

Persian Bayan, The: From A.L.M. Nicolas' French translation

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Bayán-i-Farsí Vahíd III, Báb VI[1] of Siyyid

‘Alí-Muhammad-i-Shirází’ Translated from the French Rendering of A.L.M.

Nicolas

by Ismael Velasco

With Reference to the Persian Text

Aught besides God to which the word ‘thing’ applieth, is a creature constrained in the bounds of creation.

The sum of this chapter is this:

God hath caused to descend in the Bayán the words that are the gathering point of all knowledge, and those words are these: “Verily, I am God! There is none other God but Me. Aught else beside Me is, in truth, my handiwork. Wherefore, fear Me, O my creatures!”[2]

All besides God, to which the word ‘thing’ applieth, is His creature, bound within the limitations of its fashioning, origination, new creation and youthfulness.[3],[4]

Nevertheless, the manifestation of Truth occurs in these degrees, since all things manifest God. From the beginning that hath no beginning to the end that hath no end, the sea of names and attributes hath not manifested nor will it manifest anything other than God. This, however, as regards His names and attributes, and not as relates to His essence and divinity, His very Being,[5] for all save God is His creature, and God is adored of all.

Whatsoever is designated by the word ‘thing’, God hath created through the instrumentality of His Will, and the Will He hath fashioned through the Will itself.[6] Thus, in this day, all things are dependent on the Bayán, inasmuch as they are endowed

with the spirit of existence, created by the Lord of the Seven Letters, who is the Manifestation of the Primal Will. In each Revelation God's Hidden Secret is thus made manifest, and within each act of latent being, the command of God is concealed. We have all been created through God's Intermediary, and we all return to God. God hath created each thing, then caused it to return, and we are sincere servants before Him.

Notes

[1] "It is important to strongly emphasize the fragility of this translation." (IV's note)

[2] Commenting on this theme of this Báb, Velasco writes: "The chapter asserts the inescapable limitations of contingent being, the gulf between creation and Creator. This is an important chapter of the noble Bayán, identifying and prefiguring more clearly than elsewhere the tripartite division of existence which 'Abdu'l-Bahá' captured in the ringstone symbol. God creates the Will through the Will (a divine paradox), and the Will then generates all creation. Creation is the embodiment of God's names and attributes (in potentia or rather, as discussed below, in process), whilst God in His essence remains exalted above all things. This is reminiscent of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom, where nature is the embodiment of the Will. It also recalls 'Abdu'l-Bahá's response to pantheism in Some Answered Questions, where He says that it would be correct to say that creation is one with God's attributes, but God in His essence remains exalted above its limitations." (IV's note).

[3] Regarding the translation of this term, Velasco writes: "After much consideration, I have tentatively left Nicolas's 'youthfulness', having toyed with the idea of translating 'immaturity.'" (IV's note).

[4] Velasco writes: "It is notable that in adumbrating the limitations on God's creatures, the Báb speaks both of the [material] creation and origination, and the [spiritual] new creation and youthfulness. Clearly, the new creation is alluding to a well established mystical concept recalled by Bahá'u'lláh in the Íqán as well, analogous to the Christian new birth which God brings about in the converted soul. Youthfulness as a limitation of creation, as I understand it, refers to the Báb's sublime vision of a universe in motion, beginning in its original creation, with all its perfections densely latent, through a journey of return towards God, or rather

towards His Primal Will, a process of increasingly translucent expression of the names and attributes of God. Creation is youthful or immature because it can only attain its full potential in infinity, in timelessness, the journey of return stretching out as far as God's unfathomable perfections. Only in the Manifestation of God is creation complete, mature, and naught remains but His Face, which is the Primal Will whence all creation springs and to which it all returns." (IV's note).

[5] Commenting on the translation of this term, Velasco writes: "I have translated 'His very Being' for what Islamicists would probably translate as Ipseity, so as to remain within the scriptural style of authorised translations, in which the word does not occur." (IV's note).

[6] Commenting on this paragraph, Velasco writes: "...this sacred chapter clarifies the link between Manifestation of God and the Primal Will, which is the Hidden Secret that manifests itself in each dispensation, in this case through the 'Lord of the Seven Letters', the Báb Himself, Who, as the spiritual Manifestation of the Primal Will, is the originator of all beings in the creation of the Bayán, on whom all created all things consequently depend. This is of course an allusion to the sacred tradition (hadith qudsi): 'I was a Hidden Secret and desired to be known.' My reading of the rather abstruse passage at the end is that the latent potential of all beings contains, likewise in potentia, the divine Decree that can alone actualize it. With the manifestation of the divine Command in each dispensation, the Hidden Secret, God's Primal Will, is made manifest, as is the hitherto latent act of being which His Will induces in the realm of the soul." (IV's note).

