

## Some Chronological Issues in the Lawḥ-i-Hikmat of Bahá’u’lláh

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The student of sacred history finds that every major Manifestation of God, be He called Avatar, Buddha, Messenger, Prophet or Savior, changes history. There are of course many ways in which He changes history, including the following: He reveals principles and commandments which transform those who follow Him and which significantly influence those who reject Him as well. For examples of this influence upon non-believers, the reader may consider the impact of Judaism upon the Samaritans; of Christianity on Jews and pagans; of Buddhism on Hindus and Confucians; and of Islám on Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, pagans. The Manifestation of God envisions and prophesies a future that His followers are committed to realizing; He interprets the past in a manner distinct and often markedly divergent from the conventional modes of historical perception. It is this last-mentioned creative act, the Manifestations’ revisioning of history, that we will examine in this paper.

The reader may be accustomed to thinking of history as composed of facts and therefore, he might think that history does not stand in need of interpretation, even by a Manifestation of God. Some years ago a colleague opined to the present author that history is fiction, or, to put it another way, history is fictive. Over the years the author has given much thought to this statement, and has found it difficult to refute. He has noted that every historian chooses what to include in his historical lectures and writings—and what to exclude. What he includes becomes “history,” for “history” as we know it is that portion of history which is remembered. The unremembered history has no place in our lives; it serves no function. The historian who is convinced that Western civilization is the most advanced and meritorious of all will marshal evidence in support of that conviction through his selective depiction of past events. Naturally, almost inevitably, it will appear to his readers that he is correct in coming to that conclusion. Likewise, the Muslim historian, the Christian historian, the Jewish historian, the Marxist historian, the feminist historian, the racist historian—each one will invariably select such historical events and personalities, influences and forces as he or she deems important to be featured in an historical work. This process of selection will exclude a great mass of “facts” which have been judged by that historian to be insignificant (or, at best, non-essential).

It may be argued that “modern academic” historians make every effort to be objective, to follow scientific method. However, many careful readers have noted that “modern academic” historians are, in many regards, among the most selective in the history of history, called upon by the ever-increasing fragmentation and specialization which characterizes their profession, to focus on very narrow interests. They are preoccupied with writing papers, articles, monographs and tomes which are presumed by the reader to be objective when in actuality they are invariably shot through with the extremely limited egocentric and often ethnocentric vision of the author. If one is prepared to enjoy reading the views of the “modern academic” historian without supposing them to be altogether reliable, then there is no harm done. If, on the other hand, the reader believes that this historical “expert” is somehow magically exempt from subjectivity, and if that reader takes in whatever the historian writes and believes implicitly in its literal truth, in this case the reader has been duped. The writings of the “modern academic” historian are no more inherently truthful than the pronouncements of the “traditional dogmatic” theologian, the speculations of the philosopher, or the imaginations of the poet.

Is the author suggesting that the reader remain in a state of perpetual disbelief, of profound and unalterable skepticism? Not at all. It is into this breach that the Manifestation of God steps, with commanding authority, for He alone can lead us all to the Straight Path, and replace our confusion and ignorance with understanding and truth. The Manifestation of God changes history, and one of the ways in which

He effects that change is through His creative interpretation of the past. His re-creation of the past, and His creation of the present and future become, for His followers and for their unbelieving neighbors as well, the standard by which reality can be distinguished from unreality, true history from fictive history.

In another essay, the present author has examined the doctrine of the Most Great Infallibility [*‘iṣmat al-kubrā*], which designates the Manifestation of God as the foremost interpreter of historical events. Briefly, Bahá'u'lláh makes the following claim, in various of His Tablets:

Know thou that the term ‘Infallibility’ hath numerous meanings and divers stations. In one sense it is applicable to the One Whom God hath made immune from error. Similarly it is applied to every soul whom God hath guarded against sin, transgression, rebellion, impiety, disbelief and the like. However, the Most Great Infallibility [*‘iṣmat al-kubrā*] is confined to the One Whose station is immeasurably exalted beyond ordinances or prohibitions and is sanctified from errors and omissions. Indeed He is a Light which is not followed by darkness and a Truth not overtaken by error.

Were He to pronounce water to be wine or heaven to be earth or light to be fire, He speaketh the truth and no doubt would there be about it; and unto no one is given the right to question His authority or to say why or wherefore. Whosoever raiseth objections will be numbered with the froward in the Book of God, the Lord of the worlds...<sup>1</sup>

He Who is the Dawning-place of God’s Cause hath no partner in the Most Great Infallibility [*‘iṣmat al-kubrā*]. He it is Who, in the kingdom of creation, is the Manifestation of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth.” God hath reserved this distinction unto His own Self, and ordained for none a share in so sublime and transcendent a station. This is the Decree of God, concealed ere now within the veil of impenetrable mystery. We have disclosed it in this Revelation, and have thereby rent asunder the veils of such as have failed to recognize that which the Book of God set forth and who were numbered with the heedless.<sup>2</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained this principle and the actual verse (K47) of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* in *Some Answered Questions*,<sup>3</sup> of which a short excerpt is cited here:

It is said in the holy verse: ‘There is no partner for Him Who is the Dayspring of Revelation in His Most Great Infallibility [*‘iṣmat al-kubrā*]. He is, in truth, the Exponent of ‘God doeth whatsoever He willeth’ in the kingdom of creation. Indeed the Almighty hath exclusively reserved this station for Himself and to none is given a share in this sublime and highly exalted distinction.’

Know that infallibility [*‘iṣmat*] is of two kinds: essential infallibility [*‘iṣmat-i-dhátíyyih*] and acquired infallibility [*‘iṣmat-i-safátíyyih*]. In like manner there is essential knowledge [*‘ilm-i-dhátí*] and acquired knowledge [*‘ilm-i-safátí*]; and so it is with other names and attributes. Essential infallibility [*‘iṣmat-i-dhátíyyih*] is peculiar to the universal Manifestation [*mazhar-i-kullí*], for it is His essential requirement, and an essential requirement cannot be separated from the thing itself..

In short, the meaning of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth” is that if the Manifestation says something, or gives a command, or performs an action, and believers do not understand its wisdom, they still ought not to oppose it by a single thought, seeking to know why He spoke so, or why He did such a thing. The other souls who are under the shadow of the supreme Manifestations are submissive to the commandments of the Law of God, and are not to deviate as much as a hairsbreadth from it; they must conform their acts and words to the Law of God. If they do deviate from it, they will be held responsible and reproved in the presence of God. It is certain that they have no share in the permission “He doeth whatsoever He willeth,” for this condition is peculiar to the supreme Manifestations.

Shoghi Effendi has further explained the essential nature of this doctrine of the Most Great Infallibility of the Manifestation of God, as found here in a letter written on his behalf to an individual Bahá’í:

Regarding your Bahá’í friend who does not fully understand the infallibility of the Manifestation of God: You should influence that person to study the matter more deeply, and to realize that the whole theory of Divine Revelation rests on the infallibility of the Prophet, be He Christ, Muhammad, Bahá’u’lláh, or one of the others. If They are not infallible, then They are not divine, and thus lose that essential link with God which, we believe, is the bond that educates men and causes all human progress.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, it could be claimed that the Most Great Infallibility of the Manifestation of God does not cover questions of history. Let us begin with what Bahá’u’lláh has written in reference to this matter. In two passages from *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat* [Tablet of Wisdom] Bahá’u’lláh describes the manner in which He has become informed of historical personalities and events reported in that Tablet:

Thou knowest full well that We perused not the books which men possess and We acquired not the learning [‘ulúmi] current amongst them, and yet whenever We desire to quote the sayings of the learned [al-‘ulamá’] and the wise [al-hukamá’], presently there will appear before the face of thy Lord [rabbaka] in the form of a tablet [lawḥ] all that which hath appeared in the world [al-‘álam] and is revealed in the Holy books [al-kutub] and Scriptures [al-zubur]. Thus do We set down in writing that which the eye perceiveth. Verily His knowledge [‘ilmuhu] encompasseth the earth and the heavens.

This is a Tablet wherein the Pen of the Unseen hath inscribed the knowledge of all that hath been and shall be—a knowledge that none other but My wondrous Tongue can interpret. Indeed My heart as it is in itself hath been purged by God from the concepts of the learned and is sanctified from the utterances of the wise. In truth naught doth it mirror forth but the revelations of God. Unto this beareth witness the Tongue of Grandeur in His perspicuous Book.

Say, O people of the earth! Beware lest any reference to wisdom debar you from its Source or withhold you from the Dawning-Place thereof. Fix your hearts upon your Lord, the Educator, the All-Wise.

In every land We have set up a luminary of knowledge, and when the time foreordained is at hand, it will shine resplendent above its horizon, as decreed by God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. If it be Our Will We are fully capable of describing for thee whatever existeth in every land or hath come to pass therein. Indeed the knowledge of thy Lord pervadeth the heavens and the earth.<sup>5</sup>

In another of His Tablets, published in a compilation entitled *‘Ishráqát* (not to be confused with His Tablet called *Ishráqát*), Bahá’u’lláh specifically refers to the Most Great Infallibility in relation to the characterization of an historical event in the Writings of the Báb:

qulná itaqi alláh va lá ta’tarid ‘alá man zayanahu’lláh bi-al-’iṣmat al-kubrâ va ismâat al-husná va sifâtât al-‘uluyâ mizâvár ‘ibâd ánkih mashariq-i-amr ilâhî rá tasdiq namáyand dar ánchih az ú zahir shavad chih kih bih muqtasiyât-i-hikmat-i-bálighih ahadí juzz-i-haqq ágáh nah yaf’álu máyishá’ va yahkumu má yuríd va huva al-muqtadiru’l-qadír<sup>6</sup>

A provisional translation of these verses, attempted by Dr. Iskandar Hai and the present author, in collaboration with Dr. Robert Stockman, Dr. Mu’in Afnani, and other Bahá’í scholars attending the 1999 ‘Irfán Colloquium at the Louhelen Bahá’í School is as follows:

We said unto them: Fear ye God, and contend not with the One Whom God hath adorned with the Most Great Infallibility, [with] Excellent Names and Exalted Attributes! It behooveth the servants [mankind] to testify to the truth of whatsoever proceedeth from the Dawning-place of the Cause of God, for none save God knoweth the exigencies of consummate wisdom. He doeth whatsoever He willeth, and decreeth whatsoever He desireth. He is the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

