

The early second Arabic Epistle of the Bāb sent from Bushire for Muhammad Shah Qajar (r. 1836-1848).

Trans. Stephen Lambden

The text and translation here are old Beta versions in the process of correction. Last uploaded Sept. 2004 + 30/7/06

Translated from a manuscript (khaṭṭ) dispatched from Bushire addressed to the non-Arab [Persian] Monarch (sulṭān al-`ajam) [Muhammad Shāh Qājār].. Arabic text translated as printed in Afnan, 2000: 102-103 and ...

[0]

God, is thy Lord, no God is there save Him for He is indeed One Powerful, a Preserver. So recite, O thou king (malik), the Book [Epistle] of thy Lord to the end that thou be numbered among such as have attained.

[00]

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

[1]

اقرأ كتاب ذكر اسم ربك الذى له اله الا هو العلى الكبير وانه لكتاب لاريب فيه قد نزل من لدن امام مبين وانه لهو الحق فى السموات والارض يدعو الناس الى دين الله الخالص من حكم قسطاس قويم وانه لهو السر فى صحف النبيين والمرسلين يلتو آيات ربك عن شجرة السينا ان لا اله الا هو

[1] Recite the Book [Epistle] of the Remembrance of thy Lord Who, no God is there except Him, the Exalted, the Mighty. [2] Such is indeed a Book about which there is no doubt for it was sent down on the part of a manifest Imam (imām mubīn). [3] He is assuredly the True One [Ultimately Real] (al-ḥaqq) throughout the heavens and the earth who summons the people unto the pure religion of God (dīn Allah al-khāliṣ) as

accords with a Balance which is assured (qusṭās qawwīm). [4] It is indeed the mystery (al-sirr) [secreted] in the sacred scrolls of the Prophets and the Sent Messengers (ṣuḥuf al-nabiyyīn wa'l-mursalīn) for [5] He sends forth the verses of thy Lord from the Sinaitic Tree ('an shajarat al-sīnā'), no God is there except Him.

[II]

قل اياى فارهبون

وانه لهو الامر فى كلمة الروح /* ره يدعو الناس بحكم ربك لشان يوم لاريب فيه وكل فى ذلك اليوم على الله يعرضون وانه ورقة مباركة عن الشجرة البيضاء ثم الصفرا ثم الحمرا يتلو كتاب ربك فى كل شان لاله الا هو

[1]

Say: O thou ascetically minded ones!

This is assuredly the [personified] Logos-Reality [Cause] (al-amr) engendered by the Word of the Spirit (al-amr fī kalimat al-rūḥ) (see Q. 17:28). [2] He it is who summons the people unto the decree of thy Lord pertinent to the magnitude of the [eschatological] Day about which there is no doubt whatsoever for all on that Day shall rely upon God. [3] And He indeed is a Blessed Leaf (waraqat mubārakat) from the Snow-White Tree (shajarat al-bayḍā'), then [from] the Yellow One (al-sufra') and [also from] the Crimson One (al-ḥamra') which puts forth the Book of thy Lord in every mode (fī kull sha'n), no God is there except Him.

[III]

اياى فاتقون

وان مثل نور ربك فى كتاب الله كقمص شمس فى كل وجهه عبید قد استقر على عرش ياقوت حمرا قد طاف فى حولها رجال قد رقت وجوههم كوجه الزجاجة البيضاء هل تحكى الوجوه دون الوجه سبحانه وتعالى مايدعو نفساً منهم الا من نفسه كذلك قد ارسل الله النبيين والمرسلين لامره الا ان الحكم لله فى كل شان وكل اليه يرجعون

[1]

So, O thou given to righteousness!

