

A TABLET OF MĪRZĀ HUSAYN ^CALĪ BAHĀ'U'LLĀH OF THE EARLY IRAQ PERIOD:
THE 'TABLET OF ALL FOOD' (LAWH-I KULL AL-TA^CĀM).

To date very little attention has been given to Bahā'u'llāh's (1817-92) Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^Cām despite the very considerable light it throws on his state of mind and role within the Bābī community immediately prior to his withdrawal to Iraqi Kurdistan (1854-6). Oriental Bahā'ī writers have not commented on it in detail and western Bahā'ī scholars generally remain, in the absence of a full translation, unaware of its importance. The following introduction, commentary and full translation will, it is hoped, draw attention to this somewhat abstruse though fascinating work.

INTRODUCTION

1) The text

The Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^Cām is written in a grammatically loose Arabic "revelatory" style reminiscent of the Arabic of certain of the Bāb's later writings and has several times been printed. The text printed in volume 4 of the late ^CAbd al-Hamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī's Mā'ida-yi Āsmānī (np. [Tehran] 129 Badī^C, pp. 265-276) is poorly edited. That in volume 2 of the same writer's Rahīq-i Makhtūm (np. [Tehran] 131 Badī^C pp. 416-426) is more reliable though errors, misreadings and omissions remain. A more satisfactory text is to be found (photostatically reproduced) in (the untitled) Iran National Bahā'ī Archives Private Publication (INBA MS) Vol 36 (np. [Tehran] c. 133 Badī^C, pp. 268-77). This latter text is reproduced below (pp. -) and has generally been followed in the translation (pp. -).

2) The historical context

By the summer of 1853 both Bahā'u'llāh and his half-brother Mīrzā Yahyā, Subh al-Azal (c. 1830-1912) had settled at Baghdad where, as at Kazimayn and Karbala a few Arab and Persian Bābīs resided. In view of the fact that Mīrzā Yahyā had been appointed the Bāb's successor (by the Bāb around spring 1850) and also in the light of the charismatic role adopted by Bahā'u'llāh, Baghdad became an important Bābī centre. Between 1853 and 1863 numerous individuals and groups of (largely) Iranian Bābīs visited Baghdad in order to pay homage to Mīrzā Yahyā or to visit Bahā'u'llāh—who maintained an extensive correspondence with the "people of the Bayān".

After the execution of the Bāb in July 1850 the various Bābī communities in Iran and Iraq had split into numerous factions; certain of them turned to leading Bābīs who made exalted claims for themselves. The authority of Mīrzā Yahyā was by no means universally accepted or understood—even in Iraq in the 1850's. Rival Bābī factions existed in Iraq in the early 1850's and caused Bahā'u'llāh and Mīrzā Yahyā much concern. In the face of this widespread Bābī factionalism and despite his own latent messianic aspirations, it is important to note that Bahā'u'llāh, before his withdrawal to Iraqi Kurdistan, upheld the leadership role of his half-brother, acted as his leading representative and spoke of him in exalted terms. It was not until the late 1850's that many Bābīs, disillusioned with Mīrzā Yahyā's ineffective leadership, sought enlightenment direct from Bahā'u'llāh. Bahā'u'llāh did not begin to make explicit claims for himself until the time of his exile from Baghdad (1863) and did not directly challenge the authority of his half-brother until the mid-Adrianople (1866-7) period of his ministry. The Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^Cām at several points presupposes that, at least during 1853-4, Bahā'u'llāh championed the authority of Mīrzā Yahyā (see below). It contains passages that underline the sorry state of the Iraqi and wider Bābī communities and throws light on the reasons for his withdrawal to Iraqi Kurdistan.

3) The circumstances of writing and the recipient

Written in late 1853 or early 1854 (= 1270 AH) the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^Cām was addressed to the Bābī Hajjī Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn Naraqī (d. Naraq c. 1298/9 AH = c. 1881 AD).¹ He had travelled to Iraq in the hope of meeting Mīrzā Yahyā and had asked him to write a commentary on Qur'ān 3:87 (see below). Apparently unimpressed with Mīrzā Yahyā's response (no longer extant?) he sought enlightenment from Bahā'u'llāh who wrote the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^Cām. On reading this work he became Bahā'u'llāh's ardent admirer and later, as a staunch Bahā'ī, received many letters from him.

4) The exegetical background (Qur'ān 3:87)

The Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^Cām is essentially a commentary on Qur'ān 3:87 in the Shī'ī—Sufi—Bābī tradition of esoteric exegesis;

1. Hajjī Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Hajjī Mīrzā Muhammad Taqī was a grandson of Mullā Ahmad Naraqī (an accomplished poet) and a great-grandson of Hajjī Mullā Miḥdī Naraqī (the author of a work on the episode of Karbala entitled Muḥriq al-Qulūb). He was apparently converted to Bābism by a certain Mullā Ja'far who had met the Bāb in Kashan.

كُلِّ الطَّعَامُ كَانَ حَلَالًا لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَائِيلَ
عَلَى نَفْسِهِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَةُ قُلْ فَاثَرُوا بِالتَّوْرَةِ
فَاتْلُوهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ.

" All food was lawful to the children of Israel (= Jacob) except what Israel made unlawful to himself (or, itself) before the Torah was revealed. Say: Bring the Torah and study it if you are upright persons" (3:87).

This verse is probably rooted in Genesis 32:32(3) which refers to the prohibition of the sciatic nerve after Jacob's (subsequently Israel's) wrestling with God at Peniel (see Gen. 32:23ff):

" Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, because He (God) touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh on the sinew of the hip."

In its Qur'ānic context however, it is expressive of the Prophet Muhammad's desire— in the light of the plethora of Jewish prohibitions concerning food and the need to define Islām as against Judaism— to free his community from the burden of excessive food restrictions. Qur'ān 3:87 indicates that prohibitions concerning food were not imposed upon the Israelites before the Torah was revealed to Moses; except, that is, for a prohibition, not of divine origin, which Israel imposed on himself (see Gen 32:32(3)).¹ Abū'l-Ḥasan ibn Mattuyā al-Wahidī (d.1075 AD) in his Asbāb al-Nuzūl has explained the circumstances of the revelation of Qur'ān 3:87 in the following manner (as summarized by M. Seale):

"Muhammad was confronted by some of his Jewish critics who contested the claim that he professed the faith of Abraham. They asserted that this could not be the case, seeing that he ate camel's meat and drank camel's milk, both forbidden in the Law. Muhammad replied that no such prohibition existed in Abraham's day, but they insisted that it dated as far back as Noah. The issue was settled by a quranic revelation [i.e. Qur'ān 3:87 which]..made it clear that there were no food prohibitions before Moses, and therefore none in Abraham's day." 2.

In his Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am, Bahā'u'llāh, as indicated, was not concerned with expounding the letter or the outer circumstances of the revelation of Qur'ān 3:87. Rather, he gave the key terms "food" (ta'am), "Israel" and the "children of Israel" a variety of non-literal meanings— his method of interpretation is reminiscent, for example, of that of Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn ibn al-^cArabī (1165-1240) and, more directly, that of the Bāb. i.e. in his Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqara (1843-4) and other later expository works. He expressed

1. I draw here on the article Ghidā' in EI², Vol. II. p.1061.

2. M. Seale, The Bible and the Qur'ān (London 1978), p.111. See also, for example, Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, Bihār al-Anwār (Teheran n.d.), Vol. XII. pp.216-7 (section on Jacob).

his conviction that Qur'ān 3:87 has an infinitude of subtle meanings and claimed that he could expound its mysteries from his own day until "the days find their consummation in al-mustaghāth" (= [abjad] 2001 of the Bābī era; the time of the eschatological consummation).

It is important, in attempting to understand the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am, to ask why Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn might have specifically asked both Mīrzā Yahyā and Bahā'u'llāh to explain Qur'ān 3:87. Why, in other words, was this verse in particular of importance to Bābīs during the early 1850's? This question is not easy to answer though the following theory may be on the right lines.

Qur'ān 3:87 was very likely quoted by an antinomian Bābī faction in justification of their free-thinking, libertine or gnostic stance. Elitist Bābī gnostics may have felt that this verse, non-literally interpreted, indicated that they might go beyond the constraints of Islāmic and Bābī moral and legal norms—i.e. allow themselves, as the 'true Israelites' (Bābīs), "all food" (freedom). Perhaps discouraged as a result of the Bāb's martyrdom, bewildered in the face of the mass of the Bāb's legalistic pronouncements and in view of his abrogation of the Islāmic Law, such groups appear to have clustered around leading Bābīs who made exalted claims for themselves. A Bābī faction of this kind was probably known to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn who wanted, initially from Mīrzā Yahyā, an authoritative interpretation of Qur'ān 3:87 in the light of its antinomian interpretation—by free-thinking or extremist gnostic-type Bābīs. Whatever Mīrzā Yahyā's interpretation of this verse might have been, Bahā'u'llāh's Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am certainly condemns libertine or antinomian views of Bābism and counters extremist claims to leadership by upholding Mīrzā Yahyā's authority. It contains passages in which the need to follow the laws of the Bāb is stressed and the moral laxity of libertine Bābīs censured; most notably the following lines:

"Let not the actions of those who have been spreading wickedness in the land veil you (Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn). They falsely suppose that they are rightly guided. Nay! By the Lord of the Realm of Unknowing! They are liars and calumniators. The nature of that party (Bābī faction) is such that they should never (even) be allowed to eat barley in these days. How then, can they possibly be allowed to eat what God hath forbidden in the Book."

It appears then, that Bahā'u'llāh's Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am presupposes an antinomian or extremist Bābī exegesis of Qur'ān 3:87. Having thus speculated it is worth noting that the Bāb, in his early Bayān 'Illatī Tahrīm

al-Maharim. ('Exposition of the Reason for the Prohibition of Forbidden Things') quotes Qur'an 3:87. This may add weight to the hypothesis that this verse was important in the context of issues surrounding Bābī legalism and antinomianism.¹

5) Structure --Outline of Contents.

To perhaps be over analytic the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am exhibits the following general structure.

I. Prolegomenon

Heading in praise of God.

- a) In praise of God's power as active in the focal centres of Bābī authority (leading Bābīs).
- b) In praise of God who continues to inspire Bābī leaders.
- c) The mysterious operations of the (Divine) Light.

II. An Autobiographical Supplication

- a) Bahā'u'llāh confesses his lowliness.
- b) Bahā'u'llāh, in his deep anguish, confesses his failure to call upon God.
- c) Bahā'u'llāh confesses that he inadequately bore witness of God in the light of God's transcendence, eternality and essential unknowability.
- d) Bahā'u'llāh acknowledges God's one time providential care for him and his happy condition, alludes to his role as a leading Bābī, and bemoans his more recent spiritual anguish.
- e) Bahā'u'llāh testifies to the impossibility of directly calling upon God (in His essence) yet acknowledges the necessity of his doing so in the light of His (God's) benefits and favours.
- f) Bahā'u'llāh again confesses his failure to call upon God and speaks of his being comforted as a result of his mystical experiences.

1. The Bāb's Bayān 'Illatī Tahrīm al-Maharim is contained in Teheran Bahā'ī Archives MS 6006C, pp.87-9. In it the Bāb, responding to a question about certain categories of the 'forbidden degrees' (of marriage; see Qur'an 4:23), explains the origin of things permitted and things forbidden. God, he argues at the beginning of his reply, being supremely rich or independent of need, has allowed his creatures all that he created on earth; all that is, "except what Israel made unlawful for himself" (see Q. 3:87a). In line with the typological-allegorical explanation of verses relating to Israel in, for example, his Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqara, he presupposes that Israel (in Q. 3:87) is to be identified with Imām 'Alī who "did not forbid any soul anything except it made that thing unlawful for itself". This inasmuch as God created all things through the pre-existent reality of the first Shī'ī Imām. Before this world came into being the souls of men, by their very nature, determined things permissible. But since they forgot them in this world God sent Messengers and the Book. Such, if I understand the text correctly, is the gist of the Bāb's (initial) argument.

III. Interpretation 1: Address to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn and explanation of the significances of "food" (ta'am).

- a) Addressing Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn Bahā'u'llāh explains that he had not previously desired to respond to questions posed by Bābīs but in his case will do so in view of his great faith.
- b) On the importance of Qur'an 3:87 and its infinite subtle meanings four of which will be expounded.
- c) On the significance of "food" (ta'am) relative to the various levels/stations of existence:- Hāhūt, Lāhūt, Jabarūt, Malakūt and Nasūt.

IV. A Lamentation, address to contemporary unbelievers, and a prayer for patience.

- a) Bahā'u'llāh laments the fact that the Bāb is no longer alive to comfort him in his grief and wishes he were one forgotten.
- b) Bahā'u'llāh addressee the "concourse" of peoples asking them to comfort him and not conspire against him. He informs them of God's role in protecting him and prays to God for victory and patience.

V. Interpretation 2: An address to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn and an explanation of the significance of Qur'an 3:87 (a).

- a) Bahā'u'llāh alludes to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn's faith status and acknowledges his power of understanding.
- b) Explanation of Qur'an 3:87 in terms of the centres of Bābī authority and Bābī law.
- c) On the need to follow the laws of the Bāb and the errors of a Bābī faction.

VI. Interpretation 3: An address to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn and a further explanation of the significance of Qur'an 3:87(a).

- a) Bahā'u'llāh further explains Qur'an 3:87(a) in Bābī terms in view of Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn's being captivated by the true focal centres of Bābī authority.
- b) In view of his favours upon Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn Bahā'u'llāh asks him to render thanks unto God who has guided him aright.

VII. Lamentations made in the course of Bahā'u'llāh's informing Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn of his ability to set forth endless explanations of Qur'an 3:87 and of his informing him of his desire to withdraw.

- a) Bahā'u'llāh laments his sorry plight and underlines the extent of his patience and trust in God.
- b) Bahā'u'llāh informs Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn of his ability to give endless explanations to Qur'an 3:87 in the light of God's continuing guidance.
- c) A brief lament over the inability of the people to perceive the truth.
- d) Bahā'u'llāh informs Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn of his desire to withdraw in view of the wickedness of the people.

- e) Bahā'u'llāh laments the fact that Quddūs is no longer alive to comfort him and intercede on his behalf and calls upon God to give him patience.

VIII. Interpretation 4 : Further explanations of Qur'ān 3:87(a)

- a) An explanation of key terms in Qur'ān 3:87(a) in terms of the Islāmic dispensation.
 b) An explanation of key terms in Qur'ān 3:87(a) in terms of the centres of Bābī authority.

IX. Interpretation 5 : An address to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn and a further explanation of Qur'an 3:87 (a).

- a) In view of his ecstatic state Bahā'u'llāh informs Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn of his desire to expound Qur'ān 3:87(a) still further.
 b) An explanation of key terms in Qur'ān 3:87(a) in a Bābī context.

