

# BAHĀ'Ī STUDIES BULLETIN

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NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE  
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U.K.

## BAHĀ'Ī STUDIES BULLETIN



This Bulletin has the full support of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of the United Kingdom: though they are not responsible for any of the views expressed within it. The BSB is primarily designed to facilitate communication between those among us engaged in the academic study of the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions; particularly between Bahā'īs approaching this field from such scholarly perspectives as Religious Studies, History of Religions, Iranian Studies, or Islamic Studies. It is hoped that at some stage in the future the Bulletin will be befittingly published rather than photostatically reproduced.

Articles published in this Bulletin are the perspectives of their authors **alone**. As with other Bahā'ī periodicals the content is obviously fallible; though hopefully intellectually and spiritually stimulating or challenging. Established Bahā'ī doctrine and the authoritative guidance of Bahā'ī institutions is respected though creative and scholarly individuality is neither inhibited nor censored. When printed here, translations of Bahā'ī sacred scripture – not authenticated at the Bahā'ī World Centre – are provisional. Manuscript / original scriptural texts (when printed) may or may not be textually sound.

A steady and sustained flow of scholarly contributions is vital to the success of this Bulletin: academic qualifications from western institutions of higher learning are not required of contributors. The nature and scope of contributions that would be welcome for inclusion in this Bulletin includes (for example):-

- Copies of manuscripts or of generally unavailable scriptural texts ( or portions thereof ) with or without comments about their importance / dating / diffusion / text-critical status or linguistic style.
- Essays or short notes upon aspects of Bahā'ī doctrine / history...
- Copies of letters written by or on behalf of the Universal House of Justice (or International Bahā'ī institutions) to individuals about or relating to aspects of Bahā'ī scholarship.
- Methodological essays or notes.
- Notices of books, papers or reviews of interest to Bahā'ī scholars working within such disciplines as are listed above (first paragraph).
- Reviews or review essays of Bahā'ī publications.
- Reports of Bahā'ī studies seminars or conferences.
- Reports of work in progress from people working within the field of Bābī-Bahā'ī studies.
- [Bio-] Bibliographical essays or notes.

All contributions to this Bulletin should be addressed to: Stephen Lambden (BSB Editor), 44 Queens Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 2PO, England, United Kingdom. Phone & Fax = 091. 2818597 (U.K.) / 44 91 2818597 (Dverseas). Ideally, contributions should be sent in ASCII or any major DOS / Apple Mac. word processing formats with sample printout – transliteration must be clearly indicated. Otherwise, contributions should be well typed / word processed.

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## □ EDITORIAL NOTE

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As previously announced (in BSB 5:1 [Jan.1991]) certain aspects of internationally respected Arabic-Persian transliteration norms will be followed in the BSB. From time to time the editor [Stephen Lambden] has benefited from consultation with Moojan Momen and others involved in Bahā'ī studies in the UK and internationally. Overseas sub-editors, primarily responsible for American and Canadian contributions, are:

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Valuable review, proof reading and other distribution work, has been carried out by Gillian Lambden, Robert Parry and Khazeh Fananapazir – among others who cannot all, unfortunately, be mentioned here.

## □ SUBSCRIPTIONS

The price of each issue of the BSB will vary according to size and postage costs but will not normally be less than £3.50 + postage rate (add 50p. UK & Europe; add £3 single issue or £6 double issue, rest of world). Alternatively, the BSB will be now be available (including selected revised back issues) in the widely-used WordPerfect 5.1 format: at the same basic cost as the photocopied version. This will reduce the now exorbitant UK postage costs and cut the time-consuming photocopying duplication. Attempts to reprint or exchange the WordPerfect 5.1 format of the BSB (on diskette), will often result in unsatisfactory, non-standardized copies (i.e. altered pagination, transliteration characters [ā ī ū, etc.] lost. This should not be done though passages may be extracted for citation purposes.

In the near future a new periodical supplementing the BSB – fully supported by the NSA of the Bahā'īs of the UK – entitled, *Abhā: A Journal of Bābī-Bahā'ī Studies* and consisting solely of academic articles, will be launched. Separate BSB (photocopy or diskette) and *Abhā.* subscription rates will be announced in the future.

□ Persons resident in the USA or Canada may enquire about and send their subscriptions (at a rate to be announced) to Ahang Rabbani, 17310 DeChirico Circle, Houston, USA. TX 77378; 713-251-9989 [H] /Fax [W] 713-586-2504.

From time to time issues forming part of a *BAHĀ'Ī STUDIES BULLETIN MONOGRAPH* series will come out: including, for example, oriental Bābī / Bahā'ī MSS and specialized articles of such length as would not normally be suitable (e.g. in excess of 50 pages) for the BSB.

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## THE TABLET OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH TO QUEEN VICTORIA (LAWH-I MALIKIH): AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE AND COMPLETED TRANSLATION

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Shahrokh Monjazeb

Between 31 August, 1868 and 4 November, 1870 Bahā'u'llāh was a political prisoner of the Ottoman authorities in the army barracks of the great citadel of 'Akkā'. During this unpropitious period he continued to dispatch individual letters to the major political and religious rulers of the European continent. Among those potentates to whom Bahā'u'llāh proclaimed His divinely appointed Mission was the renowned monarch of the British Empire, Queen Victoria (r. 1837-1901). 'Abdu'l-Bahā in a talk about the Bahā'ī principle of the equality of men and women delivered in Boston, Massachusetts (USA) on 26 August, 1912 said of this Queen: "Victoria, Queen of England, was really superior to all the kings of Europe in ability, justness and equitable administration. During her long and brilliant reign the British Empire was immensely extended and enriched, due to her political sagacity, skill and foresight." (*Promulgation*, 282)

Bahā'u'llāh's Arabic Tablet to Queen Victoria was never translated in its entirety by Shoghi Effendi.<sup>1</sup> The English translation of lengthy sections of it were, however, included in three of his major works; namely *The Promised Day is Come* (1941; Wilmette, Illinois: BPT., 1980 = PDC), the translation of Bahā'u'llāh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (1941; Wilmette, Illinois: BPT., 1971 = ESW) and Shoghi Effendi's own compilation of English translations of Bahā'u'llāh's Tablets (*alwāh*), *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh* (1949; Wilmette, Illinois: BPT., 1983 = GI). After organizing all the passages rendered into English by Shoghi Effendi in these works (there are some duplications), relatively little remained to be translated. It should be noted that even though great care has been taken to render the hitherto untranslated passages in a similar style and format as that of Shoghi Effendi, they nevertheless remain provisional.

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<sup>1</sup> The Tablet to Queen Victoria was earlier published in a complete English translation in the volume *Bahā'ī Scriptures* (Ed. Horace Holley; New York: Brentano's Inc., 1923 / New York: Bahā'ī Publishing Committee, 1928) No. 45, pp. 111-115. (SNL. Ed.)

TABLET TO THE QUEEN (*LAWH-I MALIKIH*) : COMPLETED TRANSLATION

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I

O Queen in London! Incline thine ear unto the voice of thy Lord, the Lord of all mankind, calling from the Divine Lote-Tree: Verily, no God is there but Me, the Almighty, the All-Wise! Cast away all that is on earth, and attire the head of thy kingdom with the crown of the remembrance of Thy Lord, the All-Glorious. He, in truth, hath come unto the world in His most great glory, and all that hath been mentioned in the Gospel hath been fulfilled. The land of Syria hath been honoured by the footsteps of its Lord, the Lord of all men, and North and South are both inebriated with the wine of His presence. Blessed is the man that hath inhaled the fragrance of the Most Merciful, and turned unto the Dawning-Place of His Beauty, in this resplendent Dawn. The Mosque of Aqsā vibrateth through the breezes of its Lord, the All-Glorious, whilst Bathā (Mecca) trembleth at the voice of God, the Exalted, the Most High. Every single stone of them celebrateth the praise of the Lord, through this Great Name.

II

Lay aside thy desire, and set then thine heart towards thy Lord, the Ancient of Days. We make mention of thee for the sake of God, and desire that thy name be exalted through thy remembrance of God, the Creator of earth and heaven. He, verily, is witness unto that which I say. We have been informed that thou hast forbidden the trading in slaves, both men and women. This, verily, is what God hath enjoined in this wondrous Revelation. God hath, truly, destined a reward for thee, because of this. He, verily, will pay the doer of good his due recompense, wert thou to follow what hath been sent unto thee by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. As to him who turneth aside, and swelleth with pride, after that the clear tokens have come unto him, from the Revealer of signs, his work shall God bring to naught. He, in truth, hath power over all things. Man's actions are acceptable after his having recognized (the Manifestation). He that tumeth aside from the True One is indeed the most veiled amongst His creatures. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

## 6

### III

We have also heard that thou hast entrusted the reins of counsel into the hands of the representatives of the people. Thou, indeed, hast done well, for thereby the foundations of the edifice of thine affairs will be strengthened, and the hearts of all that are beneath thy shadow, whether high or low, will be tranquillized. It behooveth them, however, to be trustworthy among His servants, and to regard themselves as the representatives of all that dwell on earth. This is what counselleth them, in this Tablet, He Who is the Ruler, the All-Wise. [PDC: 35-36] And if any one of them directeth himself towards the Assembly [British Parliament], let him turn his eyes unto the Supreme Horizon, and say: 'O my God! I ask Thee, by Thy most glorious Name, to aid me in that which will cause the affairs of Thy servants to prosper, and Thy cities to flourish. Thou, indeed, hast power over all things!' Blessed is he that entereth the Assembly for the sake of God, and judgeth between men with pure justice. He, indeed, is of the blissful.

### IV

O ye members of Assemblies in that land and in other countries! Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind and bettereth the condition thereof; if ye be of them that scan heedfully. Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay, its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously. And if, at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. [ESW:61-2]

### V

We behold it, in this day, at the mercy of rulers so drunk with pride that they cannot discern clearly their own best advantage, much less recognize a Revelation so bewildering and challenging as this. And whenever any one of them hath striven to improve its condition, his motive hath been his own gain, whether confessedly so or not; and the unworthiness of this motive hath limited his power to heal or cure.

## VI

That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error. [Gl:255]

## VII

Each time that Most Mighty Instrument hath come, and that Light shone forth from the Ancient Dayspring, He was withheld by ignorant physicians who, even as clouds, interposed themselves between Him and the world. It failed therefore, to recover, and its sickness hath persisted until this day. They indeed were powerless to protect it, or to effect a cure, whilst He Who hath been the Manifestation of Power amongst men was withheld from achieving His purpose, by reason of what the hands of the ignorant physicians have wrought.

## VIII

Consider these days in which He Who is the Ancient Beauty hath come in the Most Great Name, that He may quicken the world and unite its peoples. They, however, rose up against Him with sharpened swords, and committed that which caused the Faithful Spirit to lament, until in the end they imprisoned Him in the most desolate of cities, and broke the grasp of the faithful upon the hem of His robe. Were anyone to tell them: 'The World Reformer is come,' they would answer and say: 'Indeed it is proven that He is a fomenter of discord!', and this notwithstanding that they have never associated with Him, and have perceived that He did not seek, for one moment, to protect Himself. At all times He was at the mercy of the wicked doers. At one time they cast Him into prison, at another they banished Him, and at yet another hurried Him from land to land. Thus have they pronounced judgment against Us and God, truly, is aware of what I say. [ESW:63-64] In the estimation of the one true God they are the most ignorant of creatures. They sever their own arms from their bodies while remaining heedless, and unwittingly forbid themselves what is beneficial to them. Like callow youths they cannot distinguish between the fomenter of discord and the Reformer or differentiate between good and evil. Verily We see them in this Day wrapt in a manifest veil.

## IX

O ye rulers of the earth! Wherefore have ye clouded the radiance of the Sun, and caused it to cease from shining? Harken unto the counsel given you by the Pen of the Most High, that haply both ye and the poor may attain unto tranquillity and peace. We beseech God to assist the kings of the earth to establish peace on earth. He, verily, doth what He willeth.

## X

O kings of the earth! We see you increasing every year your expenditures, and laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is wholly and grossly unjust. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and lay not excessive burdens on your peoples. Do not rob them to rear palaces for yourselves; nay rather choose for them that which ye choose for yourselves. Thus We unfold to your eyes that which profiteth you, if ye but perceive. Your people are your treasures. Beware lest your rule violate the commandments of God, and ye deliver your wards to the hands of the robber. By them ye rule, by their means ye subsist, by their aid ye conquer. Yet, how disdainfully ye look upon them! How strange, how very strange!

Now that ye have refused the Most Great Peace, hold ye fast unto this, the Lesser Peace, that haply ye may in some degree better your own condition and that of your dependents.

## XI

O rulers of the earth! Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions. Beware lest ye disregard the counsel of the All-Knowing, the Faithful.

Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice. [Gl. CXIX:253] Thus did We counsel you in the Tablet\* which We previously sent you on another

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\* The "Tablet" referred to is *Sūrat al-Mulūk (Sūra of the Kings)* an earlier work of Bahā'u'llāh composed circa 1866 in Edirne. The passage alluded to is: "Lay not aside the fear of God, O kings of the earth, . . . Compose your differences, and reduce your armaments, that the burden of your expenditures may be lighted, and that your minds and hearts may be tranquillized. Heal the dissensions that divide you and ye will no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of your cities and territories demandeth." (*Sūrat al-Mulūk* in *Alvāh-i nāzilīh khatāb bih mulūk va rū'asā-yi ard*, pp. 7-8; the translation is that of Shoghi Effendi, *Gleanings*. CXVIII). → [contd.]



occasion, that ye may follow that which hath been revealed by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise.

Should anyone seek refuge beneath your shadow protect them and do not betray them. Thus doth the Supreme Pen exhort you on behalf of Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Beware lest ye commit that which was perpetrated by the King of Islam [Sultān of Turkey, 'Abdu'l-Azīz, r. 1861-76] when he commanded Us to come to him. His ministers pronounced judgement against Us with such injustice that all created things were made to lament and the hearts of those who have near access to God were consumed. We found on their part no stability, for the winds of a corrupt inclination moved them in whatever direction they pleased. They, indeed, are of those who are lost in oblivion.

## XII

O Ancient Pen! Withhold the pen and leave them to sink in their vain imaginings. Make mention of the Queen, that perchance she may turn to the Most Great Beauty with a pure heart. Prevent thou not her eyes from looking in the direction of her Lord, the Lord of Predestination, and disclose to her what hath been revealed in the Scrolls and Tablets by Him Who is the Creator of humanity, through Whom the sun was darkened and the moon was eclipsed and the call was raised between the heavens and the earth.

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[contd.] Bahā'u'llāh also reiterates this counsel in the *Tablet of Maqṣūd (Lawḥ-i Maqṣūd)* written circa 1882 at Bahji near 'Akká. He writes:

"The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the Great Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves. Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. This will ensure the peace and composure of every people, government and nation." (*Lawḥ-i Maqṣūd* in *Majmū'a-yi az alvāh-i Jamā'i Aqdas-i Abhā kih ba'd-az Kitāb-i Aqdas nāzil Shudih* [Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í Verlag GmbH, 1980], p.99; the translation is that of Shoghi Effendi, *Gleanings*, CXVII).

## XIII

Turn thou unto God and say: O my Sovereign Lord! I am but a vassal of Thine, and Thou art, in truth, the King of Kings. I have lifted my suppliant hands unto the heaven of Thy grace and Thy bounties. Send down, then, upon me from the clouds of Thy generosity that which will rid me of all save Thee, and draw me nigh unto Thyself. I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by Thy name, which Thou hast made the king of names, and the manifestation of Thyself to all who are in heaven and on earth, to rend asunder the veils that have intervened between me and my recognition of the Dawning-Place of Thy signs and the Dayspring of Thy Revelation. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Bounteous. Deprive me not, O my Lord, of the fragrances of the Robe of Thy mercy in Thy days, and write down for me that which Thou hast written down for Thy handmaidens who have believed in Thee and in Thy signs, and have recognized Thee, and set their hearts towards the horizon of Thy Cause. Thou art truly the Lord of the worlds and of those who show mercy the Most Merciful. Assist me, then, O my God, to remember Thee amongst Thy handmaidens, and to aid Thy Cause in Thy lands. Accept, then, that which hath escaped me when the light of Thy countenance shone forth. Thou, indeed, hast power over all things. Glory be to Thee, O Thou in Whose hand is the kingdom of the heavens and of the earth. [PDC:36]

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□ Key to passages translated by Shoghi Effendi

I-IIIa = PDC:35-6 "O Queen in London! . . ." to ". . . He Who is the Ruler, the All-Wise."

IIIb-IV = ESW:61-2 "And if any one of them . . ." to ". . . the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

V-VI = Gl. CXX:255 "We behold it . . ." to ". . . naught but error."

VII-VIIIa = ESW:63-4 "Each time that . . ." to ". . . aware of what I say."

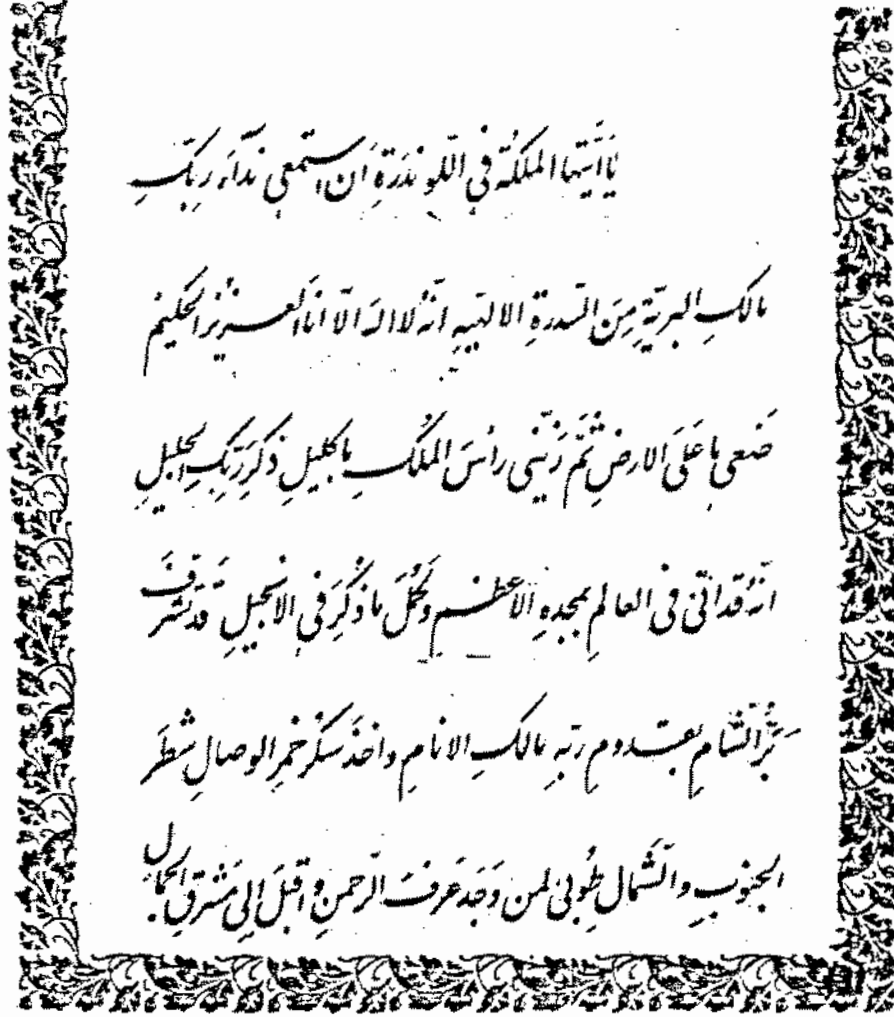
VIIIb trans. Monjazeab.

IX-XIa = Gl. CXIX:252-4 "O ye rulers of the earth! . . ." to ". . . but manifest justice."

XIb-XII trans. Monjazeab.

XIII = PDC:36 "Turn thou unto God . . ." to the end.

## THE ARABIC TEXT OF THE TABLET TO QUEEN VICTORIA \*\*



\*\* The printed texts which I consulted are found in the following two sources – the second of which is reproduced below: 1) *Kitāb-i mubīn* or *Āthār-i qalam-i a'lā* (Tehran: Mu'asisih-yi Millī-yi Matbū'at-i Amrī, 120 B.E. [1963-1964]) Volume 1, pp. 61-66 – a collection of some of the Arabic Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh lithographed from the handwriting of Mullā Zayn al-Ābidīn-i Najafābādī better known as Jināb-i Zayn al-Muqarrabīn; 2) *Alwāh-i nāzilīh khalāb bih mulūk va rū'asā-yi ard* (Tehran: Mu'asisih-yi Millī-yi Matbū'at-i Amrī, 124 B.E. [1967-1968], pp. 131-141 – a collection of Bahā'u'llāh's letters to the various kings and rulers of His time.

فِي تَبَاغُجِ الْمُسْبِينِ قَدِ اهْتَرَأَ الْمَسْجِدَ الْأَقْصَى مِنْ نِسَاءِ رَبِّهِ الْأَبْنَى  
 وَالْبَطْحَاءِ مِنْ نِدَاؤِ اللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْأَعْلَى إِذَا كُلُّ حِصَاةٍ مَسْتَجِجَةٌ لِلرَّبِّ  
 بِهَذَا الْأَسْمِ الْعَظِيمِ دَعَى بِهَوَايِكِ ثُمَّ أَهْلَى تَعْلِيكَ إِلَى مَوْلَاكَ الْعَظِيمِ  
 أَنَا تَذَكَّرُكَ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَتَحْتَبُ أَنْ يُعَلِّمُوا أَسْمَاكَ بِذِكْرِكَ خَالِقِ  
 الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ أَنْ عَلَى مَا أَقُولُ شَيْءٌ قَدْ بَلَّغْنَاكَ مَنَعَتِ بَيْعِ  
 الْعِيَانِ وَالْأَمَارِهَا مَا حَكَمَ بِهِ اللَّهُ فِي بَدَا الْفُجُورِ الْبَدِيعِ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ  
 لَكَ جِزَاءَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تُؤْتِيَ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ إِنْ تَتَّبَعِي مَا أَرْسَلْتُ لَكَ  
 مِنْ لَدُنِّ عَزِيمِ خَيْرِ إِنْ أَلْمَيْتُ عَرَضَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُ عِبَادَةَ مَا جَاءَتْهُ الْبِنَاءُ  
 مِنْ لَدُنِّ مُنْزَلِ الْآيَاتِ لِيُحِيطَ اللَّهُ عَلَمًا أَنْ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

إِنَّ الْأَعْمَالَ تُعْبَدُ الْأَقْبَالَ مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنِ الْحَقِّ أَنَّهُ مِنْ أَجْلِ  
 الْخَلْقِ كَذَلِكَ قَدْرٌ مَنْ لَدُنْ عَزِيزٍ تَدِيرُ وَيُبْعَثُ الْكُتُبَ أَوْعَتْ  
 زِمَامَ الْمَشَاوِرِ بِأَيَادِي الْجَهْوَرِ نَعْمَ مَا عَمِلْتَ لِأَنَّ بَهْتَ سَجَلَمَ أَصُولِ آيَاتِهِ  
 الْأُمُورِ تَطْمِئِنُّ قُلُوبٌ مَنْ فِي ظُلْمَاتٍ مِنْ كُلِّ وَضِيعٍ وَشَرِيفٍ  
 وَكَلِمَةٍ فَيَسْبِي لِنُفْسِ بَابٍ كَيُونُوا أَسْمَاءَ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ وَيَرَوْنَ نَفْسَهُمْ وَكَلَامَهُ  
 لِمَنْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ كَلِمَاتُهَا مَا وَعِظُوا بِهِ فِي الْفُجْرِ مِنْ لَدُنْ وَتَدِيرُ حَكِيمٍ وَادُّ  
 تَوَجَّهْ أَحَدًا إِلَى الْجَمْعِ يُجَوِّدُ ظَرْفًا إِلَى الْأَفْقِ الْأَعْلَى وَيَعُولُ بِاللَّهِ سُلْطَانُ  
 بِأَسْمَاءِ الْأَسْمَى بَابٍ تَوَيْدٌ فِي عِلْمٍ مَا تَصَلِّحُ بِأُمُورِ عِبَادِكَ وَتُعْمِرُ لِبِلَادِكَ  
 أَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ تَدِيرُ طُوبَى لِمَنْ يَدُخُلُ الْجَمْعَ لَوْجِدَ التَّوَيْدِ

ويحكيم بين الناس بالعدل الخالص إلا أنه من الخائزين يا أصحاب  
 المجلس في مناك وديار أخرى تدبروا وكلموا فيما يصلح به العالم حاله  
 لو أنتم من المتوسمين فانظروا العالم كجمل إنسان أنه خلق صميماً  
 كما قالوا عثرته الأمراض بالأسباب المختلفة المتغايرة وما طابت  
 في يوم بل اشتت مرضه بما وقع تحت تصرف أطباء غير حاذقة اليد  
 ركبوها مطية الموتى وكانوا من العائمين وإن طاب عضو من أعضائه  
 في عصر من الأعصار بطبيب حاذق بقيت أعضائه أخرى فيما كان  
 كذلك فيسلكم العليم بخبير واليوم نريد تحت أيدي الذين أهدمتم  
 سكرتكم العزود على شأن لا يعرفون خيراً أنفسهم فحسب هذا الأمر الأول

