

lie down, so that one tent holds twenty-five or thirty Janissaries. The material for the garments to which I have referred is provided at the public expense. To prevent any disputes or suspicion of favour, it is distributed in the following manner. The soldiers are summoned by companies in the darkness to a place chosen for the purpose—the balloting station or whatever name you like to give it—where are laid out ready as many portions of cloth as there are soldiers in the company; they enter and take whatever chance offers them in the darkness, and they can only ascribe it to chance whether they get a good or a bad piece of cloth. For the same reason their pay is not counted out to them but weighed, so that no one can complain that he has received light or chipped coins. Also their pay is given them not on the day on which it falls due but on the day previous.

The armour which is carried is chiefly for the use of the household cavalry, for the Janissaries are lightly armed and do not usually fight at close quarters, but use muskets. When the enemy is at hand and a battle is expected, the armour is brought out, but it consists mostly of old pieces picked up in various battlefields, the spoil of former victories. These are distributed to the household cavalry, who are otherwise protected by only a light shield. You can imagine how badly the armour, thus hurriedly given out, fits its wearers. One man's breastplate is too small, another's helmet is too large, another's coat of mail is too heavy for him to bear. There is something wrong everywhere; but they bear it with equanimity and think that only a coward finds fault with his arms, and vow to distinguish themselves in the fight, whatever their equipment may be; such is the confidence inspired by repeated victories and constant experience of warfare. Hence also they do not hesitate to re-enlist a veteran infantryman in the cavalry, though he has never fought on horseback, since they are convinced that one who has warlike experience and long service will acquit himself well in any kind of fighting. . . .

Portraits of Three Monarchs II. The Mughal Akbar

The Mughal rulers of India claimed descent from Chingiz Khân and Tamerlane. The founder of the dynasty was Babar (r. 1526-1530) who, having been driven from Fârghanâ, built a new empire for himself in northwestern India. Akbar (r. 1556-1605), his grandson, was the first Mughal emperor to establish the family power firmly on the basis of a relatively stable administrative machine, alliances with native Rajput rulers and a policy of religious tolerance and universalism.

Akbar was a generous and discriminating patron of art and letters, as were his predecessors and successors. Among those he supported was Abû'l Fazl ibn Mubârak (1550-1602), author of the history of Akbar's reign from which extracts are reproduced here.

The flowery flattery that almost obscures the meaning of some of Abû'l Fazl's passages was strictly conventional. Persian literature had elaborated the praise of princes into an art form prodigal in words, hyperbolic beyond credibility, and admired for skillful variations on familiar similes, metaphors, and rhetorical turns of phrase. Abû'l Fazl's skill is lost to readers unfamiliar with such language. What should be remembered is that the flowers of rhetoric did not conceal the kernel of meaning from his readers. To them it would be clear that Abû'l Fazl was really praising not Akbar so much as his attempt to unite the various religions and cultural groups then dividing India. Moreover, the verbal arabesques recorded in such a text are themselves indicative of the refined and effete atmosphere of the (Persian-Turkish-Mongol) court life out of which this literary-artistic tradition had grown.

ABŪ'L FAZL: FROM THE BOOK OF AKBAR

[INTRODUCTION]

So long as the spiritual supremacy over the recluse which is called Holiness and the sway over laymen which is called Sovereignty, were distinct, there was strife and confusion among the children of Noah (mankind). Now that in virtue of his exaltation, foresight, comprehensive wisdom, universal benevolence, pervading discernment and perfect knowledge of God, these two great offices . . . which are the guiding thread of the spiritual and temporal worlds, have been conferred on the opener of the hoards of wisdom and clavier of Divine treasures, a small portion at least,—if his holy nature grant the necessary faculty,—may be brought from the ambush of concealment to the asylum of publicity. Knowest thou at all who is this world-girdling luminary and radiant spirit? Or whose august advent has bestowed this grace? 'Tis he who by virtue of his enlightenment and truth, is the world-protecting sovereign of our age, to wit, that Lord (*Shāhanshāh*)¹ of the hosts of sciences,—theatre of God's power,—station of infinite bounties,—unique of the eternal temple,—confidant of the dais of unity,—jewel of the imperial mine,—bezel of God's signet-ring,—glory of the *Gūrgān*² family,—lamp of the tribe of Timur,—lord of incomparable mystery,—heir of Humāyūn's³ throne,—origin of the canons of world-government,—author of universal conquest,—shining forehead of the morning of guidance,—focus of the sun of holiness,—sublime concentration of humanity,—heir-apparent of the sun,—anthology of the books of fate and destiny,—protago-

From *The Akbar-nāma*, by Abul-Fazl ibn Mubārak, trans. by H. Beveridge, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1905-39, Vol. I, pp. 16-17, 56-57, 132; Vol. II, pp. 92-93, 113-14, 234-35, 246-47, 372-73, 581-82; Vol. III, pp. 116-19, 157-59, 364, 66, 398-400; Vol. III, pp. 1258-61. Reprinted by permission.