X. On Bahā'u'llāh's power of exposition and his claim to naught but servitude.

- a) Bahā'u'llāh explains to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn that he could give still further interpretation to Qur'ān 3:87 but refrains from doing so in the light of the limitations of men.
 b) Bahā'u'llāh informs Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn that despite his revelation of the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cam he makes no exalted claim for himself.
 c) A woe upon the people of falsehood/erring Bābīs.
 d) A brief address to the "People of the Concurrence"

XI. A Lament and an address to the people of the 'realm of unknowing'.

- a) Bahā'u'llāh laments the fact that everything has been effaced from his memory as a result of the evil deeds of the people.
 b) A brief address to the "People of the Realm of Unknowing".

XII. Conclusion

Bahā'u'llāh rounds off his discourse, reminds Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn that his efforts to regenerate the Bābī community led a "son of adultery" to conspire to kill him, and expresses his desire for death.

Concluding verse in praise of God.

6. A synopsis of Bahā'u'llāh's interpretations of key terms occurring in Qur'ān 3: 87.

Apart from the significances Bahā'u'llāh gave to "food" (ta^cam) relative to the various levels/ stations of existence (see below on III.c) he interpreted the key terms in Qur'ān 3:87(a) in the following manner— the concrete referents in brackets are, of course, to some extent speculative (see the commentary below for details):

1. "Food" (ta^cam) = " the essence of knowledge" (nafs al-^cilm)
"Israel" = " the Primal Point" (nuqtat al-ulyā) = the Bāb
"the children of Israel" = " he whom God..made a proof unto the people in these days" = Mīrzā Yahyā (?)
2. "Food" (ta^cam) = " the bearer of the Cause" (sāhib al-amr) = Mīrzā Yahyā(?).
"Israel" = " the Primal Will" (al-mashiyya al-awwalīya).
"the children of Israel" = all Bābīs captivated by the light of the "(Primal) Will from 1844 (1260 AH) up till the (eschatological) "meeting with God".
3. (a) "Food" (ta^cam) = the (Islāmic) " Guardianship" (wilayat)
"Israel" = " the Point of the Furqān" (nuqtat al-Furqān) = the Prophet Muhammad.
"the children of Israel" = God's "trustees" (ausiyā) = the Shī'ī Imāms who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad.
- (b) "Food" (ta^cam) = the Bāb / Bābī wilayat : this is implied]
"Israel" = a) " the Last Objective" (wiḥat al-ukhrā), " the Mystery of Endless Duration" (sirr al-samadaniyya) = Quddūs (?).
 = b) " the Countenance of Light" (tal^cat al-nūr), "the Isolated Manifestation" (mujarrad al-zuhūr), "the Temple of the Divine Unicity" (haykal al-ahadiyya) = Mīrzā Yahyā (?).
4. "Food" (ta^cam) = " the ocean of the unseen (bahr al-ghayb) which is hidden in the Pages of Light (sahā'if al-nūr) and treasured up in the Inscribed Tablets (alwāh al-mastūr)" = the power of the Bābī revelation / scriptures (?).
"Israel" = "the manifestation of the command (nāḥiyyat al-amr) in these days " = Mīrzā Yahyā (?)

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"the children of Israel" = "the people of the Bayān" = the Bābīs.

In addition then, to the four explanation Bahā'u'llāh gave to "food" (ta^cām) in connection with the realms of Lahūt, Jabarūt, Malakūt and Nasūt (its meaning relative to the realm of Hāhūt being known only to God— see the commentary below) a further four significances were specifically given to this term. "Israel" is given six allegorical explanations and "the children of Israel" four.

7) The role of Bahā'u'llāh and allusions to Mirzā Yahyā.

It will be evident from the above synopsis (6) that, at various points in his Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām Bahā'u'llāh appears to identify Mirzā Yahyā — as one-time head of the Bābī community — with each of the key terms occurring in Qur'ān 3:87(a). To modern Bahā'īs this might seem surprising or appear to be an inappropriate understanding of difficult expressions — on my own part. Elsewhere in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām however, there are fairly obvious allusions to Mirzā Yahyā's leadership role (see below) though their detection requires some knowledge of the manner in which the Bāb had referred to Mirzā Yahyā and the way in which he was addressed by Bābīs in the 1850's. In this respect the following notes may be useful. ¹

There is no doubt that the Bāb, around the spring of 1850 (if not a little earlier) appointed Mirzā Yahyā his successor and addressed a number of letters (or "tablets", alwah) to him— Bahā'u'llāh and other leading Bābīs were informed of this appointment. Some of them are contained in Bahā'ī as well as Azālī collections of writings of the Bāb and a few of them have been published. ²

Without going into details— I do not intend to attempt to discuss why the Bāb chose Mirzā Yahyā to succeed him—it may first be noted that though the Bāb

1. In considering this issue it must be borne in mind that no objective and detailed study of the writings and role of Bahā'u'llāh and Mirzā Yahyā during the early Iraq period has yet been carried out. Current Bahā'ī publications contain little or no information about the early Iraq period (1853-4; or indeed the following 5-6 years).
2. Refer, for example, Teheran Bahā'ī Archives MS 6007 C p.465ff; Qismati az alwah-i khatt-i Nuqta-yi Ulā wa Āqā Sayyid Husayn Kātib (n.p. [Teheran n.d.]); Iran National Bahā'ī Archives Private Publication, Vol. 64, pp. 95-102; E.G. Browne [Ed], The Tārīkh-i Jadīd. (Cambridge 1893), Appendix IV, p.420ff; H. Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Bahā'ī Faith (Oxford 1970), esp. p.33ff.

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did not regard Mirzā Yahyā as a major manifestation of divinity or refer to him as man yuzhiruhu'llāh ('Him whom God will make manifest'— the Bābī messiah figure) he did give him lofty titles and apply certain expressions in the well-known Hadīth Kumayl to him.

The Hadīth Kumayl is the record of a conversation which allegedly took place between ^cAlī b. Abū Tālib (d.661 A.D.), the first Shī'ī Imām and Kumayl ibn Ziyād one of his close companions. ¹ One version of it has it that Kumayl asked ^cAlī what constitutes al-haqīqa, "the truth" or "essential reality", and that ^cAlī, being repeatedly pressed to clarify his meaning, replied by means of five enigmatic utterances: al-haqīqa is, ²

- [1] كشف سجات الجلال من غير اشارة
" The unveiling of the splendours of the Divine Majesty without a sign. "
- [2] محو الموهوم و صحو العلوم
" The effacement of vain imagining and the clarification of true knowledge. "
- [3] هنك الشتر لعلبة السر
" The rendering of the veil through the mastery of the secret. "
- [4] جذب الاحدية لصفة التوحيد
" The attraction of the Divine Unity through the attribute of the Divine Oneness. "
- [5] نور اشرق من صبح الازل على هياكل التوحيد
" A Light (nūr) shone forth from the Morn of Eternity (subh al-azal) upon the temples of the Divine Oneness (hayakil al-tawhīd). "

In his (Persian) Dalā'il-i Sab^ca and other writings the Bāb specifically relates each of these five explanations of al-haqīqa with the first five years of his prophetic mission (that is, 1260—1265 A.H. = [presumably] Jan 22nd 1844—17th Nov 1849). ³ Since Mirzā Yahyā appears to have entered

1. On the Hadīth Kumayl see, for example, D.M. Donaldson, Al-Kumayl: A Companion of the Secret in The Muslim World, Vol.28 (1938), pp.249-57; Ishraq Khāvarī, Qānūs-i Igān, Vol.3 (n.p. [Tehran] 128 Bādī), p.
2. The Arabic version of the text cited here is taken from the Bāb's (Persian) Dalā'il-i Sab^ca (n.p. [Tehran] n.d.), p.57 (also cited, E.G. Browne, The Episode of the Bāb Vol.II. [Cambridge 1891], p.352. fn.1.).
3. Refer Dalā'il-i Sab^ca, p.57. cf. also, for example, Tafsīr Āyat al-Nūr (in Cambridge [Browne Coll.] MS F.21 [item 27], pp.155-171), p.159f; Tafsīr Hadīth al-Haqīqa [= the Bāb's commentary on the Hadīth Kumayl in Teheran Bahā'ī Archives MS 6006C] pp.74-7.

into correspondance with the Bāb and risen to prominence during the fifth year of the Bāb's mission (1265 AH = 27th November 1848—17 November 1849) he came to be addressed in terms of the fifth clause of the Hadīth Kumayl, i.e. entitled Subh al-Azal (per. Subh-i Azal); the fact that Mīrzā Yahyā was a native of the district of Nūr in Mazan-daran may also have inspired the Bāb to apply the fifth clause of this hadīth to him. In a number of his epistles the Bāb specifically refers to Mīrzā Yahyā as Ism Allāh al-Azal, "the Name of God, the Eternal" (or the like). His Wasīyyat Nāmih ("Testamentary Dispositions") for example, is addressed to " the Name of God, the Eternal" (Yā Ism al-Azal).^{1.} In certain other epistles Mīrzā Yahyā is designated al-thamara ("the fruit [of the Bayān])" and, among other things, al-Wahīd (= [abjad] 28 as is Yahyā).^{2.} After the Bāb's martyrdom many Bābīs understood Mīrzā Yahyā's role in the light of the Hadīth Kumayl. They referred to him as " His Eminence the Eternal" (Ḥadrat-i Azal), " The Eternal Fruit" (Thamarat al-Azaliyya) and the "Sun of Eternity" (Shams-i Azaliyya) through whom the divine Light (Nūr) beamed forth upon the "Temples of the Divine Unity" (hayākil al-tawhīd) understood to mean leading Bābīs.^{3.}

Towards the end of his ministry the Bāb wrote to Bahā'u'llāh—through Mīrzā Yahyā and referring to him as " 238" (= [abjad] Husayn ^{Alī} ح = 8 + 3 = 60 + 5 = 10 + 0 = 50 + 8 = 70 + 3 = 30 + 5 = 10 [total] = 238) —instructing him to protect and take care of his half-brother.^{4.} That Bahā'u'llāh was faithful to this instruction or initially supported his half-brother is referred to in a number of Bahā'u'llāh's writings. In the Sūrat al-Haykal (written in ^CAkkā around 1873) for example, Bahā'u'llāh mentions the protection he gave his half-brother and the high regard in which he was held by leading Bābīs (after the Bāb's martyrdom):

" Then remind them that We chose one [Mīrzā Yahyā] from amongst Our brethren [the Bābīs] and sprinkled upon him a dewdrop from the Fathomless Deep of the Ocean of Knowledge; then We clothed him in the robe of one of the [Divine] Names (ism min al-asma' = very probably al-azal) and elevated him to a station such as all rose up in praise of him. We preserved him from all manner of harm to the extent that even the powerful are

1. Wasīyyat Nāmih in Iran National Bahā'ī Archives Vol.64.p.95.
 2. Refer, sources mentioned in fn. p. (above).
 3. cf. for example, E.G.Browne (Ed), Kitāb-i Nuqtat al-Kāf... p. trans., idem (Ed), The Tārīkh-i Jadīd.., Appendix II.p.374ff.
 4. This epistle of the Bāb is contained in ^CIzziyya Khānum, Tanbīh al-Nā'imīn (n.p. n.d.), p.32 .It is undoubtedly authentic—cf. Shoghi Effendi(trans.), The Dawnbreakers.. p.317 where it is referred to.

incapable."^{1.}

This passage hints at Bahā'u'llāh's initial support of Mīrzā Yahyā. It bears witness to his loving protection of his half-brother before his departure for Iraqi Kurdistan.

The extent of Bahā'u'llāh's support of Mīrzā Yahyā is, it may now be noted, echoed at many points in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am. Among them are the following—see commentary below for details:

- a) I.a. Here the expression "Focal Centre[Countenance] of Eternality" (wijhat al-azaliyya) may be an allusion to Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role.
- b) I.b. This paragraph contains allusions to the Hadīth Kumayl and to Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role. Yahyā appears to be referred to as the one who utters "unique eternal melodies" (taghaniyat al-azaliyya al-wahdaniyya) and the "Light-filled Dove" (hamamat al-nuriyya).
- c) I.c. Here the references to the mysterious operations of the divine light (nūr; cf. the Hadīth Kumayl) may indicate that leading Bābīs partake of the light of subh al-azal (Mīrzā Yahyā).
- d) II.f. Here Mīrzā Yahyā may be referred to as the " Dove of the Command" (hamamat al-amr) and the "Light-filled Bird" (warqā' al-nurā').
- e) VI.a. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that here Bahā'u'llāh, drawing on the Hadīth Kumayl, refers to Mīrzā Yahyā in exalted terms and as the "bearer of the Cause" (sahib al-amr). He appears to identify "food" (ta'am; Q. 3:87) with Mīrzā Yahyā in the light of the fact that Mīrza Kamāl al-Dīn has turned to or acknowledged his leadership role; that is, been " irradiated through the orient light of the radiance of the splendours of the Morn of Eternity (subh al-azal) whose lights have " filled the horizons", and captivated by the charm of the winning ways of the Light of Endless Duration (nūr al-samadiyya) whose traces have appeared upon the Temples of Irradiation" (hayākil al-Ishraq).
- f) VII.b. Here the reference to the "Countenance of Light" (tal'at al-nūr) which " in these days" beams forth may be an allusion to Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role.
- g) IX.b. "Food" (ta'am) is here identified with the power of the Bābī revelation and; in all likelihood, with Yahyā's writings (—note the expression "pages of light" [sahā'if al-nūr]). This in the light of "Israel" being the "manifestation of the command" (mazhar al-amr; cf. sahib al-amr at VI.a i.e. Mīrzā Yahyā ?) and the "children of Israel" the Bābīs.
- h) X.b. In the course of addressing the " people of the concourse" Bahā'u'llāh speaks of the "artistry of God" (san' allāh) which radiates forth from the "Lamp of Eternality" (sirāj al-azaliyya). Here, once

1. Bahā'u'llāh, Sūrat al-Haykal (in Āthār Qalam-i 'Alī Vol.4 [n.p. (Tehran) 125 Badi'] p.268ff), p. 275.

again, there appears to be allusion to Yahyā's leadership role.

- 1) XII. In concluding his Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cam Bahā'u'llāh appears to state that he draws his discourse to a close in the light of the fact that Mīrzā Yahyā (= the "Dove of Light", hamamat al-nūr) was revealing verses in Iraq (= the "land of Exhilaration", ard al-surur ?).

