

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Treatise on Leadership (Risálíyih Síyásíyih)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



Treatise on Leadership

﴿ He is God. ﴾

Praise and benediction are owed to the pure Lord, who made the appearance of the sacred perfections of the human realm the foundation for his creation. Thus might the invisible Essence become visible in the court of perception by means of modalities, effects, laws, deeds, essences and mysteries. And thus might the lights of the reality of the saying, “I was a hidden treasure and loved to be known” become apparent from the dawning-place of the morn of vision.

Praise and glorification are also due to the complete individual reality of the great one, who is the sun of the reality of the divine world, the most great luminary of the human realm, the center of the divine self-disclosure, and the dawning-place of the attributes of the one true Lord. By means of his appearance, the secret of “thus I created the creation, so that I might be known” became a reality. “And thou beholdest the earth blackened, then, when We send down water upon it, it quivers, and swells, and puts forth herbs of every joyous kind.”

In these days and times, events contrary to all religious laws and destructive of both human society and of the divine foundation have occurred as a result of the actions of some ignorant,



TRANSLATION

unwise insurgents and fomenters of turmoil. They made the perspicuous divine religion a pretext, and by their sedition and clamor they have brought shame upon the people of Írán before the nations of the world, whether they be friends or strangers. Praise be to God! They claim to be shepherds, but they bear the characteristics of wolves. They read the Qur'án, but they desire to behave like rapacious beasts. They have a human form, but they approve of bestial conduct. "When it is said to them, 'Do not corruption in the land,' they say, 'We are only ones that put things right.' Truly, they are the workers of corruption but they are not aware." It has therefore become imperative that a brief discourse be delivered concerning the foundation stone of the divine religion, and to alert the friends to be wise and awake.

It is clear and apparent that in the fabric and nature of all beings, a faculty and a potentiality exist for the manifestation of two sorts of perfections. One is inborn perfections, which are unmediated and are purely the creation of God. The other sort is acquired perfections, which are under the shadow of the training provided by a true educator. Contemplate the external essences. For a natural freshness and delicacy exist in trees, flowers and fruit, which are purely a divine bestowal. The other is a verdure and sweetness that are added to what has been described above, which become visible as a grace bestowed by the gardener's cultivation. For, if left to itself, this plant-life would become bramble and jungle. Neither rose nor blossom would open, and no fruit would be given. It would be fit to be set afire and cleared. But when it comes under the shadow of the care and cultivation of a gardener, it becomes a garden and a rose-bower, an orchard and a flower bed. It brings forth blossoms and fruit, and covers the earth with roses and fragrant herbs. Human society is the same way. It, likewise, if left to its own devices, will become like a horde of vermin, and come under the rubric of beasts and predators. It learns rapacity, sharpness of claw, and bloodthirstiness, and is consumed in the flames of deprivation and tyranny.

The human race learns its lessons as children in the school of the world, and falls ill and is enfeebled because of chronic diseases. The sacred temples of the prophets and holy ones are the tutors in the assembly of the All-Merciful. They are the physicians in the hospital of the Lord. They are harbingers of grace, and are the sun in the ethereal sphere of guidance. When the radiant flame of spiritual and physical perfection that lies, in reality, beneath the glass of the

human lamp is laid low and extinguished, it is reignited by the divine fire. Chronic diseases vanish by the grace of the effulgence of the All-Merciful and the Christ spirit. This glorious proof clearly establishes that human society requires the education and nurturing of a true educator, and that human souls need a master, a disciplinarian, a restrainer, an encourager, a guide and an attractor. For the garden of his creation can never find embellishment, delicacy, grace and blessing save by means of the cultivation carried out by the gardener of loving-kindness, of the effulgences of the One true God, and of the just leadership provided by the government.

This figure who restrains and prohibits, who impels and disciplines, this leader and guide, is of two sorts. The first protector and restrainer is the faculty of leadership that is related to the corporeal world, and which bestows external happiness on the human realm. It safeguards human life, property and honor, as well as the glory and distinguished qualities of society. This is a magnificent category. The center that builds up or tears down these agencies of leadership, and the pivot around which this divine gift circles, is the just monarch, along with accomplished plenipotentiaries, wise ministers, and intrepid military leaders.

