



*Visits with
'Abdu'l-Bahá*

— Power of Love

For those who aspire
to lasting change,
His example guides
the way...

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Learn more about 'Abdu'l-Bahá:



English



Français

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Other stories may also have been modified slightly.



Introduction

A unique figure in human and religious history, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the perfect example in word and deed of all His Father, Bahá’u’lláh, taught.

After a lifetime of persecution and imprisonment for His religious beliefs, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá embarked in 1911 from the Holy Land on an extended trip to share His Father’s message in Egypt, Europe and North America, including nine days in Canada.

“The accounts of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s travels and of the effect He had on those who met Him are legion. Some went to extraordinary lengths to enter His presence—going by boat, by foot, or even under railway trains—and, by the urgency of their desire to see Him, imprinted themselves on the consciousness of future generations of adults

and children. The testimonies of those who were transformed by even a brief, sometimes near wordless encounter with their beloved Master remain deeply stirring. In the wide array of visitors He received—rich and poor, black and white, indigenous and émigré—the universal embrace of His Father’s Faith was unmistakably in evidence.”¹

November 28, 2021, marks the one hundredth anniversary of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s passing. In His memory, friends the world over are sharing stories of His inspiring life as a gift with their families, neighbours and co-workers, with the conviction they will contribute to a spirit of hope in these turbulent times. As He assured us: “that which is confirmed is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every soul who serveth this oneness will undoubtedly be assisted and confirmed.”

¹ *5 December 2013 message of the Universal House of Justice*



This story was told by Howard Colby Ives, a Unitarian minister who had become acquainted with the Bahá'í Faith.

A door was opening far across from me and a group was emerging and 'Abdu'l-Bahá appeared saying farewell. None had any eyes save for Him. I had the impression of a unique dignity and courtesy and love. The morning sunlight flooded the room to center on His robe. His fez was slightly tilted and as I gazed, His hand, with a gesture evidently characteristic, raised and, touching, restored it to its proper place. His eyes met mine... He smiled and, with a gesture which no word but "lordly" can describe, He beckoned me. Startled gives no hint of my sensations. Something incredible had happened. Why to me, a stranger unknown, unheard of, should He raise that friendly hand? I glanced around. Surely it was to someone else that gesture was

addressed! But there was no one near and again I looked and again He beckoned and such understanding love enveloped me that even at that distance and with a heart still cold a thrill ran through me as if a breeze from a divine morning had touched my brow!

Slowly I obeyed that imperative command and, as I approached the door where still He stood, He motioned others away and stretched His hand to me as if He had always known me. And, as our right hands met, with His left He indicated that all should leave the room, and He drew me in and closed the door. I remember how surprised the interpreter looked when he too was included in this general dismissal. But I had little thought then for anything but this incredible happening. I was absolutely alone with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Still holding my hand ‘Abdu’l-Bahá walked across the room towards where, in the window, two chairs were waiting. Even then the majesty of His tread impressed me, and I felt like a child led by His father, a more than earthly father, to a comforting conference. His hand still held mine and frequently His grasp tightened and held more closely. And then, for the first time, He spoke, and in my own tongue. Softly came the assurance that I was His very dear son.

What there was in these simple words that carried such conviction to my heart I cannot say. Or was it the tone of voice and the atmosphere pervading the room, filled with spiritual vibrations beyond anything I had ever known, that melted my heart almost to tears? I only know that a sense of truth invaded me. Here at last was my Father. What earthly paternal relationship could

equal this? A new and exquisite emotion all but mastered me. My throat swelled. My eyes filled. I could not have spoken had life depended on a word. I followed those masterly feet like a little child.

Then we sat in the two chairs by the window: knee to knee, eye to eye. At last He looked right into me. It was the first time since our eyes had met with His first beckoning gesture that this had happened. And now nothing intervened between us and He looked at me. He looked at me! It seemed as though never before had anyone really seen me. I felt a sense of gladness that I at last was at home, and that one who knew me utterly, my Father, in truth, was alone with me. As He looked, such play of thought found reflection in His face, that if He had talked an hour not nearly so much could have been said...such sympathy, such understanding, such overwhelming love—it

was as if His very being opened to receive me. With that, the heart within me melted and the tears flowed. I did not weep, in any ordinary sense. There was no breaking up of feature. It was as if a long-pent stream was at last undammed. Unheeded, as I looked at Him, the tears flowed.

He put His two thumbs to my eyes while He wiped the tears from my face, admonishing me not to cry, that one must always be happy. And He laughed. Such a ringing, boyish laugh. It was as though He had discovered the most delightful joke imaginable: a divine joke which only He could appreciate.

I could not speak. We both sat perfectly silent for what seemed a long while, and gradually a great peace came to me. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá placed His hand upon my breast saying that it was the heart

that speaks. Again silence: a long, heart-enthralling silence. No word further was spoken, and all the time I was with Him not one single sound came from me. But no word was necessary from me to Him. I knew that, even then, and how I thanked God it was so.

Suddenly He leaped from His chair with another laugh as though consumed with a heavenly joy. Turning, He took me under the elbows and lifted me to my feet and swept me into His arms. Such a hug! No mere embrace! My very ribs cracked. He kissed me on both cheeks, laid His arm across my shoulders and led me to the door.

That is all. But life has never been quite the same since.

—*Portals to Freedom*, by Howard Colby Ives, pp. 30-33



Louis Gregory was a Fisk- and Howard-educated African American lawyer from Charleston, South Carolina, who went on to become a great teacher of the Bahá'í Faith and a champion of justice.

Once when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in Washington, DC, he invited Mr. Louis Gregory to come to the house of a high government official who was giving a luncheon party in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s honor. Mr. Gregory was surprised, because he knew he had not been invited to the lunch, and he also knew that it was not the custom for white Americans to eat with a black man. However, he felt he must go if the Master wished to see him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá met him with His usual kindness. For an hour they talked of many things. Suddenly the servant appeared at the door and announced, “Lunch is served.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá got up quickly and went to the dining room, but Mr. Gregory stayed behind, not knowing what he should do. Should he leave or should he wait?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to the table, stopped suddenly and in a rather loud voice He said, in English, “Where is my friend Mr. Gregory? My friend Mr. Gregory must lunch with me.”

There was only one thing to do. The servant went in search of Mr. Gregory. In the meantime, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá began pushing aside the many knives and forks and glasses to make a place beside Himself for Mr. Gregory.

So, Mr. Gregory sat in the place of honor beside ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the table. And ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entertained the party in such a

delightful way that soon all the guests forgot, at least for a while, anything so stupid as disliking another human being merely because of the color of his skin.

—*Stories about 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, edited by Gloria Faizi, p. 23

*Unity is the expression of the
loving power of God.*

—*The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, by 'Abdu'l-Bahá,
Talk given April 14, 1912



Once ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked, “Why do all the guests who visit you come away with shining countenances?”

He said with His beautiful smile: “I cannot tell you, but in all those upon whom I look, I see only my Father’s Face.”

—*Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, by Annamarie Honnold, p. 96



A Prayer by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

He is the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful! O God, my God! Thou seest me, Thou knowest me; Thou art my Haven and my Refuge. None have I sought nor any will I seek save Thee; no path have I trodden nor any will I tread but the path of Thy love. In the darksome night of despair, my eye turneth expectant and full of hope to the morn of Thy boundless favor and at the hour of dawn my drooping soul is refreshed and strengthened in remembrance of Thy beauty and perfection. He whom the grace of Thy mercy aideth, though he be but a drop, shall become the boundless ocean, and the merest atom which the outpouring of Thy loving-kindness assisteth, shall shine even as the radiant star.

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