



for substituting their own principles for those of God, for hypocrisy, and for unjustly banishing Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdad and then Istanbul and Edirne (Muluk, 18-20). He denied opposing the sultan, and urged him to gather around himself upright ministers with whom he should consult. He sternly criticized the great gap between the wealthy and the poor in the empire, and more especially in Istanbul, and urged the sultan to intervene to distribute wealth more equitably (Muluk, 34, 36, 40). He reproached the Iranian ambassador, Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, for intriguing against him. He ended by addressing the Muslim clergy and philosophers of Istanbul, urging them to recognize his authority as God's spokesman and to be humble before God (Muluk, 49-51, 65-70).

Bahá'u'lláh's next letters to monarchs were addressed to Napoleon III (r. 1853-1870) of France and to Nasiru'd-Din Shah of Iran, and written toward the end of his Edirne exile. The French empire was deeply involved in Middle Eastern affairs because of its North African colonies, and had in the 1860s intervened in what is now Lebanon and Syria to protect the interests of the minority Christian population. Bahá'u'lláh wrote to Napoleon III, reminding of him of his expressions of concern for the oppressed during the Crimean War of 1854-56, seeking recognition of the new Bahá'í religion and apparently soliciting French diplomatic pressure on the Ottomans to guarantee Bahá'ís their civil rights. He sent the letter via a French consular official, perhaps not until the party reached Akka. He received no reply (SAQ, pp. 32-33; PDC, pp. 51- 52).

In March-April, 1868, the Ottoman authorities began an investigation of the Babis and Bahá'ís residing in Edirne, as a result of the complaints made to them by the followers of Azal. Rumors began to fly that the exiles would be further banished, or perhaps turned over to the Iranian authorities. In the end, Bahá'u'lláh was sent with his companions to Akka on the coast of Ottoman Syria, but Iranian authorities were permitted to maintain a consular office in the city to keep watch on Bahá'í activities. It is possible that the prospect of being returned to Iran or of facing increased Iranian surveillance impelled Bahá'u'lláh to write his long letter to Iran's Nasiru'd-Din Shah (r. 1848-96), in spring or summer of 1868. He mentions toward the end of it his impending exile to Akka (Muluk, 195-96). This Tablet made a point of Bahá'u'lláh's pacifist policies, which had ended the conflict between the Babis and the Iranian state. He said that in the new Bahá'í religion, it was better to be killed than to kill. He argued that a ruler had the responsibility to be just toward all his subjects, with no distinction among them, implying that discrimination on religious grounds is illegitimate (Muluk, 160-61, 164, 166). He pointed out that the Shah ruled over a number of recognized religious communities, and pleaded that the Bahá'ís be entered among their number, saying that the entire community should not continue to be punished for the sins of one person (the Babi assassin who fired on Nasiru'd-Din Shah in 1852) (Muluk, 178-79). This letter was not sent until Bahá'u'lláh arrived in Akka, and the young courier who delivered it to Nasiru'd-Din Shah, Mirza Badî`, was

arrested by the government, horribly tortured, and executed.

In the Arabic *Lawhu'r-Ra'is*, written in the summer of 1868 on his way to Gallipoli, Bahá'u'lláh vows to Ottoman first minister Mehmet Emin Ali Pasha (1815-71) that his exile will not extinguish the nascent Bahá'í faith, condemns him for plotting with the Iranian ambassador against him, and predicts that the Ottoman empire would be engulfed in turmoil and Edirne would pass out of the hands of the sultan (Muluk, 205-225). In the *Lawh-i Fu'ad*, written somewhat later concerning Ottoman Foreign Minister Fu'ad Pasha (d. 1869), he went so far as to predict that God would "take hold of" the sultan (Rosen, Collections, 6:231-32). Bahá'ís felt that these predictions were vindicated in 1876-78, when Sultan Abdulaziz was overthrown in a constitutional revolution and committed suicide, following which a Russo-Ottoman war broke out that led to the temporary occupation of Edirne by Russian forces. In the *Lawhu'r-Ra'is*, Bahá'u'lláh announced as his aim the unification of the peoples of the world. In the Persian *Lawh-i Ra'is*, written upon his arrival in Akka and also addressed to Ali Pasha, Bahá'u'lláh compares the ephemeral pomp and circumstance of the Ottoman court to the elaborate puppet shows he saw as a child at court in Tehran, at the end of which the royal puppets in all their finery were unceremoniously packed into a trunk. He asked Ali Pasha to convey his request to Sultan Abdulaziz for an audience of only ten minutes, during which he would be pleased to produce for the sultan any proof of his mission the latter deemed acceptable (Muluk, 228-67).

Of the remaining Tablets to monarchs and leaders, few are dated, but they appear to belong to the first four years of Bahá'u'lláh's exile in Akka. In his letter to Victoria (r. 1830-1901), Queen of Great Britain and Queen-Empress of India, Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed himself the spiritual return of Christ. He commended the Queen for abolishing slavery, saying it had also been forbidden in the Bahá'í faith (it was still practiced in the Middle East, but gradually being ended). He congratulated her on having entrusted the reins of counsel (by which he meant parliamentary governance) into the hands of the people, and called upon members of parliament in Britain and other countries to undertake the reform of world society so as to cure its ills. He recommended as a solution the unification of the world under a single religion. He repeated his earlier strictures, enunciated in the Tablet of the Kings (*Surat al-Muluk*), against ruinous arms races and overtaxation of the ordinary folk and the poor. He clearly enunciated for the first time here the need for a system of collective security whereby, should any nation attack another, all the others would join together to roll back and subdue the aggressor (Muluk, 131-41).

