

Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha: Volumes 1-3

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In reality thou art spiritually hungry and athirst for the Water of Life. Therefore I send thee spiritual food and bestow upon thee the Water of Life Eternal. That food is the divine advices and exhortations revealed in the Tablets and the spiritual outpourings of the Breath of the Holy Spirit. I hope ere long it will reach thee and thou wilt behold what an exhilaration and beatitude it produceth and what cheerfulness and serenity and what heavenly emotions it createth! `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas
in three volumes

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INTRODUCTION

This book is a reproduction of the Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá as contained in the archives of the House of Spirituality¹ of Bahá'ís of Chicago. These Tablets are letters written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and received by individuals and assemblies throughout America, many of them being in answer to questions.

These copies of Tablets have been gathered by the House of Spirituality of Chicago from the recipients for the purpose of safe preservation in accordance with the purpose mentioned in the following letter sent out by that Body: March 21, 1908.

To the Friends of God in the Light of El-Abha, throughout America.

Greeting: —

For a number of years the House of Spirituality has been gathering copies of Tablets, received by the Friends in America from `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, for sacred preservation in its archives, in accord with permission from him to do so in a Tablet addressed to it dated April 21, 1903, as follows:

"As to the compiling of the Tablets in a Book for the House of Spirituality, this depends upon the consent of the receivers of the Tablets; if the owners of the Tablets consent, copies should be kept and collected in the House of Spirituality and it will be acceptable."

Although many Tablets, both published and unpublished, were known to be in circulation among the believers, and notwithstanding

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the restriction to collect only copies sent in with the consent of the recipients, yet, in the spring of 1907, through the hearty response and co-operation in this endeavor about 500 copies of different Tablets had been received, acknowledge and filed with data concerning each in a safety deposit vault equipped with all modern appliances for protection.

We believe the Friends everywhere will be further interested in knowing that at that time a draft of the Tablets was made by the Librarian of the House of Spirituality for the Bahá'í Publishing Society (who contemplated issuing same in book form), with all references to personalities eliminated, and said compilation was taken by Mr. Agnew to the presence of `Abdu'l-Bahá, who inquired especially as to elimination of all names of persons and everything of a clearly personal nature, and as to whether the recipients of the Tablets had consented to publication of them, etc. - to all of which he gave approval and instructed the Publishing Society to proceed with the work.

The purpose of this communication is therefore twofold: First, that the endeavor be continued to preserve a copy of every Tablet obtainable; and second, that it be accomplished at the earliest possible moment in order to make the forthcoming Volumes of Tablets (now being prepared by the Publishing Society) as complete as possible, for only the Tablets in the archives of the House will be used, as therein is recorded the desire of the recipients.

In sending copies of Tablets, kindly see in so far as possible that together with each is given: (1) Full name of recipient (2) present address, mentioning street number, city or town, and state, (3) on or about date translation, (4) name of translator, (5) clearly state whether or not permission to publish all or only a portion of same is granted. Should there be any doubt as to whether or not a copy of any certain Tablet is already in the archives, you may be assured in knowing that every Tablet received has been acknowledged on a special printed form, signed by the Librarian.

Concerning this important matter the following words of `Abdu'l-Bahá will be of interest to all: "Verily know, that the Tablets (Book) of `Abdu'l-Bahá and his address is a hidden mystery and concealed fact; no one is informed of its greatness and importance at these times. But in the course of times and future centuries, the signs thereof will be manifested, the lights thereof will dawn, the fragrance thereof will be diffused, and the greatness, the

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importance thereof will be known. The truth I say unto thee, that each leaflet from `Abdu'l-Bahá will be a wide-spread Book; nay, rather, a glistening Gem on the Glorious Crown. Know thou Its value and hold great Its station!"

Thanking you in advance, we are your fellow servants in the Vineyard of El-Abha,

The House of Spirituality

A sufficient number of Tablets having been gathered together, they have been entrusted to the Bahá'í Publishing Society for publication in this concrete form for the enlightenment of the English-speaking world.

The Tablets appear in the book in the order received and filed in the archives, i.e. the first to respond to the above letter sent out by the House of Spirituality appear first in the book, and, so far as possible, all the Tablets to any one person or to a family or to an assembly have been placed together.

