

Napoleon III

Bahá'u'lláh

Original English



Napoleon III

O King of Paris!¹ Tell the priests to ring the bells no longer. By God, the True One! The Most Mighty Bell hath appeared in the form of Him Who is the Most Great Name, and the fingers of the Will of Thy Lord, the Most Exalted, the Most High, toll it out in the heaven of Immortality in His name, the All-Glorious. Thus have the mighty verses of Thy Lord been again sent down unto thee, that thou mayest arise to remember God, the Creator of earth and heaven, in these days when all the tribes of the earth have mourned, and the foundations of the cities have trembled, and the dust of irreligion hath enwrapped all men, except such as God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, was pleased to spare. Say: He Who is the Unconstrained is come, in the clouds of light, that He may quicken the world with the breezes of His name, the Most Merciful, and unify its peoples, and gather all men around this Table which hath been sent down from heaven. Beware that ye deny not the favour of God after it hath been sent down unto you. Better is this for you than that which ye possess; for that which is yours perisheth, whilst that which is with God endureth. He, in truth, ordaineth what He pleaseth. Verily, the breezes of forgiveness have been wafted from the direction of your Lord, the God of Mercy; whoso turneth thereunto shall be cleansed of his sins, and of all pain and sickness. Happy the man that hath turned towards them, and woe betide him that hath turned aside.

¹ This is Bahá'u'lláh's second Tablet addressed to the French Emperor. An earlier Tablet was revealed in Adrianople.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

Wert thou to incline thine inner ear unto all created things, thou wouldst hear: "The Ancient of Days is come in His great glory!" Everything celebrateth the praise of its Lord. Some have known God and remember Him; others remember Him, yet know Him not. Thus have We set down Our decree in a perspicuous Tablet.

Give ear, O King, unto the Voice that calleth from the Fire which burneth in this verdant Tree, on this Sinai which hath been raised above the hallowed and snow-white Spot, beyond the Everlasting City; "Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful!" We, in truth, have sent Him Whom We aided with the Holy Spirit that He may announce unto you this Light that hath shone forth from the horizon of the Will of your Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, and Whose signs have been revealed in the West. Set your faces towards Him on this Day which God hath exalted above all other days, and whereon the All-Merciful hath shed the splendour of His effulgent glory upon all who are in heaven and all who are on earth. Arise thou to serve God and help His Cause. He, verily, will assist thee with the hosts of the seen and unseen, and will set thee king over all that whereon the sun riseth. Thy Lord, in truth, is the All-Powerful, the Almighty.

The breezes of the Most Merciful have passed over all created things; happy the man that hath discovered their fragrance, and set himself towards them with a sound heart. Attire thy temple with the ornament of My Name, and thy tongue with remembrance of Me, and thine heart with love for Me, the Almighty, the Most High. We have desired for thee naught except that which is better for thee than what thou dost possess and all the treasures of the earth. Thy Lord, verily, is knowing, informed of all. Arise, in My Name, amongst My servants, and say: "O ye peoples of the earth! Turn yourselves towards Him Who hath turned towards you. He, verily, is the Face of God amongst you, and His Testimony and His Guide unto you. He hath come to you with signs which none can produce." The voice of the Burning Bush is raised in the midmost heart of the world, and the Holy Spirit calleth aloud among the nations: "Lo, the Desired One is come with manifest dominion!"

O King! The stars of the heaven of knowledge have fallen, they who seek to establish the truth of My Cause through the things they possess, and who make mention of God in My Name. And yet, when I came unto them in My glory, they turned aside. They, indeed, are of the fallen. This is,

truly, that which the Spirit of God hath announced, when He came with truth unto you, He with Whom the Jewish doctors disputed, till at last they perpetrated what hath made the Holy Spirit to lament, and the tears of them that have near access to God to flow. Consider how a Pharisee who had worshipped God for seventy years repudiated the Son when He appeared, whereas one who had committed adultery gained admittance into the Kingdom. Thus doth the Pen admonish thee as bidden by the Eternal King, that thou mayest be apprised of what came to pass aforetime and be reckoned in this day among them that truly believe.

