

An Epistle of the Báb to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím Qazvíní¹ on Mirzá Yahyá²

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Introduction and background:

Nine significant Epistles of the Báb from the closing years of His ministry (1849–1850) were published—together with facsimiles of the original manuscripts—in an Azalí compilation entitled *Qismat-i az alwāh-i khaṭṭ-i Nuqṭa-yi Ūlā wa Āqá Siyyid Ḥusayn Kātib* (see Denis MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History: A Survey*, p. 96). Among these, the Epistle under consideration has been identified by MacEoin as addressed to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím Qazvíní, thereby situating it within the historical and doctrinal milieu of the Báb’s communications with His loyal disciples and the wider Bábí community.

A facsimile of the original manuscript of this Epistle to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím Qazvíní is accessible via [Epistle of the Báb-Facsimile](#), while a typed edition of the text, prepared by an Azalí source, may be consulted at [Epistle of the Báb-Typed](#).

This luminous Epistle of the Báb, addressed to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím Qazvíní, stands as a document of singular importance in the formative years of His Dispensation.

¹ Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím Qazvíní (also known as Mírzá Aḥmad-i-Kātib, “the Scribe,” or Mírzá Aḥmad-i-Qazvíní) was one of the Báb’s secretaries, a teacher of Nabíl-i-Zarandí, and a close associate of Bahá’u’lláh. Born into a merchant family in Qazvín in the late 1830s, he studied law and theology under Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím-i-‘Iravání, who proclaimed him a mujtahid. Feeling unworthy, he was reassured by a dream—interpreted by the Shaykhí merchant Hájí Allāh-wardí Farhádí as a vision of Siyyid Kāẓim-i-Rashtí—that led him, with his brother ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd, to Karbalá, where he briefly attended Siyyid Kāẓim’s classes before returning to Qazvín to pursue a mercantile life and raise a family. Upon hearing of the Báb’s declaration, he set out for Shíráz—reportedly on foot. In Tíhrán, he learned the Báb had called His followers to Karbalá, but arriving there discovered that the Báb had gone instead to Búshíhr and Shíráz. Joining other Shaykhís in their search, he paused in Isfahán before at last attaining the Báb’s presence in Shíráz, among the first believers admitted to His audience. From then on, he remained a steadfast and devoted follower (John Walbridge, “Mulla ‘Abdu’l-Karim Qazvini (Mirza Ahmad Katib),” in Bahá’í Library Online, comp. Jonah Winters, [Mulla ‘Abdu’l-Karim Qazvini \(Mirza Ahmad Katib\)](#)).

² Mírzá Yahyá Núrí (1831–1912), half-brother of Bahá’u’lláh, was designated by the Báb with the title *Azal* (“Eternity”) and he is also referred to in certain Writings as *al-Mir’āt al-Azalīyah* (“the Mirror of Eternity”). Still a youth at the time of the Báb’s martyrdom in 1850, he became the nominal head of the Bábí community, largely under the guidance and protection of Bahá’u’lláh. His leadership, however, proved increasingly ineffectual, and his subsequent opposition to Bahá’u’lláh following the latter’s declaration of His mission in 1863 led to the formal separation between the Bábí and Bahá’í communities. Though he lived until 1912 in Famagusta, Cyprus, his influence steadily declined, and by the close of his life he was largely isolated, his followers having dwindled to a small remnant.

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At the outset, the Báb rejoices in the tidings conveyed by Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím concerning “the Mirror of Eternity” (*al-Mir’āt al-Azalīyah*)—Mírzá Yaḥyá—who hath spoken of God, his Lord, and hath guided souls unto God, the Source of His existence. By this testimony, the Báb affirms the sacred duty of the “Mirrors”—those who, dependent upon Him for their light, reflect His radiance and serve as guides for the wayward souls.

The Báb extols this testimony, affirming the function of the “Mirrors”—those who, while dependent on Him for their light, reflect His radiance and guide souls to the Divine.

