

Náşiri'd-Dín Sháh / Lawḥ-i-Sultán

Bahá'u'lláh

Original English



Náşiri'd-Dín Sháh / Lawḥ-i-Sultán

O King of the Earth! Harken unto the call of this Vassal: Verily, I am a Servant Who hath believed in God and in His signs, and have sacrificed Myself in His path. Unto this bear witness the woes which now beset Me, woes the like of which no man hath ever before sustained. My Lord, the All-Knowing, testifieth to the truth of My words. I have summoned the people unto none save God, thy Lord and the Lord of the worlds, and have endured for love of Him such afflictions as the eye of creation hath never beheld. To this testify those whom the veils of human fancy have not deterred from turning unto the Most Sublime Vision, and, beyond them, He with Whom is the knowledge of all things in the preserved Tablet.

Whensoever the clouds of tribulation have rained down the darts of affliction in the path of God, the Lord of all names, I have hastened to meet them, as every fair-minded and discerning soul shall attest. How many the nights which found the beasts of the field resting in their lairs, and the birds of the air lying in their nests, while this Youth languished in chains and fetters with none to aid or succour Him!

Call Thou to mind God's mercy unto Thee; how, when Thou wert imprisoned with a number of other souls, He delivered Thee and aided Thee with the hosts of the seen and the unseen, until the King sent Thee to 'Iráq after We had disclosed unto him that Thou wert not of the sowers of sedition. Those who follow their corrupt desires and lay aside the fear of God are indeed in grievous error. They that spread disorder in the land, shed the blood of men, and wrongfully consume the substance of others — We, verily, are clear of them, and We beseech God not to associate Us with them, whether in this world or in the world to come, unless they should repent unto Him. He, verily, is of those who show mercy the most merciful.

Whoso turneth towards God must distinguish himself from others by his every deed, and follow that which hath been enjoined upon him in the Book. Thus hath it been decreed in a lucid Tablet. Those, however, who cast behind their backs the commandments of God, and follow the prompting of their own desires, are, verily, in grievous error.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

O King! I adjure thee by thy Lord, the All-Merciful, to look upon thy servants with the glances of the eye of thy favour, and to treat them with justice, that God may treat thee with mercy. Potent is thy Lord to do as He pleaseth. The world, with all its abasement and glory, shall pass away, and the kingdom will remain unto God, the Most Exalted, the All-Knowing.

Say: He hath kindled the lamp of utterance, and feedeth it with the oil of wisdom and understanding. Too high is thy Lord, the All-Merciful, for aught in the universe to resist His Faith. He revealeth what He pleaseth through the power of His sovereign might, and protecteth it with a host of His well-favoured angels. He is supreme over His servants and exerciseth undisputed dominion over His creation. He, verily, is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list. The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding. His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me. Can anyone speak forth of his own accord that for which all men, both high and low, will protest against him? Nay, by Him Who taught the Pen the eternal mysteries, save him whom the grace of the Almighty, the All-Powerful, hath strengthened.

The Pen of the Most High addresseth Me, saying: Fear not. Relate unto His Majesty the Sháh that which befell thee. His heart, verily, is between the fingers of thy Lord, the God of Mercy, that haply the sun of justice and bounty may shine forth above the horizon of his heart. Thus hath the decree been irrevocably fixed by Him Who is the All-Wise.

Look upon this Youth, O King, with the eyes of justice; judge thou, then, with truth concerning what hath befallen Him. Of a verity, God hath made thee His shadow amongst men, and the sign of His power unto all that dwell on earth. Judge thou between Us and them that have wronged Us without proof and without an enlightening Book. They that surround thee love thee for their own sakes, whereas this Youth loveth thee for thine own sake, and hath had no desire except to draw thee nigh

unto the seat of grace, and to turn thee toward the right hand of justice. Thy Lord beareth witness unto that which I declare.

O King! Wert thou to incline thine ear unto the shrill of the Pen of Glory and the cooing of the Dove of Eternity which, on the branches of the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing, uttereth praises to God, the Maker of all names and Creator of earth and heaven, thou wouldst attain unto a station from which thou wouldst behold in the world of being naught save the effulgence of the Adored One, and wouldst regard thy sovereignty as the most contemptible of thy possessions, abandoning it to whosoever might desire it, and setting thy face toward the Horizon aglow with the light of His countenance. Neither wouldst thou ever be willing to bear the burden of dominion save for the purpose of helping thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High. Then would the Concourse on high bless thee. O how excellent is this most sublime station, couldst thou ascend thereunto through the power of a sovereignty recognized as derived from the Name of God!

Amongst the people are those who allege that this Youth hath had no purpose but to perpetuate His name, whilst others claim that He hath sought for Himself the vanities of the world — this, notwithstanding that never, throughout all My days, have I found a place of safety, be it to the extent of a single foothold. At all times have I been immersed in an ocean of tribulations, whose full measure none can fathom but God. He, truly, is aware of what I say. How many the days in which My loved ones have been sorely shaken by reason of My afflictions, and how many the nights during which My kindred, fearing for My life, have bitterly wept and lamented! And this none can deny save them that are bereft of truthfulness. Is it conceivable that He Who expecteth to lose His life at any moment should seek after worldly vanities? How very strange the imaginings of those who speak as prompted by their own caprices, and who wander distractedly in the wilderness of self and passion! Erelong shall they be called upon to account for their words, and on that day they shall find none to befriend or help them.

And amongst the people are those who claim that He hath disbelieved in God — yet every member of My body testifieth that there is none other God but Him; that those Whom He hath raised up in truth and sent forth with His guidance are the Manifestations of His most excellent names, the Revealers of His most exalted attributes, and the Repositories of His Revelation in the kingdom of creation; that through them the Proof of God hath been perfected unto all else but Him, the standard of Divine Unity hath been raised, and the sign of sanctity hath been made manifest; and that through them every soul hath found a path unto the Lord of the Throne on high. We testify that there is none other God but Him, that from everlasting He was alone with none else besides Him, and that He shall be unto everlasting what He hath ever been. Too high is the All-Merciful for the hearts of those who have recognized Him to apprehend His true nature, or for the minds of men to hope to fathom His essence. He verily is exalted above the understanding of anyone besides

Himself, and sanctified beyond the comprehension of all else save Him. From all eternity He hath been independent of the entire creation.

