

THOU hast asked concerning the fundamentals of religion and its ordinances: Know thou that first and foremost in religion is the knowledge of God. This attaineth its consummation in the recognition of His divine unity, which in turn reacheth its fulfilment in acclaiming that His hallowed and exalted Sanctuary, the Seat of His transcendent majesty, is sanctified from all attributes. And know thou that in this world of being the knowledge of God can never be attained save through the knowledge of Him Who is the Dayspring of divine Reality.

GRACIOUS God! Within the domains of Islam there are at present seven powerful sovereigns ruling the world. None of them hath been informed of His [the Báb's] Manifestation, and if informed, none hath believed in Him. Who knoweth, they may leave this world below full of desire, and without having realized that the thing for which they were waiting had come to pass. This is what happened to the monarchs that held fast unto the Gospel. They awaited the coming of the Prophet of God [Muhammad], and when He did appear, they failed to recognize Him. Behold how great are the sums which these sovereigns expend without even the slightest thought of appointing an official charged with the task of acquainting them in their own realms with the Manifestation of God! They would thereby have fulfilled the purpose for which they have been created. All their desires have been and are still fixed upon leaving behind them traces of their names.

PONDER likewise the Dispensation of the Apostle of God which lasted twelve hundred and seventy years¹ till the dawn of the manifestation of the Bayan. He directed everyone to await the advent of the Promised Qá'im. All deeds which in the Islamic Dispensation began with Muhammad should find their consummation through the appearance of the Qá'im. God hath made Him manifest invested with the proof wherewith the Apostle of God was invested, so that none of the believers in the Qur'án might entertain doubts about the validity of His Cause, for it is set down in the Qur'án that none but God is capable of revealing verses. During the period of 1270 years no one among the followers of the Qur'án ever witnessed a person appearing with conclusive proofs. Now the Ever-Living Lord hath made

¹ From the Declaration of Muhammad; this occurred ten years before the Hijrah which marks the starting point of the Muslim calendar.

manifest and invested with supreme testimony this long-awaited Promised One from a place no one could imagine and from a person whose knowledge was deemed of no account. His age is no more than twenty-five years, yet His glory is such as none of the learned among the people of Islam can rival; inasmuch as man's glory lieth in his knowledge. Behold the learned who are honoured by virtue of their ability to understand the Holy Writings, and God hath exalted them to such a degree that in referring to them He saith: 'None knoweth the meaning thereof except God and them that are well-grounded in knowledge.'² How strange then that this twenty-five-year-old untutored one should be singled out to reveal His verses in so astounding a manner. If the Muslim divines have cause for pride in understanding the meaning of the Holy Writings, His glory is in revealing the Writings, that none of them may hesitate to believe in His Words. So great is the celestial might and power which God hath revealed in Him that if it were His will and no break should intervene He could, within the space of five days and nights, reveal the equivalent of the Qur'án which was sent down in twenty-three years. Ponder thou and reflect. Hath anyone like unto Him ever appeared in former times, or is this characteristic strictly confined unto Him?

CONSIDER the manifold favours vouchsafed by the Promised One, and the effusions of His bounty which have pervaded the concourse of the followers of Islam to enable them to attain unto salvation. Indeed observe how He Who representeth the origin of creation, He Who is the Exponent of the verse, 'I, in very truth, am God', identified Himself as the Gate [Bab] for the advent of the promised Qá'im, a descendant of Muhammad, and in His first Book enjoined the observance of the laws of the Qur'án, so that the people might not be seized with perturbation by reason of a new Book and a new Revelation and might regard His Faith as similar to their own, perchance they would not turn away from the Truth and ignore the thing for which they had been called into being.

LET Me set forth some rational arguments for thee. If someone desireth to embrace the Faith of Islam today, would the testimony of God prove conclusive for him? If thou dost contend that it would not, then how is it that God will chastise him after death, and that, while he lives, the verdict of 'non-believer' is passed upon him? If thou affirmest that the testimony is conclusive, how wouldst thou prove

² Qur'án 3:5

this? If thy assertion is based on hearsay, then mere words are unacceptable as a binding testimony; but if thou deemest the Qur'án as the testimony, this would be a weighty and evident proof.

Now consider the Revelation of the Bayan. If the followers of the Qur'án had applied to themselves proofs similar to those which they advance for the non-believers in Islam, not a single soul would have remained deprived of the Truth, and on the Day of Resurrection everyone would have attained salvation.