The likeness of the Light of thy Lord in the Book of God is even as garment [s] of the Sun [reflected] in the whole of His Countenance [Face] (wajh). [2] One [personifying] servitude (‘ubayd) [= the Bab] hath mounted up upon a throne of Red Ruby (‘arsh yāqūt ḥamrā’) [3] whereupon there circumambulated about (ḥawl) His Person a [Cherubic] Figure (rijāl) through whom their faces were illumined even as the surface [face] of Snow-White glass (ka-wajh al-zujājat al-bayḍā’) [cf. Q. 24:36]. [4] Then how can it be that these countenances are [expressive of] anything other than His Countenance? [5] So Praised be unto Him and exalted be He, for He does not summon any Person [Logos-Self] (nafs^{an}) among them [the divine Messengers] save as an expression of His Person [= the "Logos-Self"] (nafs). [6] Thus did God commission the Prophets and the Messengers (nabiyyīn wa’l-mursalīn) for [the establishment of] His Cause [religion] (al-amr) save such that the [divine] Decree (al-ḥukm) be in every respect fully implemented through God Himself and such that all should return unto Him.

[IV]

ولقد ارسلنا اليك من قبل كتاب ربك لامبدل لحكمه ولن يجد الناس في ذلك اليوم من دون ذكر اسم الله ملتجدا. انما المومنون الذين آمنوا بالله وآياته واتبعوا آيات البدع من لدنا على صراط قويم ومن يعرض من كتاب ربه بعدما قد علم آياتنا على الحق فاولئك هم الظالمون وان الله ربك لن يقبل من احد عملا من يوم الذي سمع حرفا من آياتنا الا ان يؤمن بعبادنا وكان من الساجدين

[1] We did indeed previously send unto thee [Muhammad Shāh] a message [Book] (kitāb) of thy Lord and there is no alteration of His Decree (ḥukm). [2] On that [eschatological] Day the people shall never find any deviance away from the Remembrance of the Name of God (Dhikr ism Allāh) [3] for the believers are such as have believed in God and His verses [signs] and have followed the verses of the Innovative One (āyāt al-badī‘) deriving from Us as accords with an Upright Path (ṣirāt qawwīm). [4] And whomsoever should turn aside from the Book of his Lord after which

he hath, in very Truth, acknowledged [known] Our verses, these are the wayward. [5] God, thy Lord shall never accept [as righteous] any action (ʿamal^{an}) from anyone during a Day in which [that person] hath heard but a single letter (ḥarf^{an}) of Our verses unless he hath come to faith [believed] in Our servant [= the Bāb] and is numbered among such as prostrate themselves. [6] Such have surely disbelieved as declare that the Logos-Word of God (kalimat Allāh) derives these verses from the letters of the Qur'ān (aḥruf al-qur'ān). [7] Say: Praised be God and exalted be He above such manifestations of unbelief.

[M]

قل لونها

لننزل في كل شئى قد احاط علم ربك مثل قرآن الاول من دون فكر ولاسكون قل الم تعلم ان الله ربك قد كان على كل شئى مقتدرا وان حرفا مما ينزل من يدى الذكر لم يعدل آيات الاولين فما لهول القوم لا يومنون بايات الله قليلا فاي آية اكبر من آيات القرآن الذى قد نزل من لدن عزيز حكيم ولو اجتمع الكل على ان ياتوا بمثل آية مما نزلنا اليك فى كتابك هذا لن يستطيعن ولن يقدرن ولو كانوا منهم بمثل انفسهم بما لانفاد له من الامر الا ان ذلك لهو الحق اليقين وكفى بالله ومن نزل الايات من لديه على شهيدا

[1] Say: If We will it We could assuredly send down [revealed verses] in every circumstance (fī kullī shay') for the knowledge of thy Lord hath indeed [proved] all-encompassing like unto the first [primary] Qur'ān (qur'ān al-awwal), and this without reflection or the stilling of the Divine Pen! [2] Are you unaware that God is thy Lord and that He hath ever been Powerful over all things and that but a mere letter (ḥarf^{an}) of what He hath sent down through the instrumentality of the Remembrance (al-dhikr) shall never be distinguished from the primary [revealed] verses (āyāt al-awwālīn) [of the Qur'ān itself]. [3] So what is it with these people that they disbelieve in a portion of the verses of God? [4] Ah! For such is indeed the Greatest Sign (āyat akbar) [as stipulated] among the verses of the Qur'ān which was sent down on the part of One Mighty, Wise. [5] And if all should gather together to the end that they produce the likeness of but a single verse which We have revealed unto thee [the Bāb] in thy Book, they would prove

