



principle of the free operation of the Will of God, Who doeth whatsoever He willeth and shall not be asked of His doings. It proves how mistaken is that large group of human beings who believe that everything is on a mechanical basis -- that this much sin brings this much punishment, and so much good buys so much reward. To them, God is a blind force, operating mechanically -- something like the third rail in the subway. They themselves, however, would greatly resent being called a blind force. (The Báb develops this principle of 'Badá' in the Persian Bayán.)

Thou beholdest, O my God, him who is as one dead fallen at the door of Thy favour, ashamed to seek from the hand of Thy loving-kindness the living waters of Thy pardon.

Thou hast ordained that every pulpit be set apart for Thy mention . . . but I have ascended it to proclaim the violation of Thy Covenant . . .

O Lord, my Lord! and again, O Lord, my Lord! and yet again, O Lord, my Lord!

Throughout the Tablet, he is several times directed to pray; is addressed as would be one of Bahá'u'lláh's own sons; is told to arise and serve the Faith; to believe, serve and trust; to enter the presence of Bahá'u'lláh (Whom he had never seen); to save men from the "mire of self," to "seek the Most Great Ocean" and that "thereupon, will the doors of the Kingdom be flung wide before thy face. . ." He is told: "O Shaykh! We have enabled thee to hear the melodies of the Nightingale of Paradise . . . that thine eye might be cheered. . ."

As Dr. Alí-Kuli Khan has pointed out, the varying titles by which Bahá'u'lláh addresses Áqá Najafí indicate that the Letter is intended for a much larger audience than he. It is "a presentation of the Faith to humanity"; many aspects of man are singled out and addressed. These titles include: "O Shaykh"; "O distinguished divine"; "O thou who has gone astray!"; "O thou who hast turned away from God!". Occasionally, too, others are specifically named: "O people of Bahá"; "O Hádí". Many aspects of man are singled out and addressed. You find here, not only the evil priests who in every dispensation hold men back from their Lord -- the "blind mouths" of Lycidas -- but the good divines, who are "as eyes to the nations," reminiscent of the "Ulamá in Bahá" of the Most Holy Book. You find here the king and the scholar, the everyday believer, the saint, the sinner.

This Tablet, then, is much more than a letter to an individual. It is an important general presentation of the Faith. In this Work, as the Guardian tells us, Bahá'u'lláh "quotes some of the most characteristic and celebrated passages of His own writings, and adduces proofs establishing the validity of His cause."

Most books bring you closer to the author. But when you study the work of Bahá'u'lláh, He eludes you. As the Guardian has told us in The

Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, He is "unapproachably glorious".

Goethe says, "Above all peaks there is rest." I have read this book three times and studied it over a long period; it seems to me more likely that above all peaks there is another peak.

You want, though it is almost impossible, to read this at one sitting. It comes rapidly, and the English translation by the Guardian is flawless. You want more and more of it and are too impatient to stop and think over this and this, as you are urged along, and you mark things to come back to. It contains sentences like these:

I belong to him that loveth Me . . .

. . . others had, at times, to nourish themselves with that Divine sustenance which is hunger.

In the treasures of the knowledge of God there lieth concealed a knowledge which, when applied, will largely, though not wholly, eliminate fear.

Man's actions are acceptable after his having recognized [the Manifestation].

He is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge, and soared in the atmosphere of My love . . .

A just king enjoyeth nearer access unto God than anyone.

These, verily, are men who if they come to cities of pure gold will consider them not; and if they meet the fairest and most comely of women will turn aside.

