

Abdu'l-Bahá's Travels to the West

New York, Bowery Mission

16 April 1912

Rich and Poor

Travels of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 12

Visit to the Bowery Mission

‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited the Bowery Mission (to help the poor) on 16 April 1912. After meeting many people, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “*I am going to the poor in the Bowery now. I love them.*” As He entered the mission, He was welcomed by rows of members. Some young ladies had their arms filled with flowers for Him. Some four hundred men were present, belonging to the mission.



'Abdu'l-Bahá in New York

Talk at the Bowery Mission

Tonight I am very happy, for I have come here to meet my friends. I consider you my relatives, my companions; and I am your comrade.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 13, pp. 32-34)

Talk at the Bowery Mission

You must be thankful to God that you are poor, for Jesus Christ has said, “Blessed are the poor.” He never said, “Blessed are the rich.” He said, too, that the Kingdom is for the poor and that it is easier for a camel to enter a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter God’s Kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#) 13, pp. 32-34)

Talk at the Bowery Mission

Therefore, you must be thankful to God that although in this world you are indigent, yet the treasures of God are within your reach; and although in the material realm you are poor, yet in the Kingdom of God you are precious.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#) 13, pp. 32-34)

Talk at the Bowery Mission

The rich are mostly negligent, inattentive, steeped in worldliness, depending upon their means, whereas the poor are dependent upon God, and their reliance is upon Him, not upon themselves. Therefore, the poor are nearer the threshold of God and His throne.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#) 13, pp. 32-34)

Bowery Mission

After the talk, He distributed silver coins and a word of blessing to all of the men present. As he looked down the line, if He saw a desperately poor man, he would give two coins.

(Redman, p. 87)

Bowery Mission

A group of boys had made fun of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His party as they arrived at the mission. They were told that He was a holy man who had spent many years in prison, and while they could not come to the Bowery meeting, they could come afterwards to the Kinney home to meet Him. About thirty boys came.

Meeting with boys

“Abdu’l-Bahá was standing at the door and He greeted each boy as he came in; sometimes with a handclasp, sometimes with an arm around a shoulder, but always with such smiles and laughter it almost seemed that He was a boy with them.”

(Howard Colby Ives, quoted in Earl Redman, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Their Midst*, p. 88)

Meeting with boys

“Among the last to enter the room was a colored lad of about thirteen years. He was quite dark and, being the only boy of his race among them, he evidently feared that he might not be welcome.”

(Howard Colby Ives, quoted in Earl Redman, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Their Midst*, p. 88)

Meeting with boys

“When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá saw him His face lighted up with a heavenly smile. He raised His hand and exclaimed in a loud voice so that none could fail to hear; that here was a black rose.”

(Howard Colby Ives, quoted in Earl Redman, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Their Midst*, p. 88)

Meeting with boys

“The room fell into instant silence. The black face became illumined with a happiness and love hardly of this world. The other boys looked at him with new eyes. I venture to say that he had been called a black – many things, but never before a black rose.”

(Howard Colby Ives, quoted in Earl Redman, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Their Midst*, p. 88)