In one of His Tablets, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has affirmed the same principle, that is, the accuracy of the historical witness of the Manifestation of God:

Nevertheless, Holy Writ [nass-i-iláhiyyih] is authoritative [amr-i-mahtúm ast], and with it no history of the world can compare, for experience hath shown that after investigation of the facts [taharri haqíqat] and a thorough study of ancient records and corroborative evidence, all have referred back to the Holy Scriptures [nusús-i-iláhiyyih]. The most important thing is to establish the validity of God’s universal Manifestation [mazhar-i-kullí-yi iláhí]; once His claim proveth true, then whatsoever He may choose to say is right and correct.<sup>7</sup>

Shoghi Effendi, in reference to the historical views set forth in the writings of the eminent Bahá’í scholar, Mírzá Abú’l-Faḍl Gulpayganí, and in comparison with the statements of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (here called, the Master), has given the following interpretation:

Shoghi Effendi wishes to emphasize that what is truly authoritative are the Master’s words. In all such cases we should try and find out what He has said and abide by His words, even though they seem conflicting with the findings of modern scholars.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the Universal House of Justice directed its Secretariat to write the following letter with reference to this very topic:

We have been asked to say that there is nothing in the Bahá’í writings to support the conclusion that the revelation of a Manifestation of God is confined to an exposition of ‘values’ or that the infallibility of the Prophets does not extend to and include the area of historical and scientific ‘fact.’ On the contrary, in *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 28-29, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá points out that when the Qur’án was revealed, it contained verses explaining the movement of the stars and planets in the universe. Because these statements disagreed with the established theories of the time, the verses were ridiculed by all the mathematicians who “attributed the theory to ignorance.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá goes on to say that it was not until 900 years later, when the telescope was invented, that the validity of Muḥammad’s statements on this subject was proven.<sup>9</sup>

Now that the relevancy of the Bahá’í doctrine of the Most Great Infallibility in relation to history has been established, we will begin our study of the specific chronological issues under consideration. The *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat* was addressed by Bahá’u’lláh to Áqá Muḥammad Qá’iní, surnamed Nabíl-i-Akbar, an eminent teacher of the Bahá’í Faith memorialized by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.<sup>10</sup> *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat* was recently published in the original Arabic<sup>11</sup> and in an English translation prepared under the auspices of the Universal House of Justice.<sup>12</sup> This Tablet covers a wide selection of topics, and will be studied for many centuries to come. In this paper we will be concerned with a very brief excerpt from *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat*, pertaining to the influence of two divinely-inspired Hebrew prophets upon two ancient Greek philosophers. We will begin with the following verses, as they establish the context for the excerpt under examination:

When the eyes of the people of the East were captivated by the arts and wonders of the West, they roved distraught in the wilderness of material causes, oblivious of the One Who is the Cause of Causes, and the Sustainer thereof, while such men as were the source and wellspring of Wisdom never denied the moving impulse behind these causes, nor the Creator of the origin thereof. Thy Lord knoweth, yet most of the people know not.<sup>13</sup>

In this brief statement, Bahá’u’lláh has described the basic methodology of all Western academic and scientific scholarship, including “modern academic” historiography. This approach to scholarship roves “distraught in the wilderness of material causes, oblivious of the One Who is the Causer of Causes” while Bahá’u’lláh’s vision of history affirms the divine origin of all those progressive phenomena which we in the West have identified as distinctively human and civilized. Bahá’u’lláh then explains the purpose which animates His subsequent references to historical personages:

Now We have, for the sake of God, the Lord of Names, set Ourselves the task of mentioning in this Tablet some accounts of the sages [al-hukamá’], that the eyes of the people may be opened thereby and that they may become fully assured that He is in truth the Maker, the Omnipotent, the Creator, the Originator, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise [al-hakímu].<sup>13</sup>

Immediately following these verses, Bahá’u’lláh refers to the influence of these “sages” upon the “contemporary men of learning.” Hence, He begins this section of the Tablet with two general statements

regarding “the sages” and follows these up with specific statements about individual Greek philosophers. His purpose in mentioning these accounts, is “that the eyes of the people may be opened thereby and that they may become fully assured that He is in truth the Maker, the Omnipotent, the Creator, the Originator, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.” And Who is “the Maker, the Omnipotent, the Creator, the Originator, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise”? He is what Bahá’u’lláh called, in the previous paragraph, “the One Who is the Cause of Causes, and the Sustainer thereof.”

He proceeds in a systematic manner with the gradual unveiling of that reality which underlies appearances:

Although it is recognized that the contemporary men of learning [hukamá’] are highly qualified in philosophy [al-hikmat], arts and crafts [al-saná’i], yet were anyone to observe with a discriminating eye he would readily comprehend that most of this knowledge [‘ilm] hath been acquired from the sages of the past [hukamá’ al-qabli], for it is they who have laid the foundation of philosophy [asása’l-hikmat], reared its structure and reinforced its pillars. Thus doth thy Lord, the Ancient of Days, inform thee.<sup>14</sup>

At the conclusion of this paragraph, Bahá’u’lláh informs His reader of the source of His words: “Thus doth thy Lord, the Ancient of Days, inform thee.” This is not a human voice telling stories, which the listener or reader can take with a grain of salt or disbelieve altogether. This is the voice of God speaking. From the divine perspective, the fundamentals of present-day philosophy, arts and crafts were established by the Greek sages, hence credit for “arts and wonders of the West” should go to them rather than to their heirs, the Western Europeans. If He had stopped here, we might have concluded that Bahá’u’lláh was affirming the value of an old-fashioned aristocratic Western European education in the Greek and Roman classics. However, in this Tablet, Bahá’u’lláh gradually reveals the pattern, the warp and woof of a vast and magical carpet which is utterly unfamiliar to us in the West. That carpet is not an Oriental fantasy; it claims to be nothing less than the true nature of things in themselves.

At this point in the Tablet, Baha’u’llah introduces a link which explains why He has set Himself “the task of mentioning in this Tablet some accounts of the sages” and how this may fulfill His purpose, “that the eyes of the people may be opened thereby and that they may become fully assured that He is in truth the Maker”:

The sages aforetime acquired their knowledge [al-‘ulúm] from the Prophets [al-anbiyá’], inasmuch as the latter were the Exponents of divine philosophy [al-hikmat al-iláhiyyat] and the Revealers of heavenly mysteries. Men quaffed the crystal, living waters of Their utterance, while others satisfied themselves with the dregs. Everyone receiveth a portion according to his measure. Verily He is the Equitable, the Wise [al-hakímu].<sup>15</sup>

This statement, coming not from a mere mortal, but rather, according to Bahá’u’lláh, from the voice of God Himself (as the previous paragraph proclaims: “Thus doth thy Lord, the Ancient of Days, inform thee”), firmly establishes the source and foundation of divine philosophy, implying this divine knowledge was first revealed by God to His Manifestations, and affirming that it was then taught by the Prophets to the philosophers. That is, true “metaphysics” originated not in the philosophers themselves, but in the effulgences of God’s truth, received by the Manifestations. After establishing this, Bahá’u’lláh states that while every person perceives the real according to his own personal measure and capacity, the truth itself is from God and is independent of the measure of men. He reiterates both themes in the following verses, which bracket the short paragraph we will shortly examine:

The essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets [al-anbiyá’]. That the people differ concerning the inner meanings and mysteries thereof is to be attributed to the divergence of their views and minds.<sup>16</sup>

In this passage it seems that Bahá’u’lláh has broadened His assertion, claiming in these verses that the foundations of the entire field of philosophy—not just divine philosophy, but material philosophy as well—were revealed to the Prophets and taught by them to the philosophers. Previously in this Tablet Bahá’u’lláh has affirmed that present-day “philosophy, arts and crafts” are based upon the foundations

of philosophy established by the “sages.” Hence it can be seen that His statement here, about the entirety of philosophy, has very broad implications for our understanding of the history of the sciences, arts and crafts, as well the field of philosophy.

Bahá’u’lláh identifies the “Father of Philosophy” in yet another passage from Lawḥ-i-Hikmat:

I will also mention for thee the invocation voiced by Balínús who was familiar with the theories put forward by the Father of Philosophy regarding the mysteries of creation as given in his chrysolite tablets...<sup>17</sup>

The Father of Philosophy, according to Islamic historical tradition, is Idrís, who is also called Hermes.<sup>18</sup> In the Lawḥ-i-Basítu’l-Haqíqat (Tablet on the Uncompounded Reality), Bahá’u’lláh refers to this Father of Philosophy, this time by name:

The first person who devoted himself to philosophy was Idrís. Thus was he named. Some called him also Hermes. In every tongue he hath a special name. He it is who hath set forth in every branch of philosophy thorough and convincing statements.<sup>19</sup>

And who is Idrís? He is a Prophet of God, according to the Qur’án (as well as Islamic historical tradition, cited in Keven Brown’s article):

Commemorate Idrís in the Book; for he was a man of truth [siddíqan], a prophet [nabiyyan]; And We uplifted him to a lofty station.<sup>20</sup>

Hence, the first philosopher in every branch of philosophy is a Prophet. This statement, that the Father of Philosophy was a Prophet of God rather than a Greek sage, has revolutionary potential for the interpretation of history and philosophy alike. This is particularly true with reference to Greek philosophy, which has hitherto been almost universally acclaimed as the “leaven” which enabled the magnificent achievements of Western civilization to “rise up” from the midst of a motley collection of illiterate and blood-thirsty “barbarians.” It transfers the glory from man to God, or, to be precise, from certain aristocratic Greek males to the Unknowable Essence. Bahá’u’lláh lays considerable stress on this provenance, and, as elsewhere in His Writings, upon man’s dependence upon the Revelation of God for all true knowledge and wisdom:

For every land We have prescribed a portion, for every occasion an allotted share, for every pronouncement an appointed time and for every situation an apt remark. Consider Greece. We made it a Seat of Wisdom [kursiyya’l-hikmat] for a prolonged period. However, when the appointed hour struck, its throne was subverted, its tongue ceased to speak, its light grew dim and its banner was hauled down. Thus do We bestow and withdraw. Verily thy Lord is He Who giveth and divesteth, the Mighty, the Powerful.<sup>21</sup>