Should a Christian contend, 'How can I deem the Qur'án a testimony while I am unable to understand it?' such a contention would not be acceptable. Likewise the people of the Qur'án disdainfully observe, 'We are unable to comprehend the eloquence of the verses in the Bayan, how can we regard it as a testimony?' Whoever uttereth such words, say unto him, 'O thou untutored one! By what proof hast thou embraced the Religion of Islam? Is it the Prophet on whom thou hast never set eyes? Is it the miracles which thou hast never witnessed? If thou hast accepted Islam unwittingly, wherefore hast thou done so? But if thou hast embraced the Faith by recognizing the Qur'án as the testimony, because thou hast heard the learned and the faithful express their powerlessness before it, or if thou hast, upon hearing the divine verses and by virtue of thy spontaneous love for the True Word of God, responded in a spirit of utter humility and lowliness -- a spirit which is one of the mightiest signs of true love and understanding -- then such proofs have been and will ever be regarded as sound.'

THE recognition of Him Who is the Bearer of divine Truth is none other than the recognition of God, and loving Him is none other than loving God. However, I swear by the sublime Essence of God -- exalted and glorified be He -- that I did not wish my identity to be known by men, and gave instructions that My name should be concealed, because I was fully aware of the incapacity of this people, who are none other than those who have, in reference to no less a person than the Apostle of God -- incomparable as He hath ever been -- remarked, 'He is certainly a lunatic'.³ If they now claim to be other than those people, their deeds bear witness to the falsity of their assertions. That which God testifieth is none other than what His supreme Testimony testifieth. Were all the peoples of the world to testify unto

³ Qur'án 68:51

a thing and were He to testify unto another, His testimony will be regarded as God's testimony, while aught else but Him hath been and will ever be as naught; for it is through His might that a thing assumeth existence.

Consider the extent of the adherence of these people to matters of faith. When dealing with their own affairs they are well content with the testimony of two just witnesses, and yet despite the testimony of so many righteous men they hesitate to believe in Him Who is the Bearer of the divine Truth.

THE evidences which the people demanded from the Apostle of God through their idle fancy have mostly been rejected in the Qur'án, even as in the Surih of the Children of Israel [Surih XVII] it hath been revealed: 'And they say, by no means will we believe on thee till thou cause a fountain to gush forth for us from the earth; or till thou have a garden of palm trees and vines, and thou cause rivers to spring forth from the midst thereof in abundance; or thou cause the heaven to fall down upon us, as thou hast given out, in pieces; or thou bring God and the angels to vouch for thee; or thou have a house of gold; or thou ascend to heaven nor will we believe in thine ascension, till thou send down to us a book which we may read. Say, Praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, an apostle?'

Now be fair! The Arabs uttered such words, and now, prompted by thy desire, thou dost demand yet other things? What is the difference between thee and them? If thou dost ponder a while, it will be evident that it is incumbent upon a lowly servant to acquiesce to whatever proof God hath appointed, and not to follow his own idle fancy. If the wishes of the people were to be gratified not a single disbeliever would remain on earth. For once the Apostle of God had fulfilled the wishes of the people they would unhesitatingly have embraced His Faith. May God save thee, shouldst thou seek any evidence according to thy selfish desire; rather it behooveth thee to uphold the unfailing proof which God hath appointed. The object of thy belief in God is but to secure His good-pleasure. How then dost thou seek as a proof of thy faith a thing which hath been and is contrary to His good-pleasure?

RID thou thyself of all attachments to aught except God, enrich thyself in God by dispensing with all else besides Him, and recite this prayer:

Say: God sufficeth all things above all things, and nothing in the heavens or in the earth or in whatever lieth between them but God, thy Lord, sufficeth. Verily, He is in Himself the Knower, the Sustainer, the Omnipotent.

Regard not the all-sufficing power of God as an idle fancy. It is that genuine faith which thou cherishest for the Manifestation of God in every Dispensation. It is such faith which sufficeth above all the things that exist on the earth, whereas no created thing on earth besides faith would suffice thee. If thou art not a believer, the Tree of divine Truth would condemn thee to extinction. If thou art a believer, thy faith shall be sufficient for thee above all things that exist on earth, even though thou possess nothing.

