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

Trans. Stephen Lambden

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Translated from a manuscript (khaṭṭ) dispatched from Bushire addressed to the non-Arab [Persian] Monarch (suḵān al-ʾajam) [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]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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

[1]

اقرأ كتاب ذكر اسم ربك الذي له الله إلا هو العلى الكبري وانه لكتاب لاريب فيه قد ننزل من لدن امام مبين وانه له الحق في السماوات والأرض ودعو الناس الى دين الله الخالص من حكم قسطاس قويم وانه لهو السر في صفح النبيين و المرسلين يلتو آيات ربك عن شجرة السيناء ان لا الله إلا 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
وأنه لهو الامر في كلمة الروح */ ره يدعو ا لناس بحكم ربك لشان يوم لاريب فيه وكل في ذلك اليوم على الله يعرضون وانه ورقه مباركة عن الشجرة البيضا ثم الصفرا ثم الحمرإيتلكتاب ربك في كل شان للاهو

[1]

Say: O thou ascetically minded ones!
This is assurdly 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]

إياى فاتقون
وان مثل نور ربک في كتاب الله كقصص شمس في كل وجهه عبيد قد استقر على عرش ياقوت حمرا قد طاف في حولها رجال قد رقت وجههم كوجه الزجاجة البيضاىلتحكي الوجه دون الوجه سبحاته وتعالي مايدعو نفسا ممنا منهم إلا من نفسه كذلك قد ارسل الله النبيين والمرسلين لامره إلا ان الحكم الله في كان شان وكل الیه يرجعون
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.

[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 (‘amal 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.

[V]

قل لونشاً

لتنزل في كل شيء قداحات علم ربك مثل قرآن الأول من دون فكر ولا يكون قل الم تعلم إن الله ربك قد كان على كل شيء مقتدرًا وإن حرفًا مما ينزل من يد الذكر لم يعد آيات الأولين فما لهولا القوم لايؤمنون بآيات الله قليلا فرأى آية أكبر من آيات القرآن الذي قدنزل من لدن عزيز حكيم ولواجمع الكل على أن يأتوا مثل آية مما نزلناليك في كتابك هذا لن يستطيعون ولن يقدرون ولو كانوا مهجمين بما لا إذاد له من الأمر إلا ان ذلك لهوالحق القيقين وكفى بالله ومن نزل الآيات من لديه على شهيدا

[1] Say: If We will it We could assuredly send down [revealed verses] in every circumstance (fi kulli 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-awwalīn) [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-ḥaq al-yaqīn). [7] And in God is sufficient witness unto Me along with whomsoever reveals verses on His behalf.

[VI]

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]

Anā‘ulum yāliyā al-malik

اننى فتى عجمى من طائفة عدل التجار امى على شان لم يحظ بعلمه احد قد اختارنى الحق لحكمه وانه لا الهولقوى عزيز قل ماكانت مفتريةاً على الحق وماكانت
[1] Know O thou king! [Muhammad Shāh] that I am a non-Arab [Persian] youth (fatā` `ajamī) from the party of Justice (tā'īfat 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] Baqiyat-Allāh (“Remnant of God”), my Master (mawlā).

[VIII]

وَانَّ الْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نُزِلَ لَنَا الآنَ الْيَكْرِى يَكْفَى لِمَا حَاجَتْهُ أَهْلُ الْسَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ وَلَوْ نُلْنُزِلَ اللَّهُ الْقُرْآنَ آيَةً واحَدَةً فَمَا أَلْهَدَانَ يُقُولُونَ فَيْهَا حَرَفُ رَبِّكَ هَكَذَا فَأَمَّرَ أن يَحْضُرَ الْمُحْدَدُوْنَ مَقْرَعَتُكَ ثُمَّ قُلْ هَذَا كِتَابٌ مِّن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ نُزِلَ لِيُعْتُمَّبَدَعُونَ بِمَثَلِ أَيْبَةَ مِنْهُ فَانْتَقُولُوا وَلَنْ نَقْطُرا وَلَنْ نَفْلُعُوا فَاذْعَمُوا إِنْ كُلُّ مَا حَقَّ وَأَنَّهُ لِلّهِ صَرَطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

[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-muwahhīdīn) 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]

[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-ākhira); 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.
[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-ākhirā) or that of the primary era (al-awwallî) for it is assuredly a revelation (tanzīl) from One Mighty, One All-Wise.

[XI]

[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 Baštāmī] 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 ʿAbd al-Majid or Abdülmecit (1839-1861)

[XII]

ولقد نزلنا كتاباً لتمارككم أن يكتب بمثال مانزلنا فيه بالمواد والذويب على خط نسخ كريم ثم ترسل كتاب ربك إلى ملك الروم ثم إلى كل الملك لتعلم ان طائفة منهم قد صدقوكم الله وآية طائفة منهم كذبوا ثم نحكم بينهم بالقسط وما كان الله ليظلم نفسه 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 ʿAbd 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]

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.

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