totally incapable thereof and be unable to do so. [6] And if We supplied them with pens after the likeness of their own selves there would yet be no result relative to the Cause of God (al-amr) and such indeed is the certain Truth (al-ḥaqq al-yaqīn). [7] And in God is sufficient witness unto Me along with whomsoever reveals verses on His behalf.

[VI]

ياايها الملك

ان اتبع كم ربك ثم اشهد فى آياتى كلمة العدل لتكونن من الفائزين ثم اسجدلله ربك
مما نزلنا لىك من عنده لتكونن من الموقنين وان الله ربك قد شان يزن الروم
واكثر اهل الارض باياته ان انصردينالله لتكونن يوم القيمة لمن المنتصرين

[1]

O thou king! [Muhammad Shāh]

Follow ye the decree (ḥukm) of thy Lord then bear thou witness unto His verses [which constitute] the Word of Justice (kalimat al-`adl) to the end that thou be numbered among such as hath attained. [2] Then, furthermore, prostrate ye before God on account of that which We sent down for thee on His behalf such that thou be numbered among the those possessed of certainty. [3] God Who is thy Lord hath willed that the Ottomans (al-rūm) come to faith in [the veracity of] His verses along with most of the peoples of the earth. [4] Render victorious the [Bābī] religion of God (dīn Allāh) that the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-qiyāma) be realized through such as are inclined towards victory (li-man al-muntaṣirīn).

[VII]

انا علم ياايها الملك

انى فتى عجمى من طائفة عدل التجار امى على شان لم يحط بعلمه احد قد
اخترانى الحق لحكمه وانه لا الا هولقوى عزيز قل ماكنت مفترياً على الحق وماكنت

بدعامن الابواب وماكنت عن العالمين بعيداً وان الله قد منعى عن كل شئىى يعمل
فيه عمل الشيطان وماكنت فى شان الا باذن بقية الله مولاى

[1] Know O thou king! [Muhammad Shāh] that I am a non-Arab [Persian] youth (fatā `ajamī) from the party of Justice (ṭā'ifat al-adl), an unlettered merchant (al-tujjār ummī) to the degree that he was incapable of registering His knowledge. [2] The True One [God] (al-ḥaqq) selected Me for the expression of His Wise Decree (ḥukm), for He verily, no God is there except Him, assuredly One Powerful, Mighty. [3] Say: I was not a slanderer (muftariyy ^{an}) of the Truth (al-ḥaqq) neither was I given to supplicating the [four] Gates (al-abwāb) nor one remote from all existing worlds (al-`ālamīn). [4] Yet, even though God had set Me apart from everything there was active in him [the Bāb] the machinations [activity] of Satan (`amal al-shayṭān) [5] for I was not empowered (fī sha`n) save with the express permission of the [personified messianic] Baqiyyat-Allāh (“Remnant of God”), my Master (mawlā).

[VIII]

وان ذلك الكتاب الذى نزلنا الان اليك يكفى لى احجة اهل السموات و الارض والله
سميع عليم ولونزل الله القرآن آية واحدة فمالاحدان يقول فيها حرفاً الا ان يؤمن به
وكان من الساجدين واذا ورد عليك كتاب ربك هذا فامر ان يحضرالموحدين
مقرعزتک ثم قل هذا كتاب من ذكرالله نزل الى ان استطعتم بمثل آية منه فاتونى وان
لم تقدرؤا ولن تفعلؤا فاعلمؤا ان كلمةالله حق وانه لى صراط مستقيم

