

Introduction

Bahá'u'lláh

Translated



Introduction

From the birth of the Bahá'í Revelation in a subterranean dungeon in Tīhrán where its Author was confined in 1852, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has rapidly grown, in ever-widening circles, beyond the social and religious matrix of its inception. Among the first individuals outside the Islamic community to be attracted to its teachings, presaging the flow of people of all faiths and origins into its universal embrace, were Zoroastrians in Persia and India. To this group Bahá'u'lláh addressed a number of Tablets, several of which are presented here for the first time in full authorized translations.

Prominent among these works is Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to Mánikchí Şáhib. Mánikchí Limjí Hataria (1813–1890), also known as Mánikchí (Manekji) Şáhib, was born in India of Zoroastrian parents. An able diplomat and devoted adherent of his ancestral religion, Mánikchí Şáhib was appointed, in 1854, as an emissary on behalf of the Parsees of India to assist their coreligionists in Iran, who were suffering under the repressive policies of the Qájár monarchs. Some time after this he attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad. Although maintaining to the end of his life allegiance to his Zoroastrian faith, he was attracted to the teachings of the new religion and, moved by the sacrifice of its early martyrs, became a lifelong admirer. Years after their meeting he posed a series of questions to Bahá'u'lláh which led to the revelation of two Tablets of far-reaching significance, the first of which was sent to him in 1878.

The first Tablet, known as the Lawḥ-i-Mánikchí Şáhib, is celebrated for its striking and well-known passages epitomizing the universality of Bahá'u'lláh's prophetic claim. Revealed, at Mánikchí Şáhib's bold request, in pure Persian, the Tablet responds to the questions he had raised and proclaims some of the central tenets of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh: *“Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.” “Turn your faces from the darkness of estrangement to the effulgent light of the daystar of unity.” “Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.” “[W]hatsoever leadeth to the decline of ignorance and the increase of knowledge hath been, and will ever remain, approved in the sight of the Lord of creation.”*



TRANSLATION



AUDIO

As inferred from the contents of a second Tablet, Mánikchí Şáhib was not entirely satisfied with this reply, having anticipated a more expansive discussion of his specific questions. Bahá'u'lláh's further reply is contained in a lengthy Tablet, revealed on 14 Sha'bán 1299 (1 July 1882) in the voice of His amanuensis Mírzá Áqá Ján. The Tablet is addressed to the eminent Bahá'í scholar Abu'l-Faḍl, who at the time was employed as the personal secretary of Mánikchí Şáhib, but a lengthy portion of it addresses the latter's questions. Bahá'u'lláh states at the outset that he had "failed to consider the matter closely, for otherwise he would have readily admitted that not a single point was omitted," and explains that out of wisdom his questions had not been directly answered, but that even so, "*the answers were provided in a language of marvellous concision and clarity.*" Throughout the remainder of the Tablet, the text of each of Mánikchí Şáhib's questions is successively quoted and detailed replies are given to each, in some cases connecting the questions to the universal principles enunciated in the first Tablet.

The Tablet is noteworthy for its discussion of a range of questions regarding the tenets of both Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religions, as understood by Mánikchí Şáhib, including the nature of creation, the connection between faith and reason, the reconciliation of the differences that exist among the laws and ordinances of various religions, their respective claims to exclusivity and their differing degrees of eagerness to welcome others into their fold. Bahá'u'lláh's responses emphasize that which is right and true in the various doctrines and beliefs under examination, rather than discarding them outright for inaccuracy or insufficiency.

Included here as well with these two major works are the Lawḥ-i-Haft Pursiḡh (Tablet of the Seven Questions), addressed to Ustád Javán-Mard, a prominent early Bahá'í of Zoroastrian background and former student of Mánikchí Şáhib, and two other Tablets also revealed to believers of the same origin. Together, these five Tablets offer a glimpse of Bahá'u'lláh's love for, and special relationship with, the followers of a religion that had arisen, many centuries before, in the same land that witnessed the birth of His own Faith.

A portion of the Lawḥ-i-Mánikchí Şáhib and several excerpts from the other Tablets were previously translated by Shoghi Effendi; these have been incorporated into the text of the translations and listed in the appendix.

It is hoped that the publication of this volume will enable a deeper appreciation of the fundamental principle of the oneness of religion and lend a fresh impetus to the efforts of those who strive to promote its understanding in an age that needs it more acutely with every passing day.