1. Exalted title for Akbar.

2. *Gūrgān* is said to mean son-in-law or near relation in Mongolian; it was a title taken by Tīmūr to indicate his connection with the house of Chingiz Khān. (Tr.)

3. Akbar's father (r. 1530-1556).

nist of triumphant armies,—quintessence of the comingling of nights and days,—cream of the progeny of the elements⁴ and the heavenly bodies,—world's eye (sun) of benevolence and bounty. . . .

[Four pages of similar epithet follow.]

[THE BIRTH OF AKBAR]

Among the strange circumstances which occurred near the time of the appearance of the light of fortune,⁵ there was this,—that before the auspicious moment above-mentioned, the mother felt a pressing urgency to bring forth the child. Maulānā Cānd, the astrologer, who by the king's order, had been stationed by the chaste threshold in order that he might cast the horoscope, was perturbed, as the moment was inauspicious. "In a short time, a glorious moment will arrive, such as does not happen once in a thousand years. What an advantage if the birth could be delayed." Those who were present made light of it and said, "What is the good of your agitation? Such things are not under control."

At this very instant the impulse to bring forth passed off and the astrologer's mind was set at rest somewhat by the transit of the unlucky moment. The ostensible cause of this supreme blessing was that a country midwife had been just brought in to perform her office, and as her appearance was repulsive, the holy soul of Miryam Makāni felt disgusted and her even temper was rebuffed and so the urgency for parturition left her. But when the chosen time came, the Maulānā became disturbed, lest it should accidentally pass by. The confidants of the harem said to him, "Her Majesty, has after much suffering, got an interval of relief and is now slumbering. It would not be right to waken her. Whatever Almighty God, in His good pleasure, has determined, must happen." Just as they were speaking, the pains of travail came upon her Majesty, Miryam Makāni, and awoke

4. The elements are called the earthly mothers, and the planets, the heavenly fathers. (Tr.)

5. I.e., Akbar; astrology seems to have been unusually important at the Tīmūrid court, as at many other contemporary courts.

her and in that auspicious moment, the unique pearl of the viceroyalty of God (*Khilâfat*) came forth in his glory.

They spread the carpet of joy under the canopy of chastity and curtain of honour, and made ready a feast of joy and exultation. The veiled ones of the pavilion, and the chaste inmates of the royal harem anointed the eye of hope with the collyrium⁶ of rejoicing and coloured the eyebrows of desire with the indigo of merriness. They decked the ear of good tidings with the earring of success, painted the face of longing with the vermillion of pleasure, encircled the fore-arm of wish with the bracelet of purpose, and donning the anklet of splendour on the dancing foot, stepped into the theatre of delight and joy and raised the strain of praise and gratulation. Fan-wavers sprinkled otto of roses, and winnowed the air with sandal-scented arms. Dark-haired maidens freshened the floor by rubbing it with perfumes. Rose-cheeked damsels gave a new lustre to joy by sprinkling rose-water. Red-garmented, sweetly-smiling nymphs enveloped the silver-bosomed ones in gold, by scattering saffron. Rose-scented, jasmine-checked ones soothed the rapid dancers with camphorated sandal-wood. Gold in thuribles on the borders of the carpet, gave off fumes of incense. They uncovered the stoves which were filled with lign-aloes and ambergris. Musicians created enchanting ecstasy, and melodious minstrels breathed forth magic strains.

Among other wondrous indications there was this, that contrary to the way of other infants, his Majesty, the king of kings, at his birth and at the first opening of his eyes on the visible world, rejoiced the hearts of the wise by a sweet smile. Penetrating physiognomists recognized the smile as the herald-augury of the smiles of the spring of dominion and fortune and saw in it, the opening bud of hope and peace.

[ONE OF AKBAR'S MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES]

At this time a strange thing happened in relation to the Lord of the Earth, who was keeping himself in the disguise of an infant.

6. Kohl, for decorating the eyes.

cognito, and was giving attention to the concealment of his idiosyncrasy—a mystery which has already been conveyed, as far as my capacity would allow, from the heart to paper. The event, of which the following is an account, was the cause of some well-instructed minds coming to a knowledge of truth. One day the world-adorned Shâhinshâh⁷ felt constrained by the presence of short-sighted men, and began to chafe. The power of indignation which in a disposition innately equable is an ingredient deposited by the Lord of power broke out into anger. He became averse to the servants of fortune's threshold who always attended on his stirrup and separated from them, and issued an order that no one of his retinue should be in attendance on him. He even sent away his grooms and such like persons that the solitude of his retirement might not be contaminated by the crowd of this class of men and went out unattended and alone from the camp of fortune. In reality he was engaged in prayerful communion with his God, ostensibly he was angered with men. Among his special horses there was a noble 'Irâqî horse called Hairân which Khizr Khwâja Khân had presented to him. It had not its like for spirit and swiftness, and was also unequalled for viciousness. When he was left loose no one could come near him, and it was with difficulty that he could be recaptured. The divine hero of the world, owing to his strength and courage, rode him constantly. In this period of solitude he mounted upon this auspicious steed, and set off rapidly, leaving society aside and increasing his glory by the presence of God. When he had gone some distance he dismounted for some purpose, and, becoming heedless of the nature of his steed, assumed the posture of communing with his God. That swift and fiery horse acted according to its custom and rushed off rapidly so that it disappeared from the far-searching gaze of His Majesty. When his holy heart was again disposed to mount, there was no one in attendance, and no horse at his service. For a little while he was perplexed what to do, when suddenly he saw that this very horse was coming from a distance and galloping towards him. It ran on till it came back to him and stood quietly waiting for him. His Majesty was astonished and again mounted

7. Akbar. Shâhinshâh is an old Persian title, meaning "Lord of Lords."

the noble animal. It must be considered as one of the strange faculties of this throne-adorning dominion that a horse, whose habit was not to allow himself to be readily mounted, and who, when he ran off, could with difficulty be re-caught, and who had gone off and disappeared in such a plain, should, merely on the attention of the Shâhinshâh being directed towards him come back of his own accord and quietly submit to be re-mounted. Bravo! what apprehension can there be from solitude to him whom the incomparable Deity favours, and of whom he takes charge? And what improbability is there in such things happening to him? Although it may seem as if the wisdom-erecting Deity makes the world-adorning beauty of this spiritual and temporal visible to him alone, yet in reality it is the setting forth of sundry lamps in the highway of guidance for the direction of the short-sighted and superficial, in that they who know in him a visible lord and king may, what is more and better, know him as a spiritual ruler, and recognising that the pleasing of him is the pleasing of God may arrive at the rose-*rendezvous* of eternal happiness.

[A DEMONSTRATION OF AKBAR'S BLESSEDNESS]

... One day he mounted the elephant called Lakhna, which was an exhibitor of terrific rage, at a time when it was at the height of its ferocity, evil nature and man-killing, and made it engage with an elephant like itself, so that the proudest were surprised. The elephant Lakhna, on which H.M. was riding, was victorious and was madly pursuing the other when suddenly its foot, which resembled a great pillar, fell into a deep ditch, and in its furious condition, and when the fumes of wrath were circulating in its brain, it made great struggles and movements. At this time an athlete who was riding on the elephant's rump, for the rule is that a lion-hearted, skilful man rides crupper on these mountain forms, and such a one is called in Hindi Bhoi, could not sit the sky-high rearings of the elephant, and fell to the ground. Then, when cries awoke on every side, and the hearts of the loyal melted within them, the holy personality was also moved from its place, and his sky-brushing foot be-

came fixed in the rope of the elephant's neck, which in Hindi is called Kalâwa. H.M. with a heart which can throw the noose of courage on the heavens, and a palm which had God's help in its fingers, firmly seized the rope, and having hold of the strong cable of this Divine protection remained strong of heart and serene in soul. In that tumult and uproar which produce an earthquake in the terrene, and a riot in time, and while the elephant with his great strength was extricating his feet from the abyss, and was making marvellous struggles and inclining from side to side to the ground, and while on one hand there were the cries of the people, and on the other the efforts of the elephant for getting rid of H.M.'s sacred personality, a number of intrepid, loyal and alert men came and released H.M. from the elephant. The disturbed heart of the world was appeased, and the commoved life of the age became stationary again. I do not know if this beauty under the aspect of terror displayed itself without the intention of this chosen one, in order that the far-reaching thoughts of the wicked might be shortened by seeing such (Divine) guardianship, or whether that spiritual and temporal Khedive, that king of the visible and invisible, knowingly and designedly exhibited such glory, so that by one splendid act might be manifested the blindness of weak-sighted malevolents, and the illumination of the loyal. In a short time, when H.M. had put himself in order, the elephant by his own efforts brought out his foot from the hole and began to be riotous. H.M. with the same open view, and serene soul again mounted the elephant and proceeded, encompassed by the Divine protection, to his fixed abode.

... Several times when this fortunate writer has had the privilege of private conversation with His Majesty the Shâhinshâh he has heard from his holy lips that "our knowingly and intentionally mounting on *mast*, murderous elephants when they have a moment previously brought their drivers under their feet and killed them, and when they have slain many a man, has this for its cause and motive that if I have knowingly taken a step which is displeasing to God or have knowingly made an aspiration which was not according to His pleasure,

may that elephant finish us, for we cannot support the burden of life under God's displeasure." Good God, what an insight is this! and what a calculation with oneself! In fine, at all times, whether that of holy privacy, or that of engrossment in business, in time of battle, and in time of banquet, he is ever mindful of the real, guiding thread, and while he is outwardly with the creature, and inwardly with the Creator, he is at one and the same moment the arranger of the sections of the outward and inward and acts as the leader of both those great parties, and while deriving pleasure from both of those pleasant products adorns the throne both of the spiritual and the temporal universe.

[SOME OF AKBAR'S REFORMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS]

One of the glorious boons of His Majesty the Shâhinsâh which shone forth in this auspicious year was the abolition of enslavement. The victorious troops which came into the wide territories of India used in their tyranny to make prisoners of the wives and children and other relatives of the people of India, and used to enjoy them or sell them. His Majesty the Shâhinsâh, out of his thorough recognition of and worship of God, and from his abundant foresight and right thinking gave orders that no soldier of the victorious armies should in any part of his dominions act in this manner. Although a number of savage nations who were ignorant of the world should make their fastnesses a subject of pride and come forth to do battle, and then be defeated by virtue of the emperor's daily increasing empire, still their families must be protected from the onset of the world-conquering armies. No soldier, high or low, was to enslave them, but was to permit them to go freely to their homes and relations. It was for excellent reasons that His Majesty gave his attention to this subject, for although the binding, killing or striking the haughty and the chastising the stiff-necked are part of the struggle for empire—and this is a point about which both sound jurists and innovators are agreed—yet it is outside of the canons of justice to regard the chastisement of women and innocent

children as the chastisement of the contumacious. If the husbands have taken the path of insolence, how is it the fault of the wives, and if the fathers have chosen the road of opposition what fault have the children committed? Moreover the wives and innocent children of such factions are not munitions of war! In addition to these sound reasons there was the fact that many covetous and blindhearted persons from vain imaginings or unjust thoughts, or merely out of cupidity attacked villages and estates and plundered them, and when questioned about it said a thousand things and behaved with neglect and indifference. But when final orders were passed for the abolition of this practice, no tribe was afterwards oppressed by wicked persons on suspicion of sedition. As the purposes of the Shâhinsâh were entirely right and just, the blissful result ensued that the wild and rebellious inhabitants of portions of India placed the ring of devotion in the ear of obedience, and became the materials of world-empire. Both was religion set in order, for its essence is the distribution of justice, and things temporal were regulated, for their perfection lies in the obedience of mankind.

Among the principal events of the year was the founding of the fort of Agra. It is not concealed from the minds of the mathematical and the acquainted with the mechanism of the spheres that since the world-adorning creator hath decked Time and the Terrene⁸ with the existence of the Shâhinsâh in order that the series of creations might be perfected, that wise-hearted one has exercised himself in bringing each individual life from the secrecy of potentiality to the theatre of performance. At one time he has prepared the constituents of rule by perfecting the earth for animated nature by improving agriculture by irrigation and the sowing of seeds. At another time he establishes spiritual and temporal dominion by building fortresses for the protection of products and the guarding of honour and prestige. Accordingly, he at this time gave directions for the building in Agra—which by position is the centre of Hindustan—of a grand fortress such as might be worthy thereof, and correspond to the dignity of his dominions. An order was then issued that the old fort which was

8. Earth.

built on the east bank of the Jamna, and whose pillars had been shaken by the revolutions of time and the shocks of fortune, should be removed, and that an impregnable fort should be built of hewn stone. It was to be stable like the foundation of the dominion of the sublime family and permanent like the pillars of its fortunes. Accordingly, lofty-minded mathematicians and able architects laid the foundations of this great building in an hour which was supreme for establishing a fortress. The excavations were made through seven strata of earth. The breadth of the wall was three yards and its height sixty yards. It was provided with four gates whereby the doors of the dominion were opened towards the four quarters of the world. Every day 3 to 4,000 active builders and strong-armed labourers carried on the work. From the foundations to the battlements, the fortress was composed of hewn stone, each of which was polished like the world-revealing mirror, and was ruddy as the cheek of fortune. And they were so joined together that the end of a hair could not find place between them. This sublime fortress, the like of which had never been seen by a fabulous geometrician, was completed with its battlements, breastwork, and its loop-holes in the space of eight years. . . .

One of the occurrences was the testing of the silent of speech. . . . There was a great meeting, and every kind of enlightenment was discussed. In the 24th Divine year H.M. said that speech came to every tribe from hearing, and that each remembered from another from the beginning of existence. If they arranged that human speech did not reach them, they certainly would not have the power of speech. If the fountain of speech bubbled over in one of them, he would regard this as Divine speech, and accept it as such. As some who heard this appeared to deny it, he, in order to convince them, had a *serai* built in a place which civilized sounds did not reach. The newly born were put into that place of experience, and honest and active guards were put over them. For a time tongue-tied . . . wetnurses were admitted there. As they had closed the door of speech, the place was commonly called the Gang Mahal (the dumb-house). On the 29th (Amardád—9th August 1582) he went out to hunt. That night

he stayed in Faizâbâd,⁹ and next day he went with a few special attendants to the house of experiment. No cry came from that house of silence, nor was any speech heard there. In spite of their four years they had no part of the talisman of speech, and nothing came out except the noise of the dumb. What the wise Sovereign had understood several years before was on this day impressed on the hearts of the formalists and the superficial. This became a source of instruction to crowds of men. H.M. said, "Though my words were proved they still are saying the same things with a tongueless tongue. The world is a miserable abode of sceptics. . . . To shut the lips is really to indulge in garrulity. They have hamstrung the camel of the Why and Wherefore, and have closed the gate of speech with iron walls."¹⁰

[AKBAR AS SPIRITUAL GUIDE AND PATRON]

At this time the writer of this glorious record, Abul Fazl, the son of Mubârak was, in accordance with a sublime indication and mysterious message, exalted by prostrating himself at the holy Court of the Shâhinshâh. By the Divine assistance there was a beginning of the cure of his self-worshipping pride. The brief account of this matter is as follows. After coming from the hidden chamber of the womb to the crowded inn of existence he [*i.e.* the author] in his fifth year attained to conventional discretion. Under the educating eye of his spiritual and physical father he in his fifteenth year became acquainted with the rational and the traditional sciences. . . . Though these opened the gate of knowledge and gave him the entry to wisdom's antechamber, yet by his ill-fortune he became egotistic and self-conceited. The foot of his energy rested for a while in admiration of his own excellences, and the throng of students around him augmented his presumption. Their indiscriminate agitation

9. Not found. (Tr.)

10. Cf. the account given by Akbar himself to Father Jerome Xavier. . . . A. F. represents Akbar as making the experiment in order to prove that speech was not spontaneous with children, and as having proved his point. But Xavier's account shows that Akbar had an idea that he might find out the sacred language. It was a cruel experiment. Akbar's comment on his critics is obscure. Apparently, it means that though he proved his case, they still are unconvinced. (Tr.)

and lack of judgment put into his head the thought of asceticism and retirement. Though during the day his cell was made bright by teaching science, yet at night he would take the path of the fields and approach the enthusiasts of the "Way of Search." He would implore inspiration from those treasure-holding paupers. I was kept in the defiles of astonished perturbation by the contrary views of the superficially learned, and by the vogue of imitative formalists. I had neither power to be silent nor strength to cry out. Though the exhortations of my honoured father kept me from the desert of madness, yet no helpful remedy reached the troubled spot of my soul. Whiles my heart was drawn towards the sages of the country of Cathay, . . . whiles it felt inclined towards the ascetics of Mount Lebanon (the Druses) (?). Sometimes a desire for conversation with the Lamas of Thibet broke my peace, and sometimes a sympathy with the *padres* of Portugal pulled at my skirt. Sometimes a conference with the *mubids* of Persia, and sometimes a knowledge of the secrets of the *Zendavesta* robbed me of repose, for my soul was alienated from the society both of the sobered and the (spiritually) drunken of my own land. Though the foodlessness of search was broken by the emporium . . . of outward and inward perfections, by which is meant my advantageous attendance on my honoured father, yet as that unique product of creation's workshop lived under the veil of seclusion, there was no remedy for my distress. Owing to my own ignorance I thought that my outward position was incompatible with the final state, . . . and was much disturbed in consequence, and sought to be remote from the society around me. At last fortune favoured me, and mention was made in the holy assemblage (Akbar's religious meetings) of the acquirements of this one (himself) who was bewildered in life's society. My honoured brother, my well-wishing friends, my loving relatives, and my disciples were unanimous in saying, "You should obtain the boon of serving the spiritual and temporal Khedive." I was not inclined to do this, and my attributions apprehensions of the social state disturbed my soul, which was inclined to solitude. For I had not opened a farseeing eye, and my genius was bent upon breaking the bounds of restraint. After the fashion of the ignorant

and superficial I looked upon external circumstances as destructive of inwardness, and limitation as opposed to absoluteness. At length my father withdrew the veil and guided me to truth. He made clear to me the wondrous working of the authors of destiny, and withdrew from my head the hood of self-conceit. By delightful discourses in private interviews and in judicious assemblies, he impressed upon me the spiritual perfections of the sitter on the throne of fortune (Akbar). By sage expositions he made it clear that "The piety and knowledge of God possessed by this divinely born jewel are imperfectly known by any one. At this day he is the leader of the caravans both of Society and of Seclusion, the meeting of the oceans of Realm and Religion, the dawn of the lights of form and substance. The multiplicity of external associations does not withhold him from essential unity. Outwardly bound, he is inwardly free. From him comes the solution of spiritual and temporal matters." Of necessity I preferred the pleasing of him (his father) to my own desires, and as my heart's treasury, rich in spiritualities, was empty of the world's goods, I wrote a commentary on the verse of the Throne as an offering to the sublime court, and I presented the writing as an excuse for my being empty-handed. The Shâhinsâh received it graciously. He cast special glances on me, and by the wealth of service which is indeed the elixir of worth, he calmed my troubled mind. Love for that holy personality took possession of my heart. At this time the expedition to the eastern provinces engaged his mind. My disposition did not permit me, the sitter in the dust, to seek association with the great ones of the court, and those who were attached to the threshold of honour had not, when engrossed by the affairs of the Sultanate, leisure to take notice of unknown and humble persons. I was debarred from entering the service. Though my old notions still lurked in my soul, yet the spiritual tie between me and that great one of realm and religion continued to bind me, and when the lord of the earth returned, after conquering the eastern provinces, to the capital of Fathpûr, he remembered me, the anchorite. I had the good fortune to kiss the threshold, and this bewildered one came to find his face on the path.

[AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS UNIVERSALISM]

At this¹¹ time when the capital was illuminated by his glorious advent, H.M. ordered that a house of worship . . . should be built in order to the adornment of the spiritual kingdom, and that it should have four verandahs. . . . Though the Divine bounty always has an open door and searches for the fit person, and the inquirer, yet as the lord of the universe, from his general benevolence, conducts his measures according to the rules of the superficial, he chose the eve of Friday, which bears on its face the colouring . . . of the announcement of auspiciousness, for the out-pouring. . . . A general proclamation was issued that, on that night of illumination, all orders and sects of mankind—those who searched after spiritual and physical truth, and those of the common public who sought for an awakening, and the inquirers of every sect—should assemble in the precincts of the holy edifice, and bring forward their spiritual experiences, and their degrees of knowledge of the truth in various and contradictory forms in the bridal chamber of manifestation.

Wisdom and deeds would be tested, and the essence of mankind would be exhibited. Those who were founded on truth entered the hall of acceptance, while those who were only veneered with gold went hastily to the pit of base metal. There was a feast of theology and worship. The vogue of creature-worship was reduced. The dust-stained ones of the pit of contempt became adorners of dominion, and the smooth-tongued, empty-headed rhetoricians lost their rank. To the delightful precincts of that mansion founded upon Truth, thousands upon thousands of inquirers from the seven climes came with heartfelt respect and waited for the advent of the Shāhinshāh. The world-lord would, with open brow, a cheerful countenance, a capacious heart and an understanding soul, pour the limpid waters of graciousness on those thirsty-lipped ones of expectation's desert, and act as a refiner. He put them into currency, sect by sect, and tested them company by company. He got hold of every one of the miserable and dust-stained ones, and made

11. The order for the building of the House of Worship was given in . . . February-March, 1575. (Tr.)

them successful in their desires,—to say nothing of the becloaked and the be-turbaned. From this general assemblage H.M. selected by his far-reaching eye a chosen band from each class, and established a feast of truth. Occasionally he, in order to instruct the courtiers, sent perspicuous servants who could discriminate among men, and these reflective and keen-sighted men brought every description of person to perform the *kornish*.¹² Then that cambist and tester of worth examined them anew and invited some of them.

His sole and sublime idea was that, as in the external administration of the dominion, which is conjoined with eternity, the merits of the knowers of the things of this world had by profundity of vision, and observance of justice, been made conspicuous, and there had ceased to be a brisk market for pretence and favouritism, so might the masters of science and ethics, and the devotees of piety and contemplation, be tested, the principles of faiths and creeds be examined, religions be investigated, the proofs and evidences for each be considered, and the pure gold and the alloy be separated from evil commixture. In a short space of time a beautiful, detached building was erected, and the fraudulent vendors of impostures put to sleep in the privy chamber of contempt. A noble palace was provided for the spiritual world and the pillars of Divine knowledge rose high.

At this time, when the centre of the Caliphate . . . was glorified by H.M.'s advent, the former institutions were renewed, and the temple of Divine knowledge was on Thursday nights illuminated by the light of the holy mind.¹³ On 20 Mihr, Divine month, 3 October 1578, and in that house of worship, the lamp of the privy chamber of detachment was kindled in the banqueting-hall of social life. The coin of the hivers of wisdom in colleges and cells was brought to the test. The clear wine was separated from the lees, and good coin from the adulterated. The wide capacity and the toleration of the Shadow of God were unveiled. Sūfī, philosopher, orator, jurist, Sunnī, Shīa, Brahman,

12. Ritual greeting of respect.

13. The meaning is that Akbar was present at the discussions. (Tr.)

Jatī, Sūrā Cārbāk, Nazarene, Jew, Sābī (Sabian), Zoroastrian,¹⁴ and others enjoyed exquisite pleasure by beholding the calmness of the assembly, the sitting of the world-lord in the lofty pulpit, . . . and the adornment of the pleasant abode of impartiality. The treasures of secrets were opened out without fear of hostile seekers after battle. The just and truth-perceiving ones of each sect emerged from haughtiness and conceit, and began their search anew. They displayed profundity and meditation, and gathered eternal bliss on the divan of greatness. The conceited and quarrelsome from evilness of disposition and shortness of thought descended into the mire of presumption and sought their profit in loss. Being guided by ignorant companions, and from the predominance of a somnolent fortune, they went into disgrace. The conferences were excellently arranged by the acuteness and keen quest of truth of the world's Khedive. Every time, eye and heart gained fresh lustre, and the lamp of vigils acquired new glory. The candle of investigation was lighted for those who loved darkness and sequacity. The families of the colleges and monasteries were tested. The handle of wealth and the material of sufficiency came into the grasp of the needy occupants of the summit of expectation. The fame of this faith-adorning method of world-bestowing made home bitter to inquirers and caused them to love exile. The Shāhīnshāh's court became the home of the inquirers of the seven climes, and the assemblage of the wise of every religion and sect. The veneer and the counterfeitness of all those who by feline tricks and stratagems had come forth in the garb of wisdom were revealed. A few irreverent and crafty spirits continued their old tactics after the appearance of Truth and its concomitant convictions, and indulged in brawling. Their idea was that as in the great assemblies of former rulers the purpose of science and the designs of wisdom had been but little explored owing to the crowd of men, the inattention of the governor of the feast, the briskness of the market of praters, etc., so perhaps in this august assemblage they might succeed by the length of their tongues, and a

14. For Yati, the clergy or ascetics among the Jains. Sūrā. A general name for the Jains. For Charvaka. They are Nāstiks or infidels of Hindu philosophy. Sabian. Also called the Christians of St. John. (Tr.)

veil might be hung over the occult . . . of truth. The Khedive of wisdom by the glory of his mind carried out the work to a conclusion deliberately and impartially, and in this praiseworthy fashion, which is seldom found in the saints of asceticism,—how then is it to be found in world-rulers?—tested the various coins of mortals. Many men became stained with shame and chose loss of fame, while some acquired wisdom and emerged from the hollow of obscurity to eminence. Reason was exalted, and the star of fortune shone for the acquirers of knowledge.

[THE REACTION TO UNIVERSALISM]

. . . A set of evil-thoughted, shameless ones imagined that the Prince of horizons regarded with disfavour the Muhammadan religion. . . . The sole evidence which those wrong-headed wicked ones, whose understanding was rusted, had for this was that the wise sovereign out of his tolerant disposition and general benevolence, and extensive overshadowing, received all classes of mankind with affection. Especially did he search for evidence in religious matters from the sages of every religion and the ascetics of all faiths. Nor did he accept the replies of the headstrong and uninquiring. Above all, at this time Christian philosophers assailed the orthodox . . . , (those in agreement) of the day in the sublime assemblies, and learned discussions were carried on. The calumniators of the enlightened who by pretences had claimed for themselves a learning that did not exist, made a clamour in the court of sovereignty. They were put to shame in the holy market of justice and the heyday of discrimination, and lowered their heads into the folds of ignorance, but in the privy chambers of darkness they joined their confederates in the cry that they were mourning the loss of Faith, and that the king of the Age had, out of partiality, not accepted their replies. In their wickedness they cast suspicion upon that choice one of truth and that inwardly enlightened one. In their black-heartedness and shamelessness, they gave no heed to the fact that the honour and respect which this appreciative throne-occupant used to show to the family of the prophet had been rarely exhibited by other monarchs. Many good

...yyids¹⁵ had been raised to dignities and high offices by the favour of H.M., and from time to time they were still farther promoted and the garden of their wishes kept watered and verdant. Nor did he permit that any member of this family should lay his head on the holy feet, or rub the forehead on the threshold of fortune. A set of squint-eyed, wicked people taxed him with Shi'ism; and so led astray simple-minded Sunnis. The cause of the stumbling of this set was that in the sublime assemblies the proofs of those two sects, like those of other sects, were discussed, and that the Shâhînshâh from equity selected what was preferable.

Verse.

When a statement is strong in argument,
It is unfortunate if you do not listen to it.

His likes or dislikes, the greater or lesser numbers of the disputants, their being acquaintances or strangers, raised no dust of difference. The short-sighted and irreflecting on seeing his fondness for discussion indulged in idle talk. The favour shown to Persians, most of whom belonged to that sect (the Sh'ia), increased the evil thoughts of the turbulent. Out of ignorance, and worship of routine they did not remember the precept about accepting the explanation that was conformable to reason. And either the promotion of Turanians was hidden from the bigoted eyes of this set, or they wilfully remained ignorant of it and sought for prettexts. An impure faction reproached the caravan-leader of God-knowers with being of the Hindu (Brahman) religion. The ground for this improper notion was that the prince out of his wide tolerance received Hindu sages into his intimacy, and increased for administrative reasons the rank of Hindus, and for the good of the country showed them kindness. Three things supported the evil-minded gossips. First—The sages of different religions assembled at court, and as every religion has some good in it, each received some praise. From a spirit of justice the badness of any sect could not weave a veil over its merits. Second—The season of "Peace with all" was honoured at the court of the Caliphate, and various tribes of

¹⁵ Descendants of the Prophet.

markind of various natures obtained spiritual and material success. Third—The evil nature and crooked ways of the base ones of the age.

