

Abdu'l-Bahá's Travels to the West

New York, Church of the Ascension

14 April 1912

Material and Spiritual Civilization

Travels of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 11

New York, first public talk

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave his first public talk in America on 14 April 1912 at the Church of the Ascension, whose pastor, Dr. Percy Grant, a close friend of Juliet Thompson, had previously attacked ‘the Bahá’í sect’. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s transformative powers had won him over.

(Earl Redman, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Their Midst*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2011, p. 72-73)

New York, first public talk

The altar and the whole chancel were banked with lilies, and a victor's wreath hung on the back of the Bishop's chair, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was seated (against the rules of the Episcopal Church).

(Earl Redman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2011, p. 72-73)

Church of
the
Ascension



Speaking in public

‘Abdu’l-Bahá almost never stood still when He spoke. He paced back and forth, and made a statement which the translator would then translate, while He would smile and nod occasionally to affirm important points.

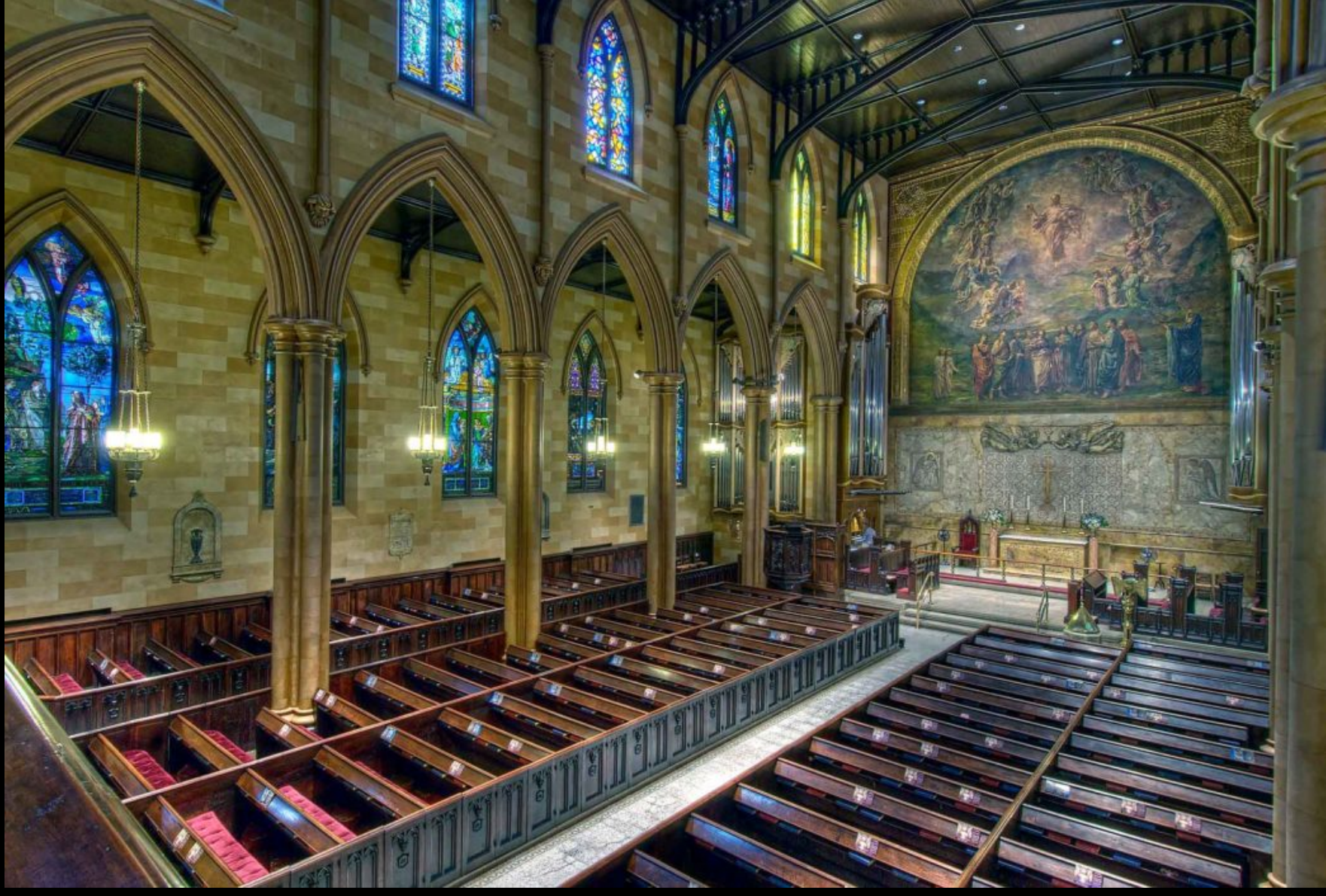
(Stanwood Cobb, quoted in Earl Redman, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Their Midst*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2011, p. 73-74)

Speaking in public

“To hear Him was... a work of art, as well as a spiritual service. First would come this spiritual flow of thought musically expressed in a foreign tongue. Then, as the translator set forth its meaning to us, we had the added pleasure of watching ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s response to the art of the translator.”