Now that the overall context of Bahá’u’lláh’s references to the history of philosophy has been discussed, we will turn our attention to the specific verses which are the subject of this particular paper. In between His statement that the Prophets “were the Exponents of divine philosophy” and His affirmation that the “essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets” Bahá’u’lláh refers to two Greek philosophers and two Hebrew prophets as examples of this mode of transmission:

inna abídaqílisa’l-ladhiyi-shtahara fí’l-hikmat kána fí zamani dáúda wa-fíthághúritha fí zamani sulay- mána ibni dáúda wa akhadha’l-hikmata min ma’dini’l- nubuwwati wa huwa’l-ladhí zanna annahu samià hafífa’l-falaki wa-balagha maqáma’l-malaki inna rabbaka yufassilu kulla amrinn idhá sháá innahu lahuwa’l-‘alímu’l-muhítu<sup>22</sup>

Empedocles, who distinguished himself in philosophy, was a contemporary of David, while Pythagoras lived in the days of Solomon, son of David, and acquired Wisdom from the treasury of prophethood. It was he who claimed to have heard the whispering sound of the heavens and to have attained the station of angels. In truth thy Lord will clearly set forth all things, if He pleaseth. Verily, He is the Wise, the All-Pervading.<sup>23</sup>

Abídaqílisa (also written Anbaduqlís, Banduqlís, Abíduqlís, Abídhūqlís, and Anbáduqlís in the sources consulted) is the Arabic transcription for the name of a famous Greek philosopher, known to Western

readers as Empedocles. The opening phrase of this section indicates that Empedocles was renowned in “philosophy” [hikmat] and that he lived in the “time” [zaman] of David. Which David? This is clarified in the second sentence. The second sentence states that Pythagoras (transcribed into Arabic as Fíthághúris and here as Fíthághúritha), another Greek philosopher—whose Pythagorean theorem and music of the spheres have preserved his memory for schoolchildren throughout the world—was living in the “time” [zaman] of Solomon, the son of David. History has a record of only one Solomon, son of David, these together being two kings of Israel, described in the Books of Kings (I, II) and Books of Chronicles (I, II), as found in both the Hebrew and the Greek versions of the Bible. Another record of these two kings, in which they are described as prophets of God, is found in the Qur’án.

Before we proceed any further with this analysis, we must examine the meaning of “time” [zaman]. In general, the Arabic word is translated as “time; period; stretch of time; duration,”<sup>24</sup> and as used by Persians the word means “time; season; fortune; calamity.”<sup>25</sup> Inasmuch as a particular Greek philosopher is associated in time with David, and then another Greek philosopher with Solomon, the son of David, it seems that Bahá’u’lláh was using [zaman] in the sense of “generation”—relating Empedocles to David’s generation and Pythagoras to Solomon’s generation. In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi and dated 15 February 1947,<sup>26</sup> the Guardian gave his definition of [zaman], as follows: “We must not take this statement too literally; contemporary may have been meant in Persian as something far more elastic than the English word.” Other than this brief reference, there does not seem to be an authorized interpretation of this term in the Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the letters of Shoghi Effendi.

Before we proceed any further with this inquiry, let us consider what is at issue. First of all, Bahá’u’lláh has affirmed that Empedocles preceded Pythagoras, even as David preceded his father, Solomon. According to “modern academic” historians, the correct dating of Empedocles is circa 445–441 B.C.E., and Pythagoras circa 540–536 B.C.E, with Pythagoras preceding Empedocles by nearly a century. While Bahá’u’lláh has not indicated the historical epoch in which Empedocles and Pythagoras lived, He has Empedocles preceding Pythagoras by a generation. These two visions of history are in contradiction to each other. Secondly, Bahá’u’lláh has stipulated that Empedocles lived during the time of David, and Pythagoras in the time of Solomon. According to the chronologies accepted by most “traditional” Jewish and Christian historians, as well as the calculations of “modern academic” historians, David and Solomon lived in the 11–10th centuries B.C.E. A sampling of contemporary historical chronologies is as follows: David lived circa 1040–970 B.C.E. and Solomon lived circa tenth century B.C.E.;<sup>27</sup> David lived circa 1001–986 B.C.E., and Solomon in 965–931 B.C.E.;<sup>28</sup> David ruled 1055–1015 B.C.E.,<sup>29</sup> and ruled Solomon starting either in 1025, 1015, 1009 or 990 B.C.E. for a period of forty years.<sup>30</sup> While Bahá’u’lláh does not identify the epoch in which David and Solomon reigned, if it were to agree with that which is almost universally adhered to by all historians of the East and the West, then it would obviously disagree with the “modern academic” historians on another score, inasmuch as Empedocles is dated by them to the sixth century, and Pythagoras to the fifth century B.C.E.

These contradictions between the chronology of Bahá’u’lláh on the one hand and “modern academic” historians on the other would not be troubling to Bahá’ís if Bahá’u’lláh had not claimed to be divinely inspired with the Most Great Infallibility [‘iṣmat al-kubrâ], and if ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi had not interpreted this to mean that every word written by Bahá’u’lláh is unerring and infallibly guided. Nevertheless, if ‘Abdu’l-Bahá or Shoghi Effendi had allowed for a symbolic interpretation of this passage from Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, this contradiction could be resolved without challenging Bahá’í scholars to reconsider the “traditional” chronologies and the conclusions of “modern academic” historians as they relate to the ancient history of Greek philosophers and Hebrew prophets.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written at least two Tablets in explanation of some of the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh contained in Lawḥ-i-Hikmat. One is a commentary on certain verses of this Tablet which pertain to cosmological questions, and is entitled Sharh Lawḥ-i-Hikmat.<sup>31</sup> The second, entitled Lawḥ-i-Mubáarak dar bárih-yi tavárikh-i-falásifah (shortened here to Lawḥ-i-Falásafih), was authored in 1906, in response to the questions of Miss Ethel J. Rosenberg, an early British believer, and this Tablet is almost entirely taken up with an explanation of Bahá’u’lláh’s chronology of philosophers and prophets in Lawḥ-i-

Hikmat (7). For the purposes of our close examination of this topic, a portion of Lawḥ-i-Falásifah will be cited in its published English translation:

As to what thou didst ask regarding the history of the philosophers: history, prior to Alexander of Greece,<sup>32</sup> is extremely confused, for it is a fact that only after Alexander did history become an orderly and systematized discipline...

Wherefore ye should not be surprised that the Tablet of Wisdom is in conflict with the historical accounts. It behoveth one to reflect awhile on the great diversity of opinion among the historians, and their contradictory accounts: for the historians of East and West are much at odds, and the Tablet of Wisdom [Lawḥ-i-Hikmat] was written in accordance with certain histories of the East...

Nevertheless, Holy Writ [nass-i-iláhiyyih] is authoritative [amr-i-mahtúm ast], and with it no history of the world can compare, for experience hath shown that after investigation of the facts [taharri haqíqat] and a thorough study of ancient records and corroborative evidence, all have referred back to the Holy Scriptures [nusús-i-iláhiyyih]. The most important thing is to establish the validity of God's universal Manifestation [mazhar-i-kullí-yi iláhí]; once His claim proveth true, then whatsoever He may choose to say is right and correct.

'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms two points in this Tablet in reference to Lawḥ-i-Hikmat: first, that "the Tablet of Wisdom was written in accordance with certain histories of the East" (it is not stated that it was written in accordance with all Eastern histories); and second, that "Holy Writ [nass-i-iláhí] is authoritative, and with it no history of the world can compare; they can never hold their own against Holy Writ [nass-i-iláhí]." Lawḥ-i-Falásifah is written in Persian, and although "nass" is an Arabic word, we have sought its meanings in Persian. One of those meanings of "nass" is "the Qur'án"<sup>33</sup> and "nusús" is the plural of "nass."<sup>34</sup> However, inasmuch as 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to "historical accounts" in Lawḥ-i-Falásifah using the term "nasús-i-táríkhiyyih" it seems that "nass-i-iláhí" should be translated employing a different meaning of "nass," namely "text, wording,"<sup>33</sup> and hence as "divine text" or, as rendered by the Research Department, "Holy Writ." It is clear, from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's choice of words, that He is not referring here to the authority and truthfulness of the Hebrew Scriptures, which He denominates "tawrát" (Torah) in the same Tablet, or even to the Qur'án (which He would have referred to by name), but to the Writings of all the Prophets of God. Inasmuch as 'Abdu'l-Bahá (and Miss Rosenberg, the recipient of this Tablet) recognized Bahá'u'lláh as a Prophet of God, and His Writings as "Holy Writ" [nass-i-iláhí], it is then evident that 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarded the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh as "authoritative" [amr-i-mahtúm ast], and therefore "whatsoever He may choose to say is right and correct." In short, we may infer from this general statement, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stated categorically (although not word for word) that the pairing of Empedocles with David and Pythagoras with Solomon, son of David "is right and correct" even though it conflicts with the views of all Western historians and indeed with those of some Eastern historians as well.

In Lawḥ-i-Falásifah we find 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirming the following: "The most important thing is to establish the validity of God's universal Manifestation [mazhar-i-kullí-yi iláhí]; once His claim proveth true, then whatsoever He may choose to say is right and correct." This statement presupposes that it is possible, nay, essential, to "establish the validity" of the Prophet, and in so ruling, 'Abdu'l-Bahá links this Tablet with His many talks and Tablets which refer to the objective proofs of prophethood, and the fulfillment of those proofs by Bahá'u'lláh, as well as by Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and other universal Manifestations of God. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts that these proofs and evidences are in agreement with science and reason, indeed, that they constitute elements of a divine science, a divine philosophy, which is the complement of physical science and material philosophy, and the help-meet of revealed religion. It is eminently reasonable to assert, the author would suggest, that a Prophet has access to innate knowledge which enables Him to see things as they are and in themselves, rather than to remain limited to the kinds of knowledge available to normal human beings, and that He should be recognized as being endowed with this superhuman gift if He fulfills the proofs of prophethood which have been established as applying to all authentic Prophets of God. Hence, on this point as well, it seems to the present author that the Bahá'í principle of the harmony of religion with science and reason has been affirmed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Lawḥ-i-Falásifah rather than compromised in the least detail.



