

Kitáb-i-Aqdas commentary

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Conqueror of Hearts table of contents

(In 1973, Hand of the Cause A. Q. Faizí gave a talk on the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to the friends in the United States, which was later published on cassette tape by the U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust.)

Dear friends of the United States of America.

Your National Assembly has given me a special honor and privilege to talk to you about the Mother Book of the Bahá'í Faith, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. I first give you the outline of this page with the hope that you will follow the subject matter one by one, and I pray that it will be well received by all the dear ones in that vast country.

First, the order in Bahá'u'lláh's life and His writings:

Second, the revelation of the Book of Aqdas, where, in what year, how long.

Third, the two gifts given to mankind through the Book of Aqdas.

Fourth, this book is a gate through which mankind enters the age of maturity. There are many reasons for these, but three will be given here.

Fifth, is the last one, and most important one. What is it, what exists in this Book which makes it the Mother Book of our Faith and this Dispensation?

Now we will start one by one, and before I start I pray to God that He will confirm me and strengthen me to do justice to this great subject.

Simplicity is the basis and order of Bahá'u'lláh's life. It rules throughout His ways and manners of living, including garments, residence, furniture, His approach to His friends and followers, and as a matter of fact, to all the people of the world. The same order applies to His Writings. All are easy to read, to follow and understand. Almost every Tablet starts with the praise of God, and immediately after that, He starts to answer questions put to Him by the believers. His answers are always direct, frank, to the point, and concise. There are, however, some exceptions to this rule and there are obvious reasons for such exceptional cases. I mention three of these exceptions:

The first is the Tablet to the King of Persia, Násiri'd-Dín Sháh. The language is very exalted and in some parts the vocabulary is very powerful and difficult to understand. The reason is this, that the King had been surrounded by the divines, who always boasted of their knowledge of the Arabic language. Bahá'u'lláh, Who had never been to their schools, by using

elaborate words and perfect melodious sentences desired to awaken and address the King and his entourage to the source of His revelation, the greatness of His Cause, and the exceptional power with which He had been endowed. When the King received this Tablet, he sent it to the divines of his country and asked them to compose a suitable answer, but none dared to even a sentence which could be compared with the perfection of words, style and melody used by Bahá'u'lláh in that great Tablet.

The other exception is His Tablet to Muhammad-Karím Khán,[1] who during his whole life stood firm against the Báb and His followers. Amongst other things that he did, he became so presumptuous as to say and write that some parts of the Báb's Writings are not of pure Arabic style. In this situation, rose to defend His beloved, the Báb and desired to bring this arrogant person to his knees. His answer long and in many instances each word refers to selected poems, prose and proverbs of archaic Arabic literature.

The Book of Aqdas is also difficult to understand, but not because of language in which it is revealed. The language is lucid, very clear and direct, but some sentences are peepholes through which one must see the panorama of the past religions, religious beliefs, customs, etc. Should the reader be a stranger to this background, such sentences would remain meaningless and the reader will be startled as to why and what they stand for in such a mighty book. To understand such references, we must know that in the past religions of God, the people had many rules about hair, clothes, the place of their prayers and worship, engaging servants, and many other petty problems, and they were all sticking to these unnecessary details of their religious life. We must know that there are man-made interpretations about customs, habits, rituals and rules which the followers of the religions take them as the revealed Words of God. Bahá'u'lláh abrogated all such man-made interpretations which stood between man and his Creator, and Bahá'u'lláh, at the same time, paves the way for us to approach God in worship and servitude only with pure, radiant and kindly hearts. It is for these and some other reasons that the beloved Guardian made the codification of the Book of Aqdas as one of the goals of his Ten Year Plan, and not its direct translation.

Now that we have this introduction in mind, let's try to understand where, when and how this Book was revealed.

The place is the house of Abud in the city of 'Akká. There are historical events mentioned in this Book, which when put together and coordinated, indicate that it had not been written in one session. The revelation continued at intervals between the years 1871 to 1873 when it was completed and concluded. When it was finished, Bahá'u'lláh did not send it immediately to the friends throughout the world, the Bahá'í world of His own time. Bahá'u'lláh in some of His Tablets gave the glad tidings to the friends that the Book was finished and ready, but would be sent in due time. The revelation of the Book of Aqdas seems to be like sparks of electricity, and each spark is an independent sentence by itself. There are almost four hundred sentences in the Book of Aqdas. Through them one observes clearly that

Bahá'u'lláh destroys all the obstacles which had been created by man-made interpretations of the Words of God and paves the way for us to tread the path of love and servitude in ease, comfort and absolutely relaxed and freed from worries, of rituals, customs and habits.