Remember the days in which the Sun of Baḥá¹ shone forth above the horizon of the Will of thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High, and recall how the divines of that age turned away from Him, and the learned contended with Him, that haply thou mayest apprehend that which, in this day, remaineth concealed behind the veils of glory. So grievous became His plight on every side that He instructed His companions to disperse. Thus was the decree made manifest from the heaven of divine glory. Remember, furthermore, how, when one of these same companions came before the King of Ethiopia and recited unto him a Súrih of the Qur'án, he declared to his attendants: "This, truly, hath been revealed by One Who is All-Knowing and All-Wise. Whoso acknowledgeth the truth, and believeth in the teachings of Jesus, can in no wise deny what hath been recited. We, verily, bear witness to its truth, even as we bear witness to the truth of that which we possess of the Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting."

I swear by God, O King! Wert thou to incline thine ear to the melodies of that Nightingale which warbleth in manifold accents upon the mystic bough as bidden by thy Lord, the All-Merciful, thou wouldst cast away thy sovereignty and set thy face towards this Scene of transcendent glory, above whose horizon shineth the Book of the Dawntide,² and wouldst expend all that thou possessest in thine eagerness to obtain the things of God. Then wouldst thou find thyself raised up to the summit of exaltation and glory, and elevated to the pinnacle of majesty and independence. Thus hath the decree been recorded in the Mother Book by the Pen of the All-Merciful. Of what avail are the things which are yours today and which tomorrow others shall possess? Choose for thyself that which God hath chosen for His elect, and God shall grant thee a mighty sovereignty in His Kingdom. We beseech God to aid thy Majesty to hearken unto that Word whose radiance hath enveloped the whole world, and to protect thee from such as have strayed far from the court of His presence.

Glory be to Thee, O Lord My God! How many the heads which were raised aloft on spears in Thy path, and how many the breasts which were made the target of arrows for the sake of Thy good pleasure! How many the hearts that have been lacerated for the exaltation of Thy Word and the promotion of Thy Cause, and how many the eyes that have wept sore for love of Thee! I implore Thee, O Thou Who art the King of kings and the Pitier of the downtrodden, by Thy Most Great Name which Thou hast made the Dawning-Place of Thy most excellent names and the Dayspring of Thy most exalted attributes, to remove the veils that have come in between Thee and Thy creatures and debarred them from turning unto the horizon of Thy Revelation. Cause them, then, O

¹ Muḥammad.

² cf. Qur'án 17:78.

My God, by Thy most exalted Word, to turn from the left hand of oblivion and delusion unto the right hand of knowledge and certitude, that they may know what Thou hast purposed for them through Thy bounty and grace, and may set their faces towards Him Who is the Manifestation of Thy Cause and the Revealer of Thy signs.

O My God! Thou art the All-Bountiful, Whose grace is infinite. Withhold not Thy servants from the most mighty Ocean, which Thou hast made the repository of the pearls of Thy knowledge and Thy wisdom, and turn them not away from Thy gate, which Thou hast opened wide before all who are in Thy heaven and all who are on Thy earth. O Lord! Leave them not to themselves, for they understand not and flee from that which is better for them than all that Thou hast created upon Thine earth. Cast upon them, O My God, the glances of the eye of Thy favour and bounty, and deliver them from self and passion, that they may draw nigh unto Thy most exalted Horizon, taste the sweetness of Thy remembrance, and delight in that bread which Thou hast sent down from the heaven of Thy Will and the firmament of Thy grace. From everlasting Thy bounty hath embraced the entire creation and Thy mercy hath surpassed all things. No God is there but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

Glorified art Thou, O Lord My God! Thou well knowest that Mine heart hath melted in Thy Cause, and that My blood so boileth in My veins with the fire of Thy love that every drop of it proclaimeth with its inner tongue: "Grant that I may be spilt upon the ground for Thy sake, O my Lord, the Most High, that from it there may spring forth that which Thou hast purposed in Thy Tablets and hast hidden from the eyes of all, except such servants as have tasted of the crystal stream of knowledge from the hands of Thy grace and quaffed the soft-flowing waters of understanding from the cup of Thy bestowal."

Thou knowest, O My God, that in all Mine affairs I have sought only to obey Thy bidding, that in Mine every utterance I have wished only to extol Thy praise, and that in whatsoever hath proceeded from My Pen I have purposed only to win Thy good pleasure and to reveal that which Thou hast enjoined upon Me through Thy sovereignty.

Thou beholdest Me, O My God, as one bewildered in Thy land. Whenssoever I make mention of that which Thou hast enjoined upon Me, Thy creatures cavil at Me; yet were I to neglect that which Thou hast bidden Me observe, I would deserve the scourge of Thine anger and would be far removed from the meadows of Thy nearness. Nay, by Thy glory! I have set My face towards Thy good pleasure, and turned away from the things whereon Thy servants have set their affections. I have embraced all that is with Thee, and forsaken all that might lead Me away from the retreats of Thy nearness and the heights of Thy glory. I swear by Thy might! With Thy love in My heart nothing can ever alarm Me, and in the path of Thy good pleasure all the world's afflictions can in no wise dismay Me. All this, however, proceedeth from Thy power and Thy might, from Thy bounty and Thy grace, and is not of Mine own deserving.

This is an Epistle, O My God, which I have purposed to send unto the King. Thou knowest that I have wished of him naught but that he should show forth justice to Thy servants and extend his favours unto the people of Thy kingdom. For Myself I have desired only what Thou didst desire, and through Thy succour I wish for naught save that which Thou wishest. Perish the soul that seeketh from Thee aught save Thyself! I swear by Thy glory! Thy good pleasure is my dearest wish, and Thy purpose My highest hope. Have mercy, O My God, upon this poor creature Who hath clung unto the hem of Thy riches, and this suppliant soul Who calleth upon Thee, saying, "Thou art, verily, the Lord of might and glory!" Assist Thou, O My God, His Majesty the Sháh to keep Thy statutes amidst Thy servants and to manifest Thy justice amongst Thy creatures, that he may treat this people as he treateth others. Thou art, in truth, the God of power, of glory and wisdom.

By the leave and permission of the King of the Age, this Servant journeyed from the Seat of Sovereignty³ to 'Iráq, and dwelt for twelve years in that land. Throughout the entire course of this period no account of Our condition was submitted to the court of thy presence, and no representation ever made to foreign powers. Placing Our whole trust in God, We resided in that land until there came to 'Iráq a certain official⁴ who, upon his arrival, undertook to harass this poor company of exiles. Day after day, at the instigation of some of the outwardly learned and of other individuals, he would stir up trouble for these servants, although they had at no time committed any act detrimental to the state and its people or contrary to the rules and customs of the citizens of the realm.