The present paper will not discuss the proofs and evidences of prophethood, or investigate the claims of Bahá’u’lláh and His fulfillment of those proofs and evidences. Nor will it explore His prophetic faculty of innate and infallible knowledge and understanding. However, it will identify some of the “Eastern histories” to which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá referred in *Lawḥ-i-Falásifah* when He indicated that certain of those histories were in agreement with the chronology of philosophers and Prophets found in Bahá’u’lláh’s *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat*. ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Ishráq Khávarí reported in his book, *Muhádirát*,<sup>35</sup> that what Bahá’u’lláh revealed regarding Empedocles and Pythagoras in *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat* was mentioned in “*Al-Milal wa’l-Nihal*” of [1] Abu-Fath al-Shahrastání (1076-1153) and in the “*Ta’ríkh Mu’tabar wa Shahúr*” [apparently the same work as “*Kitáb al-Mukhtasar fí akhbar al-bashar*”] of [2] ‘Imámu’d-Dín Abú’l-Fida’ (1273-1331). Ishráq Khávarí quotes passages from Abú’l-Fida’ (pp. 154, lines 3-5; 152, lines 15-17) which pertain to Empedocles and Pythagoras, and in the second of these two citations Abú’l-Fida’ is quoting Al-Shahrastání. Ishráq Khávarí does not state that Bahá’u’lláh quoted Al-Shahrastání or Abú’l-Fida’ in *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat*. Apparently, he was leaving his reader to draw his own conclusions.

In his article, “Problems of Chronology in Bahá’u’lláh’s Tablet of Wisdom,”<sup>36</sup> J.R.I. Cole noted a connection between the historical accounts of Al-Shahrastání and Abú’l-Fida’ and the *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat* of Bahá’u’lláh. J.R.I. Cole stated that Al-Shahrastání and Abú’l-Fida’ were the sources for Bahá’u’lláh’s references to Empedocles and Pythagoras, but went on to indicate that other Muslim historians had made similar statements, including: [3] Sá’id ibn Ahmad Sá’id Al-Andalusi (1029-1070 CE) in “*Kitáb Tabaqát al-Umam*”; [4] Jamálu’d-Dín al-Qiftí (1172-1248), in “*Ta’ríkh al-Hukamá*”; and [5] Muwaffaqu’d-Dín ibn Abí Usaybiáh (1194-1270), in “*Tabaqát al-Atbá*.”<sup>37</sup> The author of this paper found other Muslim historians who made similar statements in their historical works, including [6] Shams al-Dín al-Shahrazúrí (d. 1200), in “*Nuzhat al-arwáh wa-rawdát al-afráh*” (36); and [7] Hájjí Khalífah (d. 1609), in “*Kashf al-zunún fí asámí al-kutub wa’l-funún*.”<sup>38</sup> In an independent search for the writings of these medieval Muslim historians, the author was very fortunate in discovering the Arabic texts of all of the above in the holdings of the New York Public Library.

We will demonstrate the similarity between the words of Bahá’u’lláh and those of the seven Muslim historians studied by citing the original Arabic:

inna abídaqlísa’l-ladhiyi-shtahara fí’l-hikmati kána fí zamani dáúda (Bahá’u’lláh, *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat*, MG, p. 124)

banduqlís fakána fí zamani dáúd al-nabí ‘alayhi al- salám ‘alá má dhikru’l-‘ulamá’ bi-tawáríkhi al-umam wa kána akhadha’l-hikmata ‘an luqmáni bi’l-shám (Al-Andalusi, “*Kitáb Tabaqát al-Umam*,” p. 666)

anbáduqlis...kána fí zamani dáúd al-nabí ‘alayhi al- salám madaya ilayhi wa talqiya minhu al-‘ilm wa akhtalafa ilá luqmáni al-hakím (Al-Shahrastání, “*Al-Milal wa’l-Nihal*,” p. 359; Cole edition, vol. II, p. 132)

anbáduqlis...wa kána fí zamani dáúd wa kána akhadha’l- hikmata ‘an luqmáni bi’l-shám wa qíla ‘an sulaymáni (Al-Shahrazúrí, “*Nuzhat al-arwáh wa-rawdát al-afráh*,” folio 13)

abídhūqlís hadha fakána fí zamani dáúd al-nabí ‘alayhi al- salám ‘alá má dhikrahu’l-‘ulamá’ bi-tawáríkhi al-umam wa qíla anahu akhadha’l-hikmata ‘an luqmáni al-hakím bi’l-shám (Al-Qiftí, “*Ta’ríkh al-Hukamá*,” pp. 12-13)

banduqlís kána fí zamani dáúd al-nabí ‘alayhi al-salám ‘alá má dhikrahu’l-‘ulamá’ bi-tawáríkhi al-umam wa kána akhadha’l-hikmata ‘an luqmáni al-hakím bi’l-shám (Ibn Abí Usaybiáh, “*Tabaqát al-Atbá*,” p. 61)

abíduqlis kána fí zamani dáúd al-nabí (Abú’l-Fida’, “*Al-Mukhtasar fí akhbar al-bashar*,” p. 152; Cole edition, pp. 84-85)

banduqlís kána fí ‘asri dáúd ‘alayhi al-salám (Hájjí Khalífah, “*Kashf al-zunún fí asámí al-kutub wa’l-funún*,” p. 17)

A study of these passages seems to indicate a certain consistency between all eight accounts, and direct quotation of two of the accounts in others sources. Sáid al-Andalusi, in “Kitáb Tabaqát al-Umam” is directly quoted in Jamálu’d-Dín Ibn al-Qiftí, “Ta’ríkh al-Hukamá” (pp. 12-13; 15-16) and in Ibn Abí Usaybi’ah, “Tabaqát al-Atbá” (p. 61). The wording of al-Shahrastání’s account, in “Al-Milal wa’l-Nihal” (p. 359) is markedly different from that found in Sáid al-Andalusi, although he likewise writes “kána fí zamani dáúd al-nabí ‘alayhi al-salám” and he agrees with Sáid that Empedocles (whom he styles “Anbáduqlís” rather than “Banduqlís”) learned from “Luqmán”—something which is not attested by Bahá’u’lláh in Lawḥ-i-Hikmat. Al-Shahrastání’s account is cited and quoted by Shams al-Dín al-Shahrazúrí in “Nuzhat al-arwáh wa-rawdat al-afráh,”<sup>39</sup> and by Abú’l-Fida’ in “Al-Mukhtasar fí Akhbar al-Bashar” (p. 152). Al-Shahrazúrí also cites al-Qiftí in “Rawdat al-Afráh.”<sup>40</sup> While all of these historians write that Empedocles “kána fí zamani dáúd” (Empedocles lived in the time of David), none of them cite the origin of this historical statement. Al-Andalusi and al-Qiftí quote the Andalusian writer, Muhammad bin ‘Abdu’lláh Ibn Masarra al-Jabalí Ibn Masarra (883-931), and al-Shahrastání quotes a mysterious work entitled “Árá’ al-Falásifah.”<sup>41</sup> According to S.M. Stern, Al-Andalusi also seems to follow “Al-Abad ‘Ala’l-Ahmad” by al-‘Amirí,<sup>42</sup> and Stern also states that al-Shahrastání uses the “Siwán al-Hikmat” of Muhammad ibn Tahír ibn Bahrám al-Sijistání.<sup>43</sup> The last historian cited, Hájjí Khalífah, “Kashf al-zunún fí asámí al-kutub wa’l-funún” (p. 17) alters one word in the sentence referring to the lifetime of Empedocles, replacing [zaman] with [‘asr], which is defined as “age, era, time; period; epoch.”<sup>44</sup> Hájjí Khalífah does not indicate his sources. In Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, Bahá’u’lláh uses the same terminology as most of the historians cited, “kána fí zamani dáúd” rather than using the term [‘asr] found in Khalífah (“kána fí ‘asri dáúd”).

At this point in time, it seems that we do not know any more than has been reported in this paper about the sources for these statements by the Muslim historians. What is clear is that Bahá’u’lláh referred to these histories in general, although it is by no means clear from His specific phrasing that He was citing any of these histories in particular. Later in Lawḥ-i-Hikmat Bahá’u’lláh writes that “whenever We desire to quote the sayings of the learned and of the wise, presently there will appear before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world.”<sup>45</sup> It is clear that Bahá’u’lláh deliberately chose to cite the general wording of these historical accounts.

To continue with the passage from Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, where Bahá’u’lláh refers to Pythagoras, in Arabic:

wa-fíthághúriḥa fí zamani sulaymána ibni dáúda wa akhadha’l-hikmata min ma’dini’l-nubuwwati wa huwa’l-ladhí zanna annahu samiá hafífa’l-falaki wa-balagha maqáma’l-malaki inna rabbaka yufassilu kulla amrinn idhá sháá innahu lahuwa’l-‘álímu’l-muhítu (Bahá’u’lláh, Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, MG, p. 124)

Al-Shahrazúrí’s text on Pythagoras was inaccessible to the author of this paper; however, S.M. Stern states (43) that Al-Shahrazúrí quotes Al-Shahrastání and Al-Qiftí as well as other sources. Six of the seven Muslim historians cited above are once again brought in for comparison:

fíthághúris fakána ba’da bandaqlís bi-zamán wa akhadha’l- hikmat ‘an ashábi sulaymán bani dáúd ‘alayhumá al-salám (Al-Andalusi, “Kitáb Tabaqát al-Umam,” p. 667)

fíthághúris...kána fí zamáni sulaymán al-nabí ibn dáúd ‘alayhá al-salám qad akhadha’l-hikmata min ma’dini’l- nubawwati wa huwa’l-hakímu al-fádílu dhú al-raáyu al-matínu wa al-‘aqlu al-rasínu yad’í innahu sháhada’l- ‘awálíma al-‘uluwíyyata bihissihi wa hadsihi wa balagha fí al-riyádati ilá an samiá hafífa’l-falaki wa wasala ilá maqámi’l-malak (Al-Shahrastání, “Al-Milal wa’l-Nihal,” p. 365; Cole version, vol. II, p. 132—cited in Cole, p. 31, n. 24)

fíthághúris...kána ba’da abídhūqlís al-hakím bi-zamán wa akhadha’l-hikmata ‘an ashábi sulaymáni bni dáúd al-nabí (Al-Qiftí, “Ta’ríkh al-Hukamá,” pp. 15, 258)

inna fíthághúris kána ba’da banduqlís bi-zamán wa akhadha’l- hikmata ‘an ashábi sulaymáni bni dáúd ‘alayhamá al-salám (Ibn Abí Usaybi’ah, “Tabaqát al-Atbá,” p. 62)

fíthághúris fí zamáni sulaymáni bni dáúd ‘am wa akhadha’l- hikmata min ma’dini’l-nubawwati wa kánat wafáti sulaymáni bni dáúd li-madiyya khamasa máyata (Abú’l-Fida’, “Al-Mukhtasar fí

akhbar al-bashar,” p. 152; Cole edition, pp. 84–85) thumma fíthághúris thumma suqrát thumma aflátún (Hájji Khalífah, “Kashf al-zunún fí asámí al-kutub wa’l-funún,” pp. 17–18)

