



SHAYKH AḤMAD AL-AḤṢĀ'Ī

EARLY SHAYKHÍ REACTIONS TO THE BÁB AND HIS CLAIMS

by Denis MacEoin

The death of Sayyid Kázim Rashtí in January 1844 precipitated a major internal crisis in the Shaykhí sect. The sayyid had been the acknowledged head of the Shaykhís for seventeen years, and after his death concealed tensions, disagreements, rivalries, and ambitions within the Shaykhí community were brought to the surface.

Unlike Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í, who had designated Sayyid Kázim as his successor, the sayyid left no clear instructions as to the leadership of the school after him. Within a very short time the Shaykhí sect split into several factions, of which the two largest were that grouped around Sayyid 'Alí-Muḥammad Shírází, the Báb, on the one hand, and that centered on the figure of Hájí Mullá Muḥammad Karím Khán Kirmání (1810-1871) on the other. These factions expressed two diametrically opposed tendencies inherent in Shaykhism. The first moved away from the outward practice of Islam toward a concentration on the development of its inward (*báṭiní*) realities and, ultimately, of a new revelation following the appearance of the hidden Imam. The second emphasized the continuing role of the Prophet and the Imams, and sought acceptance from the Shí'í majority which had formerly excommunicated the founder of Shaykhism and his successor.

Once these incompatible interpretations of Shaykhí thought came to be openly expressed, an unrelenting hostility grew up

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between the two parties—a hostility fiercer than any that had existed previously between Shaykhís and Bálásarís (the Shí'í majority).

EVENTS IN KARBALA AFTER THE DEATH OF SAYYID KÁZIM

In order to trace the origins of this split in Shaykhism, let us examine briefly what occurred on the death of Sayyid Kázim, particularly with respect to the initial foundation of Babism as a school of thought within the Shaykhí community. Unfortunately, our sources with regard to this period are both restricted and partisan, and it is necessary to do a great deal of reading between the lines to determine even a rough outline of what occurred. To make matters worse, a very few of our sources are strictly contemporary. The vast majority date from after the Bábí/Karím Khání division, and many of them from very much later.

Karím Khán Kirmání himself has stated that Sayyid Kázim had not indicated a successor, and that on the sayyid's death a number of leaders gained a following, while many of his disciples scattered to different places.¹ That considerable confusion existed in the minds of the sayyid's followers after his death is also apparent from statements in an Arabic treatise by an early Bábí of Karbala who had himself been among his disciples. This individual (who gives his name somewhat curiously as al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í) states that "those among the pupils (*al-ṭulláb*) who were possessed of discernment were confused as to where they should go and to whom they should cling,"² and indicates that he himself did not at first know where to turn.³

According to this source, the pupils went to Mullá Ḥasan Gawhar and Mírzá Muḥiṭ Kirmání, the most eminent disciples of the late sayyid then in Karbala, and asked if they had heard anything from Sayyid Kázim regarding his succession. The first said that he had heard nothing. The second commented that he had heard something but would not say what it was at that time, merely instructing his inquirers not to disperse but to remain in Karbalá. Mírzá Muḥiṭ's instructions to stay put received apparent corroboration in what al-Qatíl describes as "a foundationless rumor" which became current at this point, to the

effect that Sayyid Kázim had said "the affair (*amr*) will be made manifest a year after me." As a result, the sayyid's disciples hesitated to leave Karbala for a period of four months (these would be the months of Muḥarram, Šafar, Rabí' I, and Rabí' II, corresponding approximately to February, March, April, and May) thinking that Muḥiṭ might be correct in his claims. It would appear, however, that a number of these students became disillusioned with Mírzá Muḥiṭ, rejected him, and dispersed from Karbala.⁴

This version of events is corroborated in its essentials by Mírzá Ḥusayn Khán Dakhíl, the son of Mullá Ḥusayn Dakhíl, a Shaykhí who had lived in Karbala with Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í and later became a Bábí. Mírzá Ḥusayn Khán writes that "After the death of the late sayyid, his companions scattered, and from whomsoever they heard a call, they would go in search of the *šāhib-i amr* ('Bearer of the Cause')." ⁵ This in its turn corroborates the much later Bahá'í account given by Mullá Muḥammad Zarandí, Nabíl, in his narrative. Zarandí states that "For a time, fear and anxiety filled the hearts of Siyyid Kázim's faithful disciples," but he indicates that several of them were aware that "Siyyid Kázim had bidden them quit their homes, scatter far and wide, . . . and dedicate themselves to the quest of Him to whose advent he had so often alluded." ⁶ The same source indicates that when Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í returned to Karbala on 1 Muḥarram 1260/22 January 1844, he met with Mullá Ḥasan Gawhar, Mírzá Muḥiṭ Kirmání, "and other well-known figures among the disciples of Siyyid Kázim," and that these individuals made various excuses for not leaving Karbala.⁷

CLAIMS TO LEADERSHIP OF THE SHAYKHÍ SCHOOL

The first claims to leadership of the Shaykhí community were made in Karbala. The main claimants were, in fact, the above-mentioned Mullá Ḥasan Gawhar and Mírza Muḥiṭ Kirmání. According to al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í, the former claimed "trusteeship" (*wišáya*) and the latter "superintendency" (*nižára*), but it is not clear whether these claims were made in conjunction or separately. Tanakábuní actually states that these two

men were brothers,⁸ although he seems to be the only source which links them in this way.

Mullá Ḥasan had been one of the closest disciples of Sayyid Kázim. The Sayyid praised him as "that learned, accomplished, highly endowed, and sincere man, possessed of a penetrating understanding and sound opinions,"⁹ and entrusted him with an important mission to Sayyid Mahdí Ṭabáṭabá'í. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navá'í speaks of him as acquiring a sufficient following to be regarded by many as the effective successor of Sayyid Kázim in Karbala.¹⁰ That the Báb himself regarded Mullá Ḥasan as of some importance is indicated by a reference in the former's *Kitáb al-Fihrist*, written in Búshíhr on 15 Jumádí II 1261/21 June 1845, shortly after his return from pilgrimage to Mecca, in which a letter to Mullá Ḥasan is listed as one of his works up to that date.¹¹ It is of interest to note that evidence exists which suggests that Mullá Ḥasan and Karím Khán Kirmání in the lifetime of Sayyid Kázim had already had a disagreement with Mullá Yúsuf 'Alí Ardibílí, who was later to become one of the Báb's close disciples.¹²

Mírzá Muḥíṭ, originally known as Mírzá Muḥammad Ḥusayn, was an uncle of Hájí Muḥammad Karím Khán Kirmání, and had been the tutor of Sayyid Kázim's two sons, Sayyid Ḥasan and Sayyid Aḥmad.¹³ He was to meet the Báb in the course of the latter's pilgrimage, and was the recipient of his important early work, the *Ṣaḥífa Bayna'l-Ḥaramayn*.¹⁴ According to Zarandí, Mírzá Muḥíṭ vacillated between allegiance to Karím Khán Kirmání and a claim to personal leadership of the Shaykhí community.¹⁵

Mullá Ḥasan and Mírzá Muḥíṭ were not, however, the sole claimants to leadership in Karbala. The details are unclear, but it would appear that, at some juncture, leadership of a section of the Shaykhí community there fell to one of Sayyid Kázim's sons, Sayyid Aḥmad.¹⁶ Although Sayyid Aḥmad's influence within the Shaykhí school remained largely restricted to Iraq, he does seem to have acquired a position of some prestige with the Shí'í population as a whole, with some say in the appointment and dismissal of the Keeper of the Keys to the Shrine of Ḥusayn in Karbala.¹⁷ He eventually met a tragic end. He was

murdered in an alleyway in Karbala by a group of Arabs on 17 Jumádí I 1295/19 May 1878, ostensibly for religious reasons, but in all probability as the result of political intrigue.¹⁸

It would seem that Sayyid Aḥmad took over some part of the political role of his father, but in the absence of more information it is extremely difficult to determine the exact nature of his succession. He was himself succeeded by his son Sayyid Qásim, who also became involved in political troubles.¹⁹ Under the leadership of Sayyid Aḥmad and his son, the Shaykhí community of Iraq remained clearly separate from those centered in Kerman and Tabriz, and has survived, particularly in the Basra region, to this day.