Fearing lest the actions of these transgressors should produce some outcome at variance with thy world-adorning judgement, this Servant despatched a brief account of the matter to Mírzá Sa'íd Kẖán⁵ at the Foreign Ministry, so that he might submit it to the royal presence and that whatever thou shouldst please to decree in this respect might be obeyed. A long while elapsed, and no decree was issued. Finally matters came to such a pass that there loomed the threat of imminent strife and bloodshed. Of necessity, therefore, and for the protection of the servants of God, a few of them appealed to the Governor of 'Iráq.⁶

Wert thou to observe these events with the eye of fairness, it would become clear and evident in the luminous mirror of thine heart that what occurred was called for by the

³ Tīhrán.

⁴ Mírzá Buzurg Kẖán, the Persian Consul-General in Baghdád.

⁵ The Mu'taminu'l-Mulk, Mírzá Sa'íd Kẖán-i-Anṣarí, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

⁶ Bahá'u'lláh here refers to His and His companions' application for Ottoman citizenship.

circumstances, and that no other alternative could be seen. His Majesty himself is witness that in whatever city a number of this people have resided, the hostility of certain functionaries hath enkindled the flame of conflict and contention. This evanescent Soul, however, hath, since His arrival in 'Irâq, forbidden all to engage in dissension and strife. The witness of this Servant is His very deeds, for all are well aware and will testify that, although a greater number of this people resided in 'Irâq than in any other land, no one overstepped his limits or transgressed against his neighbour. Fixing their gaze upon God, and reposing their trust in Him, all have now been abiding in peace for well-nigh fifteen years, and, in whatever hath befallen them, they have shown forth patience and resigned themselves to God.

After the arrival of this Servant in this, the city of Adrianople, some of the people of 'Irâq and elsewhere inquired about the meaning of the term "rendering assistance unto God" which hath been mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. Several answers were sent out in reply, one of which is set forth in these pages, that it may be clearly demonstrated in the court of thy presence that this Servant hath had no end in view but to promote the betterment and well-being of the world. And if certain of the divine favours which, undeserving as I may be, God hath pleased to bestow upon Me be not plain and manifest, this much at least will be clear and apparent, that He, in His surpassing mercy and infinite grace, hath not deprived Mine heart of the ornament of reason. The passage that was referred to concerning the meaning of "rendering assistance unto God" is as follows:

He is God, exalted be His glory!

It is clear and evident that the one true God — glorified be His mention! — is sanctified above the world and all that is therein. By "rendering assistance unto God", then, it is not meant that any soul should fight or contend with another. That Sovereign Lord Who doeth whatsoever He pleaseth hath entrusted the kingdom of creation, its lands and its seas, into the hands of the kings, for they are, each according to his degree, the manifestations of His divine power. Should they enter beneath the shadow of the True One, they will be accounted of God, and if not, thy Lord, verily, knoweth and observeth all things.

That which God — glorified be His Name! — hath desired for Himself is the hearts of His servants, which are the treasuries of His love and remembrance and the repositories of His knowledge and wisdom. It hath ever been the wish of the Eternal King to cleanse the hearts of His servants from the things of the world and all that pertaineth thereunto, that they may be made worthy recipients of the effulgent splendours of Him Who is the King of all names and attributes. Wherefore must no stranger be allowed in the city of the heart, that the incomparable Friend may enter His abode. By this is meant the effulgence of His names and attributes, and not His exalted Essence,

inasmuch as that peerless King hath ever been, and shall eternally remain, sanctified above ascent and descent.

It followeth, therefore, that rendering assistance unto God, in this day, doth not and shall never consist in contending or disputing with any soul; nay rather, what is preferable in the sight of God is that the cities of men's hearts, which are ruled by the hosts of self and passion, should be subdued by the sword of utterance, of wisdom and of understanding. Thus, whoso seeketh to assist God must, before all else, conquer, with the sword of inner meaning and explanation, the city of his own heart and guard it from the remembrance of all save God, and only then set out to subdue the cities of the hearts of others.

Such is the true meaning of rendering assistance unto God. Sedition hath never been pleasing unto God, nor were the acts committed in the past by certain foolish ones acceptable in His sight. Know ye that to be killed in the path of His good pleasure is better for you than to kill. The beloved of the Lord must, in this day, behave in such wise amidst His servants that they may by their very deeds and actions guide all men unto the paradise of the All-Glorious.

By Him Who shineth above the Dayspring of Sanctity! The friends of God have not, nor will they ever, set their hopes upon the world and its ephemeral possessions. The one true God hath ever regarded the hearts of men as His own, His exclusive possession — and this too but as an expression of His all-surpassing mercy, that haply mortal souls may be purged and sanctified from all that pertaineth to the world of dust and gain admittance into the realms of eternity. For otherwise that ideal King is, in Himself and by Himself, sufficient unto Himself and independent of all things. Neither doth the love of His creatures profit Him, nor can their malice harm Him. All have issued forth from abodes of dust, and unto dust shall they return, while the one true God, alone and single, is established upon His Throne, a Throne which is beyond the reaches of time and space, is sanctified above all utterance or expression, intimation, description and definition, and is exalted beyond all notion of abasement and glory. And none knoweth this save Him and those with whom is the knowledge of the Book. No God is there but Him, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.



It behoveth the benevolence of the Sovereign, however, to examine all matters with the eye of justice and mercy, and not to content himself with the baseless claims of certain individuals. We beseech God to graciously assist the King to fulfil that which He pleaseth, and, verily, that which He desireth should be the desire of all the worlds.

Later this Servant was summoned to Constantinople, whither We arrived accompanied by a poor band of exiles. At no time thereafter did We seek to meet with anyone, as We

had no request to make and no aim in view but to demonstrate unto all that this Servant had no mischief in mind and had never associated with the sowers of sedition. By Him Who hath caused the tongues of all beings to speak forth His praise! While certain considerations rendered it difficult to make application to any quarter, such steps were perforce taken to protect certain souls. My Lord, verily, knoweth what is in Me, and He beareth witness unto the truth of what I say.

A just king is the shadow of God on earth. All should seek shelter under the shadow of his justice, and rest in the shade of his favour. This is not a matter which is either specific or limited in its scope, that it might be restricted to one or another person, inasmuch as the shadow telleth of the One Who casteth it. God, glorified be His remembrance, hath called Himself the Lord of the worlds, for He hath nurtured and still nurtureth everyone. Glorified be, then, His grace that hath preceded all created things, and His mercy that hath surpassed the worlds.

It is clear and evident that, whether this Cause be seen as right or wrong by the people, those who are associated with its name have accepted and embraced it as true, and have forsaken their all in their eagerness to partake of the things of God. That they should evince such renunciation in the path of the love of the All-Merciful is in itself a faithful witness and an eloquent testimony to the truth of their convictions. Hath it ever been witnessed that a man of sound judgement should sacrifice his life without cause or reason? And if it be suggested that this people have taken leave of their senses, this too is highly improbable, inasmuch as such behaviour hath not been confined to merely a soul or two — nay, a vast multitude of every class have drunk their fill of the living waters of divine knowledge, and, intoxicated, have hastened with heart and soul to the field of sacrifice in the way of the Beloved.

