

The Epistle of the Báb to Mullá Asadulláh Qazvíní: The Báb, the Mystery of Divine Servitude¹

Mohammad Norozi²

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Introduction and Background:

Presented below is a provisional English translation of a luminous Arabic Epistle revealed by the Báb in reply to ten questions addressed to Him by Mullá Asadulláh Qazvíní, also referred to in historical sources as Mullá Áqá-yi-Qazvíní or Áqá Siyyid Asadu'lláh Qazvíní. An eminent scholar of Qazvín and a distinguished Shí'ih cleric, he initially set himself to oppose the Báb's claim and to challenge the rapidly spreading movement that had arisen in His name. With the intention of exposing the new Faith as unfounded, Mullá Asadulláh composed ten intricate questions encompassing theological, philosophical, and esoteric themes. Yet, upon receiving the Báb's replies, he was so overcome by the depth, clarity, and certitude of the answers that he embraced the Cause, thereafter becoming one of its ardent supporters, devoting his later years to travel and the promulgation of the new Revelation.

Preserved in *Zuhūr al-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 13–16, this Epistle bears within it both the majesty of divine exposition and the intimacy of personal correspondence. By the testimony of the Báb within the text, its revelation occurred on the fifteenth of Jumādá al-Ūlá, 1263 [A.H.]—corresponding to 29 March 1847 C.E.—upon the earth and amidst the fortress of Máḳū, Azerbaijan. Though confined within the fortress, amidst its mountains, His voice resounded across the spiritual horizon of Persia, proclaiming truths that transcended time and place.

Among the manifold mysteries enshrined in the Writings of the Báb, none is more exalted in its humility, more majestic in its abasement, than the mystery of **servitude**. In this Epistle, revealed amidst the trials of imprisonment, the Báb unveils, with peerless lucidity, the divine harmony between the grandeur of His Manifestation and the lowliness of His servitude—two stations outwardly opposed yet inwardly one, inseparable and co-eternal in the Reality of His being.

He opens His discourse with a prelude of praise to the **Incomparable Originator**, exalted beyond all measure:

“Praise be to God, the Incomparable Originator, Who hath brought forth Origination itself, without any origination before it, and Who hath fashioned Fashioning itself, without any fashioning after it.”

From this transcendent effulgence, the Báb turns inward, bearing witness to His own servitude:

“I bear witness unto Mine own self that I am a servant who hath believed in God and in His signs, and who hath shown patience in the path of God by My arrival upon that land after Mine ascendancy, that the souls of men might be sifted and all be tried according to the command of God.”

¹ This sacred Epistle bears no title in the original manuscript; the designation “*The Báb, the Mystery of Divine Servitude*” has been assigned by the translator in accordance with the dominant motif and thematic substance of the text.

² Contact email address: nsm_dist@hotmail.com.

Here, the twin lights of sovereignty and humility converge; the Voice that summoned creation into being proclaims its own bondage before its Creator, and in that self-effacement lies the essence of His station.

The Epistle illuminates the nature of true knowledge, inseparable from the recognition of God and the affirmation of servitude. The Báb expounds that the very word ‘*Abd*—Servant—is a divine cipher: in the letter ‘*Ayn*’ resides knowledge of God; in the letter ‘*Bā*’, separation from all created things; in the letter ‘*Dāl*’, nearness to the Creator. In this triad, knowledge, renunciation, and proximity are inseparably entwined, forming the geometry of servitude ordained by God. To be a servant is not an act of humility alone but a station of celestial proximity; it is to stand wholly in the presence of the Divine, emptied of self, yet filled with His light.

Central to this Epistle is the elucidation of the station of the Imám, peace be upon Him, as the perfect mirror of God:

“Even as the Imám—peace be upon Him—is the Mirror of God, glorified be His majesty, in Whom naught is reflected save the effulgence of His countenance. And God hath made no distinction between Him and Himself, save that of servitude.”

In these words, the Báb presents the profound truth that the Manifestation of God, though in full possession of divine sovereignty, becomes distinguished from the Lord only by the mantle of servitude. The act of reflection, the yielding of the self to the divine decree, is itself a station of exalted power, wherein majesty is expressed through abasement. Even the seeming impotence of the Imám before His slayer—*“became powerless before one such as His slayer, and begged of him a draught of water; and this was by the preordained measure of the Almighty, the All-Knowing”*—is the consummate expression of this paradoxical unity: the majesty of the Manifestation is made manifest in the exercise of servitude, and servitude itself becomes the hallmark of divine authority.

The Báb further clarifies that His own deeds and knowledge, though appearing modest, are suffused with spiritual potency. He declares:

“As for knowledge, it is none other than My knowledge of God and of His Chosen Ones; apart from this, I possess no knowledge whatsoever. As for deeds, I find none whose works are less than Mine own; yet whatsoever ariseth within My inmost heart excelleth the deeds of the learned and the devout. As for the miraculous signs, I possess no power over them for Mine own self; nor is there unto Me any sign mightier than My own Word.”

Thus, the Báb makes plain that His greatest miracle—the supreme proof of His divine mission—lay not in any outward display of power, but in the verses He revealed: those effulgent Words that flowed from His pen with such speed and majesty that they confounded the learned of His age and bore witness to the celestial Source from which they had descended.

