

**Provisional Translation of  
'Abdu'l-Bahá's "Tablet of the Fig and the Olive"<sup>1</sup>**

**He is God!**

Thou hast inquired about the subtle meanings of the blessed verse "By the Fig and the Olive."<sup>2</sup> As thine excellency well knoweth, the most eminent commentators have interpreted this verse by stating that the fig cometh from a goodly tree, that it hath numerous benefits beyond its exceeding sweetness, and doth in particular constitute an efficacious and wholesome medicine against chest diseases, and that it is therefore an excellent fruit. As to the olive, it is, according to the explicit verses of God, the fruit of a blessed tree. These two fruits, being the expression of God's highest bounty, have therefore been chosen for an oath.

Such is the view that hath been expounded and considered sufficient in the literal interpretations. While confirming such interpretations, the people of truth, they who consider the hidden realities and inner significances, have carefully examined this blessed verse and unravelled therein other far-reaching meanings.

One of them is this: In the sight of God, the most hallowed, the most blessed and most auspicious of all spots are the dawning-places of the Divine effulgences and the centres of the Divine blessings. Accordingly, "by the Fig" alludeth to Mount Tíiná and "by the Olive" to Mount Zaytá, which are situated on either side of Jerusalem. Both of these blessed mounts are in the Holy Land, for they are the places the exalted Prophets of God have used and received inspiration therein, and have been illumined with the effulgent lights of the Spirit. Thus have these mounts become the dayspring of the God's boundless grace.

After these two places, reference is made to Mount Sinai, where Moses, peace be upon Him, was manifested, and which therefore hath become the dawning-place of the splendours of the Divine verses and the day-spring of the Divine favours. Moreover, the city of Medina, the Secure City, hath been extolled as the place of the migration of Him Who is the Pride of the Messengers—upon Him rest salutations and praise—as the centre of the blessings of Islam, as the headquarters of its spiritual conquests, and as the spot wherein the Word of God hath been exalted. Thus the reference made to these blessed spots in the latter part of the verse proveth that the places mentioned earlier are also the seats of Divine effulgences.

The sublime meaning of these blessed verses is this: I swear by Mount Tíiná, Mount Zaytá, Mount Sinai, and this Secure City, which are the most blessed and honoured of all places in the sight of God, the source of His effulgent glories, and the site of the fervent supplications of His Prophets, that I have created the human temple and the reality of man in the most excellent form, and according to the most perfect order and arrangement. That is, while other creatures, and indeed the entirety of creation, are the manifestations of God's clear tokens, only the excellent figure of man representeth His

<sup>1</sup> This tablet is untitled. Translated by Necati Alkan, and revised by Hamid Samandari.

<sup>2</sup> Qur'án 95:1

most luminous sign and the sum of all Divine perfections. For he is the most great demarcation, the archetype of the greater world, the luminous Book,<sup>3</sup> the manifestation of the splendours of the Realms above,<sup>4</sup> the Inscribed Tablet,<sup>5</sup> and the Outspread Roll.<sup>6</sup> He it is who hath been made the recipient of the holy verse: "Read thine own record: Sufficient is thy soul in this day to make out an account against thee."<sup>7</sup>

Consider that the lights of prophethood have shone forth only above the horizon of mankind, and that the lamp of vice-regency hath been lit only within the glass of humanity. Infinite sciences have been manifested in the human heart; divine discoveries have been reflected in the mirror of man. Thus, the discovery of the hidden realities is due to human thought; the philosophical sciences are a favour vouchsafed unto man; the wonders of divine arts and crafts are his handiwork. Nay, the realities of all things, the natures of all beings, and the mysteries of the entire creation, which have been concealed in the invisible plane, are brought to light through his mental faculties and as the result of his activity. In sum, these virtues, qualities, and perfections are solely reserved for the reality of man, who is the essence of creation.

This letter is but a short and modest interpretation of this holy verse. Should a complete analysis and interpretation of its exalted meanings be desired, it would require a mighty book and a lengthy treatise. In view of thy well-wisher's exceeding weakness, frailty, grief, and sorrow, I have contented myself with this brief commentary and explanation. Given my fatigue after last night's meal, (as saith the holy tradition "When the stomach is filled, wisdom becometh silent"<sup>8</sup>); and the late night conversation with the friends, and since I had no time to write this letter myself, I caught his excellency Nesib Effendi and dictated it to him. Therefore, I beg thy forgiveness.

‘Abbás

<sup>3</sup> *Kitáb mubín*; cf. Qur'án 43:2, 44:2.

<sup>4</sup> *'Illiyún* occurs in Qur'án 83:18-19.

<sup>5</sup> *Lawh mastúr*; cf. Qur'án 52:2, *kitáb mastúr*.

<sup>6</sup> *Raqq manshúr*; cf. Qur'án 52:3.

<sup>7</sup> Qur'án, 17:14.

<sup>8</sup> *Idha mala 'at al-mi'da kharasat al-hikma*.