?" That was an inaccurate description of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's position on Christianity, but a useful one.

Other churches in Washington also objected to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The *Washington Post* reported on April 29 that Methodists were praying for him—that he would see the light and go home. The Rev. Dr. James Montgomery told his congregation at the Metropolitan Memorial M. E. Church that he wished that “some of those who have listened to Abdul’s lectures would take the role of teacher themselves, and convert to Christ this remarkable priest of the ‘universal cult.’” While ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was “doubtless sincere,” he said, he hoped that becoming a Christian would enable him to “return to his Eastern home a greater man.”

Just four days ago, Dr. Ernest C. Smith reminded his congregation at St. Thomas’s Church, near Dupont Circle, that “*By their fruits ye shall know them.*” Nothing good could possibly come out of Persia, he believed, but the bigger problem was that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá raised other religions to the same status as the one taught by Jesus Christ, “whom we dare not compare.” “Because of these things,” Smith said, “the only Godspeed we can bid him is a Godspeed back to his own country.”

In spite of these reports, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá doesn’t seem at all perturbed by the negative press. He told one friend that he doesn’t worry about criticism. “The denunciation by the leaders of religion,” he said, “is a proof of the greatness and influence of the Cause because no one pays any attention to something insignificant.”

## How to Cite this Article

The formatting below is from the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th Edition. For other academic citation styles, please adapt accordingly. Since the **239 Days** site and its contents may be updated from time to time, we recommend you include a “Last modified” date, which is provided at the top of both the web and PDF versions of this article.

### **FOOTNOTE/ENDNOTE:**

Jonathan Menon, “It’s Not All Sunshine and Roses,” *239 Days in America*, ed. Jonathan Menon and Robert Sockett, May 9, 2012, <http://239days.com/2012/05/09/its-not-all-sunshine-and-roses/>.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Menon, Jonathan. “It’s Not All Sunshine and Roses.” *239 Days in America*. Edited by Jonathan Menon and Robert Sockett. May 9, 2012. <http://239days.com/2012/05/09/its-not-all-sunshine-and-roses/>.

### **HOW TO CITE THE *239 Days in America* WEBSITE IN A BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Menon, Jonathan, and Robert Sockett, eds. *239 Days in America*. <http://239days.com/>.

## Terms of Use

**239 Days in America**™ and the 239Days.com website is licensed under a Creative Commons 3.0 License as specified at this link: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>. **This PDF file** is shared with you with the following additional terms:

YOU MAY quote from this PDF file with proper attribution. Your citation must include the author's name and the **239 Days in America** project's name. You may download and print this PDF file, and you may share individual PDF files in print or electronic form.

Although we want to make our work easy to share, we also wish to maintain the unity and integrity of **239 Days in America** as a whole. Therefore,

YOU MAY NOT republish or rebroadcast our PDF files in a public forum—such as by uploading them to a blog, app, or other web property, publishing them in print form, or distributing them widely using electronic means—without our prior written consent. We invite you to discuss such opportunities with us by contacting the Editor-In-Chief at [editor@239Days.com](mailto:editor@239Days.com). Otherwise, please share the permalinks displayed at the top of each file.

YOU MAY NOT extract pages from this file, recombine this PDF file with other documents, assemble its contents into any free or paid product, app, ebook, collection, compilation, or archive, nor remove this page of Terms. The **Adobe PDF**™ security features employed in this document have been selected to prevent such use. You may not circumvent these security features in any way.