Such are among the possible allusions to Mīrzā Yahyā and his role in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cam. Taken individually they are admittedly highly speculative. Viewed collectively along with the interpretation given to key terms in Qur'ān 3:87 however, this line of interpretation does seem to make sense of some otherwise incomprehensible language. It could be argued that all these seeming references to Mīrzā Yahyā really refer to the Bāb or to Bahā'u'llāh himself. This though, is difficult to maintain especially since Bahā'u'llāh explicitly states — in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cam (X.b.) — that he, at this time, claimed naught but servitude and used expressions derived from the fifth clause of the Hadīth Kumayl which were applied by the Bāb to his half-brother. At those points where Bahā'u'llāh refers to one who is, in his own day, the "bearer of the Cause" (sahīb al-amr) and "manifestation of the command" (mazhar al-amr) it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he is referring to Mīrzā Yahyā who, as noted, was recognised as the head of the Bābī community during the 1850's. As far as I am aware there is nothing in Bahā'u'llāh's writings or in the works of Bābī-Bahā'ī historians that contradicts the thesis that Bahā'u'llāh, before his departure for Iraqi Kurdistan, protected, exalted and referred to his half-brother in lofty terms. The Bāb after all, had appointed Mīrzā Yahyā to succeed him and it is untenable to maintain that Bahā'u'llāh immediately offered him no support or straightway denounced him as a 'covenant-breaker' (or whatever). The extreme tension and ultimate break between Bahā'u'llāh and Mīrzā Yahyā should not be read back into the early Iraq period of Bahā'u'llāh's ministry.

Finally, in this connection, I should like to draw attention to an interesting tablet of Bahā'u'llāh entitled Sūrat al-Kifāya ('The Surah of the Sufficiency').¹ Written in a style very similar

1. This writing of Bahā'u'llāh is contained (photostatically reproduced — it is not easy to read) in Iran National Bahā'ī Archives Private Publication (untitled), Vol. 36, pp. 277-80. None of the surveys of Bahā'u'llāh's writings make mention of this work.

to that of the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cam it contains a reply to a question about the "reality of knowledge" (haqq al-^cilm) addressed to a certain "letter of al-jūd" (harf al-jūd) and may well date from the Iraq period (1853-1863) of Bahā'u'llāh's ministry.¹ Within it are passages which could be interpreted in the light of Bahā'u'llāh's support of Mīrzā Yahyā. Apart, it seems, from referring to himself as the "Ant of Endless Duration" (nimlat al-samadiyya) which warbles forth "with the verses of the divine unicity (bi-āyat al-ahadiyya)" and the "Hoopoe of Servitude in the Heaven of Manifest Justice" (hudhud al-cubdiyya fi samā' al-^cadāl), one referred to as the "Countenance of Light" (tal^cat al-nūr) is represented as the source of true knowledge (haqq al-^cilm). Outside however, of a more detailed study of the writings of Bahā'u'llāh of the Iraq period, it is difficult to be certain whether or not this might be an allusion to Mīrzā Yahyā, or, as may well be the case, Bahā'u'llāh is applying to himself expressions once indicative of his half-brother in order to intimate his own claims.²

1. The dating of the Sūrat al-Kifāya depends in part on identifying the Bābī referred to as harf al-jūd. If it designates Aqā Muḥammad Jawād Qazvīnī, referred to by Bahā'u'llāh as ism-i jūd and ism Allah al-jūd, then it may have been addressed to him when he visited Bahā'u'llāh in Baghdad around 1862. See E.G. Browne (Ed) Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion (Cambridge 1961), pp. ix, 15; Bahā'u'llāh, Kalimāt al-Firdawsīyya (in Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh [Haifa 1978], p. 74) Mazandarani, Asrār al-Athār, Vol. 3 (Tehran 128 Bad^c), p. 56f. If, on the other hand the harf al-jūd signifies, for example, Jawād Khadīm Ḥarab Baghdādī al-Hattāb, this tablet may have been written much earlier.

2. The main text of the Sūrat al-Kifāya begins with an address to the people of al-Hā':

"O people of al-Hā'! Hearken unto the melodies of the Crimson Leaf (waraqat al-hamra') in the Paradise of the Realm of Unknowing (jannat al-^camā') for, He verily, is the Light of the Siniatic Temple (nūr haykal al-Sīnā) who acteth, on behalf of God, as a Manifest Light unto the worlds."

It may be going too far to suggest that Bahā'u'llāh is here alluding to Mīrzā Yahyā's role though it is worth noting that a few lines further on he refers to this tablet as "a dewdrop from the oceans of the Command" (rashh min abhar al-amr) and informs his readers that if they wish to attain the presence of the "Countenance of God" (tal^cat Allāh) it is necessary that they ascend up into the "etheric heaven" (? reading, samā' al-hawa') until they hear the "call of the Bird of the Almighty" (nidā' dīk al-jabbār). Furthermore, addressing the "people of the earth", Bahā'u'llāh calls upon them to hearken unto the "Leaf of the Divine Ipsity" (waraqat al-huwiyya) from the "Tree of Eternality" (shajarat al-azaliyya) planted in the "Land of Endless Duration" (ard al-samadiyya) which warbles forth with captivating divine verses (bi-āyat al-jazzabiyya al-uluhiyya). The "people of the Realm of Unknowing" (ahl al-^camā') are invited to dwell within the "Paradise of the Divine Unicity" (jannat al-ahadiyya) and the "Orchard of Eternality" (hadīqat al-azaliyya).

Pages 18-35 = Text Trans.

from that Cup, the Goblet of Servitude, which resembleth naught but a shadow in the land. I, however, ask God's forgiveness on account of that limitation. So praised be God, One worthy of praise and mighty beyond the attempts of the negligent to describe Him.

- I. a. So Ahl Alas! If there should surge upon me a sprinkling from the Ocean of (Divine) Authorization from the Sovereign of the Realm of Unknowning and King of Glory I would expound that verse (Qur'an 3:87) with the accents of the spiritual ones, the sanctified spirits, and the melodies of the scriptures, but since I have not inhaled the fragrance of realization or accomplishment then that which I have (already) set forth for you must suffice you for it is (sufficient) proof unto those who were, in the days of their lord, given to remembrance.
- b. In view of the fact that you have sought and derived warmth from the Fire of Love and have found pleasure in the charm of the trace of ink in these opposite Tablets then bear witness and be assured that I have claimed naught but servitude to God, the True One. And God is my arbitrator against that which the people falsely allege.
- c. Say! Wee unto you on account of that which your hands have committed; hereafter shall you be brought before the Knower of that which is hidden and that which is manifest (see Qur'an 9:106) and assuredly, in this respect, be questioned.
- d. Say! O People of the Concourse! Be not astonished at the artistry of God, the mercy of God and His blessings upon you, if you are of those who are informed. Fear God and know that the artistry of God radiates forth in the image(s) of the Lasp of Eternality among the artistry of the people. How is it that you neither consider (this) nor bear witness (unto it) ?
- II. a. Then Ahl Alas! By He Who hath restrained(?) the dove of sorrow in the breast of al-Rahim (= Bahá'u'lláh)! All that I have witnessed from the day on which I first drank the pure milk from the breast of my mother until this moment hath been effaced from my memory, in consequence of that which the hands of the people have committed. And God is aware of all that pertains to the people though they are not informed.
- b. Say! O People of the Realm of Unknowning! Issue forth from your habitations and present yourselves in the sanctus of Light, the manifest Cloud of Unknowning, the most-great House of God, as hath been decreed, with the permission of God, the Exalted, Who beareth witness, in the Tablet of the Heart.

- XIII. I, verily, conclude this discourse in that the Dove of Light sang forth aforetime at the moment of its(his) arrival in the Land of Exultation and warbled with the accents of the heart. And you know, O my beloved, that, for the sake of God, I desired authorization since patience, on account of my love for the unveiled beauty of God, had departed from me. And you know that a son of adultery willfully desired (to shed) my blood. Nay, by the presence of Thy Might! I do not pledge allegiance to him (?) either in secret or publicly. It is God (alone Who) causeth the day (of the spilling) of my blood to draw nigh and when my tears shall be sprinkled upon the dust. So, O would that this my day were the day (of the shedding) of my blood for my ardent desire is for the soil. So praised be God, One worthy of praise and Mighty, above that which the associators assert with respect to His description. And praise be to God, wondrous Lord of all the Worlds.

[The above translation is, at certain points, tentative in the extreme. I would be more than happy to receive corrections or critical comments. Two sections of the translation, it should be noted, are those made by Shoghi Effendi in his God Passes By (Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette Illinois 1977), p.118 -- see VII.d. and II.a (above)].

COMMENTARY

No full commentary on the Lash-i Hull al-Ta'abb will be attempted here. The following notes must serve, I hope, to clarify a few points of interest. As far as I am aware there are no comments by Bahá'u'lláh or 'Abd al-Bahá on this difficult text. Only further research into the Iraq period of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry will serve to confirm or disprove the following speculations.

- I. a. This, the opening paragraph of the Lash-i Hull al-Ta'abb, seems to me to have to do with God's continuing to guide and inspire leading Bahá'ís after the martyrdom of the Báb. That God had excited the "Letters of Manifestation" (shraf al-muhammad) - leading Bahá'ís (?) in the "Incomparable Point of the Realm of Unknowning" (bi'l-nuqat al-'asá'irya al-firdaws) - the Báb (?) perhaps signifies that the Báb, from the exalted heavenly realm, directs Bábí affairs through leading devotees. Thus, it

seems likely that by the "Firmament of Manifestation" (falak al-zuhūr), "Concealed Self" (nafs al-batūn) and "Focal centre of Eternality" (= 'Eternal Face/Countenance'; wiḥat[waḥ] al-azaliyya, n.b. azaliyya) about which the "Hidden Mount" (tūr al-ghaybiyya = the Siniatic heights of God's self-disclosure?) revolves alludes to Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role (the phrase "Concealed Self" may allude to his virtual "occultation" during the early Iraq period). Bahā'u'llāh's own role is probably indicated in the words, " caused the Lordly Point (nuqtat al-rubūbiyya = the Bāb ?) to circle round the Most-Splendid, all-Enduring Ornament (or 'archetype'/model; tarz al-abhā'iyya al-samadiyya ; n.b. abhā'iyya = Bahā'u'llāh subject to divine guidance ?)— the use of "all-Enduring" (samadiyya) may allude to Bahā'u'llāh's being seen as occupying the role Qaddūs assumed during the Bāb's lifetime (i.e. coming to be seen as his leading representative) in the light of his half-brother's leadership role (cf. below on VI.a. VII.b. and VIII.b.). If these speculations be on the right lines then, in the opening paragraph of the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am, Bahā'u'llāh, in allusive language, praises God for continuing to guide leading Bābīs, most notably Mīrzā Yahyā and Himself. This to end end that all may turn to God or become Bābīs.

That God " neither begetteth nor is begotten" (lam yalid wa lam yulad) is a Qur'ānic expression (see Qur'ān 112:3) originally designed to counter Christian incarnationalism.

I.b. It may be that this paragraph is to be understood in the light of Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role. In the opening lines there are allusions to the fifth clause of the Ḥadīth Kumayl. The "countenances characterised by [the letter] al-Hā' (cf. the opening lines of the Surat al-Kifāya quoted below) are probably the Bābīs whom God has enabled to be attracted by the "unique, eternal melodies" (taghaniyat al-azaliyya al-wahdāniyya; n.b. azaliyya [cf. Yahyā's title Subh al-Azal] wahdāniyya [cf. Yahyā's title al-Wahid]); to Yahyā as the Bāb's successor(?). By the "Light-filled Dove" (ḥamāmat al-nūriyya; cf. the use of nūr in the fifth clause of the Ḥadīth Kumayl) is probably meant Mīrzā Yahyā (cf. II.f.; XII).

I.c. Here Bahā'u'llāh speaks of the mysterious operations of the Divine Light (nūr — this word occurring no less than 12 times). God he appears to indicate, had made His nūr available to leading Bābīs; divine guidance, in other words, is still available. If the repeated use of "light" (nūr) is inspired by the fifth clause of the Ḥadīth Kumayl (= " A nūr shone forth from the Morn of Eternity [subh al-azal]..) then there may again be allusion to Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role.

II.a. Immediately following an account of the mysterious operations of the Divine Light Bahā'u'llāh underlines his own lowly estate by declaring that he is devoid of "splendour" (diyā'), "glory" (bahā'), "radiance" (sanā') and "lustre" (shu^ca^c) until he turns to God and experiences Him through various means.

II.b. Having confessed his lowliness Bahā'u'llāh states that, in view of his sadness, grief and affliction, he had failed to call upon God. This in terms of his standing before or being face to face with the ever-present possibility of spiritual rapture.

II.c. Bahā'u'llāh continues to explain that he failed to adequately bear witness unto God in the light of His transcendence and unknowability. Even the exalted holy beings and those who confess God's unity fail in their attempts to know the ultimate Godhead.

II.d. Here Bahā'u'llāh states that, during the days before he became a Bābī, he was free of difficulties; not an "atom of misfortune" befell him until he recognised God's Remembrance (Dhikr = the Bāb). As a Bābī God then made him a means by which His " Self might become known" until "oceans of sadness" overcame him. Such was the will of God.

II.e. By means of rhetorical questions Bahā'u'llāh testifies to the impossibility of directly calling upon God— in His essence— yet acknowledges the necessity of his doing so in the light of God's benefits and favours.

II.f. Once again Bahā'u'llāh confesses his failure to call upon God ; probably during the period following the martyrdom of the Bāb referred to as "those darkest of nights" and "those lengthy periods of gloom" when Mīrzā Yahyā was head of the Bābī community. Yahyā appears to be referred to as the " Dove of the Command" (ḥamāmat al-amr) which sings out from the Siniatic heights (cf. on I.a -b; above) with God's " eternal melodies" (bi-taghaniyat azaliyyat^{ka}; n.b. azaliyya) and the "Light-filled Bird" (ḥamāmat al-nūriyya) which warbles beyond the realm of "Concealed Divinity" (al-^camā'). Possibly alluding to his own secret messianic aspirations— despite the role of Mīrzā Yahyā — Bahā'u'llāh underlines the exalted nature of his mystic experiences (in the 'Black Pit' [Siyāh Chāl] in Tehran in late 1852 ?). Though he was extremely saddened by the condition of the Bābīs following the Bāb's martyrdom he found comfort through his close communion with God.

III.a. Addressing Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn Bahā'u'llāh informs him that he had not previously desired to respond to questions posed by Bābīs but will enlighten him in view of his great faith. This despite the fact that he is much grieved and misrepresented by " the people" (see below on XII).

III.b. Qur'am 3:87 is described in exalted terms and said to be possessed of an infinitude of subtle meanings. "Food" (ta^cam) has "diverse levels" of meaning four of which will (initially) be explained; i.e. the meaning of "food" relative to the realms of (1) Lāhūt, (2) Jabarūt, (3) Malakūt and (4) Nasūt— its meaning in Hāhūt being known only to God (see below).