Say: O concourse of monks! Seclude not yourselves in your churches and cloisters. Come ye out of them by My leave, and busy, then, yourselves with what will profit you and others. Thus commandeth you He Who is the Lord of the Day of Reckoning. Seclude yourselves in the stronghold of My love. This, truly, is the seclusion that befitteth you, could ye but know it. He that secludeth himself in his house is indeed as one dead. It behoveth man to show forth that which will benefit mankind. He that bringeth forth no fruit is fit for the fire. Thus admonisheth you your Lord; He, verily, is the Mighty, the Bountiful. Enter ye into wedlock, that after you another may arise in your stead. We, verily, have forbidden you lechery, and not that which is conducive to fidelity. Have ye clung unto the promptings of your nature, and cast behind your backs the statutes of God? Fear ye God, and be not of the foolish. But for man, who, on My earth, would remember Me, and how could My attributes and My names be revealed? Reflect, and be not of them that have shut themselves out as by a veil from Him, and were of those that are fast asleep. He that married not could find no place wherein to abide, nor where to lay His head, by reason of what the hands of the treacherous had wrought. His holiness consisted not in the things ye have believed and imagined, but rather in the things which belong unto Us. Ask, that ye may be made aware of His station which hath been exalted above the vain imaginings of all the peoples of the earth. Blessed are they that understand.

O King! We heard the words thou didst utter in answer to the Czar of Russia, concerning the decision made regarding the war.² Thy Lord, verily, knoweth, is informed of all. Thou didst say: "I lay asleep upon my couch, when the cry of the oppressed, who were drowned in the Black Sea, wakened me." This is what We heard thee say, and, verily, thy Lord is witness unto what I say. We

² The Crimean War (1853–1856).

testify that that which wakened thee was not their cry but the promptings of thine own passions, for We tested thee, and found thee wanting. Comprehend the meaning of My words, and be thou of the discerning. It is not Our wish to address thee words of condemnation, out of regard for the dignity We conferred upon thee in this mortal life. We, verily, have chosen courtesy, and made it the true mark of such as are nigh unto Him. Courtesy is, in truth, a raiment which fitteth all men, whether young or old. Well is it with him that adorneth his temple therewith, and woe unto him who is deprived of this great bounty. Hadst thou been sincere in thy words, thou wouldst have not cast behind thy back the Book of God, when it was sent unto thee by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise. We have proved thee through it, and found thee other than that which thou didst profess. Arise, and make amends for that which escaped thee. Erelong the world and all that thou possesseth will perish, and the kingdom will remain unto God, thy Lord and the Lord of thy fathers of old. It behoveth thee not to conduct thine affairs according to the dictates of thy desires. Fear the sighs of this Wronged One, and shield Him from the darts of such as act unjustly.

For what thou hast done, thy kingdom shall be thrown into confusion, and thine empire shall pass from thine hands, as a punishment for that which thou hast wrought.³ Then wilt thou know how thou hast plainly erred. Commotions shall seize all the people in that land, unless thou arisest to help this Cause, and followest Him Who is the Spirit of God in this, the Straight Path. Hath thy pomp made thee proud? By My Life! It shall not endure; nay, it shall soon pass away, unless thou holdest fast to this firm Cord. We see abasement hastening after thee, whilst thou art of the heedless. It behoveth thee when thou hearest His Voice calling from the seat of glory to cast away all that thou possesseth, and cry out: "Here am I, O Lord of all that is in heaven and all that is on earth!"

O King! We were in 'Iráq, when the hour of parting arrived. At the bidding of the King of Islám⁴ We set Our steps in his direction. Upon Our arrival, there befell Us at the hands of the malicious that which the books of the world can never adequately recount. Thereupon the inmates of Paradise, and they that dwell within the retreats of holiness, lamented; and yet the people are

³ Within the year Napoleon III was defeated at the Battle of Sedan (1870) and sent into exile.

⁴ The Sultán of Turkey.

wrapped in a thick veil! Say: Do ye cavil at Him Who hath come unto you bearing the clear evidence of God and His proof, the testimony of God and His signs? These things are not from Himself; nay, rather they proceed from the One Who hath raised Him up, sent Him forth through the power of truth, and made Him to be a lamp unto all mankind.