The second sort of educator and master of the human race is represented by the spiritual, holy authority, heavenly, revealed books, divine prophets, celestial souls, and the learned in the All-Merciful. For these sites of revelation and dawning-places of inspiration are educators of hearts and spirits, rectifiers of morals, improvers of character, and encouragers of the virtuous. That is, these holy beings are like spiritual faculties that save human souls from the disgrace of moral vices, the darkness of wicked characteristics, and the filth of the worlds of being. They illumine human realities with the light of the traits of the plane of true humanity, with divine attributes and with virtues and characteristics from the kingdom of God. Thus might the radiant reality of the verses, "So blessed be God, the fairest of creators," and of "We indeed created man in the fairest stature" be realized in the sacred human essence. Thus, by means of the glorious effulgences of these dawning-places of the divine verses, the pure and subtle human realities become a center for holy, divine attributes. The foundation of these sacred functions stands upon spiritual and godly affairs and conscious realities. They have no relationship to corporeal concerns, affairs of political leadership, or worldly matters. Rather, the holy faculties of these good and pure souls are in reality the life, consciousness, and identity of the obedient heart and

spirit, not of water and clay. The standards of the signs of these pure realities are raised up in the spiritual, life-giving heavens, not in the dusty earth. There is no way for the affairs of the government and the subjects, of ruler and ruled, to enter in here. They are specially favored with the holy and divine breezes and with spiritual and everlasting effulgences. They do not interfere in any other sphere, nor do they steer the steed of their resolve into the arena of governmental leadership. For the affairs of leadership and government, of kingdom and subjects, already have a respected object of authority, an appointed source, whereas a different holy center and distinct wellspring exists with regard to guidance, religion, knowledge, education, and the promulgation of good morals and of the virtues of true humanity. These latter souls have nothing to do with affairs of civil leadership, nor do they seek to interfere in them. Thus, in this most great cycle of the maturity and adulthood of the world, this matter has been put into the text of the divine Book as one might put lead into the structure of a building. By virtue of this incontrovertible text, and this brilliant proof, all must comply with and submit to the commands of the government, and all must follow and obey the throne of sovereignty. That is, they must be sincere subjects and willing servants in obeying and serving the monarchs. Thus is it written in the Book of the Covenant and of faith and the last will and testament of Bahá'u'lláh, whose decree is decisive, whose dawn is luminous, and whose morn is true and shining with the explicit text. The command that is recorded is as follows:

“O ye the loved ones and the trustees of God! Kings are the manifestations of the power, and the daysprings of the might and riches, of God. Pray ye on their behalf. He hath invested them with the rulership of the earth, and hath singled out the hearts of men as His Own domain. Conflict and contention are categorically forbidden in His Book. This is a decree of God in this Most Great Revelation. It is divinely preserved from annulment and is invested by Him with the splendour of His confirmation. Verily He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. It is incumbent upon everyone to aid those daysprings of authority and sources of command who are adorned with the ornament of equity and justice.”

Also, in a frank epistle that he wrote addressing one of the Muslim clerics, he says in one blessed passage:

"It is now incumbent upon His Majesty the Sháh—may God, exalted be He, protect him—to deal with this people with loving-kindness and mercy. This Wronged One pledgeth Himself, before the Divine Kaaba, that, apart from truthfulness and trustworthiness, this people will show forth nothing that can in any way conflict with the world-adorning views of His Majesty. Every nation must have a high regard for the position of its sovereign, must be submissive unto him, must carry out his behests, and hold fast his authority. The sovereigns of the earth have been and are the manifestations of the power, the grandeur and the majesty of God. This Wronged One hath at no time dealt deceitfully with anyone. Every one is well aware of this, and beareth witness unto it. Regard for the rank of sovereigns is divinely ordained, as is clearly attested by the words of the Prophets of God and His chosen ones. He Who is the Spirit (Jesus)--may peace be upon Him--was asked: "O Spirit of God! Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" And He made reply: "Yea, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." He forbade it not. These two sayings are, in the estimation of men of insight, one and the same, for if that which belonged to Caesar had not come from God, He would have forbidden it. And likewise in the sacred verse: "Obey God and obey the Apostle, and those among you invested with authority." By "those invested with authority" is meant primarily and more especially the Imáms---- the blessings of God rest upon them! They, verily, are the manifestations of the power of God, and the sources of His authority, and the repositories of His knowledge, and the daysprings of His commandments. Secondly these words refer unto the kings and rulers-- those through the brightness of whose justice the horizons of the world are resplendent and luminous. We fain would hope that His Majesty the Sháh will shine forth with a light of justice whose radiance will envelop all the kindreds of the earth. It is incumbent upon every one to beseech the one true God on his behalf for that which is meet and seemly in this day.