At this point it may be noted that there are innumerable references in the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh to the hierarchy of metaphysical realms mentioned above. Well known in theosophical Sufism and given a variety of interpretations the following notes must suffice to give some idea of their meaning: ¹.

Hāhūt = the realm of the Divine Ipseity (huwīyya > huwa = "He is"); the inaccessible realm of the Divine Essence.

Lāhūt = the exalted realm of God's Self-disclosure; the transcendent realm of the Divine Epiphany.

Jabarūt = the realm of the Divine Omnipotence; the realm of the Divine Decrees or spiritual powers.

Malakūt = the realm of the Divine Sovereignty; the world of the Kingdom or sphere of the Angels (cf. Qur'an 6:75; 8:185, etc.).

Nasūt = the realm of the Divine creation; the world of humanity.

In drawing on the hierarchy of the metaphysical realms in order to express something of the esoteric senses of the "food" (ta^cam) mentioned in Qur'an 3:87 Bahā'u'llāh echoes a hermeneutic method adopted by the Bāb who frequently gave Qur'anic verses, terms and letters of the alphabet a variety of senses in these realms. In his Tafsīr Sūrat al-^cAsr (Commentary on Sūra 103 of the Qur'an) for example, he comments on the letter ayn (the 4th letter) as follows:

"Now as regards the fourth letter [of Sura 103] which is the letter ayn [E]. It signifieth the sublimity of the Divine Unicity (quluw al-ahadiyya) in the realms of Lāhūt (maqāmāt al-lāhūt); the sublimity of the Divine Uniqueness (quluw al-wāhidiyya) in the grades of Jabarūt (shu'unāt al-jabarūt); the sublimity of the Divine Mercy (quluw al-rahmaniyya) in the realms of the dominion (al-mulk) and Malakūt; the sublimity of the Divine Perpetuity (quluw al-samad-

1. For further details see, for example, L. Gardet, art. ĀLAM in EI² Vol. 1. pp.350-2; A. Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam (University of North Carolina Press 1975), 270.

-aniyya) in that God revealed Himself (tajalā Allāh) unto all (and) in all in the realities of the "selves" (rī haqā'iq al-anfus) and the "horizons" (al-afāq ; see Qur'an 41:53) in the land of Nasūt." ¹.

Furthermore, though not immediately apparent, Bahā'u'llāh (at III.e-f), in his initial comments on the meaning of "food", draws on other mystical configurations found in the writings of the Bāb. In particular the following correspondences may be diagrammatically expressed:

"REALMS"	"COLOURS"	"PARADISES"
<u>Hāhūt</u>	—	("Attributes") <u>Oneness</u> (<u>jannat al-ahadiyya</u>)
[1] <u>Lāhūt</u>	<u>White</u> (<u>nūr al-bayda'</u>)	<u>Endless Duration</u> (<u>jannat al-samadiyya</u>)
[2] <u>Jabarūt</u>	<u>Yellow</u> (<u>ard al-safra'</u>)	<u>Uniqueness</u> (<u>jannat al-wahidiyya</u>)
[3] <u>Malakūt</u>	<u>Green</u> (<u>ard al-khadra'</u>)	<u>Justice</u> (<u>jannat al-^cadl</u>)
[4] <u>Nasūt</u>	<u>Red</u> (<u>ard al-hamra'</u>)	<u>Bounty</u> (<u>jannat al-fadl</u>)

These correspondences are not accidental. The various expressions indicative of the four colours are set out according to the scheme adopted by the Bāb in his Persian Bayān (see III.10. IV.18. cf. VIII.5) and other writings. E.G. Browne had noted the Bāb's use of such 'correspondences' and drawn up the following chart: ².

Fire	Air	Earth	Water
White	Yellow	Green	Red

1. Tafsīr Sūrat al-Asr in Iran National Bahā'ī Archives Private Publication Vol. 69 (pp.21-119), p.41. See also for example, Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar (Commentary on Sūra of the Qur'an); Camb. Univ. Lib. Browne Coll. MS. Or. F 10(7), fol.19f.

2. Refer, E.G. Browne, Index of Chief Contents of the Persian Bayān in [idem. Ed.], Kitāb-i Nuqtatu'l-Kāf.. (Leyden 1910), LXI.f.

"Heart" (fū'ad)	Spirit (ruh)	Soul (nafs)	Body (jism)
Diamond	Topaz	Emerald	Ruby
Creation	Provision	Life	Death

It should be clear then, that in his Lahū-i Kull al-Ta'ām, Bahā'u'llāh does not use esoteric terminology in an arbitrary fashion. The hierarchy of metaphysical realms are mentioned in classical order (not all authorities include Hāhūt: Lāhūt often expressing the Divine transcendence); loosely speaking from the world of God → the world of mankind. Corresponding, among other things, to the four elements, the four colours are set forth in accordance with the Bābī scheme—i.e. white → yellow → green → red. The various attributes associated with the succession of paradises (or gardens) bear some relation to the senses that might be attributed to the hierarchy of metaphysical realms as well, it seems (cf. below) to the Bābī hierarchy conceived to be --: God/ the Bāb (n.b. ahadiyya); Qudūs (n.b. samadiyya); Mīrzā Yahyā (n.b. wahidiyya); Bahā'u'llāh (n.b. adl) and the believers (n.b. fadl).

Also worth noting is the fact that the terms Hāhūt and Lāhūt (expressive of the most elevated spiritual heights) are both in genitive relationship with the word "throne" (arsh) while the terms Jabarūt and Malakūt (expressive of the lower yet also heavenly realms) are both in genitive relationship with terms expressive of 'water', namely, tamātām (= [loosely] 'depths') and gamāqām (= [loosely] 'fathomless deep')—note also the rhyme.¹ This may well be expressive of Qur'ānic or mystical cosmology; the notion that the 'throne of God' rests upon the 'waters' (see, for example, Qur'an 11:7). The word arsh is linked with the upper divine realms and tamātām and gamāqām with the lower yet heavenly spheres where celestial "water" (cf. Gen 1; for the ancients the source of rain) was thought to be stored.

1. Internal rhyme is a feature of many of Bahā'u'llāh's writings. Certain alwāh are meant to be heard and have, when chanted in their original tongue, an hypnotic and Dhikr-type effect. Content is, at times, along with strict grammar, subordinate to the dhikr dimension. Western and some oriental critics of Bahā'u'llāh's grammar and style often fail to appreciate these facts. An English translation of, for example, the opening line of Bahā'u'llāh's Sūrat al-Khitāb (= ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ عَلَى هَيْئَتِ النَّارِ نَبِي هَيْكَلِ الْكُورِ)
 من سرور الانسان باذن الرحمن قد كان في قطب الجنان بالحق مشهوراً
 could not possibly reflect the rhythm of the Arabic (text from an unpublished MS).
2. Note also that naṣūt (in paragraph III.g) is in genitive relationship with "point" (nuqṭat): thus, Throne, Waters, Point.

III.c In this paragraph, though Bahā'u'llāh relates the significance of "food" (ta'ām) to the "throne of Hāhūt" and "Paradise of the Divine Oneness" (jannat al-ahadiyya) he underlines the fact that the most exalted level of the mysteries of Qur'an 3:87 cannot be explained by anyone. In the realm or station (maqām) of the Divine Ipseity God alone is informed of its meanings. Not even Bahā'u'llāh himself—in view of his oppressed condition—is informed of a single letter of its hidden secrets. Few, it is made clear, could sustain the impact of the disclosure of the spiritual forces which exist in the most transcendent realm. Should "oceans of light" (abḥar al-nūr) surge forth from the world of the Godhead all would be "drowned" save a number of exalted Bābīs (? = "Letters of Manifestation"; ahruf al-zuh-ūr).

When Bahā'u'llāh states that the realm or station (maqām) of the "Paradise of the Divine Oneness" is that of the (loosely) "Unique Sonship" (ibniyyat al-ahadiyya), the "Incomparable Israelicity" (Isrā'iliyyat al-firdāniyya) and "Resplendent Selfhood" (nafsaniyyat al-lama'aniyya) he may be suggesting that the unfathomable archetypes of the mysteries of Qur'an 3:87 (note the use of three of the key terms in this verse [ibn = son > banī the oblique plural, banī Isrā'il = "children/sons of Israel"; Isrā'il and nafs = 'self' cf. nafsihi = "his self"] in relative adjectival form in construct state with similar forms expressive of God's singleness and resplendence) exist in this lofty sphere. Here the exoteric (zāhir) and esoteric (bāṭin) aspects of Qur'an 3:87 (? — or perhaps this transcendent realm) are one and the same. In the exalted world of the Divinity there is no 'exteriority' and no 'interiority'. Such 'limitations' are transcended.

III.d. The "Paradise of Endless Duration" (jannat al-samadiyya) is here described as the realm or station (maqām) of "He [God] is He [God, Himself]" (هُوَ هُوَ; see further on III.e. below). It is appropriate, as this expression indicates, that the highest 'knowable realm' is that in which nothing but God Himself is disclosed or truly existent; all things being 'subsumed' in God' and all 'stations' expressive of His glory. The realm of Lāhūt, it might be deduced, is the most lofty sphere occupied by God's divine Manifestations and chosen ones. Indeed, the exalted inhabitants of this realm are those who are established upon the "Seat of Glory" (kursi al-jalāl). Allusion is made to Qur'an 76:5 when it is said that they drink "liquid camphor" (mā' al-kāfūr) nigh unto the "All-Beauteous One" (al-jamāl).¹

1. cf. Bahā'u'llāh, Haft Wādī in Āthār-i Qalam-i Āqlī Vol. III (n.p. [Tihiran] 121 Badī^c) p. 130 where Qur'an 76:5 is quoted in connection with the secrets of the 'seventh valley' (faqr-i haqiqī wa fanā' aslī).

III.e. The "Paradise of the Divine Unicity" (jannat al-wāhidiyya) is described as the realm or station (maqām) of "Thou art He [God] and He [God] is Thou" (أَنْتَ هُوَ وَهُوَ أَنْتَ). This, in other words is the realm of the affirmation of Divinity on the part of exalted beings one level below that of the realm of the claim of identity with God beyond duality. (that spoken of in III.d.) The phrases " He is He" (هُوَ هُوَ see III.d.) and "Thou art He and He is Thou" (أَنْتَ هُوَ وَهُوَ أَنْتَ in III.e.) form part of certain Shī'ī traditions (ahādīth) indicative of the exalted status or divinity of the Prophet Muhammad and the Imāms.¹ Such traditions were frequently quoted by the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh. In writings of the Iraq and later periods Bahā'u'llāh quotes them in connection with the exalted claims of the Messengers or Manifestations of God. He argues that the great Prophets claim Divinity but not identity with the absolute unknowable essence of God since they also affirm their humanity or distinguish themselves from the absolute Godhead. Explaining the mysteries of the "City of Unity" (madinat al-tawhīd) in his Jawāhir al-Asrār (late 1850's) he, at one point, writes:

" And this is the station (maqām) which hath been mentioned in the tradition (hadīth), " I, verily am He [God] and He [God] is I [Myself] except that He is [what] He [is] and I [am what] I [am] (أَنَا هُوَ وَهُوَ أَنَا). And if, in that realm (maqām), the 'Sealed Temple' (haykal al-khatm = the Prophet Muhammad ?) should say, " I verily, am the Point of Origin" (nuqtat al-badā') he, assuredly, speaketh the truth. And if he should say, " I, verily, am other than that" this likewise is a certain truth. And if he should say, " I verily, am the Lord of the Dominion and the Kingdom (sahib al-mulk wa'l-malakūt) or " the King of Kings" (malik al-mulūk) or " the Sovereign of the Divine Realm (sultan al-jabarūt) or (I am) Muhammad or 'Alī or their progeny' or aught else such is undoubtedly confirmed on the part of God..." 2.

A similar passage is contained in Bahā'u'llāh's Kitāb-i Iqān (written between 1858 and 1862). After underlining the unknowability of the essence of God and stressing that His divine Manifestations represent Him in all respects— it being impossible to relate to God independently of them—

1. For a note on the source of such traditions see, for example, Ishraq Khāvarī, Qamūs-i Iqān Vol.1. (n.p. [Tehran] 127 Badī'c), p.166f. and Vol.4 (n.p. [Tehran] 128 Badī'c), pp.1802-3.
2. Bahā'u'llāh, Jawāhir al-Asrār in Āthār Qalam-i A'ālā Vol.III (n.p. [Tehran] 121 Badī'c), pp. 35-6.

he writes:

" ..They [the messengers or manifestations of God] are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed a light that can never fade. Even as He hath said: " There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and Them; except that they are Thy servants, and are created of Thee." This is the significance of the tradition: " I am He, Himself, and He is I, myself (أَنَا هُوَ وَهُوَ أَنَا)." 1.

Again, responding to criticisms surrounding his claim to Divinity in his Lawh-i Shaykh.. (Ibn-i Dhi'b ; c.1891), he writes:

" Men have failed to perceive Our purpose in the references We have made to Divinity (الرّهیت) and Godhood (رہ) (بيت). Were they to apprehend it, they would arise from their places and cry out: " We verily, ask pardon of God! " The Seal of the Prophets [Muhammad].. saith: " Manifold are Our relationships with God. At one time, We are He Himself, and He is We Ourselves. At another He is that He is, and We are that We are" (لنا مع الله حالات نحن فيها هو هو نحن و هو هو نحن) (نعم).

The "Paradise of the Divine Unicity" (jannat al-wāhidiyya) and world of Jabarūt is then, the realm of the affirmation of Divinity. It is appropriate that it is allotted to exalted believers who do nothing save at God's bidding for they are manifestations of "Thou art He and He is Thou" described in Qur'ān 21:27.³

III.f. That "Paradise of Justice" (jannat al-^cadl) is allotted to those believers whom nothing distracts from the remembrance of God (see Qur'ān 24:27). As "companions of the Light" (ashāb al-nūr) they find rest upon the "carpet [or expanse ?] of the Almighty" (bisāt al-^cizz) in the realm of Malakūt.⁴

III.g. What is here, relative to the "Paradise of the Divine Bounty" (jannat al-fadl), meant by the expressions "the Golden Secret" (sirr al-safra'), "the Snow-White Mystery" (mustasirr al-baydā') and "Point of Nasūt" (nuqtat al-nasūt) is not clear. It is possible that the first two of these expressions allude to leading Bābīs who represent the Bāb on earth (the Bāb being alluded to as the nuqtat al-nasūt; note the use of the colours

1. Bahā'u'llāh, Kitāb-i Iqān (NSA of the Baha'is of Germany 1980), p.75 ; trans. Shoghi Effendi, The Kitāb-i-Iqān (London 1961), p.65.
2. Bahā'u'llāh, Lawh-i..Shaykh.. (n.p. n.d.), pp. 51-2; trans. Shoghi Effendi, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (Wilmette 1971), p.43.
3. cf. Bahā'u'llāh's Chahār Wadī (in Āthār-i Qalam-i A'ālā, Vol.III) p.147 where Qur'ān 21:27 is also quoted.
4. cf. Bahā'u'llāh; ibid., p.146 (Qur'ān 24:27 quoted).