More grievous became Our plight from day to day, nay, from hour to hour, until they took Us forth from Our prison and made Us, with glaring injustice, enter the Most Great Prison. And if anyone ask them: "For what crime were they imprisoned?," they would answer and say: "They, verily, sought to supplant the Faith with a new religion!" If that which is ancient be what ye prefer, wherefore, then, have ye discarded that which hath been set down in the Torah and the Evangel? Clear it up, O men! By My life! There is no place for you to flee to in this day. If this be My crime, then Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, committed it before Me, and before Him He Who was the Spirit of God, and yet earlier He Who conversed with God. And if My sin be this, that I have exalted the Word of God and revealed His Cause, then indeed am I the greatest of sinners! Such a sin I will not barter for the kingdoms of earth and heaven.

Upon Our arrival at this Prison, We purposed to transmit to the kings the messages of their Lord, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Though We have transmitted to them, in several Tablets, that which We were commanded, yet We do it once again as a token of God's grace. Perchance they may recognize the Lord, Who hath come down in the clouds with manifest sovereignty.

As My tribulations multiplied, so did My love for God and for His Cause increase, in such wise that all that befell Me from the hosts of the wayward was powerless to deter Me from My purpose. Should they hide Me away in the depths of the earth, yet would they find Me riding aloft on the clouds, and calling out unto God, the Lord of strength and of might. I have offered Myself up in the way of God, and I yearn after tribulations in My love for Him, and for the sake of His good pleasure. Unto this bear witness the woes which now afflict Me, the like of which no other man hath suffered. Every single hair of Mine head calleth out that which the Burning Bush uttered on Sinai, and each vein of My body invoketh God and saith: "O would I had been severed in Thy path, so that the world might be quickened, and all its peoples be united!" Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

Know of a truth that your subjects are God's trust amongst you. Watch ye, therefore, over them as ye watch over your own selves. Beware that ye allow not wolves to become the shepherds of the fold, or pride and conceit to deter you from turning unto the poor and the desolate. Wert thou to quaff the mystic Wine of everlasting life from the chalice of the words of thy Lord, the All-Merciful, thou wouldst be enabled to forsake all that thou dost possess and to proclaim My Name before all mankind. Cleanse then thy soul with the waters of detachment. Verily, this is the Remembrance that hath shone forth above the horizon of creation, which shall purge thy soul from the dross of the world. Abandon thy palaces to the people of the graves, and thine empire to whosoever desireth it, and turn, then, unto the Kingdom. This, verily, is what God hath chosen for thee, wert thou of them that turn unto Him. They that have failed to turn unto the Countenance of God in this Revelation are indeed bereft of life. They move as bidden by their own selfish desires, and are in truth accounted among the dead. Shouldst thou desire to bear the weight of thy dominion, bear it then to aid the Cause of thy Lord. Glorified be this station which whoever attaineth thereunto hath attained unto all good that proceedeth from Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Arise thou, in My name, above the horizon of renunciation, and set, then, thy face towards the Kingdom, at the bidding of thy Lord, the Lord of strength and of might. Through the power of My sovereignty stand before the inhabitants of the world and say: "O people! The Day is come, and the fragrances of God have been wafted over the whole of creation. They that have turned away from His Face are the helpless victims of their corrupt inclinations. They are indeed of them that have gone astray."

Adorn the body of Thy kingdom with the raiment of My name, and arise, then, to teach My Cause. Better is this for thee than that which thou possessest. God will, thereby, exalt thy name among all the kings. Potent is He over all things. Walk thou amongst men in the name of God, and by the power of His might, that thou mayest show forth His signs amidst the peoples of the earth. Burn thou brightly with the flame of this undying Fire which the All-Merciful hath ignited in the midmost heart of creation, that through thee the heat of His love may be kindled within the hearts of His favoured ones. Follow in My way and enrapture the hearts of men through remembrance of Me, the Almighty, the Most Exalted.