O God, my God, and my Master, and my Mainstay, and my Desire, and my Beloved! I ask Thee by the mysteries which were hid in Thy knowledge, and by the signs which have diffused the fragrance of Thy loving-kindness, and by the billows of the ocean of Thy bounty, and by the heaven of Thy grace and generosity, and by the blood spilt in Thy path, and by the hearts consumed in their love for Thee, to assist His Majesty the Sháh with Thy power and Thy sovereignty, that from him may be manifested that which will everlastingly endure in Thy Books, and Thy Scriptures, and Thy Tablets. Hold Thou his hand, O my Lord, with the hand of Thine

omnipotence, and illuminate him with the light of Thy knowledge, and adorn him with the adornment of Thy virtues. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee, and in Thy grasp are the reins of all created things. No God is there but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Bounteous.

In the Epistle to the Romans Saint Paul hath written: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." And further: "For he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." He saith that the appearance of the kings, and their majesty and power are of God.

Moreover, in the traditions of old, references have been made which the divines have seen and heard. We beseech God--blessed and glorified be He--to aid thee, O Shaykh, to lay fast hold on that which hath been sent down from the heaven of the bounty of God, the Lord of the worlds.

Therefore, divine friends, endeavor with heart and soul, and show forth with pure and true intentions the miracle of wishing the government well and obeying the state.

This matter is more important than the obligations of the manifest religion or the decisive texts of the exalted Book. It is well known that the state naturally desires the ease and repose of subjects, and seeks the bounty and happiness of the people. It wants to safeguard the just rights of dependents and the lowly, and attempts by every means to curb the evil deeds of transgressors. For the honor and prosperity of the subjects depends upon the power, grandeur and might of the glorious governmental authority and the triumphant state, and the success and affluence of the populace is the object of the gaze of the honored ruler. This matter is self-evident. If there has been a lessening in the repose of the people or a decrease in the well-being of high and low, this was the fault of the incompetence of subordinates, and of the tyranny and ignorance of some malicious persons, who appear in the clothing of learned clerics but are actually versed in the arts of ignorance, and who instigate public turmoil in the beginning and the end. "Turmoil was asleep; cursed be the one who awakens it."

For fifty years, in by-ways, from pulpits, and in councils and gatherings in the presence of government officials, this gaggle of imbeciles--that is, the clerical leaders--has launched charges

against this oppressed community of fomenting discord. They accused them of opposition, saying that this community wreaks destruction in the world and corrupts the morals of human beings, that they are instigators of sedition everywhere, are absolutely pernicious, are the sign of rebellion and the standard of insurgency, the foe of religion and state, and the enemy of the very life of the subjects. It is an exigency of divine justice that the reality of every community become clear and apparent, so that in world councils it might become obvious and evident who is the reformer and who the worker of corruption, and which people are the instigators of sedition and which the malefactors. And God knows the worker of corruption from the reformer. How good it would be if a touchstone could be found that would cover the face of every dissembler with soot. Now, divine friends, fall to giving thanks for the evidences of divine grace, insofar as true justice has torn away the veil from the deeds of every religious group, and the hidden secrets of souls have become apparent. Praise be to God, then thanks be to God!

The function of the religious leaders and the duties of the clerical jurists are to attend to spiritual affairs and to promulgate divine attributes. Whenever the leaders of the manifest religion and the pillars of the mighty divine law have intervened in the world of political leadership, put forward their rulings and attempted to manage affairs, it has ever caused the unity of the believers in the one true God to be destroyed, and resulted in the dispersal of the faithful into factions. The flames of turmoil flared up, and the blaze of rebelliousness scorched the world. The country was plundered and pillaged, and the people became the prisoners and hostages of oppressors.