IT is recorded in a tradition that of the entire concourse of the Christians no more than seventy people embraced the Faith of the Apostle of God. The blame falleth upon their doctors, for if these had believed, they would have been followed by the mass of their countrymen. Behold, then, that which hath come to pass! The learned men of Christendom are held to be learned by virtue of their safeguarding the teaching of Christ, and yet consider how they themselves have been the cause of men's failure to accept the Faith and attain unto salvation! Is it still thy wish to follow in their footsteps? The followers of Jesus submitted to their clerics to be saved on the Day of Resurrection, and as a result of this obedience they eventually entered into the fire, and on the Day when the Apostle of God appeared they shut themselves out from the recognition of His exalted Person. Dost thou desire to follow such divines?

Nay, by God, be thou neither a divine without discernment nor a follower without discernment, for both of these shall perish on the Day of Resurrection. Rather it behooveth thee to be a discerning divine, or to walk with insight in the way of God by obeying a true leader of religion.

In every nation thou beholdest unnumbered spiritual leaders who are bereft of true discernment, and among every people thou dost encounter myriads of adherents who are devoid of the same characteristic. Ponder for a while in thy heart, have pity on thyself and turn not aside thine attention from proofs and evidences.

However, seek not proofs and evidences after thine idle fancy; but rather base thy proofs upon what God hath appointed. Moreover, know thou that neither being a man of learning nor being a follower is in itself a source of glory. If thou art a man of learning, thy knowledge becometh an honour, and if thou art a follower, thine adherence unto leadership becometh an honour, only when these conform to the good-pleasure of God. And beware lest thou regard as an idle fancy the good-pleasure of God; it is the same as the good-pleasure of His Messenger. Consider the followers of Jesus. They were eagerly seeking the good-pleasure of God, yet none of them attained the good-pleasure of His Apostle which is identical with God's good-pleasure, except such as embraced His Faith.

THY letter hath been perused. Were the truth of this Revelation to be fully demonstrated with elaborate proofs, all the scrolls that exist in the heaven and on the earth would be insufficient to contain them.

However, the substance and essence of the subject is this, that there can be no doubt that from everlasting God hath been invested with the independent sovereignty of His exalted Being, and unto everlasting He will remain inaccessible in the transcendent majesty of His holy Essence. No creature hath ever recognized Him as befitteth His recognition, nor hath any created being ever praised Him as is worthy of His praise. He is exalted above every name, and is sanctified from every comparison. Through Him all things are made known, while too lofty is His reality to be known through anyone but Him. The process of His creation hath had no beginning and can have no end, otherwise it would necessitate the cessation of His celestial grace. God hath raised up Prophets and revealed Books as numerous as the creatures of the world, and will continue to do so to everlasting.

If thou art sailing upon the sea of God's Names, which are reflected in all things, know thou that He is exalted and sanctified from being known through His creatures, or being described by His servants. Everything thou beholdest hath been called into being through the operation of His Will. How can such a created thing, therefore, be indicative of His essential oneness? God's existence in itself testifieth to His Own oneness, while every created thing, by its very nature, beareth evidence that it hath been fashioned by God. Such is the proof of consummate wisdom in the estimation of those who sail the ocean of divine Truth.

If, however, thou art sailing upon the sea of creation, know thou that the First Remembrance, which is the Primal Will of God, may be likened unto the sun. God hath created Him through the potency of His might, and He hath, from the beginning that hath no beginning, caused Him to be manifested in every Dispensation through the compelling power of His behest, and God will, to the end that knoweth no end, continue to manifest Him according to the good-pleasure of His invincible Purpose.

And know thou that He indeed resembleth the sun. Were the risings of the sun to continue till the end that hath no end, yet there hath not been nor ever will be more than one sun; and were its settings to endure for evermore, still there hath not been nor ever will be more than one sun. It is this Primal Will which appeareth resplendent in every Prophet and speaketh forth in every revealed Book. It knoweth no beginning, inasmuch as the First deriveth its firstness from It; and knoweth no end, for the Last oweth its lastness unto It.

In the time of the First Manifestation the Primal Will appeared in Adam; in the day of Noah It became known in Noah; in the day of Abraham in Him; and so in the day of Moses; the day of Jesus; the day of Muhammad, the Apostle of God; the day of the 'Point of the Bayan'; the day of Him Whom God shall make manifest; and the day of the One Who will appear after Him Whom God shall make manifest. Hence the inner meaning of the words uttered by the Apostle of God, 'I am all the Prophets', inasmuch as what shineth resplendent in each one of Them hath been and will ever remain the one and the same sun.