[1] This Book [Epistle to Muhammad Shāh] at this very moment was sent down unto thee for the completion of the Proof (al-ḥujjat) for the inhabitants of both the heavens and the earth. [2] And God is indeed One All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [3] If God had revealed but a single verse of the Qur`ān it is not for anyone to [object] saying that it is [insufficient proof as] a single letter (ḥarf ^{an}) save that he should nonetheless come to faith [in the Qur`ān) and thereby be numbered among such as prostrate themselves [before God] (al-sājidīn). [4] And since there hath come to thee this Book [Epistle] (kitāb) of thy Lord, then command that the believers of the Divine Unity (al-muwaḥḥidīn) should be present [as an intimation of thy Might (maqarr `izzatika), then announce unto them

that this Book [Epistle] derives from the [messianic] Dhikr-Allāh (Remembrance of God) as revealed unto Me. [5] So do ye [vainly] attempt to produce the likeness of a single letter (ḥarf ^{an}) thereof and thereby imitate Me! [6] Indeed! they shall never prove capable of this neither will they ever be able to operate in this way. [7] Then know ye of a certainty that the Word of God (kalimat Allāh) is the Ultimate Truth (ḥaqq) and that it is fully in accordance with the Straight Path (ṣirāt al-mustaqīm).

[IX]

ياايهاالملك

ان اعرف حكم الله ثم اعلم ان كل الملك في يدي مولاي كمثل خاتم في يديك يقلبه كيف يشاء كما يشاءوا لا مرد لامر الله والله قوي عزي ان استقم على الملك بالعدل من حكم ربك في الكتاب فان كلمة الله ما اراده ملك الدنيا والاخرة ولا حكم الفتوى مثل لما الحق والله شهيد عليم

[1] O thou king (malik) [Muhammad Shāh]! Be cognizant of the Providence [Decree] of God (ḥukm Allāh) and know ye that every king (malik) is in the hands of my Master (mawlā). [2] This even as the likeness of the seal (khātam) in thine own hands which He imprints even as He wills after the manner that He wills. [3] There is no gainsaying (maradd) of the Cause [Religion] of God (li-amr Allāh) (cf. Q. XX) for God is One Powerful, One Mighty. [4] Rise ye up over the dominion (al-mulk) with justice (bi'l-`adl) as accords with the Providence of thy Lord (ḥukm rabbika) expressed in the Book (al-kitāb). [5] The [personified] Word of God (kalimat Allāh) does not desire worldly dominion (mulk al-dunyā') nor [that of] the world to come [Hereafter] (al-ākhirah); neither the decree of fatwā after the fashion of the `ulamā' of the True God (ḥaqq). [6] Of this God Himself is Witness, One All-Knowing.

[X]

قل اننى ارات الله ربك وحده

لا الاله هوالحى القديم بلى قد احب ان تنصردنكرالله ليومنن شرق الارض وغربها
بايات رب كوكانوا من المهتدين وان حكم حرف مما ينزل من لى لم يعدل ملك
الاخرةوالاولى لايته تنزيل من عزيز حكيم

[1] Say: I, verily, alone am the Desire of God (iradat Allāh) thy Lord, no God is there except Him, the Living, the Ancient One. [2] Yea indeed! the thing most beloved is that thou should render victorious the Dhikr-Allāh (Remembrance of God) to the end that both the Easts of the earth and the Wests thereof might come to faith through the verses of thy Lord (āyāt rabbika) and they be numbered among the rightly guided. [3] He hath decreed that but a letter of what He hath set down through Me would in no wise justify either [possession of] the dominion of the world to come [Hereafter] (al-ākhirah) or that of the primary era (al-awwalī) for it is assuredly a revelation (tanzīl) from One Mighty, One All-Wise.