Toward the end of the dynasty of the Safavid kings [1501-1722], may they rest in peace, the religious leaders sought influence over the political affairs of Írán. Raising their standard, they contrived and sought a way until they opened the door to an ill-omened movement that proved harmful and wrought enormous destruction. Írán became pasturage for wandering Türkmen tribes and the arena for Afghan raiding and conquest. The blessed earth of Írán was subdued by neighboring peoples, and the glorious clime fell into the hands of strangers. The formerly triumphant state was effaced and the brilliant dynasty was ended. Tyrants began their encroachments, and the ill-intentioned set their sights on the property, honor and life of others. Persons were killed, wealth was pillaged, the grandees were targeted, and their possessions

were expropriated. Civilized Írán became wilderness. The bejeweled crown of the glorious kings became the seat of demons. The reins of government fell into the hands of predators. The royal family was made prisoner, enchained beneath the sword of the bloodthirsty; their wives were taken captive, and their children made hostages. This was the fruit of the interference in political affairs of religious leaders and of those accomplished in the unassailable revealed law.

On another occasion, at the beginning of the reign of Áqá Muḥammad Khán [Qájár, r. 1785-1797], the religious leaders of the people once again interjected themselves into political affairs, and thereby covered Írán's peoples with the dust of abasement. They put forward their judgment with regard to the appointment of the monarch, singing a siren song that confused the minds of the people. They thus provoked turmoil and commotion, and raised the standard of contention. The tempest of rebellion arose, and the path of sedition and discord became ascendant. Anarchy and chaos showed their faces, and the wave of rebellion reached the apex of the heavens. The tribal chieftains put forward claims to sovereignty and planted the seeds of enmity in the country's fields. They fell upon one another, and security and safety vanished, and the covenant and testament were abrogated. Neither life nor property remained, and public order was no more. Finally, the decisive events at Kirmán took place, and pernicious trouble-makers were defeated.

A third such incident occurred during the reign of the late [Fath-\`Alí] Sháh [r. 1797-1834]. The leaders of religion hurled themselves into it with quaking and howling, and raised the standard of misfortune. They began a campaign for holy war against Russia, faring upon the highways to the accompaniment of drumbeats and tambourines, until they reached the border. When they began the attack, throwing stones, they were met with a fusillade of gunfire on the battlefield. Casting aside considerations of shame and good name, they chose to flee in disgrace.

The greatest object lesson lay in the sad events associated with the late Sultán Abdülaziz [r. 1861-1876], the wronged. At the end of his life the religious leaders mounted a rebellion and raised aloft the banner of enmity. In a frenzy, they launched a movement, seeking an entrée into and participation in decision-making. They instigated riots and contended with officials of the state. They made the manifest religion and the mighty revealed law a pretext and spoke of the welfare of the nation, seeking to depose the cabinet ministers. They undermined the structures of

equity and chivalry. They exiled persons of good will and delighted the malicious. They caused the nation's true ones to be considered odious, and elevated traitors to beloved figures among the people. When they succeeded in achieving their purposes, they adopted a different tactic. Now they demonstrated opposition to the throne itself, and insolently raised their own hands against the ruler and the government. They issued a religious ruling deposing him, then turned to subversion and lashing out. They cast away the oar of manliness and stirred up the dust of tyranny. They committed the injustice of disgracing the perspicuous faith and the law of the lord of messengers. The flame of regret and sorrow burst forth in the hearts of the people of the world as a result of this movement, and the breasts of the world's inhabitants were seared at the wrong done that glorious monarch. In the end, they insisted on combat. They practiced with talon and claw, strapped on weapons and announced the war. They spread rumors that Russia's was a miserable government, that its armies and troops wore a spiritless mien, that its officers were cowards, its men incompetent, its state incapable of launching an onslaught, and its regime impotent.

"We," they said, "are a victorious people and a resplendent nation. Let us wage holy war, and demolish the foundations of opposition. We shall attain celebrity throughout the world, and shall altogether delight the nations and communities thereof."