If these souls, who have renounced all else but God for His sake and offered up their life and substance in His path, are to be accounted as false, then by what proof and testimony can the truth of what others assert be established in thy presence? The late Ḥájí Siyyid Muḥammad⁷ may God exalt his station and immerse him in the ocean of His forgiveness and mercy! — was one of the most learned divines of his age, and one of the most devout and pious men of his time. So highly was he regarded that his praise was on every tongue, and his righteousness and piety were universally acknowledged. Yet, when hostilities broke out with Russia,⁸ he who himself had pronounced the decree of holy war, and who with blazoned standard had left his native land to rally to the support of his faith, abandoned, after the inconvenience of a brief encounter, all the good that he had purposed, and returned whence he had come. Would that the veil might be lifted, and that which hath ere now remained hidden from the eyes of men be made manifest!

⁷ Áqá Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Ṭabáṭabá'í-y-i-Isfáhání, known as “Mujáhid”.

⁸ The second Russo-Persian War of 1825–28.

For more than twenty years this people have, day and night, been subjected to the fury of the Sovereign's wrath, and have been scattered by the tempestuous gales of his displeasure, each to a different land. How many the children who have been left fatherless, and how many the fathers who have lost their sons! How many the mothers who have dared not, out of fear and dread, to mourn their slaughtered offspring! How numerous those who, at eventide, were possessed of utmost wealth and affluence, and who, when morning came, had fallen into utter abasement and destitution! No land is there whose soil hath not been tinged with their blood, nor reach of heaven unto which their sighs have not ascended. Throughout the years the darts of affliction have unceasingly rained down from the clouds of God's decree, yet despite all these calamities and tribulations, the flame of divine love hath so blazed in their hearts that even should their bodies be torn asunder they would not forsake their love of Him Who is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, but would welcome with heart and soul whatever might befall them in the path of God.

O King! The breezes of the grace of the All-Merciful have transformed these servants and attracted them unto His Holy Court. "The witness of a true lover is upon his sleeve." Nevertheless, some of the outwardly learned have troubled the luminous heart of the King of the Age concerning these souls who revolve round the Tabernacle of the All-Merciful and who seek to attain the Sanctuary of true knowledge. Would that the world-adorning wish of His Majesty might decree that this Servant be brought face to face with the divines of the age, and produce proofs and testimonies in the presence of His Majesty the *Sháh*! This Servant is ready, and taketh hope in God, that such a gathering may be convened in order that the truth of the matter may be made clear and manifest before His Majesty the *Sháh*. It is then for thee to command, and I stand ready before the throne of thy sovereignty. Decide, then, for Me or against Me.

The All-Merciful saith in the Qur'án, His abiding testimony unto all the peoples of the world: "Wish ye then for death, if ye be men of truth."⁹ Behold how He hath declared the yearning for death to be the touchstone of sincerity! And, in the luminous mirror of thy judgement, it is doubtless clear and evident which people have chosen, in this day, to lay down their lives in the path of the Beloved of the worlds. Indeed, were the books supporting the beliefs of this people to be written with the blood spilled in the path of God — exalted be His glory! — then countless volumes would have already appeared amongst men for all to see.

How, We fain would ask, is it possible to impugn this people whose deeds are in conformity with their words, and to give credence instead to those who have refused to relinquish one jot of their worldly authority in the path of Him Who is the Unconstrained? Some of the divines who have declared this Servant an infidel have at no time met with Me. Never having seen Me, or become acquainted with My purpose,

⁹ Qur'án 2:94; 62:6.

they have nevertheless spoken as they pleased and acted as they desired. Yet every claim requireth a proof, not mere words and displays of outward piety.

In this connection the text of several passages from the Hidden Book of Fáṭimih — the blessings of God be upon her! — which are relevant to the present theme will be cited in the Persian tongue, that certain matters which have ere now been hidden may be revealed before thy presence. The people addressed in the aforementioned Book, which is today known as the Hidden Words, are those who, though outwardly known for learning and piety, are inwardly the slaves of self and passion.

He saith: O ye that are foolish, yet have a name to be wise! Wherefore do ye wear the guise of the shepherd, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock? Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.

And likewise He saith: O ye seeming fair yet inwardly foul! Ye are like clear but bitter water, which to outward seeming is crystal pure but of which, when tested by the Divine Assayer, not a drop is accepted. Yea, the sunbeam falls alike upon the dust and the mirror, yet differ they in reflection even as doth the star from the earth: nay, immeasurable is the difference!

And also He saith: O essence of desire! At many a dawn have I turned from the realms of the Placeless unto thine abode, and found thee on the bed of ease busied with others than Myself. Thereupon, even as the flash of the spirit, I returned to the realms of celestial glory, and breathed it not in My retreats above unto the hosts of holiness.

And again He saith: O bondslave of the world! Many a dawn hath the breeze of My loving-kindness wafted over thee and found thee upon the bed of heedlessness fast asleep. Bewailing then thy plight it returned whence it came.¹⁰

Therefore, in the exercise of the royal justice, it is not sufficient to give ear to the claimant alone. God saith in the Qur'án, the unerring Balance that distinguisheth truth from falsehood: "O ye who believe! If a wicked man come to you with news, clear it up at once, lest through ignorance ye harm others, and afterward repent of what ye have done."¹¹ The holy Traditions, moreover, contain the admonition: "Believe not the tale-bearer." Certain of the divines, who have never seen Us, have misconceived the nature of Our Cause. Those, however, who have met Us will testify that this Servant hath not spoken save in accordance with that which God hath commanded in the Book, and that He hath called attention to the following blessed verse — exalted be His Word: "Do

¹⁰ cf. Persian Hidden Words, nos. 24, 25, 28 and 30.

¹¹ Qur'án 49:6.

ye not disavow us merely because we believe in God, and in what He hath sent down unto us, and in what He had sent down aforetime?"¹²

O King of the age! The eyes of these refugees are turned towards and fixed upon the mercy of the Most Merciful. No doubt is there whatever that these tribulations will be followed by the outpourings of a supreme mercy, and these dire adversities will be succeeded by an overflowing prosperity. We fain would hope, however, that His Majesty the Ṣháh will himself examine these matters and bring hope to the hearts. That which We have submitted to thy Majesty is indeed for thine highest good. And God, verily, is a sufficient witness unto Me.