ان سعى احد من بولاد في صحته لم يكن معصوده الابان يفتح بها  
 كان اورسما لدا لا يعبر على برزخ الاعلى وقد يعده به الذي جعله  
 الذرياق الاعظم وتبب الا تم لصحة هو اتحاد من على الارض على  
 امر واحد وشريعته واحدة هذا لا يمكن ابد الا بطيب حادق كامل مؤيد  
 لغري هذا هو الحق وما بعده الا الضلال المبين كقوله اني ذاك النسب  
 الاعظم واشرق ذاك النور من مشرق بعثتم مسعاه المتطهرون وصاروا  
 سخا بامنه وبين العالم لدا ما طاب مرضه ونهى في سعيه الى حين  
 انتم لم بعثوا على حفظه وصحته والذي كان منظر القدره بين امرته  
 من عمارا وما كتبت ايدي المتطهين فانظروا في حسنه الايام التي

أتى جبال استكبرم والاسم الأعظم بحياة العالم وتحسادهم انهم قاموا  
 عليه بأسياف شاذة واركلوا ما فرغ به الروح الأمين الى ان جعلوا  
 سجوناً في اخرت البلاد المعام الذي تطعيت عن ذل ايادي ابي المفضلين  
 اذ قيل لهم اتى مصلح العالم قالوا قد تحقق انه من المفسدين بعد ذلك  
 ما عاشروا معه ويرون انه ما حفظ نفسه في اقل من حين كان في كل  
 الاحيان بين ايدي اهل الطغيان مرة حبسوه وطورا افسسوه جود  
 تارة واروا به بسلاة كذلك حكموا علينا والله على ما نقول عليم  
 من اجل خلق لدمى اتقى يعطون اعضاءهم ولا يشعرون يموتون  
 من انفسهم ولا يعرفون مثل كل الصبيان لا يعرفون المفسد



مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ وَالشَّرِّ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ قَدْ زَاغَمُ الْيَوْمَ فِي حِجَابِ مَسِينٍ  
 يَا مَعْشَرَ الْأُمَرَاءِ مَا حَرَّمَ سَخَابًا بِالْوَجْهِ الشَّمْسِ وَمَنْعَتُهُ عَنِ الْأَشْرَاقِ  
 أَنْ اسْتَمِعُوا مَا يَحْكُمُ بِهِ الْعِلْمُ الْأَعْلَى لَعَلَّ تَشْرِيحَ بِنَفْسِكُمْ تَمُوتُ الْعُرُودُ  
 نَسَلُ اللَّهِ بَأْسَ يُؤَيِّدُ الْمُلُوكَ عَلَى الصَّالِحِ أَنْ كُنُوا الْعَادِلَ عَلَى مَا يَرَى  
 يَا مَعْشَرَ الْمُلُوكِ إِنَّمَا زَاغَمُ فِي كُلِّ سَنَةٍ تَزَادُونَ مَصَارِعَكُمْ وَتُكَلِّبُونَ  
 عَلَى الرَّعِيَةِ إِنْ هَذَا الْأَظْلَمُ عَظِيمٌ أَتَقَارِفُونَ الْمَظْلُومَ وَعِبْرَتَهُ وَلَا  
 تَحْكُمُونَ عَلَى الرَّعِيَةِ فَوْقَ طَائِفَتِهِمْ وَلَا تَحْسَبُونَ لَهُمْ تَعْمِيرَ قُصُورِكُمْ أَنْ تَحْتَابُوا  
 لَهُمْ مَا نَحْتَابُ لَهُمْ لَا نَفْسُكُمْ لَدَاكَ نُسْبَانُكُمْ مَا نَسْفَعُكُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَمِرُّوا مِنَ التَّنْفِرِ  
 إِنْهُمْ حَرَامُكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَا نَا حَكِيمٌ اللَّهُ وَأَبَاكُمْ أَنْ تَسْلُبُوا

يَا أَيُّهَا السَّارِقِينَ بِهِمْ كُفْرُونَ وَتَاكُفُونَ وَعَيْبُونَ وَعَلَيْهِمْ تَسْكِرُونَ  
 إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا أَمْرٌ حَبِيبٌ لِمَا نَبَذْتُمْ أَصْلِحُوا الْأَكْبَرُ عَنْ ذُرِّكُمْ تَمَسَّكُوا بِهَذَا  
 الصَّالِحِ الْأَصْغَرَ لَعَلَّ بِهِ تَصْلِحُ أَمْوَالُ الَّذِينَ فِي ظِلْمِكُمْ عَلَى قَدَرٍ يَشْتَرُ  
 الْأَمْرِينَ أَنْ يَصِلُوا إِذَا تَبَيْتُمْ إِذَا تَحْتَ جُؤُنْ كِبْرَةَ الْعَاكِرِ وَمَتَمَّ  
 إِلَّا عَلَى قَدَرٍ تَحْتَلُونَ بِهِ مَمَالِكُكُمْ وَبِلَدَانِكُمْ أَيَاكُمْ أَنْ تَدْعُوا مَا نُصَحُّكُمْ بِهِ مِنْ  
 لَدُنْ عَلِيمٍ آمِينَ أَنْ اتَّخَذُوا بِمَعْشَرَ الْمَلُوكِ بِتَسْكُنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْأَخْتَارِ  
 بِبَيْتِهِمْ وَتَسْرِجُ الرَّعِيَّةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَكُمْ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ مِنَ الْعَارِفِينَ إِنْ قَامَ هَدًى  
 مِنْكُمْ عَلَى الْأَخْرَقِ قَوْمًا عَلَيْهِ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا عَدْلٌ مَبِينٌ كَذَلِكَ وَصَّيْنَاكُمْ  
 فِي اللَّوْحِ الَّذِي أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى إِنْ تَتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلْنَا

مِنْ لَدُنِّ عَسِيرٍ حَكِيمٍ إِنَّ يَبْرِئُ أَحَدًا إِلَى ظِلِّكُمْ أَنْ حَفَظُوا وَلَا اسْتَمَعُوا

كَذَلِكَ نَعْظُمُ الْقَلَمَ الْأَعْلَى مِنْ لَدُنِّ عَظِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ يَا كَيْفَ أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا مَا

فَعَلْتُمْ لِلْإِسْلَامِ أَوْ أَيْتَانَهُ بِأَمْرِ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ نَاكِلًا وَكَلَامًا بِالْقَلَمِ الَّذِي

نَاحَتْ الْأَشْيَاءُ وَحَرَقَتْ أَلْبَابُ الْمُعْتَرِينَ تَحْرُكُكُمْ أَيْ مَاجِ الْغَوِيِّ كَيْفَ

تَسَاءَلُوا وَجَدْنَا لَكُمْ مِنْ تَسَاءَلِ الْأَيُّهُمُ مِنَ الْهَامِينَ أَنْ يَا قَلَمُ اقْدِمْ

أَنْ أَسْكِبَ الْقَلَمُ دَعْوَتَهُ لِيُضَوِّقَ فِي أَوْهَامِهِمْ ثُمَّ أَدْرِكُ الْمَلَكَةَ لَعَلَّ تَوَجُّهًا

بِالْعَلْبِ الْأَطْرَافِ إِلَى الْمَنْظَرِ الْأَكْبَرِ وَلَا تَمْنَعُ الْبَصَرَ عَنِ النَّظَرِ إِلَى شَطْرِهَا

مَا لَكَ الْقَدْرَ وَتَطْلُعُ بِأَنْزَلٍ فِي الْأَلْوَابِ وَالزَّبْرِ مِنْ لَدُنِّ خَالِقِ الْبَشَرِ

الَّذِي بِهِ ظَلَمْتَ بَشَرًا وَكَيْفَ الْقَمَرُ وَارْتَفَعَ الْبِنَاءُ بَيْنَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

أَنْ أَقْبَلِي إِلَى التَّوْبَةِ وَتُؤْتِي يَا مَالِكِي أَنَا الْمَلُوكُ وَأَنْتَ مَالِكُ الْمُلُوكِ  
 قَدَرْتُمْ يَدَ الرَّجَاءِ إِلَى سَهَابِ فَضْلِكَ وَمَوَاهِبِكَ فَانزِلْ عَلَيَّ مِنْ سَحَابِ  
 جُودِكَ يَا حَبْلِي مَنْقَطَةً عَنْ ذَوَابِكِ وَتَعْرِيفِي إِلَيْكَ أَمْنِي رَبِّ سَهَابِكَ  
 بِسَمْتِكَ الَّذِي جَعَلْتَهُ سُلْطَانَ الْأَسْمَاءِ وَنَهَيْتَهُ نَفْسِكَ لِي فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 وَالسَّمَاءِ بِأَنْ تَحْسُرَ الْأَعْيَابُ الَّتِي حَالَتْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عِرْفَانِ مَطْلَعِ  
 آيَاتِكَ وَمَشْرِقِ حَيَاتِكَ أَنْتَ الْمُقَدَّرُ الْعَسِيرُ الْكَرِيمُ أَمِي رَبِّ  
 لَا تَحْرِسْنِي عَنْ نَفْحَاتِ قَمِيصِ رَحْمَتِكَ فِي آيَاتِكَ وَكَثِّبْ لِي مَا يَسْتَبِيحُ  
 بِإِمَانِكَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِكَ وَإِيمَانِكَ وَفَرَنْ بَعْرَفَاتِكَ وَتَقْبَلُنَّ تَقْبَلُنَا  
 إِلَى أَنْفِقِ أَمْرِكَ أَنْتَ تَبَوَّأْتَ مَوْلَى الْعَالَمِينَ وَأَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ تَقْبَلُنَّ أَيْدِيَنَا

يا الٰهى على ذكرك بين ايمانك ونصرة امرك فى ديارك ثم اقبل منى  
 ما فاتت عني عنده طلوع انوار وجهك انا انت على كل شى قدير  
 والسموات لك يا من بيدك ملك السموات والارضين .

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## A FURTHER TABLET OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH TO FĀRIS THE PHYSICIAN

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Stephen Lambden

It is probable that the Most Holy Tablet (*Lawh-i aqdas*, 'Akkā period, 187?),<sup>1</sup> designated the "Tablet to the Christians" by some western Bahā'īs, was communicated by Bahā'u'llāh to the Syrian, Protestant Christian physician, Dr. Fāris (dates unknown). Another Arabic Tablet, characterized as a "Mighty Tablet" (*al-lawh al-'azīm*) (I:2) and an "irrevocable, all-embracing Message" (*al-khitāb al-mubram al-muhīt*) (XI:3) is reproduced and translated below. It was almost certainly addressed to this same early Christian convert, this "horseman of realities" (*fāris al-haqā'iq*) as Bahā'u'llāh referred to him (see below on I:6 and XI:1ff).

The story of Fāris' conversion to the Bahā'ī religion is well known.<sup>2</sup> It has been quite frequently outlined by Bahā'u'llāh himself. Unfortunately, however, detailed, precise biographical information about Fāris is lacking: the present writer is not aware of details of Fāris' post-conversion Bahā'ī life and activities in either primary scriptural (Persian and Arabic) or other secondary sources (cf., XI:1ff and Appendix One).

In one of his Tablets the founder of the Bahā'ī Faith refers to Fāris as one of "the bishops of the Christians" (*usuf al-nasārī*). This designation probably did not describe a past ecclesiastical position. It is most probably honorific or poetical and is reflected in a *mathnawī* of Zarandī where Fāris is poetically (?) designated a "learned Christian [priest]" (Per. *qissīs-i masīhī*).<sup>3</sup> These designations may have been born out of the eloquence of Fāris' first letter

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the *Lawh-i aqdas* can be found in a variety of published and unpublished Arabic and Persian compilations of Bahā'u'llāh's Tablets. See for example, *Alwāh-i Bahā'u'llāh...sūra-yi haykal...* pp. 163-172; *Majmū'a az alwāh-i jamāl-i aqdas-i abhā'* ("Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh revealed after the Kitāb-i-Aqdas"] Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahā'ī Verlag, 1980/137). The fairly recent authorized English translation is published in TB:9-17. On earlier translations see the details supplied by the present writer in M. Sours, *A Study of Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet to the Christians* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1990) p.7. The exact dating and *sitz im leben* of the *Lawh-i aqdas* are unknown.

<sup>2</sup> An account of Fāris' conversion to the Bahā'ī Faith by Nabī-i Zarandī is contained in the second (unpublished) part of Zarandī's history. It is translated in Hasan Balyuzi's *Bahā'u'llāh King of Glory* pp.265-268 (See Appendix One) and registered in other sources. See also, Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Ganj.* pp.164-168 drawing on a biographical poem (*mathnawī*) of Zarandī.

<sup>3</sup> This poem contains an account of Bahā'u'llāh's journey from Adrianople to 'Akkā' and refers to its author's conversion of Fāris (see Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Ganj.*).

to Bahā'u'llāh (see on XI:2), taken as evidence that he should be considered a learned, "priestly" Christian.<sup>4</sup> In the *Tārikh-i Zarandī (Dawnbreakers..)* and other sources, Fāris is referred to as a physician. Whatever the case, it is clear from the following words of Bahā'u'llāh contained in a Tablet to Mullā Muhammad Ridā' Manshādī, Rad al-Rūh (written fairly shortly after Fāris' conversion), that Fāris was considered a Christian convert of great magnitude; "By God! His [Fāris'] creation is, in the estimation of God, greater than the creation of the heavens and of the earth."<sup>5</sup>

Like the "Most Holy Tablet" (*Lawh-i aqdas*), the Tablet translated here contains passages addressed to Christians generally. In a succession of paragraphs (VII -> X) the whole ecclesiastical hierarchy of the (Eastern) Church -- from "Patriarchs" (*al-batariqa*) (VII) and "Archbishops/ Metropolitans" (*al-matārina*) (VIII) to "bishops" (*al-asāqif*) (IX) and "priests" (*al-qassīs*) (X) -- are informed of the advent of the one promised in the holy books.

Bahā'u'llāh categorically proclaims himself the return of Christ. He has built the true eschatological Temple -- the new Jerusalem of his religion, laws and revelation. The world, he proclaims, is in turmoil before his resplendent theophany; the parousia of the Divine, Everlasting Lord. The promises have been fulfilled and the latter-day signs have appeared. Fāris is advised to communicate Bahā'u'llāh's elevated claims with tact and wisdom; in accordance with the varying capacity of the people (XI:4)

At various points in his *The Promised Day is Come* (= PDC ) Shoghi Effendi translated about one third of this Tablet to Fāris (see below passages between asterisks and in quotation marks, II:3-4; VII:1ff; VIII:1ff; IX:1ff; X:1ff). The rest of the translation set out below is my own and is provisional. Only selected notes commenting on this important Tablet will be registered here.

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<sup>4</sup> *Qassīs* can signify one learned in matters Christian or a leader of the Christian community; a presbyter, priest or bishop. It is an Arabic loanword derived from the Syriac. In E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Rep. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984) 2:2521 [= 1st ed. 'Book 1' Pt.7 1885] it is noted that "in the present day [*qassīs* is] applied to a Christian presbyter [= elder -- a minister or priest ranking between a bishop and a deacon] or priest." Fāris worked as a physician. As indicated, he was probably referred to honorifically as a *qassīs* ("priest") in the sense of his being a learned Christian.

<sup>5</sup> An unpublished Haifa typed (Arabic) copy of this Tablet was communicated to me by Christopher Buck.

PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION OF THE ARABIC TEXT

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[I]

The One, the Etemal, the Ancient.

<sup>[1]</sup> Thine epistle was presented before the Divine Countenance. From it did We find the fragrance of love and affection. <sup>[2]</sup> Wherefore did We send down for thee this Mighty Tablet. <sup>[3]</sup> It is incumbent upon thee that thou render thanks unto he who enabled thee to hear the cooing of the Dove, and caused thee to comprehend this Straight Path. <sup>[4]</sup> Rise up for the victory of the Cause of thy Lord, with wisdom and perspicuity. <sup>[5]</sup> He, verily, aideth whomsoever He desireth through a sovereignty which cometh from Him. He assuredly is the All-Powerful, the Omnipotent. <sup>[6]</sup> We ask God that He make thee the horseman of realities in this battlefield and make thee of such as are not withheld by idle fancies from God, thy Lord and Lord of all the worlds.

[II]

<sup>[1]</sup> Take ye hold of the Goblet of Eternity in the Name of thy Lord, the King of Names. <sup>[2]</sup> Then drink therefrom and say: 'Unto Thee be Praise, O Thou Chalice of mystic knowers. <sup>[3]</sup> \* *"The Breath hath been wafted and the Breeze hath blown. <sup>[4]</sup> From Zion hath appeared that which was hidden and from Jerusalem is heard the Voice of God the One, the Incomparable, Omniscient."* [PDC:77] \*

[III]

<sup>[1]</sup> This is that which was sent down aforetime by this Wondrous Pen. <sup>[2]</sup> Say: 'The Temple hath been built with the hands of the power of the Conqueror of Infirmary and the All-Merciful hath manifested Himself from this Luminous Orient.' <sup>[3]</sup> Say: 'Is that [Temple] built with the hands of the All-Merciful to be preferred or that built from mere clay?' <sup>[4]</sup> God hath cried out and giveth the people the glad-tidings of this Cause which hath radiated and sparkied from the Horizon of the Will of your Lord, the Ancient of Days.



## [IV]

<sup>[1]</sup> So know that We, when We adorned the Kingdom with the ornament of the Name of thy Lord, the Supreme, the fishes in the oceans were thunderstruck; <sup>[2]</sup> the fruits fell down from the trees; <sup>[3]</sup> the inmates of the spiritual dominion were confounded; <sup>[4]</sup> the tribes of the mundane world wailed; <sup>[5]</sup> the People of the Midian of Names were halted and <sup>[6]</sup> such pillars as are in earth and heaven were convulsed; save, that is, such as thy Lord, the Wise, hath willed.

## [V]

<sup>[1]</sup> Blessed be thou in that thy name hath been mentioned in the Kingdom of thy Lord and there hath been sent down for thee that through which thy remembrance will be maintained throughout the eternity of God. <sup>[2]</sup> This is an expression of His bounty unto thee if thou be of such as are numbered among the mystic knowers.

## [VI]

<sup>[1]</sup> The Spirit [Jesus] hath assuredly come with the Ornament of God and every one of His limbs crieth out, 'I, verily, am the Beloved of the worlds.' <sup>[2]</sup> And when the promise was fulfilled and the veil was rent asunder through the Finger of the Divine Decree, then such as were in creation were terrified and the fire of hatred was inflamed in the hearts of the iniquitous. <sup>[3]</sup> And they committed that which caused the inmates of Paradise to lament and the Faithful Spirit to tear its garments asunder. <sup>[4]</sup> Say: 'Tribulations shall in no wise withhold Us from what We have purposed. <sup>[5]</sup> In very truth shall We cry out, even though the swords of all the worlds be unsheathed against My Face.'

## [VII]

<sup>[1]</sup> \* "Say: 'O concourse of patriarchs! He Whom ye were promised in the Tablets is come. <sup>[2]</sup> Fear God, and follow not the vain imaginings of the superstitious. <sup>[3]</sup> Lay aside the things ye possess, and take fast hold of the Tablet of God by His sovereign power. <sup>[4]</sup> Better is this for you than all your possessions. <sup>[5]</sup> Unto this testifieth every understanding heart and every man of insight. <sup>[6]</sup> Pride ye yourselves on My Name and yet shut yourselves out as by a veil from Me? <sup>[7]</sup> This indeed is a strange thing.'" [PDC:101] \*

## [VIII]

<sup>[1]</sup> \* "Say: 'O Concourse of archbishops! He Who is the Lord of all men hath appeared. <sup>[2]</sup> In the plain of guidance He calleth mankind, whilst ye are numbered with the dead! <sup>[3]</sup> Great is the blessedness of him who is stirred by the Breeze of God and hath arisen from amongst the dead in this perspicuous Name." [PDC:101]\*

## [IX]

<sup>[1]</sup> \* "Say: 'O concourse of bishops! Trembling hath seized all the kindred of the earth and He Who is the Everlasting Father calleth aloud between earth and heaven. <sup>[2]</sup> Blessed the ear that hath heard, and the eye that hath seen, and the heart that hath turned unto Him Who is the Point of Adoration of all who are in the heavens and all who are on earth." [PDC:101] \*

## [X]

<sup>[1]</sup> \* "O concourse of priests! The Day of Reckoning hath appeared, the Day whereon He Who was in heaven hath come. <sup>[2]</sup> He, verily, is the One Whom ye were promised in the Books of God, the Holy, the Almighty, the All-Praised. <sup>[3]</sup> How long will ye wander in the wilderness of heedlessness and superstition? <sup>[4]</sup> Turn with your hearts in the direction of your Lord, the Forgiving, the Generous." [PDC:102] \*

## [XI]

<sup>[1]</sup> Thus did We send down the verses to the end that thou be gladdened through My remembrance of thee and be numbered among those firmly established. <sup>[2]</sup> I recollect when thy communication was received the first time; the time when the Most Great Ocean settled upon the Ark in view of that which the hands of the polytheists had committed. <sup>[3]</sup> And I am mindful of this latter time when thy letter was presented before My Countenance. We recited it and We replied to thee by means of this irrevocable, all-embracing Message. <sup>[4]</sup> In all circumstances be observant of the necessity of wisdom. Address the people in accordance with their intellectual capacity, for sucking infants die that eat meat at the beginning of their days. Thus counselleth thee thy Lord, the All-Merciful.

الأحدي الأبدى القمى

قد حضر كتابك لدى الوجه ووجدنا من عرف الحب و الوداد لذا نزل لك  
 هذا اللوح العظيم ينبغى لك به ان تشكر الذى اسعك هدير الورداء و  
 عرفك هذا السبيل المستقيم ثم على نعمة امر ربك بالحكمة و البيان  
 انه يويد من اراد سلطان من عنده و انه لهو المقدر القدير نزل الله  
 ان يجعلك فارس الحقايق فى هذا المضار و يجعلك من الذين مانعتهم  
 الأوامر عن الله ربك و رب العالمين خلج البقاء باسم ربك مالك  
 الاسماء ثم اشرب منه و قل لك الحمد يا مسمى العارفين قد فاحت الشفحة  
 و مرت الشمس و ظهر من سهيون ما هو المكنون و يسع من اورشليم  
 نداء الله الواحد الفرد العظيم هذا ما نزل من قبل من هذا القلم البديع  
 قل قد بنى الهيكل بايادى قدرة مالك العلى و تجلى الرحمن من هذا  
 المشرق النير قل هل الذى بنى بايادى الرحمن خير ام الذى بنى من  
 العطين قد ينادى كوم الله ما سواه و يبشروم بهذا الأمر الذى اشرك و  
 الاح من اتق ارادة موليكم القديم فاعلم اننا لنا زيننا الملكوت بطراز اسم  
 ربك المختار اصصقت الحيتان فى البحار و سقطت الاشجار من الاشجار و  
 تحير اهل العبروت و ناحت قبائل الناسوت و توقفت اهل مداين الاسماء  
 و تنزلت اركان من فى الارض و السماء الا من شاء ربك الحكيم طوبى  
 لك بما ذكر اسعك فى ملكوت ربك و نزل لك ما يشبه به ذكرك بهوام  
 الله هذا من فضل عليه لو تكون من العارفين ان الروح قد اتى بطراز  
 الله و كل ركن من اركانه ينادى اتى محبوب العالمين فلما جاء الوعد و  
 خرق الغطاء باسم القضاء اذا نزع من فى الأسماء و اشتعلت نار البغضاء  
 فى قلوب القائلين و ارتكبوا ما ناح به سكان الفردوس و شق نياحه روح  
 الأمين قل ان الهيا لا ينعنا عما اردنا نطق بالحق ولو شتل على وجهى  
 سيوف العالمين قل يا مشر البطارقة قد اتى ما وعدتم به فى الاوج  
 اتقوا الله و لا تتبعوا شئون التومنين شعوا ما عندكم و خلوا لوح الله  
 سلطان من عنده هذا خير لكم عما عندكم يشهد بذلك كل عارف بهيم  
 تقفروا باسم و احتجبت من نفسى ان هذا شئ عجيب قل يا مشر  
 الملونه قد ظهر مولى البرية انه فى بر الهدى يدعو الوردى و انتم من

<sup>6</sup> A manuscript text of this Tablet can be found in Iran National Bahā'ī Archives, Manuscript Xerox Collection Vol. 81:153-157. In addition to this text I have consulted the Haifa typescript reproduced below (supplied to me by Christopher Buck).

الميتين طوبى لمن تحرك من نسة الله و قام عن بين السموات بهذا  
الاسم السببى قل يا ملاء الاساقفة قد اخذت الزلازل كل القبايل و الرب  
الابدى ينادى باعلى النداء بين الارض و السماء طوبى لاذن سمع و لعين  
رأت و لقلب اقبل الى قبة من فى السموات و الارضين يا معشر  
القيسين قد ظهر يوم الدين و فيه اتى من كان فى السماء و انه لهو  
الذى وعدتم به فى كتب الله المتقنين العزيز الحميد الى متى تركضون فى  
بيداء الغفلة و الامم توجّهوا بالقلوب الى شطر ربكم الفنون الكريم  
كذلك نزلنا لك الآيات لتفروح بذكرى ايتك و تكون من الراسخين ان  
اذكر اذ حضر كتابك مرة الأولى اذ استوى بحر الانعظم على الفلك بها  
اكتبت ايدى الشركين وهذه مرة اخرى حضر لدى الوجه قرشاه و  
اجبتك بهذا الخطاب البرم المحيط كن شامتراً فى كل الأحوال الى شطر  
الحكمة و كلم الناس على قدر عقولهم لان الرخيخ لو تلعبه اللحم فى اول  
ايامه يموت كذلك ينصحك ربك الرحيم

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NOTES AND COMMENTS ON SELECTED LINES AND PHRASES

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In the line heading this Tablet God's Oneness and ever-existing Reality is celebrated. This may reflect the anti-trinitarianism of the Qur'ān.