Although this Book is very small in size, it is very dynamic in nature and is the main source of the three streams in which the Bahá'í Writings flow abundantly. These three channels are ordinances, spiritual principles, and administrative principles. Let us study in this way also. The exalted Pen of Bahá'u'lláh looks like a traveler who walks in the lofty summits of ranges of mountains and calls, invites, nay insists on the inhabitants of the valleys below to try to ascend to the summits above, whence they can behold the endless beauty of the panorama of that mountain. Sometimes, however, this traveler descends from His lofty summit and goes to the inhabitants of the valley below and helps them to become perfect and independent entities through prayers, consultation, contribution, through a fast and feasts, charity, abstain from alcohol beverages and drugs, and teaches them to live together in perfect harmony and help one another in their upward march.

Bahá'u'lláh also explains that through this Book He has brought two heavenly gifts to mankind. One is a lamp and the other is a key. He says that His commandments are the lamp of mercy entrusted to hands of man. The key is His love. Having the lines of the lamp in our hands, that lamp will help us on our upward march in life, and when we cross the roads and paths, we come across treasures of immeasurable precious stones. By the light of His commandments, we find such treasures, and by the key of His love, we open them and allow humanity to benefit by them. This love is defined by the beloved Master as the mystery of divine revelation, as the spiritual fulfillment of any individual person, as the light of the Kingdom and the breath of the Holy Spirit inspires unto the human spirit is the cause of the manifestation of truth in the phenomenal world, is the means of the most great happiness in both the material and spiritual worlds. It is the greatest law in this vast universe of God. It is the universal magnetic power between the planets and stars shining in the lofty firmament.

Dear friends, let's always have this lamp of His ordinances shining in our lives, and the key of His love operating in our hearts. This Book is a gate through which man enters the age of maturity, leaving behind all the years and centuries of childhood, savagery and inhumanity. The reasons for this are many, but I mention only three.

Bahá'u'lláh mentions in this Book that He had received letters from different individuals in many parts of the Bahá'í community His time, and in all such letters, the writers had asked Him for more ordinances and commandments. Such supplications are tokens of health and maturity. Why? Let's suppose an individual who is a victim to fever. He usually loses his appetite when he is a victim to fever. The physician treats this individual by giving him medicine, sometimes bitter and unbearable. Then the day comes when

the person says that he desires food, more food and the treating doctor takes this as a good omen and declares it as the starting point of the general health of that person. The same principle is true with children who don't like school, who hate all tasks, and remaining in school for long hours. But when they are mature enough, they desire more books to read, more hours to spend with their professors, and more tasks to do. Those letters to Bahá'u'lláh are the first glimpses of a new day in which man begs his Lord to give him from the endless treasure houses of His bounty.

The second proof is this. In past ages, sages talking to sovereigns and rulers of the world could not directly bring to their majesties the fatal result of their judgments and inequities. They related stories of gods and goddesses of ancient times, and they read to them fables about ferocious and wicked animals, and how the cruel ones were finally condemned to fail and fall and victims to their own ego, greed and cunningness. Aesop's stories, fables, and Greek and Roman mythologies are famous in the West. (Somebody) and the Tales of One Thousand and One Nights are outstanding books of the East. These were books, in the Middle Ages, read in the homes and taught to the members of the royal families, and, as a matter of fact, to rulers and ministers of the time. But by the advent of the new age of Bahá'u'lláh, He opened a new way of talking to the commanding personalities of His time.

He did not sing to them the fables and myths. He never spoke to them about the stories and myths of ancient times. He rather spoke to them like a father who speaks to his children who have reached the age of maturity. His addresses the rulers of the world in most open, direct and explicit terms, and He brings to their notice the evil consequences of their deeds. He warns them against prejudices, irreligiousness, and exhorts them to rule and treat their subjects as their own children. He even opens the panorama of future events in front of their eyes, and tells them that He saw the banks of the Rhine covered with blood; not once, but twice. He heard the lamentations of Berlin; not once, but twice, and envisioned the great divines, dignitaries and emperors falling into degradation and humiliation. He approached them in this way and set clear, decisive words and terms to indicate that man is approaching the age of maturity when he is addressed as a man and not as a child.

In the same Book He calls the members of the Universal House of Justice men of justice and the trustees of the merciful on this planet. He assures that body of His divine inspiration and guidance and adorns them with the mantle of legislating on matters which are not already explicitly ordained by His exalted Pen.

Now we reach the last, but not the least, point in this course. What is prescribed in this Book which makes it the Mother Book of this world Faith? The revelation of this Book is an act of creation. When God created the earth and decreed that it should rotate around itself and revolve around the sun, He placed a great mysterious power in the heart of the planet. He called it the force of gravity. This force of gravity controls all aspects of our lives on this planet. The form of our body, muscles, height and movement, and

constructions, buildings, bridges, arches, etc., all are under the strict direct and powerful influence of this invisible force. By controlling this, if we want to live properly, we must have our peace and equilibrium with this power. We teach our children to walk, to run, to play and perform athletic feats. What do we really do in all this training? We teach them to run and play but to remain conscientiously aware of their equilibrium. The greatest wrestlers, boxers, weight lifters, acrobats, etc. are doomed to fail and fall once they lose their balance with this mysterious power. The architect who designs a certain construction of many stories is constantly mindful lest one little deviation would cause the force of gravity to bring the whole building down.

The Covenant of God is this great and mysterious power in all the religions of God. In the past, because of varying circumstances, the Center of the Covenant had been appointed by allusions or pronouncements or by some kind of exceptional treatment by the Prophet of God. But this is the era of the oneness of mankind during which man enters the age of maturity. The Messenger of God placed this mysterious power, the Covenant of God, in the heart of this Book. I mean that He appointed the Center of His Covenant in the Book of Aqdas and clarified and confirmed the details in His Will and Testament. A Bahá'í will have his life full of bounties and endless joy if he keeps this point in mind and arranges all his affairs in such a way as to never lose his equilibrium with the force of gravity of our Faith, the Center of Covenant and the World Centre of our Faith.

Let us take an example. Suppose a group of passengers are seated in a plane, waiting for departure. To their great disappointment and surprise, they are suddenly ordered to leave the plane and wait in the airport for two or three hours. "Why?" they all inquired. "Continue. There's nothing wrong. The seats are all well arranged. The hostesses are kind and expert in their profession. The pilots are young, energetic and experienced. The engines are strong." But then an officer comes and to appease the agitated passengers, he tells them and explains to them that expert engineers have examined the engine and have found some dislocation inside the engine, which makes the plane disqualified to take off. What does it mean? It means that should the plane take off with such a disturbance inside the engine, the force of gravity will pull it down and a crash will certainly take place within a few minutes.

Sometimes the friends hear that an individual Bahá'í is expelled from the rank of file of the Bahá'í world community. They often say, "What's wrong with him? He is knowledgeable. He has served the Cause for many years. He prays, fasts, contributes and does everything regularly." But they are not aware of the fact that this individual, because of ego, could not keep his balance with the Center of the Cause and therefore must be expelled lest his contagious disease spreads. If not controlled, a spiritual crash takes place at any moment and many will perish with him.

In conclusion I would like to bring to your notice that Bahá'u'lláh has emphasized the fact that faith and deeds are accepted together. Faith

without deeds, and deeds without faith, are not accepted. One is never accepted without the other. He also says that because of man's obedience to God's ordinances and principles revealed in this age, order and security will be established on this planet. These are the true shelters that we need the most in these days and forever. I hope I have given enough about the Book of Aqdas to the beloved friends of America and I pray that each one of you will be successful in serving the Cause of God in that vast country and throughout the world, as many of your dear pioneers are doing. Wherever I went, I found pioneers from America, sacrificing their lives, their energies and whatever they have for the propagation and protection of our beloved Faith. Thank you very much.

Note

[1] Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-Karím khán of Kirmán considered himself the successor to Siyyid Kázim and assumed leadership of the shaykhí school.

— Kitab-i-Aqdas commentary (Used by permission of the curator)