In Iran, the bid for leadership of the Shaykhí community came to be centered in three places: Tabriz, Kerman, and Shiraz. In Tabriz, the man who claimed leadership of the Shaykhís was Mírzá Shafí' Thiqat al-Islám Tabrízí, a *mujtahid* who had studied under Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim in Karbala.²⁰ Apart from him, there were several other notable Shaykhís in the city, the most outstanding of whom were Hájí Mullá Maḥmud Nizám al-'Ulamá and Muḥammad Mámaqání Hujjat al-Islám. Nizám al-'Ulamá achieved distinction as tutor to the then crown prince, Náṣir al-Dín Mírzá, by virtue of which position he was later to preside over the examination of the Báb held in Tabriz in August 1848, and attended by the prince, leading government officials, religious dignitaries, and eminent members of the Shaykhí community (including Mírzá 'Alí-Aṣghar, the Shaykh al-Islám of the city).²¹ Mámaqání was also present at that tribunal, and was later among the ulama who signed a *fatwá* for the Báb's death before his execution in July 1850.²²

Like Nizám al-'Ulamá, Mámaqání succeeded in making himself respectable to the Shí'í community at large, and his family was to retain for some time a position of considerable importance in Azerbaijan.²³ Although incidents between Shaykhís and Bálásarís took place intermittently in Tabriz (notably a riot in 1850), it is clear that the Shaykhí notables of that city were particularly eager to identify themselves with the main body of

Shí'í Islam. They emerged as the leading figures in the trial, condemnation, and sentencing of the Báb for heresy. They were certainly more successful in this rapprochement with orthodoxy than was their principal rival, Hájí Muḥammad Karím Khán Kirmání.

KARÍM KHÁN KIRMÁNÍ

Since we are concerned in this paper with the response of Karím Khán Kirmání to the Báb and his claims, it will be useful to give some details at this point about his background and career. Karím Khán's father, Ibráhím Khán Ṣahír al-Dawla, was a cousin and son-in-law of Fath-'Alí Sháh, the second king of the Qájár dynasty.²⁴ At the beginning of Fath-'Alí's reign, Ibráhím Khán was appointed Governor of Khurasan, being later transferred to the governorship of Kerman and Baluchistan,²⁵ a position he held from 1803 until his death in 1824-25.²⁶ Ibráhím Khán's relationship with the ruling dynasty was strengthened by his marriage to Humáyún Sulṭán Khánum Khánumán,²⁷ the eldest daughter of Fath-'Alí Sháh and a sister of Ḥusayn-'Alí Mírzá Farmánfarmá and Ḥasan-'Alí Mírzá Shujá' al-Sulṭána, and by the marriage of two of his sons to two other daughters of the monarch.²⁸ In addition to this, Karím Khán himself was later married to a daughter of Muḥammad-Qulí Mírzá Mulk Árá, the third son of Fath-'Alí Sháh.

During the twenty-one-year period he held the governorship of Kerman, Ibráhím Khán succeeded in restoring prosperity and security to a region which had fallen into serious decline following the brutal sack of Kerman city in 1794 by Áqá Muḥammad Sháh. In the course of his term as governor, Ibráhím Khán built several important buildings, including a *madrasah*, public bath, and government palace; restored a number of ruined edifices; and repaired the local water system. A deeply religious man, he showed concern at the absence of religious scholars in the region following the sack and invited ulama from Arabia, Khurasan, and Fars to come and live in Kerman. These included Shaykh Ni'mat Alláh al-Baḥrání, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Aḥsá'í

(who lived at Sírján), and Mullá 'Alí A'má.²⁹ He showed particular favor to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í whom he met on several occasions in Yazd during the Shaykh's residence there. It has been suggested that it was through Ibráhīm Khán's influence that Fath-'Alí Sháh invited the Shaykh to Tíhrán in 1808.³⁰

Ibráhīm Khán is said to have had forty wives by whom he had twenty sons and twenty-one daughters.³¹ The mother of Karím Khán was a daughter of Mírzá Raḥím, the *mustawfí* of Tiflis, who gave birth to him on 18 Muḥarram 1225/23 February 1810.³² It appears to have been his father's desire that this son be brought up as a scholar, unlike his other sons, who were all given administrative posts within the province of Kerman. Shaykhí accounts describe Karím Khán as a remarkable child who began writing at an early age and showed signs of incipient greatness.

On the death of Ibráhīm Khán, the inevitable disagreements broke out among his sons, but Karím Khán is said to have avoided becoming involved in this wrangling and continued his studies and devotions.³³ In search of the "perfect Shí'í," he associated with various sects, but was eventually guided to Sayyid Kázim Rashtí in Karbala. Despite certain obstacles, he traveled to Karbala, via Isfahan and Kermanshah (where he met Shaykh 'Alí, a son of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í), and at last met Sayyid Kázim. The sayyid is said to have seen great promise in Karím Khán and accepted him as his pupil. At one point, it is recorded Karím Khán offered the sayyid all the property he had inherited from his father, although the offer was turned down. A subsequent offer of a one-fifth tax (*khums*) on his possessions to be paid to Sayyid Kázim was, however, accepted.³⁴

Karím Khán's first visit to the sayyid took place in about 1828, when he was eighteen, and was extended into a stay of a year. Returning to Kerman, he continued his studies and gave classes to others for a time, before leaving once more—this time accompanied by his wife—for Karbala. He now became a close disciple of Sayyid Kázim. He received considerable praise from his teacher and made marked progress under his instruction. After some time, however, the sayyid instructed Karím Khán to return to Kerman in order to instruct the people there, not

impossibly out of fear that his continued association with an influential member of the Qájár family might excite suspicions concerning his own political motives. At about this time, Karím Khán married his half cousin, one of the twenty-three daughters of Muḥammad-Qulí Mírzá Mulk Árá. In Kerman, he continued to correspond with Sayyid Kázim, whose regard for him is apparent from numerous letters. Among these is a brief letter in which the sayyid writes, speaking of Karím Khán, "his decree is to be obeyed and whatever he prefers is to be done; to reject him is to reject God, the Prophet, and the blessed Imams."³⁵

On the death of Sayyid Kázim, Karím Khán, then aged about thirty-four, began to claim for himself the position of leader of the *Shaykhí* community. Within a short time he was able to draw to himself the majority of the Iranian and a number of the Arab *Shaykhís* who had not become Bábís. In general, those *Shaykhís* who became followers of the Báb for a time, only to abandon him at a later stage in the development of his doctrines, tended to turn to Karím Khán as an alternative. By the end of his life, Karím Khán had so consolidated his position as head of the sect that the succession, after a brief dispute, passed to his second son Hájí Muḥammad Khán (1263/1846–1324/1906), and from him to his brother Hájí Zayn al-‘Ábidín Khán (1276/1859–1360/1942), from him to his son Shaykh Abú'l-Qásim Khán Ibráhímí, Sarkár Áqá (1314/1896–1389/1969), and from him to his son, the present head of the school, ‘Abd al-Riḍá Khán Ibráhímí, Sarkár Áqá.

Our sources do not make clear the details of how Karím Khán established his position as head of the *Shaykhí* community at Kerman. However, a careful examination of what evidence there is suggests that, rather than making any overt claim to leadership, he simply attracted a following by emerging as the chief representative of certain views and tendencies which appealed to a large section of the school. His prodigious output of works on numerous topics and the comparative simplicity of most of his Persian writings ensured the rapid spread of his fame and a wide popularity. The emergence of the Báb proved to be of particular help to him in consolidating his influence with that section of the *Shaykhí* school to which he made his strongest

appeal. It gave him an opportunity to make clear his position on the important question of the relationship of Shaykhism to Shiism as a whole, and to define his attitude toward what he regarded as heterodox Shaykhí views. While conserving the identity of the school, Karím Khán and his successors strove to integrate it as far as possible into the orthodox community, largely by playing down those elements in the original Shaykhí teaching which clashed most forcibly with traditional or existing views, and by emphasizing those aspects which asserted their similarity with accepted Shí'í beliefs.

This emphasis can be seen throughout the works of Karím Khán, but we may use as an example section 17 of his *Risálay-i Sí Faşl*, written in 1269/1853. This section was written in reply to the request to "provide an explanation of the beliefs of Shaykhism," and begins with the words: "If you should wish for a brief reply, our beliefs are the beliefs of all Twelver Shí'ís; whatever the Shí'ís agree upon in respect of the principles of religion, we confess the same, and whatever they reject, we also reject. We regard the consensus (*ijmá'*) of the Shí'ís on the bases (*uşúl*) and subsidiaries (*furú'*) of faith as evident and proven." The rest of the section is a summary of standard Shí'í beliefs on God, the Prophet, and the Imams.³⁶

This trend towards orthodoxy was given an added impetus by the emergence of the Báb as an identifiable and vulnerable target for the concerted attacks of conventional Shí'ís and Shaykhís alike. The fact that the Báb and all his principal followers had been students of Sayyid Kázim, coupled with the veneration given by the Bábís to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim as precursors of their movement, or as "the two preceding Bábís," placed the remaining Shaykhís in serious danger of being too closely linked with Babism in the minds of the public and the ulama. At first, this simply meant the continuation of the ostracism of the Shaykhí school by many of the orthodox community. But before long, it began to carry the risk of physical persecution as the Bábís resorted to arms and became the objects of concerted attacks from government and people. In order to offset the unwelcome implications of their mutual origin, certain Shaykhí ulama, as we have seen, proved eager to take a

leading role in the theological, judicial, and even physical attack on the Bábís.

