

Importance of collecting and safeguarding the Bahá'í writings

Extracts from the Bahá'í writings on the subject
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Compiled by Bahá'í International Archives.

Published in Bahá'í Studies Review 11 pages 100-102
2003

Bahá'í World Centre: 10-1986

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Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

(All extracts are from previously untranslated tablets)

In regard to thy mention of the setting in order of the verses and epistles - this undertaking is accounted one of the greatest of deeds by Him Who is the All-Sufficing, the Exalted. . . The greater portion of the writings and verses have fallen into the hands of the infidels whether in the Land of Tá [Tehran] or other lands. The people of God should do all that lieth within their power to protect and preserve the Tablets. In the Land of Tá whatever there was in the homes of the friends was taken and fell into the hands of the heedless. We have commanded all to safeguard that which hath proceeded from the Pen of the Most High. We ask God to aid them to act in accordance with His wish and desire, and to draw them nigh to Him. He, verily, is the Almighty, the Powerful.

We have commanded all to observe wisdom, but from the friends we see heedlessness and negligence. They should guard the Tablets as they guard their eyes, nay with greater vigilance, if they be of them that comprehend.

Truly, none must be careless in the matter of safeguarding the divine Tablets. In former times, when plans were laid to seize some of the friends, before all else it was the writings that fell into the hands of the enemy. This is not permissible. The friends should designate a strong, secure place for storing the divine verses so that they may not be exposed to the touch of unworthy hands, even though these verses are, and shall always be, such as 'none shall touch but the purified' [Qur'án 79:56]

Guard thou the verses of thy Lord as thou wouldst guard thine own eyes. He, verily, is the Preserver, the Mighty.

The treatment of the Tablets should be such that they remain preserved in their original immaculacy. When being read they should be placed within a second sheet, and thereafter deposited in some special place for safe keeping.

Extracts from the letters of Shoghi Effendi

Another necessary and highly commendable undertaking is the founding of a Bahá'í Archives in each of the Bahá'í provincial administrative centres. . . Anyone who, spontaneously and of his own free will,

donates material to the Archives of his National Spiritual Assembly - whether this be Tablets, books, pictures, objects or the like - and especially if his inheritors are not accounted of the people of Bahá, or are not considered by him as trustworthy or reliable, will have performed a highly meritorious act in the sight of God, and his name will be perpetuated in the records of the Spiritual Assemblies and his memory enshrined in the Archives for ever.

An Archives has also recently been established in the Holy Land, and whatever Sacred Writings and precious relics the individual believers and the Spiritual Assemblies donate voluntarily to this Archives - in particular those items that are more suitably and profitably collected together in one place, and whose dispersal would be a source of loss and detriment - will remain guarded and preserved in their name in a place set aside for the purpose. With the passage of days, visitors to the Holy Land from all quarters of the globe will have the privilege of viewing these items, and, remembering those faithful servants of the Threshold of Grandeur, will commemorate their mention and offer up prayers on their behalf.

July 1925 to the Bahá'ís of the East - translated from the Persian

Another essential requirement is the expediting of the tasks of transcribing, collecting and despatching the Sacred Writings to the Holy Land, and recording the general history of the Cause of God. The Western believers in the far-flung reaches of the free world, who have set about prosecuting important plans, are anxious and expectant that these two tasks be speedily completed and the necessary preparations for their forthcoming projects be made without delay, thus enabling them to give concrete expression to their hopes and plans for the future, and to impart a great momentum to the spread of the Holy Cause.

September 1926 to the Bahá'ís of the East - translated from the Persian

In one of the Tablets, the Pen of the Most High, referring to this foundation [The International Archives Building], which provides the best and surest, the soundest and most perfect means of collecting, safeguarding and classifying the scattered, but growing body, of Sacred Writings and relics, states: 'It is the concern of the True One to reveal, and the concern of men to spread what hath been revealed. He will, verily, promulgate His Cause by the hands of His scattering and well-favoured angels. Spiritual souls will assuredly emerge from behind the veil of divine protection who will gather together the tokens and verses of God and put them into the most excellent order. This is His sure and irrevocable decree.'