Glorified art Thou, O Lord My God! I bear witness that the heart of the King is in truth between the fingers of Thy might. If it be Thy wish, do Thou incline it, O My God, in the direction of charity and mercy. Thou, verily, art the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the Most Bountiful. No God is there besides Thee, the All-Glorious, the One Whose help is sought by all.

Concerning the prerequisites of the learned, He saith: "Whoso among the learned guardeth his self, defendeth his faith, opposeth his desires, and obeyeth his Lord's command, it is incumbent upon the generality of the people to pattern themselves after him..."¹³ Should the King of the Age reflect upon this utterance which hath streamed from the tongue of Him Who is the Dayspring of the Revelation of the All-Merciful, he would perceive that those who have been adorned with the attributes enumerated in this holy Tradition are scarcer than the philosopher's stone; wherefore not every man that layeth claim to knowledge deserveth to be believed.

Again concerning the divines of the Latter Days, He saith: "The religious doctors of that age shall be the most wicked of the divines beneath the shadow of heaven. Out of them hath mischief proceeded, and unto them it shall return." And again He saith: "When the Standard of Truth is made manifest, the people of both the East and the West curse it."¹⁴ Should anyone dispute these Traditions, this Servant will undertake to establish their validity, since the details of their transmission have been omitted here for the sake of brevity.

Those doctors who have indeed drunk of the cup of renunciation have never interfered with this Servant. Thus, for example, Ṣhayḵ Murtaḏá¹⁵ may God exalt his station and cause him to repose beneath the canopy of His grace! — showed forth kindness during

¹² Qur'án 5:59.

¹³ A Tradition ascribed to the eleventh Imám, Abú Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-'Askarí.

¹⁴ Traditions ascribed to the sixth Imám, Abú 'Abdu'lláh Ja'far aṣ-Ṣádiq.

¹⁵ Ṣhayḵ Murtaḏáy-i-Anṣarí, a prominent mujtahid.

Our sojourn in 'Iráq, and never spoke of this Cause otherwise than as God hath given leave. We beseech God to graciously assist all to do His will and pleasure.

Now, however, all have lost sight of every other consideration, and are bent upon the persecution of this people. Thus, if it be inquired of certain persons who, by the grace of their Lord, repose beneath the shadow of thy royal mercy and enjoy countless favours, "What service have ye rendered in return for these royal favours? Have ye through wise policy annexed a further territory to the realm? Have ye applied yourselves to aught that would secure the welfare of the people, the prosperity of the kingdom, and the lasting glory of the state?," they will have no other reply than to designate, justly or falsely, a group of people before thy royal presence as Bábís, and forthwith to engage in massacre and pillage. In Tabríz, for instance, and in the Egyptian town of Manşúríyyih, a number of this people were ransomed and large sums were seized, yet no account of these matters was ever made in the court of thy presence.

The reason for which all these things have come to pass is that their persecutors, finding these unfortunate ones without protection, have forgone more weighty matters and occupied themselves instead with harassing this afflicted people. Numerous confessions and divers creeds abide peacefully beneath the shadow of thy sovereignty. Let this people be also numbered with them. Nay, those who serve the King should be animated by such lofty aims and sublime intentions as to continually strive to bring all religions beneath the shelter of his shadow, and to rule over them with perfect justice.

To enforce the laws of God is naught but justice, and is the source of universal content. Nay more, the divine statutes have always been, and will ever remain, the cause and instrument of the preservation of mankind, as witnessed by His exalted words: "In punishment will ye find life, O men of insight!"¹⁶ It would, however, ill beseem the justice of thy Majesty that for the trespass of a single soul a whole group of people should be subjected to the scourge of thy wrath. The one true God — glorified be His Name! — hath said: "None shall bear the burden of another."¹⁷ It is clear and evident that in every community there have been, and will ever be, the learned and the ignorant, the wise and the heedless, the profligate and the pious. That a wise and reflecting soul should commit a heinous deed is most improbable, inasmuch as such a person either seeketh after this world or hath forsaken it: if he be of the latter, he would assuredly have no regard for aught else besides God, and moreover the fear of God would deter him from unlawful and reprehensible actions; and if he be of the former, he would just as assuredly avoid such deeds as would alienate and alarm the people, and act in such a manner as to earn their confidence and trust. It is therefore evident that reprehensible actions have always emanated, and will ever emanate, from ignorant and foolish souls.

¹⁶ Qur'án 2:179.

¹⁷ Qur'án 6:164; 17:15; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38.

We implore God to guard His servants from turning to anyone save Him, and to draw them nigh unto His presence. His might, in truth, is equal to all things.

Praise be unto Thee, O Lord My God! Thou hearest the voice of My lamentation, and beholdest My condition, My distress and affliction! Thou knowest all that is in Me. If the call I have raised be wholly for Thy sake, then draw thereby the hearts of Thy creatures towards the heaven of Thy knowledge, and the heart of the Sovereign towards the right hand of the throne of Thy name, the All-Merciful. Supply him then, O My God, with a portion of that goodly sustenance which hath descended from the heaven of Thy generosity and the clouds of Thy mercy, that he may forsake his all and turn unto the court of Thy favour. Aid him, O My God, to assist Thy Cause and to exalt Thy Word amidst Thy creatures. Strengthen him, then, with the hosts of the seen and the unseen, that he may subdue every city in Thy Name, and hold sway, through Thy sovereignty and might, over all that dwell on earth, O Thou in Whose hand is the kingdom of creation! Thou, verily, art the Supreme Ordainer in both the beginning and the end. No God is there but Thee, the Most Powerful, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

So grossly hath Our Cause been misrepresented before thy royal presence that, if some unseemly act be committed by but one of this people, it is portrayed as being prompted by their beliefs. By Him besides Whom there is none other God! This Servant hath refused even to sanction the commission of reprov'd actions, how much less those which have been explicitly prohibited in the Book of God.

God hath forbidden unto men the drinking of wine, and this prohibition hath been revealed and recorded in His Book. In spite of this, and of the fact that the learned doctors of the age — may God increase their numbers! — have all prohibited the people from such a wretched act, there still remain some who commit it. The punishment which this act entaileth, however, applieth only to its heedless perpetrators, whilst those noble manifestations of supreme sanctity remain exalted above and exempt from all blame. Yea, the whole creation, both seen and unseen, beareth witness unto their holiness.

Yea, these servants regard the one true God as He Who “doeth as He willeth”¹⁸ and “ordaineth as He pleaseth.”¹⁹ Thus they view not as impossible the continued appearance in the contingent world of the Manifestations of His Unity. Should anyone hold otherwise, how would he be different from those who believe the hand of God to be “chained up”?²⁰ And if the one true God — glorified be His mention! — be indeed regarded as unconstrained, then whatever Cause that Ancient King may please to

¹⁸ cf. Qur'án 3:40; 14:27; 22:18.