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yellow and white used in connection with the higher realms of Jabarūt and Lahūt). Alternatively, all three expressions may simply indicate that the forces of the higher worlds are operative in the human world. Thus the statement that the "proofs [or 'guides' ?] of the Remembrance" (adillā' al-dhikr; dhikr= the Bāb ?) are greatest (akbar) therein.

IV.a. In this paragraph Bahā'u'llāh laments the fact that the Bāb, referred to as the "Primal Point" (nuqtat al-ūlā; the spiritual source and locus of being), is no longer alive to comfort him (see the parallel lament over the absence of Quddūs to comfort him, paragraph VII.e.). When he writes, " Would that I had died after him [i.e. along with the Bāb] before these days or were one quite forgotten, consigned to oblivion" he draws on Qur'ān 19:22 (the virgin Mary's lament over the birth of her fatherless child, Jesus).

IV.b. Here Bahā'u'llāh addresses the " Concourse" (most likely his fellow Bābīs) calling upon them not to falsely accuse him, acknowledge that he claims naught but servitude, and be conscious of the fewness of his days (see further X.b. and XII). God protects him as he protected others (more specifically the Bāb ?) before him and bears witness to the truth of his standing within the Bābī community. It is not for the ignorant (among the Bābīs ?) to attempt to question his motives or determine God's will.

In this paragraph we find hints of opposition to the efforts of Bahā'u'llāh to regenerate the Bābī community (from other Bābīs) during the early Baghdad period. Apart from what will be said below in this connection attention may at this point be drawn to the following words of Shoghi Effendi—probably based on the Tārīkh-i Nabīl (Vol. II) and expressive of opposition to Bahā'u'llāh during his first year in ^cIraq :

" A clandestine opposition, whose aim was to nullify every effort exerted, and frustrate every design conceived by Bahā'u'llāh for the rehabilitation of a distracted [Bābī] community, could now be clearly discerned. Insinuations, whose purpose was to sow the seeds of doubt and suspicion and to represent him as a usurper, as a subverter of the laws instituted by the Bāb, and the wrecker of His Cause, were being incessantly circulated. His Epistles, interpretations, invocations and commentaries were being covertly and indirectly criticised, challenged and misrepresented. An attempt to injure his person was even set afoot [see XII below] but failed to materialize." 1.

1. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By (Wilmette Illinois, 1979), p. 117.

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V.a. In this paragraph Bahā'u'llāh, addressing Mirza Kamāl al-Dīn, acknowledges his steadfastness— despite his being tested— and in the light of his power of understanding, informs him of his desire to expound Qur'ān 3:87 still further. He draws on abstruse Siniatic imagery rooted in the Qur'ān and much developed in many of his own and the Bāb's writings and alludes to certain verses of the (Qur'ānic) Sūra of the Cave (18: 17-18).

It is difficult to understand what Bahā'u'llāh intended by the words, " When the breezes of love (aryāh al-muhabba) spilled over from the right-side of the Siniatic Tree (shajarat al-tūr) you [Mirzā Kamāl al-Dīn] were turned [or ' he/it turned you ' : yugallibuka; cf. ' We turned them ' nuqallibuhum in Qur'ān 18:18a] to the right and to the left" (or ' on [your] right-side and on your left ' ; dhāt al-yamīn wa dhāt al-shimāl, see Qur'ān 18:18a). It may be that Bahā'u'llāh refers to himself as the one from whom " breezes of love" (= the inspired words of the Lah-i Kull al-Ta'ām ?) spilled over from the Siniatic-Tree (= Bahā'u'llāh ? ; the phrase " right side" yamīn is, in this connection, an allusion to the side of the Mount (tūr) from which God called out to Moses, see Qur'ān 19:52f, etc., cf. Exodus 3:1) turning him to the right and to the left (= testing the extent of his faith by revealing divinely inspired verses despite Mirzā Yahyā's leadership role ?). He remained in the " Cave of Light" (kahf al-nūr ; steadfast in faith ?) by God's leave. Alternatively this whole paragraph may allude to the fact that Mirzā Kamāl al-Dīn remained faithful to Mirzā Yahyā (= the Siniatic Tree) from whom he had been denied access and received a disappointing commentary on Qur'ān 3:87. He, in other words, remained faithful to Bābism (was protected in the " Cave of Light") despite being tested in faith (= " turned to the right side and to the left "). That, whatever, the significance of this difficult paragraph, the allusions to Qur'ān 18:17-18 have to do with Mirzā Kamāl al-Dīn's being tested in faith and remaining steadfast is clear. This inasmuch as the story of the ' Companions of the Cave ' has (see Qur'ān 18: 18:13ff, esp. 18: 13-14 and 17b) to do with steadfastness in the true path under difficult circumstances and was understood by Bahā'u'llāh on these lines. In his Chahār Wādī (Four Valleys, c. 1858 ?) Bahā'u'llāh quotes Qur'ān 18:16 in the context of difficulties or tests encountered by the mystic wayfarer :

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"On this plane (maqām) the tempests (talātum) are many and the surging waves (tamātum) innumerable. Now is the wayfarer lifted up [to heaven] now is he cast down [to hell]. Thus hath it been said: " Now thou drawest me towards the throne of the realm of unknowing (ʿarsh al-ʿamā) ; again Thou castest me into the nethermost fire (nār al-ighmā) ". The mystery treasured in this plane (maqām) is divulged in the following blessed verse from the [Sūra of the] Cave: " And thou wouldst have seen the sun, when it arose, declining to the right from their cave and when it set leaving them on their left; while they were in its spacious chamber. This is one of the signs of God. Guided indeed is he whom God guideth; but for him whom God misleadeth, thou shalt by no means find a patron" (18:16). " 1.

Though subject to tests and trials or changes of fortune, it may be deduced from the context in which the above words were written (see the whole of the second of the ' Four Valleys '), there are lofty souls who are not distracted from the true path. In Qur'ān 18:16 the fact that the sun, when it had risen, declined to the right-hand side of the Cave, and then, when setting, passed by its left-hand side appears to indicate, for Bahā'u'llāh, the positive and negative operations of the Divine Providence (n.b. Qur'ān 18:16b). Though the ' sun ' appeared at diverse points those within the ' cave ' of true faith remained steadfast— remained within it — they saw the will of God at work in all things and at all times. That the ' cave ' (kahf) may be understood to signify the state of true faith (n.b. ' Cave of Light ' kahf al-nūr) may, it might be added, be deduced from, for example, the Bāb's Qayyūm al-Asmā (Commentary on sūra 12 of the Qur'ān, written 1844). In chapter LXXIII (on Qur'ān 12:72) of this work, which is entitled " The Cave " (al-kahf) and which, in large measure consists of an interesting midrashic type rewrite of Qur'ān 18:9ff, the Bāb identifies Himself with the " Cave " : " And the Cave (kahf) is this Gate (al-bāb) inscribed in the Mother Book (umm al-kitāb) about the [Siniatic] Fire. . . The companions of the Cave (ashāb al-kahf) are seven letters (n.b. the 7 letters of ʿAlī Muḥammad the Bāb's name) of " Thy [God's or the Bāb's ?] names " and the " companions of the Bāb " (ashāb al-bāb) who came to believe in him. Qur'ān 18:17-18 has to do with the " forerunners about the Bāb " (sābiqūn haul al-bāb; i.e. the Bāb's first disciples and their coming to faith in him). 2.

1. Bahā'u'llāh, Chahār Wādī, (in AQA, Vol. III; see above), p. 145. trans., (adapted) in Ali-Kuli Khan and M. Gail, The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys (Wilmette Illinois 1968), p. 50.

2. For details see Qayyūm al-Asmā LXXIII, Camb. Univ. Lib. Browne Coll. MS F.11., f. 127b. ff.

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In the light of the foregoing it may then, be deduced that the reference in the Lawh-i Kull al-Taʿām to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn's being " turned to the right and to the left " but remaining protected in the " Cave of Light " has to do with his being tested and remaining steadfast in the Bābī faith.

V.b. Having, in abstruse language, borne witness to Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn's steadfast faith and power of understanding, Bahā'u'llāh sets forth an interpretation of key terms in Qur'ān 3:87:

" food " (taʿām) = the essence of knowledge (nafs al-ʿilm) or, in other words, " all branches of learning " (kull al-ʿulūm);

" Israel " = the " Primal Point " (nuqtat al-ūlā), that is, the Bāb;

" the children of Israel " = " He whom God.. made a Proof (ḥujja) unto the people in these days " ; as noted, below, an allusion to Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role (?).

The words " except what Israel made unlawful for itself (or himself) " indicates that which the Bāb made unlawful—presumably in his legalistic pronouncements. The Bāb abrogated Islāmic law replacing it with his own.

V.c. Bahā'u'llāh here calls upon Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn to acknowledge the divinely inspired and binding nature of the laws of the dispensation of the Bayān. (= " all that God decreed [presumably through the Bāb] in the Book "). All Bābīs must accept and follow the laws of the Bāb.

As noted below it may be deduced from the second part of paragraph V.c. that Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn had been troubled by an antinomian Bābī faction (in Iraq ? or in Naraq ?). This " faction " (al-fiʿat, the correct reading) imagined themselves to be rightly guided but evidently disregarded the legalistic aspects of the Bāb's writings. Such Bābī factions, some libertine others gnostic in their transcendence of legal norms, were probably widespread in Iran after the Bāb's execution. In this respect it is worth drawing attention to the missionary H.A. Stern's encounter with anti-Islāmic and militant if not antinomian Bābīs in Mazandaran in the early 1850's :

" In returning to my lodging, I met a good number of Mahomedans who enquired whether I had any tracts against their Prophet. Upon my asking why they wanted such pamphlets, they replied with great caution. . . Because we detest Mahomed and ridicule his Koran. " During the short conversation I had with them in the street, I learnt that they were secret followers of Baba [sic. = the Bāb]. . . I informed my acquaintances in the street, that I should be glad to see them in the caravanserai, but they were afraid to meet me, for fear of exciting suspicion. One of them, who from his white turban appeared to be a mullah,

said, "Inshallah," (i.e., please God) "we shall yet drive Mahomed, Ali, and all the Imams from Persia; and whether we become Inglesse [English] or Russ [Russian], (meaning Christians of either Churches) is to us a matter of indifference, since all creeds are better than that of the Arabian robber." I was glad to get out of their company, for although they appeared to belong to the aristocracy of the place [apparently Barfurush], still their language was too violent, and their opposition and hatred to the Prophet of Mecca [Muhammad] too bitter, for any lengthened conversation in the public thoroughfare." 1.

VI.a. Bahā'u'llāh here addresses Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn. In the light of the fact that he had turned to the true sources of guidance it is explained that "food" (also) signifies the "Bearer of the Cause" (sahib al-amr; a technical term indicative of an individual who is a source of religious authority and guidance); that is, Mīrzā Yahyā.

It is difficult to maintain that the "Morn of Eternity" (subh al-azal) whose "lights" (anwar, pl. of nūr) have "filled the horizons" (an allusion to Qur'an 41:53) is anyone other than Mīrzā Yahyā, Subh al-Azal. By the "Light of Endless Duration" (nūr al-samadiyya) whose traces have appeared upon the "Temples of Irradiation" (hayakil al-ishraq; here there is obvious allusion to the 5th clause of the Hadīth Kumayl) is probably meant Quddūs or Bahā'u'llāh² or possibly Yahyā again. Furthermore, there is very likely reference to the leadership role of Mīrzā Yahyā when it is stated that the "Lamp of Eternality" (siraj al-azaliyya; n.b. azaliyya) "in these days" (fi tilka'l-ayyam) sheds splendour upon the "Luminary of the Realm of Unknowing" (misbah al-cama').

It may thus be deduced that, in the first part of paragraph VI.a., Bahā'u'llāh informs Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn that Mīrzā Yahyā is the "bearer of the cause" (of the Bāb). At the time when the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am was written, it may be noted at this point, acceptance of the leadership role of Mīrzā Yahyā also implied acceptance of the authority of Bahā'u'llāh.

Having identified "food" (ta'am) with the "Bearer of the Cause" (= Mīrzā Yahyā) it is appropriate that Bahā'u'llāh goes on to identify

1. H.A. Stern, Dawnings of Light in the East. (London 1854), pp. 261-2.
2. Derivatives of the root SMD in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am occur in contexts suggestive of Quddūs or Bahā'u'llāh—Bahā'u'llāh may, early in the Iraq period, have been seen as the "return" of Quddūs (?); cf. above on I.a., III.b. and below on VII.b. Samad (=loosely 'Endless Duration') is a Qur'anic hapaxlegomenon (Qur'an 112:2 only). Quddūs, it is worth noting in this connection, wrote a commentary (now apparently lost) on the letter sad of Sanad (or on the Sūrat al-Tawhīd, Sūra 112).