When the results of this movement became apparent, the fruits of these notions became manifest. Vengeance incarnated itself, the poison of repeated chastisement took physical form, and calamity befell both government and subjects. The earth was dyed red with the blood of innocents, and the cadavers lent the battlefield a horrifying aspect. The generality of subjects quaffed from the cup of affliction, and three hundred thousand young men—the cynosures of the women of the empire—downed the hemlock of annihilation. What great edifices were leveled into the dust, and how many ancient families faced extinction or dire poverty! Thousands of well-ordered villages were ground into the earth, and populated regions were rendered wasteland. Treasuries were cast to the wind, and the wealth of the state and the people was wiped out. A million subjects were forced to emigrate, and a huge number of the empire's notables and the great had to leave their homesteads upon losing their property. Small children and the elderly wandered in the desert, bereft of leadership and of personal effects. The

quarrelsome religious leaders who had raised the cry of “War, to war!” and “Let us wage a holy war!” whimpered, at the first assault, “Where is our refuge?” and “To where can we flee?” By making war but a little they forewent rich compensation and glorious rewards, rather turning their faces and fleeing. They had brought this greatest of catastrophes to pass. Praise be to God! Shall persons who are unable to manage or train up their own households, who are wholly uninformed both with regard to domestic and foreign affairs, interfere in the proceedings of the kingdom and its subjects, or intervene in the intricacies of political matters?

Were you to refer to history, you would find innumerable, and, indeed, infinite numbers of such occurrences, the cause of which in every instance was the interference of religious leaders in political affairs. These souls are the authorities in establishing the purport of divine laws, not with regard to their implementation. That is, whenever the government questions them about the exigencies of the revealed law and the reality of the divine ordinances affecting both general and specific issues, they must communicate the conclusions to which their jurisprudential reasoning has led them about the commands of God, and that which is in accord with the revealed law. Otherwise, what expertise do they have in political matters, the protection of the subjects, the managing of serious affairs, the welfare and prosperity of the country, the implementation of the civil regulations and secular laws of a realm, or foreign affairs and domestic policy?

Likewise, in all previous ages and eras, there were persons who became centers of opposition to the friends of God and to the believers in the divine verses, who outwardly were adorned with the ornament of religious learning but in whose hearts piety and the fear of God had dwindled. They appeared learned but in reality were ignorant. They spoke of self-denial but their souls were irreligious. Their bodies carried out ritual worship, but their hearts were asleep. For instance, in the time when the spirit-giving soul of Christ bestowed life on the body of the world, and the holy breaths of Jesus revived contingent beings, the rabbis of the children of Israel such as Anas and Caiaphas voiced opposition to and rejected that gem of existence, that beauty of the seen world, that praised spirit. They went so far as to declare him an infidel, desiring his ruin, persecuting him, and inflicting harm on him. They punished his disciples and applied the severest sanctions to them. They issued rulings of imprisonment, exile and death, even resorting

to torture, and by means of the severest torment they martyred him and caused his most pure blood to flow. This opposition, harshness and punishment all derived from the religious leaders of the community.

Consider, in addition, the days of that mystery of existence, the promised beauty, who was confirmed in the station of the praised one—Muḥammad, the Messenger of God. There were opponents, obstinate and haughty, among the Jewish rabbis and there were intransigent Christian monks, and ignorant and envious pagan soothsayers. These opponents included Abu `Amir Rahib, Ka`b b. Ashraf, Nadr b. Harith, `As b. Wa`il, Yaḥyá b. Akhtab, and Umayyah b. Hilal. These leaders of the people arose to curse, kill and beat that dawning sun of prophethood. They were so perverse in their persecution of that lamp unto the world of humanity that he said and spoke forth with majesty, “No prophet was persecuted as I was persecuted.” Thus, note that in every age and era some irreligious leaders of religion were responsible for oppression, hindrances, sieges, violence, torment, and renewed tyranny. Whenever opposition to the state has arisen, it has all been as a result of the hints, innuendoes, allusions, and gestures of these rebellious individuals. Likewise, in these days, if you look carefully, what was promulgated and what occurred was as a result of the iniquity of the unjust religious leaders, who lack all piety, are devoid of the law of God, and who boil with the heat of envy and jealousy.