¹⁹ cf. Qur'án 5:1.

²⁰ cf. Qur'án 5:64.

manifest from the wellspring of His Command must be embraced by all. No refuge is there for anyone and no haven to hasten unto save God; no protection is there for any soul and no shelter to seek except in Him.

The essential requirement for whoso advanceth a claim is to support his assertions with clear proofs and testimonies. Beyond this, the rejection of the people, whether learned or ignorant, hath never been, nor shall it ever be, of any consequence. The Prophets of God, those Pearls of the ocean of Divine Unity and the Repositories of Divine Revelation, have ever been the object of men's repudiation and denial. Even as He saith: "Each nation hath plotted darkly against their Messenger to lay violent hold on Him, and disputed with vain words to invalidate the truth."²¹ And again: "No Messenger cometh unto them but they laugh Him to scorn."²²

Consider the dispensation of Him Who is the Seal of the Prophets²³ and the King of the Chosen Ones — may the souls of all mankind be offered up for His sake! After the Daystar of Truth dawned above the horizon of Hijáz, how great were the cruelties which the exponents of error inflicted upon that incomparable Manifestation of the All-Glorious! Such was their heedlessness that they regarded every injury inflicted upon that sacred Being as ranking among the greatest of all acts, and constituting a means of attainment unto God, the Most High. For in the early years of His mission the divines of that age, both Christian and Jewish, turned away from that Daystar of the heaven of glory, whereupon all people, high and low alike, bestirred themselves to extinguish the light of that Luminary of the horizon of inner meanings. The names of all these divines have been mentioned in the books of old; among them are Wahb Ibn-i-Ráhib, Ka'b Ibn-i-Ashraf, 'Abdu'lláh-i-Ubayy, and others of their like.

Finally, matters came to such a pass that these men took counsel together and conspired to shed His pure blood, even as God — glorified be His mention! — saith: "And remember when the disbelievers schemed against Thee, that they might lay hold upon Thee, or slay Thee, or cast Thee out; and so they schemed, and God schemed, and God, verily, is the best of schemers."²⁴ Again He saith: "But if their opposition be grievous to Thee — if Thou canst, seek out an opening into the earth or a ladder into heaven and bring to them a sign; yet if God wished, He could gather them unto true guidance; be Thou not, then, of the ignorant."²⁵ By God! The hearts of His favoured ones

²¹ Qur'án 40:5.

²² Qur'án 36:30.

²³ Qur'án 8:30.

²⁴ Qur'án 6:35.

²⁵ cf. Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33.

are consumed at the purport of these two blessed verses. Such established and undisputed facts have been forgotten, and no one hath paused to reflect, in days past or in this day, upon the things that have prompted men to turn away from the Revealers of the light of God at the time of their manifestation.

Likewise, before the appearance of the Seal of the Prophets, consider Jesus, the Son of Mary. When that Manifestation of the All-Merciful revealed Himself, all the divines charged that Quintessence of faith with impiety and rebellion. Eventually, with the sanction of Annas, the most learned of the divines of His day, and Caiaphas, the high priest, His blessed person was made to suffer that which the pen is ashamed to mention and powerless to describe. The wide world in all its vastness could no longer contain Him, until at last God raised Him up unto heaven.

Were a detailed account of all the Prophets to be given here, We fear that it might lead to weariness. The doctors of the Torah in particular assert that no independent Prophet will come after Moses with a new Law. They maintain that a Scion of the House of David shall be made manifest Who will promulgate the Law of the Torah, and help establish and enforce its commandments throughout the East and the West.

The followers of the Gospel, likewise, hold as impossible that the Bearer of a new Revelation should again shine forth from the dayspring of the Will of God after Jesus, Son of Mary — peace be upon Him! In support of this contention, they adduce the following verse from the Gospel: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the words of the Son of Man shall never pass away.”²⁶ They maintain that neither the teachings nor the commandments of Jesus — peace be upon Him! — may ever be altered.

At one point in the Gospel, He saith: “I go away, and come again.”²⁷ Again in the Gospel of John, He hath foretold the advent of a Comforter who shall come after Him.²⁸ In the Gospel of Luke, moreover, a number of signs and portents have been mentioned. Certain divines of that Faith, however, have interpreted these utterances after their own fancy, and have thus failed to grasp their true significance.

O would that thou wouldst permit Me, O Şháh, to send unto thee that which would cheer the eyes, and tranquillize the souls, and persuade every fair-minded person that with Him is the knowledge of the Book. Certain persons, incapable of answering the objections raised by their opponents, claim that the Torah and the Gospel have been corrupted, whereas in reality the references to such corruption pertain only to specific

²⁶ John 14:28.

²⁷ cf. John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.

²⁸ Muḥammad

cases.²⁹ But for the repudiation of the foolish and the connivance of the divines, I would have uttered a discourse that would have thrilled and carried away the hearts unto a realm from the murmur of whose winds can be heard: “No God is there but He!” For the present, however, since the season is not ripe, the tongue of My utterance hath been stilled and the wine of exposition sealed up until such time as God, through the power of His might, shall please to unseal it. He, verily, is the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

Praise be unto Thee, O Lord My God! I ask Thee by Thy Name, through which Thou hast subdued all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth, to protect the lamp of Thy Cause within the globe of Thine omnipotence and Thy bountiful favour, lest it be exposed to the blasts of denial from those who remain heedless of the mysteries of Thy name, the Unconstrained. Increase, then, by the oil of Thy wisdom, the radiance of its light. Thou, verily, hast power over all the dwellers of Thine earth and of Thy heaven.

I implore Thee, O My Lord, by that most exalted Word which hath struck terror into the hearts of all who are in the heavens and on the earth, save only those who have taken fast hold of Thy Sure Handle, not to abandon Me amidst Thy creatures. Lift Me up, then, unto Thyself, cause Me to enter beneath the shadow of Thy mercy, and give Me to drink of the pure wine of Thy providence, that I may dwell within the tabernacle of Thy majesty and beneath the canopy of Thy favour. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou, verily, art the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

O King! The lamps of equity have been extinguished, and the fire of tyranny hath so blazed on every side that My people have been led as captives from Zawrá'³⁰ to Mosul, known as Ḥadbá'. This is not the first outrage that hath been suffered in the path of God. It behoveth every soul to consider and call to mind that which befell the kindred of the Prophet when the people took them captive and brought them unto Damascus, known as Fayhá'. Amongst them was the prince of them that worship God, the mainstay of such as have drawn nigh unto Him, and the sanctuary of those who long for His presence — may the life of all else be a sacrifice unto him!³¹

They were asked: “Are ye of the party of the Seceders?”³² He replied: “Nay, by the Lord Almighty. We are but servants who have believed in God and in His verses. Through us the countenance of faith hath beamed with joy. Through us the sign of the All-Merciful

²⁹ See, for example, Qur’án 4:46; 5:13; 5:41; and 2:75, and the discussion in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, paragraph beginning “Were they to be questioned concerning those signs...” ff.

