

# A Remarkable Marriage

When Louis Gregory met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt in 1911, he immediately fell to his knees. Louis loved and admired the leader of the Bahá'í Faith and had come from Washington, D.C., to see him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá welcomed him kindly and said, "I am happy to have you here." Louis wrote, "I never felt more peaceful or composed."

During this visit, Louis also met a British woman who would change his life: Louise Mathew. Like him, Louise had been a Bahá'í for less than two years.

'Abdu'l-Bahá asked Louis about U.S. race relations, and Louis said they were hostile. At that time, Black and white people often had separate schools, hotels, buses, and even drinking fountains. Some Bahá'ís supported segregated meetings, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá said Bahá'í events should be open to all.

"In the present antagonism there is great danger to both races," he told Louis. "If you have any influence to get the races to intermarry, it will be very valuable."

This view was controversial—even among Bahá'ís. Interracial marriage was illegal in 29 U.S. states! Some people even said it was biologically harmful. In the South, a Black man could face violence or death for being with a white woman.

'Abdu'l-Bahá continued to promote interracial marriage when he visited North America in 1912. Louis and Louise attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Bahá'í Temple near Chicago.

'Abdu'l-Bahá asked Louise, "How are you and Mr. Gregory getting along?"

Startled, she asked, "What do you mean? We are good friends."

He smiled and said emphatically, "You must be very good friends."

Another time, he suggested she give Louis a white flower. Afterward, Louise said, "Love began to grow in my heart and the desire for the marriage."

Louise asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá if he wished her and



The Gregorys had an Episcopal wedding ceremony in 1912, then exchanged the Bahá'í marriage vows.

Louis to marry. He said yes and asked, "Do you love him, would you marry him if he asked you?"

Louise said, "Yes."

He told her, "If he loves you he will ask you."

As Louis and Louise grew closer, they knew their union would cause a sensation in some places. Louis often traveled in the South to give Bahá'í talks, but Louise couldn't accompany him. They would need courage, determination, and strong love.

On September 27, 1912, they were quietly married in New York City. It was the first marriage between a Black and white Bahá'í.

Despite challenges and long separations, Louis and Louise were happy together for 38 years. Louis called her "my angel wife" and "a tower of strength." Louise referred to him as her "precious darling." In later years, they lived in a cottage at Green Acre Bahá'í School and felt accepted in the small town of Eliot, Maine.

Through their marriage, Louis and Louise provided a shining example, as envisioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá when he wrote to them, "I beg of God that through you, good fellowship may be obtained" between the white and Black races, "for you are the introduction to this accomplishment . . ."