As for the learned who are pure of heart and soul, each of them is a divine mercy and gift, a candle of guidance, a lamp of providence, a lightning bolt of reality, a guardian of the revealed law, a balance of justice, a sovereign of trustworthiness, a true morn, a towering palm tree, a shining dawn, a shimmering star, a spring of mystical insight, a fountain of the sweet water of life, a nurturer of souls, a bearer of glad tidings to hearts, a guide to the peoples, a crier of truth among humankind, and a most great sign. Each is the highest banner, the essence of being, the grace of existence, the manifestation of purity, and the dawning sun of sanctity. They abhor the being of ephemeral dust and the self and passion of the human world. They sit in the corner in the councils of existence, drunk with the praise and magnification of the Lord of love. They are unmoveable pillars bowing and genuflecting toward the house of God in the gathering of effulgence, encompassed by the beatific vision. They are as an impregnable fortress for the manifest religion and as the sweet waters of the Euphrates for the thirsty. They are the path of

salvation to the lost, the birds of thanksgiving in the gardens of divine unity, the radiant candles of the divinely learned in the councils devoted to God's uniqueness. They are the heirs of the prophets, privy to mysteries. They are the cloisters of the heaven of asylum for the leader of the hosts of the righteous at the convent dedicated to the mention of God. They consider seclusion from others attainment to the threshold of divinity. All others are as a lifeless body or a static mosaic on a wall. It is written in the Qur'án, "And God has led him astray out of a knowledge."

By its nature, human society needs rules and relationships. For without these ties, security and protection cannot be had, nor can security or prosperity. In their absence, the sacred honor of human beings is nowhere in evidence, and the beloved of hopes remains invisible. The country and the clime would never be populated, nor would cities and villages be arranged and embellished. The world would not be well-ordered. Human beings would not have been able to develop and grow. Repose for the soul and tranquillity for the conscience would not have been easy to attain. The splendors of human beings would never have become manifest, nor would the candle of divine bestowal have been lighted. The essence of human beings would not have been to discover the reality of the contingent world nor to become aware of the universal wisdom of God. The fine arts would not have become widespread, nor would the great inventions have been discovered. The earth would not have become the observatory of the heavens, and the astonishing technologies and wonders of the mind and thought would not have come to pass. The east and west of the world could not associate with one another, nor would steam power be able to unite scattered regions.

These rules and relationships, which form the foundation for the edifice of well-being and are as a shield of grace, are none other than the revealed law and a social order that can serve as a guarantor of prosperity, a force for purity, and a protector of human society. For society in general is like a single human being, insofar as both specific essences as well as different, contradictory and opposed elements coexist therein. Necessarily, it is susceptible to accidents and given to illnesses. When debilitating diseases befall it, a skillful physician is required to diagnose the malady, to examine its symptoms minutely, and to meditate upon the causes for it and the exigencies of nature. He will investigate principles, results, means and desiderata, and distinguish between particulars and universals. Therefore, he will think upon what the

precipitating circumstances of this disease might be, and the etiology of the malady. He will treat and cure it. From all this it is known that the healing cure and the sufficient medicine arises from the same reality of nature, from constitution and illness. In the same way, society and the edifice of the world are susceptible to essential infirmities and are under the sway of a variety of illnesses. Order, laws, and divine ordinances are like a salvational remedy, and a cure for the people.

Can a knowledgeable person imagine that he can, all by himself, identify the chronic illnesses of the world and come to know the variety of diseases that afflict contingent existence; that he can diagnose the maladies of the people of the earth or the painful condition of human society; or that he can uncover the hidden mysteries of ages and centuries? Could he discover the necessary relationships that derive from the realities of things, or legislate an order and laws that would constitute a quick cure or a complete remedy? There is not the slightest doubt that it is impossible. Thus, it is evident and has been established that the one who legislates ordinances, order, canon law and civil laws among humankind is God, the Mighty, the All-Knowing. For no one but the incomparable Lord is aware and informed of the realities of existence, the abstrusities of every being, the hidden mystery, and the recondite enigmas of eras and ages. For this reason, European law is still imperfect and incomplete, still in the realm of change and alteration or repeal and amendment even though it is in reality the result of several thousand years of thinking by constitutional scholars and political philosophers. For the learned of the past had not discovered the harmfulness of some laws, whereas later scholars became aware of it. Therefore, some laws are amended, some are reaffirmed, and some are altered.