Throughout His responses to the ten questions, the Báb demonstrates that servitude is the singular lens through which all other aspects of the Manifestation must be understood. He emphasizes the necessity of surrendering entirely to God, affirming that all apparent contrarities—the power to act yet the self-effacement, the sovereignty yet the dependence—are manifestations of the divine decree:

“And whatsoever thou hast beheld in that station of apparent contrariety returneth, in truth, unto that same divine decree. And none hath the right to say, ‘Why?’ or ‘Wherefore?’”

In the Epistle’s closing passages, the Báb unites fear and hope in His own servitude:

“Say: I fear, and I hope alike for His forgiveness and His chastisement. And I know assuredly that His judgment is founded upon justice. If pardon be granted, it is from Him, a token of His bounty; and if chastisement be decreed, I am verily deserving thereof.”

In this final expression, He exemplifies the full perfection of the servant: conscious of the omnipotence and justice of God, the Manifestation bows in humility, trusting fully in divine ordination, yet radiating the inexhaustible sovereignty of His station.

In the Báb’s luminous Epistle, the profound paradox of His station is made manifest: sovereignty crowned by servitude, majesty veiled in humility, and the Manifestation wholly absorbed in the service of the Lord. In the history of Revelation, no clearer portrait exists of the perfection of servitude as the apex of prophetic and Manifest station.

Thus Doth the Báb Reveal:³

“In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

[Prelude]

*Praise be to God, the Incomparable Originator, Who hath brought forth Origination itself, without any origination before it, and Who hath fashioned Fashioning itself, without any fashioning after it.*⁴

*Then did He ordain the Destiny as an isthmus between the two, in accordance with the geometry of His design.*⁵

Glorified and exalted is He! Transcendent hath He ascended in the loftiness of the sovereignty of the Countenance of His Presence, beyond the description of all essences.

Sanctified beyond all sanctity is the Manifestation of the vestures of the Countenance of the sovereignty of His Self-Subsisting Being, exalted above the description of all contingent beings in their true reality.

*Whosoever claimeth that He is known through the dawning of His Identity hath, within his own soul, conceived a likeness unto the sovereignty of His Oneness; and whosoever claimeth that He indicateth by His Essence unto His own Essence hath verily claimed unto himself the right of inaccessibility in His Essence.*⁶

For He is, as He is in His eternal Being and in His everlasting Identity; knowledge is utterly severed from the limits of His Selfhood, and wholly separated, by His Essence, from the ordinances of expression.

For it is the ancient camphor,⁷ whose inner reality hath barred all manifestations from the limits of the archetype; It is a pure and simple Essence, which, by virtue of its existence, hath barred all emanations from attaining the station of Majesty.

³ For ease of reading, the various sections of the Epistle—comprising the *Prelude*, the ten *Revelations in Response to Queries*, and the *Epilogue*—have been identified by the present translator and marked within the text.

⁴ In Islamic metaphysics, particularly within *ḥikmat al-ishrāq* and ‘*irfānī*’ cosmology, *ibdā’* (origination *ex nihilo*) and *ikhtirā’* (fashioning or bringing-forth) represent successive and hierarchically distinct modes of divine creative activity. *Ibdā’* denotes the absolute, timeless act of divine origination—creation without precedent, mediation, or preexistent matter—by which God calls into being the highest immaterial realities, such as the First Intellect or the Primal Will. *Ikhtirā’*, by contrast, refers to a secondary creative stage, involving the manifestation of existents derived from those primary realities. It signifies a creative act that, while independent of temporal sequence, is nevertheless conceptually posterior to *ibdā’* and pertains to the emergence of the cosmos from the world of pure emanation. Thus, the two terms together describe the full metaphysical descent from the ineffable source of all being to the structured order of existence—a process articulated in both philosophical and Bábí-Bahá’í cosmology as the unfolding of divine revelation within the arc of descent (*qaws al-nuzūl*).

⁵ In the Báb’s cosmology, *al-Qadar* (Destiny) represents the intermediary principle between the divine act of Origination (*ibdā’*) and the manifest act of Invention (*ikhtirā’*). It denotes the stage of divine determination wherein the latent realities of existence are measured, proportioned, and ordained in accordance with the divine “geometry” (*handasah*). Thus, *Qadar* functions as the metaphysical *barzakh*—the isthmus—between pure emanation and contingent creation: the archetypal blueprint through which the worlds of being are fashioned and harmonized.

⁶ The expression “to claim the right of inaccessibility in His Essence” (*idda ‘ā ḥaqq al-imtina’ fī dhātih*) denotes an act of metaphysical presumption — to arrogate to oneself an attribute belonging solely to the Divine Reality. In the Báb’s theological system, *al-imtina’* signifies the absolute unreachability of God’s Essence: no name, attribute, or intellect can penetrate that sanctified domain. Knowledge of God, therefore, is possible only through His Manifestation (*maẓhar*), Who is the mirror reflecting the divine Names without confounding the Essence Itself. Bahá’u’lláh later reaffirms this same doctrine: “The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, He, the Source of infinite grace, hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit” (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, ¶103).

⁷ The term *camphor* (Arabic: *kāfur*, كافور) denotes a white, fragrant crystalline substance derived from the camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*), known for its cooling nature. In Arabic and Persian literary and mystical usage, it symbolizes

Glorified and Exalted be He! None knoweth how He is in the eternity of all eternities, and He verily is the Almighty, the All-Powerful.