By the right thinking and truthful conduct of the world's lord, they were soon put to shame for their ignorance, and set about endeavouring to amend the days of their ignorance, but many ask retribution for their evil deeds descended into the tortures of failure.

[AKBAR'S DEATH]

Of the last events and of the final catastrophe, namely the soul-piercing, sense-destroying, heart-rending occurrence of the passing of the empire-adorning Khâqân,¹⁶ and of the march of the caravan-leader of Truth's highway from this perishable caravanserai to the Holy world and to the everlasting kingdom.

In the beginning of winter, when the air was cold, and the constitution became torpid.

Verse.

From the cold blasts of Mihrgân (autumn)
The life of the garden congealed,
Recuperative powers remained imbedded,
There was no start of vegetation.
The rose was bared of her silken kerchief,
The hearts of the trees were congealed,
The rose garden . . . was congealed into clay . . . ,
The hundred lamps of the house of mourning died out,
In the garden the glory of the jasmine faded
As when the face of the moon is eclipsed,
The market of flowers and spring broke up,
The world's grandeur was dissolved,
Both the tulip's diadem was reversed
And the cypress's standard laid low.

The wind of autumn blew on the house-garden of world-rule, and the cold blast of Mihrgân passed over the rose-garden of fortune. The ever-vernal flower of the parterre of sovereignty

¹⁶ I.e., Akbar.

was touched by the hand of decay, and the verdant tree of the garden of the Caliphate lost its foliage. Why should I not speak plainly. The throne-adorned, the world's fortune withdrew his skirt from realm and clime. The sitter on the *masnad* of glory shook out his sleeve over throne and diadem. The world-lighting luminary which, contrary to the sun and moon, shed his light day and night, became in a moment dark, and the constellation of fortune, the centre of the world's light, which, contrary to the fixed stars and the planets, bestowed its rays night and day, suddenly became extinguished. The sound of the drum of dominion which for years had filled the spheres with joy, at once ceased. The notes of the flute of joy, on hearing which Venus used to dance with joy during the night-time, altogether died away.

... On the eve of Wednesday, 4th Abân, 15th October, 1605, H.M. withdrew the shade of his heavenly self from the heads of mortals, and spread out the shadow of his beneficence over the heads of the celestials. The men of this world sat down in the dark days of failure, while the inhabitants of the other world attained their long-cherished wishes. The report of this disaster caused lamentation in heaven and earth. There was a daily bazaar of consternation and terror, and sorrow and affliction became active. Darkness took possession of the earth, and the evening of sorrow fell upon mortals in the midday of contentment. The lightning of labour and sorrow struck mankind's harvest of joy. The stone of violence and oppression smote on the vases of the hearts of the sincere. Good God! What a personality he was! He was pure from every stain and endowed with all perfections. What a jewel free from every blemish and pure of every stain! Lofty prestige, a happy horoscope, an awakened fortune, complete auspiciousness, a daily-increasing dominion, mounting victoriousness, pleasant friendship, a love of pleasantries, friendly cherishing, foe-destroying, a kingdom-bestowing liberality, a might that overthrew enemies, a world-embracing majesty, a world-conquering resolution, a firmness and gravity together with the working of conspicuous miracles, lofty converse, an illuminated mind, a God-given understanding, an enlightened

soul, a taste for knowledge, an expounder of mysteries, and an opener of mysteries, conquest over difficulties, etc., etc.—all these were gathered together in that sublime personality and created astonishment among the lords of insight.

Portrait of Three Monarchs *III. The Safavid 'Abbâs*

Shâh 'Abbâs the Great (r. 1588-1629) inherited a state that had been built upon fervent religious faith. The Safavid family claimed to be the sole legitimate heirs to the Prophet Muhammad and as such demanded that all good Muslims submit to their leadership. This claim, of course, made enemies of all other Muslim rulers, but by 'Abbâs' time, fervor had cooled, at least in court circles. Peace with the Ottoman empire became possible, and 'Abbâs himself was more interested in how to get hold of competent gunsmiths—if need be, from as far away as England—than in fine points of Muslim doctrine.

In order to cement relations with Europeans, whose skills in war and technology had begun to matter very much, Shâh 'Abbâs was willing even to admit to his country missionaries, whose professed aim was to convert Muslims to Christianity. The following extract comes from a report written by two Carmelite missionaries sent by the Pope to Irân in 1604: Father Simon was the leader and superior of the mission; Father Vincent is described in the text.

REPORT OF THE CARMELITE MISSION (FROM FATHER SIMON: REPORT ON PERSIA, PERSIANS AND 'ABBÂS I)

... The country which I saw is sparsely inhabited, for the most part all flat, with little water and much uncultivated land;

From *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, compiled by H. G. Chick, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939, vol. I, pp. 155-61, 248-55.