

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 10 June 2014

From: Research Department

Tablet of the Universe

In her email letter of 29 March 2014, Ms. ... asks a number of questions about the historical background of the Lawḥ-i-Aflákíyyih, or Lawḥ-i-Áfáqíyyih—commonly known as the Tablet of the Universe—the circumstances of its composition, and whether any Bahá'í scholars have written about it. The Research Department offers the following response.

The Lawḥ-i-Aflákíyyih, written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, has been published in its original Arabic in *Makátib-i-‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, volume 1, pages 13–32. The date and addressee are not mentioned in published versions of the Tablet. In the only known published study of the Tablet in Persian,¹ it has been suggested that, on the basis of a passage from a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh revealed in ‘Akká, the Lawḥ-i-Aflákíyyih was written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the request of Bahá'u'lláh sometime between 1876 and 1883. Thus far, we have not found any information regarding where this Tablet was revealed. However, it has been proposed in the same article that the Tablet’s addressee was Jináb-i-Mírzá Muḥammad Ḥusayn-i-Munajjim-i-Tafrishí, a devoted early believer and skilled astronomer who interacted with many eminent personalities in Ṭihrán.²

With regard to relevant scholarly works, Ms. ... may be interested in the following references, which contain brief discussions of the Tablet:

William S. Hatcher, *Minimalism: A Bridge between Classical Philosophy and the Bahá'í Revelation* (Canada: William S. Hatcher and Juxta Publishing, 2002), pages 59 and 62.

Ian Kluge, “Bahá'í Ontology: An Initial Reconnaissance,” in *Lights of ‘Irfán*, Book Six (Evanston: ‘Irfán Colloquia, 2005), pages 121–160, especially pages 150–152; available online at irfancoolloquia.org/pdf/lights6_kluge.pdf.

Ian Kluge, “Further Explorations in Bahá'í Ontology,” in *Lights of ‘Irfán*, Book Seven (Evanston: ‘Irfán Colloquia, 2006), pages 163–200, especially pages 164 and 188; available online at irfancoolloquia.org/pdf/lights7_kluge.pdf.

Steven Phelps, “The Bahá'í Faith and Atheism,” a revised and edited transcript of two talks given by Dr. Steven Phelps at the Swedish Bahá'í Summer School in Lundsbrunn in July 2009; available online at bahaiwritings.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/the-bahai-faith-and-atheism-by-dr-steven-phelps.pdf. See page 13.

¹ Muḥammad Afnán, “Nazarí bar Muḥtaváy-i-Lawḥ-i-Mubáarak-i-Aflákíyyih (Review of the Lawḥ-i-Aflákíyyih’ [Tablet of Universe]),” in *Safíniy-i-‘Irfán*, volume 7 (Darmstadt: Asr-i Jadid Publishers, 2004), pages 82–90.

² *Tárikh-i-Samandar va Mulḥaqát* (Ṭihrán: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 131 B.E.), pages 202–203.