(Stanwood Cobb, quoted in Earl Redman, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Their Midst*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2011, p. 73-74)

Church of
the
Ascension



Talk at Church of the Ascension

14 April 1912

Material civilization is like unto the lamp, while spiritual civilization is the light in that lamp. If the material and spiritual civilization become united, then we will have the light and the lamp together, and the outcome will be perfect.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 5)

Talk at Church of the Ascension

14 April 1912

For material civilization is like unto a beautiful body, and spiritual civilization is like unto the spirit of life. If that wondrous spirit of life enters this beautiful body, the body will become a channel for the distribution and development of the perfections of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 5)

Talk at Church of the Ascension

14 April 1912

Today the world of humanity is in need of international unity and conciliation. To establish these great fundamental principles a propelling power is needed. It is self-evident that the unity of the human world and the Most Great Peace cannot be accomplished through material means.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 5)

Talk at Church of the Ascension

14 April 1912

Therefore, it is evidenced that the promotion of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity, which is the essence of the teachings of all the Manifestations of God, is impossible except through the divine power and breaths of the Holy Spirit.

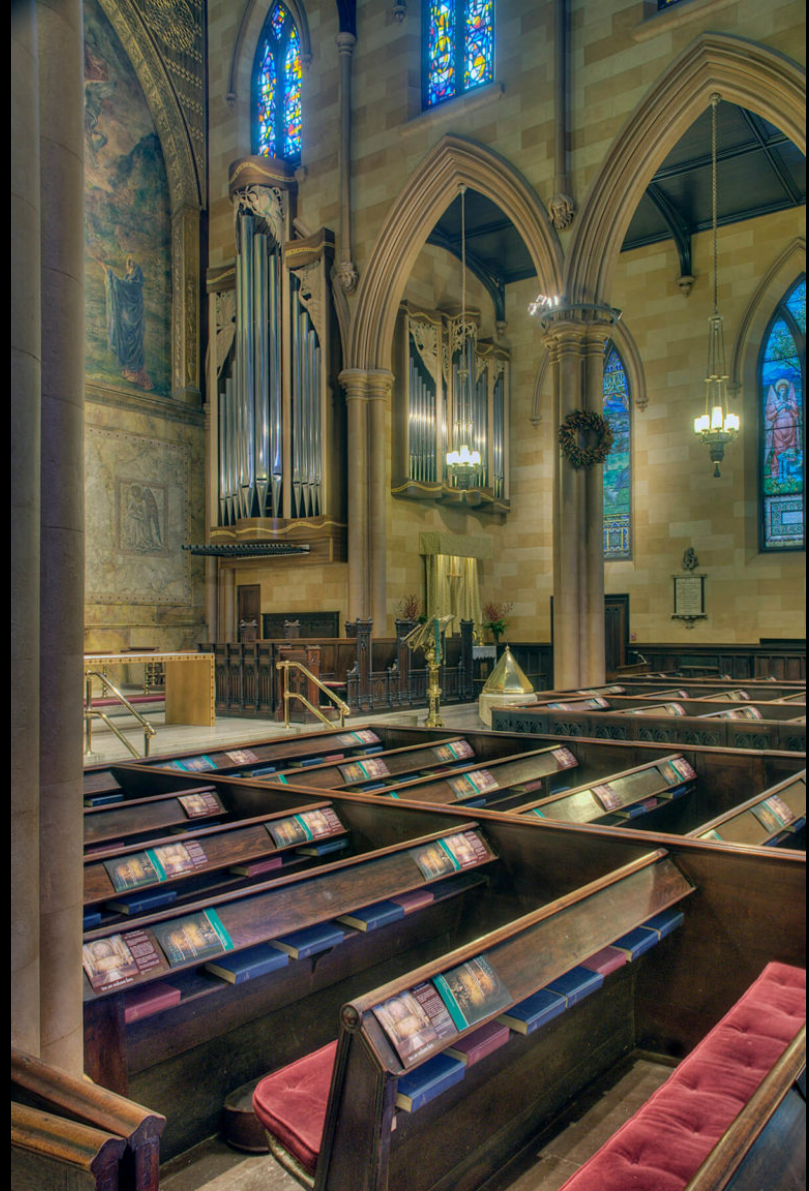
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 5)

Talk at Church of the Ascension

For man two wings are necessary. One wing is physical power and material civilization; the other is spiritual power and divine civilization. With one wing only, flight is impossible.... Therefore, no matter how much material civilization advances, it cannot attain to perfection except through the uplift of spiritual civilization.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 5)

Church of the Ascension



Meeting Kahlil Gibran

One famous person that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá met in New York was the famous Lebanese poet and painter Kahlil Gibran, a good friend of Juliet Thompson. He was deeply attracted to the Master without ever fully recognizing His station. He asked if he would be allowed to sketch the Master, and was given an hour. He thought often about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá while writing some of his books.

Sketch of
'Abdu'l-Bahá
by
Kahlil Gibran

April 1912



'Abdu'l-Bahá