[XI]

. ولقد رجع ذكرالله باذن ربك من بلدالحرام وانه قد اراد ارض المقدسة فانظر ماذا
ترى فى شان ذكرالله على الارض المقدسة فى ملك الروم والله عزى حميد ولقد
سمعنا اليوم ان الرسول قد حبس فى البغداد ان اطلبه من قريب فانه لعلى عزيز
وان لم ترى الشان فيها نريد عرش الله فى ملكك ان ارسل حكم الجواب فانه لمن
النازلين قريبا

[1] The Dhikr-Allāh hath returned with the permission of thy Lord from the region of sacred precincts (balad al-ḥarām) [Mecca-Medina] [2] and He hath now desired [sovereignty over] the sacred land (arḍ al-muqaddasah) [the `Atabat in Ottoman Iraq = Karbala-Najaf region]. [3] So take notice of that which thou observe of the potency (fī sha`n) of the Dhikr-Allāh (Remembrance of God) over the sacred land which lieth within the Ottoman dominion (fī mulk al-rūm) for God is indeed Almighty, One Praiseworthy. [4] We have heard of the day when the Messenger [of the Bāb = Mullā `Alī Bastāmī] was imprisoned in Baghdad. [5] So seek him out soon for he [Mulla `Ali Bastami] is indeed one elevated and mighty. [7] This even though thou [Muhamad Shah] shall fail to perceive any significance in this [8] for We desire the [establishment of the] Throne of

God (ʿarsh Allāh) [justice] in thy dominion [= Persia]. [6] Send ye then a directive of response (ḥukm al-jawāb) [to this] soon (qarīb^{an}) for verily, it pertains to the one who is assuredly among the residents [of Persia] (man al-nāzilīn) [?].



The Ottoman Sultan `Abd al-Majid or Abdülmecit (1839-1861)

[XII]

ولقد نزلنا كتاباً اليك لتامر ان يكتب بمثل ما نزلنا فيه بالمداد الذهب هلى خط نسخ
كريم ثم ترسل كتاب ربك الى ملك الروم ثم الى كل الملوك لنعلم ان طائفة منهم قد
صدقوا حكم الله واى طائفة منهم كذبوا ثم نحكم بينهم بالقسط وما كان الله ليظلم
نفساً من بعض ذرة والله قوى حكيم

[1] We indeed sent down a Book [Epistle] unto thee [Muhammad Shāh] to the end that thou should command that there be written the like of what We sent down therein in golden Ink (al-midād al-dhahab) in a noble, naskh script (khaṭṭ naskh karīm). [2] Then shall thou [Muhammad Shāh] dispatch this Book [Epistle] of thy Lord unto the Ottoman Sovereign (malik al-rūm) [= Sultan `Abd al-Majid] then unto all the [other] kings (mulūk) [3] This to the end that We might know which faction (tāʿifat) among them hath been just with respect to the command of God and which faction (tāʿifat) among them had been untruthful. [4] Wherefore shall We judge between them with justice. [4] God can never [in this respect] be accused of tyranny towards any soul (nafs^{an}) even to the extent of a minute degree for God is One Powerful, Almighty.

[XIII]

ياايها الملك

عزز رسل عبد الله ثم وقرهم فانهم فى حكم الكتاب لمن المقربين الاولين لمسطور
وان حكم ربك فرض اجب ذكر الله فى حكم ذلك الكتاب بايدى اهل ملكك من قريب و
سبحان الله ربك رب السموات والعرش عما يصفون وسلام على المرسلين والحمد
لله رب العالمين

[1]

O thou King (al-malik) [Muhammad Shāh]!

Empower ye the messengers of the servant of God (rusul `abd Allāh), then render them solace [2] for they, according to the decree of the Book, are assuredly reckoned foremost among such as are nigh unto God (al-muqarrabīn al-awwalīn), persons [whose status is] inscribed (la-mastūr). [3] This decree of thy Lord is a most appropriate ordinance (fard) of the Dhikr-Allāh (Remembrance of God) as accords with the decree of that Book which is near at hand (min qarīb) through the hands of the people of thy realm [dominion]. [4] And praise be unto God, thy Lord, the Lord of the heavens and of the Throne (`arsh) above all that they [falsely] attribute. [5] And peace be upon the sent Messengers (al-mursalīm) and praised be unto God, the Lord of all the worlds.