In a comparative reading of these texts we notice immediately that al-Andalusi indicates that Pythagoras “learned wisdom” [akhadha’l-hikmat] “from the companions of Solomon” [‘an asháb sulaymán] and that al-Qiftí and Ibn Abí Usaybi‘ah quote Al-Andalusi’s statement to this effect almost verbatim. This wording is not found in Bahá’u’lláh’s Lawḥ-i-Hikmat but it does appear in a treatise written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, entitled “Risáliy-i-Madaniyyih”:

va dar taváríkhi muta‘addadih madhkúr kih falásifih-yi yúnán mithli fíthághúritih akthari mas’ili hikmati iláhiyyih va tabí’iyyih rá az talámidhih-yi hadrat-i sulaymán iqtibás nimúd<sup>46</sup>

Marzieh Gail, in her English translation of this work has worded this passage in the following manner:

It is furthermore a matter of record in numerous historical works that the philosophers of Greece such as Pythagoras, acquired the major part of their philosophy, both divine and material, from the disciples of Solomon.<sup>47</sup>

Louis Cheikho, the editor of Al-Andalusi’s “Kitáb Tabaqát al-Umam” in the published version consulted,<sup>48</sup> in a note appended to this account has referred to the “learned ones of Israel” [‘ulamá’ al-isrá’iliyín]. This interpretation of the phrase “disciples of Solomon” seems to be favored by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as He makes mention of a connection between the “learned ones of Israel” in at least three of His public talks:

In the splendor of the reign of Solomon their sciences and arts advanced to such a degree that even the Greek philosophers journeyed to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of the Hebrew sages and acquire the basis of Israelitish law. According to Eastern history this is an established fact.<sup>49</sup> Even the celebrated philosophers of Greece journeyed to Jerusalem in order to study with the Israelitish sages, and many were the lessons of philosophy and wisdom they received.<sup>50</sup>

Even the philosophers of Greece went to Palestine to drink from the fountains of their wisdom and sit at the feet of their sages. All these facts prove that Moses was a Prophet and a Teacher.<sup>51</sup>

As we return to our study of Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, we find that Bahá’u’lláh’s description of Pythagoras uses wording which is almost identical to that found in Al-Shahrastání (“Al-Milal wa’l-Nihal,” p. 365), who is quoted in Abú’l-Fida (“Al-Mukhtasar fí Akhbar al-Bashar,” p. 152): Pythagoras “lived in the time of Solomon the son of David” [fí zamani/zamáni sulaymán bin dáúd] “and he learned wisdom” [wa akhadha’l-hikmat] “from the treasury of prophethood” [min ma‘dini’l-nubuwwat]. Bahá’u’lláh continues with verses that are found neither in Al-Shahrastání nor in Abú’l-Fida. In fact, these verses do not seem to be found in any of the other five sources either. There are at least four possibilities which present themselves: first, that Bahá’u’lláh was “quoting” Al-Shahrastání in this passage; second, that He was “quoting” Abú’l-Fida; third, that He was quoting Al-Shahrastání’s source; and fourth, that He was citing another historian, who, like Abú’l-Fida, had derived this historical account from Al-Shahrastání. If His intention had been to cite the exact words of specific historians, surely He would not have introduced so many variations in His text. It seems that His purpose was to quote the words of various historians which, taken together, would more nearly satisfy the mind of the recipient of this Tablet, the learned Áqá Muhammad-i-Qá’íní, surnamed Nabíl-i-Akbar.

We now have some idea of which “Eastern” histories Bahá’u’lláh may have cited in this particular passage of Lawḥ-i-Hikmat. We might now ask the question, “But why these particular sources?” If we consider the Most Great Infallibility of the Manifestation of God as proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh, it appears that one answer to this question is that Bahá’u’lláh considered these historical accounts to be accurate. By quoting them He certainly seems to invest them with authority. Prior to this investiture, they were but the statements of individual historians, no more privileged in status than those of any other historians. Inasmuch as they are, nonetheless, at extreme variance with “modern academic” histories, we may well ask whether or not there are other “Eastern” historians who have reported these events and personalities in this manner, and if the only “Eastern” histories which can be cited are authored by Muslim

writers. J.R.I. Cole has furnished much information on this question in his article, cited earlier. The author of this paper has also consulted a number of other sources, all of which will be discussed here.

Let us begin with the chronological order which places Empedocles before Pythagoras. As we have noted, Bahá'u'lláh indicates that Empedocles preceded Pythagoras, apparently by as much as a generation. A number of Muslim writers have cited such an order, which is, as has already been established, the opposite of what Western historians maintain. The Muslim authors will be listed here in order of their antiquity: [1] Sá'id ibn Ahmad Sá'id al-Andalusi (1029-1070), in "Kitáb Tabaqát al-Umam"<sup>52</sup> counts five great ancient Greek philosophers—Empedocles, then Pythagoras, then Socrates, then Plato and finally, Aristotle; [2] Abu-Fath al-Shahrastání (1076-1153), in "Al-Milal wa'l-Nihal"<sup>53</sup> lists Pythagoras after Empedocles and before Socrates and Plato; [3] Yahya al-Suhrawardí (d. 1191), in "Hikmat al-Isráq"<sup>54</sup> cites Pythagoras as the disciple of Empedocles; [4] Shams al-Dín Al-Shahrazúrí (d. 1200), in "Nuzhat al-arwáh wa-rawdat al-afrah" (37) lists Pythagoras after Empedocles and before Socrates in what seems to be a chronological listing of Greek philosophers; [5] Jamálu'd-Dín al-Qiftí (1172-1248), in "Ta'rikh al-Hukamá"<sup>55</sup> lists the order of the five great ancient philosophers as follows: Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; [6] 'Imádu'd-Dín Abú'l-Fida' (1273-1331), in "Al-Mukhtasar fí Akhbar al-Bashar"<sup>56</sup> likewise places Pythagoras after Empedocles and before Hippocrates, Socrates and Plato; [7] Hájjí Khalífah (d. 1609), in "Kashf al-zunún fí asám al-kutub wa'l-funún"<sup>57</sup> has also listed "divine philosophers" [falásafata'l-iláhiyyún] "the greatest of whom were Empedocles then Pythagoras, then Socrates, then Plato, then Aristotle." Consequently, we find that this order was not uncommon among Muslim writers—J.R.I. Cole and Ilai Aloni have, between them, cited seven such writers, and there may have been others.

"Eastern" histories, apart from those authored by Muslims, which refer to Empedocles and Pythagoras have been difficult to locate. To date, the earliest recorded reference to Empedocles which the present author has discovered is found in a work written by Philo Judaeus (BCE 30?-45 CE). Philo Judaeus lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and he was Jewish, and on both counts he may be regarded as an "Eastern" historian. He was a copious author who seems to have written exclusively in the Greek language. His writings survive in Greek, Latin and Armenian manuscripts. In his book entitled "On the Life of Moses," Philo Judaeus stated that Empedocles, among other Greek philosophers, "used the Old Testament writings"<sup>58</sup> in arriving at some of his metaphysical doctrines. Those doctrines included, according to other scholarly sources, a "doctrine of emanations"<sup>59</sup> and a science of "four elements."<sup>60</sup> Philo Judaeus does not identify the epoch in which Empedocles lived. Thus far, he is the only "Eastern" historian, other than the seven Muslim historians already cited, who identified a connection between Empedocles and the writings of the Hebrew prophets. Nevertheless, the existence of Philo Judaeus' testimony indicates that these Muslim historians did not fabricate this historical anecdote in the Middle Ages.

We now come to consider historical accounts of contact between Pythagoras and Solomon which are found in various "Eastern" histories. The earliest known reference to a connection between Pythagoras and the Hebrew prophets is found in "An Interpretation of the Law of Moses" (also titled "Exegetical Commentaries on the Books of Moses") by Aristobulus of Paneas (also known as Philobulus), who flourished in the second century B.C.E. According to the first book of Maccabees (chapter I, verse 10), Aristobulus was the teacher of the Alexandrian monarch Ptolemy VI (also known as Philometer), who died in 146 B.C.E.<sup>61</sup> or 145 B.C.E.<sup>62</sup> The second book of Maccabees, apparently written in 124 B.C.E. (according to the text, chapter I, verse 10), includes a letter from the people of Judaea, the city of Jerusalem, the Judaeen council of elders and Judas Maccabaeus addressed to Aristobulus, the teacher of Ptolemy VI, and to the Egyptian Jews. Fragments of Aristobulus' commentaries on the Torah are preserved in the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius,<sup>63</sup> in which he contends that the doctrines of Pythagoras, among other Greek philosophers, were derived from the Hebrew Scriptures. The teachings of Aristobulus are discussed by Valckenaer.<sup>64</sup> Christian apologists often cited Aristobulus in their attempts to answer the arguments of their Roman pagan opponents.<sup>65</sup> Philo Judaeus (B.C.E. 30?-45 C.E.) employs some of the same arguments as Aristobulus, in his work "On the Life of Moses" and other books. Pythagoras is one of the Greek philosophers whom he most admired, and, according to Professor Zeller,<sup>66</sup> Philo Judaeus "assumed that the Hellenic sages used the Old Testament writings" in arriving at

their metaphysical positions. Philo’s writings had a tremendous impact upon Christian theological and philosophical literature, and there is a vast scholarly corpus dedicated to the study of his writings and their influence upon subsequent thinkers. Hence, we see that there were at least two Jewish writers residing in Egypt and writings about the connections between civilizations (hence, “Eastern” historians) who attested to some kind of link between Pythagoras and the Hebrew prophets. Once again, this is not a medieval fabrication...Aristobulus lived circa 150 B.C.E. while Philo Judaeus lived about a century and a half later, both of them hundreds of years before the Muslim historians we have cited.