The Epistle then sets forth two cardinal injunctions entrusted to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím. The first is the vigilant preservation of the sacred Writings—whether the testimonies of former ages or the newly-revealed effulgences of His own Dispensation. The second is the safeguarding of the spiritual integrity of Mírzá Yaḥyá, whose heart is portrayed as so pure and unsullied that not even the passing thought of another should cast upon it the least shadow of sorrow. Thus, Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím is enjoined to safeguard both the outward trust of the Revelation—its script and text—and the inward vessel designated to reflect its light.

The Báb further points to the “five resplendent Tablets” dispatched in luminous script, embodiments of divine spirit and fragrance, whose preservation and transmission are here solemnly enjoined. He charges Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím to enshrine within the “Tablets of Remembrance” the prerogatives of “the Beauteous Fruit”—a term denoting the sacred Word and its manifestation in successive embodiments. This act of stewardship, He declares, shall prove the source of victory, the “most excellent and ancient of reminders,” and is to be safeguarded with the same vigilance as one would guard the very apple of one’s eye.

Finally, the Báb lays down a directive of the utmost consequence: that whatsoever exalted truth, profound meaning, or hidden mystery might be discerned within His Writings is not to be left to private judgment, but must, in obedience to His command, be referred to “the Mirror of God and His Countenance.” By this injunction, He establishes both the principle of hierarchical referral and the recognition that all interpretive authority is contingent upon the Manifestation Himself, the ultimate Source of illumination. The “Fruit” signifies the sacred deposit of the divine Word; the “Mirror” its appointed reflector; the “Countenance” the Manifestation in Whose presence alone the fullness of truth resides. In this threefold order the Báb discloses the channel through which His Revelation was to be preserved, safeguarded, and conveyed. Having thus set forth this sacred hierarchy, the Báb bears witness that all these acts of remembrance and referral have already been raised up into the Divine Presence, inscribed as a “Remembrance from God in the Book.” He closes with a solemn affirmation of His own station, proclaiming that God Himself is “the Best of them that

remember,” the Source and Sustainer of every act of commemoration and the final Witness to all deeds performed in His path.

Taken as a whole, the Epistle reveals the twin burdens of guardianship and protection: the one, safeguarding the textual heritage of the Faith; the other, shielding the purity of him designated to reflect the Manifestation’s light from every disturbance. Yet it also foreshadows, with a solemn poignancy, the tragic betrayal of that trust, when the very Mirror so carefully guarded would, in the fullness of time, turn away from the Sun Whose radiance alone had bestowed upon it brilliance.

What follows is a provisional English rendering of this luminous letter, translated with the utmost reverence and care.

The Báb Reveals Thus:

"God, the Most Generous

*In the Name of God, the All-Bountiful, the Lord of the Bountiful;
In the Name of God, the All-Bountiful, the Possessor of the Noble*

Thou hast, indeed, rejoiced Me, O My Name, in the Mirror of Eternity (al-Mir'āt al-Azaliyah),⁴ for he hath spoken of God, his Lord, and hath guided unto God, the Source of his existence. Praise be unto Him Who hath manifested him, in a manner befitting His station and worthy of His glory.⁵

The first is the perfect vigilance in his⁶ protection; the second, the fostering of yearning and ardent joy within him, that not even the passing thought of any created being should cast the shadow of sorrow upon his unsullied heart.

Behold how He hath brought into being and dispatched five resplendent Tablets from His Writings, inscribed in the luminous script, and imbued with spirit and fragrance.

And thou shalt give perfect vigilance to the preservation of the Writings of God—whether from eternity past or in their wondrous renewal—and shalt enshrine, within the Tablets of Remembrance, the prerogatives of the Beauteous Fruit.

Verily, God shall grant you victory thereby, for it is the most excellent and ancient of all reminders. That ye may guard all that hath been sent down from God, as your own eyes; at all times, before, during, and after the appointed time.