And now, behold Me, upon the night of the fifteenth of the month of Jumādā al-Ūlá, in the year 1263 [A.H.], upon the earth and amidst the mountains, in imprisonment.⁸

I bear witness that there is no God but Him, alone, without partner or peer; even as His very Essence hath testified unto His own Essence that there is no God but Him, the Mighty, the All-Wise.⁹

And I bear witness unto Muḥammad — may the blessings of God rest upon Him, upon His Kindred, and upon His Chosen Ones — in that station of might, unity, majesty, and grandeur.¹⁰ Such that none among creation can grasp that through knowledge; indeed, He is the Mighty, the Most Exalted.

And I bear witness unto Mine own self that I am a servant who hath believed in God and in His signs, and who hath shown patience in the path of God by My arrival upon that land after Mine ascendancy, that the souls of men might be sifted and all be tried according to the command of God — exalted be His remembrance¹¹ — for He, verily, is the Mighty, the All-Wise.¹

[Revelation in Response to Queries]

Thereafter, I have perused thy letter and discerned what thou didst desire to set forth therein.

1: *Know, then, that pure knowledge is that which is concerned with naught save the recognition of God — exalted be His remembrance — and this is the primal nature which God hath created within His servant, that thereby he may affirm his servitude unto God, his Lord.*

Whereas ‘Alī—peace be upon Him—hath alluded, in the letters of the word ‘Abd (Servant), that by the letter ‘Ayn (‘ilm, عِلْم) is signified his knowledge of God; by the letter Bā’ (būnuhu, بُنُوهُ) is signified his separation from all creation; and by the letter Dāl (dunūwwuh, دُنُوْهُ) his nearness unto the Creator — sanctified above all manner and beyond all allusion.

2: *And as to that which thou hast written concerning the doubts that have assailed thee and thy brethren — this is but due to thy remoteness from the court of nearness to the Manifestation of thy Lord and their Lord.*

Seek then refuge in God, hold fast to His cord, and put thy trust in Him. Know that the ultimate degree of certitude is that thou shouldst fear naught while in the presence of God, and shouldst behold, in the

purity, clarity, and detachment from the heat of passion. The Qur’ān associates it with celestial refreshment and spiritual bliss: “The righteous shall drink of a cup whose mixture is of camphor” (Qur’ān 76:5). In later Shī’ī mystical writings—particularly within the Shaykhī school—the term was employed metaphorically to signify a lofty realm within the divine worlds, alluding to the sphere of pristine simplicity and essential unity. Within this context, the Báb’s reference to the “ancient camphor” evokes both the Qur’ānic imagery of spiritual purity and the metaphysical symbolism of the Shaykhī tradition, representing the most transcendent and undiluted reality of the Divine Essence.

⁸ The Epistle was revealed on the night of 15 Jumādā al-Ūlá, 1263 AH, corresponding to 29 March 1847 CE. This date situates the revelation during the Báb’s early period in Mákū, Azerbaijan.

⁹ Reference to the first Pillar of Faith in the Bábí and Bahá’í religious framework: Tawḥīd (Unity of God). It underscores the absolute oneness of the divine essence, which forms the foundational principle of both the Báb’s revelation and subsequent Bahá’í theology.

¹⁰ Reference to the second and third pillars of faith: Prophethood (Nubuwwah) and Imamate (Imāmah). Prophethood denotes the divinely appointed Messenger who reveals God’s will, while Imamate signifies the divinely guided authority that succeeds the Prophet, safeguarding and interpreting His teachings. Together, they underscore the continuity of divine guidance and the mediation between God and creation.

¹¹ Reference to the fourth pillar of faith: the Shī’ah and the Qá’im (He Who shall arise). This pillar denotes the divinely appointed authority within the Shī’ah community and the eschatological figure who will arise to establish justice and divine order. It underscores the continuity of divine guidance and the ultimate fulfillment of God’s purpose through the appearance of the Qá’im.

face of God's majesty, no thing whatsoever. Whoso falleth short of this station is not of Us, nor can he be numbered among them that pertain unto Us. Rather, such a one hath arisen from the tempestuous darkness of the self, and shall return thereto, unless he be grieved by its veils.

3: And as to what thou hast written concerning thy migration in the path of God — naught in the heavens or on the earth is hidden from God. Indeed, a bounty from His Presence hath been conferred upon thee, in that He hath guided thee unto His path. And verily, He shall recompense all with that which surpasseth what they desire and what they perform. Fear not, therefore, in the Cause of God, on account of what thou knowest, for God is powerful over all things, encompasseth all things, and is, in very truth, a witness unto all things.

4: And as to what thou hast written, that the Gate of the Imám — peace be upon Him — must needs be a mirror reflecting Him, this is indeed the truth, wherein there is no doubt. Even as the Imám — peace be upon Him — is the Mirror of God, glorified be His majesty, in Whom naught is reflected save the effulgence of His countenance. And God hath made no distinction between Him and Himself, save that of servitude. As the Proof of God — peace be upon Him—hath alluded in His supplication for the venerated month of Rajab: 'By Thy stations which none knoweth save Thee.' and so forth.¹²

Yet be not neglectful of the ordinance of servitude. For the Imám — peace be upon Him — despite His exaltation above all things and His independence of all things, became powerless before one such as His slayer, and begged of him a draught of water;¹³ and this was by the preordained measure of the Almighty, the All-Knowing.¹⁴

