



“Bind Ye the Broken With the Hands of Justice”

By Robert Sockett

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WHILE UNDER HOUSE ARREST in Adrianople, Bahá'u'lláh addressed the rulers of the nineteenth century in his Tablet of the Kings. Over the next few years he would continue to write messages to the monarchs in Europe and the Middle East. Sometimes he wrote letters directly to them, and at other times addressed them by name in his other works. In 1873, in his book of laws, Bahá'u'lláh called the leaders of the New World to a unique role in establishing justice.

Sultan ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz had banished Bahá'u'lláh from city to city across the Ottoman Empire. Bahá'u'lláh wrote the Ottoman prime minister, ‘Alí Páshá, and warned him that the Sultan would soon lose control of his realm. “The day is approaching when the Land of Mystery [Adrianople] and what is beside it shall be changed, and shall pass out of the hands of the King,” he wrote. ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz was overthrown on May 30, 1876. Two weeks later he committed suicide.

When Napoleon III, the Emperor of France, received Bahá'u'lláh’s message through diplomatic channels, it was reported that he laughed, threw it over his shoulder, and said, “If this man is God, I am two Gods!”

After arriving in the prison city of ‘Akká, Bahá'u'lláh wrote back. “It is not Our wish to address thee words of condemnation,” he wrote, “out of regard for the dignity We conferred upon thee in this mortal life.” But, he charged Napoleon: “Hadst thou been sincere in thy words, thou wouldst have not cast behind thy back the Book of God, when it was sent unto thee by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise. We have proved thee through it, and found thee other than that which thou didst profess.”

In 1870 Napoleon III was supreme. But by September he was gone, baited by Bismarck into going to war against the rising technological might of Prussia. Prussia’s shocking victory at the Battle of Sedan unified Germany: Kaiser Wilhelm I was crowned Emperor of Europe’s new leading power in Napoleon’s residence at Versailles.

Two years later, in his Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh wrote about Germany and the ephemeral nature of earthly glory, recalling the example of Napoleon III. “We hear the lamentations of Berlin,” he wrote, “though she be today in conspicuous glory.”

Bahá'u'lláh's tone changed when he wrote to Queen Victoria. He praised this ruling monarch for abolishing the slave trade and for her representative government. “Thou, indeed, hast done well, for thereby the foundations of the edifice of thine affairs will be strengthened, and the hearts of all that are beneath thy shadow, whether high or low, will be tranquillized.”

Bahá'u'lláh indicated that he thought little of the capacity of the rulers of the nineteenth century to properly manage the planet. “And whenever any one of them hath striven to improve its condition,” he said, “his motive hath been his own gain, whether confessedly so or not; and the unworthiness of this motive hath limited his power to heal or cure.” Instead, he addressed the “elected representatives of the people in every land.” “Take ye counsel together,” he wrote, “and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind and bettereth the condition thereof.”

Later, in the Most Holy Book, Baha'u'lláh gave a specific mission to the leaders across the Atlantic. “Hearken ye, O Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein,” he wrote. “Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.”

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FOOTNOTE / ENDNOTE:

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