The early Christian writer Clement of Alexandria (150–211/215 C.E.), in “Stromateis”<sup>67</sup> likewise asserted that the Greek philosophers, including Pythagoras acquired their metaphysical wisdom from the Hebrew Scriptures. However, he denies any direct connection between Pythagoras and Solomon.<sup>68</sup> Another Christian writer, although not “Eastern” by any definition, the Cambridge Platonist Henry More (1614–1687) wrote<sup>69</sup> that “Pythagoras drew his knowledge from the Hebrew Fountains” and asserted that to this “all Writers, Sacred and Prophane, do testifie and aver.” Of the Islamic writers who refer to Pythagoras as a contemporary of Solomon, we have seen that the first of these (among those cited in this study) is Abu-Fath al-Shahrastání (1076–1153), in “Al-Milal wa’l-Nihal”; followed by Shamsu’d-Dín al-Shahrázúrí (d. 1200), in “Nuzhat al-arwáh wa-rawdat al-afráh”; and ‘Imádu’d-Dín Abú’l-Fida’ (1273–1331), in “Al-mukhtasar fí akhbar al-bashar.” Mullá Lutfi’l-Maqtúl<sup>70</sup> states that divine wisdom was transmitted from Solomon to Pythagoras. Three Islamic historians—Sá’id al-Andalusi (1029–1070), in “Kitáb tabaqát al-umam”; Jamálu’d-Dín al-Qiftí, in “Ta’rikh al-Hukamá’”; and Ibn Abí Usaybi’ah, in “Tabaqát al-atbá’”—report that Pythagoras learned wisdom from the disciples or companions of Solomon.

Now that we have examined some of the “Eastern” histories to which Bahá’u’lláh seems to have been referring in the Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, we will take under the consideration the sources which “Western” historians have cited as fundamental to their account of these events. We will begin with the chronology of the ancient Greek philosophers. Luis E. Navia, in *Socratic Testimonies*,<sup>71</sup> his exhaustive study of the life of Socrates, has indicated that the principal source for the chronology of the pre-Socratic philosophers is found in *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*,<sup>72</sup> by Diogenes Laertius. Navia writes<sup>73</sup> that there “is hardly any definite knowledge concerning Diogenes Laertius himself, and there are even doubts as to his correct name: he has been also called Laertius Diogenes or simply Laertius.” Navia continues regarding this historical source<sup>74</sup>: “It has been assumed that he lived around the year A.D. 250, and that his original work was more extensive than its extant form.” Navia reports<sup>75</sup> that “Diogenes Laertius makes it clear that the great majority of documents written about Socrates between the middle of the fourth century B.C. and the second century A.D. also perished.” It would be reasonable to conclude that most of the documents which might have pertained to Empedocles and to Pythagoras would also have perished. Navia characterized Laertius’ “Lives of the Philosophers” as an historical source as follows: “revealing not so much with respect to the biography and ideas of Socrates, but with respect to the sorts of accounts and anecdotes about him which had been developed during the first five centuries after his death;”<sup>76</sup> “to some, for instance, it is nothing but a collection of gossip reports of little historical worth and of no philosophical consequence, while according to others, it is an important contribution that gathers within a few pages valuable information about the popular conception of Socrates developed in ancient times.”<sup>77</sup> In reference to both Plato and Socrates in Laertius’ book, Navia wrote<sup>78</sup>: “Diogenes Laertius’ biography while indeed the most extensive Platonic biography of ancient times, contains such an extraordinary array of anecdotal information, that, just as in the case of his biography of Socrates, it can at most give us an adequate idea, not so much of the actual biography of Plato, but of the kinds of reports that circulated about him during the first five centuries after his death.” We might note that Aristobulus lived around four hundred years prior to Diogenes Laertius, and that Philo Judaeus died some two hundred years before Laertius was born. Perhaps they were informed of reports about Empedocles and Pythagoras which did not survive in the Greek libraries to which Laertius apparently had access.

What then did Diogenes Laertius actually write about Empedocles and Pythagoras in his “Lives of the Philosophers”? Laertius wrote that Empedocles “flourished in the 84th Olympiad,”<sup>79</sup> which the famous classicist and editor and translator of Laertius, Professor R.D. Hicks (Oxford University) renders as 444–441 B.C.E.<sup>80</sup> Laertius quotes Timaeus (of whom we have no independent record) to the effect

that Empedocles was a pupil of Pythagoras,<sup>81</sup> and also Neathes (whose writings have not survived except where cited by Laertius) that Empedocles studied with the Pythagoreans but was excommunicated when he publicly revealed certain of their secret teachings in his poem.<sup>82</sup> Laertius wrote that Pythagoras “flourished in the 60th Olympiad,”<sup>83</sup> which is rendered by Professor Hicks as 540–536 B.C.E.<sup>84</sup> Laertius described the travels of Pythagoras, and we should note that there is no reference to a visit to the land of Israel:

While still young, so eager was he for knowledge, he left his own country and had himself initiated into all the mysteries and rites not only of Greece but also of foreign countries. Now he was in Egypt when Polycrates sent him a letter of introduction to Amasis; he learnt the Egyptian language, so we learn from Antiphon in his book *On Men of Outstanding Merit*, and he also journeyed among the Chaldaeans and Magi.<sup>85</sup>

While Bahá'u'lláh has not specifically addressed the accuracy and reliability of Greek historical records, He has addressed the question of “conflicting tales and traditions” in one of His Tablets:

Furthermore, among existing historical records differences are to be found, and each of the various peoples of the world hath its own account of the age of the earth and of its history. Some trace their history as far back as eight thousand years, others as far as twelve thousand years. To any one that hath read the book of Juk is clear and evident how much the accounts given by the various books have differed. Please God thou will turn thine eyes towards the Most Great Revelation, and entirely disregard these conflicting tales and traditions.<sup>86</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá has specifically addressed this same topic, that is, the accuracy of ancient historical records, and in reference to Greek history, in *Lawḥ-i-Falásafih* (7):

As to what thou didst ask regarding the history of the philosophers: history, prior to Alexander of Greece (32), is extremely confused, for it is a fact that only after Alexander did history become an orderly and systematized discipline. One cannot, for this reason, rely upon traditions and reported historical events that have come down before the days of Alexander. This is a matter thoroughly established, in the view of all authoritative historians. How many a historical account was taken as fact in the eighteenth century, yet the opposite was proved true in the nineteenth. No reliance, then, can be placed upon the traditions and reports of historians which antedate Alexander, not even with regard to ascertaining the lifetimes of leading individuals...

The histories prior to Alexander, which were based on oral accounts current among the people, were put together later on. There are great discrepancies among them, and certainly they can never hold their own against Holy Writ [nass-i-iláhí]. It is an accepted fact among historians themselves that these histories were compiled after Alexander, and that prior to his time history was transmitted by word of mouth.

It is clear that Empedocles and Pythagoras lived prior to Alexander the Great, and hence, in the estimation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the historical records pertaining to these two Greek philosophers are not to be trusted, particularly if they conflict with what has been written in “Holy Writ” (nass-i-iláhí)—which has already been demonstrated to include, nay, to be crowned by, the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, including *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat*.”

Now that we have briefly surveyed the principal source for the Western chronology of the ancient Greek philosophers, we will turn our attention to the principal source for both the traditional Jewish and Christian and the Western “modern academic” chronology of the ancient Hebrew prophets—the Hebrew Scriptures. The Bible has been studied by so many scholars as to make its introduction to the reader entirely superfluous. However, the statements of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi regarding the historical accuracy and reliability of the Biblical text are not nearly as well known, and hence these will be cited here, beginning with this statement by Bahá'u'lláh:

...the Torah that God hath confirmed consists of the exact words that streamed forth at the bidding of God from the tongue of Him Who conversed with Him (Moses).<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, Bahá'u'lláh affirmed in Kitáb-i-Íqán that the text of the Bible was not perverted by the Jewish people:

Verily by “perverting” the text is not meant that which these foolish and abject souls have fancies, even as some maintain that Jewish and Christian divines have effaced from the Book such verses as extol and magnify the countenance of Muhammad, and instead thereof have inserted the contrary. How utterly vain and false are these words! Can a man who believeth in a book, and deemeth it to be inspired by God, mutilate it? Moreover, the Pentateuch had been spread over the surface of all the earth, and was not confined to Mecca and Medina, so that they could privily corrupt and pervert its text. Nay, rather, by corruption of the text is meant that in which all Muslim divines are engaged today, that is the interpretation of God’s holy Book in accordance with their idle imaginings and vain desires. And as the Jews, in the time of Muhammad, interpreted Those verses of the Pentateuch, that referred to His Manifestation, after their own fancy, and refused to be satisfied with His holy utterance, the charge of “perverting” the text was therefore pronounced against them. Likewise, it is clear, how in this day, the people of the Qur’án have perverted the text of God’s holy Book, concerning the signs of the expected Manifestation, and interpreted it according to their own inclination and desires.<sup>88</sup>

Also, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written regarding the reliability of the Torah as a testimony to the Revelation of God, and as a source of historical accounts:

Know ye that the Torah is that which was revealed in the Tablets to Moses, may peace be upon Him, or that to which He was bidden. But the stories are historical narratives and were written after Moses, may peace be upon Him.<sup>89</sup>

Know ye that the Torah is that which was revealed in the Tablets to Moses, may peace be upon Him, and in that which He was commanded to do.... The glorious Book, the Mighty Decree, is what was in the Tablets which Moses, upon Him be peace, brought from Mount Sinai, and that which He proclaimed unto the children of Israel, in accordance with the explicit text of those Tablets.<sup>90</sup>

Shoghi Effendi has confirmed and expanded upon this assessment of the contents of the Bible, as indicated in the following letters written by Shoghi Effendi and by his secretary on his behalf:

The Bible is not wholly authentic, and in this respect is not to be compared with the Qur’án, and should be wholly subordinated to the authentic writings of Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>91</sup>

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states we believe what is in the Bible, He means in substance. Not that we believe every word of it to be taken literally or that every word is the authentic saying of the Prophet.<sup>92</sup>

We cannot be sure of the authenticity of any of the phrases in the Old or the New Testament. What we can be sure of is when such references or words are cited or quoted in either the Qur’án or the Bahá’í writings.<sup>93</sup>

We have no way of substantiating the stories of the Old Testament other than references to them in our own teachings, so we cannot say exactly what happened at the battle of Jericho.<sup>94</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Lawḥ-i-Falásafih has discussed the relative unreliability of the Bible as a source of historical facts, citing the problem of the various versions of the Scriptures:

Furthermore, the Torah, held to be the most ancient of histories, existeth today in three separate versions: the Hebrew, considered authentic by the Jews and the Protestant clergy; the Greek Septuagint, which is used as authoritative in the Greek and the other Eastern churches; and the Samaritan Torah, the standard authority for that people. These three versions differ greatly, one from another, even with regard to the lifetimes of the most celebrated figures.