## [I]

I:1f Opening the Tablet (I:1) Bahā'u'llāh acknowledges the receipt of an epistle or letter from Fāris the physician, the addressee. The text of this epistle, unlike that of Fāris' first communication (*'arīda*; see further on XI:3 and Appendix 1) is not, it seems, extant. From it Bahā'u'llāh sensed his deep spiritual love (*al-hubb*) and affection (*al-widād*, or 'love, friendliness, concord'). The Tablet itself (translated above) might be considered a second Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to Fāris if it is presupposed that the *Lawh-i aqdas* is the first – an uncertain matter as already indicated.

Bahā'u'llāh is referred to (as quite frequently in many other Tablets) as the "Countenance", "Face" or "Visage" (*al-wajh*). The person, being or "Face" of the Manifestation of God is, in Bābī-Bahā'ī theology, reckoned the "Face of God"; they mirror each other. This terminology is rooted in the theologically loaded use of *wajh* ("face") in the Qur'ān (see esp. Qur'ān 2:115, 272; 28:88; 30:38-9) and in certain Islamic exegetical and mystical traditions.<sup>6</sup> There exist

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<sup>6</sup> On the Islamic background of Bahā'u'llāh's frequent use of *wajh* ("Face", "Visage", "Countenance") as an indication of his divine being, person, manifestation or theophany, see for example, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Ed), *Islamic Spirituality Foundations*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) Ch. 16, "God", section, 'The Face of God' (pp.322-333 by S.H. Nasr) where it is noted that "The Face of God is that aspect of the Divinity which He has turned toward the world...". Some key exegetical material is summed up in Ayoub, *The Qur'an*, 146ff and Lawson, *Approaches*, 177. An extract from chapter 73 (Question 115 on "The Glories of the Face" *subuhāt al-wajh*) of Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futuḥat al-Makkīya*, ("The Meccan Revelations / Illuminations") is translated by W.C. Chittick in *Les Illuminations de La Meque*, (Paris: Sindbad, 1988), pp. 97-99 – an important Prophetic tradition reads, "God does not sleep, nor would it be seemly for Him to sleep; ... His veil is light; were it to be removed, the Glories of His Face would burn away every creature whose eyes looked upon Him" (Muslim, *Imān* 293; Ibn Māja, *Muqaddima* 13 cited Chittick p.506); another form of it cited by Ibn 'Arabī is "God has seventy" – or "seventy thousand" – "veils of light and darkness; were they to be removed, the Glories of His Face (*subuhāt al-wajh*) would incinerate everything perceived by the creatures' eyes" (trans. Chittick, *ibid* p.96; see *Futuḥāt* II:80.34, 460. etc.) See also Nurbaksh's *Sufi Symbolism* IV p. 66f, section entitled "The Look, Visage, or aspect (*wajh*)" where the author states (referring to various Persian dictionaries) that *wajh* has six basic meanings in Persian: 1. face, visage (*ru'i, chera*) 2. essence, 3. state of being, mode (*hāl*) 4. the origin of time, 5. quality, sense, 6. aspect, point of view." (p. 66 fn1). Various Sufi, poetical uses of *wajh* are translated (p.66f).

various traditions (*ahadīth*) in which the Imām[s] is reckoned to be the 'Face of God' (*wajh Allāh*) -- one such tradition was commented upon by the Bāb (see *Tafsīr hadīth nahnu wajh Allāh* INBAMC 53:56-8; 67:138-140).<sup>8</sup> In a letter to Mūhammad Shāh the Bāb states, "I verily am the Countenance of God (*wajh Allāh*) which shall never pass away..". (Arabic text cited AA 5:281). Bahā'u'llāh's Tablets contain many similar statements including the following extract from a Tablet to Mīrzā Sādīq, "Verily, I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the [lights of the] Face [= Bahā'u'llāh, *anwār-i wajh*], and hear the Voice, of the Promise One" (GI VII:10). In another Tablet reflecting Qur'ān 28:88 Bahā'u'llāh writes, "This is the Day in which the Tongue of Grandeur crieth out, 'All things (*kull' shay'*) shall perish save My Face (*wajhī*)'" (Arabic text cited AA 5:282). Likewise, in a challenging address directed to "leaders of religion" (*ma'shar al-'ulamā'*) in the Most Holy Book (*kitāb-i aqdas*), Bahā'u'llāh declares that "All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord (*wajh rabbika*), the Almighty, the Well-Beloved." (Para. 101 p. 53).

It is in response to Fāris' letter that Bahā'u'llāh revealed the "Mighty Tablet" (*al-lawh al-'azīm* 1:2) reproduced and translated here. It may be that at 1:3 Bahā'u'llāh alludes to Mullā Muhammad, Nabī-i Zarandī (1831-1892 CE) who enabled Fāris to become acquainted with his writings (= "hear the cooing of the Dove [*warqā'* Bahā'u'llāh]") and accept his station (= "comprehend this straight Path" [*al-sabīl al-mustaqīm* cf. Qur'ān 1:3, 5]). By "this straight Path" either the person of Bahā'u'llāh or his religion might be intended. In a Tablet to Javād Bahā'u'llāh taught that this is the eschatological "Day" in which he, as personified *Ṣirāt* (Traverse / Path), calleth aloud, "I am the Straight Path" (*al-sabīl al-mustaqīm*; *Majmū'a*, 146 trans. TB:237; see further below p.63f on the doctrine of the 'Bridge of the Separator' [činvat-bridge]).

Alternatively, 1:3 may simply refer to Bahā'u'llāh's / God's needing to be thanked for guiding Fāris to the Bahā'ī Faith. At 1:4 Bahā'u'llāh exhorts Fāris to promote the Bahā'ī Cause with wise teaching; to "rise up for the victory of the [Bahā'ī] Cause" with "wisdom and perspicuity" -- so as not to cause danger or persecution. God assists such teachers of his Faith.

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<sup>8</sup> The tradition is cited in many sources. See for example, Mullā Muhsin Fayd-i Kāshānī (d. 1680), *Tafsīr al-Sāfī* on Qur'ān 28:88.

Alluding to Fāris' name (in Arabic *fāris* = 'horseman', 'cavalier') Bahā'u'llāh in I:6 draws on military imagery by referring to him as a "horseman of realities" (*fāris al-haqā'iq*) in this battlefield (or, racecourse; *al-midmār*), the battlefield of the world. Fāris should live up to the implications of his name by fighting spiritual battles, detached from "idle fancies" and near to God, in the arena of this world, and within himself. He should be a cavalier armed with divine, gnostic truths (*al-haqā'iq* cf. Rev 9:16f [Arabic]).

## II

In II:1 Fāris is exhorted to grasp "the Goblet of Eternity" (*qadah al-baqā'*); perhaps to turn to Bahā'u'llāh in a state of deep spirituality and recite II:2-4 thereby acknowledging the realization of the scriptural promises. The word *al-baqā'* ("Eternity", "Eternal Subsistence") at II:1 probably indicates the immortal, everlasting realm whose inmates have attained the state beyond *fanā'*, the mystical "death" of the limited human self. Drinking from the "Goblet of Eternity" presupposes the attainment of an elevated spirituality through the person or revelation of Bahā'u'llāh. This in Bahā'u'llāh's name, "in the Name of thy Lord, the King of Names". Important undertakings are carried out in the name of God; through the "greatest name" (*al-ism al-a'zam*) which is the "King of Names" (= Bahā'u'llāh).<sup>9</sup>

Bahā'u'llāh is addressed at II:2 as the "Chalice of mystic knowers (*musqī al-ārifīn*). The word *musqī*, is only very loosely translated "Chalice"<sup>10</sup> It would seem to indicate one who actively dispenses water or acts as a personified drinking vessel (cf. "goblet" *qadah* at II:1). The figure of the "cupbearer" (*saqī*) in Sufi writings should be noted. Bahā'u'llāh is the one who proffers the water of spiritual life to mystic knowers/ gnostics (*ārifīn*). He dispenses the "water" of the divine mysteries.

II:3-4 is the translation of Shoghi Effendi (PDC:77). When at II:3a it is said that "The Breath (*al-nafha* alternatively, 'blast') hath been wafted" there is perhaps allusion to Qur'ān 21:46

<sup>9</sup> Here, as in Islam, undertakings are commenced by reciting a form of the *basmalla* ("In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate"). While Noah, for example, unmoored his "Ark", "in the name of God" (*bi-ism Allāh*, see Qur'ān 11:41), the "Holy Mariner" (Bahā'u'llāh) was directed to unmoor the "Ark of the Bahā'ī Cause "in the name of God, the Most High" (*bi-ism Allāh al-'alī al-a'alā* = the Bāb?; see also MA 4:335 and below on XI:2).

<sup>10</sup> The word *musqī* (> S.Q.Y; active participle of form IV?) could alternatively have been translated "Cup-Bearer". The verb *saqā* signifies, to draw water, water, to give to drink... Words derived from this root occur some 14 times in the Qur'ān (see Kassis, 1099).

(*naḥḥa* is a Qur'ānic *hapax legomenon*) understood in an eschatological sense.<sup>10</sup> It may then be that Bahā'u'llāh indicates that a "breath" of Divine judgement has been released through his manifestation. In the sixth couplet of his earliest extant revelation, the *Sprinkling of the Cloud of Unknowing* (*Rashḥ-i 'amā'* late 1852 CE), Bahā'u'llāh uses the term *naḥḥa* to indicate a "breath" of sacred judgement accompanying a Divine revelation (*al-wahy*) -- the Bāb's or his own?:

"The Stunning Trump! The Celestial Rapture!  
In the firmament of heaven they twain rain down as a single Breath (or 'Blast', *naḥḥa*)"

II:3b is translated by Shoghi Effendi, "the Breeze (*al-nasama*) hath blown." The non-Qur'ānic Arabic feminine noun *nasama* indicates a gentle breeze, zephyr or (possibly perfumed) wind. It and the verbal noun *nasīm* (derived from the same root N.S.M) often have the same or similar meanings. They occur frequently in Persian Sufi poetry.<sup>11</sup> The reference to the blowing of the breeze here can probably be understood as the breeze of reunion with the manifestation of God for in another Tablet partly paralleling that to Fāris, it is stated, "The hill of God (*kaum Allāh*) = Mt. Carmel) hath trembled on account of the breeze of expected reunion [with God, *nasamat al-wisāl*]." (Cited in Arabic in Ishrāq Khāvarī, RM 2:527).

With the words "From Zion (*ṣiḥyawn*) hath appeared that which was hidden (*al-maknūn*)" at II:4a, it is possible that Isaiah 2:3 is alluded to. If this Tablet to Fāris predates the composition of the *Kitāb-i aqdas* it is likely that this 'most-holy book' is the "hidden" thing (cf. GPB:213). That the "Voice of God" (*nidā' Allāh*), is heard from Jerusalem (II:4b) could be taken to support the allusion to Isaiah 2:3, which reads, "...For out of Zion shall go forth the law (*al-*

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<sup>10</sup> This verse reads, in what appears to be the context of a warning to persons unable to appreciate Qur'ānic "Revelation" (*bi'l-wahy*), as follows, "If but a breath (*naḥḥa*) of thy Lord's chastisement touched them, they would surely say, 'Alas for us! We were evildoers' (tr. Arberry, 326).

<sup>11</sup> A few examples are registered by Nurbaksh, 1990:31, "THE BREEZE" (*nasim*). "The breeze represents the wind that brings Divine favour." (EE 66); "You put garlic under your nose while seeking the breeze that bears the rose's scent. How strange that the unsustained one seeks help from the helpless one!" (Rumi); "Is there a breeze in the realm of love That does not bear the scent of life from your tresses?" (Sana'i); "The fragrance of Tartar musk has no value, In that meadow where a breeze wafts from the curl of the Beloved." (Hafez); "I only hope that for but a moment on your Path, You might send a breeze bearing your aroma." (Attar)."



*sharī'a*), and the word of the Lord (*kalimat Allāh*) from Jerusalem" (cf. also Psalm 50:2-3). In a Tablet to Bahá'is of Khurasán partly translated in *Gleanings*. X (text in MAM: 267-80), there appears to be another expression of the fulfilment of Isaiah 2:3: "Out of Zion hath gone forth the Law of God (*sharī'at Allāh*), and Jerusalem, and the hills and land thereof, are filled with the glory of His Revelation." (GI, 13).

The word Zion (Heb. *sāyôn* Arabic, *Ṣihyawn / Ṣihyūn / Sahyūn*) occurs 154 times in the Hebrew Bible -- 47 times in Isaiah, 38 times in the Psalms, etc. It is a topographical term which once designated the south-east hill of the later city of Jerusalem. Today Zion signifies "a hill to the southwest of the ancient Zion and across the Tyropoean Valley, from it" (Levenson, 92).<sup>12</sup> In the Bible "Zion" mostly designates the area known today as the 'Temple Mount' where the Dome of the Rock mosque is situated (see J.D. Levenson, *Sinai & Zion*, 92).<sup>13</sup> In Biblical times Zion often indicated the mountain abode of YHWH (the God of Israel) which was viewed as a new Sinai. The Israelite God, YHWH (Yahweh/"Jehovah") once designated "The One of Sinai", came to be referred to as "he who dwells on Mount Zion" (Isa 8:18). Outside of the Pentateuch, Zion often becomes a kind of equivalent to Jerusalem, the Israelite religious capital. In the Bible Zion commonly designates the eschatological, the "latter day" city of salvation. The city name Jerusalem (also known as Salem -- originally, it seems, the name of a Canaanite deity; see Psalm 76:3) is very ancient (very probably pre-Mosaic). From early times Jerusalem indicated the whole settlement on the hill of Zion. Jerusalem is mentioned many more times in the Bible than Zion (660 times in the Hebrew Bible; 7 times in the New Testament -- 5 of these in OT quotations).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Historically, it is the case that, "In Christian usage, the name of Zion became attached to the SW hill of Jerusalem as early as the fourth century. The reason for this transfer is probably the common belief that the house in which the apostles were gathered together on the day of Pentecost was located in these parts of the city. Thus the Christian Zion where the preaching of the gospel had begun, was contrasted with the mountain of Zion, the center of Old Testament worship." (IDB 4:960)

<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew word Zion is of uncertain etymology. cf. Heb *sāyôn*, = 'dry place, parched ground'; Arabic, *sahweh*, = 'hillicrest, mountainous ridge' (IDB 4:959); suggested possible etymologies are numerous.

<sup>14</sup> For some further details see, E. Lohse, *Zion.. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. VII p. 292ff (esp.300f).

Neither Zion nor Jerusalem are mentioned in the Qur'ān. Bahā'u'llāh's use of them is a result of Biblical influence. Zion (*Sihyūn/ Sihyaw'n*) is found in quite a number of major Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh of the Galilean/'Akkā' period. It occurs at one point in the *Kitāb-i aqdas*. According to the "Most Holy Book" (c. 1873), "from the heart of Zion there cometh the cry: 'The promise is fulfilled. That which hath been announced in the holy Writ of God, the Most Exalted, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved, is made manifest'" (S&C 18). Personified Zion is represented as acknowledging the fulfilment of scriptural prophecies through the coming of Bahā'u'llāh.

Perhaps the best known occurrence of the word Zion is in the *Tablet of Carmel (Lawh-i karmīl* c. 1891) where we, at one point, read: "Call out to Zion (*sahyūn*), O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come!" (TB:4) Mount Carmel is bidden to announce to Zion (Jerusalem) the advent of Bahā'u'llāh.

In his *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf/ Lawh-i Shaykh (Lawh-i ibn-i dhī'b)* Bahā'u'llāh bids the Shaykh

'Peruse that which Isaiah hath spoken in his Book, "Get thee up into the high mountain, O Zion, that bringest good tidings; lift up thy Voice with strength, O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings. Lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah: Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him." [= Isaiah 40:9-10a]

After citing these verses of Isaiah, Bahā'u'llāh, referring to both Zion and Jerusalem, interprets both these basically synonymous terms, relative to the "new Jerusalem" of the west Galilean, the 'Akkā-Haifa region. He states,

'This Day all the signs have appeared. A great city hath descended from heaven, and Zion trembleth and exalteth with joy at the Revelation of God, for it hath heard the Voice of God on every side. This day Jerusalem hath attained unto a new Evangel, for in the stead of the sycamore standeth the cedar [see Isa 9:10b]. Jerusalem is the place of pilgrimage for all the peoples of the world, and hath been named the Holy City. Together with Zion and Palestine, they are all included within these regions. Wherefore, hath it been said [in an Islamic tradition], "Blessed is the man that hath migrated to 'Akká'." (ESW 145).

Also quoted in the same volume (ESW) is Amos 1:2. Here not only Zion and Jerusalem but also [Mount] Carmel are mentioned (see ESW, 145). Like Zion, Jerusalem (*Ūrushalīm*) and the "new Jerusalem" are quite frequently mentioned in Bahā'ī sacred scripture (for selected refs see Heggie, *Concordance* 350). Details will not be gone into here.

## [III]

By stating that at III:1, "This is that which was sent down aforetime by this Wondrous Pen (*al-qalam al-badī'*)."<sup>15</sup> Bahā'u'llāh probably refers to earlier Tablets in which the statements made in III:2f were registered -- *al-qalam al-badī'* ("Wondrous / Unique Pen") doubtless refers to Bahā'u'llāh's power of revelation.

III:2 "Say: 'The Temple (*al-haykal*) hath been built with the hands of the power of the Conqueror of Infirmity (*mālik al-'ilal*) and the All-Merciful hath manifested Himself (*tajallā*) from this Luminous Orient (*al-mashriq al-munīr*).'"

It is in the light of other similar passages in Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh that *mālik al-'ilal* has been loosely translated "Conqueror of Infirmity" implying that Bahā'u'llāh has come with supernatural healing powers. The founder of the Bahā'ī Faith claims to be the expected messianic figure who, like Christ, will purify men of their sicknesses or have power over their infirmities.

It is in the role of the "Conqueror of Infirmity", that Bahā'u'llāh represents himself as the true builder of the spiritual, eschatological Temple (*haykal*). This "Temple" the "new Jerusalem", unlike the ancient Jerusalem Temple (that of Solomon, rebuilt several times), is essentially the spiritual Temple of the Word of God. Probably earlier than this Tablet to Fāris, we read in the *Lawh-i Hirtik*,<sup>16</sup> "...the promise made unto the nations concerning the appearance of the Healer of Infirmities (*muttahir al-'ilal*). He, verily, is the Builder of the Temple."<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in another untitled Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh the following words occur which are partly parallel to III:2 (and the foregoing verses of the *Lawh-i Hirtik*),

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<sup>15</sup> It is not absolutely certain that III:1 should open a new paragraph (not of course indicated in the original) or whether this line should be reckoned as II:5 and refer to II:3/4f (?).

<sup>16</sup> A Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to George David Hardegg (1812-1879), one time leader of the Association of Templars *Tempelgesellschaft*). My article, *A Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to Georg David Hardegg: The Lawh-i Hirtik* is fully reproduced, translated and commented upon in BSB 2:1 (June 1983) -- revised edition now available.

<sup>17</sup> In this Tablet (late 1871 or early 1872) Bahā'u'llāh probably wishes to indicate to Hardegg that the Templar eschatological hopes surrounding the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple (or its spiritual counterpart), found their realization in western Galilee, the 'Akkā-Haifa region where he resided. He has raised the edifice of a new religion or "new Jerusalem" in the form of a new outpouring of the "Temple" of the word of God.

"The hill of God (*kaum Allāh*) hath trembled on account of the breeze of expected reunion with God, (*al-wisāl*). It verily hath been named Carmel and crieth out, 'The Builder of the Temple (*bānī al-haykal*) hath assuredly come as hath the Healer of Infirmities (*muttahir al-'ilal*). Blessed be those who have attained.'" (RM 2:527).

The "Healer of Infirmities" (*muttahir al-'ilal*) mentioned here would again appear to be identical with the "Conqueror of Infirmary" at III:2. This figure (= Bahā'u'llāh) is again identified with the Builder of the new, eschatological Temple.

At the beginning of Shoghi Effendi's *Centennial Tablet (Lawh-i qam, p.1)* many titles assumed by Bahā'u'llāh are listed. Included, as in the Tablet to Fāris and the *Lawh-i Hirtik*, are the titles "Healer of Infirmities" (*muttahir al-'ilal*) and "Builder of the Temple" (*bānī al-haykal*). In his *Rahiq-i makhtūm* (a commentary on the *Lawh-i qam*) these titles have been commented on by 'Abd al-Hamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī. Commenting on *muttahir al-'ilal* he notes that the prophets of the children of Israel gave the glad-tidings of the advent of the Lord of Hosts (Bahā'u'llāh) who will heal all sicknesses and infirmities. He quotes Isaiah 35:4-6 (in Persian) in illustration of the expected eschatological healing.<sup>19</sup> In the Authorized/King James version these verses read,

"Say to those who are of fearful heart, 'Be strong fear not! Behold your God [=Bahā'u'llāh] will come with vengeance, and the recompense of God. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.." (Isa 35:4-6).<sup>20</sup>

III:2-3 is also, it is important to note, paralleled in Bahā'u'llāh's significant *Sūrat al-haykal* ("The Sūra of the Temple", c.1873?):

"Thus have We built the Temple (*haykal*) with the hands of power and might, could ye but know it. This is the Temple (*haykal*) promised unto you in the Book (*al-Kitāb* = the Hebrew Bible / 'Old Testament'). Draw ye nigh unto it. This is that which profiteth you, could ye but comprehend it. Be fair, O peoples of the earth! Which is preferable, this, or the temple which is built of clay? Set your faces

<sup>19</sup> This verse however, does not contain the expression *muttahir al-'ilal* either in the original Hebrew or in the Arabic/Persian translations.

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 35 is an important prophetic chapter for Bahā'u'llāh. He cited Isaiah 35:1-2 and 4a in his ESW:146-7 and in many other Tablets (see for example, MA 7:209).

towards it. Thus have ye been comanded by God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting."<sup>20</sup>

There are several Biblical texts which are regarded as predicting the future restoration of the (Jerusalem) Temple. One such text, perhaps alluded to by Bahā'u'llāh in the passage from the *Sūrat al-haykal* cited above, occurs in Zechariah 6:12-13a:

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall grow up in his place, and he shall build the Temple ( Heb. *hékhāl*; Arab. *haykal*) of the Lord. It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall bear royal honour, and shall sit and rule upon his throne..'"

At III:3f Bahā'u'llāh poses the same rhetorical question found in the *Sūrat al-haykal*, 'Is the spiritual Temple of God built with the hands of Divine power [= Bahā'u'llāh] to be preferred or that Temple built from earthly material?' The nature of the question presupposes the acceptable reply: the spiritually erected "new Jerusalem" of Bahā'u'llāh's revelation (the Bahā'ī Cause) is to be preferred to the old, clay-built, material Jerusalem. God Himself, through the glorious theophany of Bahā'u'llāh, announces the glad-tidings of His Cause.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The Arabic text of the *Sūrat al-haykal* is printed in various Bahā'ī publications including the *Ahwāh-i Bahā'u'llāh...Sūrat al-haykal*. The English translation is that of Shoghi Effendi, PDC:47. This passage, part of the conclusion of the *Sūrat al-haykal*, clearly teaches that the Temple to be built in the latter days is none other than the Word or person of Bahā'u'llāh as represented in the *Sūrat al-haykal*. Indeed, Bahā'u'llāh ordered that this Tablet – which incorporates the complete text of five of his 'Tablets to the kings' (the religious and secular leaders of various nations / communities) should be written up in the form of a pentacle representative of the "New Jerusalem", the eschatological Temple of his Cause. The expected new Temple was thus seen by Bahā'u'llāh as a "spiritual Temple". Perhaps conscious of Templar expectations through Hardegg's association with the Bahā'īs, Bahā'u'llāh came to teach that his own revelation constituted the Temple predicted in such Biblical texts as Zech 6:12f. (see below and cf. GPB: 213).

<sup>21</sup> Commenting on the title "Builder of the Temple" *bānī al-haykal* Ishrāq Khāvarī (RM 1:289-91) also draws attention to Malachi chapter 3:1a which he quotes in Persian translation: "...the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his Temple (*haykal*)..". Though the expression *bānī al-haykal* does not occur here, he asserts that this verse predicts the coming of the Builder of the Temple (*bānī al-haykal*) as the eschatological manifestation of Divinity (i.e. Bahā'u'llāh). This since it says, "...the Lord..will..come to his [own] temple" (*khudāvand..bi-haykal-i khud.. khāhad āmad*; so the Persian translation quoted by Ishrāq Khāvarī). Ishrāq Khāvarī argues as follows. Malachi 3:1f does not, as Christians maintain, refer to Jesus the Messiah for Malachi 3:5 refers to God's coming "for judgement" -- Jesus had not come to "condemn the world" or "judge the world" (see John 3:18 and 12:47). Bahā'u'llāh, furthermore, is also referred to in the 3rd chapter of the book of Malachi as is his herald the Bāb, the messenger (*rāsul*) who will "prepare the way" (3:1) before the advent of Bahā'u'llāh (refer, RM 1:290).

## [IV]

IV: 1ff. With the coming the new Kingdom (*al-malakūt*), its being adomed with the "ornament of the Name of thy Lord, the Supreme (*al-mukhtar*)", all things were effected. "Fishes" (human beings?) were "thunderstruck" with awe. "Fruits" fell down from the "trees" -- the results of human activity were limited?. While exalted souls, "the inmates of the spiritual dominion (*ahl al-jabarūt*) were confounded", earthly "tribes" (*qabā'il al-nasūt*) were made to "wail" on account of the loss of spiritual guidance as was predicted in the sacred books (cf. Bahā'u'llāh, KI:43 and refer for example, Matt 24:30). Unreceptive persons attached to the things of the world ("the people of the Midian of Names") were held or held themselves back. Such earthly "pillars" (*arkān*) as God willed were shaken.

