



## ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the City of Angels

By Jonathan Menon

Published: October 19, 2012 | Last modified: June 24, 2013

Permalink: <http://239days.com/2012/10/19/abdul-baha-in-the-city-of-angels/>

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ DIDN’T LEARN the sad news until he arrived in San Francisco on the ferry boat from Oakland, where he had stepped off the train from Salt Lake City in the early morning hours of October 3, 1912. Thornton Chase had passed away three days earlier, on September 30, at the Angelus Hospital on Trinity Street in downtown Los Angeles.

They held the funeral the next day, October 4, at ten o’clock in the morning in the chapel of Pierce Brothers, an undertaker’s establishment in the City of Angels. Flowers covered the open casket, banked themselves upon easels, and overflowed to knit a carpet across the floor. A quartet of male voices sang “Nearer, My God, to Thee,” and “Lead, Kindly Light,” by John Henry Newman:

*Lead, Kindly Light, amidst th’encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on!*

Three hundred and fifty miles to the northwest, at 1815 California Street in San Francisco, perhaps ‘Abdu’l-Bahá didn’t share quite the same sentiments that rang out in song in faraway Los Angeles. “*I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears, Pride ruled my will,*” they sang. But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remembered his friend Chase as “free from the troubles of this world.” “*Remember not past years!*” they sang. But “The life of Mr. Chase was spiritual in character; his service will ever be remembered,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said.

Thornton Chase was only sixty-five years old when he died. “No matter how long he might have remained here, he would have met nothing else but trouble,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said. “The purpose of life is to get certain results. . . . If the tree bring forth its fruit young, its life is short; it is praiseworthy.” “Praise be to God!” he said, “the tree of Mr. Chase’s life brought forth fruit. . . . therefore he is free.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá had not intended to voyage beyond the San Francisco Bay area, but once Chase died he changed his plans. He left for Los Angeles on Friday morning, October 18, and after a pleasant train ride arrived that evening. No sooner had he checked into the Hotel Lankershim on Broadway at 7th Street (as usual, friends had booked him into the best hotel in the city), than the

customary torrent of invitations started to pour in for speaking engagements at local churches and societies. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declined them all. “I have absolutely no time,” he said. “I have come here to visit Mr. Chase’s grave . . . I will stay here one or two days and then I must leave.”

The next afternoon, just before 1 p.m., ‘Abdu’l-Bahá watched the countryside fight back against the spreading concrete of the metropolis as his streetcar glided slowly out of the city. Five and a half miles southwest of downtown, in the green suburb of Inglewood, California, he stepped from the car and, without waiting for directions, made his way through the Inglewood Park Cemetery to the spot where Thornton Chase had been laid to rest. “The place is charming,” a bystander wrote, “the meadows are green, and there are many trees.” Twenty-five people followed him in silence.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá stood for a while leaning against a nearby tree, remarked on the beauty of the surroundings, and scattered the flowers each person had brought over Chase’s resting place. Then he stood at its head, chanted a prayer in Arabic, and spoke for a few minutes about the distinguished life of his friend. At the end ‘Abdu’l-Bahá dropped to his knees, placed his forehead on the grave, and kissed it.

## How to Cite this Article

The formatting below is from the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th Edition. For other academic citation styles, please adapt accordingly. Since the **239 Days** site and its contents may be updated from time to time, we recommend you include a “last modified” date, which is provided at the top of both the web and PDF versions of this article.

### **FOOTNOTE / ENDNOTE:**

Jonathan Menon, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the City of Angels,” *239 Days in America*, ed. Jonathan Menon and Robert Sockett, October 19, 2012, <http://239days.com/2012/10/19/abdul-baha-in-the-city-of-angels/>.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Menon, Jonathan. “‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the City of Angels.” *239 Days in America*. Edited by Jonathan Menon and Robert Sockett. October 19, 2012. <http://239days.com/2012/10/19/abdul-baha-in-the-city-of-angels/>.

### **HOW TO CITE THE *239 Days in America* WEBSITE IN A BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Menon, Jonathan, and Robert Sockett, eds. *239 Days in America*. <http://239days.com/>.

## Terms of Use

**239 Days in America**™ and the 239Days.com website is licensed under a Creative Commons 3.0 License as specified at this link: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>. **This PDF file** is shared with you with the following additional terms:

YOU MAY quote from this PDF file with proper attribution. Your citation must include the author's name and the **239 Days in America** project's name. You may download and print this PDF file, and you may share individual PDF files in print or electronic form.

Although we want to make our work easy to share, we also wish to maintain the unity and integrity of **239 Days in America** as a whole. Therefore,

YOU MAY NOT republish or rebroadcast our PDF files in a public forum—such as by uploading them to a blog, app, or other web property, publishing them in print form, or distributing them widely using electronic means—without our prior written consent. We invite you to discuss such opportunities with us by contacting the Editor-In-Chief at [editor@239Days.com](mailto:editor@239Days.com). Otherwise, please share the permalinks displayed at the top of each file.

YOU MAY NOT extract pages from this file, recombine this PDF file with other documents, assemble its contents into any free or paid product, app, ebook, collection, compilation, or archive, nor remove this page of Terms. The **Adobe PDF**™ security features employed in this document have been selected to prevent such use. You may not circumvent these security features in any way.