In the Hebrew Torah, it is recorded that from Noah’s flood until the birth of Abraham there was an interval of two hundred and ninety-two years. In the Greek, that time-span is given as

one thousand and seventy-two years, while in the Samaritan, the recorded span is nine hundred and forty-two years. Refer to the commentary by Henry Westcott, for tables are supplied therein which show the discrepancies among the three Torahs as to the birth dates of a number of the descendants of Shem, and thou wilt see how greatly the versions differ one from another.

Moreover, according to the text of the Hebrew Torah, from the creation of Adam until Noah's flood the elapsed time is recorded as one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years, while in the Greek Torah the interval is given as two thousand two hundred and sixty-two years, and in the Samaritan text, the same period is said to have lasted one thousand three hundred and seven years.

Reflect thou now over the discrepancies among these three Torahs. The case is indeed surprising. The Jews and Protestants belittle the Greek Torah, while to the Greeks, the Hebrew version is spurious, and the Samaritans deny both the Hebrew and the Greek versions.

Our purpose is to show that even in Scriptural history, the most outstanding of all histories, there are contradictions as to the time when the great ones lived, let alone as to dates related to others. And furthermore, learned societies in Europe are continually revising the existing records, both of East and West. In spite of this, how can the confused accounts of peoples dating from before Alexander be compared with the Holy Text of God? If any scholar expresses astonishment, let him be surprised at the discrepancies in Scriptural history. (7)

Since 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote this Tablet, Biblical scholarship has recognized even a greater variety of Biblical versions. In addition to the three noted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *Lawḥ-i-Falásafih* there is a version of the Bible in Ethiopic, also called Coptic; there is another in Armenian; one in Syriac, the language of the Peshitto; yet another in Aramaic. The most ancient manuscripts of the Bible which have yet to be discovered are those which were found in the 1940s and 1950s in the Qumran caves overlooking the Dead Sea. These include texts in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. This collection has yet to be translated into English in its entirety and much of it has not been published in such manner as to make it accessible to non-specialist readers of the Bible. The task of comparing the Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Samaritan, Ethiopic, Armenian, Syriac and other versions has occupied Biblical scholars for well over a century now, but the Qumran cave manuscripts will require that any definite conclusions be postponed for decades or even for generations to come. Computer technology may speed up the process somewhat, but funding cuts may retard it, and there is no telling how long it will be before lay readers will be able to compare the various versions of the Bible and come to their own conclusions regarding the reliability of its historical accounts.

In *Lawḥ-i-Falásafih*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá frankly discusses the "contradictions" between three versions of the Bible. Many "modern academic" historians would agree with His assessment and then go on to state that due to these "contradictions" the text of the Bible is not a reliable source for the understanding of ancient history. 'Abdu'l-Bahá reaches an entirely different conclusion, which will be cited for the third time in this paper:

Nevertheless, Holy Writ [*nass-i-iláhiyyih*] is authoritative [*amr-i-mahtúm ast*], and with it no history of the world can compare, for experience hath shown that after investigation of the facts [*taharri haqíqat*] and a thorough study of ancient records and corroborative evidence, all have referred back to the Holy Scriptures [*nusús-i-iláhiyyih*]. The most important thing is to establish the validity of God's universal Manifestation [*mazhar-i-kullí-yi iláhí*]; once His claim proveth true, then whatsoever He may choose to say is right and correct.

The histories prior to Alexander, which were based on oral accounts current among the people, were put together later on. There are great discrepancies among them, and certainly they can never hold their own against Holy Writ [*nass-i-iláhí*]. It is an accepted fact among historians themselves that these histories were compiled after Alexander, and that prior to his time history was transmitted by word of mouth. (7)



Hence, although there are “contradictions” between the various versions of the Bible, nevertheless, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá affirms that the testimony of the “Holy Writ” is more reliable than the “ancient records” of pre-Alexandrian history. As has been noted earlier, “Holy Writ” in this case does not refer exclusively to the Bible, but embraces all of the Scriptures, including the Qur’án, the Bayán, and the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh. Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi indicate that these more recent Scriptures are much more reliable than the Bible. Bahá’u’lláh refers to the Qur’án in Kitáb-i-Íqán:

Although many traditions had been revealed by that Source of Prophethood and Mine of divine Guidance, yet He mentioned only that Book, thereby appointing it as the mightiest instrument and surest testimony for the seekers; a guide for the people until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>95</sup>

With unswerving vision, with pure heart, and sanctified spirit, consider attentively what God hath established as the testimony of guidance for His people in His Book, which is recognized as authentic by both the high and lowly. To this testimony we both, as well as all the peoples of the world, must cling, that through its light we may know and distinguish between truth and falsehood, guidance and error.<sup>96</sup>

Consider, how He hath appointed and decreed this selfsame Book, the Qur’án, as a guidance unto all that are in heaven and on earth. He, the divine Being, and unknowable Essence, hath, Himself, testified that this Book is, beyond all doubt and uncertainty, the guide of all mankind until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>97</sup>

And yet, the unfailing testimony of God to both the East and the West is none other than the Qur’án.<sup>98</sup>

Shoghi Effendi has also expressed his views regarding the authenticity of the Qur’án, and of the Bábí and Bahá’í Writings, in the following letters written on his behalf:

In regard to your question concerning the authenticity of the Qur’án. I have referred it to the Guardian for his opinion. He thinks that the Qur’án is, notwithstanding the opinion of certain historians, quite authentic, and that consequently it should be considered in its entirety by every faithful and loyal believer as the sacred scriptures of the Muhammadan Revelation.<sup>99</sup>

As to ...’s claim that the Qur’án is not wholly authentic, the Bahá’ís refuse to share such a belief, as they are convinced that that Holy Book is entirely the words of the Prophet Himself. Even Western historians and Orientalists agree that the Qur’án is an authentic book.<sup>100</sup>

They must strive to obtain, from sources that are authoritative and unbiased, a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islám—the source and background of their Faith—and approach reverently and with a mind purged from preconceived ideas the study of the Qur’án which, apart from the sacred scriptures of the Bábí and Bahá’í Revelations, constitutes the only Book which can be regarded as an absolutely authenticated Repository of the Word of God.<sup>101</sup>

The Bible is not wholly authentic, and in this respect is not to be compared with the Qur’án, and should be wholly subordinated to the authentic writings of Bahá’u’lláh.<sup>102</sup>

In conclusion, while “modern academic” historians may be inclined to regard the pairing of Empedocles with David and Pythagoras with Solomon as fictive rather than truthful to the historical record, Bahá’u’lláh, endowed with the Most Great Infallibility, and His appointed Interpreters, with conferred infallibility have alike asserted that it is they would be mistaken. He challenges believers in God and in the Prophets to weigh His Writings in the Balance of the Holy Scriptures, the Bible and the Qur’án among them:

In mine hand I carry the testimony of God, your Lord and the Lord of your sires of old. Weigh it with the just Balance that ye possess, the Balance of the testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God. If ye find it to be established in truth, if ye believe it to be of God, beware, then, lest ye cavil at it, and render your works vain, and be numbered with the infidels.<sup>103</sup>

And to those “modern academic” historians and other secular scholars who would apply the standards and methodologies of their various disciplines to determine the truthfulness and reliability of His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh writes:

Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life.<sup>104</sup>

Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men.<sup>105</sup>

Give ear unto the verses of God which He Who is the sacred Lote-Tree reciteth unto you. They are assuredly the infallible balance, established by God, the Lord of this world and the next.<sup>106</sup>

This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth are weighed, and their fate determined, if ye be of them that believe and recognize this truth.<sup>107</sup>

In the context of all of the statements cited in this paper, the author would suggest in conclusion that the discrepancies between the verses referring to Empedocles and David, Pythagoras and Solomon the Lawḥ-i-Hikmat of Bahá'u'lláh on the one hand, and the views of Western “modern academic” historians on the other hand, can be resolved through the recognition of certain overall principles which suggest the direction of a new historiography. This distinctively Bahá'í historiography cites the unreliability of ancient historical sources; the special status of Scripture as a witness to actual persons and events; the all-embracing Most Great Infallibility of the Manifestations of God, reaching their culmination in the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh; the divinely-guided interpretations of history which have issued from His pen and from His appointed Interpreters, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. As Bahá'í historiography develops, the entire field of ancient history will undergo a radical transformation. The penetrating insights of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi into the processes, events and personalities of the past will provide a leavening and chastening influence, guiding humanity to an appreciation of our forebears more attuned to reality than to the flawed reconstructions of the historians and theologians of the past and present. We are not doomed to repeat history, nor to live in a man-made world, a world of fiction. We can know the real, the true, and distinguish it from the unreal, the false. The first step towards such a knowledge is not the rejection of religion, as so many of our contemporaries have supposed, but rather, it is the recognition of the Manifestation of God, He Who, to cite His own words:<sup>108</sup>

Indeed He is a Light which is not followed by darkness and a Truth not overtaken by error. Were He to pronounce water to be wine or heaven to be earth or light to be fire, He speaketh the truth and no doubt would there be about it; and unto no one is given the right to question His authority or to say why or wherefore.