Say: He from whom, in this day, the sweet savours of the remembrance of His Lord, the All-Merciful, have not been diffused, is indeed unworthy of the station of man. He, verily, is of them that have followed their own desires, and shall ere long find himself in grievous loss. Doth it behove you to relate yourselves to Him Who is the God of mercy, and yet commit the things which the Evil One hath committed? Nay, by the Beauty of Him Who is the All-Glorified! could ye but know it. Purge your hearts from love of the world, and your tongues from calumny, and your limbs from whatsoever may withhold you from drawing nigh unto God, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Say: By the world is meant that which turneth you aside from Him Who is the Dawning-Place of Revelation, and inclineth you unto that which is unprofitable unto you. Verily, the thing that deterreth you, in this day, from God is worldliness in its essence. Eschew it, and approach the Most Sublime Vision, this shining and resplendent Seat. Blessed is he who alloweth nothing whatsoever to intervene between him and his Lord. No harm, assuredly, can befall him if he partaketh with justice of the benefits of this world, inasmuch as We have created all things for such of Our servants as truly believe in God.

Should your words, O people, be at variance with your deeds, what then shall distinguish you from those who profess their faith in the Lord, their God, and yet, when He came down to them overshadowed with clouds, rejected Him and waxed proud before God, the Incomparable, the Omniscient? Shed not the blood of anyone, O people, neither judge ye anyone unjustly. Thus have ye been commanded by Him Who knoweth, Who is informed of all. They that commit disorders in the land after it hath been well ordered, these indeed have outstepped the bounds that have been set in the Book. Wretched shall be the abode of the transgressors!

God hath prescribed unto everyone the duty of teaching His Cause. Whoever ariseth to discharge this duty, must needs, ere he proclaimeth His Message, adorn himself with the ornament of an upright and praiseworthy character, so that his words may attract the hearts of such as are receptive to his call. Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers. Thus doth God instruct you. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

They who exhort others unto justice, while themselves committing iniquity, stand accused of falsehood by the inmates of the Kingdom and by those who circle round the throne of their Lord, the Almighty, the Beneficent, for that which their tongues have uttered. Commit not, O

people, that which dishonoureth your name and the fair name of the Cause of God amongst men. Beware lest ye approach that which your minds abhor. Fear God and follow not in the footsteps of them that are gone astray. Deal not treacherously with the substance of your neighbour. Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. He, verily, will bestow upon you the double of what ye possess. He, in truth, is the All-Bounteous, the Most Generous.

Say: We have ordained that our Cause be taught through the power of utterance. Beware lest ye dispute idly with anyone. Whoso ariseth wholly for the sake of his Lord to teach His Cause, the Holy Spirit shall strengthen him and inspire him with that which will illumine the heart of the world, how much more the hearts of those who seek Him. O people of Bahá!⁵ Subdue the citadels of men's hearts with the swords of wisdom and of utterance. They that dispute, as prompted by their desires, are indeed wrapped in a palpable veil. Say: The sword of wisdom is hotter than summer heat, and sharper than blades of steel, if ye do but understand. Draw it forth in My name and through the power of My might, and conquer then with it the cities of the hearts of them that have secluded themselves in the stronghold of their corrupt desires. Thus biddeth you the Pen of the All-Glorious, whilst seated beneath the swords of the wayward.

If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin. He, verily, is the Concealer, the Lord of grace abounding. O ye rich ones on earth! If ye encounter one who is poor, treat him not disdainfully. Reflect upon that whereof ye were created. Every one of you was created of a sorry germ.⁶ It behoveth you to observe truthfulness, whereby your temples shall be adorned, your names uplifted, your stations exalted amidst men, and a mighty recompense assured for you before God.

Give ear, O peoples of the earth, unto that which the Pen of the Lord of all nations commandeth you. Know ye of a certainty that the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation in the Law that hath branched out from this Most Great Ocean. Haste ye thereunto at Our behest. We, verily, ordain as We please. Regard ye the world as a man's body,

⁵ Followers of Bahá'u'lláh.

⁶ cf. Qur'án 77:20; 32:8.

which is afflicted with divers ailments, and the recovery of which dependeth upon the harmonizing of all of its component elements. Gather ye around that which We have prescribed unto you, and walk not in the ways of such as create dissension.