"Israel" with "the Primal Will" (al-mashiyya al-awwaliyya) by means of which God created all things. For the Bāb the Divine Manifestations and holy souls are 'incarnations' of al-mashiyya (= the Divine Will; and not the ultimate Divine Essence [al-dhāt]). In many passages in his writings he represents al-mashiyya as an hypostatic reality which God called into being (from nothing) in order to (indirectly) create the phenomenal world—God, in his transcendence did not directly create anything.¹ In his Tafsīr Sūrat al-Hamd he explicitly states that God called His Will (al-mashiyya) into being from nothing and made it the cause of all else besides Himself.² Also worth noting in this connection is the fact that the Bāb in his Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqara, commenting on Qur'an 2: 83 about ten years before Bahā'u'llāh wrote the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'am, had identified "Israel" with al-mashiyya and the "children of Israel" with all that was brought into being by it.³

Presupposing that the Bāb is an 'incarnation' of al-mashiyya Bahā'u'llāh also identifies the "children of Israel" with the Bābīs; that is, those who came, in the "year sixty" (= 1260 AH = 1844 AD; the first year of the Bāb's ministry) to believe in him and all who, up till the eschatological consummation, will come to believe in him. The "Day" on which "He (= God) shall assemble the people before the Lord of the Worlds" (= God or, for Bābīs man yuzhiruhu'llāh [the Bābī messiah figure]) is the eschatological "Day" spoken of in the Qur'an (see, for example, Q.) when, following the final resurrection, God will gather all people and execute judgement. In his later writings Bahā'u'llāh explains the eschatological gathering before God in terms of his own mission— he having appeared in the station of "Godhead" (though not as an incarnation of the Divine Essence).⁴

At the end of paragraph VI.a Bahā'u'llāh, having acknowledged Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn's faith status and referred to Bābīs who have and those who will come to believe, assures him that God's guidance will continue to be given to the people of the Bayān. God, he explains— probably in the light of Bābī factionalism and apostasy and the slow growth-rate of the community— desires good (the Bābī Cause) for the people but the people limit

1. See for example, Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqara (Tehran Bahā'ī Archives MS 6014 C) p. 88ff; Sāhifa-yi Adliyya (n.p. [Tehran] n.d.), p. 16; Tafsīr Bismillāh (Tehran Bahā'ī Archives MS 6014 C) p. 301ff
2. Tafsīr Sūrat al-Hamd (in Iran National Bahā'ī Archives Priv. Pub. Vol. 69), p. 10ff.
3. Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqara, p. 223. See further ibid., pp. 168, 176, 270.
4. See in particular, Bahā'u'llāh's letter to Jawād Tabrizī (Adrianople period?) in Iran National Bahā'ī Archives Priv. Pub. Vol. 73. p. 183ff.

themselves (cf. Qur'an 3:117b).The people, he states,are unaware of the fact that the "Light of God" (cf. Yahya's leadership role) has always been and will always be established upon the "Throne of Favour" (Carsh al-^cata). Though, in other words, the Bab is no longer alive, divine guidance is still available and his cause will ultimately triumph.

VI.b. This paragraph appears to be expressive of Bahā'u'llāh's role in guiding Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn to an 'orthodox' Bābī perspective. In difficult symbolic language it is indicated that Mīrzā Yahyā and Bahā'u'llāh are sources of divine guidance and Baghdad the centre of the Bābī world.

That Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn was lifted up to the summit of the "Mount of Light" (tūr al-nūr) and elevated to the peak of the "Mount of Servitude" (tūr al-^cubudiyya) probably indicates his coming to accept the leadership roles of Mīrzā Yahyā and Bahā'u'llāh : the former being alluded to as tūr al-nūr (n.b. nūr) and the latter as tūr al-^cubudiyya (n.b. ubud-^ciyya ; cf. on IX.a. and X.b.)¹. That he was "enabled to drink deep of the Water of the Divine Oneness (mā' al-ahadiyya) from the Camphor Fount (ayn al-Kafūr) at the hand of the All-Beauteous Joseph (yūsuf al-jamāl) indicat-
-es his initiation into the 'Bābī mysteries' . It is difficult to decide who might here be intended by the "All-Beauteous Joseph" ; the Bāb, Yahyā , Bahā-
-u'llāh or even man yuzhiruhu'llāh (in the unseen realm) might be alluded to. ² Bahā'u'llāh almost certainly intends himself by the phrase "Gladsome Ant" (nimlat al-mahbūr). The expressions "Land of Exhilaration" (ard al-^csurūr) and "Cradle of Tranquility" (mihād al-am[i]n) very probably signify Baghdad as the haven or locus of the light of Bābī authority. ³.

1. Perhaps, if "Mounts" (tūrān— unless it be "cycles" and kūrān "eras" or the like) at the beginning of paragraph I.c. be construed as a dual form of tūr (= the [Sinaitic] Mount), there is cryptic allusion to the leadership roles of Yahyā and Bahā'u'llāh.
2. The reference to the "All-Beauteous Joseph" is rooted in the Bāb's imāmological, mystical and qabbalistic interpretation of the 12th sūra of the Qur'an. In his Qayyūm al-Asmā, a commentary—though not in the classical sense—on this sūra, the Bāb equates Joseph with the Imām Husayn in the light of belief in his imminent eschatological return and his role as "gate" (bāb) to the hidden Imām (see for, example, chapters V.XXXII.,XXXIV. XC). Subsequent to his transference to Adhirbayjan he claimed to be both "Joseph" and the return of the Imām Husayn(in certain writings he makes the following equations: Joseph [abjad 156] = qayyūm [lit. 'self-subsisting', abjad 156] = the Qā'im = the Mahdī ; see for example, Letter to Hajji Mirza Sayyid 'Alī in Iran National Bahā'ī Archives Private Pub. Vol. 58 p.176 ; Persian Bayan VII.1.IV.4.5.,cf. Dalā'il-i Sab'a [Persian n.p.n.d.] p.49. Then, towards the end of his ministry, he came to see Joseph as a type of man yuzhiruhu'llāh (the

It is of considerable interest that Bahā'u'llāh refers to himself as the "Gladsome Ant " (nimlat al-mahbūr) which "sings out" (= reveals verses ?) about the "Cradle of Tranquility" (= Baghdad ? --or, to offer another suggestion, the haven of the Bābī Cause ?) wherein Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn found rest (= true guidance ?). By referring to himself as an "Ant" (nimlat) he may wish to draw attention to his (at this time) claim to nothing but "servitude to God" (see X. b.). Such is suggested by the expression "Ant of Servitude" (nimlat al-^cubudiyya) in paragraph IXa (on which see below). That, in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cam, Bahā'u'llāh intended himself by these genitive expressions is clear from paragraph VII.d. where he clearly refers to himself as " this lowly, this forsaken Ant " (see below). As far as I am aware the only other writing in which Bahā'u'llāh refers to himself as an "Ant" (nimlat) is the Sūrat al-Kifāya (that this is so may be indicative of its being dated to the early [pre-Sulaymaniyya?] ^cIraq period) where, at one point, we read:

" O people of the Concourse! Harken unto the song(s) of the Ant of Endless Duration (nimlat al-samadiyya) which warbleth with the verses of the Divine Unicity" (bi-āyat al-ahadiyya), ['] He, verily, is the True One (al-haqq), the Point of the Realm of Unknowing (nuqtat al-camā')², the Essence of the Divine Ipseity (jawhar al-huwiyya). ['] So exalted be God, the King, the True One, Who hath ever been powerful over all things. This is the Call of the Hoopoe of Servitude (hudhud al-^cubudiyya) in the Heaven of Manifest Justice (samā' al-cadāl) who standeth before (tilqā') the All-Glorious One (al-jalāl), ['] He, verily, is the Unseen (al-

Bābī messiah figure) whom he, in his Kitāb al-Asmā ('Book of Names' c. 1849-50), it is worth noting, refers to as the "All-Glorious Joseph" (yūsuf al-bahā') whom the Bābī (= "Jacob") await (see Ishraq Khavari Qamus-i Igan Vol.4. [n.p. [Tehran] 128 Badi^c] p. 1875).

In his writings of the post-Baghdad period Bahā'u'llāh occasionally claims to be the true Joseph: this claim being essentially equivalent to claiming to be the return of Imām Husayn and man yuzhiruhu'llāh. It is not clear however, whether the phrase yūsuf al-jamāl in paragraph VI.b. applies to him. It seems more likely that the Bāb or Yahyā is intended. There may be some connection with Bābī speculations surrounding the return of Imām Husayn (n.b. nūr = [abjad] 256 = 2 x 128 = [abjad] Husayn).

3. On "the land of exhilaration" (ard al-surūr) see below on XII. I suggest that the "Cradle of Tranquility" (mihād al-am[i]n) signifies Baghdad in the light of the Bābī understanding of the expressions amā'an (= 'a place of tranquility/ safety') and balad amā'an (" a city tranquil/ secure") in Qur'an 2: 125-6 (originally descriptive of the Meccan Ka'ba or "House" ; see for example, Qayyūm al-Asmā LV and LXXXVII. cf. Bahā'u'llāh's eventual designation of his house in Baghdad as the "Most-Great House of God" [or the like] and its becoming a place of Bahā'ī pilgrimage).

ghayb), the Pure Wine of Manifestation (sirf al-zuhūr), the Mystery of the All-Beauteous One (sirr al-jamal) [1]. So praised be He, He is God Who hath ever been witness unto all things." 1.

The exact source of the motif of the "ant" as applied by Bahā'u'llāh to himself is not clear. It may be that it is rooted in a Bābī exegesis of Qur'ān 27:15ff.² Obscure interpretations of Qur'ānic verses and prophetic stories are not uncommon in Bābī-Bahā'ī scripture. No less obscure for example, than Bahā'u'llāh's referring to himself as an "ant" is the Bāb's equating Imam ^cAlī with the "gnat" mentioned in Qur'ān 2:26.³

VII.a. Here Bahā'u'llāh states that he, in his "sorrow and anguish" continually complains to God. This since God alone is aware of his troubled state of mind and difficult circumstances. Swearing by God he represents himself as more dejected than any of his contemporaries. All things "possessed of spirit" weep over his plight to the degree that eschatological catastrophes are all but precipitated—in the Qur'ān it is predicted that the heavens will be cleft asunder, the earth split open and the mountains levelled on the "Day" of resurrection. His plight is such that the "Eye of Time" has never witnessed its like.

Despite his intense spiritual anguish Bahā'u'llāh is patient and forbearing. He commits all his affairs to God Who might see fit to protect him from his wayward contemporaries.

VII.b. Having bemoaned his plight Bahā'u'llāh yet informs Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn that he is capable of revealing countless explanations of Qur'ān 3:87.⁴ He states that he could, through God's grace and bounty, expound this verse from his own day (the early 1850's) until the future eschatological consu-

1. Sūrat al-Kifāya (in INBA, Priv.Pub. Vol. 36), p. 278 . On the Sūrat al-Kifāya see below .
2. Qur'ān 27:15ff narratives a story of Solomon and contains the only Qur'ānic use of the word ant (namlat/nimlat). Worth noting in the light of the above is the fact that the ant asks God to admit it to the ranks of His righteous servants ('ibadika al-sālihīn)— note also the role of the hoopoe (Q.27:27f; cf. above on IX.a). I wonder if Bahā'u'llāh expressed his role within the Bābī community during the early Iraq period by means of motifs derived from an allegorical interpretation of Qur'an 27:15ff ?
3. See Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqara , p. 92.
4. In line with many traditions (ahadith) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and the (Shī'ī) Imams Bahā'u'llāh, throughout his ministry, expressed the conviction that Qur'ānic verses have countless levels of meaning. See for example, Letter to Jawād Tabrizī in INBA, Priv.Pub. Vol. 73. p.183.

summation. The expression al-mustaghāth (lit. 'the One[God] Who is invoked [for help]') is found in the writings of the Bāb and appears to be a gematric cipher indicative of the terminus ad quem or latest point in time at which man yuzhiruhu'llāh will appear. It has a numerical value of 2001 ($م = 40 + س = 60 + ت = 400 + ع = 1000 + ا = 1 + ث = 500 = [total] 2001$) and led some Bābīs to suppose that the "greater resurrection" or eschatological consummation would be in the distant future (1844 + 2001 = 3845 AD)¹. In several of his writings of the Baghdad period (1853—1863) Bahā'u'llāh refers to the future advent of man yuzhiruhu'llāh (without identifying himself as this Bābī messiah) and uses the expression al-mustaghāth in this connection.² From the early 1860's however, he came to claim to be the "return" (raj'ā) of the Bāb and the appearance of man yuzhiruhu'llāh. He associated the term al-mustaghāth with his own day.³

In the second half of paragraph VII.b. Bahā'u'llāh appears to state that it is in the light of God's continuing to inspire leading Bābīs that he could provide countless explanations of Qur'ān 3:87. The power of revelation, mediated from on high is still operative. The "Sun of Manifestation" (shams al-zuhūr; = Divine Guidance) still shines upon the people of the Bayān.

Allusion may be made to the following persons --sources of divine guidance—in the following expressions --: "Mystery of the Divine Oneness (sirr al-ahadiyya; n.b. ahad) = the Bāb; "Ocean of Endless Duration"

1. See for example, Persian Bayān II.16; II.17; III.15; VII.10 . The word mustaghāth, it should be noted, is used by the Bāb along with ahyāth (= 'the Most Succouring'; abjad = $ا = 1 + ح = 1,000 + س = 10 + ث = 500 [total] = 1511$) and ghiyāth (also abjad 1511) to express the eschatological terminus ad quem. Elsewhere in his writings the Bāb intimates the imminent appearance of man yuzhiruhu'llāh or states that the time of the ultimate eschatological "Hour" is known only to God. Azalī writers have tended to stress the distantly future aspects of the Bāb's predictions— which are not consistent—and Bahā'īs (in the light of Bahā'u'llāh's claim, during the 1860's to be man yuzhiruhu'llāh) their imminent dimension.
2. See for example, Shoghi Effendi, trans. The Kitāb-i-Iqān, pp. 147, 158. cf. Jawāhir al-Asrār (in AQA, Vol. III), pp. 43, 66, 83.
3. cf. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Tablet on the Mission of Moses' in Ishraq Khāvarī (Ed) Mā'ida-yi Asmānī Vol. 4 (n.p. [Tehran] 129 Badī'c), p. 41.

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(bahr al-samadiyya; n.b. samad) = Quddūs; "Countenance of Light" (ṭal^cat al-nūr; n.b. nūr) = Mīrzā Yahyā. That the "Countenance of Light hath beamed forth from the right-side of the Tree of the Command (shajarat al-amr; n.b. al-amr) in these days.." is very likely a reference to the leadership role of Mīrzā Yahyā who stands below, in the hierarchy of sources of guidance, the Bāb and Quddūs (see above).

Such alleged 'correspondences' may seem speculative but a close study of the use of Arabic terms indicative of divine attributes in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām leads to the conclusion that leading Bābīs are alluded to. A pattern emerges which may be seen in paragraphs III (c—g see the chart below) VI.a (cf. VI.b) and VII.b. The Bābī hierarchy, it may be deduced, is indicated as follows—: The Bāb (n.b. the uses of ahadiyya), Quddūs (n.b. the uses of samad[ān] liyya), Mīrzā Yahyā (n.b. the uses of wahidiyya + nūr + azal + amr), and Bahā'u'llāh (n.b. the uses of ad[ā]l + 'ubudiyya ['abd] + bahā' / abhā, etc). Furthermore, at certain points in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām, it is suggested that Bahā'u'llāh and Yahyā occupy the roles once played by the Bāb and Quddūs (see for example on I.a). The application of these 'correspondences' to, it may be noted here, the Sūrat al-Kifāya, tends to confirm this level of interpretation.