Located in north-west Arabia, the land of Midian was the region in which Moses sojourned in the service of Jethro / Shu'ayb prior to the commencement of his mission and the exodus from Egypt (cf. KI: 35). The proper noun Midian (Ar. Madyan) is ten times mentioned in the Qur'ān. According to one strand of Qur'ānic tradition, it was the scene of the mission of the Arabian prophet Shu'ayb -- traditionally identified with Moses' father in law (the figure Jethro of the Hebrew Bible) -- whose people rejected him (see Qur'ān 7:85; 9:70; 11:84,95; 12:40; 22:44; 28:22ff;29:36; EI<sup>2</sup> 5:1155-6). While Shu'ayb was rejected in Midian, Moses sought divine guidance there (Qur'ān 28:22). It was in Midianite territory that Moses ultimately encountered God in the burning bush or tree. Symbolically, Midian is the sphere of rejection as well as that of the search for guidance and the encounter with God.

It is thus the case that in certain Bābī and Bahā'ī texts references to Midian occur in contexts which seem to be indicative of states of rejection, search or transition. They may indicate the path to the encounter with God. In the following extract from a prayer for example, there is reference to the "gate of the Midian of Thy nearness" (Arabic text cited AA 5:117). In IV:5, the phrase "the people of the Midian of Names" (*ahl madyan al-asmā'*) could thus be understood to indicate persons subject to various limitations. In all likelihood it indicates persons seeking truth and subject to barriers preventing their recognition of Bahā'u'llāh.

## [V]

[V] In this paragraph Fāris is considered one blessed for having been mentioned in Bahā'ī sacred writ. On this account he will be remembered for all time.

## [VI]

Bahā'u'llāh here proclaims himself the return of Jesus, "the Spirit" (*al-rūh*) every aspect of whose being (*kull rukn min arkānihī*) crieth out, 'I, verily, am the Beloved of the worlds (*mahbūb al-'alamīn*). The eschatological promise (*al-wa'd*) recorded in past scriptures has been fulfilled. Human beings however, have reacted negatively. They committed such deeds against Bahā'u'llāh and his companions as caused heavenly figures to lament. Even the lofty embodiment of the Holy Spirit, the communicator of revelation which is the "Faithful Spirit" (*rūh al-amīn* traditionally a title of Gabriel in Qur'ān 26:193), tore its garments asunder. In other Tablets Bahā'u'llāh refers to the grief stricken state of heavenly beings over his suffering and the plotting of those opposed to him (Azalī covenant breakers?). The following paragraph from a Tablet to a female believer is of especial interest,

"We have revealed Ourselves unto men, have unveiled the Cause, guided all mankind towards God's Straight Path, promulgated the laws and have enjoined upon everyone that which shall truly profit them both in this world and in the next; yet have they pronounced judgement to shed My blood, whereat the Maid of Heaven (*al-hūr*) hath wept sore, Sinai (*al-tūr*) hath lamented and the Faithful Spirit (*al-rūh al-amīn*) was made to sigh with grief." (*Majmū'a*, 157; trans. TB:251)

Despite rejection and internal opposition, the Word of God will be communicated. Divine revelation will not be halted (VI:4-5).

## [VII]

VII:1f is Shoghi Effendi's translation of Bahā'u'llāh's address to Christian patriarchs (*yā mashar al-batānīqa*)! (see PDC:101) The title Patriarch (< Gk. patriarchēs; patria = 'family', patēr = 'father'; archē = 'rule') was used from the 6th century CE. It indicates a senior bishop of various Orthodox or Eastern churches – most likely the heads of Eastern churches or bishops of these churches ranking above primates (chief bishops) and metropolitans. Such ecclesiastics are informed of the realization of written scriptural promises (or "Tablets"). It is necessary that they "fear God" and detach themselves from superstitious ideas. Their faith should not be circumscribed by their attachment to the person or name of Jesus – rendering them unable to

accept Bahā'u'llāh. This first Christ (Jesus) should not veil them from the one who is the return of Christ (Bahā'u'llāh). They are essentially one. Rejection would be an astonishing thing.

In the earlier *Lawh-i aqdas* Fāris himself seems to be one referred to as not held back by the "veils of names"; his devotion to the person of Jesus Christ and his name. In the very first paragraph of this Tablet, Christians are asked whether they have shut themselves out by reason of Bahā'u'llāh's Name (see TB:9). From the Bahā'ī standpoint they limit themselves if they expect the literal, physical return from the sky, of the same Jesus of Nazareth whom they regard as their saviour and an incarnation of Divinity. They pray ceaselessly for the glorious parousia but remain unreceptive at the time of the second advent, its realization. As the spiritual "return" of Christ, the promised one has a new, Arabic name, the "greatest name" (*ism-i a'zam*) Bahā'u'llāh.

#### [VIII]

This paragraph (trans. PDC:101) is addressed (literally) to the "concourse of Metropolitans (*ma'shar al-matārina*) which Shoghi Effendi translates "concourse of archbishops". A metropolitan is a bishop who exercises provincial jurisdiction – in early Christian times jurisdiction over of a principal city or 'metropolis'. He presides over other bishops in a given province and, in the Eastern churches, ranks between an archbishop and a patriarch (cf. VII above). Bahā'u'llāh proclaims himself "the Lord of all men" (*waliy al-barrīya*) who has been manifested in the plain of guidance (*barr al-ahdī*). The ecclesiastical leaders (Metropolitans/ Archbishops) are reckoned spiritually "dead". Greatly blessed are such as have been "resurrected" to the life of true faith through the power of the "greatest name" (= Bahā'). This is most likely that referred to as a luminous, perspicuous Name (*al-ism al-mubīn*).

#### [IX]

This paragraph, in which the "concourse of bishops (*malā' al-asāqif*) is addressed, is again the translation of Shoghi Effendi (see PDC:101). Bahā'u'llāh underlines the powerful effect of his advent. "Trembling", the "earthquakes" of trials (*al-zalāzil*) have seized all mankind (*al-qabā'il*), (lit.) the "tribes" of humankind. The presence of God has been realized. The "Everlasting Father" (*al-rabb al-abadī* or (lit.) "Everlasting Lord" has come and is announcing His mission. He is the locus of faith, the "Point of Adoration" (*qibla*) for all heavenly and earthly beings.



## [X]

In Shoghi Effendi's translation Christian priests (*al-qissīs*) are informed that the "Day of Reckoning" (*yawm al-dīn*) cf. Qur'ān 1:3) has appeared. It is the "Day whereon He Who was in heaven" has appeared as promised in sacred scripture; (lit.) in the Book of God (*fi kitāb Allāh*). Various New Testament verses locate Jesus Christ in "heaven" until the time of the expected second advent (e.g. John 3:13; Matt 24:30, etc). Bahā'u'llāh wonders how long the priests will delay in coming to faith in him as the promised one, the returned Christ.

## [XI]

Bahā'u'llāh here explains why he has revealed the verses (*al-ayāt*) of this Tablet. It is that Fāris might be gladdened by his recollection of him and remain steadfast in faith. He then calls to mind the occasion of his receipt of Fāris' first Arabic communication (XI:2) . It was whilst he was moored outside Alexandria (August 26-27, 1868) in the course of his exile, via Haifa, to the 'Akkā' prison. Fāris' eloquent Arabic communication, a petition or 'declaration of faith' (*arīda*) in Bahā'u'llāh, is extant. In the aforementioned Tablet to Rad al-Rūh it has been referred to by means of an originally Qur'ānic phrase *kitāb mubīn*, signifying a 'lucid communication' or 'manifest book'. Bahā'u'llāh advised Rad al-Rūh, on reciting it, to exclaim, "Exalted be God, Who bringeth to life through His Power whatsoever He willeth. He, verily, is the Quickener of all the worlds."

In yet another Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh, Fāris' first communication to him is again described as a "lucid, Arabic communication (*kitāb 'arabī mubīn*). It is said to have been written by one of the "Christian bishops" (*usqf al-nasārī* = Fāris). From it Bahā'u'llāh "caught the fragrance of the Mercy of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Great" (Arabic text cited Ganj, 166). He is said to have cited it in one of his 'Tablets to the friends' (see, Faizi, *From Adrianople*, 20).<sup>22</sup>

Fāris had his declaration of faith delivered through a Christian named Constantine, a watch-maker whom Bahā'u'llāh regarded very highly. It was ultimately destined to be delivered much further afield. Bahā'u'llāh himself commanded his amamuensis Mīrzā Āqā Jān, Khādīm Allāh, to send it to Iran (refer Ganj, 167). Its style and vocabulary were influenced by the Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh themselves -- Fāris no doubt studied them with Nabī-i Zarandī, his first teacher.

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<sup>22</sup> The highly praised petition of Fāris has been partly translated into English (See Faizi, *From Adrianople*. 21-22; Taherzadeh, RB III:8-9.).

According to XI:2 Fāris' communication was written at a time when "the Most Great Ocean (*bahr al-a'zam* = Bahā'u'llāh) was settled upon the Ark (or 'seated upon the ship', *al-fulk*) in view of the actions of certain non-Bahā'ī enemies (the "polytheists" *al-mushrikīn*).

Often indicating the manifestation of God, the expression "Most Great Ocean" (*al-bahr al-a'zam*) is quite common in Bābī-Bahā'ī scripture. It occurs for example, in the 46th sūra of the *Qayyūm al-asmā'* where it apparently indicates the Bāb as the embodiment of the pure celestial "Water" (*al-mā'*): "God assuredly created the believers from a drop sprinkled forth from that Most Great Ocean (*al-bahr al-a'zam*)..". In the *Most Holy Book (Kitāb-i aqdas)* God addresses Bahā'u'llāh as the "Most Mighty Ocean" (*Yā bahr al-a'zam*) (Para. 96,p.54) and Bahā'u'llāh refers to his terrestrial existence as the "ocean of My presence" (*bahr al-wisāl*) (Para. 121, p.63). And in another Tablet Bahā'u'llāh states, ".. the seas proclaim: The Most Great Ocean [*al-bahr al-a'zam* = Bahā'u'llāh) hath appeared, from whose waves one can hear the thundering cry: 'Verily, No God is there but Me, the Peerless, the All-Knowing.' (*Majmū'a*, 154; trans. TB:247)

The Qur'ānic terminology used at XI:3 to express Bahā'u'llāh's embarking on a ship in the Mediterranean sea is also suggestive of His/God's sovereign enthronement and the arrival of the "Ark" of salvation.<sup>23</sup> Concrete and salvation history are both expressed. Bahā'u'llāh's exile by ship is his mystical enthronement. Far from being silenced or intimidated by the Mediterranean sea voyage, the "most great Ocean" of Bahā'u'llāh's power of revelation surged above the earthly ship of his exile. A potentially perilous ocean voyage was, in reality, a mystical enthronement. The ship of the exile was really the "Ark" of salvation within which Bahā'u'llāh was enthroned, his presence realized. Throughout his exile Bahā'u'llāh's sovereignty was expressed by means of his continuing power of revelation.

There exist a number of Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh in which reference is made to this journey and his receipt of Fāris' message – for some historical details see Appendix One. In one Arabic Tablet, partially printed in Ishrāq Khāvarī's *Ganj-i shāyigān* and containing lines similar to XI:2, the Mediterranean journey is again mystically recounted, "[It was as if] We were soaring

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<sup>23</sup> The language here (*idhā istawā bahr al-a'zam 'alā al-fulk*) reflects that of the Qur'ān; see especially references to God's settling or seating himself upon the heavenly Throne (7:54; 10:3; 13:2; 20:5; 25:59; 32:4, 57:4) and the settling of Noah's Ark on Mt. Jūdī (11:44).

in the atmosphere of expectant yearning until it transpired that We arrived at the shore of the sea – whereupon the Most-Great Ocean (*bahr al-a'zam*) settled upon the Ark (or ship, *al-fulk*) and attained the Snow-White Sea" (*al-bahr al-abyad*).” Bahā'u'llāh continues by referring to the arrival opposite Alexandria, then states, “..there entered before Us a youth of the people of the Son (*ahl al-ibn* = Christians; presumably, Constantine).<sup>24</sup> He presented before the Countenance [Bahā'u'llāh] a lucid, Arabic communication (*kitāb 'arabī mubīn*) written by one of the bishops of the Christians (*usquf al-naṣārī*; = Dr. Fāris) wherefrom We caught the fragrance of the Mercy of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Great.” (cited Ganj 166).

In another Tablet in honour of one of the Afnān of Yazd, reference is made to the arrival at Alexandria, “.. until We arrived opposite one of the cities of the earth [Alexandria]..”. At that time there was “present before the Countenance [=Bahā'u'llāh] one of those who have established a relationship with the Son (*al-ibn* = Jesus; a Christian), with a lucid communication (or ‘manifest book’; *kitāb mubīn*) ..” (cited Ganj 167).

Finally, but not exhaustively in this connection, is the following passage from the aforementioned Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to Rad al-Rūh, which contains words closely parallel to XI:2b

“The appointed time was accomplished and We arrived at the shore of the ocean. Then did the Most Great Ocean settle down upon the Ark (*idhā qad istawā bahr al-a'zam 'alā al-fulk..*) causing the denizens of Paradise to cry out, ‘In the Name of God be its course!’ [= Qur’ān 11:43a]. Then it was that they addressed the Ark and exclaimed, ‘Blessed be Thou in that the Desire of the Worlds [Bahā'u'llāh] hath found lodging upon thee.’..” (Tablet to Rad al-Rūh, unpublished Haifa typescript).

At XI:3 Bahā'u'llāh states that he also mindful of the subsequent (a second, not extant?) communication of Fāris with Him (= the “Divine Countenance” lit. “Face” *al-wajh*). This latter communication was recited and replied by means of the Tablet translated here, which is characterised as an “irrevocable, all-embracing Message” (*al-khitāb al-mubram al-muḥīṭ*).

<sup>24</sup> Ishrāq Khavārī records that this Christian youth, Constantine the watch-maker, who acted as the vehicle of communication between Nabī/Fāris and Bahā'u'llāh, subsequently taught of Bahā'u'llāh with great dedication (see Ganj..166). On recounting his encounter with Bahā'u'llāh he is recorded as having said, “By God! I saw the Father of Christ.” (see the Appendix below).

Bahā'u'llāh exhorts Fāris at XI:4 to observe "the necessity of wisdom (*shatr al-hikmat*)" under all circumstances. The people must be addressed according to their spiritual-intellectual capacity. Utilizing time-honoured metaphorical language used, for example, in early Christian times (see Hebrews 5:12f and 1 Corinthians 3:2) <sup>25</sup> Bahā'u'llāh states that "sucking infants (*al-rudda*) die that eat meat (*al-lahm*) at the beginning of their days". A certain spiritual maturity must be obtained before deep theological truths can be taken in, appreciated, or understood. "Infants" require the "milk" of basic instruction rather than the "meat" of high theophany.

#### □ APPENDIX I: FĀRIS AND HIS CONVERSION TO THE BAHĀ'Ī FAITH

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It will have been clear from the foregoing notes that in certain of his Tablets Bahā'u'llāh refers to his receipt of a petition from the newly converted Dr. Fāris whilst on board a ship moored outside Alexandria. The basic historical account of Fāris' conversion is that of Nabīl-i-Zarandī which will be reproduced here as introduced and translated in H.M. Balyuzi's, *Bahā'u'llāh The King of Glory* (p.265f): <sup>26</sup>

"On the second night [23 August 1868], the liner cast off anchor to continue the journey to Alexandria, which she gained on a morning two days later [the morning of 26th August]. Here the exiles changed ship. This liner, set for Haifa, was also an Austrian-Lloyd. A number of Persians came aboard at Alexandria to pay their respects to Bahā'u'llāh. Among them was Hājī Muhammad 'Alī Pirzādih (usually known as Hājī Pirzādih), a celebrated Sūfi seer. Unbeknown to the exiles, Nabīl-i-A'zam was in the prison-house of Alexandria. He had been sent to Egypt by Bahā'u'llāh to appeal to the Khedive on behalf of Mirzā Haydar-'Alī and six other believers. The fact of his detention in Egypt was known, but not the location of his imprisonment. Several of the exiles went ashore in Alexandria to make purchases; one of them, Aqā Muhammad-lbrāhim-i-Nāzir (the steward) passed by the prison-house, and Nabīl-i-A'zam, looking out, noticed him, and surprised, called him. But let Nabīl himself, that excellent narrator, tell the circumstances of his arrest and imprisonment, and of his unexpected contact with Bahā'u'llāh and His party in Alexandria:

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<sup>25</sup> The metaphorical use of the terms "milk" (for infants) and "meat" (solid food for adults) was widespread in antiquity. It can be found in many ancient sources; ranging, for example, from Philo of Alexandria (d. c. 50 CE?) and the early Hermetic corpus, through to Islamic and other literatures.

<sup>26</sup> (Oxford:George Ronald, 1980), citing an unpublished portion of Nabīl-i-A'zam/ Zarandī's historical chronicle.

I went to Mansúrfyyah by the railway [after arriving from Adrianople], searched for Áqá Siyyid Husayn [of Káshán], found him and told him why I was there. He said that Mirzá Hasan Khán the [Persian] Consul from the day he managed to send those seven to the Súdán, feared for his life, and had placed spies everywhere that they might inform him whenever a stranger arrived in Egypt. 'It is best that you leave your *Mathnaní* with me carry nothing of the sacred writings with you, and go to Cairo. There 266 take lodgings at the Takyiy-i-Mawlaví with Shaykh Ibráhím-i-Hamadání, who receives a stipend from Ismá'íl Páshá, and stay until the Khedive returns, when we can find means to send him your *Mathnaví*. I went to Cairo, and lodged with Shaykh Ibráhím, not knowing that he was also a spy. One night, in the early hours of the morning, I saw the Blessed Perfection in the world of dreams. He said: 'Some people have come asking for permission to harm Mirzá Hasan Khán; what sayest thou?' When I awoke I knew that something would happen that day. I went to Sayyid-ná Husayn Square, and walked about for an hour or two. Then I found myself surrounded by a number of people who said, 'They have asked for you at the *Seraye*.' But instead they took me to the house of Mirzá Hasan Khán. Then I realized that they had duped me by mentioning the *Seraye*, so that I should give myself up, and not say that I was not a Persian subject. After long talks with the Consul, I was handed over to an official, who put me in chains. Several times they sent for me. At one time, a number of Persian merchants, such as Mirzá Siyyid Javád-i-Shírází, who was a British subject but presided over the Persians, Hájj Muhammad Taqíy-i-Namází and Hájj Muhammad-Hasan-i-Kázirúni, were there, seated on chairs, and they made me sit down with them. However, I was feverish and weakened. They brought a photograph of the Most Great Branch, and asked me whether I knew who He was. I said: 'Yes, that is the eldest Son of Bahá'u'lláh, Who is known as 'Abbas Effendi. I have seen Him many times in the drawing-room of Khurshíd Páshá, the Váli of Adrianople.' They then produced the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, and told me to read to them. I said 'I have fever and I can't read.' The Consul said, 'He fears to be mocked, should he read.' I replied, 'Let someone else read and I shall have my share of the good deed of mocking.' The book was passed to Hájj Muhammad-Taqíy-i-Namází. He read the account of the detachment and self-sacrifice of the followers of the Point of the Bayán [the Báb]; if they were not in the right [it asks], then by what proofs could one demonstrate the rightness of the cause of the people of Karbilá. He read on and they kept laughing. Then Mirzá Javád turned to me and asked, 'Why did you become a Bábí? Had the Cause of the Báb been true, I should have become a Bábí, because I am both a siyyid and a Shírází.' I answered, 'But neither has it been proved that I am a Bábí, nor that you are not one. As the poet, Háfiz, has it:

From Basrah comes Hasan, from Habash comes Bilál, From Shám comes Suhayb;  
but from the soil of Mecca arises Abú-Jahl; how strange!"

267 At that all the people present burst out laughing, and Mirzá Javád became crestfallen. The Consul noticed that the people there had no cause to rejoice, and sent me back to the prison. And I beseeched God never to see him again. That same day he was called to Alexandria on some business. And I had another dream, in which the Blessed Perfection was telling me: 'Within the next eighty-one days, to thee will come some cause of rejoicing.' Then Mirzá Safá arrived from Mecca, and was told that Mirzá Hasan Khán had imprisoned a traveller in a dark and dismal . . . place. 'Tell him', they said, 'for God's sake to free this innocent man.' Mirzá Safá expostulated with him, and

When I was taken there, the late Siyyid Husayn petitioned Sharíf Páshá, and wrote that this traveller was an Ottoman subject whom the Persian consul had unlawfully imprisoned and tortured. Whereupon, I was transferred from the lower to the higher prison. And it was arranged to take the Persian consul to task. A physician was there in that prison. He tried to convert me to the Protestant Faith. We had long talks and he became a Bahá'í.

On the eighty-first day of my dream, from the roof-top of the prisonhouse, I caught sight of Áqá Muhammad-Ibráhim-i-Názir, passing through the street. I called out to him and he came up. I asked him what he was doing there, and he told me that the Blessed Perfection and the companions were being taken to 'Akká . . . and that he had come ashore in the company of a policeman to make some purchases. The policeman, he said, 'will not allow me to stop here much longer. I will go and report your presence here to the Áqá [the Most Great Branch]. Should the ship stay here longer, I shall perhaps come and see you again.' He set my being on fire and went away. The physician was not there at the time. When he came, he found me shedding tears and reciting these lines: 'The Beloved is by my side and I am far away from Him; I am on the shore of the waters of proximity and yet deprived I am. O Friend! Lift me, lift me to a seat on the ship of nearness; I am helpless, I am vanquished, a prisoner am I.' It was in the evening that Fáris (that was the name of the physician) came, and saw my distress. He said, 'You were telling me that on the eighty-first day of your dream, you must receive some cause of rejoicing, and that today was that eighty-first day. Now, on the contrary, I find you greatly disturbed.' I replied, 'Truly that cause for rejoicing has come, but alas! "The date is on the palm-tree and our hands cannot reach it"'. He said, 'Tell me what has happened, perhaps I could do something about it.' And so I told him that the Blessed Perfection was on that boat. He too, like me was greatly disturbed and said, 'Were the next day not a Friday, and the *Seraye* closed we could, both of us, have got permission to board the ship and attain His presence. But still, something can be done. You write whatever you wish. I will also write. Tomorrow, one of my acquaintances is coming here. We will get these letters to him to take to the liner.' I wrote my story and gathered together all the poems I had composed in the prison. Fáris the physician, 268 also wrote a letter and stated his great sorrow. It was very touching. All of these he put in an envelope, which he gave to a young watch-maker named Constantine, to deliver early in the morning. I gave him the name of Khádím [Mírzá Áqá Ján] and some others of the companions, told him how to identify them and impressed on him not to deliver the envelope until he had found one of them. He went out in the morning. We were looking from the roof-top. We first heard the signal and then the noise of the movement of the ship, and were perplexed, lest he had not made it. Then the ship stopped and started again after a quarter of an hour. We were on tenterhooks, when suddenly Constantine arrived. He handed me an envelope and a package in a handkerchief, and exclaimed, 'By God! I saw the Father of Christ.' Fáris, the physician, kissed his eyes, and said, 'Our lot was the fire of separation, yours was the bounty of gazing upon the Beloved of the World.' In answer to our petitions, there was a Tablet, in the script of Revelation, a Letter from the Most Great Branch, and a paper filled by almond *nuql* [a sweet] sent by the Purest Branch. In the Tablet, Fáris, the physician, had been particularly honoured. One of the attendants had written: 'Several times I have witnessed evidences of power which I can never forget. And so it was today. The ship was on the move, when we saw a boat far away. The captain stopped the ship, and this young watch-maker reached us, and called aloud my name. We went to him and he gave us your envelope. All eyes were on

us and we are exiles. Yet no one questioned the action of the captain.' [= From Nabli's unpublished history].

The next port of call was Port Sa'id, which was reached the following morning. The liner anchored there the rest of the day, and at nightfall journeyed on. The next day, at sunset, she stood before Jaffa, and at midnight left for her destination - Haifa."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Presumably based upon the same source is the extract from "MEMORIES OF NABĪL" in the English language volume *The Chosen Highway* pp. 247-9. Likewise the talk by A.Q. Faizi to the Oceanic Conference, held in Palermo, Sicily, August 1968 printed in the booklet, *From Adrianople..* pp.18-22. See also Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh* 3:5ff. Among other accounts is that of the covenant-breaker Mīrzā Muhammad Jawād of Qazwīn whose Arabic *Historical Epitome* was translated by E.G. Browne and printed within *Materials..*( section I p. 32).

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## THE TABLET OF THE SEVEN QUESTIONS (*LAWH-I HAFT PURSISH*) OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH: AN INTRODUCTION AND PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION.

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Shahriar Razavi

The *Tablet of the Seven Questions (Lawh-i haft pursish)* was revealed by Bahā'u'llāh in reply to a petition of Ustād Javān Mard, a prominent Zoroastrian in Yazd who converted to the new Faith. Ustād Javān Mard served on the Zoroastrian Council of Yazd and was, for a time, its secretary. He was also the principal of the first Zoroastrian school in Yazd. It is reported that he was the first Zoroastrian convert who, after his death, was buried, rather than left in the local Dakhma ("Tower of Silence") -- as is the practice among Zoroastrians.

