

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

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

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

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

¹ The text of the *Lawh-i aqdas* can be found in a variety of published and unpublished Arabic and Persian compilations of Bahā'u'llāh's Tablets.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

² An account of Fāris' conversion to the Bahā'ī Faith by Nabī-i Zarandī is contained in the second (unpublished) part of Zarandī's history.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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION OF THE ARABIC TEXT

[I]

The One, the Eternal, the Ancient.

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

[II]

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

[III]

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

[IV]

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

[V]

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

[VI]

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

[VII]

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

[VIII]

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

[IX]

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

[X]

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

[XI]

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

الأحدي الأبدى القسنى

قد حفر كتابك لدى الوجه ووجدنا من عرف الحب و الوداد لذا نزل لك
 هذا اللوح العظيم ينبغي لك بان تشكر الذى اسعك هدير الوراق و
 عرفك هذا السبيل المستقيم لم على نصرة امر ربك بالحكمة و البيان
 انه يويد من اراد سلطان من عنده و انه لهو المقدر القدير نزل الله
 ان يجعلك فارس الحقايق فى هذا المضار و يجعلك من الذين مانعتهم
 الأوهام عن الله ربك و رب العالمين خل قدح البقاء باسم ربك مالك
 الاسماء ثم اشرب منه و قل لك الحد يا متى العارفين قد فاحت الشفحة
 و مرت التسه و ظهر من صهيون ما هو المكنون و يسمع من اورشليم
 نداء الله الواحد الفرد العليم لما ما نزل من قبل من هذا القلم البديع
 قل قد بنى الهيكل بايادى قدرة مالك العلى و تجلى الرحمن من هذا
 المشرق النير قل هل الذى بنى بايادى الرحمن خير ام الذى بنى من
 الطين قد ينادى كوم الله ما سواء و يبشروم بهذا الأمر الذى اشرق و
 الاح من افق ارادة موليكم القديم فاعلم اننا لنا زينا الملكوت بطراز اسم
 ربك المختار اصصقت الحياتن فى البحار و سقطت الاشجار من الاشجار و
 تحير اهل الجبروت و ناحت قبائل الناسوت و توقف اهل مداين الاسماء
 و تنزل اركان من فى الارض و السماء الا من شاء ربك الحكيم طوبى
 لك بما ذكر اسك فى ملكوت ربك و نزل لك ما يشيت به ذكرك بدوام
 الله هذا من فضل عليه لو تكون من العارفين ان الروح قد اتى بطراز
 الله و كل ركن من اركانه ينادى اتى محبوب العالمين فلما جاء الوعد و
 خرق الغطاء باسم القضاء اذا نزع من فى الأسماء و اشتعلت نار البغضاء
 فى قلوب القائلين و ارتكبوا ما ناح به سكان الفردوس و شق شيا به روح
 الأمين لل ان الهيا لا يمتنعنا عما اردنا نطلق بالحق ولو شتل على وجهى
 سيوف العالمين قل يا معشر البطارقة قد اتى ما وعدتم به فى الاواح
 اتقوا الله و لا تتبعوا فتوى السومين شعوا ما عندكم و خلوا لوح الله
 سلطان من عنده هذا خير لكم عما عندكم يشهد بذلك كل عارف بهير
 تقفرون باسمى و احتجبتن عن نفسى ان هذا لشي عجب قل يا معشر
 الملوك قد ظهر مولى البرية انه فى يدي يندعو الورى و انتم من

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

البيتين طوبى لمن تحرك من نعمة الله و قام عن بين السموات بهذا
الاسم السببى قل يا ملاء الاساقفة قد اخذت الزلازل كل القبائل و الرب
الابدى ينادى باعلى النداء بين الارض و السماء طوبى لاذن سمعت و لعين
رأت و لقلب اقبل الى قبة من فى السموات و الارضين يا معشر
القيسين قد ظهر يوم الدين و فيه اتى من كان فى السماء و انه لهو
الذى وعدتم به فى كتب الله المتقنين العزيز الحميد الى متى تركضون فى
بيداء الغفلة و الاممات توجهوا بالقلوب الى شطر ربكم الغفور الكريم
كذلك نزلنا لك الآيات لتفروح بذكرى ايك و تكون من الراسخين ان
اذكر اذ حضر كتابك مرة الاولى اذ استوى بحر الانعظم على الفلك بنا
اكتبت ايدى الشركين وهذه مرة اخرى حضر لدى الوجه قرشاه و
اجبتك بهذا الخطاب السبرم المحيط كن ناشراً فى كل الأحوال الى شطر
الحكمة و كلم الناس على قدر عقولهم لان الرضيع لو تطعمه اللحم فى اول
ايامه يموت كذلك ينصحك ربك الرحيم

NOTES AND COMMENTS ON SELECTED LINES AND PHRASES

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

[I]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[III]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[IV]

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

Located in north-west Arabia, the land of Midian was the region in which Moses sojourned in the service of Jethro / Shu'ayb prior to the commencement of his mission and the exodus from Egypt (cf. KI: 35). The proper noun Midian (Ar. Madyan) is ten times mentioned in the Qur'ān. According to one strand of Qur'ānic tradition, it was the scene of the mission of the Arabian prophet Shu'ayb -- traditionally identified with Moses' father in law (the figure Jethro of the Hebrew Bible) -- whose people rejected him (see Qur'ān 7:85; 9:70; 11:84,95; 12:40; 22:44; 28:22ff;29:36; EI² 5:1155-6). While Shu'ayb was rejected in Midian, Moses sought divine guidance there (Qur'ān 28:22). It was in Midianite territory that Moses ultimately encountered God in the burning bush or tree. Symbolically, Midian is the sphere of rejection as well as that of the search for guidance and the encounter with God.

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

[V]

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

[VI]

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

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

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

[VII]

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

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

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

[VIII]

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

[IX]

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

[X]

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

[XI]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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