[+CHAPTER2]

Bayán-i-Farsí Vahíd III, Báb XIV
of Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad-i-Shirází
Translated from the French Rendering of
A.L.M. Nicolas
by Ismael Velasco

Bab XIV

In which it is ordained to preserve the Bayán to the degree possible for each person.

The sum of this chapter [báb] is this: That which remaineth amongst men from the Tree of Truth is His words and the spirits attached to them. Therefore, the more everyone striveth to preserve, honour and exalt His words, the more will these words be manifest in their spirits. It is forbidden to utilize mediocre paper unless it is bound and preserved as the most precious object in the eyes of all, so that it doth not happen as with the Qur'án, copies of which lie strewn, unbound and ragged, on all corners of the mosques.[1]

None shall expend on the Bayán the value of a grain of mustard seed without God Himself being surety to a reward two thousand times above what hath been rendered, accruing, if not directly unto him, then unto his heirs. Nor shall such recompense be withheld from him in this world or in the world to come.

Happy is he that preserveth and beautifieth the words of God as lieth within his power, inasmuch as therein lieth the exaltation and beautification of his own spirit. This is not to say that one should offer up one thousand mithqáls[2] of gold in completing a Bayán, and thereby leave destitute, by reason of a single mithqál, a believer in whom rests the spirit of the Bayán. Each must spend in accordance with his means.

It is not hidden from the eyes of the people of the Bayán that there is not one servant who, upon owning the entire Bayán, hath not seen the value of his good deeds double, and divine angels without number descend blessings upon him each day, invoking for him mercy and good health. The more one exerts effort in the embellishment of the Bayán, in the lightness of its weight, in its good script, in the ornamentation of its pages, the more worthy will it be in the sight of God, and better is this than to proceed otherwise.

It is not fit to write upon the margins,[3] as is the habit of the students of theology, as this diminishes its value.

The substance of the word in this chapter is that each one should strive, according to his means, to own a Bayán without likeness, though there be others infinitely superior, and beyond these, others infinitely inferior.

It is forbidden to write, except in a beautiful script.

Happy is he that reads it, or looketh upon it, or pondereth its meaning! For the object of all things is the realization of that which God hath revealed therein. Indeed, every word is non-existent, if it proceed from one whose spirit is aided by aught but the reading of the Bayán.

He hath rendered his due unto the Bayán who pondereth on its exaltation and invoceth blessings upon it in these words: "O my God! Send Thy blessings upon the Bayán and upon them that have believed, under all conditions, in Thine exaltation and grandeur. Punish them that have disbelieved in the Bayán by Thy scourge, Thy Wrath and Justice. It is a bounty from God unto His servants, and in truth God is the Self-Subsistent, the Bestower of bounties."

The entire splendour [Bahá'í] of the Bayán is Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest.[4] All mercy pertaineth unto one that hath believed in Him, and all chastisement is his who disbelieveth in Him.

Notes

[1] An interesting anomaly between Nicolas's and Browne's version occurs here in the second paragraph, where Nicolas reads:

"It is forbidden to utilize mediocre paper unless it is bound and preserved as the most precious object in the eyes of all, so that it doth not happen as with the Qur'án, copies of which lie strewn, unbound and ragged, on all corners of the mosques."

And Browne reads:

"Even small epistles must be bound, for [the Bayán] must not come like the Qur'án, fragments of which are sold in every corner of the mosques in an unseemly manner." [Velasco's note]

[2] A mithqál is a unit of weight. The weight of the traditional mithqál used in the Middle East is equivalent to 24 nakhuds. However, the mithqál used by the Bahá'ís consists of 19 nakhuds, "in accordance with the specification of the Bayán" (Q and A 23). The weight of nine of these mithqáls equals 32.775 grammes or 1.05374 troy ounces. (Universal House of Justice, Kitáb-i-Aqdas, n.78, p. 200-1) [MW's note]

[3] i.e. in the Bayán.

[4] Peter Terry notes, that in the Azalí lithographed edition of the Persian text, this passage reads as "va kullu bahá bayán man yuzhiruhu'llah ast." A literal translation would be "And Him Whom God shall make manifest is all the Glory of the Bayán." (MF's note, based on a posting to Tarjuman by Peter Terry, dated June 7, 2001).

[+CHAPTER3]

Bayán-i-Farsí Vahíd VI, Báb XIX of Siyyid

'Alí-Muhammad-i-Shirází Translated from the French Rendering of A.L.M.

Nicolas

by Ismael Velasco

With Reference to the Persian Text

Báb XIX

It is obligatory to answer each letter, question or request received.

The substance of this chapter [báb] is this. It hath been ordained that in this Dispensation, should one write a letter to another the recipient should give reply. And God doth not love prolonged delays in answering. One must reply in one's own hand, or by means of a scribe.

Likewise, should someone ask a question, the one thus questioned must respond in a precise manner. Perchance on the Day of God's Manifestation none will remain ignorant of that sublime Daystar; and when He revealeth the divine word: "Am I not thy Lord?", all shall respond with "Yea!".