For Karím Khán, the emergence of such a target proved the key to establishment of his own role as the defender of Shaykhí doctrine against the "heretical views" of the Bábí Shaykhís, and as the leader of the rapprochement with orthodoxy. Such a role made him a clear focus for the less radical element in the school. His attack on the Báb, carried out from the pulpit and by writing and disseminating four extended refutations, had the virtue of being on the one hand negative in its uncompromising rejection of Babism as an innovation (*bid'a*) essentially unconnected with Shaykhism, and, on the other, positive in its consolidation of the orthodox Shí'í position which he strove to adopt for the school. It is worth noting that, in all four refutations, and particularly in the earliest, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, considerably more space is devoted to argument in favor of orthodox doctrine than to condemnation of Bábí belief.

CIRCUMSTANCES PRECEDING THE BÁB'S CLAIM.

In order to understand the nature of Karím Khán's refutation of the Báb, however, it will first be necessary to take a fresh look, albeit a brief one, at certain major developments in the first year or so of the Bábí movement. We have seen that, for a period of some four months after the death of Sayyid Kázim, the Shaykhí community of Karbala found itself unable to initiate any positive action to determine the succession to its late head. Then, as al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í states, a break with Mírzá Muḥiṭ Kirmání occurred and people began to disperse. This dispersal may well have been initiated, and was certainly led, by a young Shaykhí of about thirty-one, Mullá Husayn Bushrú'í, who had returned to Karbala shortly after the sayyid's death, after an absence of some three years. During that period, he had traveled to Isfahan and Mashhad at the request of Sayyid Kázim, in order to clarify the Shaykhí position to Sayyid Muḥammad Báqir Shaftí and Hájí Mírzá 'Askarí, the then Imám Jum'a of Mashhad.³⁷

Mullá Husayn appears to have been one of a number of Shaykhís who believed that Sayyid Kázim had given indications that the advent of the hidden Imam and the era of the "innermost reality" (*báṭin al-báṭin*) was imminent. This is not to suggest that they expected the Imam himself to be made known on the death of Sayyid Kázim, but that they did believe the first signs of his appearance and the events preparatory to it would shortly appear. One of the earliest sources indicating that such an expectation was current, at least among the Shaykhí population of Karbala, is the treatise by al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í referred to above. This writer lays stress on the fact that Sayyid Kázim constantly alluded to "a cause" (*amr*) which would appear on his death, and leaves no doubt that a sizeable section of the Shaykhí community hoped for the beginning of the end, as it were.

Corroboration that a considerable measure of muted messianic expectation was current among the Shaykhís of Karbala at this period may be found in a letter written by Qurrat al-'Ayn in 1261/1845 (about the same time as al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í's treatise) in which she quotes Sayyid Kázim as having spoken thus near his death: "O people! My passing is near, but you have not understood what I have been saying to you, nor have you comprehended my purposes. After me there shall appear a great cause and a severe test, and you shall fall into disagreements with one another. We have been but as a herald (*mubashshir*) for that great cause."³⁸

Again, she mentions how someone once asked the sayyid "O Lord, who shall be the bearer of the cause after you?" He replied, "God hath with Him a cause which He shall bring to maturity." Since this last statement was what 'Alí al-Sámirí, the last of the four gates who had followed the twelfth Imam, had said when asked "Who shall be the Báb after you?", people thought that the cause to which Sayyid Kázim alluded was similar to that of the four gates during the period of the lesser occultation of the hidden Imam. But Sayyid Kázim clearly stated "Our cause is not like that of the gates."³⁹ The appearance of the Báb clearly represented for many a distinct break with the

charismatic modes of Shaykhism, and a thrust in a new direction. It was to be the beginning of a new phase in history, the beginning of the last days leading up to the appearance and triumph of the promised Imam.

Later Bábí and Bahá'í sources have telescoped matters by stating that the predictions of Sayyid Kázim led directly to the recognition of the promised Imam in the person of Sayyid 'Alí-Muḥammad Shírázī, only months after the death of Sayyid Kázim. In fact, the Báb did not claim to be the return of the hidden Imam until the period of his imprisonment in Máku in 1847-48. Those Shaykhís who met him Shiraz in May 1844 and shortly after, accepted him as the representative (*ná'ib*) or gate (*báb*) of the Imam, who would make things ready for the Imam's appearance once the world was ready.

Letters from a number of early Bábís who had been Shaykhís, including al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í, make it clear that the acceptance of Sayyid 'Alí-Muḥammad as the Báb was facilitated by prior recognition on the part of certain Shaykhís at least of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í and Sayyid Kázim Rashtí as "the two previous gates," or as "the Shaykh and Báb" (*al-Shaykh al-Báb*) and "the Sayyid and Báb" (*al-Sayyid al-Báb*),⁴⁰ or as "the first Báb" and "the second Báb."⁴¹ A later Bábí work, the so-called *Nuqṭat al-Káf*, probably written in the early 1850s, similarly refers to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim as "those two mighty Bábs."⁴² The Báb himself speaks of Sayyid Kázim as "the previous gate of God" on more than one occasion.⁴³ This is not, of course, evidence that Sayyid Kázim, for example, was spoken of as "Báb" in his lifetime, but it does demonstrate that reference to him as such was perfectly acceptable to a group of his followers within a short time of his death, even if only as the confirmation of an unvoiced conviction.

We shall return shortly to the question of the Báb's initial claims, but first it will be useful to fill in the details of how he came to make them. Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í and a number of other Shaykhís, after consultation as to the wishes of Sayyid Kázim, retired to the Masjid al-Walí, a mosque in Kúfa, to engage in seclusion (*i'tikáf*) for the standard forty-day period

(*arba'in*) common among sufis and others. Nabíl-i Zarandí, writing long after these events, appears to limit the number participating in the retreat to those who were later to become the Báb's first disciples. He thereby gives the impression that a simple division occurred between those who set out in search of a successor to Sayyid Kázim and by virtue of that search alone discovered the Báb, and those who were prepared to wait for developments. Actually, quite a large number appear to have been engaged in seclusion. Mírzá Husayn Hamadání, the author of the *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, relates that he was present at the retreat in the mosque at Kúfa (obviously a fiction of convenience on his part) and that he saw there, apart from several of those who later became disciples of the Báb, a Mírzá 'Abd al-Hádí, a Mullá Bashír, and "many other learned and devout men who had retired into seclusion."⁴⁴ Fáḍil Mázandarání mentions Hájí Sayyid Khalíl Madá'íní, a tribal leader who had studied under Sayyid Kázim, as also being present.⁴⁵

After the celebration of the birth of the Prophet on 12 Rabí' I/ 1 April, Mullá Husayn Bushrú'í left Kúfa with his brother and cousin, heading for Kerman with the intention of meeting and consulting there with Muḥammad Karím Khán. That this was his aim at this point is confirmed by Shaykh Muḥammad Taqí Hashtrúdí, an early Bábí from the Shaykhí school, in his *Abwáb al-Hudá*, where he quotes Mullá Husayn as having thus described his objectives to him in person.⁴⁶

Further corroboration for this is to be found in an untitled manuscript history of the period by Aḥmad ibn Abú'l-Hasan Sharaf Shírází. This author quotes a Bábí who had accompanied Mullá Husayn to Shiraz as follows: "He [Mullá Husayn], thereupon prepared to go to Shiraz, and used to tell me, en route: 'It has not been determined where I am to go; but I believe that I may go to Kerman and see Hájí Muḥammad Karím Khán, as it may be that the sayyid [Sayyid Kázim] meant that I should enter the service of the Imam through him.' In this belief we came to Shiraz."⁴⁷

The route taken by Mullá Husayn and his companions passed, however, through Búshíhr and Shiraz, where it would

seem that they sought out Sayyid 'Alí-Muḥammad Shírází. According to one account, Mullá Ḥusayn told Mírzá 'Abd al-Wahháb Khurásání that "since the Seyyid 'Alí Muḥammad had honoured me with his friendship during a journey which we made together to the Holy Shrines [of Karbalá and Najaf], I at once on reaching Shiraz sought out his abode."⁴⁸ Other sources confirm that Mullá Ḥusayn had at least seen the Báb during the latter's stay in Karbala in 1841, probably shortly before the former's departure for Isfahan.⁴⁹

THE BÁB AT KARBALA

The Báb had lived for some seven months in Karbala, from the spring to the autumn of 1841, following a period of several years spent in the trading port of Búshíhr. Influenced, no doubt, by the fact that his uncles and relatives "were among the lovers and admirers of Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim,"⁵⁰ he attended the classes of the sayyid, and seems to have been received by him on a number of occasions with considerable attention.