And whatsoever thou hast beheld in that station of apparent contrariety¹⁵ returneth, in truth, unto that same divine decree. And none hath the right to say, 'Why?' or 'Wherefore?' Nor doth it harm him who knoweth God and His Chosen Ones, should he not manifest his knowledge according to the desires of men. For were God to bestow upon all according to the inclinations of their own selves, there would remain not one among the unbelievers. Yet He is by no means powerless to do so. Rather, He maketh His decree manifest and setteth forth His proof, even though it be through a single verse, by which mankind are powerless to produce the like thereof, that he who perisheth may perish through a clear proof, and he who liveth may live through a clear proof.¹⁶

¹² *Al-Mafāṭīḥ al-Jinān*, Shaykh 'Abbās al-Qummī, Chapter II, Section I, "On the Virtues and Acts of the Month of Rajab." The author instructs that on each day of Rajab one should recite the following supplication:

"O God! I ask Thee by the meanings of all that Thy servants call upon Thee with, and by Thy stations which admit no diminution in any place; by which those who truly know Thee recognize Thee, with no difference between Thee and them, save that they are Thy servants and Thy creation... O Possessor of Majesty and Generosity."

¹³ Reference to the incident of the Plain of Karbala, where Imám Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (peace be upon him) was martyred.

¹⁴ The phrase "by the preordained measure of the Almighty, the All-Knowing" evokes the Báb's conception of *taqdīr*—the divine determination or measured ordainment of all things within the arc of creation. Here it signifies that even the abasement of the Imám, despite His inherent exaltation, unfolded according to the divinely allotted measure of destiny. Through such trials the Manifestations of God exemplify the perfection of servitude and submission before the inscrutable will of the Almighty.

¹⁵ The term *diddiyya* (contrariety or opposition) refers to the paradoxical qualities that may appear in a Manifestation's station or actions when viewed from the human perspective. In the Bábí and Bahá'í mystical framework, such apparent contradictions do not signify deficiency or inconsistency, but rather reflect the manifold ways in which the divine decree (*ḥukm*) manifests in creation. All phenomena, whether of exalted majesty or humble submission, ultimately return to the same divine ordinance, illustrating that the Manifestation's outward actions, however paradoxical they may seem, are perfectly aligned with God's wisdom. Thus, the "station of apparent contrariety" embodies the harmony of opposites under the immutable law of divine decree, revealing both the transcendence and immanent governance of God over all creation.

¹⁶ Qur'an: *Sūrah al-Anfāl* (8:42). The expression "that he who perisheth may perish through a clear proof, and he who liveth may live through a clear proof" encapsulates a central principle in Bábí and Bahá'í theology regarding divine justice and the efficacy of revelation. The term *bayyinah*—rendered here as "clear proof"—denotes a decisive, unmistakable manifestation of God's guidance, by which human souls are spiritually tested. It signifies that the outcomes of spiritual "life" or "perishing" are determined not arbitrarily, but according to the recognition or rejection of God's manifest signs. The phrase

5: *And as to what thou hast written, that the late Siyyid¹⁷ — may the mercy of God be upon him — did not claim the station which I have claimed, and therefore no signs transcending the natural order appeared from him — the matter hath, in truth, become confused for thee.*

For thou hast heard his saying on many occasions, Beware of the name ‘al-‘Āmiriyyah,’¹⁸ for I tremble lest it be profaned by the tongue of the speaker. Hast thou not heard his utterance, concerning him who shall appear after him, expressed in those verses which he oftentimes recited?

‘O thou of tender years! O thou whose limbs are yet supple!

O thou freshly weaned from thy mother’s milk!’¹⁹

Know thou that the absence of supernatural signs on his part proceeded from the decree of the Imām — peace be upon Him — whose hidden mystery the people are unable to fathom. And verily, were God to will it, He could cause to appear from Me a bounty emanating from His own Presence, even as I once wrote, in Mine own hand, in two separate letters to two of the divines, foretelling the passing of al-Mu‘tamad eighty-seven days ere his appointed time.²⁰ What deed, then, could compare with this? Sharpen thy sight, clarify thy vision, and seek forgiveness from thy Lord, that thou mayest indeed be numbered among the believers.

6: *And as to that thou hast written concerning the saying of God — exalted and glorified be He — ‘Obey Me, that I may make thee like unto Myself,’²¹ and so forth. By My life! I have not obeyed God in that station due to any weakness or deficiency on My part, and doubt not that God, My Lord, faileth not to fulfill His promise.*

further underscores the concept of ‘*ajz*, human incapacity to produce or rival such a divine proof. In this context, the passage highlights that both the spiritual consequences of belief or disbelief and the exercise of free will are inextricably linked to the manifest evidence presented, thereby reconciling the transcendent authority of the Manifestation with the moral and spiritual responsibility of each soul under God’s immutable decree (*ḥukm*).

¹⁷ Sayyid Kāzīm al-Rashṭī — A prominent Shi‘ī scholar of the early 19th century, noted for his extensive knowledge of hadith, jurisprudence, and esoteric interpretation.

¹⁸ The phrase “Beware of the name al-‘Āmiriyyah...” alludes to a celebrated Arabic verse of uncertain authorship, often attributed to Qays ibn al-Mulawwah (Majnūn Laylā). In the classical context, al-‘Āmiriyyah refers to Laylā al-‘Āmiriyyah, the poet’s beloved, and the line expresses a lover’s jealous reverence for her name. The Báb’s allusion transforms this motif into a mystical admonition: the sacred names and divine mysteries should be protected from casual utterance, just as the lover guards the sanctity of the beloved’s name from the tongue of the heedless.