Indeed, let us go to the heart of the matter. The revealed law is like the spirit of life, and civil government is like the power of salvation. The revealed law is like the shining sun, and the civil government is like April clouds. These two radiant stars are like two points in a constellation above the horizon of the contingent world that shine down on the people of the world. The one illuminates the realm of spirit, and the other renders the arena of the world a rose garden. One causes the sea of conscience to throw up pearls, the other makes the earth into a heavenly paradise. One renders a heap of dirt the envy of the heavens, the other makes the mansion of darkness into the delight of the world of lights. The cloud of mercy arises and rains down the

droplets of bounty, and the breaths of grace diffuse perfume and musk. The dawn breeze wafts and delivers a fragrance that nourishes the soul. On the earth the law of the highest heaven takes hold and the pleasing season of spring arrives. The divine spring-time bestows a wondrous freshness on the garden of the world, and the pre-existent sun of grandeur bestows a new radiance throughout the horizon of contingent being. Soiled dust becomes sandalwood and ambergris, and the blackened furnace becomes the rose bower of the All-Merciful and the garden of illumination. The point is this, that these two most great signs are like milk and honey, like two helping spirits in the ether, which aid one another. Thus, disregard for the one is a betrayal of the other, and slighting obedience to one is rebellion against the other.

The divine revealed law, which is the life of existence, the light of the visible world, and is consonant with the ultimate goal, requires an agency that will implement it, decisive means, a manifest protector, and a firm promulgator. There is no doubt that the wellspring of this mighty institution is the edifice of the state and the sword of rulership. When the one becomes strong and triumphant, the other becomes manifest and refulgent. Whenever the one achieves paramountcy and radiance, the other is rendered perspicuous and luminous. Thus, a just government is ipso facto a government in accordance with the divine law, and a well-ordered realm is an all-encompassing mercy. The glorious crown is wrapped in divine confirmations, and the regal diadem is adorned with the gems of heavenly bounty. In the manifest book, it is clearly said, "Say: O God, king of kings, you bestow rule on whomever you please, and take it away from whomever you please." Therefore, it is evident and obvious that this bestowal is a divine gift and a grant from the Lord. In the same way, the authentic saying of Muḥammad has it that "The ruler is the shadow of God on earth." Given these texts, which are like a mighty edifice, how clear is the falsehood of the words of any vexatious usurper, which are mere imagination unsupported by proof or evidence.

Note that in the blessed verse quoted above as well as in the clear saying of the Prophet, the statement is absolute rather than conditional, with generalized purport rather than being limited to a specific case. As for the station of the Imams and of the near ones at the threshold of grandeur, it is that of spiritual honor and glory. Their right is to the authority of the All-Merciful, and their crown of glory is the dust of the divine path. Their gleaming scepter is the lights of the

bounty of God. Their royal throne is the seat of hearts, and their exalted and great crown is in the kingdom of God. They are the monarchs of the world of spirit and heart, not that of water and clay. They are sovereigns of the realm of the placeless, not of the graveyards of the contingent world. No one can usurp or plunder this glorious station or this pre-existent grandeur.

With regard to the human world, on the contrary, their throne is a mat on the floor, and their place of honor is at the lowly row of shoes by the door. The apex of their honor lies in the lowest depths of servitude, and the palace of their sovereignty is a secluded corner. They see grand chateaux as dusty graves, and consider the world's pomp to be an unbearable hardship, looking upon wealth and riches as pain and torment. For them, unparalleled pageantry is but a hardship for the conscience and the soul. Like grateful birds in this realm of vainglory, they content themselves with a few kernels of grain. In the garden of divine unity, upon the branches of detachment, they eloquently sing the praises and glorification of the Living and pre-existent God. Indeed, this was the principle referred to in the sound tradition, "Rulership is the gift of the Lord of grandeur, and government is a mercy of the Lord of divinity." The ultimate conclusion is this, that complete rulers and just kings must, out of gratitude for this divine grace and these glorious marks of favor, be justice incarnate. They must be the personification of reason as a grace from the Unknowable, the very image of the sun of loving kindness, the cloud of compassion, the banner of God, and the sign of the All-Merciful.

A government that causes its people to flourish must be obeyed, and obedience to it is a cause of nearness to God. Divine justice requires the observation of mutual rights, and the divine precept commands the safeguarding of mutual justice. The subject has the right to expect from the ruler security and kind treatment. The one led has the right to expect that the leader will look on him with the eye of protection. The protection afforded by kings eventuates in the ruled being cared for, and the people take refuge in the safekeeping of the monarch. Justice is the path of every ruler who acts responsibly toward his subjects. For the subject, government is a secure fortress. The trustworthy shelter of rulership should be an impregnable sanctuary and an exalted asylum for the rights of the subjects. It must expend every effort in protecting and safeguarding the innocent, and must give all its attention to securing the honor and happiness

of its dependents and subjects. For the subject is a divine repository, and the poor are the trust of the Lord of Oneness.