It can be surmised that the Tablet was revealed some time between 1876 CE when Ustād Javān Mard -- whilst a student of Mīrzā Abu'l Faḍl in Tih-rān -- first came across the Bahā'ī Faith, and 1882/3 CE when large scale conversion from within the Zoroastrian community took place in Yazd. Within the tablet, through a play on Ustād Javān Mard's name, he is addressed as *Shīr Mard*, "Lion of a Man" and "Lion amongst men" (*Shīr mardumān*); that is, one lion-like, a manly, courageous soul.

Ustād Javān Mard's petition contained seven questions on eschatological, theological and social themes. Unfortunately, it would seem that the text of the petition is not extant. Some of the questions are repeated in the text of the Tablet in part (questions 4, 6) or in full (questions 1, 3) whilst others appear to be a paraphrase of the original enquiries (questions 2, 5, 7).

The Tablet, except for a brief Arabic supplication (at the end of the reply to question 3), is in Persian. Like other Tablets revealed for Zoroastrians, the Persian employed is fairly pure containing fewer distinctly Arabic terms than is the case in many other Persian writings of Bahā'u'llāh.

In 1899 most of the Persian text of the Tablet, together with a Russian translation by the soldier and orientalist, Alexander G. Tumansky (d. Istanbul 1920), appeared in *Zapiski Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk S. Peterburg (Mémoires de L'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Petersbourg)* 8th series, Vol.3, No. 6, (1899), pp. 100-102+105-108. The Persian text printed here commences with the first question but does not contain the introduction -- there are only very minor variant readings compared with the text printed in *Majmū'a-yi alwāh-i mubāraka hadrat-i Bahā'u'llāh*.

Two portions of this Tablet were translated into English by Shoghi Effendi and included in his general letter to the West of 1941, *The Promised Day is Come*. The Arabic supplication contained in this Tablet has been translated into English by the Research Department at the World Centre at the request of the Universal House of Justice. These sections have been indicated in the text [PDC & RD].

In replying to the seventh question reference is made by Bahā'u'llāh to a work by Mīrzā 'Abu'l Fadl, *Sharh-i shajara nāma-yi mubāraka* ("Commentary on the Blessed Genealogical Tree"), later published in Bombay as a pamphlet, in which he delineated the ancestry of Bahā'u'llāh.<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of themes in this Tablet which appear to have been the common concern of many early Zoroastrian converts to the Faith and seem to have played an important role in their conversion:<sup>2</sup>

- A common experience of persecution with early Bahá'is (Question 3)
- Eschatological concerns (Questions 5 and 6)
- Bahā'u'llāh as the fulfilment of prophecy (Question 4)
- The importance to Zoroastrians of the Persian Language (Question 1)
- The genealogy of Bahā'u'llāh (Question 7)
- Emphasis on universality of the Bahá'í message (Question 2)
- Kindness and tolerance (Question 2)

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on this see H.M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'is in the time of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985) Chapter 23 and Appendix One below.

<sup>2</sup> For further information on Zoroastrian conversions see Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), page 212; Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* vol 3 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1983), Chapter 11.

THE TABLET OF SEVEN QUESTIONS, PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION <sup>1</sup>

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In the Name of the Speaker Who uttereth Wisdom.

Praised be the Sanctified Lord Who hath illumined the world through the effulgence of the Sun of His Providence. From the letter "B" the Most-Great Ocean (*bahr-i a'zam*) hath appeared and from the letter "H" the Pure Divinity (Ipseity, *huwīya*) hath been made manifest. He is that Almighty One Whose purpose the power of men can never frustrate; nor can the hosts of kings hinder His Utterance. Thy letter was received and seen; therefrom did We hear thy call. Therein were the pearls of love hidden and the mysteries of loving-kindness treasured. We beseech the Incomparable Sovereign to confirm thee in aiding His Cause and to assist thee in guiding to the Water of Life such as are sore-thirst in the wilderness of ignorance. In every respect is He One Mighty and Powerful. We now reply to that which thou hast enquired of the Ocean of Knowledge and the Day-Star of Wisdom.

The initial question: "Firstly, in what tongue should God, the Peerless, be worshipped and in what direction is it befitting to turn?"

The beginning of all things is the worship of God which followeth upon the recognition of Him. Sanctified must be the eye that seeketh to recognise Him and sanctified likewise must be the tongue that uttereth His praise in this Day in which the faces of the learned and the wise are oriented in His direction – nay rather, every direction is itself inclined towards Him.

O *Shīr-Mard*! I beseech God that thou be a man of action and, by the power of the Omnipotent arise and say: "*O high-priests [dastūrān]! Ears have been given you that they may hearken to the mystery of Him Who is the Self-Dependent, and eyes that they may behold Him. Wherefore flee ye? The Incomparable Friend [Dūst-i yik-tā] is manifest. He speaketh that wherein lieth salvation. Were ye, O high priests, to discover the perfume of the rose garden of understanding ye would seek none other but Him, and would recognise, in His new vesture, the*

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<sup>1</sup> The text translated below is that printed in *Majmū'a-yi alwāh-i mubāraka hadrat-i Bahā'u'llāh* (Cairo, 1920/ Rep. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1978) pp. 240-248. Reference has also been made other texts including that printed in *Daryā-yi dānish* (New Delhi: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1985) pp: 65-71. I am grateful to Stephen Lambden and Khazeh Fananapazir for advice in the course of making this provisional translation.

*All Wise and Peerless One, and would turn your eyes from the world and all who seek it, and would arise to help Him" [PDC:77]*

The second question is regarding religion (*kīsh*) and tradition (*āyīn*).

The religion of God hath, in this Day, been made manifest. He Who is the Possessor of the World is come. His religion is righteousness and His tradition forbearance. This religion bestoweth eternal life and this tradition leadeth men to the world of true detachment. Therein is all religion and tradition encompassed. Receive it and cling ye thereto.

The third question: "In what manner should we deal with the people of this Day who have segregated themselves into separate religions – each regarding their own religion (*kīsh*) and tradition (*āyīn*) as superior and more exalted than others – so that we may not suffer at their hands and tongues?"

O Lion amongst Men (*Shīr-Mardumān*)! Regard suffering, when endured in the path of His Highness the Omnipotent One [*ḥadrat-i yazdān*], as comfort itself. Endured in His path every pain is a mighty remedy, every bitterness sweetness itself, and every abasement an exaltation. If men were to truly seek and to understand, they would readily offer up their lives for the sake of this suffering for it is the key to hidden treasures. If outwardly it is abhorrent, inwardly it is well-pleasing. We accept and affirm that which thou sayest. The people of this Day, bereft of the splendour of the Sun of Justice, have considered Him their enemy. Shouldst thou wish to be free from suffering, recite this utterance (*bayān*) which hath emanated from the Pen of the All-Merciful:

"O my God, O my God! I testify to Thy oneness and Thy singleness. I beg of Thee, O Thou Who art the Possessor of Names and Fashioner of Heavens, by the influence of Thine exalted Word and the potency of Thy Supreme Pen, to aid me with the standards of Thy power and might, and to protect me from the mischief of Thine enemies, who have broken Thy Covenant and Testament [RD]." Thou verily, art the Almighty, the Most Powerful."

This invocation (*dhikr*), like unto a mighty fortress and a powerful host, shall protect and deliver thee.

The fourth question: "Our books have announced the [future] appearance of Shāh Bahrām with manifold signs for the guidance of mankind..."

O friend! "Whatsoever hath been announced in the Books hath been revealed and made clear. From every direction the signs have been manifested. The Omnipotent One [*yazdān*] is calling, in this Day, and announcing the appearance of the Supreme Heaven [*mīnū-yi a'zam*]" [PDC:77]. The world is illumined by the lights of His appearance, yet rare indeed are the eyes endowed with insight. Ask of the one true God to bestow insight upon His servants. Insight leadeth to wisdom (*dānā'ī*) and hath ever been the cause of salvation. Keeness of wisdom (*dānā'ī-yi khirad*) is derived from insightful vision. Were the peoples of the world to gaze with their own eyes, they would see that the world is, in this Day, illumined with a new radiance. Say: the Day-Star of Wisdom (*khurshīd-i dānā'ī*) is manifest and the Sun of Knowledge (*āftāb-i dānish*) evident. Happy the one who attaineth thereunto, who seeth clearly and hath recognised Him.

The fifth question concerned the bridge of *Ṣirāt*, "paradise" (*bihisht*) and "hell" (*dūzakh*).

Verily, the Messengers of God have appeared in truth and have spoken the truth. That which the Envoy of the Omnipotent One (*pīk-i yazdān*) hath announced, hath come to pass and shall continue to be made manifest. The world of existence is established upon the basis of reward and punishment. Heaven and hell have ever been and continue to be confirmed by knowledge and wisdom, for the existence of reward and punishment requireth them. In the first station and on the foremost level paradise, signifieth the attainment of the good pleasure of the True One. Whosoever attaineth His good pleasure is considered and reckoned as being among the denizens of the most exalted paradise. Upon the ascension of this soul, such a person shall attain that which mere pen and ink are powerless to describe. The bridge of *Ṣirāt*, "the balance" (*mīzān*), "paradise" (*jannat*), "hell-fire" (*nār*) and whatsoever hath been mentioned and written in the Divine Books, is clear and evident to those with seeing eyes and to those whose gaze is directed towards the Most Great Beauty (*manzar-i akbar* lit. 'greatest vista/panorama' = Bahā'u'llāh). At the moment of the manifestation and appearance of the lights of the Day-Star of mystery, all peoples occupy the same station. Then, at the time when the True One maketh a declaration, such as give ear and attain faith are reckoned among the inmates of paradise (*jannat*). Likewise, the bridge of *Ṣirāt*, "the balance" and whatsoever hath been mentioned regarding the Day of resurrection (*rūz-i rastkhīz*) hath now been realized and come to pass for the Day of this Manifestation (*yaum-i zuhūr*) is the Day of the Greatest Resurrection (*yaum-i*

*rastkhīz-i akbar*). We cherish the hope that, aided by the Wine of Divine Revelation and the Fount of Lordly Bounty, thou shouldst attain the station of mystical insight and realization and witness, both outwardly and inwardly, all that which thou hast mentioned.

The sixth question: "After relinquishing the body and the departure of the soul to the other realm ..."

In this regard, a while ago there appeared from the Pen of Divine Knowledge that which sufficeth such as are possessed of vision and bestoweth the greatest felicity upon the learned. We, in very truth, proclaim that the departed soul deriveth happiness from goodly deeds; the effects of charity and acts of generosity offered in the path of God revert back to that soul.

The seventh question is concerning the matter of the name, lineage and pure ancestry [of Bahā'u'llāh]...

Regarding this matter, 'Abu'l-Fadl-i Gulpāygānī -- upon him be My Glory -- hath written, based on the Heavenly Books, that which bestoweth knowledge and increaseth understanding. The Faith of God is endowed with power and might. Erelong that which the Tongue hath uttered will be made manifest. We beseech God to empower thee to render assistance unto Him. He is the All-Wise, the Most Powerful. Shouldst thine honour obtain and peruse the Sūrih-yi Ra'īs and the Sūrih-yi Mulūk, thou wouldst find thyself no longer in need of that whereof thou hast asked and wouldst arise to render service to the Cause of God in such wise that neither the oppression of the whole world, nor the power of its nations, would prevent thee from rendering assistance to the Sovereign of Eternity.

I beseech God to confirm thee in that which shall exalt and immortalize thy name. Strive, perchance thou mayest obtain the aforementioned Tablets [Sūrahs] and acquire therefrom a portion of the pearls of wisdom and utterance which have appeared from the treasury of the Pen of the All-Merciful. Glory be upon thee and upon all who have remained constant, steadfast, firm and faithful.

۲۴۰ - ۲۴۱

## بنام کی یندۀ دانا

ستایش پاک یزدان را سزاوار که از روشنی  
 آفتاب بخشش جهانرا روشن نمود \* از با بحر اعظم  
 هویدا \* و از ها هوویه بخته \* اوست توانائیکه توانائی  
 مردم روزگار او را از خواست خود باز ندارد \*  
 و اشک‌های پادشاهان از گفتارش منع نماید \*  
 نامه ات رسید دیدیم \* و ندایترا شنیدیم \* در نامه  
 لالی محبت مکنون و اسرار مودت مخزون \* از داور  
 بی‌همال می‌طلبیم ترا تأیید فرماید بر نصرت امرش \*  
 و توفیق بخشد تا تشنگان دشت نادانی را با آب زندگانی  
 برسانی \* اوست بر هر امری قادر و توانا \* آنچه  
 از دریای ذناتی و خورشید یسنائی سؤال نمودی  
 باجابت مقرون \*

<sup>1</sup> The text reproduced below is that printed in *Majmū'a-yi alwāh-i mubāraka hadrat-i Bahā'u'llāh* (Cairo, 1920/ Rep. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1978) pp. 240-248.

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\* پرش نخستین \* نخست پرستش یکتای  
 یزدانرا بچه زبان ورو بکدام سو بنائیم شایسته است \*  
 آغاز گفتار پرستش پروردگار است \* و این پس  
 از شناسائیت \* چشم پاک باید تا بشناسد \* و زبان  
 پاک باید تا بتاید \* امروز روهای اهل دانش وینش  
 سوی اوست \* بلکه سویها را جمله رو بر سوی او \*  
 شیر مرد از خداوند میخواهیم مردم میدان باشی \*  
 و بتوانی یزدان بر خیزی و بگوئی \* ای دستوران  
 گوش از برای شنیدن رازی نیاز آمده و چشم از  
 برای دیدار چرا گریزاید \* دوست یکتا پدیدار \*  
 میکوید آنچه را که رستکاری در آنست \* ای

(۳۱)



دستوران اگر بوی گلزار دانائی را بیایید جز او  
 نخواهید \* ودانای یکتارا در جامه تازه بشناسید \*  
 واز کیتی و کیتی خواهان چشم بردارید و بیاری برخیزید \*  
 \* پرسش دوم \* در کیش و آیین بوده \*  
 امروز کیش یزدان پدیدار \* جهاندار آمد و راه  
 نمود \* کیشش نیکوکاری \* و آیینش بردباری \* این  
 کیش زنده کی پاینده بچشد \* و این آیین مردمان را  
 بجهان بی نیازی رساند \* این کیش و آیین دارای  
 کیشها و آیینهاست \* بگیریید و بدارید \*  
 \* پرسش سوم \* با مردم روز کار که جدا جدا  
 کیشی گرفته اند و هر یک کیش و آیین خویش را پیشتر  
 و بهتر از دیگری دانند چگونه رفتار نمائیم که از دست  
 و زبان ایشان در رخ و آزار نباشیم \*  
 ای شیر مردمان رنجرا در راه حضرت یزدان  
 راحت دان \* هر دردی در راه او در مانیتست بزرگ \*  
 و هر تلخی شیرین \* و هر پستی بلند \* اگر مردمان  
 بیابند و بدانند جان رایگان در راه این رنج دهند

۲۴۳

این رنج مفتاح کنج است اگر در ظاهر منکر است  
 در باطن پسندیده بوده وهست \* گفتار ترا پذیر فیم \*  
 و تصدیق نمودیم چه که مردمان روزگار از روشنائی  
 آفتاب داد محرومند \* داد را دشمن میدارند \* اگر بی  
 رنجی طلبی این بیان که از قلم رحمن جاری شده  
 قرائت نما \* الهی الهی أشهد بفرادیتک و وحدانیتک  
 أسألك يا مالك الأسماء و فاطر السماء بنفوذ كلمتك  
 العلیا و اقتدار قلمك الأعلى أن تنصرنی برایات قدرتك  
 وقوتك و تحفظنی من شر أعدائك الذین تقضوا  
 عهدك و میثاقك انك انت المقتدر القدير \*

این ذکر حصنی است متین و لشکر یست مبین

حفظ نماید و نجات بخشد \*

\* پرشس چهارم \* در نامه های ما مژده داده اند

شاه بهرام بانسانهای زیاد از برای رهنمایی مردمان

میآید الی آخر بیانه \*

ای دوست آنچه در نامه ها مژده داده اند ظاهر

وهوید اگشت \* نشانها از هر شطری نمودار \* امروز

یزدان ندامینماید و کل را بمینوی اعظم بشارت  
 میدهد \* کیتی بانوار ظهورش منور و لکن چشم  
 کم یاب \* از یکتا خداوند پنهانند بخواه بندگان خود را  
 بینائی بخشند \* بینائی سبب دانائی و علت نجات  
 بوده و هست \* دانائی خرد از بینائی بصراست \* اگر  
 مردمان بچشم خود بنگردند امروز چهارا بر روشنائی  
 تازه روشن بینند \* بگو خورشید دانائی هویدا \* و آفتاب  
 بینش پدیدار \* بختیار آنکه رسید و دید و شناخت \*  
 \* پرشش بنجم \* از پهل صراط و بهشت و دوزخ بوده \*  
 پیمبران بر استی آمده اند و راست گفته اند  
 آنچه را پیک یزدان خبر داده پدیدار شده و میشود \*  
 عالم بمجازات و مکافات برپا \* بهشت و دوزخ را خرد  
 و دانائی تصدیق نموده و مینماید چه که وجود این  
 دواز برای آن دو لازم \* در مقام اول و مرتبه اولی  
 بهشت رضای حق است \* هر نفسی برضای او فائز  
 شد او از اهل جنت علیا مذکور و محسوب \* و بعد از  
 عروج روح فائز میشود با آنچه که آه و خامه از

ذکرش عاجز است \* صراط و میزان و همچنین جنت  
 و نار و آنچه در کتب الهی مذکور و مسطور است  
 نزد اصحاب بصر و مردمان منظر اکبر معلوم  
 و مشهود است \* حین ظهور و بروز انوار خورشید معانی  
 کل در یک مقام و اتف و حق نطق میفرماید با آنچه  
 اراده میفرماید \* هر یک از مردمان که بشنیدن آن فائز  
 شد و قبول نمود او از اهل جنت مذکور \* و همچنین  
 از صراط و میزان و آنچه در روز رستخیز ذکر نموده اند  
 گذشته و رسیده \* و یوم ظهور یوم رستخیز  
 اکبر است \* امید هست که آنجناب از رحیق وحی  
 الهی و سلسبیل عنایت ربانی بمقام مکاشفه و شهود  
 فائز شوند و آنچه ذکر نموده اند ظاهراً و باطناً  
 مشاهده نمایند \*

\* پرسش ششم \* پس از هشتن تن که روان از تن  
 جدا شده بآن سرا شتابد الی آخر \* در این مقام چندی  
 قبل از خامه دانش ظاهر شد آنچه که بینایان را  
 کفایت نماید و اهل دانش را فرح اکبر بخشد \*

براستی، یکوئیم زوان از کردار پسندیده خوشنود  
 میشود\* و داد و دهش در راه خدا با و میرسد \*

﴿ پرسش هفتم ﴾ از نام وز ادونیا کان پاک نهاد  
 بوده \* أبو الفضل کلبایکانی علیه بهائی در این باب  
 از نامه‌های آسمانی نوشته آنچه که آگاهی بخشد و بر  
 یثنائی بیفزاید آیین یزدان با قوت و نیر و بوده و هست  
 زوداست آنچه از زبان گفته شد در ظاهر دیده شود\*  
 از خداوند میخواهیم تر ابر یاری نیر و بخشد \* اوست  
 دانا و توانا \* اگر آنجناب سوره رئیس و سور ملوک را  
 بیابد و بخواند از آنچه سؤال نموده بی نیاز گردد  
 و بخد مت امر الهی قیام نماید قیامیکه ظلم عالم و قوت  
 امم او را از نصرت مالک قدم منع نکنند از حق  
 میطلبیم شمارا تأیید فرماید بر آنچه سبب بلندی  
 و بقای نام است \* جهد نمائید شاید بسور مذکوره  
 هم برسید و از لالی حکمت و بیان که از خزینه قلم  
 رحمن ظاهر شده قسمت برید و نصیب بردارید \*  
 البهاء عليك وعلى كل ثابت مستقیم و راستخ امین \*

## Appendix One: A Few Expository Notes on the *Lawh-i haft pursish*

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Stephen Lambden

The truth of the Zoroastrian religion, the official faith of ancient Iran and that of its modern remnant community (now roughly 100,000 worldwide), is categorically affirmed in Bahā'ī scripture. The founder prophet Zoroaster (fl. c. 1,000 BCE?) is reckoned to be a Manifestation of God. To date however, relatively little research has been done in the area of Zoroastrian doctrine and Bābī-Bahā'ī scripture. Through a study of Zoroastrian sacred writ, much light can be thrown on the hundreds, if not thousands of Tablets which the central figures of the Bahā'ī Faith addressed to Zoroastrians. It is hoped that the following selected notes expository of a few doctrinal aspects of the *Lawh-i haft pursish* (details will not be gone into here) will be of value to Bahā'īs with a particular interest in Bahā'ī doctrine and matters Zoroastrian.

### □ The appearance of Shāh Bahrām

"To Him [Zoroaster] must have alluded when, according to tradition, He foretold that a period of three thousand years of conflict and contention must needs precede the advent of the World-Savior Shāh Bahrām, Who would triumph over Ahriman and usher in an era of blessedness and peace." (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* [Wilmette, Illinois: BPT., 1974] p.95)

Many centuries of oral tradition and written scripture lie behind multi-faceted Zoroastrian messianism. Zoroastrianism has an especially rich body of apocalyptic texts which have influenced both Semitic and Asian eschatological teachings. The roots of Zoroastrian messianism have been tentatively traced to the Gāthās – the most ancient sacred hymns, stemming from Zoroaster himself. In these hymns the future active participle, Saošyant (lit. 'He who will bring benefit', 'Future Benefactor') occurs three times in the singular (Yasna 45:11; 48:9; 53:2), and a number of times in the plural (46:3; 48:12; cf. 30:9; 61:5; 70:4).<sup>1</sup> *Astvat Ersta* meaning "He who embodies righteousness" (refer Yasna 43:3), is considered the Avestan

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<sup>1</sup> See Mary Boyce. *A History of Zoroastrianism* Vol 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill) p. 234.

designation of the Zoroastrian World Reformer, the Saošyant.<sup>1</sup> Two earlier messianic saviour figures (Saošyants), who figure in several Zoroastrian apocalyptic texts – such as the Iranian [Greater] and Indian [Lesser] *Bundahišn*, ("Primal Creation"; XXXII/III;XXXV) – were modelled after the two brothers of Zoroaster named (Av.) Uxšyat. Ǝreta, "He who makes righteousness grow" (Pahlavi, Ušēdar/Hušēdar; in Bahā'ī interpretation the Prophet Muḥammad) and Uxšyat. nemah, "He who makes reverence grow" (Pahlavi, Ušēdarmāh / Hušēdarmāh; in Bahā'ī interpretation, the Bāb) (see M. Boyce, 'ASTVAT ƎRƎTA' *Enc.Iranica*, 2:871).

Shāh Bahrām is not a messiah figure explicitly mentioned in the most ancient Zoroastrian texts. In various guises he does, however, figure in quite a number of Zoroastrian apocalyptic and related writings.<sup>2</sup> A key Middle-Persian text in the Avestan script (Pāzand) is the composite and repeatedly revised *Commentary on the Vahman yašt (Zand ī Vahman yašt [Vohuman Yasn])* or (in abbreviated form) *Bahman Yašt*, (7th-12th cent. CE? reflecting earlier traditions and having an Avestan substratum, see *Elr.* 3:491f) – it was translated into Persian at the end of the 15th century. Within it there is reference to the warrior deliverer Wahrām Warzāwand who, along with Pišyōtān [son of King Vīštāspa] the priest, will restore true religion to Iran: "And regarding that Vāhrām the Vargāvand [= Wahrām Warzāwand] it is declared that he comes forth in full glory.. with the seat of true explanation of the religion, he restores again these countries of Iran.." (trans. West, *SBE* 5 Pt. 1, 229-30). The name Wahrām Warzāwand (lit. 'Wahrām/ Bahrām the Strong/Powerful') is essentially synonymous with the later victorious,

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<sup>1</sup> Various articles and notes analyze the tradition of the Zoroastrian World Reformer, Saošyant. See for example, G. Messina, 'Il Saušyant-nelle tradizione Iranica e la sua attesa' *Orientalia* 1 (1932) 170-1; Jean Kellens, 'Saošyant' in *Studia Iranica* 3 (1974), pp.187-209. See also J.R. Hinnells, 'Zoroastrian Saviour Imagery and its Influence on the New Testament' *Numen* XVI pp.161-185.

<sup>2</sup> Some references are provided in Christopher Buck's unpublished, ground-breaking essay, 'Was Bahā'ullāh Shāh Bahrām Varjāvand despite Zoroastrian 'Prophecies'? (AAR/SBL PacNW region 1982) which draws heavily upon K. Czeglédy, 'Bahrām Čōbīn and the Persian Apocalyptic Literature' *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 8 [1958], 21-43. Informative papers can be found in Hellholm, D., (ed), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism held in Uppsala, August 12-17 1979), Tübingen, 1983. A useful bibliography of 'Works on Iranian Apocalypticism' exists in Fereyduh Vahman, *Arda Wiraz Namag, The Iranian 'Divina Commedia'* (= Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Monograph series No 53; London and Malmo: Curzon Press Ltd, 1986) pp. 319-321. Mary Boyce's 'On the Antiquity of Zoroastrian Apocalyptic' in *BSOAS* XLVII (1984), pp.57-75 is illuminating.

kingly figure Shāh Bahrām (loosely, "King of Victory").<sup>1</sup>

Zardušt Bahman Pazdu was the author of a legendary celebration of Zoroaster in pure Persian verse, the *Zardušt-nāma* (1278 CE). Purporting to be based on a lost Pahlavi work and closely related to book VII of the encyclopedic *Dēnkard* ("Acts of Religion", 9th-10th cent. CE), it contains explicit reference to the eschatological advent of Shāh Bahrām.<sup>2</sup>

While in modern, new Persian the word Shāh indicates a "ruler" or "king", the epithet Bahrām, signifies, for example, various kings, heroes, an angel or the planet Mars (see Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 210). In fact the word Bahrām is actually based upon the Pahlavi form (= Warahran/Wahrān) of the Avestan Vereθthraγna (Verethragna = lit. "smiting of resistance"), the designation of the Old Iranian personification of Victory; a key figure in the Zoroastrian pantheon (see Boyce, *History*, 1:63f; G. Gnoli, 'Bahrām' *Elr.* 3:510f). Bahrām was the name of six Sassanian kings and notables as well as many later Iranians. The celebrated military commander and king of Iran, Bahrām VI Čōbīn (rg. 590-1) was expected to return and appears, through later legends about him, to have contributed to messianic portraits of the Zoroastrian conquering saviour (see K. Czeglédy, 'Bahrām Čōbīn.. esp.38f; A.H. Shahbazi, 'Bahrām VI Čōbīn' *Elr.* 3:519f; Buck, C. 'Was Bahā'u'llāh Shāh Bahrām..'Boyce, *On the Antiquity*, p.73).