¹⁹ Hájí Mirzá Jānī al-Kāshānī mentions in his work *Nuqṭat al-Kāf*, p. 103 (published 1328 AH, translated into English by Edward Brown) that Sayyid Kāzīm al-Rashṭī frequently recited these lines, alluding to the approaching appearance of the Qá‘im, the Báb. This poem appears in the Dīvān-i Ghazalīyāt-i Shām, Ghazal no. 2127, by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.

²⁰ The term *al-Mu‘tamad* refers to Manúchíhr Khán Mu‘tamad al-Dawlih, the Governor of Isfahán, who graciously hosted the Báb during His six-month stay in that city before His transfer to the fortress of Máku by order of Muḥammad Sháh. In this passage, the Báb foretells the passing of Manúchíhr Khán well before his death. Similarly, in the prelude to His Commentary on the Súrah of al-Baqarah, the Báb describes a vision in which He beheld the passing of Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtí prior to the arrival of the news in Shiráz some months later. The Báb writes:

“O God! Thou surely knowest that, on the very night wherein I willed the establishment of a sign in this Book, I beheld that every particle of the Holy Land was lifted into the air; then moved spontaneously toward My house, and there settled. Thereafter came the tidings of the passing of al-Khalīl, the learned, venerable master—may God’s mercy be upon him. Indeed, I had informed certain individuals of this event even before the tidings reached them, by the very vision of My sleep.” This passage not only attests to the Báb’s visionary insight but also situates His early revelations within a context of spiritual foreknowledge and divine disclosure.

²¹ The phrase “Obey Me, that I may make thee like unto Myself” reflects a profound mystical principle articulated in both Bábí and Bahá’í revelation. It is echoed in a Hadith Qudsi, wherein the Exalted Lord declares: “My servant, obey Me, that I may make thee like unto Myself; I am Ever-Living, never to die; I will make thee living, never to die; I am Rich, never in need; I will make thee rich, never in need; I am as I will, and I will make thee as thou wilt” (Mashāriq Anwār al-Yaqīn, al-Hāfiẓ Rajab al-Barsī, Mu’assasat al-‘Ilmī li-l-Maṭbū‘āt, 2001, ch. *Mawālāt ‘Alī wa-‘Adam Idrāk Kinnah*, p. 104). This pronouncement underscores the transformative efficacy of obedience to God’s command (*ḥukm*), whereby the human soul is spiritually conformed to the attributes of the Divine Manifestation. The text emphasizes that such conformity is not literal but a mystical elevation: the believer partakes in divine life, richness, and volition in a manner proportionate to God’s ordinance, illustrating the inseparable connection between obedience, divine grace, and spiritual transformation.

7: *And as to that which thou hast alluded to concerning the accomplishments of Mirdámád²² and Shaykh Bahá'u'd-Dín²³ — may the mercy of God be upon them, and may He vouchsafe His forgiveness unto them — God alone knoweth their true reality; as for Me, I have never claimed aught of those attainments, nor am I capable of them except by the will of God and the bounty He may graciously confer upon Me.*

And know thou that ascetic discipline or abstinence from food is no proof in My case, for I neither weary Myself nor diminish My food out of bodily weakness; Nay rather, the very proof in My case is the absence of that which men imagine to be a proof.²⁴ Comprehend this, if thou possessest understanding, and surrender thyself entirely to the command of God, that thou mayest be numbered among the truly victorious.

8: *And as to what thou hast described concerning the attributes of him who beareth that station — God, verily, knoweth best where He ordaineth His authority. As for knowledge, it is none other than My knowledge of God and of His Chosen Ones; apart from this, I possess no knowledge whatsoever. As for deeds, I find none whose works are less than Mine own; yet whatsoever ariseth within My inmost heart excelleth the deeds of the learned and the devout.²⁵*

As for the miraculous signs, I possess no power over them for Mine own self; nor is there unto Me any sign mightier than My own Word. For the light of the Morn of Eternity hath shone forth upon My outward being in like manner as upon My inmost essence. And I do not say unto thee aught less than this. I seek forgiveness for having confined Thy majesty within the bounds of greatness, and To Thee do I turn in penitence.

9: *And as to that which thou hast written concerning the disputation of the late Siyyid — may the mercy of God be upon him — in Baghdád with the 'ulamá of the Sunnis, and their reception of the*

²² Muhammad Bāqir ibn Muhammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Istrābādī al-Dāmād was a distinguished scholar of high repute, a sage and skilled theologian well-versed in rational sciences, contemporary with Shaykh Bahá'u'd-Dín. He was also a masterful poet in both Persian and Arabic. He received *ijāzas* (authorizations) from his maternal uncle Shaykh 'Abd al-'Alī ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-'Alī al-'Āmili al-Karkī, and from Shaykh Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-'Āmili, both of which have been preserved. Al-Dāmād authored numerous works in philosophy, jurisprudence, and theology, including *al-Qabasāt*, *al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, *al-Ḥabl al-Matīn*, *Shāri' al-Najāt*, commentaries on *al-Kāfi*, *al-Faqih*, and *al-Šahīfah al-Kāmilah*, as well as treatises on the prohibition of naming the Mahdī—may peace be upon him—among others. He passed away in 1041 A.H. Additional works include *'Uyūn al-Masā'il*, *Khalasat al-Malakūt*, *Taqwīm al-Īmān*, *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn*, *al-Rawāshih al-Samāwiyyah*, *al-Sab' al-Shadād*, *Ḍawābiṭ al-Riḍā'*, *al-'Imādāt wa'l-Tashrīqāt*, *Sharḥ al-Istibṣār*, along with numerous letters, responses to questions, and poetry. — *Amal al-Āmal fī 'Ulamā' Jabal 'Āmil*, al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, p. 101.