In the same way, subjects are obliged to obey and show forth truthfulness. They must perform the duties of servanthood and be sincere in their service. Good intentions and gratitude are requisite, such that they pay their taxes with entire thankfulness and bear annual imposts with complete approbation. In order to further exalt the station of the monarchs, augment the power of the government, and increase the glory of the throne of rulership, they must sacrifice their property and their lives. For the benefit of these transactions, and the fruit of this obedience, accrues to the subjects in their entirety, such that all share and participate in this great good fortune and this noble station. Rights are mutual, and affairs require justice from all parties involved, and all are under the protection of the just Lord.

The state and the government are like the head and the brain, while the people and the subjects are like limbs and members. When the parts of the head and brain, which are the center of the senses and the faculties, and which manage the entire body and all the limbs, gain overwhelming power and complete influence, they then raise the standard of preservation and deploy means for defense. They attend to requisite needs, they prepare for desirable outcomes, and they arrange for the limbs and members to be completely at rest and relaxed. If their influence or power should wane, the body would become a wasteland and the corporeal realm would lack peace and security. A thousand kinds of affliction would beset the body, and the prosperity and repose of all its organs would disintegrate. Likewise, when the agencies of the government are influential and its commands prevail, the country is embellished and the subjects find repose. But if its power is shaken, then the edifice of prosperity and comfort for the subjects is shaken and razed. For the government is the requisite protector, guard, strengthener, governor, defender and prohibiter. When the government serves as the shepherd of its subjects and the subjects arise to fulfill the functions allotted to followers, the ties of conciliation are made strong and the means of binding them together are established. When the power of the country and the potency of the entire population are established and gathered together at a single point as one individual, there is no doubt that it attains the greatest influence. When the rays of the sun fall on the surface of a round, concave glass, all the heat is

concentrated in its center. In this way it becomes penetrating, concentrated, and capable of setting a fire, such that a hard, refractory body, even on that might ordinarily be nonflammable, will be finished if it is placed before this point. Note that wherever a government is resplendent or an empire is triumphant, its subjects subsist in the utmost honor and happiness. The dependents and ordinary folk in every great country are extremely well cared for, are advancing through all stages with the greatest rapidity, and are continuously exalted in their knowledge, wealth, commerce and industry. This principle is renowned and accepted among all the wise and learned, nor does any doubt attach thereto.

Divine friends! Listen with the ear of wisdom, and avoid the instigators of sedition. If you perceive in anyone the odor of turmoil, even though he might outwardly appear to be a person of some gravity or a peerless religious leader, know that he is rather an antichrist, and any opponent of the glorious law is an enemy of God. One who undermines the edifice is a breaker of the covenant and is barred from the threshold of the All-Merciful. A person who is well informed and insightful is like a radiant lamp, and is a cause of the prosperity and well-being of the macrocosm and the microcosm. Compelled by faith and the social compact, such a one strives for the good and for the repose of the people of the world.

Divine friends, the divine law has an era of youth, and the wondrous Cause has a springtime. The new age is the beginning of a first development. This age is the chosen age of the one God. The horizons of the contingent world are illumined by the attributes of the luminary of the apex of mystical insight. The east and the west of the globe are perfumed by the breaths of holiness. The face of the new creation is fair and comely, and the temple of the wondrous Cause is vigorous and fresh in the highest degree. Hearken with the ears of wisdom to the divine counsel and advice, and show forth a miracle with true intentions, sincerity of character, good disposition, and good fortune. Thus might it be established in world society and the council of nations, that they are the shining candle of the world of humanity and the rose in the garden of the divine realm. Mere speech bears no fruit, and the sapling of vain hopes remains barren. Action is required. Potentially, all things have talent. All things are exquisite. Some are easy to acquire, others are difficult to attain. But what good is mere potentiality? Human beings must be in

actuality the sign of the All-Merciful and the standard of the Lord. Peace be upon those who follow the guidance.