And should aught exalted be found therein, make mention of it in connection with the Fruit, that, by the command of God, it may be directed unto the Mirror of God (mir'āt Allāh) and His Countenance.⁷

⁴ المرآت ازلیه / مرآت (al-Mir'āt / al-Mir'āt al-Azaliyah) — "the Mirror / the Mirror of Eternity" This title was conferred by the Báb upon Mirzá Yahyá, signifying the mystical locus wherein divine realities are reflected. In Panj Shan, in a Tablet addressed to Azal, the Báb states, "Today, from the inception of the Revelation of the Bayán until the advent of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest, all attainment of exaltation by anyone is a token reflection of the exalted station of the Point of Unity and the Dayspring of the Morn of Eternity. How beloved it hath been, and continueth to be, before God that in each Revelation pure mirrors will reflect the Tree of Truth. But the mirrors are not illumined by themselves, independent of the Primal Will, for had they been radiant by themselves, they would have been speaking before the Day of Revelation.... All the mirrors abide by His bidding, return unto Him, utter His glory, and seek shelter beneath His shadow." (Panj Shan, p. 135, provisional translation by Nader Saiedi).

⁵ In this passage the Báb addresses Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím Qazviní, assuring him: "Thou hast, indeed, rejoiced Me, O My Name, in the Mirror of Eternity". The Báb rejoices that Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím has borne witness to Yahyá's words, for Yahyá, in that moment, had spoken in recognition of God, his Lord, and had summoned men unto Him, the Source of his being. By thus praising the testimony relayed by His disciple, the Báb affirms the spiritual function of the "Mirrors," who reflect the light of the Manifestation and guide others to the Divine, while remaining wholly dependent on Him for the radiance they transmit.

⁶ Mirzá Yahyá.

⁷ In this passage the Báb employs a tripartite metaphor of the Fruit, the Mirror, and the Countenance. The Fruit (althamara) designates His own revealed Words and Writings, the tangible expression of His Cause. The title "Mirror of God" (mir'āt Allāh), conferred upon Mirzá Yahyá (Majmū'eh Maqālāt, Dr. Muḥammad Afḡān, 2013, p. 418), denotes

Verily, We were watchful, and placed before the Presence of God that which had been raised unto Him, a Remembrance from God in the Book; for He is, indeed, the Best of them that remember.”

one who reflects but does not originate the light—an intermediary who derives all authority from the Manifestation. The Countenance (wajh), by contrast, signifies the Manifestation of God Himself, the direct locus of divine revelation. In this imagery, the Fruit manifests the bounty of the Tree, the Mirror reflects the radiance of the Countenance, and the Countenance alone is the primal source of light.

**An Epistle of the Báb to Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím Qazvíní on Mirzá Yahyá, Transcribed
from a Typed Copy**

الله اكرم

بسم الله الكرم ذى الكارمين

بسم الله الكرم ذى الكرماء

قد بهجتنى ان يا اسمى في المرآت الازليه حيث قد حكى عن الله ربه و دل على الله موجه الحمد لمجليه كما هو اهله ومستحقه
كمال تراقب اول در حفظ آن و ثانى در

شوق و ابتهاج آن داشته که قدر ذکر امکانى هم خطوط حزن بر قلب سازجش وارد نشود

چگونه آنکه بتكون آيد و پنج لوح مطرز از آثار اون بخط بهى باروح وريحان فرستاده باش

و کمال حفظ در آثار الله داشته چه از لاً و چه بديعاً و شئونات ثمره بهيه را در الواح تذكار آورده

حتى ينصرکم الله به انه خير نصار قديم و لتحفظن کل ما نزل من عند الله کعينیک في کل حين وقبل حين وبعد حين وإن کان
عليها هنالك فاذکره بالثمر لينظرن من الله بامرہ الى مرآت الله و وجهه فاننا کنا ناظرين واحضر بين یدی الله ما قدر فع الى الله
ذکراً من الله في الکتاب انه هو

خيرالذاکرين