²³ Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn Muhammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Hārithī al-'Āmili al-Jubbā'ī was a learned and accomplished scholar, distinguished for his mastery in jurisprudence, ḥadīth, rhetoric, literary composition, theology, and mathematics. He was recognized as an authoritative figure of his time, widely trusted and esteemed for both his scholarly rigor and his literary eloquence. — *Amal al-Āmal fī 'Ulamā' Jabal 'Āmil*, al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, p. 76.

²⁴ The Báb's declaration that "ascetic discipline or abstinence from food is no proof in My case, for I neither weary Myself nor diminish My food out of bodily weakness; nay rather, the very proof in My case is the absence of that which men imagine to be a proof" conveys a profound mystical and theological principle central to Bábí and Bahá'í thought. It repudiates the conventional assumption that outward austerities—fasting, self-denial, or physical hardship—constitute evidence of spiritual station or divine favor. The Báb affirms that His actions, neither constrained by bodily limitation nor motivated by self-imposed asceticism, are independent of such external forms. More strikingly, the passage elucidates the paradoxical nature of His proof (*bayyinah*): that His divine authority is manifest precisely in ways imperceptible to ordinary human judgment, transcending customary indicators of holiness. By this teaching, the Báb underscores both the inadequacy of human measurement (*'ajz*) and the absolute sovereignty of God's will, demonstrating that true spiritual authority is revealed through realities that lie beyond the conventions and expectations of the worldly mind, and that the ultimate evidence of a Manifestation's station is intrinsic, subtle, and wholly divine.

²⁵ This passage encapsulates the Báb's paradox of divine self-effacement and inner omnipotence. Outwardly, He appears devoid of visible "deeds," yet inwardly, the divine inspiration that arises within His *sirr* surpasses the cumulative labors of all human strivers. The statement overturns juridical conceptions of merit (*'amal*) and asserts that true action is the inward revelation of divine will—a theme later echoed in Bahá'u'lláh's writings.

truth from him, I am in no wise acquainted thereof; nor would any among them have embraced his Faith save through the compelling authority of the Cause itself.

Be thou just in the religion of God this day, that all who oppose it may be more firmly constrained by its ordinance than were those of former times, who could not bring forth aught comparable to the proofs revealed, whether in the days of the Shaykh or of the Siyyid²⁶ — may the mercy of God rest upon them both. And of this, there can be no doubt in the sight of them that are endued with insight.

10: And as to what thou hast written concerning the emanation of the perfect soul among the mystics, and the confirmation of this reality in regard to the bearer of this Cause, and thy inability to respond to thine own self concerning this matter — fear God, and follow not the promptings of thine own passions.

For God, exalted and glorified be He, hath spoken to His Beloved, saying: ‘Thou shalt not guide whomsoever thou lovest, but God guideth whomsoever He willeth.’²⁷ What soul could be stronger than the soul of Muḥammad — may the blessings of God be upon Him and His Kindred?

And how was it that He (Muḥammad) could not transform the souls of His near kindred from denial to divine recognition? Even so is the Divine Decree, extending from atom unto atom. Nay rather, God hath made His Cause manifest and steadfast, so that every soul may perceive it.

Then said He—exalted be His remembrance — ‘There shall be no compulsion in religion.’²⁸

And again His saying: ‘Whoso willeth, let him believe, and whoso willeth, let him disbelieve.’²⁹

And again His saying: ‘And whoso disbelieveth — God is, indeed, independent created things.’³⁰

And yet, beyond all doubt, had Muḥammad — may the blessings of God be upon Him and His Kindred—willed, through His irrevocable Will, the guidance of all, God would assuredly have guided all mankind. But He (Muḥammad) was fully conscious of the guidance of all, in accordance with that which He (Muḥammad) had accepted and willed in conformity with the ordinance of His Lord. Whoso attaineth unto felicity entereth the Faith, and whoso followeth the promptings of his own desires knoweth thereby the judgment of God, and thereafter shall he indeed be numbered among the idolaters.

[Epilogue]

Say: I fear, and I hope alike for His forgiveness and His chastisement. And I know assuredly that His judgment is founded upon justice.

If pardon be granted, it is from Him, a token of His bounty; and if chastisement be decreed, I am verily deserving thereof.

²⁶ Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī and Sayyid Kāzīm al-Rashtī — Two prominent early 19th-century Shiʿī scholars and leaders of the Shaykhi school. Both were influential in the intellectual and esoteric religious milieu that preceded the Báb’s declaration.

²⁷ Qurʾan: *Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ* (28:56).

²⁸ Qurʾan: *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2:256).

²⁹ Qurʾan: *Sūrah al-Kahf* (18:29).

³⁰ Qurʾan: *Sūrah Al-ʿImrān* (3:97).

*Lo, O Death, thou that forsakest me not!
Grant me rest, for thou hast consumed every friend,
I behold thee relentless toward those I love,
As though thou wert guided unto them by sure decree.³¹*

And whenever I have delivered unto thee a concise reply to thy questions, know that the detailed answer shall be revealed to thee through contemplation of these brief words.

Verily, I answered thee then from the mountain wherein I was compelled, though I possessed the power to act otherwise.

