

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S GREAT VOYAGE: THE TITANIC



In the spring of 1912, people were buzzing with news about the famous new ship of luxury, the RMS *Titanic*. It was the largest in its day at about 882.5 feet long (269 m). With nine decks, it was roughly the height of a 17-story building!

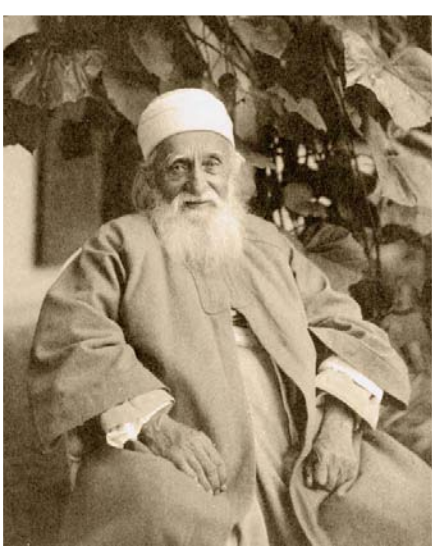
'Abdu'l-Bahá, the leader of the Bahá'í Faith at the time, was planning a journey to North America, and some Bahá'ís suggested that he join the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*.

But 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "No, we will go direct, trusting in the assistance and protection of the Blessed Beauty." ("Blessed Beauty" was a title he used to refer to his father, Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith.) Instead, he sailed on the SS *Cedric*.

'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in New York on April 11, the day after the *Titanic* left England. Telegrams came pouring in from Bahá'ís who were full of joy at his safe arrival.

A few days later, shocking news came. The *Titanic* had sunk in the early hours of April 15, taking about 1,500 lives! The Bahá'ís said prayers of gratitude that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had not traveled on that ship.

From the moment he arrived, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was constantly busy with interviews and talks about the Bahá'í teachings. And he offered more than words—after speaking to about 400 men in need at the Bowery Mission, 'Abdu'l-Bahá greeted each one kindly and gave them money.



'Abdu'l-Bahá in New Hampshire during his visit to the U.S.

After nine days in New York, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to Washington, D.C. He stayed with the family of Agnes Parsons. Every day people gathered to hear him speak. One day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá talked about the *Titanic* and urged everyone to pray for those who had died. He said, "I was greatly affected by this disaster. Some of those who were lost voyaged on the *Cedric* with us as far as Naples and afterward sailed upon the other ship. When I think of them, I am very sad indeed."

But he added, "I am consoled by the realization that the worlds of God are infinite . . . The souls of those who have passed away . . . have hastened to a world superior to this."

'Abdu'l-Bahá explained that we must use our knowledge and abilities to stay as safe as possible, but also depend on God to protect us. He said, "God has endowed man with intelligence so that he may safeguard and protect himself . . . He must be deliberate, thoughtful and thorough in his purposes, build the best ship and provide the most experienced captain; yet, withal, let him rely upon God and consider God as the one Keeper."

In August 1912, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in Maine, he met a woman who had survived the *Titanic* disaster. She said, "I am told that you advised not to travel by that ship . . . Did you know that this would happen?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered, "God inspires man's heart."