Naw-Ruz 1954 to the Bahá'ís of the East - translated from the Persian

Extracts from Letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

Last year . . . the matter of collecting the originals or photographic copies of the Tablets addressed to the . . . friends (with translations) was mentioned. The meeting was entirely favourable to the suggestion and ___ offered to see that all Tablets or copies of Tablets or other interesting Bahá'í relics or treasures sent to him would be properly stored in safe-deposit.

. . . Such a matter requires someone who is keenly interested and sufficiently energetic, tactful and persistent to overcome the apathy or dilatoriness of friends who are in possession of the materials, to see the thing through.

28 October 1925 to an individual believer

Shoghi Effendi received . . . a few days ago a letter dealing chiefly with two matters which he has very much at heart:

- 1) the collection by the National Spiritual Assembly of the originals or photographic copies of all available Tablets sent to friends in ___, with translations, with a view to their safe preservation and the publication of the translations.
- 2) the preparation for the press . . . of the talks given to ___ by the Master in Palestine, with full notes regarding the circumstances under which these talks were given.

Shoghi Effendi warmly approves of both these suggestions and hopes the friends will co-operate in carrying them out as speedily and thoroughly as is practicable.

. . . If the Tablets (originals) were presented to the National Archives, then the donors might receive one or more photographic copies, while if the owners did not wish to part with the originals the committee could have photographic copies prepared for the Archives and return the original to the owner.

31 October 1925 to a National Spiritual Assembly

The work of collecting and publishing the Tablets is one of the most important tasks that this generation has to undertake for upon it depends our true understanding of the Cause and its principles. The more we put it off, the more we are apt to lose some of the original writings.

Yet, important as this task may be, it is fraught with difficulties. The early translations are far from being accurate, no matter who the translator may be. Shoghi Effendi firmly believes that only Tablets with the Master's signature and in the original tongue should be recognized. Any translations or copies of them fail from having real authority. This shows the importance of collecting the original Tablets that bear the Master's signature.

20 August 1929 to an individual believer

I am directed by the Guardian to express his grateful appreciation for your letter . . . with the volume containing copies of the Tablets revealed to the friends in ___ by the Master and Bahá'u'lláh.

In accomplishing this task you have rendered a most valued and permanent service to the Cause in ___ and posterity will owe you a debt of gratitude very hard to repay.

Furthermore this compilation shall be of indispensable value and use to the Guardian and to all International bodies that may meet in Haifa whether in the distant or near future. You are quite aware, of course, with the fashion in which both Bahá'u'lláh and the Master gave some of their most important teachings as part of their Tablets addressed to far-away friends. Hence the necessity of such compilations throughout the world.

29 March 1930 to an individual believer

___ has suggested to the Guardian that he should ask your NSA to address an appeal to the . . . believers urging them to co-operate with the National and local Bahá'í Archives . . . in their efforts for the collection of Bahá'í sacred relics, and specially the Tablets, and their safe preservation.

As this is undoubtedly one of the most urgent tasks facing the believers at present, he strongly feels it advisable that your NSA should once more impress upon the friends the necessity of their giving full and continued support to the truly valuable work which the National as well as the local Archives Committees are accomplishing for our beloved Faith. . . .

Now that the Cause is rapidly passing through so many different phases of its evolution is the time for the friends to exert their utmost in order to preserve as much as they can of the sacred relics and various other precious objects that are associated with the lives of the Founders of the Faith, and particularly the Tablets They have revealed.

Every believer should realize that he has a definite responsibility to shoulder in this matter, and to help, to whatever extent he can, in rendering successful the valuable work which National and local Bahá'í Archives Committees are so devotedly accomplishing for the Faith in ___.

25 September 1936 to a National Spiritual Assembly

___ has safely delivered the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which you forwarded to the Holy Land, and the Guardian has read them, and will place them in the International Archives. It is indeed a miracle that you were able to protect these precious things during the long and dangerous years of the war, and the . . . Bahá'ís must be very grateful to you for doing so. The Guardian was happy to hear that photographs have been made of them and kept in ___.

16 March 1953 to an individual believer