H. M. Balyuzi has noted that "these occasional visits did not and could not make Him a pupil or disciple of Siyyid Kázim."⁵¹ While this is certainly correct in the sense that the Báb never completed a full course of studies on the basis of which he might have been given an *ijáza* by the sayyid or other mujtahids, it is misleading in terms of the Báb's own attitude toward Sayyid Kázim. In the *Risálay-i Sulúk*, one of the Báb's earliest works, written in the lifetime of the sayyid, he speaks of him as "my lord, support, and teacher" (*sayyidí wa mu'tamadí wa mu'allimí*),⁵² while he refers to himself in an early prayer as having been "one of the companions of Kázim, may my spirit be his sacrifice."⁵³ Similar references can be found in numerous other early letters of the Báb.⁵⁴

Several sources indicate that, in the course of his stay in Karbala, and, particularly his visits to Sayyid Kázim, the Báb became acquainted with, and attracted a certain amount of attention from, a number of Shaykhís, many of whom later

became his followers.⁵⁵ These individuals included Mullá Şádiq Khurásání, Shaykh Hasan Zunúzí, Mullá Aḥmad Mu'allim Hisárí, Sayyid Jawád Karbalá'í, Mírzá Muḥammad Rawḍa-Khwán Yazdí (a future "Letter of the Living"), Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí Nahrí, Mírza Hádí Nahrí, and Mullá Ja'far Qazvíní. Mullá Ḥusayn Dakhílí, the son of Mullá Ḥusayn Dakhíl Marághí'í, states in an unfinished manuscript that his father met the Báb with Sayyid Kázim, and that a group of mutual friends used to talk about him before the sayyid's death. This group included Mullá Aḥmad Ibdál Marághí'í (another future "Letter of the Living"), Áqá Muḥammad Ḥasan, Áqá Muḥammad-Ḥusayn Ughlí Marághí'í (Khála), and Mullá 'Alí Ardibílí.⁵⁶ That the Báb had met and served Sayyid Kázim and was held in respect while in Karbala is admitted by Karím Khán in his first attack on him, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, although he points out that he himself never met him.⁵⁷

THE BÁB'S EARLIEST CLAIM

Sayyid 'Alí-Muḥammad's first claim to be the "Báb" was made, according to his own statement in the Persian *Bayán*, to Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í on the evening of 22 May 1844.⁵⁸ Some three weeks before that, on 4 May, another group of Shaykhís set off from Karbala for Shiraz, traveling by sea according to al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í.⁵⁹ The same source states that this group consisted of seven individuals, namely, Mullá 'Alí Baştámí, Mullá 'Abd al-Jalíl (Urúmí), Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí Qazvíní, Mullá Ḥasan Bajistání, Mullá Aḥmad (Ibdál) Marághí'í, Mullá Maḥmud Khú'í, and Mullá Muḥammad Míyámí.⁶⁰ Zarandí, however, in writing of what must be the same group, omits this last name and adds another seven, bringing the total to thirteen.⁶¹

This group of thirteen met the Báb individually and accepted his claims, being numbered by him among the "Letters of the Living" (*ḥurúf-i ḥayy*), apparently identical with the group referred to elsewhere as "forerunners" (*sábiqún*). It included Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí Qazvíní and his brother Mírzá Hádí, the first of whom was the brother-in-law of Fáṭima Khánum

Baraghání (Ṭáhirih), named Qurrat al-'Ayn by Sayyid Kázim Rashtí. This woman had won a reputation as an outstanding and radical *Shaykhí* scholar (*'álima*) and was to become a center for endless controversy following her acceptance of the Báb. On the recommendation of her brother-in-law, she was included by the Báb in his list of "Letters of the Living," although then living in Qazvín. The last member of the group was a young student from Mázarán who had, it seems, also been engaged in seclusion at the mosque at Kúfa, but had traveled independently to Shiraz. Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí Bárfurúshí, later known as Quddús, became a close favorite of the Báb and eventually led the Bábí rising in his native province in 1848. By the time of his arrival in Shiraz, Muḥammad-Ḥasan and Muḥammad-Báqir, the brother and cousin of Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í, had also joined the ranks of the Báb's earliest disciples.

Before proceeding to describe how this group spread the claims of the Báb to their fellow *Shaykhís*, it will be useful to devote a few paragraphs to a discussion of what those claims were. Bahá'í sources have tended to attribute the Báb's later, more developed claims retrospectively to the initial period of his ministry, resulting in a serious distortion of the pattern in which the Báb's thought developed. The nature of the Báb's earliest claims is indicated in various ways in several passages of his writings from the first two years of his career.

In an early prayer, he writes that he is the "bearer" of knowledge like Sayyid Kázim, and that, if God were to reveal another cause, this would be a great comfort; otherwise, he says, he has not claimed anything and does not state that he is the "bearer" of any cause other than that to which he referred.⁶² In the same prayer, he goes on to say that the days of "his Proof" (*ḥujja*) are drawing near—an indication that the hidden Imam was expected to appear soon. Similar references to the imminent appearance of the Imam may also be found in the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*. As we shall see shortly, intense messianic expectation came to characterize much Bábí propaganda in the first year or so after the Báb's initial declaration.

On the opening page of the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, the Báb writes: "God hath decreed that this book be sent down in interpretation

of the Sura of Joseph, from Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Alí ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alí ibn Músá ibn Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alí ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alí ibn Abí Ṭálib [i.e., from the twelfth Imam, the promised Qá'im] to his servant that it may be the Proof of God revealed from the Remembrance [*al-Dhikr*, a title widely used by the Báb at this time] unto all mankind."⁶³ Similarly, in the opening passage of the *Ṣaḥífa Maḥzúna*, he writes: "This is the mighty, hidden book which God hath sent down upon His Proof, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan [i.e., the twelfth Imam]. The *Baqíyyat Alláh*, Lord of the Age [titles of the twelfth Imam], hath in his turn delivered it to his Gate (*Báb*), the Remembrance, that it may be the clear proof of God from the Remembrance unto all the worlds."⁶⁴ In his slightly later *Ṣaḥífay-i 'Adliyya*, written during his stay in Shiraz following his pilgrimage, the Báb writes: "Out of his bounty, the Hidden Imam, may God hasten his advent, hath chosen one of his servants from among the peoples of Iran, and the descendants of the Prophet, in order to protect the Faith of God."⁶⁵

When, at a later date, the Báb actually claimed to be the Hidden Imam, he did not seek to conceal the nature of his earlier claims. This is evidenced by the *Dalá'il-i Sab'a*, written in prison in Azerbaijan:

"Consider the grace of the Promised One in so extending his mercy to the people of Islam that he might bring them salvation, how he whose station is that of the first of all created things and the manifestation of the verse 'Verily, I am God,' revealed himself as the Báb of the Qá'im of the family of Muḥammad, and in his first book commanded observance of the laws of the Qur'án so that men might not be disturbed by a new Book and a new Cause."⁶⁶

Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí Zunúzí (who was executed with the Báb in 1850), writes in a dialogue between himself and a *Shaykhí* scholar that "people in the beginning believed the Báb was sent by the Hidden Imam," and goes on to state that, at the start of his career, the Báb maintained that his words were below those of the Imam, although greater in rank than those of *Shaykh* Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í or Sayyid Kázim Rashtí, making

himself out to be an interpreter of the Qur'án, while his followers faithfully observed the Islamic law.⁶⁷ This is largely borne out by statements of the Báb himself in his *Ṣaḥífay-i 'Adliyya*, where he writes: "The meaning and form of expression of all the verses which God hath caused to flow from my tongue are as utter nothingness when compared with a single letter of the Book of God [Qur'án] or the words of the people of the House of Purity [the Imams]," and again, "the words that have flowed forth from my tongue and pen, and those which will, by God's permission, flow therefrom in the future, can never equal a single letter of the prayers of the People of Purity [the Imams], for they dwell in the substance of the Will of God while all others are subject to the influence of their actions."⁶⁸