VII.c. Having, apparently, in the last part of paragraph VII.b., underlined the leadership role of Mīrzā Yahyā, Bahā'u'llāh here laments the fact that the people do not recognise his half-brother's position; which also involves acceptance of his own status. Yahyā is alluded to through the use of the word hujja — a term indicative of an individual with a leadership role. On the other hand it might be possible to understand the reference to the hujja as an allusion to the Bāb himself or his cause which the people have failed to truly understand. Whatever the case it is clear that Bahā'u'llāh laments the people's (probably Bābīs) inability to recognise the true source of guidance.

VII.d. Here Bahā'u'llāh calls upon Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn to give heed to his words referring to himself as "this lowly, this forsaken ant" (see above). He expresses his desire to withdraw from the company of his fellow Bābīs; anticipating his imminent departure for Iraqi Kurdistan in view of the actions of those around him.

Bahā'u'llāh did not withdraw to Iraqi Kurdistan simply because he had failed to regenerate the Bābī community. Though he largely concealed his own messianic aspirations by outwardly supporting his half-brother his rise to

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prominence— partly precipitated by Yahyā's persistent concealment— excited opposition from leading Iraqi Bābīs. Opposition became so fierce that his death was plotted (see on XII. above and cf. on IV.b. below). Several sections of the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām bear eloquent testimony to the depth of Bahā'u'llāh's disillusionment with his fellow Bābīs. In order to avoid creating a premature breach within the community he felt compelled to withdraw. Such was his anguish that he "contemplated no return" and "hoped for no reunion" ¹. — the reasons for his eventual return to Baghdad after two years in Iraqi Kurdistan cannot be discussed here.

VII.e. Having expressed his desire to abandon his fellow Bābīs Bahā'u'llāh here laments the fact that Quddūs is no longer alive to comfort him or weep over his sorry plight. Were he present, Bahā'u'llāh continues, he would implore him to intercede on his behalf. This brief lament is paralleled by that at paragraph IVa (see below) and is followed by a prayer for patience and victory over opponents.

Bahā'u'llāh's referring to Quddūs as the "Countenance of My Love" (ṭal^cat hubbī) hints at the great respect he had for this leading Bābī—alluded to, as we have seen, elsewhere in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām (see further on VIII.b. below). Though the last of the 'Letters of the Living' to come to faith in the Bāb he came to be seen as foremost among them. As the "Last Point" (nuqtat al-ukhrā) he most fully reflected the light of the "First Point" (nuqtat al-ūlā; i.e. the Bāb). Towards the end of the Bāb's ministry leading Bābīs saw the Bāb and Quddūs as the "Alpha" and "Omega" of the dispensation of the Bayān. In his writings the Bāb gave Quddūs the most exalted of titles and attributes. In his Kitāb-i Panj Sha'm and other late writings he referred to him as "the Last Name of God" (ism Allāh al-akhir; hence nuqtat al-ukhrā in paragraph VII.e.) and accorded him divine status.

Several of the writings of Bahā'u'llāh of the Iraq period contain references to the exalted status of Quddūs. Towards the end of the Sāhifa-yi Shatt-iyya (c. 1857—8?) for example, we have the following Bābī 'confession of faith':

"..He verily, no god is there except Him. ^cAlī before Muḥammad [= the Bāb] is the essence of God (ḏhat Allāh) and His All-Ending Being. Muḥammad before ^cAlī [= Quddūs = Mīrzā Muḥammad ^cAlī Barfurushī] is the Mine of the Cause of God (or source/treasure-house of the Cause of God; ma^cdan amr Allāh) and His Perpetual Essence. The Countenance of the Living One (ṭal^cat al-hayy = Mīrzā Yahyā? [or man yuzhiruhu'llāh or Bahā'u'llāh himself?]) is the hidden retreat of the decree of God

1. See Bahā'u'llāh Kitāb-i Iqān (trans. Shoghi Effendi), p. 160.

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(makman hukm Allāh) and his upright bounty. The Letters of the Living (hurūf al-hayy = the Bāb's first disciples) are the first to believe in God and His signs (or verses) and we, one and all, hold fast unto them." ¹.

VIII.a. In this paragraph the key terms in Qur'ān 3:87 are interpreted in terms of the Islāmic dispensation. By those who "dwell in the Snow-White Forest" and "Isle of al-Furqān" the Muslims are intended. al-Furqān is synonymous with and a title of the Qur'ān meaning (roughly) "the Criterion" "the Distinguisher" (among other things). ². "Food" (ta^cam) is equated with the Islamic "Guardianship" (wilayat) or principle of continuing divine guidance; hence "Israel" signifies the Prophet Muhammad (= the "Point of al-Furqān" and the "children of Israel" the Imāms who came after him (= God's "trustees," ausiyā)

VIII.b. Having expounded Qur'ān 3:87 in terms of the Islāmic dispensation Bahā'u'llāh now explains, on similar lines, its meaning relative to the religion of the Bāb. The Bābīs are evidently intended by those who dwell in the "Crimson Isle" or "Orchard of the Bayān" (Bayān [lit. 'Exposition'] meaning, as in certain writings of the Bāb, the Bābī Cause or the totality of Bābī scripture). They abandon the "food" (ta^cam) of the Islāmic dispensation, its sources of authority and guidance, and partake instead of the "food" (guidance) vouchsafed by the Bāb; the "Pure Wine of the Divine Oneness" (sirr al-ahadiyya; n.b. ahadiyya), guidance from the "Primal Point" (nūqtat al-ūlā = the Bāb). The Islāmic dispensation has, in other words, been abrogated. We have (see below) clear allusion to Quddūs by the use of the expressions "Last Countenance" (wiḡhat al-ukhrā; lit. 'Last/Ultimate Objective' and "Mystery of Endless Duration" (sirr al-samadāniyya n.b. samadāniyya). Once again it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Mīrzā Yahyā is intended by the "Countenance of Light" (tal^cat al-nūr; n.b. nūr), the "Isolated Manifestation" (mujarrad al-zuhūr — an allusion to Yahyā's marked dissimulation?) and the "Temple of the Divine Unicity"

1. Sahīfa-vi Shattiyya in Mā'ida-yi Āsmānī, Vol. IV, p. 149. Such references to Quddūs are not confined to Bahā'u'llāh's writings of the Iraq period. In a letter/tablet (lawh) probably dating from the ^cAkkā period written in reply to a question about the words "But We strengthened them with a third" (in Qur'ān 36:14 — traditionally thought to be about the missionary preaching of two then three early Christians at Antioch) interesting reference is made to the Bāb and Quddūs (= the "two") whose mission was "strengthened" by the eschatological advent of Bahā'u'llāh. (see *ibid.*, [Vol. IV], p. 77).

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(haykal al-ahadiyya; cf. the 5th clause of the Hadīth Kumayl). Yahyā's "imprisonment" and "concealment" in (and around) Baghdad is probably intended by the last lines of paragraph VIII.b.

IX.a In this paragraph Bahā'u'llāh explains why he desires to set forth a further explanation of Qur'ān 3:87 (in paragraph IX.b.) It seems likely that he refers to himself as "the Dove of Servitude" (hamamat al-^cubudiyya, n.b. ubudiyya) "which sings (= reveals verses?) in the "Heaven of Concealed Divinity" (samā' al-^camā'), the "Hoopoe of Light" (hudhud al-nūr; cf. Qur'ān 27:27f, Sūrat al-Kifāya cited below) which warbles in the "midst of the atmospheres" (wast al-ajwā', i.e. heavenly realms), the "Siniatic Tree" (shajarat al-tūr) which burns through the Fire (nār) of its own self (c.f. the 'burning bush' which was 'not consumed' in Exodus 3:1) and the "Ant of Servitude" (nimlat al-^cubudiyya; see above on VII. d.).

The significance of the fact that the "Siniatic Tree" exists above the "Ark of the Testimony" (tābūt al-shahādāt; cf. Qur'ān 2:248 and the Biblical 'Ark of the Covenant') beyond "(Mount) Qāf" (= a mythical mountain believed to surround the world sometimes identified with mount Caucasus—it is occasionally mentioned in the writings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh) in(?) the "Land of Realization" (ard al-imdā') is not clear. There is probably allusion to Bahā'u'llāh's role within the Bābī community and, at the same time, his isolation in the face of being oppressed or misunderstood. That he, as the "Ant of Servitude", conceals himself in the "Vale of the Divine Oneness" (wādī al-ahadiyya) in "this 'Night' through the mystery of fidelity" (bi' l-sirr al-wafā') may have similar import. The expression wādī al-ahadiyya is an allusion to the Siniatic Vale and its Tree and "this 'Night'" is probably indicative of the troublesome period following the martyrdom of the Bāb. The phrase "through the mystery of fidelity" is obscure (cf. though the beginning of 'Persian Hidden Word' No 77).

To sum up: paragraph IX.a., it appears, expresses Bahā'u'llāh's desire, in the light of his love for Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn, his power of revelation and his soaring up beyond the limitations of oppression, to explain Qur'ān 3:87 further.

IX.b. In the first part of this paragraph Bahā'u'llāh gives his final explanation of key terms in Qur'ān 3:87. "Food" (ta^cam) is identified with the "Ocean of the Unseen" (bahr al-ghayb = the heavenly source of divine revelation?) which is hidden in the "Pages of Light" (ṣahā'if al-nūr) and treasured up in the "Inscribed Tablets" (alwāh al-mastūr). There is very

probably allusion to the writings of Mīrzā Yahyā. This is suggested by the words "pages of light" (ṣahā'if al-nūr ; n.b. nūr and cf. "verses of light" [āyat al-nūr] in paragraph III.d.). The early writings of Yahyā were viewed by both the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh very highly.¹ Worth noting is the fact that he probably wrote his "Book of Light" (Kitāb al-nūr — an Arabic work in 77 chapters) around the same time that Bahā'u'llāh wrote the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'ām.² Certain groups of Bābīs during the early 1850's believed that Yahyā revealed divinely inspired verses.

Having, it appears, alluded to Yahyā's writings, Bahā'u'llāh probably refers to his half-brother as the "Manifestation of the command" (mazhar al-amr cf. ṣahib al-amr in paragraph VI.a.) who is, in one sense, "Israel". The "children of Israel" are the Bābīs. (= people of the Bayān), who are permitted to partake of the "food" (ta'ām) of the Bābī revelation as represented by Yahyā and his writings. That this "food" is lawful to "all who desire to ascend unto the Heaven of Bounty (samā' al-'ināyat) to drink the Water of Manifestation (mā' al-zuhūr — probably the correct reading) from this Cup (or Glass, al-zajāja), the Goblet of Servitude (kūb al-'ubudiyya) which resembleth naught but a shadow (fai') in the land" is indicative of Bahā'u'llāh's position in the light of Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role; the former being the "Glass" in which the light of Yahyā's authority is reflected and the "Goblet of Servitude" (n.b. the use of 'ubudiyya) or one occupying an outwardly subordinate role. In the latter part of paragraph IX.b. Bahā'u'llāh underlines his position of "servitude". He speaks of himself as resembling "naught but a shadow (fai') in the land" (Baghdad) and asks God's forgiveness on account of his lowly status.³

X.a. Here Bahā'u'llāh explains, having set forth his final interpretation of Qur'an 3:87, that he could expound this verse in accordance with its celestial levels of meaning. This however, he refrains from doing in the light of

1. See, for example, the letters of the Bāb in Qismati az alwāh. p. 10ff and of Bahā'u'llāh in 'Izziyya Khanum, Tanbīh al-Nā'imīn, p. 40ff.
2. On Yahyā's Kitāb al-nūr see E.G. Browne, A Traveller's Narrative. Vol. II. (Cambridge 1891), pp. 340-1; idem (Ed), Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion ([Rep.] Cambridge 1961), p. 216. Interesting and almost certainly authentic letters of Bahā'u'llāh expressive of his high regard for the Kitāb al-nūr are contained in 'Izziyya Khanum's Tanbīh al-Nā'imīn (see pp. 36ff [esp. p. 40], 85ff).
3. It may appear that I have read a lot into paragraph IX.b. The reader is referred to the—undoubtedly authentic—letter of Bahā'u'llāh printed in 'Izziyya Khanum's Tanbīh al-Nā'imīn, pp. 85-6 for evidence that this line of interpretation is correct.

the limited capacity of his contemporaries. What he has already set forth in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'ām must suffice. God is probably meant by "Sovereign of the Realm of Unknowing" (sultan al-'amā') and "King of Glory" (malik al-bahā') and the inhabitants of the spiritual worlds by "spiritual ones" (rūhaniyyin), "sanctified myriads" (ribwāt al-muqaddasīn ; a phrase derived from the 'Prayer of the Signs' [du'ā-yi simāt attributed to Imām 'Alī] rooted in Deut 33: 2 and occasionally found in the Bāb's writings) and "enrap-tured ones" (mujazzabīn).

X.b. In view of the fact that Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn has turned to him (= "sought and derived warmth from the fire of love") and been honoured and entranced through the revelation of the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'ām (= "found pleasure in the charm of the trace of ink in these opposite Tablets") Bahā'u'llāh asks him to "bear witness and be assured" that he has "claimed naught but servitude to God" (al-'ubudiyya li-llāhī). God bears witness to this fact in the face of hostile misrepresentations by his fellow Bābīs.

Here then, Bahā'u'llāh clearly underlines the fact that his role was one of servitude— as presupposed at many points in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta'ām (see above) and, in fact, in several other 'tablets' (alwāh) of the early period following his withdrawal to Iraqi Kurdistan. He did not usurp the leadership role of Mīrzā Yahyā or make any explicit leadership claim for himself. Both before and after his withdrawal to Iraqi Kurdistan he, to quote Shoghi Effendi, "appeared in the guise of, and continued to labor as, one of the foremost disciples of the Bāb."¹ It is remarkable that Bahā'u'llāh did not challenge his half-brother's leadership role— in explicit terms— before the mid- 1860's — especially in view of Yahyā's incapacity and a succession of challenges to his leadership during the 1850's. Though such writings as his Rashh-i 'Amā' ('The Sprinkling of the Cloud of Divinity' early 1269 AH= late 1852 ?) and al-Qasīda al-Warqā'iyya ('The Dove's Ode' c. 1272 AH= 1855 AD) contain allusions to his future assumption of leadership of the Bābī community it was only towards the end of the Iraq period (roughly between 1860 and 1863) that he clearly intimated his claim to leadership (in for example his Halih, Halih, Halih, Ya Bishārat —written late 1862 or early 1863).

1. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 128.

X.c. In this woe directed against wayward Bābīs who misrepresent his role Bahā'u'llāh draws on Qur'ān 9:106b. He indicates that his opponents will, on the resurrection Day, brought before God and questioned as to their deeds.