Regarding publications, the following Tablet from `Abdu'l-Bahá was received by this Society in October, 1906:

He is God!

O ye heavenly Assemblage!

Your letter was received and its contents became known. Ye have written concerning the printing and publication of the Tablets.

The translation of the Surat-ul-Hykl² is of the utmost difficulty. It must be translated by a committee who are exceedingly efficient both in Persian and English, exercising the closest and most minute attention.

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Otherwise the text would not become intelligible. The same rule applieth to other Writings and Tablets. For the present the organization of such a committee of translators is not possible and there is no other means than the translations made by individuals. In the future, God willing, means will be brought about. Translations will be made by a committee composed of two most erudite Persians and two learned Americans, all of them having the utmost proficiency in both languages and possessing a certain knowledge of sciences and arts. Then others from among the scholars and thinkers must assist. At that

time Tablets will be translated correctly and published. What ye have in your hands and what is already printed will impart a certain degree of information. Whatever matter the spiritual Boards of Council in New York, Chicago, Washington and Kenosha unanimously deem advisable to print and publish, ye may print and publish; and have the utmost union and oneness with each other.

Regarding the Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá: Each of them is important. Print ye those which are in detail.

As to the question of annihilation and destruction of the spirits³ : Mr. Phelps hath not fully understood the matter or else the translator hath made some mistake. It was not intended to convey the idea that the unbelieving souls are absolutely annihilated. Nay, rather, it was meant that the existence of the evil spirits in comparison to the existence of the sanctified souls was like unto annihilation. As you clearly behold, the existence

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of mineral in comparison with the existence of man is like unto non-being. When the body of man is destroyed and disintegrated, it returneth to the mineral.

Concerning the income of the printing and publishing society, as ye write, it must be expended for charitable purposes.

O ye believers of God! I am pleased with you and seek for your assistance and confirmation. I hope that ye may, day by day, add to your love, steadfastness, purity of intention and service to the Cause of God.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

`Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas.

These Tablets were originally written in Persian and all bear the caption, "He is God!"⁴ and close with expressions of good will, such as, "Upon ye be greetings and praise!" These expressions have been omitted from this compilation; also such portions as are clearly of a personal nature, as well as names of persons, as instructed by `Abdu'l-Bahá.

Omission of names of persons has been designated by the sign, thus; omission of purely personal portions of the text have been designated by the sign, thus ***. The translator's interpolations are enclosed in parentheses, thus (); editor's interpolations are enclosed in brackets, thus []. For messages within Tablets a special sign has been found necessary and these messages are enclosed within this special sign, thus & &. Quotations are shown by the usual sign, thus " ".

The great labor of translating these Tablets from the original language has been entrusted to the following translators,

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whose inestimable service is hereby gratefully acknowledged: Anton Haddad,

Mirza S. M. Raffie, Mirza Housein Rouhy, Ali Kuli Khan, Dr. Ameen U. Fareed, H. S. M. Taki Manshadi, Mirza Ahmad Esphahani, Mrs. Getsinger, Miss Barney and Mirza Moneer Zane.

The House of Spirituality desires to thank all who have assisted in this matter of gathering in copies of Tablets for preservation in its archives, and requests the Bahá'ís everywhere to continue the endeavor as outlined in the circular letter sent out by that Body, as herein quoted. Address such communications to the Librarian of the House of Spirituality, P. O. Box 283, Chicago, Ill.

Only a portion of the Tablets now on file with the House of Spirituality are contained in this volume. Other volumes will be issued as soon as possible. Tablets coming in will take their place in order according to the date received and appear in forth-coming volumes.

The Bahá'í Publishing Society.

Feast of Naurooz, March 21, 1909.