All feasts have attained their consummation in the two Most Great Festivals, and in two other Festivals that fall on the twin days — the first of the Most Great Festivals being those days whereon God shed the effulgent glory of His most excellent Names upon all who are in heaven and on earth, and the second being that day on which We raised up the One Who announced unto the people the glad tidings of this Great Announcement.⁷ Thus hath it been set down in the Book by Him Who is the Mighty, the Powerful. On other than these four consummate days, engage ye in your daily occupations, and withhold yourselves not from the pursuit of your trades and crafts. Thus hath the command been issued and the law gone forth from Him Who is your Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Say: O concourse of priests and monks! Eat ye of that which God hath made lawful unto you and do not shun meat. God hath, as a token of His grace, granted you leave to partake thereof save during a brief period. He, verily, is the Mighty, the Beneficent. Forsake all that ye possess and hold fast unto that which God hath purposed. This is that which profiteth you, if ye be of them that comprehend. We have ordained a fast of nineteen days in the most temperate of the seasons, and have in this resplendent and luminous Dispensation relieved you from more than this. Thus have We set forth and made clear unto you that which ye are bidden to observe, that ye may follow the commandments of God and be united in that which the Almighty, the All-Wise, hath appointed unto you. He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. Haste ye to win your share of God's good grace and mercy in this Day that eclipseth all other created Days. How great the felicity that awaiteth the man that forsaketh all he hath in a desire to obtain the things of God! Such a man, We testify, is among God's blessed ones.

⁷ The two Most Great Festivals are the Festival of Riḍván, during which Bahá'u'lláh first proclaimed His Mission, and the Declaration of the Báb. The "twin days" refer to the Birthdays of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. cf. Kitáb-i-Aqdas, ¶1110.

O King! Bear thou witness unto that which God hath Himself and for Himself borne witness ere the creation of earth and heaven, that there is none other God but Me, the One, the Single, the Most Exalted, the Incomparable, the Inaccessible. Arise with the utmost steadfastness in the Cause of thy Lord, the All-Glorious. Thus hast thou been instructed in this wondrous Tablet. We, verily, have desired naught for thee save that which is better for thee than all that is on earth. Unto this testify all created things and beyond them this perspicuous Book.

Meditate on the world and the state of its people. He, for Whose sake the world was called into being, hath been imprisoned in the most desolate of cities,⁸ by reason of that which the hands of the wayward have wrought. From the horizon of His prison-city He summoneth mankind unto the Dayspring of God, the Exalted, the Great. Exuldest thou over the treasures thou dost possess, knowing they shall perish? Rejoicest thou in that thou rulest a span of earth, when the whole world, in the estimation of the people of Bahá, is worth as much as the black in the eye of a dead ant? Abandon it unto such as have set their affections upon it, and turn thou unto Him Who is the Desire of the world. Whither are gone the proud and their palaces? Gaze thou into their tombs, that thou mayest profit by this example, inasmuch as We made it a lesson unto every beholder. Were the breezes of Revelation to seize thee, thou wouldst flee the world, and turn unto the Kingdom, and wouldst expend all thou possessest, that thou mayest draw nigh unto this sublime Vision.

We behold the generality of mankind worshipping names and exposing themselves, as thou dost witness, to dire perils in the mere hope of perpetuating their names, whilst every perceiving soul testifieth that after death one's name shall avail him nothing except insofar as it beareth a relationship unto God, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Thus have their vain imaginings taken hold of them in requital for that which their hands have wrought. Consider the pettiness of men's minds. They seek with utmost exertion that which profiteth them not, and yet wert thou to ask of them: "Is there any advantage in that which ye desire?," thou wouldst find them sorely perplexed. Were a fair-minded soul to be found, he would reply: "Nay, by the Lord of the worlds!" Such is the condition of the people and of that which they possess. Leave them in their folly and

⁸ 'Akká.

turn thy sight unto God. This is in truth that which beseemeth thee. Hearken then unto the counsel of thy Lord, and say: Lauded art Thou, O God of all who are in heaven and on earth!