As stated above in some of the passages quoted, at this stage the Báb did not seek to abrogate the Qur'án or the Islamic legal system (*sharí'a*). In the *Ṣaḥífay-i 'Adliyya*, he makes this point explicit when he writes: "Since there can be no change decreed for [the Faith of God], this blessed *sharí'a* shall never be abrogated. Nay, 'that which Muḥammad hath declared lawful shall remain lawful to the Day of Resurrection, and that which he hath declared unlawful shall remain unlawful until the Day of Resurrection.'"⁶⁹ Similarly, in an early letter to Qurrat al-'Ayn, noted for her eagerness to abolish the Islamic code, he writes: "Be thou assured that all the externals of the *sharí'a* are observed. Whoever neglects the least of its laws it shall be as if he has neglected all of them."⁷⁰ In a letter written as late as his stay in Isfahan, he maintains that "I have not instructed anyone save [to observe] the laws of the Qur'án."⁷¹

His first group of seventeen disciples remained for a short time with the Báb, being instructed by him and making copies of his earliest writings, including the commentary on the *Súrat al-Baqara*, the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, the *Ṣaḥífay-i Makhzúna*, and a *ziyarat-náma* for the Imám 'Alí. They then dispersed from Shiraz, traveling to different parts of Iran, and beyond, in order to acquaint people in those regions with the claims of the Báb. Through these "forerunners" and the men they met and converted, the claims of the new teacher were rapidly made known, principally to the *Shaykhí* communities in the areas they

visited. Mullá Yúsuf Ardibílí succeeded in converting most or all of the large Shaykhí population of Mílán in Azerbaijan.⁷² Mullá Aḥmad Ibdál Marághí'í acquainted Mullá Ḥusayn Dakhíl Marághí'í with the claims of the Báb. The latter in turn traveled to Shiraz, only to find that the Báb had gone to Arabia on pilgrimage. Returning to Marágha, he made a point of telling the Shaykhís in every town and village he passed through of the appearance of the Báb, and succeeded in converting most of the Shaykhís in Marágha itself.⁷³ Mullá Jalíl Urúmí was instructed to go to Qazvín, where he married and stayed for some three years teaching Babism. His converts were mainly Shaykhís from the town.⁷⁴

In this way, a growing section of the Shaykhí school followed the Báb in the period of his earliest claims, even though, as happened in Marágha for example, many of these abandoned him some three years later when he assumed the station of Qá'im and formally abrogated the Islamic law. The unity of Shaykhism was irretrievably shattered, and a core of convinced Bábís was created, wholeheartedly prepared to put into practice the radical changes implicit in the Báb's later claims.

THE IMPACT OF THE BÁB'S CLAIM IN KARBALA

The most shattering impact made by the dissemination of Bábí propaganda on the Shaykhí world occurred at the heart of that world, in Karbala. Al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í states that Mullá 'Alí Bastámí and his companions returned to Karbala on 11 August, and proceeded to teach what they were permitted of the Báb's claims.⁷⁵ Other sources, however, suggest that Mullá 'Alí, possibly accompanied by one or two others of the "Letters of the Living," reached there about October.⁷⁶

Mullá 'Alí first went to Najaf, where he presented a letter from the Báb to Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Ra'ís al-'Ulamá, the leading Shí'í divine of that period.⁷⁷

It is not difficult to understand the Báb's reasons for writing to Ra'ís al-'Ulamá. He was the sole *marja' al-taqlíd* for the Persian Shí'ís at the shrines in Iraq, and, therefore, for the whole of Iran. He stands midway between the widely recognized leaders

of the immediate past, such as Áqá Muḥammad-Báqir Bihbihání, Sayyid Muḥammad-Mahdí Ṭabáṭabá'í Baḥr al-'Ulúm, Shaykh Ja'far Najafí, Shaykh Muḥammad-Báqir Shaftí, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥmad al-Aḥsá'í, and others, and his own outstanding pupil, Shaykh Murtaḍá Anṣarí, who was to become the first mujtahid to be recognized as *marja'* for the entire Shí'í world. In Shaykh Muḥammad-Ḥasan's violent rejection of the claims of the Báb we can see, not so much the ages-old response of a firmly entrenched and rigid system of orthodoxy to new and disturbing ideas, but rather a defensive action on the part of the leading representative of the mujtahid class (then on the verge of almost universal supremacy within Twelver Shiism) against a claim to even more far-reaching and direct authority—a claim which threatened to supplant the entire ecclesiastical structure of Shí'íh Islam.⁷⁸

Significantly, Nabíl indicates that there were Shaykhís among the followers of Shaykh Muḥammad-Ḥasan, and that they joined with the non-Shaykhí ulama in condemning Mullá 'Alí as a heretic and expelling him from Najaf.⁷⁹ If this is so, it shows clearly how, from the beginning, the Báb's claims served as a means of unifying the interests of Shaykhís and Bálásarís by providing a target which both could condemn as heretical.

Despite this initial rebuff, Mullá 'Alí's teaching among the Shaykhís in Karbala and, later, from prison in Baghdad, was highly successful and resulted in large numbers of converts. These included Shaykh Muḥammad Shibl al-Baghdádí, who had been Sayyid Kazím's representative in Baghdad; Shaykh Bashír al-Najafí, a mujtahid of seventy-five; Shaykh Sultán Karbilá'í; and Shaykh Šáliḥ Karímí.⁸⁰ He also appears to have met and conversed with Qurrat al-'Ayn, who had recently arrived in Karbala from Qazvin.

After Mullá 'Alí's trial in January 1845, and his removal from Baghdad to Istanbul some months later, the core of Shaykhí Bábís he left behind continued to win others over to the side of the Báb, effecting a permanent breach in the Shaykhí community of Iraq. During his stay there, Mullá 'Alí had, in fact, created something of a chiliastic fervor among the Shaykhís of the region.

There had already existed a sense of messianic expectation in Karbala and Baghdad, notably among the Shaykhí community there. According to al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í, those who had accepted the Báb's cause without, at that time, knowing anything of his identity, expected that "the cause would be revealed to them and the veil lifted from them, so that the secret might conquer them in the year 1261."⁸¹ The same writer, who was present in Karbala at this period, indicates that a considerable sense of expectancy centered on the year 1261. He cites Hájí Mullá Ja'far Kirmánsháhi as saying that he was with Shaykh Aḥmad during the latter's preparation for his last journey to Mecca, in 1826. Some people asked the Shaykh concerning the signs of the appearance of the Imam, and he merely replied "Sixty-one."⁸²

According to al-Karbalá'í, some Jews in Karbala referred to the appearance of the Báb's cause as being "what we awaited in the month of Rabí' I of the year '61," while many sufis, particularly those of the Sháh Ni'matu'lláhi order, were expecting the Imam to appear—al-Karbalá'í had heard twenty-five years previously certain prophecies from them referring to the year '61.⁸⁴ Everyone, he writes, expected the promised one to appear from his own group, and he specifically mentions here the sufis, Bálásarís, Isma'ilís, other Shí'ís (presumably those not opposed to Shaykhism), and even Sunnís.⁸⁵ How widespread this sense of expectancy really was outside the circles of the Shaykhí school (and even within those circles) is extremely difficult to say, but there is evidence that it was not restricted to that school.