X.d. Again echoing Qur'ānic texts Bahā'u'llāh here addresses the 'People of the Concourse' (= most likely, his fellow Bābīs). They should not be astonished at the " artistry of God" (sun^c allāh), the mercy of God (rahmat allāh)" or His "blessings" (barakat; or abundance, prosperity) upon them. (cf. the reference to the "artistry of God" sun^c allāh in an eschatological setting in Qur'ān 27:88). God, in other words, is in control of affairs and bestows his guidance upon them. This should not be doubted.

Allusion is probably made to Mirza Yahyā's leadership role when it is stated that the "artistry of God" (sun^c allāh —i.e. God's perfectly ordered handiwork) radiates forth in the "image" (or "images" ?) of the "Lamp of Eternality" (sirāj al-azaliyya; n.b. azaliyya = Mīrzā Yahya ?) among the "artistry of the people" (sun^c al-nās). Bahā'u'llāh appears to be saying that the concrete guidance of God is available to Bābīs through the hierarchy of their leaders. God has a perfectly ordered purpose and is in control of it through his earthly representatives.

XI.a. Here Bahā'u'llāh laments the fact that his past memories—obviously poetically— have been effaced in view of the wayward deeds of his contemporaries. Once again the depth of his spiritual agony is exposed.

XI.b. In this address to the (loosely) "people of the realm of unknowing" (ahl al-^camā'; probably in this instance the inhabitants of the upper world or the Bābī community at large) Bahā'u'llāh probably calls upon them to appear at Baghdad, the focal centre of Bābī guidance and authority. (cf. below on VI.b) . Baghdad, it appears, is referred to as the "sanctum of Light" (haram al-nūr), the "manifest Cloud of Unknowing" (^camā' al-zuhūr, i.e. the place of the epiphany of the all-highest reality) and the "most-great House of God" (bayt allāh al-akbar; i.e. the Bābī centre in Baghdad ?).¹ That the celestial beings— sources of guidance and inspiration—should appear at Baghdad has been decreed by God in the " Tablet of the Heart" (lawh al-fū'ād); it is a preordained affair. Bābīs, this para-

1. The house of Sulayman-i-Ghannām (or 'Mirza Mūsā the Bābī') in Baghdad came to be designated bayt allāh al-akbar [al-^cazam] by Bahā'u'llāh and a place of Bahā'ī pilgrimage. It may possibly be intended here.

—graph may be taken to imply, should regard Baghdad as the seat and focal centre of authority and guidance.

Worth noting in this connection is the fact that the Sūrat al-Kifāya contains several passages parallel to paragraph IX.b.— and probably with similar import:

" O people of the Realm of Unknowing: (Yā ahl al-^camā')! This is the paradise of the Divine Oneness (jannat al-ahadiyya), the orchard of eternity (hadīqat al-azaliyya). Then dwell therein with the permission of God... Enter the House of Light (bayt al-nūr), the Snow-White Land (ard al-baydā'), the Crimson Pillar (rukn al-hamrā'), this Abode (al-dār; cf. Qur'ān 10:25) which is the Abode of the Hereafter (dār al-ākhirā), the Primal Mystery (sirr al-ūlā) which is assuredly the (source of) Life (al-haywān) written in the Mother Book (umm al-kitāb)..." 1.

" O people of the realms of Being: (Yā ahl al-akwān)! Eat of the succulent fruit (thamarat al-muthmirat) of the Crimson Tree (shajarat al-hamrā') which hath been planted in the Land of Realization (ard al-imdā'), the Point of Origination (nuqtat al-bad'); the Sealed Mystery (sirr al-khatm) and Secret of the Divine Decree (mustasirr al-qadā')... Issue forth from your habitations in order that you might be present in the sanctum of destiny (haram al-qadar), the intimate threshold of the Cloud of Unknowing (^camā' al-uns) as hath, with the permission of God, been decreed in the Tablet of the Heart (lawh al-fū'ād)." 2.

XII. In this concluding paragraph Bahā'u'llāh first explains the reason for his bringing the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām (= " this discourse" al-kalām) to a close. He intimates that he had done so inasmuch as Mīrzā Yahyā, as nominal head of the Bābī community and the "Dove of Light" (hamamat al-nūr ; cf. below on I.b. II.f.), had been revealing verses ('singing forth') since the time of his arrival in Iraq (= the "Land of Exhilaration", ard al-surūr; cf. below on VI.b.). In line with his adoption of the position of servitude he brings his 'tablet' to an end.

Addressing Mīrzā Kamāl al-Dīn Bahā'u'llāh further mentions that since his patience had run out in the light of his love for the unveiled

1. Sūrat al-Kifāya (in INBA.Priv.Pub. Vol.36), p. 278 (cf.p.277).
2. Ibid.p. 279. This and the above passage appear to contain allusions to Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership role (cf. Introduction below) n.b. the phrases "orchard of eternity" (hadīqat al-azaliyya), "House of Light" (bayt al-nūr; cf. "sanctum of light" [haram al-nūr] in paragraph IX.b.) and "succulent Fruit" (thamarat al-muthmirat; al-thamara , "the Fruit" , is a common Bābī designation of Yahya).

beauty of God" (jamāl allāh) he desired "authorization" (muṭamad^{an} God's leave to direct Bābī affairs ?). This may indicate that Bahā'u'llāh had become so impatient with the wayward Iraqi Bābī community that he underlined the leadership role he had come to occupy in view of his half-brother's marked dissimulation: without it appears, directly challenging Yahyā's position. It was probably shortly after Bahā'u'llāh began to assert his authority that the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām was written for this work may be viewed as an expression of the hopelessness of his efforts to regenerate the Bābī community, his stressing his role of servitude, his desire to withdraw and the leadership role of his half-brother. In the face of opposition from leading Bābīs — they probably accused him of usurping Yahyā's role — he abandoned his efforts to consolidate the community. Instead of stressing his own leadership role he expressed his desire to withdraw and his position of servitude. In a sense the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām may be viewed as an apologia designed to underline its author's role of servitude and the leadership role of Mirza Yahyā in the face of Bābī factionalism.

Some light is thrown on the nature of Bahā'u'llāh's role within the Bābī community immediately prior to his withdrawal to Iraqi Kurdistan in the "Sūra of God" (Sūrat Allāh). In this work, probably written shortly before his exile to Constantinople (1863) and addressed to a certain Muhammad ^cAli, Bahā'u'llāh explains the circumstances that led him abandon his fellow Bābīs. He states that he had found himself to be a "leader in the land" (ra'is^{an} fi al-ard) and a "guardian" (ra'ī^{an} — or protector, shepherd) of the Bābīs. Then he decided to abandon his role to such as might desire it. Then, since the affairs of the Bābī community declined in the light of ineffective leadership, he disclosed something of his God-given perfections and withdrew to Iraqi Kurdistan. ¹.

On the basis of statements in the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām, the Sūrat Allāh and other historical sources — which cannot be fully discussed here — it may be deduced that during the first year of his residence in Iraq Bahā'u'llāh — :

- 1) Came to occupy a leading role in the light of his half-brother's position as nominal head of the Bābī community.
- 2) In the light of Bābī factionalism, waywardness and ineffective leadership underlined his own leadership role — without necessarily challenging Yahyā's leadership role. ².

1. Refer, Sūrat Allāh (in Athar Qalam-i A^clā Vol. IV. pp. 68-72), pp. 71-2.

2. It may be that at this stage Bahā'u'llāh claimed to be the return of Imām Husayn — a claim that could have been understood in various ways and not necessarily as a challenge to Yahyā's position.

- 3) Encountered opposition from leading Bābīs — who may have accused him of usurping Yahyā's authority.
- 4) Underlined his position of servitude in order to prevent a further split within the community.
- 5) Withdrew to Iraqi Kurdistan.

The reference to the "son of adultery" (ibn zina') who willfully desired or plotted Bahā'u'llāh's death is obscure. It is known that secret plans were made to have Bahā'u'llāh killed — perhaps around the beginning 1854 — ¹ though the identity of his enemies is not clear. Bahā'ī sources indicate that Siyyid Muḥammad Isfahānī (d. 1872), a leading Bābī resident in Karbala in the early 1850's and a staunch supporter of Mirzā Yahyā, secretly opposed Bahā'u'llāh (in the early 1850's) and encouraged Mirzā Yahyā to check his growing prestige. It is unlikely however, in the light of Bahā'u'llāh's initial support of Yahyā, that the assassination plot originated with Yahyā and Siyyid Muḥammad. The words " I do not pledge allegiance (?) to him either in secret or publicly " indicate that Bahā'u'llāh's chief adversary was other than his half-brother whom he supported. I wonder if the "son of adultery" (ibn zina') was a claimant to leadership of the Bābī community whom Bahā'u'llāh repudiated and who thus conspired to have him killed. ². Alternatively another leading Bābī may have claimed to more fully represent Mirzā Yahyā's interests and for this reason opposed Bahā'u'llāh — Siyyid Muhammad Isfahani may have attempted this(?).

At the end of paragraph XII Bahā'u'llāh, having reminded Mirzā Kamāl al-Dīn of his efforts to regenerate the Bābī community and an attempt on his life, informs him that God alone is in control of his destiny. Though the attempt to have him removed from the scene did not materialise he, in view of his spiritual agony, ardently desires death.

It seems to me then, to sum up, that the final paragraph of the Lawh-i Kull al-Ta^cām is expressive of Bahā'u'llāh's role of servitude and anticipates, in view of the opposition he had encountered, his imminent withdrawal to Iraqi Kurdistan.

1. See below on Paragraph IV.b. esp. the quotation from God Passes By.
2. It is possible that rival claimants to leadership of the Bābī community were encouraged by the arrival of the years "69-70" (= 1269-70 AH = 15 October 1852 — 24 Sept 1854 — this period being of eschatological import in certain writings of the Bāb). It was probably during the year 1270 AH (4 Oct 1853 — 24 Sept 1854 — more specifically early in this year) that Bahā'u'llāh's life was endangered. Perhaps he was not alone in claiming or underlining his leadership role at this time.

* Another possibility would be Mirza Bahá'u'lláh's Kuzmáná'í who was known as Mirza Jawád (See Muhammad 'Allí Faydí, Kitáb-i Lá'ílá-yi Dirásháhi [Tehran 123 Bahá'í], pp.302-3).

APPENDIX : Some corrections and further notes.

Since completing my article on the Leah-i Bahl al-Ja'á (in great haste) a few further points and corrections have occurred to me:

- 1) The Leah-i Bahl al-Ja'á addressed in the Sírat al-Bá'á could be Hajji Siyyid Jawád Karbalá'í (see whom see, for example, Sulaymání [M] Mosáhib Mízárat Vol.2 [Tehran n.d.], p.471ff).
- 2) The expression "Incomparable Point of the Realm of Unknowing" (... al-muqádat al-'asá'íyya al-fírahíyya...) might be better translated, "Esconded and Incomparable Point" (see trans. I.a).
- 3) A more accurate translation of "... and present yourselves in the spectrum of light..." (for, li'l-hajjír fí jaran al-ár) might be "[... Issue forth from your habitations] before the Presence in the spectrum of light [= Mirá'í Táyyé ?] — i.e. attain Y ághá's presence in Baghdad (? — see the following lines) (see trans. II.b).
- 4) In the course of my researches I have noticed that there is in fact a work of the late Baghdad period in which Bahá'u'lláh refers to himself as an "ant" (anásíq/násíq). In the Persian section of the Leah-i Bahl al-Ja'á (probably written in May 1863) he calls himself an "antillated ant" (anásíq-i fírahíyya; see text in Isrá'ílí Shíráfí, Bahá'í Sháhidín [Tehran 123 Bahá'í], p. 43) (see Comm. on VI.b).
- 5) The expression ard al-ár, "Land of Exhilaration" is found in the writings of the Báb (see trans. VI.b, III). At one point, for example, in the Kitáb-i Gúrá, of the Súrá al-ár (Brown Coll. MS. fol.164b) the Báb states:
 " I, verily, am the Fire in the light...the light of the [Sínaitic] Mount (al-ár) in the land of Exhilaration (ard al-ár)..."
 Here ard al-ár is indicative of the region where the Sínaitic theophany took place — not that this necessarily contradicts its being used by Bahá'u'lláh of Iraq/Baghdad (? , as the centre of Bábí guidance, the 'New Sinai').
- 6) In paragraph III.a. I have translated al-lá'ílá al-ár "through the Mystery of Fidelity". (cf. the opening line of Bahá'u'lláh's Bahá'í 'Asá') Though it is still not clear to me exactly what this expression might mean a more accurate translation may well be "with interior[heart-felt] Fidelity [or Faithfulness — to the Bábí Covenant ?]" or, perhaps "through/in/with the Trusted Secret/Faithful Mystery" (?).

- 7) In paragraph VI.b. reference is made to the "All-Bounteous Joseph" (rusuf al-ár). As indicated in the Commentary (see above) this might be a reference to the Báb, Táyyé, Bahá'u'lláh himself or even san rusufshu'lláh. Possibly supportive of its being a reference to Táyyé or san rusufshu'lláh is the following passage from what is almost certainly an early writing of Mirá'í Táyyé, the Kitáb al-Máhid (early-mid-Baghdad period ?):
 " I, [Táyyé] verily, am the garment (al-ár) of the All-Bounteous Joseph (rusuf al-ár)..." 1.
- 8) A fair number of references to the "Ark of the Testimony" (al-ár al-shahádat) occur, for example, in the Báb's Súrá al-ár (see above, trans., par., II.a). The "Ark" (al-ár) is the source of a celestial fire (the Sínaitic Fire ?) or an heavenly region in which eschatological perdition — asá' will come upon the ungodly (see, for example, Gl. III fol.66a; III, fol.67a; XIII, fol.90a; LXI, fol.106a; LXII, fol.122a; LXIII, fol.129a; LXIV, fol.137a; LXV, fol.139a; LXVIII, fol.143a; XCII, fol.162b). The Sínaitic Fire and that of the celestial "Ark" are related. Also worth noting is the fact that in Bábí-Bahá'í cosmogony the heavenly "throne" (al-'arsh) exists 'beyond M. 'Alí' (cf. Súrá al-ár CVIII, fol.193b; LXIXVI, fol.180b, etc.,).

I should like, at this point to express my thanks to Dr. Denis MacBain for reading over my provisional translation of the Leah-i Bahl al-Ja'á and to Dr. Peter Smith for a few useful remarks on the commentary.

- 1. Káfer, DMH.MS. Vol.80, p.198 — on the Kitáb al-Máhid (wrongly attributed to the Báb) see my An Early Form of Mirza Husayn 'Alí Bahá'u'lláh: The Bahá'í 'Asá'. (in Bahá'í Studies Bulletin — forthcoming issue), Appendix.
- 2. On the significance of M. 'Alí' in esoteric theosophy see for example, H. Corbin, Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth (trans. S. Pearson., Princeton Univ. Press 1977), p.73ff.