In truth, the injunction to reply hath been ordained for none other purpose except this, yet its obligations extend to the very last atom of existence, and likewise as regards correspondence.

There can be no doubt that on the Day of His Manifestation His books shall descend upon everyone; that none should remain ignorant on account of the veils that envelop him, nor fail to answer Him, inasmuch as the reality of one's being issueth forth from one's response: in the world of the hearts, through the affirmation of His Unity; in the world of the spirits, through the affirmation of His Prophethood; in the world of the souls, through the affirmation of His Successorship; in the physical world through the affirmation of His Gatehood.

In each Dispensation, those that respond are distinguished from those that remain silent. In the preceding Dispensation, all have responded, inasmuch as it is inconceivable today that any within Islam should fail to speak the twin confessions, of the station of Successorship (wafí),^[1] and of the Qur'anic laws. It is impossible to conceive of someone not uttering these words, and yet in the ensuing Manifestation the sincere among them shall be distinguished from the insincere by their response.

He is a servant endowed with insight who answereth God in every degree and in all circumstances, be it through his writings, or through his utterance, or through his deeds, which is the most potent way. In accordance with this duty, all are enjoined to answer one another, to the extent that if a child be found crying, it is obligatory to answer his cries in the usual manner.

It is the same for one whose very state conveyeth request, though it be without words, and it is incumbent upon them that understand to respond accordingly. Likewise, should one be found whose situation betokeneth asking, it is needful to answer. The same applieth to all kindred situations, which the man of vision promptly perceiveth.

In all circumstances it is obligatory to answer. And this to the end that none may, under any circumstance, become a source of torment. Perchance on the Day of Judgement, when the most perceptive of hearts, except those whom God pleaseth to exempt, fail to recognise their Goal, their Best Beloved, no torment might come unwittingly upon Him; for thereby would the very principle of their religion be rendered vain, and they would remain shut out in darkness by reason of questions which are but the consequences of those principles.

Thus it is that in each Manifestation they that remain in darkness do so on account of these consequences.

But God aideth through His mercy whomsoever He willeth, and He encompasseth all things.

Notes

[1] I have translated the word *Walí* as "Successorship", to emphasise its covenantal dimension. (Velasco's note).

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[+CHAPTER4]

Bayán-i-Farsí Vahíd IX, Báb II

of Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad-i-Shirází Translated from the French Rendering of

A.L.M. Nicolas

by Ismael Velasco

With Reference to the Persian Text

Báb II

In which it is ordained that whosoever is competent in a script peerless and of surpassing beauty, it is incumbent upon him to pen for God in the course of his life six thousand verses. He must lay down in his will that these verses must be brought before the Sun of Truth, that the Point may bestow, in His mercy, His recompense on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, God is cognisant of all things.

The substance of this chapter is this: If in the dispensation of the Bayán a scribe be found whose competence is without peer in his day in any of the nineteen prescribed styles, ranging from the all-glorious (*Abhá*) script even unto the most beauteous writing, it is pleasing unto God that he should set down one thousand lines (*bayts*) on paper of the highest quality, and beautify it with adornments similarly beyond compare. It will be needful that he layeth down in his will that on the Day of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest, this book shall be offered unto that Tree of Truth, that He might bestow the recompense of His verses. Thus shall he be mentioned among the friends of that Tree.

Should the scribe lack means to write down thus one thousand lines, it behoveth the Witnesses of the Bayán to defray the costs. If he hath the means to accomplish this himself, it would be more meet and seemly not to pay another for a deed performed for the sake of God.

The scribe is free to choose among the Points five grades of writing, be it verses, supplications, commentaries, disquisitions on philosophy, or discourses in Persian; and it shall be pleasing whichever one he puteth to paper .

The fruit of this command is that, if on the Day of Manifestation such a one, and others like him, be found, they may not set their pens in motion save in the works of Him Whom God shall make manifest, since it is prohibited for them to make use of their pens to write down the words of another than Him. Perchance on that Day there may be one who shall act for the sake of God. And this would be worth more than all that might be written in the gloom of the night.

No style in this Dispensation is more pleasing unto Him Who hath appeared in this Manifestation, than the shikaste script of a man that liveth, and is not among the dead. For the majority of men write well, yet they are dead and not alive, and the beauty of calligraphy is conditioned on the scribe being possessed of life. The similitude of the shikaste script to the naksh style, when both scribes live, is as that of fulfillment to youthfulness. Each thing is beloved of God in its own measure.

And verily, verily teach your children the best of scripts, the most exalted in your eyes! Perchance it may bring honour unto thee in the presence of God.[1]

Notes

[1] These last two lines in the A.L.M Nicholas translation seemingly do not accord with the original Persian text, and hence they are given in italics (MW's note, June, 2001).

— Persian Bayan, The: From A.L.M. Nicolas' French translation (Used by permission of the curator)