The purpose of the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, one of the works of the Báb brought by Mullá 'Alí to the shrines, was, in the words of Major Rawlinson, the British political agent in Baghdad, "to prepare the Mohammedan world for the immediate manifestation of the Imam, and to identify the individual to whom the emendations of the text [of what was regarded as a corrupted copy of the Qur'án] were declared to have been revealed, as his inspired and true precursor."⁸⁶ Mullá 'Alí's arrest and trial did little to calm the growing unrest and messianic expectation; in his account of the trial, Rawlinson writes: "I understand that considerable uneasiness is beginning to display itself at Kerbela

and Nejef, in regard to the expected manifestation of the Imam, and I am apprehensive that the measures now in progress will rather increase than allay the excitement."⁸⁷

The excitement which this activity aroused was further intensified by the arrival of news that the Báb, on leaving for pilgrimage to Mecca in September 1844, had said that he would reveal his Cause in Mecca, enter Karbala, and fulfill the prophecies. In various letters, he called on his followers to gather together in Karbala, in order to aid the Qá'im when he appeared.⁸⁸ Large numbers of Bábís headed for Karbala to await the Báb's arrival, many of them, it would appear, preparing to fight a *jihád* in the company of the Imam.⁸⁹ As we shall see, the Báb's action in thus assembling his followers in anticipation of an uprising (*khurúj*, literally, "coming forth") was to be included by Karím Khán Kirmání as a major piece of evidence against the Báb. In reality, however, nothing came of the Báb's plans to join his followers at Karbala, whatever the true intention of such a gathering may have been. Sailing from Jidda on 4 March 1845, the Báb arrived in Búshíhr on 15 May.⁹⁰ Shortly after his arrival there, he sent a letter to Karbala, probably via Hájí Sayyid Jawád Isfahání, telling his disciples there that it had proved necessary to alter his plans and return directly to Iran, and that they should proceed to Isfahan, remaining there until they received further instructions.⁹¹

This change of plans precipitated a serious breach among the Bábís in Karbala, causing large numbers to abandon the Báb. According to al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í, "only a tiny band" remained after this incident and the arrest, a couple of months later, of Mullá Šádiq Khurásání and others in Shiraz.⁹² This small group regarded the change in intentions as the interposition of *badá'* (alteration of the divine will) and was, if anything, reinforced in its allegiance. The Báb himself appears to have indicated that, because of opposition to his Cause and attacks on his messengers, God had become angry with men and decreed a postponement of five years in which they might increase in sin and His proclamation to them be completed.⁹³ In effect, the proclamation of Qá'im-hood and resurrection (*qá'imíyya* and *qíyáma*) was postponed until the fifth year of the Báb's career.

With the arrival of the Báb in Shiraz in early July 1845, it became possible for those who remained faithful to him in Karbala either to travel to meet him in person or to receive news of him firsthand from those who returned from that city. A considerable movement between Karbala and Shiraz began, as a result of which the Báb's now precarious position was again strengthened and his authority extended over what was by now developing into a more consciously radical group of Shaykhís under the leadership of Qurrat al-'Ayn in Karbala.

Mírzá Hádí Nahrí and his brother Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí Nahrí, who had frequently met the Báb in Karbala, had already gone to Shiraz while the Báb was in Arabia, the former returning to Karbala, where he doubtless brought further information about Sayyid 'Alí-Muḥammad to his companions there.⁹⁴ Other Shaykhís traveled between the two towns, among them Shaykh Šálih Karímí, a convert of Mullá 'Alí Baṣṭámí; Shaykh Sulṭán Karbalá'í; Shaykh Ḥasan Zunúzí; Sayyid Jawád Karbalá'í; and Áqá Sayyid 'Abd al-Hádí Qazvíní, later the husband of a niece of Qurrat al-'Ayn.⁹⁵ Through these and other individuals, various books and letters of the Báb reached Karbala and were circulated in the region. Works such as the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, *Ṣaḥífay-i Makhzúna*, *Ṣaḥífay-i A'mál al-Sana*, the commentary on the *Ḥadīth al-Jarīyya*, and other minor writings became well known and served as the basis for propaganda and polemic, both with respect to the unconvinced among the Shaykhí population at large, and within the ranks of the Bábí community itself.⁹⁶

MULLÁ JAWÁD WILYÁNÍ

Of considerable importance for the future relationship between the Shaykhí and Bábí movements was the arrival in Shiraz of Mullá Jawád Wilyání, a former Shaykhí of Qazvin who had lived for a short time in Karbala. Mulla Jawád was a maternal cousin of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, who was by now the leading figure among the Bábís of Karbala, and had been responsible for introducing her to Shaykhí doctrine at an early age. One of the first in Qazvin to acknowledge the Báb as the new Shaykhí leader, he had been one of those awaiting the Báb's arrival in Karbala.

Disappointed by the Báb's failure to appear, he traveled to Shiraz with a group of fellow *Shaykhís*, including Mullá 'Abd al-'Alí Harátí and Mírzá Ibráhím Shírází. Within a short time after their arrival in Shiraz, Mullá Jawád and his two companions came into conflict with the Báb and his other followers there, including Mullá Husayn Bushrú'í. Serious disagreements seem to have occurred, in the course of which these three men were expelled from the community of believers.⁹⁷

The expelled companions allied themselves in some sense with the Báb's enemies in the city. (Mullá Jawád seems to have distributed some of the Báb's writings for the use of his opponents as evidence of heresy.) This schism appears to have led to the outbreak of disturbances of some kind between Bábís and non-Bábís, resulting in the expulsion from Shiraz of Mullá Jawád and his companions by the civil authorities. Why these men rather than the Báb's other newly arrived disciples, should have been expelled is a matter for speculation.

Having by now rejected the Báb as a legitimate successor to Sayyid Kázim, Mullá Jawád and his fellow apostates made for Kerman, where they joined forces with Karím Khán. In Kerman, Mullá Jawád appears to have adopted the role of spokesman for Karím Khán, and to have written letters in support of his claims to various individuals, as is indicated by al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í, who refers to Mullá Jawád as "the herald" (*munád*) of Karím Khán.⁹⁸ The defection of three followers of the Báb, and the transfer of their allegiance to himself, was without doubt a valuable factor in enhancing Karím Khán's reputation at this critical juncture. Undoubtedly, these men were able to supply Karím Khán with much of the fresh information which he incorporated into his second and third attacks on the Báb—*Tír-i Shiháb* (1846) and *al-Shiháb al-Thaqib* (January 1849). Two untitled treatises in refutation of the Báb were, in fact, written by Karím Khán in direct reply to questions from Mullá Jawád.⁹⁹ The latter returned after some time to Qazvin, where he is reported to have himself written a refutation of the Báb, the text of which does not appear to be extant.¹⁰⁰

The Báb, for his part, regarded this act of apostasy on the part of Mullá Jawád, Mullá 'Abd al-'Alí, and Mírzá Ibráhím, as a serious calamity. He wrote at length, and in very strong terms,

deprecating their actions. In a letter written in Shiraz, probably not long after these events, the Báb states that "the worst thing which has befallen me is the action of *Khuwár al-Wilyání* [i.e., Mullá Jawád] in his injustice to me; at the time when I was writing the decree of his expulsion, it was as if I heard one calling within my heart, 'Sacrifice the most beloved of all things unto you, even as [the Imam] Husayn made sacrifices in my path.'" ¹⁰¹ In another letter, quoted by Zarandí, the Báb refers to Mullá Jawád and Mullá 'Abd al-'Alí as "the Jibt and *Tághút*, the twin idols of this perverse people," ¹⁰² while he elsewhere speaks of them and Mírzá Ibráhím as "the Golden Calf, and its body, and its lowing." ¹⁰³ Mullá Jawád, in particular, is often referred to in Bábí and Bahá'í literature as *khuwár*, the "lowing" of the Golden Calf. ¹⁰⁴ The opening passage of the Báb's commentary of the *Súrat al-Kawthar*, written in Shiraz shortly after these events for Sayyid Yahya Darábí, makes lengthy and pained reference to the infidelity of these three men. ¹⁰⁵

Mullá Jawád's rejection of the Báb, and his expulsion from the ranks of his followers, had repercussions in Karbala. He himself wrote a letter to Qurratu'l-'Ayn, and received an impassioned and sometimes stern reply from her, addressed to him, Mullá 'Abd al-'Alí, and "others." ¹⁰⁶ Written in 1261/1845, this would appear to be the earliest extant dated work of this woman which we possess. It contains fairly detailed references to the content of Mullá Jawád's original letter, outlining the nature of his objections before proceeding to refute them. Among the points raised by Mullá Jawád were: the Báb's failure to appear in Karbala, the difficulty for most people in reading the Arabic writings of the Báb, his acceptance of parts of the Báb's writings but not others, the possibility that God may establish the truth in a place or person not fit to receive it, his own claim to have a "Qur'án" more eloquent and complete than the Báb's *tafsir* (the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*), the confusion of the language of the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, and the station accorded Mullá Husayn Bushrú'í by the Báb. ¹⁰⁷

Taken together, the arguments raised by Mullá Jawád—most of which are of little consequence in isolation—indicate a general attitude which seems to lie at the root of his eventual abandonment of the Báb. Already shaken in his convictions by the

Báb's failure to appear in Karbala as he had promised, Mullá Jawád had clearly headed for Shiraz with the express intention of engaging in *mubahila* or trial by faith with him. A major factor in his eventual disenchantment with and rejection of the Báb was certainly the latter's reaction to his attempt to thus put his claims to the proof.