In past times then, some Zoroastrians have expected an eschatological king and saviour who, among other titles, has been designated Shāh Bahrām ("King of Victory"). In the last days he is to liberate humanity and rule Iran. As Bahā'u'llāh considered himself to be this figure, the prophecies are obviously to be understood non-literally.

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<sup>1</sup> Worth noting is the fact that Zoroastrian ("Magian") belief in the messianic advent of Wahrām Warzāwand (as 'Bahman Varjāmwand' [sic.]) appears to have been registered by the intemperate, Spanish, Sunnī (Zāhirī) Muslim writer Ibn Hazm (994-1064 CE) in an anti-Messianist paragraph of his *Kitāb al-Fiṣāl*.. (Refer J.W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*.. London: Lutterworth Press, 1955, 1/2:223).

<sup>2</sup> See Rosenberg, F., ed. and tr., *Le Livre de Zoroastre (Zaratusht Nama)*, St. Petersburg, 1904. This text, informed by earlier Pahlavi sources, contains the only extant surviving manuscript version of the Persian text of the *Zaratusht-Nāma*. Legendary material contained within it appears to have been known to Bahā'u'llāh, 'Abdu'l-Bahā and various Bahā'ī apologists. Iranian expectation of Shāh Bahrām is most likely based upon this text. cf. also the Persian version of the Pazand/Pahlavi *Jāmāsp Nāmag* which is analyzed in Tord Olsson, 'The Apocalyptic Activity. The Case of Jāmāsp Nāmag' in Hellholm, 1983 p.21ff).



□ The doctrine of the 'Bridge of the Separator' (Av. 'čhinnvatō peretu'; činvat-bridge).

Zoroastrian eschatology knows of a traverse or 'bridge' which departed souls must cross in order that their deeds or worth can be evaluated. The Gāthās mention it "symbolically as a transitory stage between the darkness of the world and the new life which is happiness for the righteous."<sup>1</sup> According to *Yasna* 46, Zoroaster and the true believers in Ahura Mazdā, unlike their enemies, will cross the bridge successfully. In later Zoroastrian literature the 'bridge' is a concrete cosmological reality spanning various Iranian mountains. It has two extremities, "one which stands at Čagād ī daīdīg, the lawful summit, and the other at Alborz. When a righteous man crosses the bridge it becomes nine lances wide. In the case of a sinner it becomes as sharp as a blade. The righteous person is helped by Astad and Mihr to reach Paradise, whereas the wicked one falls into the darkness of Hell, after having suffered terrible anguish." (Vahman 239; see Vidēvdāt XIII. 8-9, etc).

The doctrine of the bridge has many parallels. It is reflected in most major religions including Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>2</sup> The extensive Islāmic tradition literature (*aḥadīth*) speaks of the 'bridge of the separator', which all deceased persons cross, as the 'bridge of *al-Širāt*'. For the righteous it is a wide expanse crossed easily with angelic help, while for the wicked it is a sharp, narrow pathway to hell.<sup>3</sup> The following words are from a tradition related by Imām Ja'far al-Šādiq, "The *Širāt* of God is [Imām] 'Alī (d. 40/661) whom God made His trustee over the knowledge of all that is in the heavens and on the earth.." (cited in al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*. [Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1978], 140).

Both the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh wrote explanations of *Širāt* as the 'traverse / bridge of *Širāt*.' The former commences Persian Bayān II:12 -- which is expository of *Širāt* -- as follows: "In

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<sup>1</sup> See Vahman, *Artā.*, 239. See further, S.G.F. Brandon, *Man and his Destiny in the Great Religions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), p.152ff.

<sup>2</sup> On Judaeo-Christian literature see for example, H.R. Patch, *The Other-world according to Description in Medieval Literature*, Cambridge Mass. 1950. See also J.J.L. Duyvendak, *A Chinese Divina Commedia*, Leiden, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Enrico Cerulli, *Il Libro della Scala e la questione delle fonti Arabo-Espagnole della Divina Commedia*. Città del Vaticano, 1949; Al-Ghazālī, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*. (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989), pp. 205-210 (= a translation by T.J. Winter from Book XL of al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' ulūm al-dīn*, section on the *Širāt* ["Traverse" or "Bridge"]).

every age the intention of [the bridge of] *Ṣirāt* is the Manifestation of God (*zuhūr Allāh*) and his Cause" (or, whatsoever he hath commanded i.e. the Bāb and his revelation). In Arabic Bayān II:12 he relates the *Ṣirāt* with the Bābī messiah "Him who God shall make manifest" (*man yuzhiruhu Allāh*) and his "Cause" (*amr*). Zoroastrian tradition as mediated through Islamic channels clearly informs the Bāb's exposition. In a Tablet to Javād Bahā'u'llāh (the Bābī messiah) taught that today is the eschatological "Day" in which he, as personified *Ṣirāt*, calleth aloud, 'I am the Straight Path (*al-sabīl al-mustaqīm*; cf. Qur'ān 1:3 etc., *Majmū'a*, 146 trans. TB:237).

#### □ The lineage or ancestry of Bahā'u'llāh

Zoroastrians have a profound respect for lineage. They generally expect their various messiah figures, including the ultimate messiah, Saošyant (though conceived of a virgin), to be of the seed of Zoroaster. In replying to question seven (see above) about the lineage and ancestry of Bahā'u'llāh in the *Lawh-i haft pursish*, reference is made to a treatise on this subject written by the apostle of Bahā'u'llāh and Bahā'ī apologist, Mīrzā 'Abu'l-Faḍl-i Gulpāygānī (1844-1914). Though this detailed treatise was lost in 1300/1883, there exists another brief consideration of this subject by Gulpāygānī, the *Sharh-i shajara-yi jamāl-i mubāraka* ("Commentary on the Blessed Genealogical Tree"), written in New York in 1321/1903-4 in reply to an enquiry of Khusraw Bimān.<sup>1</sup>

The consideration of Bahā'u'llāh's genealogy by Gulpāygānī apparently had its origin in an attempt to interpret a few stanzas of a poem of Abī Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Alī al-Shalmaghānī (executed 322/934).<sup>2</sup> Differing Bahā'ī opinions had been expressed in 19th century Tehran about its meaning. Loosely translated from the Arabic, it reads:

<sup>1</sup> Printed in R. Mihrabkhānī's *Rasā'il va Raqā'im-i Abu'l-Faḍā'il* (Tehran: BPT., 135/1978, pp. 41-47). Balyuzi in *Bahā'u'llāh King of Glory* records that this reply to Āqā Khusraw Beman, written at 'Abdu'l-Bahā's instruction, was printed in Bombay as a pamphlet (p.11 fn). For a few details on the history of Gulpāygānī's first genealogical treatise (*nisāla*) see also Mihrabkhānī, *Zindigānī-i Mīrzā Abu'l-Faḍl-i Gulpāygānī* (Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahā'ī-Verlag, 154/1988), pp.418-9 (item 15).

<sup>2</sup> Al-Shalmaghānī was a Shī'ī extremist who is reckoned to have preached incarnationist and other heretical ideas. He had considerable influence at the 'Abbasid court in Baghdad and was the assistant and lieutenant (*nā'ib*) of the third "gate" (*bāb*) to the hidden Imām, Ibn Rūh Nawbakhtī (305/917-326/928) who excommunicated him and his followers in 312/924-5.

"O claimant (or 'seeker', 'interrogator'?, *tālib*<sup>an</sup>) from the Hāshimite house (*bayt hāshimī*);  
 And disclaimer (*jāhid*<sup>an</sup>) from the house of the Chosroes (*bayt kisrawī*)!  
 Assuredly was he hidden in a non-Arab lineage (*nisbat a'jamī*);  
 One Persian, of noble, agreeable, descent (*fī'l-fārsī al-hasab al-radī*)".<sup>1</sup>

In a Tablet to Abū'l-Faḍl dated 26 Sha'bān 1299/1882, underlining the veracity of his application of these words to the person of Bahā'u'llāh, the Founder of the Bahā'ī Faith wrote, "O Abu'l-Faḍl! Thou hast uttered the very truth and caused to be made manifest that which was concealed in His book (or 'his [Shalmaghānī's] writing?; cited Mihrabkhānī, *Zindigānī*, 419). Gulpaygānī's researches came to be related to Sassanian genealogy and the Shī'ī rulers and notables of Ṭabaristān (north Iran; spanning modern Māzandārān from where Bahā'u'llāh's family originated). Various Persian, Sassanian kings were named Khusro – in Greek Chosroes; Syriac, Kesrō/Kosro; Arabic, Kisrā; Persian, Khusraw (see M.Morony, Kisrā. EI<sup>2</sup> 5:184-5). Chosroes I son of Kavadh (Kavāt), known as Anosarvan (Ar. Anūshirwān; "of the Immortal soul") and *Dagdar* ("the Just" Ar. 'Ādil), reigned as king of Persia from 531-579 CE.<sup>2</sup> Abu'l-Faḍl draws attention to the fact that Ridā Qulī Khān (1215/1800-1288/1871-2), known as "Prince of the Poets" (*Amīr al-shu'āra*), in his *Nizhād-nāmih* ("Genealogical Treatise") reckons that the line of the 'Alid Nūrīs of Māzandārān<sup>3</sup> culminates in the person of Chosroes I, the

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic text cited Gulpaygānī, *Sharh-i shajara*.. in Mihrabkhānī, *Rasā'il*, 41. Abu'l-Faḍl notes that some, by virtue of the reference to Hāshimite status and the use of "Persian" (Fārsī; understood to mean Shī'rāzī), found prophetic allusion to the Bāb in these lines. The Bāb, as a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, was a Hāshimite, a descendant of Hāshim b. Abd Manāf – the common ancestor of Muhammad, 'Alī and al-'Abbās whom the 'Abbāsids claimed descent from. He was also a Persian born in Shī'rāz.

<sup>2</sup> Two subsequent Sassanian kings, dominant during the late Sassanian period, were named 'Chosroes': Chosroes II Abharvez (Ar. Kisrā Aparwīz; Per. Khusraw Parwīz, 591-628 CE., nephew of Chosroes I and possibly a Christian) and Chosroes III (630-2). Chosroes II was among those rulers contemporary with the Prophet Muhammad who received a letter of proclamation from him. He is said to have torn up this letter inviting him to Islām and planned to kidnap its author. Legend has it that the Prophet foretold his death.

<sup>3</sup> Detailed research into Bahā'u'llāh's genealogy would include a study of the 'Alids of Tabarestān, Daylamān and Gīlān on which an important article has been written by W. Madelung in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (ed. E. Yarshater) 1:881-886. Certain of the works listed in the bibliography may be important, e.g. H.L. Rabino de Borgamile, 'Les dynasties Alaouides du Mazandéran' in *Journal Asiatique* 210

"Just".<sup>1</sup> He also notes, as Balyuzi summarizes it in his *Bahá'u'lláh, King of Glory*, that "final confirmation came from Hájí Mirzá Ridá-Qulí, a half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, who told Mirzá Abu'l-Faḍl categorically, in answer to his query, that the Núris possessed a genealogical table tracing their line back to Yazdigird the Sásánian." (Balyuzi, BKG:11, drawing on Gulpaygānī's essay cited *Rasā'il* p.44f).

Of probable relevance to the study of Bahá'u'lláh's genealogy are the traditions about Shāhbānūya (Shahrbānū = 'Lady of the Land'), daughter of the last Sassanian King, Yazdigird III (632-651 CE).<sup>2</sup> She is said in various Shī'ī and other sources to have married the third Shī'ī Imām, Ḥusayn (martyred 61/680) and to have been the mother of the fourth Imām, 'Alī Zayn al-'Abidīn (b. Medina c. 36/656-7 -- c.94/712). In Shī'ī traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and the Imāms, the fourth Imām was reckoned the "son of the two elect [lines]" (*ibn al-khīratayn*) – descended through both the Arabs of Quraysh (Hāshimites) and the non-Arabs of Persia, from Chosroes (for details see Majlisī, *Bihar al-Anwār* <sup>2</sup> 46:4f).

Aspects of the Zoroastrian popular legends about Shahrbānū and the shrines associated with her have been studied by Mary Boyce and others.<sup>3</sup> Boyce recounts popular Zoroastrian and Shī'ī legends associated with two different shrines relating to her (at Yazd and Rayy [near Tehran]).<sup>4</sup> She also sums up a few of the contradictory Sunnī and Shī'ī traditions about

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(1927) pp.253-77.

<sup>1</sup> Gulpaygānī, *Shah-i shajara*.. in Mihrabkhānī, *Rasā'il*, 42ff.

<sup>2</sup> She is also, for example, variously named; Ghazāla, Solāfa, Salāma, Shāhzanān (see W. Madelung, "Alī b. al-Husayn.." *Elr.* 1:849).

<sup>3</sup> See Mary Boyce, 'Bībī Shahrbānū and the Lady of Pārs' *BSOAS* XXX (1976), pp. 30-44. Madelung writes about her alleged descent, "According to reports of a legendary character she was a daughter of Yazdegerd, the last Sassanian king of Persia, captured in the Arab conquest.. This descent is commonly accepted by Shi'ite tradition but is not confirmed by the early sources and is rejected by some of the genealogists. According to Ebn Qotayba, his mother was said to be from Sind.." (art. cit. 839).

<sup>4</sup> See Boyce, Bībī Shahrbānū, 31-3; see also Sayyid Ja'far Shahīdī, *Cherāg-i roshān dar dunyā-yi tarīkh* (Tehran, 1333/1954; esp. the chapter relating to Shahrbānū). Above what purports to be the grave of Shahrbānū in Rayy we read, "This is the tomb of the Mother of Believers, the most excellent of princesses, my Lady Shahrbānoe. May Allāh sanctify her secret!" (Boyce, Bībī, 38). In the *Ziyārat-nāmah* of this shrine the princess is called Shahrbānū daughter of Yazdigird, as well as "Shāh-Jehān" (King of the World), "Shāh-i Zanān" (King of Women) and "Jehān-Bānū" (Lady of the World) (refer *ibid*).

Shahrbānū, traditionally the mother of the fourth Imām.

Among the traditions recorded by Boyce about the mother of the fourth Imām is that of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd (d. 845 CE author of the *Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*) who "states that 'his mother was a slave-girl (*umm walad*) called Ghazāla, who, after Husayn, was married to his client [mawlā] Zuyaid, to whom she bore 'Abdullāh ibn Zuyaid' [see *Ṭabaqāt*, Leiden, 1904, v, 156]. Ibn Qutayba (d. A.D. 889) amplifies this slightly: "Alī Asghar [the fourth Imām] son of Husayn is the only person through whom any descendants of Husayn survive. It is said that his mother was a Sindī woman called Sulāfa, or it is said Ghazāla, who after Husayn was taken to wife by Zubaid, the client of Husayn ibn 'Alī. She bore to him 'Abdullāh ibn Zubaid, who is therefore of the same mother as Alī ibn Husayn' [*al-Ma'ārif*, Cairo, 1935, 94]." (pp.33-4). She also refers to the *Firāq al-Shī'a* of Nawbakhtī (10th cent CE) where various names/titles of the fourth Imām's mother are given, including her pre-captive designation, Jehānshāh and that she was the daughter of Yazdigird III. A late tenth century CE *Tārīkh-i Qum*<sup>1</sup> speaks of "Shahrbānoe daughter of Yazdigird" also referring to Salāma (or Sulāqa) who is again Jehāb shāh daughter of Yazdigird (p.197). Ibn Bābūya al-Qummī (Bābawayh, 306/908-381/991) in his *'Uyūn akhbār al-Ridā'* records a tradition from Sahl ibn Qāsim Nōšjānī (d.818 CE) to the effect that Imām 'Al-Ridā (the eighth Imām, d. 203/818) said to him in Khurāsān: "I and you are kinsmen" and related this to the marriage of Yazdigird III's daughters to the Shī'ī Imāms Hasan and Husayn (see Tehran lithograph 1275/1858, 309). Such is a summary of a few legendry and sometimes non-historical traditions noted by Boyce. They invite detailed analysis.<sup>2</sup>

Bahā'u'llāh appears, in certain Tablets, to deny descent from the Prophet Muḥammad. In a Tablet to Mashadī Ismā'īl Zaqānī he refers to himself (as did Muḥammad and the Bāb) as an "unlettered one" (*al-ummī* cf. Qur'ān 7:157-8) whose advent is predicted in all the sacred books. He states that neither his clothes nor his appearance indicate any special status:

"The garb He weareth, His flowing locks, His head-dress, attest the truth of His words."

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Tihirānī, Tehran 1313/1934, 195-6.

<sup>2</sup> An obviously unhistorical tradition is also recorded in the *Kitāb al-kāfī* of Kulaynī (d. 939/40 CE) to the effect that Imām 'Alī rescued Yazdigird's daughter and facilitated her marriage to his son Imām Husayn (*al-Kāfī*, Tihiran, 1381/1962, 1, 466).

These words are continued with reference to "Certain ones among both commoners and nobles" who have objected to the effect that he is "neither a member of the ecclesiastical order (*'ulamā'*) nor a descendant of the Prophet" (Muḥammad, lit. 'one of the Sayyids', *sādāt*). In response to this Bahā'u'llāh states,

"Say: O ye that claim to be just! Reflect a little while, and ye shall recognize how infinitely exalted is His present state above the station ye claim He should possess. The Will of the Almighty hath decreed that out of a house wholly devoid of all that the divines, the doctors, the sages, and scholars commonly possess His Cause should proceed and be made manifest." (GI XLIV).

In *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi sums up, in the following manner, the fundamentals of the Bahā'ī belief with respect to the genealogy of Bahā'u'llāh:

"He derived his descent, on the one hand, from Abraham (the Father of the Faithful) through his wife Katurah [see Gen 25:1], and on the other from Zoroaster, as well as from Yazdigird, the last king of the Sāsānīyān dynasty. He was moreover a descendent of Jesse, and belonged through his father Mirzā 'Abbās, better known as Mirzā Buzurg -- a nobleman closely associated with the ministerial circles of the Court of Fath-'Alī Shāh -- to one of the most ancient and renowned families of Mázandarán." (p.94).

In certain of the abovementioned sources it is indicated that Shahrbānū (daughter of Yazdigird III), after the death of her husband (the third Imām), married his client (mawlā) from whom a son 'Abdu'llāh was born. As Bahā'u'llāh seems not to be descended from the Prophet or the Shī'ī Imāms, it would seem likely that further research into the traditional material -- not that this is all historical -- might attempt to trace his genealogy back through 'Abdu'llāh and his mother to the Sassanian kings, including Yazdigird III and Chosroes I.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The present writer plans to write up in more detail (in a forthcoming BSB) his notes upon the genealogy of Bahā'u'llāh as it relates to Abrahamic / Semitic religious tradition.



*PART TWO*

*Letters of the Universal House of Justice;  
Short Notes and Studies;  
Reviews and Bibliographical Miscellany*



LETTERS OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE / MEMORANDA OF THE  
RESEARCH DEPARTMENT, BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE, HAIFA.

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MEMORANDUM <sup>1</sup>

To: The Universal House of Justice  
From: The Research Department

Date: 8 May 1990

Arabic as the Universal Language

In her letter dated 20 April 1990 Dr. Betty Fisher refers to a statement by Mr. Peter Mühlischlegel that Bahá'u'lláh had remarked to pilgrims that Arabic would be the future universal language, as it was the language of revelation for the last three Manifestations. She asks if any translated text confirms this statement.

The Research Department has not found any text to support Mr. Mühlischlegel's statement. In "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 138, Bahá'u'lláh declared: "At present, a new language and a new script have been devised." However, a letter dated 9 August 1937 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer refers to this passage and states:

As to the new tongue and script to which Bahá'u'lláh refers on page 107 of that same book: we do not know to what particular medium of language they refer.

Another letter dated 15 August 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, referring to Bahá'u'lláh's statements on page 32 of "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf" regarding the elimination of fear and the "redoubling" of the potency of "that force which is hid in men", states:

These were never, so far as we know, further elaborated by Bahá'u'lláh; they remained hidden within the realms of His infinite knowledge, just as did the universal language which, in that same book, He mentions.

The potential of Arabic to serve as a world universal language is not immediately clear in the literature and history of the Faith. On the one hand it is highly praised and recommended to the world by Bahá'u'lláh Himself:

In one of His Tablets <sup>2</sup> revealed in 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes the importance of adopting the auxiliary international language ordained in the "Kitáb-i-Aqdas". He states that its implementation will provide a means for safeguarding the unity of the human race and will facilitate intercourse and understanding among the peoples of the world. In this Tablet

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<sup>1</sup> >>> Log Stamp: 60546. res <<< 1990. 06. 05. 13:47:52 2e47 25ae 32c7.

<sup>2</sup> "Nafahát-i-Quds", pp. 5-8.



Bahá'u'lláh praises the Arabic language for its expressiveness and eloquence, and remarks that no other language can match its vast possibilities. He further states that God would be pleased if all the peoples of the world were to speak the Arabic language. But He does not require humanity necessarily to adopt it as the international language; rather He leaves the choice to the appropriate institutions.

Adib Taherzadeh, "The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh", vol 4 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1987), pp 159-60)

On the other hand, notes of utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, although regarded in the same category as pilgrim's notes, seem to suggest Arabic's unsuitability as a universal language:

... no one person can construct a Universal Language. It must be made by a Council representing all countries, and must contain words from different languages. It will be governed by the simplest rules, and there will be no exceptions; neither will there be gender, nor extra and silent letters. Everything indicated will have but one name. In Arabic there are hundreds of names for the camel!

("Abdu'l-Bahá in London: Addresses and Notes of Conversations" (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, (1912) 1987), p. 94)

The Blessed One ['Abdu'l-Bahá] was invited by Halkataz Zahabia (Golden Ring Club). They asked Him if it were possible that the Arabian language would become the universal language. He replied in the negative....

("Mahmud's Diary" , ed. Christine Lofstedt (unpublished), p. 251) <sup>3</sup>

The apparent contradiction between these two perspectives for and against Arabic as a universal language is elucidated by the following extract from a letter dated 8 June 1980 written on behalf of the House of Justice to an individual believer, which describes a two-stage process in the development of a universal language:

You are quite correct in stating that there are two different provisions in the Sacred Texts for the selection of an International Auxiliary Language.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, this task is given to the governments of the world, on the other it is given to the House of Justice. It is not possible now to foresee exactly how this

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<sup>3</sup> This exchange is also reported by Dr. Zia Bagdadi in his article "Abdu'l-Bahá in America", published in *Star of the West*, vol. 19, no. 10 (January 1929), p. 309: "The Syrians of Boston invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to their club on July 24 1912, and [were] anxious to know if the Arabic language would in time be the international language. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: 'No! ..'. It appears that the original source of this account is "Mahmud's Diary".

<sup>4</sup> See "Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas", 1st pocket-sized ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988) pp.22, 127.

will come about but it would seem reasonable to suppose that, long before the Bahá'í community is large enough or can exercise the authority to produce such a world-embracing change, events will compel the governments, either progressively or all in concert, to select an International Auxiliary Language to be taught as a second language in all schools and to be used in all international commerce. At a much later stage, possibly at the time of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth the Universal House of Justice may well decide to review the situation and either confirm the decision that the governments had made, or change the choice to a more suitable language.

Of course, conditions may produce a development very different from the one just outlined. One of the characteristics of Bahá'í Administration is its flexibility which enables it to deal with unforeseen developments and continually changing conditions. The one certain thing about the choice of an International Auxiliary Language is that the Universal House of Justice does not judge the present time propitious for it to take any action in this regard.

It is possible that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's remarks may refer to Arabic's unsuitability for the first stage, though it could be chosen in the second stage.

Further description of the second stage is found in the Eighth Leaf of the *Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih*:

We have formerly ordained that people should converse in two languages, yet efforts must be made to reduce them to one, likewise the scripts of the world that men's lives may not be dissipated and wasted in learning divers languages. Thus the whole earth would come to be regarded as one city and one land.  
(*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 68)

Regarding this passage a letter dated 16 March 1946 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer explains:

What Bahá'u'lláh is referring to in the Eighth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise is a far distant time, when the world is really one country, and one language would be a sensible possibility. It does not contradict His instructions as to the need immediately for an auxiliary language.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For some further details touching upon this subject see Stephen Lambden, *A Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh Commenting on that verse of the Most-Holy Book (Kitáb-i-Aqdas) about the need for an International Language and Script: A Provisional Translation and Commentary* in BSB<sup>2</sup> (2nd Ed) 4:3-4 (January 1991) pp.34-53.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

24 December 1991

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your letters of 20 July and 16 October 1991, posing questions about the use of inclusive masculine terms in the Sacred Writings and conveying audio-cassette tapes from Mr. -----, have been received. The delay in response, due to the pressure of work at this time when there are so many extraordinary events unfolding in the world, is regretted and you have our apology. We are to convey the following advice.