The second letter to Napoleon III was written in 1869 as part of the larger collection of Tablets to the Monarchs called the Tablet of the Temple (*Surat al-Haykal*). Bahá'u'lláh began by instructing the emperor to have his priests cease ringing the church bells in anticipation of Christ's second coming, since Bahá'u'lláh was himself that advent. In an aside, he

addressed the monks of the Roman Catholic church, urging them to abandon their seclusion in monasteries and to take up useful work and to marry and produce offspring who would praise God after their deaths. He also urged holy men to forsake vegetarianism, saying he had allowed the eating of meat. Bahá'u'lláh complained to Napoleon III that while he claimed to have intervened in the Crimean War in order to save the innocent, he had declined to help the innocent Bahá'ís, and had haughtily cast Bahá'u'lláh's previous letter behind his back. "For what thou has done," he wrote, "thy kingdom shall be thrown into confusion, and thine empire shall pass from thy hands, as a punishment for what thou hast wrought." (POB, p. 31). He urged the emperor to be just to his subjects and to the poor. In another aside, he urged the Bahá'ís to spread the new religion, by first acquiring excellent moral qualities, by wisdom and exposition, and by avoiding arguments. He called upon the rich to be humble before the poor, and to engage in philanthropy. He announced the establishment of four great holy days, commemorating the manifestation of God's names (at Ridvan), the sending of a messenger to announce Bahá'u'lláh's advent, and two others, which he said would be specified in a Book. (Bahá'u'lláh discussed the holy days of his religion more extensively later, in the Most Holy Book [al-Kitab al-Aqdas] of 1873). In concluding, he said that all the people of the world should be seen as one. This letter was smuggled out of the Akka prison and delivered to Cesar Ketaphakou, son of the French consul in Akka, who translated it into French and sent it on to Paris. Ketaphakou later became a Bahá'í on seeing the prophecy of Napoleon III's fall fulfilled when he was defeated at Sedan by the Prussians in 1870 (SAQ 33, PDC, 51).

Bahá'u'lláh announced himself to Tsar Alexander II (d. 1881), as well, warning him not to allow his base desires to veil him from turning toward the countenance of his Lord. He notes that a Russian official helped Bahá'u'lláh when he was imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal dungeon in Tehran, 1852-53, saying, "Whilst I lay chained and fettered in the prison, one of thy ministers extended Me his aid. Wherefore hath God ordained for thee a station which the knowledge of none can comprehend except His knowledge. Beware lest thou barter away this sublime station" (POB, p. 27). He declared himself the fulfillment of biblical messianic expectations mentioned in Isaiah, and in the Old and New Testaments, saying that the Father and the Son were come in the holy vale (Muluk, pp. 121-28).

In the letter to Pope Pius IX (r. 1846-1878), Bahá'u'lláh warned the pontiff not to allow a focus on Jesus's name to bar him from recognizing the reality of the Lord of the heavens and earth. He criticized the pope for living in palaces while the returned Messiah dwelt in the most desolate of abodes. He reminded Pope Pius that the most learned men of Jesus's own time rejected him, while a humble fisherman embraced his teachings. He lamented that while generations of pious monks had prayed day and night for the return of Christ, when he came they failed to recognize him. He said to the Pontiff to "Sell all the embellished ornaments thou dost

possess, and expend them in the path of God . . . abandon thy kingdom unto the kings, and emerge from thy habitation, with thy face set towards the Kingdom, and, detached from the world, then speak forth the praises of thy Lord" (POB, p. 85). He thus counselled the Pope to relinquish the papal estates and concentrate on a spiritual ministry. He identified the Bab as the return of John the Baptist for Christians, heralding Bahá'u'lláh's own advent who speaks with the tongue of the Son (Muluk, pp. 73-90).

In addition, Bahá'u'lláh apostrophizes some rulers in his 1873 book of laws, *al-Kitab al-Aqdas*. He addressed Kaiser Wilhelm I of Prussia (r. 1871- 88), reminding him of how ephemeral was earthly glory, giving the example of his defeated enemy Napoleon III. Bahá'u'lláh foresaw that the banks of the Rhine would be "covered with gore" and heard "the lamentations of Berlin" (Muluk, pp. 250-51). The Prussian monarchy later perished in the defeat inflicted on it in World War I. He rebuked the emperor Franz Joseph of Austria for visiting Jerusalem but neglecting to inquire about Bahá'u'lláh while in the Holy Land. He collectively addressed the monarchs and rulers presiding over the territories of the Americas, urging them to recognize him, and to "bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord" (Muluk, 258; POB, 63). He also collectively addressed the rulers of the earth in the Most Holy Book, calling upon them to accept him as their spiritual sovereign (Muluk, pp. 262- 65).

Bahá'u'lláh took an increasingly dim view of absolute monarchy during this period. Whereas he began by urging something like cabinet consultation on Sultan Abdulaziz, he ended by predicting that in the future no one would accept the task of ruling as monarch alone, that monarchy would survive, if at all, only as constitutional monarchy. He wrote to Shaykh Salman soon after his exile in Akka, "One of the signs of the maturity of the world is that no one will accept to bear the weight of kingship. Kingship will remain with none willing to bear alone its weight. That day will be the day whereon wisdom [or Reason: `aql] will be manifested among mankind. Only in order to proclaim the Cause of God and spread abroad his faith will anyone be willing to bear this grievous weight" (Mujmu`ih-yi Mubarakih, Sabri ed., 125-26; PDC, 72).

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