Praise be to God, Who hath freed me for His worship and intimate supplication, and for the praise of Him, of Muḥammad, and of His Chosen Ones. Unto Him do I complain of my affliction and my sorrow; upon Him do I rely in my solitude and estrangement; sufficient is God as a Guardian; And glorified be God, at morn and at eventide.”

³¹ This passage discusses lamentation and complaint over the oppression of tyrants against the people of piety, and it is reported in Shi‘ī tradition that these verses were recited on the day of the martyrdom of ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir (may God be pleased with him). The account exemplifies the experience of persecution and divine testing in early Islamic history, illustrating the trials faced by the faithful under oppression (*Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 34, p. 438, 86).

The Sublime Epistle of the Báb in Reply to Mullá Asadulláh Qazviní (From a Typed Version of the Arabic Text)

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ)

الحمد لله الذي ابتدع الإبداع لا من إبداع قبله واخترع الاختراع لا من اختراع بعده ثم جعل القدر بينهما برزخاً لهندسته فسبحانه وتعالى قد علا علو ظهور سلطان حضرته عن وصف الجوهريات وتقدس قدس مظهر قمص طلعة سلطان قِيوميته عن نعت الممكنات بحقيقتها فمن قال إنه معروف بطلعة هويته فقد اتخذ في نفسه شبهاً لسلطان أحديته ومن قال إنه يدل بذاته على ذاته فقد ادعى حق الامتناع في ذاته إذ إنه كما هو عليه في كينونته الأزلية وإنيته الأبدية مقطعة العرفان عن حد نفسانيته ومفارقة حكم البيان بذانتيته إذ إنها هي كافورية قديمة التي هي بانيته مسددة الظهورات عن حد المثال وإنها هي ذات بحت ساذجية التي هي بكيونيتها مقطعة التجليات عن مقام الجلال فسبحانه وتعالى لا يعلم كيف هو في أزل الازال وإنه لهو القوي العزيز

وها أنا ذا في ليلة النصف من شهر جيم الأولى في سنة ١٢٦٣ على الأرض ثم الجبال في الحبس أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له كما قد شهد ذاته بذاته بأنه لا إله إلا هو العزيز الحكيم وأشهد لمحمد - صلى الله عليه وآله وأوصيائه - صلوات الله عليهم بما هو عليه من العزة والوحدة والجلال والعظمة حيث لا يحيط بعلم ذلك أحد من الخلق إنه لا إله إلا هو العزيز المتعال وأشهد لنفسي بأنني أنا عبد آمن بالله وآياته وصبرته في سبيل الله بالورود على تلك الأرض بعد قدرتي لتغربل النفوس من الناس وتمحص الكل بأمر الله عن ذكره إنه هو العزيز الحكيم

وبعد قد قرئت كتابك واطلعت بما أردت في خطابك فاعلم أن العلم الخالص هو الذي لا يتعلق بشيء إلا بمعرفة الله عز ذكره وهو فطرة الله التي خلقها الله في العبد ليثبت بها عبوديته لله ربّه حيث أشار عليّ (ع) في أحرف العبد: "بأن العين علمه بالله والباء بونه عن الخلق والدال دنوه بالخالق بلا كيف ولا إشارة"

وإن الذي كتبت من الشكوك الواردة عليك وعلى إخوانك فهو من بُعد مقامك على بساط قرب طلعة مولاك وسيدهم فاستعد بالله واعتصم بحبله وتوكل عليه واعلم بأن حد اليقين أن لا تخاف مع الله شيئاً ولا ترى في جنب عظمة الله أمراً وإن دون هذه الرتبة فليست ممناً ولا ينسب إلينا بل بدنت من طمطام ظلمات النفوس ورجعت إليها إذا لم تحزن بها

وإن الذي كتبت مهاجرتك في سبيل الله فلا يخفى على الله شيء في السموات ولا في الأرض وإن عليك المنة من عنده لما هداك إلى صراطه وإنه هو يجزي الكل بأحسن مما يريدون ويعملون ولا تخف في دين الله من عملك فإن الله قادر على كل شيء ومحيط بكل شيء وهو على كل شيء شهيد

وإن ما كتبت بأن باب الإمام - عليه السلام - لا بد أن يكون مرآة له فهو حق لا ريب فيه فكما أن الإمام - عليه السلام - هو مرآة الله جل جلاله لا يحكي فيه إلا طلعته وما جعل الله فرقاً بينه وبينهم إلا العبودية حيث أشار الحجة - عليه السلام - في دعائه في شهر رجب المرجب: "وبمقاماتك التي ... الخ" ولكن لا تغفل من حكم العبودية فإن الإمام - عليه السلام - مع علوه على كل شيء وغنائه عن كل شيء يعجز لمثل قاتله ويطلب منه الماء وإن ذلك من تقدير العزيز العليم وإن كل ما رأيت في ذلك المقام من صفات الضدية يرجع إلى ذلك الحكم وليس لأحد يقول لم ويم ولا يضّر لمن عرف الله وأوليائه عدم إظهار علمه بما شاء الناس لأن الله لو أعطى الكل بما يهوى إليه نفسه فلم يبق أحد من الكفار ولا يعجزه ذلك ولكن يظهر حكمه ويتبين حجته ولو كان بأية واحدة التي يعجز الناس عن الإتيان بمثلاً ﴿لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَى مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ﴾