When considering the manner in which masculine nouns and pronouns are used to refer to God, it is important to bear in mind that when Bahá'u'lláh was revealing His Scriptures He had to use language and forms of expression which could be understood by those whom He was addressing. This is the case with every Prophet; He is compelled to use old forms through which He will raise humanity to a new level of understanding. In Arabic and Persian, as in English and most European languages, it has been customary to refer to God as "Lord" and "Father" rather than "Lady" and "Mother". While using the conventional wording Bahá'u'lláh approached the matter on two levels. In relation to God He devoted vast numbers of Tablets to conveying the truth that God is not only neither male nor female, but is far above all human understanding. If you study deeply the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh that portray both the transcendence and immanence of God you will find that the entire question of sex in this context falls into total insignificance.

On the human level, the Bahá'í teachings stress again and again the equality of men and women. They do not ignore the differences between the sexes, but repeatedly emphasize their equality. This is a universal concept, irrespective of the language in which it is expressed.

With regard to the use of masculine pronouns to refer to both men and women, the originals of the Sacred Writings clearly cannot be changed, and the House of Justice does not feel it appropriate to change Shoghi Effendi's translations. The Guardian did not even approve the changing of pronouns in Bahá'í prayers when they are read. Therefore, no deviation in translation from the actual meaning of the words, to accommodate the general trend of thought and behavior affecting a language, is permissible, unless, of course, the equivalent of the original word does not exist in a given language. The challenge, therefore, is to accept the use of pronouns in their generic sense, which will lead one to view the matter in terms of a spiritual response, rather than one of semantics.

As it is felt that Mr. -----'s questions should first be addressed to your National Spiritual Assembly, the tapes are being returned to you by separate airmail. However, we are enclosing information on homosexuality seen from the perspective of the Bahá'í Faith, which may assist you in coming to a clearer understanding of the principles concerning this subject.

The House of Justice has asked us to assure you of its loving prayers at the Sacred Threshold that you may be divinely assisted in your efforts to serve the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and His loved ones.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
For Department of the Secretariat

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat  
Dr. Moojan Momen  
Wixamtree, Sand Lane  
Northhill, Biggleswade  
Beds. SG18 9AD  
England

17 September 1991

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Dr. Vahíd Ra'fatí referred to the Universal House of Justice the final paragraph of the postscript to your letter of 7 September 1991 in which you ask about the designation as Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh and Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in volume V of "The Bahá'í World", of two sets of individuals. We are to convey the following comments.

This question was raised recently by an individual believer and a copy of the response dated 13 March 1991 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice is attached for your information.

It is obvious that Shoghi Effendi wanted to have in "The Bahá'í World" some information about outstanding believers of those two periods. Moreover, it cannot be said that he limited the use of the description "Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh" or "Disciple of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" strictly to those 19 named in each list. For example, George Latimer is not included in the list of "Disciples", but when he passed away, Shoghi Effendi referred to him as a "distinguished disciple of 'Abdu'l-Bahá".

Regarding the substitution of Consul Albert Schwarz for Dr. Arthur Brauns, it cannot be concluded that the Guardian "demoted" Arthur Brauns from being a Disciple of 'Abdu'l-Bahá when he changed the entry to that of Consul Schwarz.

It is hoped that this information will be of assistance to you.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

For Department of the Secretariat

## Enclosure

13 March 1991

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Counsellor Hartmut Grossmann referred your letter of 17 December 1990 to the Universal House of Justice, which has instructed us to send you the following reply.

The discrepancy in names and photographs between Dr. Arthur Brauns and Consul Albert Schwarz in the listing of the Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has been recognized for some time, but the solution has not yet been ascertained. The facts that are to hand are as follows.

In "The Bahá'í World", vol. III, the photograph on page 84 is Dr. Arthur Brauns, and this is identified correctly as him on page 85.

In "The Bahá'í World" vol. IV, the photograph on page 117 is still of Dr. Arthur Brauns, but the description given on page 118 is of Consul Albert Schwarz. An In Memoriam article for Consul Schwarz also appears in vol. IV, since he died during the period covered by that volume.

The Archives Office has in its files a photocopy of a page of the photographs, bearing Shoghi Effendi's handwriting, in which the photograph of Consul Schwarz appears as No. 8 (photograph No. 15 is also different).

One conclusion that could be drawn from these few facts is that Shoghi Effendi listed Arthur Brauns among the Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá while Consul Schwarz was still alive but, following the latter's death, changed the entry for vol. IV of "The Bahá'í World". For some unknown reason, however, the earlier photographs were reprinted instead of the new ones. But this is mere conjecture and cannot be confirmed until it is possible for the Archives Office to search thoroughly all the correspondence relating to the publication of vols. III and IV of "The Bahá'í World". The photograph in the Archives Building seems to have been copied from vol. IV of "The Bahá'í World" and contains, therefore, the same inconsistency.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

Dr. Moojan Momen..

17 October 1991

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice referred to the Research Department your letter of 25 September 1991 in which you ask for information concerning those believers who are known as Hands of the Cause.

It is hoped that the enclosed copy of a memorandum dated 30 September 1991 prepared in response will be of assistance to you as you endeavour to arrange for the preparation of articles for inclusion in the Short Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
For Department of the Secretariat

**Enclosure**

To: The Universal House of Justice  
From: The Research Department

Date: 30 September 1991

**HANDS OF THE CAUSE OF GOD**

The Research Department has considered the questions raised by Dr. Moojan Momen in his FAX letter of 25 September 1991 to the Universal House of Justice. Dr. Momen explains that, as General Editor of "A Short Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith", he plans to include articles on all of the Hands of the Cause. He notes that the list of the Hands given in "The Bahá'í World", vol. 14, pp. 445-457, does not include two persons who are identified as Hands of the Cause in the book, published in Iran, "Mu'assasih Ayádi Amru'lláh" by 'Abdu'l-'Alí 'Ala'í. According to this latter source, on p. 26, Mr. 'Ala'í states that Mirzá 'Abdu'lláh Mutlaq was addressed by Shoghi Effendi as a Hand of the Cause; and, on p. 810, he mentions that Áqá Siyyid Áqá Afnán was addressed by Bahá'u'lláh as a Hand of the Cause. Dr. Momen, therefore, seeks clarification as to whether the information contained in Mr. 'Ala'í's book is correct and whether the two persons referred to should be regarded as Hands of the Cause. We provide the following response.

The list in "The Bahá'í World", vol. 14, contains the names of those believers whose appointment as Hands of the Cause is clearly supported by the evidence that was available at the time of the compilation of the list. In the case of the Hands nominated by Shoghi Effendi, for example, their appointment was accompanied by an official and public announcement to the Bahá'í world.

With regard to whether other individuals might be identified as Hands of the Cause, it is interesting to note that Shoghi Effendi in a letter dated 19 April 1947, written on his behalf in response to a question about the references to the Hands of the Cause contained in "God Passes By", p. 195 and pp. 328-329, stated:

The Hands of the Cause, of Bahá'u'lláh's days, will be known to the friends by name when the history of the Cause in Persia and the Near East is written and available.

In the view of the Research Department, the conditions set out above by the beloved Guardian have not, as yet, been met. Additional research will be needed to identify and to confirm the name of any individual who may have been addressed by Bahá'u'lláh as a Hand of the Cause. Until such research is completed, it is preferable to use only those names listed in "The Bahá'í World".

As to the status of believers who might have been addressed by Shoghi Effendi as Hands of the Cause but whose names were not announced publicly to the friends, this, too, is a matter requiring additional research. For the present, the Universal House of Justice, in a memorandum dated 1 April 1979, has instructed that such names should not be included in the list of the Hands of the Cause.

**LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE REGARDING THE SAI BABA MOVEMENT (DATED 20 OCTOBER 1991)**

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

In reviewing...note was taken of your concern regarding the Sai Baba movement,... Although we have not yet received a request from you regarding clarification on this subject, we have been asked to provide the enclosed copies of entries from two standard reference books which furnish some information about Sai Baba. While the Sai Baba movement appears to have some of the ideals and goals already expressed by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and there would be no objection to individuals supporting social projects of the movement, assuming there are no limiting factors of which we are not aware, it would be inappropriate for Bahá'ís to expend all their energies on it, since the most important service Bahá'ís can render is to help develop the Bahá'í community, the pattern for the future world order. Bahá'ís of course cannot accept the claim of the founder of the movement, or his successor, that he is the equivalent of what we understand to be the Manifestation of God, even though he may have been inspired with the spirit of the age. It is clear in the Bahá'í Writings that such an august Figure is not to appear before the expiration of at least a full thousand years after the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. You may wish to counsel any believers who are contemplating an association or affiliation with this movement.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat.

**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN RELIGIONS,3rd Edition**

S.A.I. FOUNDATION  
14849 Lull St.  
Van Nuys, CA 91405

All religions have had their miracle workers, but Satya Sai Baba (b. 1926) is certainly the most outstanding in India today. The first miracle related to Sai Baba concerned a mysterious cobra found under his bed, proclaiming, say his followers, Sai Baba's role as Sheshiasa, Lord of Serpents. As a child he worked miracles for his classmates, producing objects out of nowhere, a favourite practice still continued.

In 1940, he fell into a coma which lasted for two months. Upon awakening suddenly, he announced, "I am Sai Baba of Shirdi." Sai Baba of Shirdi (1856?-1918) was an Indian holy man who had left behind a large following who still venerated him and observed his teachings. Satya

Sai Baba, by his statement, claimed to be his reincarnation. Followers assert his ability to recall conversations between individuals who were disciples of the original Sai Baba

The thrust of the Sai Baba movement is veneration of Sai Baba and recounting the miracle stories about him. Teachings are mainline Hinduism with emphasis on four aspects-Dharma Sthapana (establishing the faith on a firm foundation), Vidwatposhana (fostering scholarship), Vedasamrakshana (preservation of the Vedas) and Bhaktirakshana (protection of the devotees from secularism and materialism).

The Indian headquarters in Prasanthi Nilayam (Home of the Supreme Peace) are the focus of the Sai Baba movement. Here each Thursday devotees gather for a darshan or vision of Sai Baba. Special darshans are held during the Dasara holidays in October and his birthday celebration in November.

Interest in Sai Baba in America began with a set of lectures given in 1967 at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Movies of Prasanthi Nilayam were shown by Indra Devi, who had recently visited Sai Baba. The movement spread during the 1970s and groups have formed across the United States. Membership: Not reported.

#### □ COMMENTS OF THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE ON AUTHENTICITY OF SOME WELL-KNOWN PRAYERS AND 'TABLETS'<sup>6</sup>

From time to time the National Spiritual Assembly receives letters from Bahá'ís or local Spiritual Assemblies about the authenticity of certain prayers or "tablets" that are circulated in typed form. The Research Department of the Universal House of Justice is asked to check these writings for authenticity. The following works that commonly circulate in the Bahá'í community are not authentic:

- "Fourth Dimensional Consciousness" and other instructions to Marie Watson. This so-called tablet from 'Abdu'l Bahá is erroneous; Shoghi Effendi has stated that it is not a work by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- "O God! Give me knowledge, faith and love...": This prayer was written by Ibrahim Kheiralla, a Covenant-breaker; he attributed it, however, to Bahá'u'lláh.
- "Hold Thou my right arm, O God! and dwell continually with me. Guide me to the fountain of Thy knowledge and encircle me with Thy glory...." Another prayer written by Ibrahim Kheiralla and attributed by him to Bahá'u'lláh.

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<sup>6</sup> Reprinted from *American Bahá'í*, September 27, 1992.



- *The Significance of the Greatest Name*, beginning "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! The cry that renovates the soul...on that cry are all the cries of the Universe sounded." The Research Department has not been able to find, either in English or Persian, such statements attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

- *The Marriage Tablet*, beginning "The bond that unite hearts most perfectly is loyalty..." This is not a tablet at all, but is an unauthenticated record by Ahmad Sohrab of a talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The friends may use it, but it should be made clear that this is not Bahá'í scripture.

- "There is a power in this Cause, a mysterious power, far, far beyond the ken of men and angels. ..." This passage is from Ahmad Sohrab's diary and should be considered as interesting material, but not as scripture.

- "O Lord! Open Thou the door, provide the means..." This is a free translation of part of a prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the friends in Tehran, incomplete and unfortunately, even erroneous.

- "O God! Make me a teacher in Thy Cause..." This prayer cannot be confirmed as authentic as no original has been found.

- "O our God! We beg of Thee...that Thou wilt guide us always...and that we may ever be strong and fully prepared to render instant, exact and complete obedience." This prayer cannot be confirmed as authentic as no original has been found.

- "O God! For the sake of Thy love I will leave everything and wander in the deserts and over the mountains..." This prayer cannot be confirmed as authentic as no original has been found.

- "My strength is the assistance of the Blessed Perfection...." from the pilgrim's notes of Julia Grundy, *Ten Days in the Light of 'Akká*, p.63.

- "Fill Thou, O God, our home with harmony and happiness, with laughter and delight..." Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but in fact it is three short supplications that appear on pages 147 and 148 of *The Mission of Bahá'u'lláh* by Hand of the Cause of God George Townshend.

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## □ NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS

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### RESEARCH OFFICE, BAHÁ'Í NATIONAL CENTER [USA], ANNUAL REPORT, RIDVAN 1993 (April, 1993, Wilmette, Ill).

#### Research Office Annual Report, 1992-93

The Research Office was established by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States in May 1990 and is now completing its third year of existence. This, its third annual report, covers the period April 21, 1992 through April 20, 1993.

#### I. Correspondence and Telephone Inquiries.

The written communications of the Research Office nearly doubled in 1992-93 over 1991-92, and more than doubled compared to the 700 letters and memos the office produced in 1990-91. The increased productivity is probably attributable to several factors: 1) much greater automation of the letter writing process, where much of the important bureaucratic terminology and all transliteration has been assigned macros and where macros allow creation of the basic letter form and printing of envelopes instantly; 2) better automation of backing up of data and spell checking; 3) greater experience writing letters, which means they can be composed much faster. The incoming correspondence of the Office did not increase as dramatically as the outgoing correspondence.

Area of Office Responsibility:	1991-92	1992-93
Literature Review:	228	239
Special Materials Reviewing Committee:	91	217
Models of Unity Project: <i>World Order</i> magazine:	52	80
Bahá'í encyclopedia project:	20	3
Other Research Office:	26	7
Association for Bahá'í Studies:	—	107
Other:	448	951
<b>GRAND TOTAL :</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>1604</b>

The numbers above represent files on the hard disk; occasionally a file was sent to more than one person, and very rarely a file was not saved. In aggregate the 1992-93 outgoing correspondence occupies about 6.5 megabytes.

Telephone inquiries have also definitely increased, although no count of them is kept. The acquisition of an answering machine for the Research Office greatly improved the efficiency of response to calls and allowed the Director to respond to calls every day, even when he is not in the Office. Currently the number of telephone calls ranges from 2 to 14 per day and usually average about 6 calls; assuming 250 business days per year, the Office thus processes about 1500 telephone calls annually.

The research functions of the Research Office are many. Central are projects assigned to the Office by the National Spiritual Assembly. Developing and strengthening contacts with academics, especially Bahá'í academics, is a second important part of its work; this aspect is carried out through academic teaching and publishing, attendance at academic conferences, correspondence, and assisting Bahá'í academic and scholarly institutions.

## **A. Research Projects Assigned by the National Spiritual Assembly.**

### *Models of Unity*

In March 1992 -- the beginning of this reporting period -- the final draft of the Chicago Models of Unity report was completed and printed. The report has subsequently sold about 15,000 copies and has been used widely across the country to proclaim the Bahá'í perspective on racial, ethnic, and religious unity. A groundswell of interest in repeating the research has led to twenty-six Bahá'í communities around the country requesting the Research Office for information on how to conduct their own Models of Unity studies. Three studies -- in San Leandro, California; Portland, Oregon; and Greensboro, North Carolina -- are in process, and others are contemplated. The Director of Research gave a Models of Unity training class in Portland and a public presentation on the Models of Unity research in San Leandro; the latter meeting was attended by the mayor, a member of the Board of Education, and a member of the City Council. A national Models of Unity conference is being planned for Louhelen Bahá'í School this summer 80 that Bahá'í communities interested in the research program can meet to exchange ideas and brainstorm.

With the completion of the Chicago phase of research a new phase, based in Atlanta, was begun in September 1992. The Director of Research went to Atlanta to train volunteers in interviewing techniques. A survey was designed and a cover letter was drafted to send to those to be interviewed. A computer system to survey the public electronically at malls and other public places about models of unity was field tested and prepared for use in Atlanta. But commencement of the Atlanta phase has been delayed by the need to hire someone in Atlanta to run the day-to-day operations of the Models of Unity research, and by the need to plan the research far more thoroughly than the Chicago project because of our application for a research grant to fund the work. It is anticipated that 1993-94 will see the Atlanta project begin, and probably see its successful conclusion.

### *Drug Abuse Statement*

In 1992-93 it proved very difficult for the Task Force assigned the responsibility to write a Bahá'í statement on the epidemic of drug abuse to meet and develop the outline it created in December 1991. One meeting of two members was held in October, however, the draft that one had composed was extensively discussed and edited, and some progress on producing a new draft was made.

## **B. Academic Work.**

A major and growing function of the Research Office has been to develop contacts for the Bahá'í Faith in academia, especially in the fields of Religious Studies and Middle East Studies, but to a lesser extent in History, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences as well. This responsibility has been met through several efforts: 1) contacting and corresponding with scholars who are interested in doing research or writing on the Bahá'í Faith; 2) assisting college professors who are including information on the Faith in their courses; 3) assisting students, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í, on their research on the Faith and in their contacts with college professors.

Over the year three non-Bahá'í professors have sent manuscripts on the Bahá'í Faith to the Research Office for comment, and the suggested revisions apparently were accepted. Three academics have requested articles on the Faith and the Research Office has supplied them with manuscripts, two of which went through an editing process.

An important tool for all efforts to assist academia in its study of the Bahá'í Faith has been *A Curriculum Guide on the Bahá'í Faith*, a 100-page document prepared by the Office which includes a 50-page annotated topical bibliography and several outlines of courses on the Bahá'í Faith. Copies of the manuscript have been sent to about fifty academics and students in response to their questions. The Guide has undergone several revisions and appears to be ready for publication.

#### *Courses on the Bahá'í Faith*

A major goal of the Research Office has been to establish courses on the Bahá'í Faith, especially in the Chicago area. In addition to university courses, non-credit courses on aspects of the Faith have also been a priority.

So far it has proved easier to establish non-credit courses. The Research Office gives a course "Religion in Bahá'í and Comparative Perspective" that is held at the House of Worship Thursday nights. In the academic year 1991-92 a cycle of thirty three 90-minute-college-level classes on the world's religions was completed; attendance ranged from eight to almost thirty and averaged in the high teens. A new eighteen-month cycle of classes has started; the lecture notes are being prepared for eventual publication as a textbook on world religion from a Bahá'í perspective. An abbreviated version of the course is now being given in South Bend, Indiana, monthly. A cycle of twelve 90-minute classes on the writings of Bahá'u'lláh is ongoing at Northwestern University for its Bahá'í club and four 90-minute classes on aspects of Bahá'í Studies are ongoing for the University of Chicago Bahá'í Club. A monthly Bahá'í research and scholarship seminar is contemplated for the future. All these courses are seen as preparatory for future courses that will be more formal and can be taken for college credit.

Two opportunities for formal classes have been pursued this year. In late March 1992 the Research Office, after consultation with the Northwestern University Bahá'í Club, submitted a proposal for a course on the Faith to the Department of the History and Literature of Religion at Northwestern. The Bahá'í Club has followed up by meeting with the chairman of the department. The proposal has not yet been rejected or accepted. In March 1993 an informal discussion with the chairman of the Religious Studies Department at DePaul University led to the suggestion that the Research Director teach a course on the Faith at that university.

#### *Teaching*

When the Research Office was established it was agreed that its status would be enhanced if the Director was also a part-time instructor. As a result the Director obtained a part-time teaching position at DePaul University's Religious Studies Department. Over the year he has taught three sections of "Comparative Religious Worlds," the department's introductory course on religion, and in April 1993 began to teach "Jesus and Christian Origins." The Director also participates in faculty programs at DePaul when possible.

#### *Publishing*

Publishing is an important aspect of the life of any scholar, and is an important responsibility of the Director, both to develop his own scholarly talents and to enhance the status of the Research Office. Over the course of the year the following scholarly papers have been submitted or published:

"Jesus Christ in the Bahá'í Writings," *Bahá'í Studies Review*, 21 (1992): 33-41.

Review of Marzieh Gail's *Summon Up Remembrance, in Iranian Studies*, 22.4 (1989): 118-20.

"*The Purpose of Physical Reality*," review of John Hatcher's book by the same title, published in French translation in the *Encyclopédie Universelle Philosophique*. ---

"The Role of Women in the American Bahá'í Community, 1900-1912," in *World Order*, forthcoming.

"The Bahá'í Faith in the 1990s, a 15-page article to be published in Timothy Miller, ed., untitled book on the current status of various new religious movements in the United States.

"The Bahá'í Faith," article composed for a forthcoming encyclopedia on religion in the United States, at the request of an editor.

"The Bahá'í Faith," article on the Faith composed for the second edition of Edwin Gaustad's *Atlas of Religion in the United States*. The editor of the book will use the article and other information to compose the Bahá'í entry.

In addition to scholarly articles, the Research Office composed six articles on the Holy Year for *The American Bahá'í*, the national Bahá'í monthly newspaper, during 1992-93 and wrote a two-page "backgrounder" on the Bahá'í perspective on life after death for the Bahá'í World Congress Media Task Force.

#### *Attending Scholarly Conferences*

The Director attended the following scholarly conferences in 1992-93:

*American Academy of Religion*, Nov. 20-23, 1992 in San Francisco. There he gave a paper on the Faith in the New Religious Movements section and gave another paper at the Bahá'í Studies Colloquy. The Colloquy was attended by a half dozen scholars and included three presentations on the Faith.

*Middle East Studies Association*, late October 1992, Portland, OR. Attended the Persia Religiosa Society meeting, an informal gathering of Bahá'ís and their friends, where three excellent papers related to the Faith were delivered.

*Newcastle Conference*, July 1992: Sponsored by the Religious Studies Seminar of the Association for Bahá'í Studies for English-speaking Europe, the three-day conference had about ten presentations on the Faith and was attended by about thirty. The Director gave a presentation on "American Bahá'í History, 1921 to the present."

No annual meeting of the Association for Bahá'í Studies was held during 1992-93 because of the World Congress in New York, Nov. 20-23, 1992. However, the Director attended two scholarly gatherings at the World Congress: a dinner for Bahá'í scholars; and a meeting of members of the ABS affiliate organizations worldwide.

#### *Contacts with Scholars*

One value of attending academic conferences is the opportunity to contact scholars who need information on the Bahá'í Faith, or might need it in the future. Other contacts result from phone calls or letters to the Research Office. In 1992-93 several salient contacts stand out: two undergraduates who called and visited the office for assistance on their senior theses about the Faith; an entomologist who asked for assistance with his article about Harrison Dyar, a heterodox early Bahá'í who was also one of the leading world authorities on mosquitoes; Dr. Margit Warburg, a Danish scholar who has written extensively about the Faith; and Dr. David B. Barrett, editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* and other important sources of statistics on the sizes of various international religious groups.

### *Association for Bahá'í Studies*

The Director of the Research Office is also a member of the International Committee of the Association for Bahá'í Studies, a body which met twice in 1992-93. In September he was elected recording secretary. He also is a member of the Executive Committee of the ABS (formerly called the Secretariat), a body that met in person at least three times over the year and by telephone at least four times. In September the Director was also asked to serve on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, the Association's quarterly scholarly publication. As a result of these responsibilities he is in touch by telephone with Christine Zerbinis at the Centre for Bahá'í Studies in Ottawa several times per week.

The Research Office has been called on to pursue goals of the Association for Bahá'í Studies. In August the Director composed a draft Handbook for ABS regional committees, defining their purposes and tasks and the policies that govern their functioning. At different times the Director also met with representatives of the Regional Committees of upstate New York, New England, Texas, Colorado, northern California, and Oregon in an attempt to improve their functioning. He also speaks regularly to the secretary of the Agriculture Seminar of the ABS to assist that body with its work. The Director is a member of the executive committee of the Religious Studies Seminar of the ABS as well.

### *World Order Magazine*

The Director is also a member of the Editorial Board of *World Order* magazine. During the year the editorial board met once. The Director edited one article for publication and composed an article for *World Order*. He examined about sixteen articles submitted to the magazine last year.

### *The Bahá'í Encyclopedia*

The Director was called on to write a series of articles for the *The Bahá'í Encyclopedia* in 1992-93 he completed eight of them, and revised several. He also reviewed six articles for the encyclopedia on request of their authors.

### *Haj Mehdi Arjmand Trust*

In late November the Director was asked to collaborate with the Director of Landegg Academy, Dr. Iraj Ayman, and with Dr. Moojan Momen in setting up three programs for the Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Trust. This fund will sponsor the following: a program to grant up to \$3000 per year to Bahá'í scholars to support their research and publication of the results; an annual conference at Landegg on the Bahá'í approach to scripture; and an annual nineday Bahá'í Studies seminar for Bahá'í college students.