It offers historical material which in future will stimulate the keenest research. We learn, for example, of the Master's first betrothal; of Bahá'u'lláh's arrest in Níyávarán and of the kind of chains He was bound with; of the machinations against Him by Persian officials in Constantinople and of the suicide there of Hájí Shaykh Muhammad-'Alí; the fact that Mírzá Yahyá was not exiled out of Persia; that he abandoned the writings of the Báb in Baghdád; that Hádí Dawlat-Abádí tried to destroy every copy of the Bayán; that the Azalís tried to claim Siyyid Javád-i-Karbilá'í as one of themselves, pasting his picture under that of Mírzá Yahyá; that Bahá'u'lláh had never read the Bayán; that in 1863 (this date is given in *God Passes By*) Bahá'u'lláh suggested to a Turkish official, Kamál Páshá, that his government convene a gathering to plan for a world language and script. (In this connection, Volaptik was invented by Johann Martin Schleyer of Konstanz, Baden, about 1879; Esperanto, by Dr. Ludovic Lazarus Zamenhof, was first discussed in print by him in 1887.)

It gives us a moral code, including such precepts as:

If anyone revile you, or trouble touch you, in the path of God, be patient, and put your trust in Him Who heareth, Who seeth. He, in truth, witnesseth, and perceiveth, and doeth what He pleaseth, through the power of His sovereignty.

The sword of wisdom is hotter than summer heat, and sharper than blades of steel . . . withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. He, verily, will bestow upon you the double of what ye possess.

If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin.

Be . . . thankful in adversity . . . Be fair in thy judgment and guarded in thy speech . . . Be a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression . . . a home for the stranger . . .

The fear of God is continually stressed:

We enjoin the servants of God and His handmaidens to be pure and to fear God . . . The fear of God hath ever been a . . . safe stronghold . . . Their [the Bahá'ís] hearts are illumined with the light of the fear of God . . .

Students of the Qur'án will remember how strikingly the fear of God is likewise extolled in that Book: "God loveth those who fear Him," and "Whoso feareth God, his evil deeds will He cancel . . ."

Among many such precepts, Bahá'u'lláh states here: "Regard for the rank of sovereigns is divinely ordained . . ." and interprets "Render unto Caesar" far differently from the current meaning given this verse in Christendom, where it is made to imply that Caesar is a sort of reversal of God, a concept at variance with the Bahá'í teaching on kingship.

Bahá'u'lláh also answers, in this Work, a question often asked:

Why a new religion? He says, by implication to the Muslims, that if they prefer what is ancient, why did they adopt the Qur'án in place of the Old and New Testaments? And He states that if bringing a new Faith be His crime, then Muhammad committed it before Him, and before Him Jesus, and still earlier, Moses. He adds:

And if My sin be this, that I have exalted the Word of God and revealed His Cause, then indeed am I the greatest of sinners! Such a sin I will not barter for the kingdoms of earth and heaven.

(Strange, how often the public asks this question, forgetting today's universal wretchedness; the mind's loneliness, that is crowding those brick buildings with the barred porches, that you see as you travel through the

country; the enslavement of human beings by other human beings like themselves; the moral rottenness -- you have only to look at the sidewalks of any big city early in the morning, and the debris in its gutters, you do not even have to read the doctors' case histories, or the newspapers. And if you are one of those "nice people" so many persons claim to be, who do not drink to excess, nor harm anyone, and therefore do not need a God to obey -- or need only some sterile deity of their own choosing, a selection from whose precepts they will follow when they see fit, and whose synthetic thunder, listened to, or not listened to, once a week, does not fool them for a moment -- then you are empty, you are ineffective, you make no impact on society; and those discarded men sprawling in the streets are your glass of wine, and those piles of dead bodies you turn away from in the press, are your professed goodwill, and all that useless agony in so many men's and women's hearts, is your sexual sophistication.)

The Bahá'ís of the West are gradually learning more about the Báb; through The Dawn-Breakers, The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, and this present Text, they are drawing closer to Him, and to the story of His life, which is the story of His love for Bahá'u'lláh. Among His utterances here is the striking plea to His followers that even should an impostor arise after Him, they should not protest against the man, nor sadden him. In time, twenty-five persons, most of whom later begged forgiveness of Bahá'u'lláh, claimed to be He Whom God Shall Manifest. This was because of His longing to protect the True One. He is His own proof, the Báb told His followers: ". . . who then can know Him through any one except Himself?" The breath of the Báb's despair is here, and His beautiful words, "I . . . am, verily, but a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make Manifest . . ." Bahá'u'lláh links the Heraldship of the Báb with, that of John the Baptist, and shows how John's companions as well "were prevented from acknowledging Him Who is the Spirit (Jesus)."

Not only are we brought near to Him Who was the return of the Twelfth Imám, but to all the Imáms, and -- since the Guardian is as the Imám -- to the institution of Guardianship in our own Faith. The reference to the "snow-white" hand of the Qá'im goes back to Moses' sign in the Qur'án. By the 'Impost' is meant the tithe, payment of which is a religious duty, as are the Fast and the Pilgrimage: "We are the Way . . . and We are the Impost, and We are the Fast, and We are the Pilgrimage, and We are the Sacred Month, and We are the Sacred City . . ." says the Imám Ja'far-i-Sádiq. In connection with the Imámate, E. G. Browne's brief summary is valuable: "According to the Imámite view . . . the vice-regency is a matter altogether spiritual; an office conferred by God alone, first by His Prophet, and afterwards by those who so succeeded him . . . the Imám of the Shiites is the divinely-ordained successor of the Prophet, one endowed with all perfections and spiritual gifts, one whom all the faithful must obey, whose decision is absolute and final, whose wisdom is superhuman and whose words are authoritative."

Swiftly, in this Book, the scenes pass. There is the dungeon, and the dream there, and the promise:

Verily We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by  
Thy Pen . . . Erelong will God raise up the treasures of the earth -- men who  
will aid Thee . . .

There is the dramatic suicide in the mosque, of Hájí Shaykh  
Muhammad-'Alí. There is the "city, on the shores of the sea, white,  
whose whiteness is pleasing unto God . . ." The mood varies, the tempo shifts.  
You can hear these swift questions and answers in music, as a kind of  
spiritual:

Hath the Hour come? Nay, more; it hath passed . . . Seest  
thou men laid low? Yea, by my Lord . . . Blinded art thou . . . Paradise is  
decked with mystic roses . . . Hell hath been made to blaze.

There are the thought-inducing lines on the moan of the pulpits:

I was walking in the Land of Tá (Tihrán) --  
the dayspring of the signs of thy Lord -- when lo, I heard the lamentation of  
the pulpits and the voice of their supplication unto God, blessed and glorified  
be He. They cried out and said . . . Alas, alas! . . . Would that we had never  
been created and revealed by Thee!

This reminds us of the Qur'anic verse, referred to earlier by  
Bahá'u'lláh: "God, Who giveth us a voice . . ." And then the  
earth-quaking apostrophe to the She-Serpent:

Judge thou equitably, O She-Serpent! For what crime didst  
thou sting the children of the Apostle of God . . .  
?

This refers to the martyrdom of the "twin shining lights," descendants of  
Muhammad; you would need Michelangelo or Milton to comment here.

People who must choose often ask whether they should add this or that book to  
their private library. My reasons for owning this one are: Its beauty of text,  
translation, and format; its brevity; its richness from the academic point of  
view -- the materials it offers for study; its comprehensiveness -- for,  
although it is an independent creative work, having its own unity of form, its  
own personal spirit -- it is almost an anthology, and one selected by  
Bahá'u'lláh Himself. And then, there is the totality of its  
impact on the reader, and the eternal gift it holds out to him, of the mercy of  
God.

Yes, it helps us to enter His presence; it brings us to "Him Whom the world  
hath cast away and the nations abandoned . . ."

Where has Áqá Najafí gone now? Where has he gone in his  
enormous globular turban and his curled-up shoes? He was, as  
Bahá'u'lláh called his fellow, "the last trace of sunlight upon

the mountain-top." Where has he taken all his hatred? In any event, it became the occasion of this Book, this last earthly gift to us from Bahá'u'lláh; His enemies brought Him poison, but He changed it into honey for His loved ones.

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