For the information of those who know little or nothing of the Bahá'í Revelation, we quote the following account translated from the (French) Encyclopaedia of Larousse: -

Bahá'ísm the religion of the disciples of Bahá'u'lláh, an outcome of Babism. - Mirza Husain Ali Nuri Baha'o'llah was born at Teheran in 1817 A. D. From 1844 he was one of the first adherents of the Bab, and devoted himself to the pacific propagation of his doctrine in Persia. After the death of the Bab he was, with the principal Babis, exiled to Baghdad, and later to Constantinople and Adrianople, under the surveillance of the Ottoman Government. It was

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in the latter city that he openly declared his mission. He was "He whom God would make manifest," whom the Bab had announced in his writings, the great Manifestation of God, promised for the last days; and in his letters to the principal Rulers of the States of Europe he invited them to join him in establishing religion and universal peace. From this time, the Babis who acknowledged him became Bahá'ís. The sultan then exiled him (1868 A. D.) to Acca in Palestine, where he composed the greater part of his doctrinal works, and where he died in 1892 A. D. (May 29). He had confided to his son, Abbas Effendi `Abdu'l-Bahá, the work of spreading the religion and continuing the connection between the Bahá'ís of all parts of the world. In point of fact, there are Bahá'ís everywhere, not only in Mohammedan countries, but also in all the countries of Europe, as well as in the United States, Canada, Japan, India, etc. This is because Bahá'u'lláh has known how to transform Babism into a universal religion, which is presented as the fulfillment and completion of all the ancient faiths. The Jews await the Messiah, the Christians the

return of Christ, the Moslem the Mahdi, the Buddhists the fifth Buddha, the Zoroastrians Shah Bahran, the Hindoos the reincarnation of Krishna, and the Atheists - a better social organization! Bahá'u'lláh represents all these, and thus destroys the rivalries and the enmities of the different religions; reconciles them in their primitive purity, and frees them from the corruption of dogmas and rites. For Bahá'ísm has no clergy, no religious ceremonial, no public prayers; its only dogma is belief in God and in his Manifestations (Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, et al., Bahá'u'lláh). The principal works of Bahá'u'lláh are the Kitab-ul-Ighan, the Kitab-ul-Akdas, the Kitab-ul-Ayd, and numerous letters or tablets addressed to sovereigns or to private individuals. Ritual holds no place in the religion, which must be expressed in all the actions of life, and accomplished in neighborly love. Every one must

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have an occupation. The education of children is enjoined and regulated. No one has the power to receive confession of sins, or to give absolution. The priests of the existing religions should renounce celibacy, and should preach by their example, mingling in the life of the people. Monogamy is universally recommended, etc. Questions not treated of are left to the civil law of each country, and to the decisions of the Bait-ul-Adl, or House of Justice, instituted by Baha-o-llah. Respect toward the Head of the State is a part of respect toward God. A universal language, and the creation of tribunals of arbitration between nations, are to suppress wars. "You are all leaves of the same tree, and drops of the same sea," Bahá'u'lláh has said. Briefly, it is not so much a new religion as Religion renewed and unified, which is directed today by `Abdu'l-Bahá. - (Nouveau Larousse Illustre, supplement, p. 66.)

Just as this book was going to press the introduction to it appearing on the following page was received from `Abdu'l-Bahá.

He is God!

O Thou Almighty Lord!

Strengthen all mankind that they may do according to the instructions and teachings recorded in these writings, so that wars and strifes may be eliminated from the world of man; that the roots of enmity may be destroyed and the foundations of love and affection be established; that the hearts may be filled with love and the souls be attracted; that wisdom may advance and the faces become brightened and illumined; that there be no more wars and strifes and that reconciliation and peace appear; that the Unity of the world of man may pitch its tent on the "apex of the horizons," so that peoples and parties become as one nation, that different continents become as one continent and the whole earth as one land; that the sects of antagonizing and dogmatic religions be unified; that the world of creation be adorned and all the people of the earth abide in unity and peace.

Verily, Thou art the Giver, the Bestower, the Beholder!

(signed) `Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas.

Notes:

1) See pages 1 and 6 of Tablets.

2) Surat-ul-Hykl, by BAHÁ'OLLAH, a portion of which was translated by Anton Haddad, published in 1900. The retranslation of this book has not yet been undertaken. [Ed. - An authorized translation has now been done; see here.]

3) Referring to passage in "The Life and Teaching of Abbas Effendi" (Abdul-Baha), by Myron T. Phelps, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.

4) This is a usage of the people of the East. The purpose is that in every matter the commencement should be in the Name of God.

Volume I

— Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha: Volumes 1-3 (Used by permission of the curator)