³⁰ Baghdád.

³¹ ‘Alí Ibn Ḥusayn, known as “Zaynu'l-‘Ábidín”, the second of the Imám Ḥusayn’s sons, who became the fourth Imám.

³² The Kḥárijites, a faction opposed to both the Imáms and the Umayyad state.

hath shone forth. At the mention of our names the desert of Baḥā³³ hath overflowed with water and the darkness separating earth and heaven hath been dispelled.”

“Have ye forbidden”, they were asked, “that which God hath made lawful, or allowed that which He hath forbidden?” “We were the first to follow the divine commandments”, he answered. “We are the root and origin of His Cause, the beginning of all good and its end. We are the sign of the Ancient of Days and the source of His remembrance amongst the nations.”

They were asked: “Have ye forsaken the Qur’án?” “In our House,” he replied, “did the All-Merciful reveal it. We are the breezes of the All-Glorious amidst His creation. We are the streams that have branched out from the Most Great Ocean, through which God hath revived the earth, and through which He shall revive it again after it hath died. Through us His signs have been diffused, His proofs revealed, and His tokens disclosed. With us is the knowledge of His hidden meanings and His untold mysteries.”

“For what crime have ye been punished?” they were asked. “For our love of God,” he made reply, “and for our detachment from aught else save Him.”

We have not related his exact words — peace be upon him! — but rather have We imparted a sprinkling from that ocean of life eternal that lieth enshrined within them, that those who hearken thereunto may be quickened and made aware of what hath befallen the trusted ones of God at the hands of a lost and wayward generation. We see the people in this day censuring the oppressors of bygone ages, whilst they themselves commit yet greater wrongs and know it not!

God beareth Me witness that My purpose hath not been to foment sedition, but to purify His servants from whatsoever hath prevented them from drawing nigh unto Him, the Lord of the Day of Reckoning. I was asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of My Lord, the All-Merciful, passed over Me, awoke Me from My slumber, and bade Me lift up My voice betwixt earth and heaven. This thing is not from Me, but from God. Unto this testify the dwellers of His Dominion and of His Kingdom, and the inhabitants of the cities of His unfading glory. By Him Who is the Truth! I fear no tribulation in His path, nor any affliction in My love for Him and in the way of His good pleasure. Verily God hath made adversity as a morning dew upon His green pasture, and a wick for His lamp which lighteth earth and heaven.

Shall a man’s wealth endure forever, or protect him from the One Who shall, ere long, seize him by his forelock? Gazing upon those who sleep beneath the gravestones, embosomed in the dust, could one ever distinguish the sovereign’s crumbling skull from the subject’s mouldering bones? Nay, by Him Who is the King of kings! Could one discern the lord from the vassal, or those that enjoyed wealth and riches from those

³³ Mecca.

who possessed neither shoes nor mat? By God! Every distinction hath been erased, save only for those who upheld the right and who ruled with justice.

Whither are gone the learned men, the divines and potentates of old? What hath become of their discriminating views, their shrewd perceptions, their subtle insights and sage pronouncements? Where are their hidden coffers, their flaunted ornaments, their gilded couches, their rugs and cushions strewn about? Gone forever is their generation! All have perished, and, by God's decree, naught remaineth of them but scattered dust. Exhausted is the wealth they gathered, dispersed the stores they hoarded, dissipated the treasures they concealed. Naught can now be seen but their deserted haunts, their roofless dwellings, their uprooted tree-trunks, and their faded splendour. No man of insight will let wealth distract his gaze from his ultimate objective, and no man of understanding will allow riches to withhold him from turning unto Him Who is the All-Possessing, the Most High.

Where is he who held dominion over all whereon the sun shineth, who lived extravagantly on earth, seeking out the luxuries of the world and of all that hath been created upon it? Where is the commander of the swarthy legion and the upraiser of the golden standard? Where is the ruler of Zawrá', and where the tyrant of Fayhá'?³⁴ Where are those before whose munificence the treasure-houses of the earth shrank in shame, and at whose largesse and swelling spirit the very ocean was abashed? Where is he who stretched forth his arm in rebellion, and who turned his hand against the All-Merciful?

Where are they who went in quest of earthly pleasures and the fruits of carnal desires? Whither are fled their fair and comely women? Where are their swaying branches, their spreading boughs, their lofty mansions, their trellised gardens? And what of the delights of these gardens — their exquisite grounds and gentle breezes, their purling streams, their souging winds, their cooing doves and rustling leaves? Where now are their resplendent morns and their brightsome countenances wreathed in smiles? Alas for them! All have perished and are gone to rest beneath a canopy of dust. Of them one heareth neither name nor mention; none knoweth of their affairs, and naught remaineth of their signs.

What! Will the people dispute then that whereof they themselves stand witness? Will they deny that which they know to be true? I know not in what wilderness they roam! Do they not see that they are embarked upon a journey from which there is no return? How long will they wander from mountain to valley, from hollow to hill? "Hath not the time come for those who believe to humble their hearts at the mention of God?"³⁵ Blessed is he who hath said, or now shall say, "Yea, by my Lord! The time is come and

³⁴ Allusions to the 'Abbásid and Umayyad dynasties, respectively.

³⁵ Qur'án 57:16.

the hour hath struck!," and who, thereafter, shall detach himself from all that hath been, and deliver himself up entirely unto Him Who is the Possessor of the universe and the Lord of all creation.

And yet, what hope! For naught is reaped save that which hath been sown, and naught is taken up save that which hath been laid down,³⁶ unless it be through the grace and bestowal of the Lord. Hath the womb of the world yet conceived one whom the veils of glory shall not hinder from ascending unto the Kingdom of his Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most High? Is it yet within us to perform such deeds as will dispel our afflictions and draw us nigh unto Him Who is the Causer of causes? We beseech God to deal with us according to His bounty, and not His justice, and to grant that we may be of those who have turned their faces unto their Lord and severed themselves from all else.

I have seen, O Şháh, in the path of God what eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Mine acquaintances have repudiated Me, and My pathways have been straitened. The fount of well-being hath run dry, and the bower of ease hath withered. How numerous the tribulations which have rained, and will soon rain, upon Me! I advance with My face set towards Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Bounteous, whilst behind Me glideth the serpent. Mine eyes have rained down tears until My bed is drenched.