وإن ما كتبت أن السيد - رحمه الله عليه - ما ادعى حكم الذي أنا ادعيت ولذا لم يظهر منه خوارق العادات فقد اشتبه الأمر عليك وسمعت قوله في كثير من الأوقات: "وإياك واسم العامرية إنني أخاف عليهما من فم المتكلم" أما سمعت قوله في حق من يجيء بعده بتلك الأشعار في كثير من الأوقات: "يا صغيّر السنّ يا رطب البدن يا قريب العهد من شرب اللبن" وإن عدم خوارق العادات من عبده هو من أجل حكم الإمام - عليه السلام - لما لا يعلم الناس سرّه وإنني أنا لو شاء الله ليظهر من عندي فضلاً من عنده كما كتبت في كتابين بخطي إلى اثنين من العلماء حكم فوت المعتمد قبل أجله بسبعة وثمانين يوماً فأي أمر يعدل ذلك دق بصرك وصف نضرك واستغفر الله ربك لتكونن من المؤمنين

وإن ما كتبت من حكم قول الله عز وجل: "أطعني أجمعك مثلي" لعمري أنا ما أطعت الله بذلك المقام لعجزي وضعفي لا شك أن الله ربّي لا يخلف الميعاد

وإن ما أشرت من صنایع مير الداماد وشيخ البهائي - رحمة الله عليهما ويغفر الله عنهما - الله يعلم بهما إنني أنا ما ادعيت شيئاً من تلك الصنایع ولا أستطيع بهما إلا إذا شاء الله وأكرمني وإن الرياضة وقلة الأكل ليس بدليل في حقّي لأنني أنا ما أعجب نفسي ولا أقل في الأكل لضعف جسمي بل إن الحجة هي عدم الحجة مما يتصورون لي فافهم إن كنت ذا فهم واسلم أمر الله لتكونن من الفائزين

وإنَّ ما وصفت من صفات حامل ذلك المقام الله أعلم حيث يجعل حكمه وأما العلم هو علمي بالله وأوليائه ولا أعلم دون ذلك وأما العمل فما أجد أحداً أقلَّ عملاً منِّي ولكن ما يخطر في سرِّي أفضل من عمل المجتهدين وأما خوارق العادات فلا أملك لنفسي شيئاً وليس أعظم آية لي من كلامي لأنَّ نور صبح الأزل أشرق على علانيتي بمثل سريرتي ولا أقول لك أصغر من ذلك وأستغفر الله عن التَّحديد بالكبير وإليه أنيب

وإنَّ ما كتبت من مباحثة السيّد - رحمة الله عليه - في البغداد مع علماء السُّنة وقبول الحقِّ عنه فلا أعلم به ولا يقبل أحد منهم دينه إلَّا الزامهم أنصف في دين الله اليوم كلَّ المخالفين ليكونون أشدَّ إلزاماً بالأمر من عجزهم عن الإتيان من الآثار أو في زمان الشَّيخ أو السيّد - رحمة الله عليهما - ولا شكَّ في ذلك عند أولي الألباب

وإنَّ ما كتبت من أثر نفس الكامل من العرفاء وثبوت ذلك في حقِّ حامل ذلك الأمر وعجزك من جواب نفسك من هذا اتَّق الله ولا تتَّبِع هواك فإنَّ الله عزَّ وجلَّ يقول مخاطباً لحبيبه: ﴿إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾ فأيُّ نفس تكون أقوى من نفس محمّد - صَلَّى الله عليه وآله - فكيف لا يبدِّل نفوس ذي قرابته عن الكفر بالإيمان وكذلك الحكم من الذِّرة إلى الذِّرة بل إنَّ الله جعل أمره واضحاً ثابتاً بحيث يدركه كلُّ النفوس ثمَّ قال عزَّ ذكره: ﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ﴾ ثمَّ قوله: ﴿فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ﴾ ثمَّ قوله: ﴿وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ مع أنَّه لا شكَّ بأنَّ محمّد - صَلَّى الله عليه وآله - لو شاء بهداية الكلِّ بمشيتته الحتمية فإنَّ الله هدى النَّاس جميعاً ولكن تنبأ الكلَّ هداية الكلِّ بما قبل وشاء حكم ربِّه فمن أدرك السَّعادة دخل في الدِّين ومن اتَّبِع هواه فقد علم بحكم الله ثمَّ بعد ذلك ليكوننَّ من المشركين

قل أخاف وأرجو عفوه وعقابه واعلم حقاً إنَّه حكم عدل فإنَّك عفو فهو تفضَّل وإنَّك تعذيب فإنِّي له أهل "أَلَا أَيُّهَا الْمَوْثُ الَّذِي لَيْسَ تَارِكِي * أَرَحْنِي فَقَدْ أَفْنَيْتَ كُلَّ خَلِيلٍ *** أَرَاكَ مُصِرّاً بِالَّذِينَ أُحِبُّهُمْ * كَأَنَّكَ تَنْحُو نَحْوَهُمْ بِدَلِيلٍ"

فكلُّما ألقيت لك جواب موجز لسؤالك وأما الجواب المفصَّل يظهر لك بالتَّفكُّر في الكلمات الموجزة وإنَّني أنا أجبتك حينئذٍ في الجبل الذي أكون فيه مجبوراً بعد قدرتي على غير ذلك فأحمد الله الذي فرغني لعبادته ومناجاته والثناء عليه وعلى محمّد وأوليائه وإليه أشكو بئني وحزني وعليه أتكل في وحدتي وغربتي كفى بالله وكَيْلاً وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلاً