

'Abdu'l-Bahá and Mírzá Ghaffár Zanúzí ALM Nicolas's 'Abdoul-Béha et la situation', 1912¹

Translator

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The *Fikr*, only journal currently published in Tauris, carried the following article:

During these last years, some plotters had endeavoured to sow suspicion between the government and the nation; to stir dissension between the constitutionalists and the reactionaries! It was everywhere proclaimed: If the government and nation do not become constitutionalists, religion will disappear! We had been told this so much, that we were persuaded and convinced of it. At last the government and the people came to agreement and the organic laws were drawn and printed. We all know them; their limits are precise, and the acts of government, as those of the nation also, must be in accord with both the civil and the religious Law.

However, at that moment, someone, dressed in the garb of Islam, set about gathering all that was needed to raise, between the government and nation at last in agreement, the germs of dissension and hatred. Soon one could see that certain individuals, enemies of Islam, whose garb they wore, were carefully chosen by certain others. They were specifically charged to prevent, by whatever means, the entente from becoming established.

Among these last, shines the name of Mirza Ghaffar Zenouzi, popular tribune. This hypocrite, beating on his chest with the stone of Islamism, shouted from the rostrum: "Islam has disappeared! Islam is dead!" Certainly all of you, inhabitants of Tauris, know him. Then the people of the governor general arrested him² and found him to be the carrier of the two letters which we publish below. One of these letters is signed by Mirza Ghaffar himself and is addressed to Saint-Jean d'Acre; the other comes from the hand of Abdoul-Béha, signed with his seal and addressed to Mirza Ghaffar.

¹ Abdoul-Béha et la situation [article traduit par A.-L.-M. Nicolas, sous le pseudonyme de Ghilan], *Revue du Monde Musulman* (Paris), 1912, vol. 21, p. 261-267. Editor's note: regarding this article, we read in Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqání's diary for Sunday, August 24, 1912, "The newspaper '*Fikr*' [Thought] was mentioned, and He continued: "In this newspaper our letter speaks for itself. We are far from taking part in any seditious movement and we hold fast to the will of the Lord." (Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqání, *Mahmud's Diary: The Diary of Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqání*, translated by Mohi Sobhani, George Ronald, Oxford, 1998.

² Mirza Ghaffar frequented the Lazarite school in Tauris. As such he was more or less, and rather less, protected by the French consulate. As the Consul was absent, a Lazarite went directly to the governor Choudja ed-Dowlé. This behaviour was not pleasing and the Lazarite was not admitted. Mirza Ghaffar was condemned to death, to be executed that very night. At nine o' clock in the evening, the Consul's wife, made aware of the situation, telephoned Choudja ed-Dowlé to ask for mercy for the guilty. Choudja ed-Dowlé granted it with the best grace in the world and Mirza Ghaffar was released.

I wish for you to publish these two documents so that Persians may become aware of the hidden springs of certain events and understand, at the same time as the goals pursued, the twisted means adopted. They will then know whence come the widespread tides of blood, and from what source emanate the troubles and discord. They will understand where is the centre of activity seeking to throw to the winds the might of government. Then, perchance, the blinded Persian nation will be able to recognise where her friends are to be found and who her enemies are.

Letter of Abdoul-Béha

O friends of Abdoul-Béha! The Creator of the world is bestirred! The cloud of divine mercy is moved! The light of God hath appeared and rises over all horizons! It is the cause of tranquillity for all created beings. This is the time for goodwill and union stretching to the high heavens! This is the peal of the bell of unity and concord, sounding from the mysteries of glory! Man has found felicity once more, while the shadows have cleared. The freed have recovered their joy; the sea of unity is astir with crashing waves, and union's zephyr blows from the flowerbed of mercy³. Each one of God's friends must become even as a regiment, and make their hearts steadfast through unveiling and making visible the truths, evidences, insights and meanings. The divine bugles must proclaim the glad tidings of God, and attract the souls to happiness in these good news.

Call all men to the light of guidance, and give the glad tidings of the great gift! Soon will this land, through the bounty of the God of all the world, become purified and be the object of heaven's envy! The banner of guidance will be raised! The curtains that conceal the unity of the human world will be lifted! East and West will become one! Between North and South there will be no more differences! The basis of all things will be founded upon unity, and all mention of the opposer will die out! The Most Great Name, may the souls of his servants be a sacrifice for Him, has destroyed all obstacles, torn away all bonds. He shows forth love for everyone, casting the blessing of unity into the thronged multitudes; spreading its benevolence to each being in this world and counselling and bidding everyone to profit from the lights of Truth and benefit from the ultimate Beauty!

Therefore do not look upon the faults nor defects of anyone! Pay no heed to envy or hostility! Become, one and all, the tokens of God's mercy, and endeavour to obtain forgiveness from everyone! Thus will ye change the stranger into an intimate, and every oppressor into a friend of justice! The ignorant, summon ye to knowledge! Guide the steps of the wayward to the Sirat! Act with the greatest joy, the most perfect goodwill, with all your soul! May the glory of the All-Glorious rest upon you.

³ Whether this tableau refers to Persia or the world in general, it must be confessed that it does not remotely resemble reality.

Letter of Mirza Ghaffar

O my Master! O Abdoul-Béha!

I write with extraordinary ardour and love! I yearn to kiss thy blessed feet! May it please heaven that as those who have at this moment the honour of attaining thy presence, I may take my portion of this immense boon! For I, who am nameless before the existence of that Sultan of Being, have rejoiced in the recognition of this great Cause! It is through the blessing of the marvellous preaching and exhortations of my dear friend Mounir Divan that from darkness' shadows I have stepped into the world of lights! It is thanks to him that I have become a unit in the army of the friends! Praised and glorified be God!

At the command of my guide, Mirza Ebrahim Mounir Divan, I will recount the dream that was my guide and the cause of my conversion. I will share also a strange dream I had, two years ago, in Téhéran. The night of the 12 djemmedi el-evvel 1330, I saw a corridor 4 metres wide, but with a length of many farsakhs. It stretched out in a straight line. The ceilings and walls of this strange corridor were carpeted with polished fabrics of many colours and great price. Suddenly, I arrived at a door that was on the right hand side and opened into a room. Numerous people entered and left this room.

A young man, handsome, of tall stature, who wore on his koulah the insignias of the Souldan⁴ of the Persian army, was sitting, in the room, on a chair. Another young man, like a servant, stood nearby. Suddenly I saw my eldest brother approach. Thereupon I understood I had stumbled into a gathering of Béhaïs. I then began to insult my brother, telling him: "O my brother, do you know what you have done? You have become a Béhai! You have dishonoured our family!" I spoke to him thus for a long time! The moment when, carried away, I overflowed with the most awful insults, I felt of a sudden a revolver in my hand! I shot at him and struck his back on his right. He bled profusely, but did not move. Only a faint smile hovered on his lips, whilst he gazed at me.

The one who seemed the servant of the Sultan addressed me violently: "Brother!" he told me, "Why do you torment the people? Why do you pull the curtains thus? Perhaps the majority of men share in the beliefs of this religion! What have you to meddle in the religion of another?" But the Sultan silenced him: "What is this to do with you? How many times have I told you not to get involved in what does not concern you? Such a person acts, acts, acts, and ends up by exhausting himself!" I shot a few bullets at the domestic and he was gravely wounded. But neither he nor my brother died.

⁴ A subordinate officer in the Persian army

Fearing that I might be questioned, I moved on. I was leaving in a troubled state, when suddenly I stepped on a precipice more than 1000 metres deep. It rose above an ocean dark and full of waves. Were I to move in the slightest, I was indubitably lost. My head turned and suddenly I began to insult myself: “Wretched one! Why did you not perceive this earlier! You could have avoided this misfortune!” I had such fear, that I could not turn back my steps. The cliff plunged abruptly into the sea. I fell all the while screaming like a madman. But, suddenly, I saw my brother who, with the smile still on his lips, stretched out his arms and caught me. I was so ashamed I turned away... and awoke. I declared my faith the same day!

As to my dream in Téhéran, which I have written on my notebooks as a political dream, it is as follows:

“I saw, in a dark night, two dragons, similar to those which are struck on Chinese coins, that is head raised, tail hanging, suspended between heaven and earth. They were yellow and spotted and one would have described them as golden by the light of the setting sun. Suddenly a two headed eagle, full of eagerness, claws outstretched, plunged toward them. These two did not pay, at the beginning, the least heed; but the eagle having reached their vicinity, the dragons turned their heads toward it. The eagle then withdrew, then returned to the charge. At this moment a tiger assailed the dragons; then a panther made its appearance and joined the battle. A wolf arrived, then a stag, and an elephant. All fell on the dragons and the attacks increased.

All these wilds beasts found themselves, now in the air, now on the floor. I then saw an enormous lion, but very old and very thin. With perfect slowness, caused by its weakness, it marched slowly towards the dragons. It sought to keep itself on the air, but he was so feeble that he advanced only with great difficulty. He went thus till he reached the dragons. Suddenly these, with an infernal noise, exploded. One of them was surely an instrument of hellfire, since all around him took flame. All the wild beasts disappeared. There was naught but those multicoloured sparks one witnesses in fireworks. I awoke trembling with fear.

May I be offered up as a sacrificed to the friends!

I beseech my Master to please to honour me with the explanation of these dreams and instruct me as to the services I may render the Cause⁵

Translation: Ghilan⁶

⁵ One can get a sense of the mentality of Abdoul-Béha’s adepts. The misfortune is that this incident alerted the Musulmans and that little by little the Béhaïs were thrown out, in Tauris, from administrative posts

⁶ Editor’s note: Pseudonym of ALM Nicolas