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- 2) Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (KA): a)Arabic, Haifa:1995, K47, p. 45; b)English translation, Haifa:1992, K47, pp. 36-37.
- 3) An-Núru'l-Abbá, Mufawadat 'Abdu'l-Bahá (AM), pp. 129-131; *Some Answered Questions* (SAQ), chapter XLV, pp. 171-173).
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- 5) TB, pp. 149, 150
- 6) *Ishráqát*, Bombay, n.d., p. 18—cited in “Áhang-i-Badí’,” sál 32, shamárih 344, pp. 22-23.
- 7) Lawḥ-i-Mubáarak dar bárih-yi tavárikh-i-falásafih (shortened here to Lawḥ-i-Falásafih), was written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1906, in response to the questions of Miss Ethel J. Rosenberg. This Tablet is found in its original Persian text in Má'idiy-i-Ásmání (volume II, pp. 64-67/68-71), and in English translation, by the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Center, in *Ethel Jenner Rosenberg: The Life and Times of England's Outstanding Bahá'í Pioneer Worker*, Robert Weinberg (George Ronald, Oxford, 1995, pp. 78-81). A provisional translation of this Tablet by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre was sent with a letter, dated 15 December 1994, to the present author prior to its publication in the aforementioned biography of Miss Rosenberg. Also, Keven Brown provided the author with his provisional translation of this Tablet. It was in comparing these two translations with the Persian original that the present author came to his conclusions regarding the import of this text.

- 8) From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi; cited in a letter dated 17 January 1978, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer ([www.bahai-library.org/uhj/tesurrection.bible.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/uhj/tesurrection.bible.html)).
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- 32) Alexander the Great is reported in all Western standard historical works to have lived circa 356-323 B.C.E.
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- 34) Steingass, p. 1407.
- 35) ‘Abdu’l-Hamid Ishráq Khávarí, *Muhádirát*, Irán: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1964, volume I, pp. 164-166.
- 36) J.R.I. Cole, “Problems of Chronology in Bahá’u’lláh’s Tablet of Wisdom,” Spring 1979 issue of *World Order* (periodical published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States of America. Inasmuch as J.R.I. Cole makes no reference to Ishráq Khávarí in his *World Order* article, it seems likely that he was unacquainted with the former’s previously published reference to this theme in *Muhádirát*.
- 37) Shams al-Din al-Shahrazúrí, “Nuzhat al-arwáh wa-rawdát al-afrah,” Ms. 1488 Leiden—cited in Miguel Asín Palacios, *Ibn Masarra y su escuela*, Apendice 4; reprint in *Obras Escogidas*, Madrid 1946, pp. 192-194; and Ms. 23365 British Museum, edited by ‘Abd al-Karím ‘Umar Abú Shuwayrí (Tripoli, 1988)—cited in *Ilai Alon*, Socrates Arabus (Ilai Alon), Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1995, pp. 24, 98, 17 (Arabic).
- 38) Muwaffaqu’d-Dín Ibn Abí Usaybi’ah, *‘Uyún al-Anbá fí Tabaqát al-Atbá’*, Beirut: Maktabat al-Hayah, 1965, pp. 61-62.
- 39) Hájjí Khalífah, “Kashf al-zunún fí asámí al-kutub wa’l-funún” (HK), edited by G. Flügel (Lexicon bibliographicum et encyclopaedicum, London, 1858)—cited in *Ilai Alon*, pp. 24-25, 98-99, 17-18 (Arabic).
- 40) Palacios, p. 192, entitled “Rawdat al-Afráh” and cited in *Encyclopedia Islamica*, 2nd edition (EI2), volume I, pp. 483-484.
- 41) Palacios, pp. 192-194, cited in EI2:I:483-484.
- 42) Ms. Aya Sofiya 2450: see EI2:I:483.
- 43) EI2:I:483-484.
- 44) Wehr, p. 721.
- 45) TB, p. 149.
- 46) Written in 1875, and first published in Bombay in 1882, *Risáliy-i-Madaniyyih* has been reprinted by Bahá’í-Verlag, in Germany, 1984. This quotation is found on p. 91.
- 47) *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1970, p. 77. The author offers the following literal rendering of these verses from the Persian: “And in many historical chronicles it is recorded that the philosophers of Greece similar to Pythagoras generally acquired their knowledge of the propositions of divine and natural philosophy from the disciples of His Eminence Solomon.”
- 48) Sá’id ibn Ahmad Sá’id Al-Andalusi, “Kitáb Tabaqát al-Umam” (AA) published in “Al-Machriq, Revue Catholique Orientale Mensuelle,” Beyrouth: *Imprimerie Catholique*, no. 14, Septembre 1911, p. 667, n. 4.

- 49) Talk on 12 October 1912, at Temple Emmanu-El, San Francisco; Persian transcription in “Majmú’ih Khitábát Hadrat-i-‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” p. 612; English translation reported in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (PUP), Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982, pp. 362-363.
- 50) Talk on 8 November 1912, at Eighth Street Temple, Washington, D.C.; English translation recorded in PUP, p. 406.
- 51) Talk on 9 November 1912, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Parsons, Washington, D.C.; English translation recorded in PUP, p. 412.
- 52) AA, p. 666.
- 53) Abu-Fath al-Shahrastání, “Al-Milal wa’l-Nihal,” *Qahirah: Maktabat al-Anjlu al-Misriyah*, 1977, pp. 359, 365; edited by ‘Abdu’l-Azíz al-Wakil, Cairo: Halabí and Co., 1968, volume II, pp. 119-120.
- 54) Yahya al-Suhrawardí, “Hikmat al-Ishráq,” in Henry Corbin, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Sohrawardi*, Teheran-Paris, 1952, II, 300, 13—cited in Ilai Aloni, *Socrates Arabus*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1995, p. 24, n. 71.
- 55) Jamálu’d-Dín al-Qiftí, *Ta’rikh al-Hukamá’*, edited by Dr. Julius Lippert, Leipzig: Dieterich’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903, p. 12.
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- 57) HK, I:72,1; cited in *Ilai Alon*, *Socrates Arabus*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1995: in English: p. 98, n. 81 and in Arabic: p. 17, n. 80.
- 58) Professor Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy* (EZ), 13th edition, revised by Wilhelm Mestle, translated by L.R. Palmer, New York: Meridian Press, 1955, p. 279-280.
- 59) *International Cyclopaedia*, volume V, p. 416.
- 60) *Ibid.*, p. 415.
- 61) *Ibid.*, volume XII, p. 259.
- 62) *Ibid.*, volume I, p. 682; and *Webster’s Biographical Dictionary*, p. 1219.
- 63) EZ, p. 278; *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971, volume III, p. 444) identifies the survivals of Aristobulus’ commentary in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*” (1:22; 6:3); and in Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* (7:32) and *Praeparatio evangelica* (7:14; 8:10; 13:12).
- 64) Valckenaer, *De Aristobulo Judaeo*, Leyden, 1806.
- 65) *International Cyclopaedia*, volume I, p. 682.
- 66) EZ, pp. 279-280.
- 67) Clement of Alexandria, “Stromateis,” in *Miscellanies*, V:14, quoted in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, 1956, pp. 325, 329, 466: cited in J.R.I. Cole, p. 33, n. 30-32.
- 68) *Ibid.*, cited in J.R.I. Cole, p. 33.
- 69) Henry More, quoted in C.A. Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists*, London, 1969, p. 7—cited in J.R.I. Cole, pp. 33-34, n. 35.
- 70) Mullá Lutfí’l-Maqtúl, translated by Henry Corbin and Adnan in *La Duplication de l’Autel*, Paris: 1940, p. 25.
- 71) Luis E. Navia, *Socratic Testimonies* (LN), University Press of America, 1987. (72)Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (DL), in Greek and with an English translation by R.D. Hicks, two volumes, Harvard University Press, 1979.
- 73) LN, pp. 323-324.
- 74) *Ibid.*, p. 324.
- 75) *Ibid.*, p. 321.
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- 79) DL, volume II, book VIII, chapter ii, paragraph 74, p. 388-389.
- 80) *Ibid.*, p. 389, n. a
- 81) *Ibid.*, paragraph 54, pp. 368-371.
- 82) *Ibid.*, paragraph 55, pp. 370-371.
- 83) *Ibid.*, chapter i, paragraph 45, pp. 360-361.
- 84) *Ibid.*, p. 361, n. e
- 85) *Ibid.*, paragraphs 2-3, pp. 320-323.
- 86) Bahá’u’lláh, Lawḥ-i-‘Abdu’l-Razzáq, translated into English by Shoghi Effendi in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* (GL), Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1971, LXXXVII, pp. 174-175.
- 87) From a recently translated Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh; cited in letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 1 January 1981 ([www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html))
- 88) Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (KI), translated into English by Shoghi Effendi; Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1970, pp. 86-87.
- 89) From a recently translated Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; cited in letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 1 January 1981 ([www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html))

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- 90) From a recently translated Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ([www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html))
- 91) From a letter dated 28 July 1936 to a National Spiritual Assembly, written by Shoghi Effendi ([www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html))
- 92) From a letter dated 11 February 1944 to an individual believer, written by Shoghi Effendi ([www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html))
- 93) From a letter dated 4 July 1947 to an individual believer, written by Shoghi Effendi ([www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/uhj/resurrection.bible.html))
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- 95) KI, pp. 201-202.
- 96) Ibid., p. 202.
- 97) Ibid., p. 203.
- 98) Ibid., p. 210.
- 99) From a letter dated July 6, 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer.
- 100) From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi.
- 101) Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1990, p. 49.
- 102) From a letter dated July 28, 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly.
- 103) Bahá’u’lláh, Súrat al-Bayán, translated into English by Shoghi Effendi, in GL, CXXIX, p. 281.
- 104) Bahá’u’lláh, Súrat al-Mulúk, translated into English by Shoghi Effendi, in GL, CXIV, p. 236.
- 105) KA, K99.
- 106) KA, K148.
- 107) KA, K183.
- 108) TB, p. 108.