### *In Memoriam Articles for The Bahá'í World*

The Department of Publishing of the Bahá'í World Centre periodically asks the National Spiritual Assembly to find persons to write *In Memoriam* articles for *The Bahá'í World*. Over the last year five articles have been completed; the list of articles still outstanding stands at four. Most should be finished in the next few months, in time for the publication of the next volume.

### III. Prospect for the Future.

The year 1993-94 is likely to see a considerable increase in the number of courses on aspects of the Faith taught or sponsored by the Research Office. Some of the courses may be taught for college credit; some may be part of the contemplated systematic curriculum on the Bahá'í Faith being developed by the Association for Bahá'í Studies. With the anticipated establishment of a statistics function as a result of volunteered services of a professional statistician, the Research Office will greatly increase its services to the National Spiritual Assembly and will meet a long-felt need. The hiring of part-time assistance on a contract basis promises to increase the office's human resources and output. The Bahá'í National Center's library system will probably undergo important expansion and reorganization if the Research Office acquires larger quarters in a few months. Thus the Research Office currently appears poised for major development of its capabilities over the next year.

#### Supplement: Reviewing.

The Research Office supervises the literature review function of the National Spiritual Assembly and carries out much of the correspondence for the Special Materials Reviewing Committee. These two reviewing tasks are separate.

#### *Literature Review Office*

From 1 May 1992 through 12 March 1993, 54 items completed review. This represents a large decrease from the 75 items that completed review in 1991-92; it is about the same as the 61 items that completed review in 1990-91. The number of items in the review "pipeline" is eleven, two more than last year and seven more than the year before; this delay in processing manuscripts reflects the increasing workload of the Research Office. Outgoing correspondence from the Literature Review Office totaled approximately 239 letters and memos, a slight increase compared with last year's 228. The ratings given to the manuscripts were as follows:

Pass:	43	(79%)
Resubmit Manuscript:	7	(13%)
Reject:	2	(4%)
Changes Required:	2	(4%)

In 1991-92 68% of the manuscripts received a "pass," 19% received "changes required," 1% received "reject," 4% received "resubmit manuscript," and 4% received other ratings. The change in the distribution of the ratings probably reflects a tendency to move required changes into the "optional changes" category; manuscripts with optional changes receive either a "pass" rating if the suggestions are not too numerous, or a "resubmit" rating if they are substantial.

The types of manuscripts received in 1992-93 were as follows:

Essays and booklets:	16
Books:	9
Bulletins & Newsletters	11
Pamphlets:	1
Plays:	2

Also received were 1 compilation, 2 teaching items, 1 computer program, 4 poems, and 4 other items. In contrast, in 1991-92 books, pamphlets, newsletters and "miscellaneous" (mostly essays and booklets) were all about equally common.

The length of time items remain in the reviewing queue remained about the same as last year. In 1992-93 books required 64 days to review on average, the same as last year; newsletters and bulletins averaged 7.5 days, up from an average of 2 days last year but the same as the 8-day average of 1990-91; other items required an average of 27.5 days, whereas the previous year they averaged 24 days. Several reviewers are now sufficiently well trained that the review coordinator does not need to read the manuscripts they have examined in detail. An assistant has been hired who will take on an increasing fraction of the literature review work during 1993-94.

#### *Special Materials Reviewing Committee*

Records of the Special Materials Reviewing Committee are not as detailed as those of the Literature Review Office. Approximately 217 letters and memos were written for the committee over the course of the year by the Director of the Research Office; several dozen additional letters were written by members of the committee. Approximately 100 items were submitted to review. The most popular items were cassette tapes, cards, and posters. No statistics on the percentage of items that passed review have been kept. In September a set of guidelines for authors, composers, and producers of special materials was drafted; it is in the process of being field tested and modified.

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#### □ RELIGIOUS STUDIES SEMINAR, ASSOCIATION FOR BAHÁ'Í STUDIES

The Religious Studies Seminar of the Association for Bahá'í Studies met on Friday morning, June 18, 1993, at the Sheraton Le Centre Hotel in Montreal, site of the 17th annual meeting of the ABS. No papers were delivered, but instead there was general discussion of the purposes of the Religious Studies Seminar and the various research projects that impact on religious studies. The purposes of the Seminar were given as follows:

1. To explore the nature and meaning of the Bahá'í scriptures.
2. To explore Bahá'í history.
3. To explore the development of the Bahá'í community, both sociologically and by other means.
4. To study the lives of the Central Figures and Shoghi Effendi, and to develop Bahá'í biography.
5. To explore Bahá'í theology, philosophy, and ethics.
6. To educate the Bahá'í community in the techniques and approaches of the scholarly community; to apply these techniques to the study of the Faith; to educate the scholarly community in the Bahá'í Faith; and through study of the Faith to assist in the development of various scholarly disciplines.

The Seminar thus embraces all or part of the following fields: religious studies, history, biography, literature, theology, philosophy, ethics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology.

The following efforts were mentioned and discussed during the program:



1. The Haji Mehdi Arjmand Trust. This organization is dedicated to the memory of Haji Mehdi Arjmand, an early Persian Bahá'í of Jewish background who is known for his brilliant knowledge of the Bible and Qur'án and his ability to defend the proofs of the Bahá'í revelation using those two books. Descendants of Haj Mehdi Arjmand have agreed to fund the Trust, which has three purposes: (1) to sponsor annual international conferences on scripture from a Bahá'í perspective; (2) to provide financial assistance for research on the Bahá'í Faith, particularly on Bahá'í scripture or the Bahá'í perspective on other scriptures; (3) to hold an annual Bahá'í Studies seminar for Bahá'í graduate students, so as to assist them to study the Bahá'í Faith via their chosen fields of expertise. The Trust is about to issue its first research grants in the next few weeks. Its first scripture conference will probably be held in Newcastle, England, in December 1993; the second conference is tentatively planned for Wilmette in late March 1994.

2. Bahá'í Studies is represented at the American Academy of Religion (AAR), a professional association of some 8000 professors and students of Religious Studies and Bible Studies. There will be a Bahá'í program at this year's meeting, to be held in Washington, D.C. on 20 November 1993. Bahá'í scholars also attend the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) annual meetings and in early November 1993, at the MESA annual meeting in North Carolina, there will be a Bahá'í Studies program.

3. The Bahá'í encyclopedia is making excellent progress and will probably appear in two volumes, starting in about a year.

4. Most published English-language Bahá'í scriptural texts now exist in electronic form and are being proofread for eventual release to the public. Many other works, such as the Dawn-breakers, the Balyuzi books, the Taherzadeh books, and others are being prepared in electronic form as well.

5. The course on the Bahá'í Faith at the University of Toronto was a great success and will be repeated every other year. It is a regular, full-credit course. A course on the Faith may occur at DePaul University in Chicago in about a year and a half.

6. Electronic courses on the Bahá'í Faith may soon start on the United States Bahá'í National Center Bulletin Board System (BNCBBS). A course on the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is contemplated to start the program, followed by other courses. Electronic courses have an enormous potential educating the Bahá'í community.

7. The Association for Bahá'í Studies has established a goal of creating an intense summer course on the Faith, and some work to plan the course has begun. Weekly classes on world religion already exist at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette and this fall a course on the Faith will be added.

8. The United States Bahá'í Archives continues to make new collections available to researchers and is anxious to assist Bahá'ís interested in organizing their local archives and in doing historical research.

In subsequent discussion it was noted that the Religious Studies Seminar might want to put more emphasis on mysticism, as no one is making a systematic exploration of that aspect of the Faith. It was also noted that new textbooks on the Faith were needed, particularly a text that contains readings about the Faith, for such a text is essential in college courses on the Faith.

The need to strengthen the Seminar's organization was also discussed briefly.

## MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS AND NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: REVIEWS AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MISCELLANY <sup>1</sup>

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### □ ASIAN RELIGIONS: HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, ZOROASTRIAN...

Keown, Damien, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* London: Macmillan, 1992, 269pp. ISBN 0-333-55263-6 £40.50

It is argued throughout this volume that Buddhist ethics (*sīla*) is fundamental to the spiritual Path.

Bucknell, R.S. and Stuart-Fox, M., *The Twilight Language - Explorations in Buddhist Meditation and Symbolism* Richmond UK: Curzon Press Ltd., 1993, xiii + 233pp. ISBN 0 7007 0234 2 Pbk. £12.99.

This is an interesting attempt at an hermeneutical linkage between two significant strategies within Buddhism – meditation discourse and the seemingly second-order rational analysis of the nature and role of meditation. [RP]

Coleman, Graham, *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture* London: Rider, 1993, 433pp. ISBN 0 7126 5663 4 Hbk £16.99

A comprehensive sourcebook comprising i) biographies of lamas, saints and scholars ii) a country by country directory and iii) a valuable glossary of major Buddhist, Tibetan and sanskrit Terms. [RP]

### □ SEMITIC/JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN-ISLAMIC AND RELATED RELIGIONS

#### JUDAISM

Goodenough, E. R., *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, ed., with a foreword by Jacob Neusner [Bollingen Series], 1992, 375pp. ISBN 0691019223 Pbk £11.95.

An extremely useful one-volume abridgement of the 13 volume classic, magnum opus of Erwin R. Goodenough.

Joyce, James, R. *The Spurious Texts of Philo of Alexandria*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991. xiii. 252 pp.

The transmission of the writings of the great Jewish philosopher and exegete, Philo of Alexandria (d. c.50 CE?) is highly complex. This volume attempts to distinguish between the genuine and the spurious. Sixty one spurious Philonic texts are identified.

Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai, Judaism from a feminist perspective*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993. £12.95 Pbk. ISBN 0 06 06684 6..

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated all reviews are by the editor (Stephen Lambden = SL) or by Robert Parry (= RP).

## □ CHRISTIANITY

Charles Hill. *Regnum Caelorum*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992 236pp. ISBN 0-19-826738-X £27.50.  
A study of early Christian millenarianism.

Robeck, C.M., *Prophecy in Carthage. Perpetua, Tertullian and Cyprian*. 1993; 329 pp.

A historical study of early Christian prophecy. Pbk. £16.95.

Attridge., H.W., & Hata., G.(Eds.), *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism*. (Studia Post Biblica, 42) 1993; 802pp. Hb. £70.00.

Essays relating to Eusebius of Caesarea's (c.265-339) famous account of the early church.

Rorem, P., *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to the Influence*. 1993; 288 pp. £32.50.

The writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500 AD) present a synthesis of Christian doctrines and Neoplatonic thought. They are very important texts in the history of Christian mysticism.

Aquinas, St. - Elders, L.J., *The Metaphysics of Being of St. Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective*. (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 34). 1993; 328 pp. Hbk £68.00.

Shows Aquinas' innovations in determining both the subject and method of metaphysics especially as relates to his Aristotle commentaries. The extensive literature of Thomas interpretation of the past 50 years is introduced.

Aquinas, St.- Davies, B., *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; 416pp. ISBN 0198267533, Pbk £14.95.

Aquinas, St. - Elders, L.J., *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*. (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 26). 1990; ix + 332 pp. Paper £63.00

Aquinas, St. - Kreeft, P.J., *A Summa of the Summa. The Essential Philosophical Passages of Summa Theologica*. 1993; 540 pp. HBk £34.50 / Pbk. £21.50

Aquinas, St. - Kretzmann, N. & Stump, E., (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas. (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy)*. 1993; c.320 pp.

Ten leading scholars introduce all the important aspects of Aquinas' thought, ranging from its historical background and dependence on Greek, Islamic and Jewish philosophy and theology, through the metaphysics, epistemology and ethics, to the philosophical approach to Biblical commentary. Bound £40.00 / Paper £12.95.

Ninian Smart & Steven Konstantine, *Christian Systematic Theology in a World Context*. London: Marshall Pickering, 1991. 9 + 466,pp. ISBN 0 551 02055 5, (Pbk) £14.99.

The authors make it clear that they write from a combined Anglican and Orthodox background. The text benefits from Ninian Smart's extensive knowledge of world religions in dialogue, as well as his keen philosophical awareness. Both writers affirm experience of other cultures and religions. Basically their discussion aims at correcting a cultural tribalism which has infected Christian Systematic Theology. Through the development of certain categories (see Part II p. 149ff.) they hope to open up Theology to other religious traditions, whilst retaining what is valuable and enduring in Christianity. Part I, 'Setting the Scene' (p. 17ff.) ranges over themes familiar to readers of Smart's earlier ideas on Religious Studies and Phenomenology. Part II, 'The Vision of Love,' attempts to deepen familiar Christian concepts such as the Trinity, Divine creativity and embodiment, human spirit and love. It is, however, their particular construal of the Trinity as Love that enables Christian Theology to open up to other religious experiences. This is a wide ranging, non-polemical book. Its conclusions (or rather suggestions) are pluralistic. Bahā'ī scholars will find it a good example of the kind of view which suggests that the way forward for religious dialogue, involves the acceptance of some kind of pluralism. The authors do not subscribe to the notion of a unifying world religion -- such as the Bahā'ī Faith. The authors say that they expect responses to their views. Surely there are Bahā'īs involved in Theology (Bahā'ī and non-Bahā'ī) who could take up Smart and Konstantine's perspectives as a point of departure for fruitful dialogue? [RP].

#### □ ISLAMIC STUDIES

Hirtenstein, Stephen and Michael Tieman (eds.). *Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi, A Commemorative Volume* Shaftesbury, Dorset · Rockport, Massachusetts Brisbane, Queensland: Element Books for the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, 1993 xii+379 pp. ISBN 1-85230-349-2 Hardback (£40) ISBN 1-85230-395-6 Paperback.

A rich compendium of material published in commemoration of the 750th anniversary of the life and work of Muhyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (1165-1240) "one of the world's mystical giants". It contains an introduction by Stephen Hirtenstein and is divided into two parts:

#### Part I, Translations,

Paul B. Fenton and Maurice Gloton, 'The Book of the Description of the Encompassing Circles (*Al-Inshā'ad-Dawā'ir*)' (p.12f); Roger Boase and Farid Sahnoun, 'Excerpts from the Epistle on the Spirit of Holiness (*Risālah Rūh al-Quds*)' (p.44f); James Winston Morris, 'How to Study the *Futūhat*: Ibn 'Arabi's Own Advice' (p.73f); William C. Chittick, 'Two Chapters from the *Futūhat al-Makkiyya*' (p.90); Michael Sells, 'Towards a Poetic Translation of the *Fusūs al-Hikam*' (p.124f)

#### Part II, Studies,

Avraham Abadi, 'The Determinism Implicit to Change' (p.142f); Claude Addas, 'Abu Madyan and Ibn 'Arabi' (p.163); Ralph Austin, 'Ibn al-'Arabi - Poet of Divine Realities' (p.181f); Michel Chodkiewicz, 'The Esoteric Foundations of Political Legitimacy in Ibn 'Arabi' (p.190f); Mahmoud Al-Ghorab, 'Muhyiddin Ibn al-'Arabi Amidst Religions (*adyān*) and Schools of Thought' (*madhāhib*) (p.200f); Denis Gril, '*Adab* and Revelation or One of the Foundations of the Hermeneutics of Ibn 'Arabi' (p.228f); Souad Hakim, 'Knowledge of God in Ibn 'Arabi' (p.264f); Dom Sylvester Houédard, 'Ibn 'Arabi's Contribution to the Wider Ecumenism' (p.291f); Alexander Knysh, 'Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition' (p.307f); Martin Notcutt, 'Ibn 'Arabi in Print' (p.328f); Frithiof Rundgren, 'The Preface of the *Futūhat al-Makkiyyah*' (p.340); Mustafa Tahrali, 'The Polarity of Expression in the *Fusūs al-Hikam*' (p.351f); Peter Lamborn Wilson, 'Quantum, Chaos, and the Oneness of Being: Meditations on the *Kitāb al-Alef*' (p.360f)

Dominique Urvoy, (trans. by O. Stewart), *Ibn Rushd (Averroes)*. London & New York: Routledge, 1991; 156 pp. Pbk. £10.99. ISBN 0-415-05567-9.

The book registers the main elements of Ibn Rushd's (1126-1198 CE) work against the historical and cultural background of Muslim Spain. He had a profound influence on western scholasticism.

#### □ SHĪ'Ī ISLĀM & IRANICA

'Alī Akbar Dehkhoda, *Loghat-Nama, [The Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Persian Language]* Available from Mazda Publishers (Costa Mesa), 1993. 20 Vols., ordered before January 1st. 1994, \$895<sup>2</sup>

The following note on the historical background of this dictionary has been issued by Mazda Publishers,

"The late scholar Ali Akbar Dehkhoda began compiling the *Loghat-Nama* [The Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Dehkhoda] during World War 1. By the end of 1980, the last volume of this monumental work was published. The nearly 70 years of continuous effort to compile the work, and nearly 45 years to publish it, led to a multiplicity of problems with the first edition. Although these problems are small when compared to the original monumental task of bringing the work to print, the importance of the work and the place it occupies in the study of Persian language, literature and culture make it necessary to publish a second edition that eliminates these shortcomings. Some of the shortcomings included the following:

1- The primary problem was the old fashioned method of hand typesetting. This method requires the typesetter, or compositor, to pick the individual pieces of type one by one and assemble them into words, sentences and paragraphs. The pieces of type were normally made of lead or some other type of metal, which could chip or break during the printing process, leaving portions of the printed word missing. More importantly, as it became necessary to change and edit words or sentences after the type was set, it was necessary to reset the entire line, which would have introduced new typographical errors without the editors' knowledge. There could be no real assurance that the final product was free of errors.

2- The mere size of the old edition, 50 volumes in all, and the time it took to complete them, introduced errors without the editors' knowledge that were, on occasion, unintentionally humorous. For example, editors working under pressure of deadlines would hand down additional research instructions to less experienced editors. Although the latter would take extra care to carry out editorial changes, some instructions were

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<sup>2</sup> A limited quantity special introductory offer on the 20 Vols of the *Loghat-Nama* is currently available at \$895 + Shipping & Handling Charges (\$25-\$55). Method of payment for individual orders: all individual orders must be prepaid by either personal check (subject to collection) or money order. Payment must be made in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank only including Canadian customers. Visa or Mastercard is accepted in any currency. Send Orders To: Mazda Publishers P.O. Box 2603, Costa Mesa, CA 92626 U.S.A. Tel:(714)751-5252; Fax: (714)751-4805.

mistaken as though they were the final form of an entry. In one instance, the late Dehkhoda had asked, "Please look up the meaning of this phrase in another book." The editor, thinking that this was the manner in which the entry should have been listed, had instructed the typesetter to repeat Dehkhoda's request in front of the entry! There are other such examples in the old edition. Moreover, in some instances, the alphabetical ordering of the entries was not followed precisely. Although there are many topics in the first edition, it can be difficult to find them readily.

3- The old edition was published in fascicle format and sold to subscribers. This method posed logistic difficulties that are not unique to the *Loghat-Nama*. As is usually the case, given the time it took to complete the work, some subscribers would lose or destroy the fascicles by accident. There was also the possibility that the subscriber would forget to order, or if a vendor went out of business, it would leave the customer without an adequate number of fascicles. During the binding process of these fascicles, the binder may inadvertently mix up the fascicles' alphabetical order, making it difficult to find topics in their proper places.

4- The length of time it took to publish the work, 45 years, also led to the use of various qualities of paper in the printing process. Not all 50 volumes have the same grade of paper. Often, the printer used paper stock that was readily available given the conditions of the time.

5- Finally, the sheer size of the first edition, 50 volumes, made it difficult to shelve, transport or use.

#### **The New Edition:**

- 1- The entire work has been thoroughly edited and copy edited by a team of experts.
- 2- The work has been typeset using the latest available Persian language typesetting machine. Each sentence has been checked and double checked for accuracy.
- 3- Instead of being offered in individual fascicles, the work is now completely bound.
- 4- Alphabetical order is carefully observed.
- 5- The best possible paper stock for such works is used in the new edition. Known as "bible paper," this is a very thin, but opaque stock that allows the ink to adhere to the surface without seeping through. Each volume holds approximately 1,500 pages of text, but does not exceed 3.5 centimeters in thickness and 1.5 kilograms in weight. As a result, the new edition is now available in 20 volumes."

#### **□ RELIGIOUS STUDIES MISCELLANY & NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS**

Riesebrodt, M., Pious Passion. *The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran. (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society, 6)*. 1993; 263 pp. 2 charts, 5 tables. Bound £30.00.

Attfield, Robin & Barry Wilkins (eds.). *International Justice and the Third World*. London: Routledge, 1992 ix+207 HB £35 (0-415-06924-6) Pbk 10.99 ISBN 0-415-06925-4.

A collection of essays on Global Justice and the importance of development by diverse contemporary philosophers.

Braybrooke, Marcus (ed.), *Stepping Stones to a Global Ethic*. London: SCM., 1992, 151pp. Pbk £9.95 ISBN 0 334 01574X.

While this book does not highlight or support the need for a single world religion (or contain any mention of the Bahá'í Faith), it is an important survey of the quest for global ethical principles. The body of the book brings together the texts of various statements 'on issues ranging from global survival and peace and non-violent action to religious freedom, the elimination of religious intolerance and the world's children'([sic] from the book cover). Among the documents printed within are the many Declarations of the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

#### □ THE BĀBĪ & BAHĀ'Ī RELIGIONS

Atkinson, A.G. et al (eds), *Green Acre on the Piscataqua A Centennial Celebration* Eliot, Maine: Green Acre Bahá'í School Council, 1991, 132pp. £12.95

An account of the origins and development of the Green Acre Bahá'í School once the property of Sarah Jane Farmer (1847-1916)

The Universal House of Justice, *The Ministry of the Custodians 1957-1963 An account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992. xxiv + 485pp. ISBN 0-85398-350-X.

This book of messages of the Hands of the Cause is prefaced by an introduction by one of their number Amatu'l-Bahá, Rúhíyyih Khanum and contains a full list of all the Hands appointed by the central figures of the Faith.

Davidson, Dr J. & Dr M. Tidman (eds.), *Cooperative Peace Strategies*, Mona Vale NSW, Australia: Association for Bahá'í Studies - Australia, 1992/149. iv + 244pp. ISBN 0 9099991 43 X.

This volume contains the Universal House of Justice's 'The Promise of World Peace' (pp.6-23) followed by essays of varying quality arranged into sections:

#### SECTION 1: COMMUNICATION AND THE MEDIA

Introduction (p.24f); Ian Mathews, 'How the Mass Media can Contribute to Peace' (p.26f); Stella Cornelius, 'UNAA Media Peace Awards' (p.34f); Ann Sanson, 'Criteria for Media Peace Awards' (p.37); Nobel August-Forel Perdu, 'International Auxiliary Language: A Bahá'í Perspective' (p.43f); Miguel Gil, 'Religious Dialogue, a Pathway to Peace' (p.49f);

## SECTION 2: FOSTERING SKILLS IN SOCIAL INTERACTION

Introduction (p.57f); Peter Renshaw, 'Fostering Cooperation: Learning the Cooperative Process' (p.59f); Christine Wood, 'Parenting Programs' (p.67f); Ann Stark, 'Conflict Resolution' (p.81f); Marjorie Tidman 'Education for a Peaceful Future' (p. 90f);

## SECTION 3: SOCIAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & THE ENVIRONMENT

Introduction (p.105); Lawrence Arturo, 'Social & Economic Development & World Peace' (p. 106f); Faiborz Moshirian, 'Economics of Militarisation and Conversion to Demilitarisation' (p.119f); Richard Bell and David Chittleborough, ' Agriculture & Peace' (p.125f); David Chittleborough and David Bell, 'Land Degradation and the Problem of Sustainable Agricultural Development' (p.138f); Tahereh Nadarajah, 'Environmental Issues and World Peace' (p.146f);

## SECTION 4: DEVELOPING GLOBAL POLITICAL & ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

Introduction (p.156); Keith Suter, 'Reducing Armaments & Increasing Security: The Continuing Issues in Preserving Peace' (p.157f); John Davidson, 'Dimensions of Global Reconstruction: From World Conscience to World Commonwealth' (p.171f); Keith Suter, 'The Transformation of the United Nations: The 1955 Bahá'í Initiative' (p.188f); Keith Suter, 'United Nations Peacekeeping Operations' (p.206f)

## SECTION 5: INVOLVING THE PEOPLE

Introduction (p.223) Michael Le Grand, 'To be a Peacebuilder or Peacekeeper' (p.224f); Sitareh Ala'i, 'Women and Peace' (p.230f); Keith McDonald, 'Putting the Theory into Practice: Fremantle Festivals of Peace, 1986 & 1988' (p.239f); Epilogue: Seven Candles of Unity - -'Abdu'l-Bahá.

### □ ERRATA TO BSB 6:4-7:2 & 7:3-4

A few scanning and other errors of pagination exist in certain early copies of this BSB (6:4-7:2). The following selected errata may be present.

Cover. The title of the second article should be (as on page 18): 'The Tablet of Medicine (*Lawh-i Tibb*) of Bahá'u'lláh: A Provisional Translation with Occasional Notes'.

There is no page 17; the text jumps from p.16 to p.18.

There is an unnumbered page between p.112 and 113.

p.113 for 'messgae', read message and for 'appalloing' read appalling

p.118 for 'invisible' read invisible.

### □ ERRATA TO BSB 7:3-4 (June 1993)

Page 7 - last line -- read rapt not wrapt.

Page 35 - footnote 21 -- rásul should be rasūl.

Page 41 - last para. -- the word 'is' is missing.

Page 43 - line 6 and last para. -- delete emboldened numbers as these refer to page numbers in H. Balyuzi's "King of Glory"

----- line 5 -- For **Mathnani** read **Mathnavi**

Page 44 - line 44 -- The emboldened number here refers to the page number in H. Balyuzi's "Bahá'u'lláh, King of Glory".