

O thou dear handmaid of God! Praise thou God, because...

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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O thou dear handmaid of God! Praise thou God, because thou art favored at His Holy Threshold, and cherished in the Kingdom of His might. Thou art the head of an assembly which is the very imprint of the Company on high, the mirror image of the all-glorious realm. Strive thou with heart and soul, in prayerful humility and self-effacement, to uphold the Law of God and spread His sweet savors abroad. Endeavor thou to become the true president of the assemblies of spiritual souls, and a companion to the angels in the realm of the All-Merciful.

Thou didst ask as to the tenth to the seventeenth verses of the twenty-first chapter of Saint John the Divine's Revelation. Know thou that according to mathematical principles, the firmament of this earth's brilliant daystar hath been divided among twelve constellations, which they call the twelve zodiacal signs. In the same way, the Sun of Truth shineth out from and sheddeth its bounties through twelve stations of holiness, and by these heavenly signs are meant those stainless and unsullied personages who are the very wellsprings of sanctity, and the dawning-points proclaiming the oneness of God.

Consider how in the days of the Interlocutor (Moses), there were twelve holy beings who were leaders of the twelve tribes; and likewise in the dispensation of the Spirit (Christ), note that there were twelve Apostles gathered within the sheltering shade of that supernal Light, and from those splendid dawning-points the Sun of Truth shone forth even as the sun in the sky. Again, in the days of Muḥammad, observe that there were twelve dawning-points of holiness, the manifestors of God's confirming help. Such is the way of it.

Accordingly did Saint John the Divine tell of twelve gates in his vision, and twelve foundations. By "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" is meant the holy Law of God, and this is set forth in many Tablets and still to be



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read in the Scriptures of the Prophets of the past: for instance, that Jerusalem was seen going out into the wilderness.

The meaning of the passage is that this heavenly Jerusalem hath twelve gates, through which the blessed enter into the City of God. These gates are souls who are as guiding stars, as portals of knowledge and grace; and within these gates there stand twelve angels. By “angel” is meant the power of the confirmations of God — that the candle of God’s confirming power shineth out from the lamp-niche of those souls — meaning that every one of those beings will be granted the most vehement confirming support.

These twelve gates surround the entire world, that is they are a shelter for all creatures. And further, these twelve gates are the foundation of the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and on each one of these foundations is written the name of one of the Apostles of Christ. That is to say, each one maketh manifest the perfections, the joyous message, and the excellency of that holy Being.

In brief, the Scripture saith: “And he that talked with me had a rod made out of gold, that is, a measure, wherewith he measured the city and the gates thereof and the towers thereof.” The meaning is that certain personages guided the people with a staff grown out of the earth, and shepherded them with a rod, like unto the rod of Moses. Others trained and shepherded the people with a rod of iron, as in the Dispensation of Muḥammad. And in this present cycle, because it is the mightiest of Dispensations, that rod grown out of the vegetable kingdom and that rod of iron will be transformed into a rod of purest gold, taken from out the endless treasure houses in the Kingdom of the Lord. By this rod will the people be trained.

Note well the difference: at one time the Teachings of God were as a staff, and by this means the Holy Scriptures were spread abroad, the Law of God was promulgated and His Faith established. Then followed a time when the staff of the true Shepherd was as iron. And today, in this new and splendid age, the rod is even as pure gold. How wide is the difference here! Know, then, how much ground hath been gained by the Law of God and His Teachings in this dispensation, how they have reached such heights that they far transcend the dispensations gone before: truly this rod is purest gold, while those of other days were of iron and wood.

This is a brief answer that hath been written for thee, because there was no time for more. It is certain that thou wilt forgive me. The handmaids of God must rise to such a station that they will, by themselves and unaided, comprehend these inner meanings, and be able to expound at full length every single word; a station where, out of the truth of their inmost hearts, a spring of wisdom will well up, and jet forth even as a fountain that leapeth from its own original source.