Trial by faith of this kind was common during this period, and the Báb himself instructed several of his followers to engage in such contests with their adversaries. In this case, however, the Báb regarded such a challenge as unacceptable and improper. In a prayer written after Mullá Jawád's departure from Shiraz, he writes: "Know that Jawád Qazvíní hath written in his letter in Persian, which he wrote with the images of hell, vain words, among which were those in which he has challenged me to *mubahila*, thus making a liar of himself—for it is as if he had not read in the Book of God that *mubahila* is my decree and my sign, and that he has no authority to issue a challenge to it."¹⁰⁸ The point at issue is that of the station to be accorded to Báb. In declaring himself to be the sole source of divine guidance then on earth (whatever the precise nature of his claim), the Báb demanded a degree of obedience which Mullá Jawád and other *Shaykhís* seem to have been unable to give. The history of Babism up to 1848 is marked by a high measure of tension between the cautious intellectualizing of the large numbers of *Shaykhí* Bábís who became more and more disillusioned and abandoned the Báb in greater and greater numbers as his doctrines and injunctions jarred increasingly with established Islamic theory, and the utterly dedicated bands of saints and zealots who argued, fought, and were often tortured or put to death for a cause they often understood little enough of.

The emphasis which the Báb placed on observance of the Islamic laws, and his references to his station as being below that of the Imams, attracted that section of the *Shaykhí* community which sought for a formal continuation of the leadership provided by *Shaykh* Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim in the context of a rigid adherence to Islamic practice and veneration for the Imams. On the other hand, it soon became apparent to some individuals that, even at this stage, there existed in the claims and ideas of the Báb elements which were clearly in a state of tension

with his apparently normative and traditional injunctions. There thus emerged a group which, although initially amenable to the claims implicit in the Báb's writings, persisted in judging such claims in terms of existing theory. When the Báb seemed to discard much of the theory on which their judgments were based, the ideological edifice of faith appeared to collapse for such individuals.

Mullá Jawád seems to have been one of the first to detect an incongruity between the Báb's claims and the modes in which he actually proposed to establish them. Thus, he considered that the Báb's writings did not conform to the established criteria of Quranic style or grammar, his answers to questions appeared to function outside the framework of normal question-answer relationships—even of accepted epistemological approaches—and his most favored disciples seemed to be ascribed roles alien to the established religious roles which were available to the ulama. Joining Karím Khán, who sought to rationalize Shaykhí doctrine and to bring it closer to the established norms of Twelver Shiism, he was able to find in the books of his new leader a consistency between claims and criteria which he had not found in the writings of the Báb. Not unsurprisingly, Karím Khán, challenged by two emissaries of the Báb, had already recognized the heterodox nature of the Báb's claims and teachings and had himself, not long before Mullá Jawád's arrival in Kerman, initiated a campaign of written and oral attacks on the Báb which was to continue over several years.

KARÍM KHÁN'S RESPONSE TO THE BÁB'S CLAIM

During this period, Karím Khán was beginning to make his independent bid for leadership of the Shaykhí school. Mullá Jawád arrived in Kerman shortly after the visits of two emissaries from the Báb who had gone to that city in the hope of winning the allegiance of Karím Khán.

As far as can be determined (though the question is too detailed to discuss here) Mullá Şádiq Khurásání, an elderly Shaykhí who had studied under Sayyid Kázim, was the first Bábí to communicate the claims of the Báb to Karím Khán.

Converted by Mullá Husayn Bushrú'í in the course of the latter's visit to Isfahan in mid-1844, Mullá Šádiq headed for Kerman carrying with him, in the words of Karím Khán, "a number of suras in the style of the Qur'án, a number of books in the style of the *Šahífa Sajjádiyya* [a popular collection of prayers attributed to the fourth Imam, 'Alí ibn Husayn "Sajjád"], and a number of *khuṭbas* in the style of the *Nahj al-Balágha*" [a compilation of traditions ascribed to the Imám 'Alí].¹⁰⁹ The suras in question were a number of chapters from the Báb's *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, as is clear from those parts of them quoted by Karím Khán in several of his works. Mullá Šádiq was, according to Karím Khán, brought to a meeting presided over by the latter, defeated in argument, and sent on his way.

He was followed after some time by Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí Bárfurúshí Quddús, the Báb's companion on his pilgrimage, and, therefore, probably the best acquainted of all the Báb's followers with his teachings at this stage. Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí brought with him a letter in the Báb's own hand for Karím Khán, and succeeded in delivering it to him before being expelled like his predecessor.¹¹⁰ The letter in question is quoted in full by Karím Khán in his *Al-Shiháb al-Tháqib*.¹¹¹ Mullá Šádiq and Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí were, according to Karím Khán, the only Bábís he ever met.¹¹² In his final attack on the Báb, written in 1283/1867, however, he refers to and quotes from the Báb's Persian *Bayán* and gives detailed references to what would seem to be the Arabic *Bayán*.¹¹³ This is evidence that, even if he did not have further direct contact with Bábís, he was able to obtain their literature.

In 1845, Karím Khán was aged thirty-five and was at the height of his power. In his *Hidáyat al-Ṭálibín*, written in Dhú'l-Hijja 1261/December 1845, he suggests that he was already acting as head of the Shaykhí school when he follows an account of the sufferings of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim with a description of his own sufferings at the hands of various opponents. Between 1247/1832 (the date of his first extant treatise [*risála*]) and 1260/1844, he had written a total of twenty works, principally untitled treatises. From about 1844, his output began to increase markedly, a minimum of ninety-five titles

being produced between that date and 1270/1854. These included important works such as *Irshád al-'Awwám* (written in four parts between 1263/1847 and 1267/1851), *Hidáyat al-Ṭálibín* (written in Yazd in 1261/1845), *Jawámi' al-'Alláj* (written in 1269/1853), and *Rujúm al-Shayáṭín* (written in 1268/1852).

It is hardly surprising then that his response to the message of the Báb took the form of a series of refutations in Arabic and Persian which were spread widely, to *Shaykhís* in particular. Fáḍil Mázandarání maintains that Karím Khán attacked the Báb in no less than twelve of his works, although he fails to give all but a few of their titles.¹¹⁴ Karím Khán himself writes in his *Risálay-i Sí Faṣl*, written in 1269/1853: "I have written five or six books in refutation of him [the Báb], and have sent them to different parts of Azerbaijan, 'Iráq A'jam, 'Iráq 'Arab, Hijaz, Khurasan, and India. I have also written letters to the ulama and sent petitions to officials of the victorious government. At times in Yazd and Kerman, and when on a journey to Khurasan, I have made clear their unbelief from pulpits, with proofs and evidences."¹¹⁵

Of these "five or six books," only three are actually known: *Izhá al-Báṭil*, completed on 12 Rajab 1261/17 July 1845; *Tír-i Shiháb*, completed on 12 Rabí' I 1262/10 March 1846; and *al-Shiháb al-Tháqib*, completed on 21 Ṣafar 1265/16 January 1849. A fourth complete work in refutation of the Báb, the *Risála dar Radd-i Báb-i Murtád*, was written by Karím Khán at the request of Náṣir al-Dín Sháh in 1283/1867.

KARÍM KHÁN'S STATEMENTS ABOUT THE BÁB

There is clearly no space in a paper of this length to enter into a full discussion of these works. However, it is of value to refer to some of the main points raised by Karím Khán in *Izháq al-Báṭil* and *Tír-i Shiháb*, thereby restricting our comments to the earliest period. It should be borne in mind that the former work in particular is a lengthy discourse devoted more to the discussion of certain relevant points of Shí'í doctrine, such as the

miraculous character of the Qur'án, miracles, and the tokens and stations of the *nuqabá* and *nujabá*. Here we shall deal only with those sections which deal specifically with the Báb and his doctrines.