I sorrow not for Myself, however. By God! Mine head yearneth for the spear out of love for its Lord. I never passed a tree, but Mine heart addressed it saying: "O would that thou wert cut down in My name, and My body crucified upon thee, in the path of My Lord!" for I see the people wandering distraught and unconscious in their drunken stupor. They have raised on high their passions and set down their God. Methinks they have taken His Cause for a mockery and regard it as a play and pastime, believing all the while that they do well, and that they dwell securely in the citadel of safety. Howbeit the matter is not as they fondly imagine: tomorrow shall they behold that which today they are wont to deny!

Erelong shall the exponents of wealth and power banish Us from the land of Adrianople to the city of 'Akká. According to what they say, it is the most desolate of the cities of the world, the most unsightly of them in appearance, the most detestable in climate, and the foulest in water. It is as though it were the metropolis of the owl, within whose precincts naught can be heard save the echo of its cry. Therein have they resolved to imprison this Youth, to shut against our faces the doors of ease and comfort, and to deprive us of every worldly benefit throughout the remainder of our days.

By God! Though weariness lay Me low, and hunger consume Me, and the bare rock be My bed, and My fellows the beasts of the field, I will not complain, but will endure patiently as those endued with constancy and firmness have endured patiently,

³⁶ cf. Luke 19:21.

through the power of God, the Eternal King and Creator of the nations, and will render thanks unto God under all conditions. We pray that, out of His bounty — exalted be He — He may release, through this imprisonment, the necks of men from chains and fetters, and cause them to turn, with sincere faces, towards His face, Who is the Mighty, the Bounteous. Ready is He to answer whosoever calleth upon Him, and nigh is He unto such as commune with Him. We further beseech Him to make of this darksome tribulation a shield for the Temple of His Cause, and to protect it from the assault of sharpened swords and pointed daggers. Adversity hath ever given rise to the exaltation of His Cause and the glorification of His Name. Such hath been God's method carried into effect in centuries and ages past. That which the people now fail to apprehend they shall ere long discover, on that day when their steeds shall stumble and their finery be folded up, their blades blunted and their feet made to falter.

I know not how long they shall spur on the charger of self and passion and rove in the wilderness of error and negligence! Shall either the pomp of the mighty or the wretchedness of the abased endure? Shall he who reposes upon the loftiest seat of honour, who hath attained the pinnacle of might and glory, abide forever? Nay, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on earth shall pass away, and there remaineth alone the face of My Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most-Bountiful.³⁷

What armour hath not been pierced by the arrow of destruction, and what regal brow not divested by the hand of Fate? What fortress hath withstood the approach of the Messenger of Death? What throne hath not been shattered to pieces, what palace not reduced to rubble? Could the people but taste that choice Wine of the mercy of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, which lieth in store for them in the world beyond, they would assuredly cease their censure, and seek only to win the good pleasure of this Youth. For now, however, they have hidden Me behind a veil of darkness, whose fabric they have woven with the hands of idle fancy and vain imagination. Erelong shall the snow-white hand of God rend an opening through the darkness of this night and unlock a mighty portal unto His City. On that Day shall the people enter therein by troops, uttering what the blamers aforesaid exclaimed,³⁸ that there shall be made manifest in the end that which appeared in the beginning.

Is it their wish to tarry here when already they have one foot in the stirrup? Look they to return, once they are gone? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of Lords! save on the Day of Judgement, the Day whereon the people shall arise from their graves and be asked of their legacy. Well is it with him who shall not be weighted down with his burdens on that Day, the Day whereon the mountains shall pass away and all shall gather to be questioned in the presence of God, the Most Exalted. Stern, indeed, is He in punishing!

³⁷ cf. Qur'án 55:26.

³⁸ cf. Qur'án 12:31.

We beseech God to purge the hearts of certain divines from rancour and enmity, that they may look upon matters with an eye unobscured by contempt. May He raise them up unto so lofty a station that neither the attractions of the world, nor the allurements of authority, may deflect them from gazing upon the Supreme Horizon, and that neither worldly benefits nor carnal desires shall prevent them from attaining that Day whereon the mountains shall be reduced to dust. Though they now rejoice in the adversity that hath befallen Us, soon shall come a day whereon they shall lament and weep. By My Lord! Were I given the choice between, on the one hand, the wealth and opulence, the ease and comfort, the honour and glory which they enjoy, and, on the other, the adversities and trials which are Mine, I would unhesitatingly choose My present condition and would refuse to barter a single atom of these hardships for all that hath been created in the world of being.

But for the tribulations that have touched Me in the path of God, life would have held no sweetness for Me, and Mine existence would have profited Me nothing. For them who are endued with discernment, and whose eyes are fixed upon the Sublime Vision, it is no secret that I have been, most of the days of My life, even as a slave, sitting under a sword hanging on a thread, knowing not whether it would fall soon or late upon him. And yet, notwithstanding all this We render thanks unto God, the Lord of the worlds, and yield Him praise at all times and under all conditions. He, verily, standeth witness over all things.

We beseech God to extend wide His shadow, that the true believers may hasten thereunto and that His sincere lovers may seek shelter therein. May He bestow upon men blossoms from the bowers of His grace and stars from the horizon of His providence. We pray God, moreover, to graciously aid the King to do His will and pleasure, and to confirm him in that which shall draw him nigh unto the Dayspring of God's most excellent names, so that he may not give countenance to the injustice he witnesseth, may look upon his subjects with the eye of loving-kindness, and shield them from oppression. We further beseech God, exalted be He, to gather all mankind around the Gulf of the Most Great Ocean, an ocean every drop of which proclaimeth that He is the Harbinger of joy unto the world and the Quickener of all its peoples. Praise be to God, the Lord of the Day of Reckoning!

And finally We beseech God, exalted be His glory, to enable thee to aid His Faith and turn towards His justice, that thou mayest judge between the people even as thou wouldst judge between thine own kindred, and mayest choose for them that which thou chooseth for thine own self. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Thus have We built the Temple with the hands of power and might, could ye but know it. This is the Temple promised unto you in the Book. Draw ye nigh unto it. This is that which profiteth you, could ye but comprehend it. Be fair, O peoples of the earth! Which

is preferable, this, or a temple which is built of clay? Set your faces towards it. Thus have ye been commanded by God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Follow ye His bidding, and praise ye God, your Lord, for that which He hath bestowed upon you. He, verily, is the Truth. No God is there but He. He revealeth what He pleaseth, through His words "Be and it is."