Karím Khán gives brief and somewhat vague accounts of the Báb in both these works, at times making up for obvious lack of information by the use of supposition. He speaks of the indecision experienced by the Shaykhí community on the death of Sayyid Kázim and the dispersal of his followers in search of the bearer (*hámil*) of the Fourth Support (*rukṇ-i rábi'*), a point to which we shall return. This indecision, he says, and the search in which it resulted were seen by the Báb as an opportunity to make a claim for himself; during the lifetime of Sayyid Kázim, he had been held in some respect, but was even then influenced by certain ideas and events which ultimately led to his later claims.¹¹⁶

According to Karím Khán, the Báb had heard of the appearance of a certain Mullá Šádiq in Azerbaijan who had acquired a following of some twelve hundred during Sayyid Kázim's lifetime. Karbilá'í Qásim Zunúzí is quoted in a Bahá'í history of 'Ishqábád as stating that a certain Mullá Šádiq from Urdúbád near the Araxes had proclaimed to the people there the imminent advent of the Qá'im, gathering a following of almost ten thousand. The Russian authorities became concerned because of the disturbance his preaching stirred up and exiled him to Warsaw where, it would appear, he later died; his place was soon taken by a fellow townsman, Sayyid 'Abd al-Karím Urdúbádí who was himself eventually exiled to Smolensk.¹¹⁷

It is also alleged by Karím Khán that the Báb became aware of what he had written on the necessity of the Fourth Support and the impossibility of any age being without it.¹¹⁸ Karím Khán maintains that on the death of Sayyid Kázim, the Báb observed the tyranny of local governors and realized that people wanted to be freed of it. He determined to overthrow the government and succeeded in gathering together followers to whom such an objective appealed for a variety of reasons: out of desire for personal leadership, hope for change in the government, enmity

toward the existing order, or because of the sheer weight of injustice and oppression.¹¹⁹ After some thought, the Báb put forward various claims—in particular that of being the Gate of the Hidden Imam—and wrote a number of works, including a book in suras in imitation of the Qur'án, which he claimed to have been revealed to him, a *ṣaḥífa* challenging those of the Imams, and sermons in emulation of those of 'Alí.¹²⁰ These claims were initially made to a group of *Shaykhís* who arrived in Shiraz with the hope of raising their own position, but Karím Khán maintains that these individuals were "new in the Cause" and little informed of its realities.¹²¹

According to Karím Khán, the Báb's followers began to spread out, making known his promise to come to Karbala at Muḥarram (1261) with the intention of coming out of the shrine of Ḥusayn on the day of 'Ashúra (10 Muḥarram) bearing a sword, in order to lead his followers in waging holy war.¹²² People flocked to Iraq in large numbers in anticipation of this event, and the Báb's following there grew considerably. Karím Khán maintains, however, that the Báb had miscalculated the distance from Mecca to Karbala, and that, realizing he could not in fact reach the latter place by the tenth of Muḥarram, he was compelled to put back the date to Naw-Rúz (21 March). In the event, the road from Mecca to Karbala was closed by Arab tribes, and the Báb was forced to return by way of Búshihr. When Muḥarram and then Naw-Rúz passed and the Báb did not appear, no one knew whether "he had been drowned at sea or burnt on the land," and, in the end, his followers felt ashamed of the claims they had advanced on his behalf. Arriving at Búshihr, the Báb was himself summoned by the governor of Shiraz and, on reaching the latter place, recanted his claims.¹²³

This is virtually all the information concerning the Báb which appears to have reached Karím Khán by the time of writing *Tír-i Shiháb*, some nine months after the last event described. One further fact he does mention, however, and that is his receipt of a letter from the Báb calling on him to bring a military force to Shiraz with which to wage war with him, and instructing him to tell his *mu'adhḥin* to include the Báb's name in the *adhán* formula.¹²⁴ The text of this letter is not quoted by Karím Khán in

Tír-i Shiháb, but does appear, apparently in full, in his later work, *Al-Shiháb al-Tháqib*.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, a good deal of space is taken up in both works under discussion here with quotations from writings of the Báb available to Karím Khán, in particular the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*. Karím Khán maintains that the Báb's production of a book in the form of the Qur'án, with verses (*áyát*), suras, and indications for *sijda*, is in itself evidence against him.

Karím Khán's arguments concerning the Báb's writings are developed principally in two ways: detailed discussion of the miraculous nature (*i'jáz*) of the Qur'án¹²⁶ and commentary on the language and content of the Báb's works.¹²⁷ The Báb's Arabic comes in for heavy criticism, being described as grossly incorrect, incoherent, and inelegant.¹²⁸ One argument used in this context is that it is meaningless to argue that our inability to make sense of the Báb's replies to certain questions is due to our lack of understanding, since this would destroy any real possibility of deciding between true and false. Only someone who shows himself to be knowledgeable on outward matters can then write some obscure passages on other topics which may not be openly divulged. If someone's writings are incomprehensible from beginning to end, how can we judge them? Karím Khán refutes the Báb's claim of his ability to write Arabic in spite of being unlearned, on the grounds that his stay in Karbalá and his association with Arabs in the *garmsír* regions of Shiraz and the ports, as well as in Shiraz itself, had enabled him to pick up a smattering of the language like anyone else.¹²⁹

Largely basing his remarks on the passages of the Báb cited by him, Karím Khán identifies ten items in the Báb's teaching which are opposed to Islam and some of which are heretical innovation (*bid'a*):

1. The claim to a new revelation (*wahy*) after that of Muḥammad,
2. The claim to bring a new book after the Qur'án,
3. Legitimization of *jihád* which is illegitimate in the time of the Imam's concealment,
4. The prohibition on writing his books in black ink, and the requirement to write them in colored ink,

5. The promulgation of claims which are the prerogatives of the Prophet and the Imams,
6. The decree that his name be mentioned in the *adhán*,
7. The claim to "special vicegerency" of the Imam (*níyába kháṣṣa*),
8. The decree that all must obey him, and that whoever refuses to do so is an infidel (*káfir*),
9. The claim that all must worship him, and regard him as the point of adoration (*qibla*) and mosque (*masjid*),
10. Deceits relating to the twelfth Imam (apparently in respect of prophecies relating to the coming of the Imam).¹³⁰

On the basis of the above points, Karím Khán declares the Báb an infidel, maintaining that "our God is not his God, our Prophet is not his Prophet, and our Imam is not his Imam."¹³¹ Particular attention is paid to the Báb's call to wage war in the time of concealment of the Imam. Numerous traditions are cited to demonstrate that the waging of *jihád* is illegitimate except under the Imam himself.¹³²

Karím Khán also succeeds in extracting evidence from the passages he quotes, to demonstrate that the Báb had advanced a variety of claims in respect of his own person. These passages show that the Báb had made a claim to the role of Gate to the Imam (*bábíyya*), the station of Imam (*imáma*), prophethood (*risála*), and even divinity (*ulúhíyya*).¹³³

A curious tension exists between the actual claims of the Báb made in his writings of this period, and clearly demonstrated by passages such as those quoted earlier in this paper, and those claims Karím Khán attributes to him on the basis of an inductive process using a limited number of the Báb's works. References to *wahy* (revelation), *jihád* (holy war), *halal* and *haram* (matters that are permitted and forbidden), and the like, enabled Karím Khán to perceive a trend toward increasingly elevated claims on the part of the Báb well before the majority of such claims were made explicit. It is, perhaps, worth noting that it was not until 1848, when the Báb announced his claim to be the Qá'im and abrogated the *sharí'a*, that large numbers of Shaykhí Bábís, including most of those in Marágha, and many at the conference of Badasht, abandoned him as a heretic on basically

the same grounds that had served Karím Khán in his condemnation of him as such at this early stage.¹³⁴

THE DOCTRINE OF THE FOURTH SUPPORT

In speaking of the initial impact of the Báb's claims on the majority of Shaykhís, however, one important point must be considered. In *Izháq al-Báṭil*, Karím Khán maintains that the "basic question" involved is the existence of the true bearer (*hámil*) of the "Fourth Support" (*rukṇ-i rábi'*). When Sayyid Kázim died, there had to be a bearer after him, and people went in search of his successor in this capacity. At this point, the Báb made his claims, and many came to regard him as this bearer of the Fourth Support.¹³⁵ As mentioned above, Karím Khán maintained that, during the lifetime of Sayyid Kázim, the Báb had read what Karím Khán had written on the need for a Fourth Support and the impossibility of any age being deprived of it. Inadvertently, Karím Khán here provides us with an important clue as to the nature of the doctrine of the Fourth Support as he originally taught it and the reason for his modification of the doctrine in subsequent writings.

Let us first give a short description of the developed doctrine as expounded by Karím Khán in three works: *Hidáyat al-Ṭalibín* (Dhú'l-Hijja 1261/December 1845),¹³⁶ *Risály-i Sí Faṣl* (1269/1853),¹³⁷ and *Rukṇ-i Rábi'* (1282/1865-66). Briefly, it is this: traditional Shí'í theology speaks of five bases (*uṣúl*) of religion: the oneness of God (*tawhíd*), prophethood (*nubuwwa*), resurrection (*ma'ád*), the justice of God (*'adl*), and imamate (*imáma*). Shaykhí belief, according to Karím Khán, is that knowledge of God, like that of the Prophet or Imams, implies and involves a knowledge of all His attributes. Since none of these attributes can be denied by the believer, it makes more sense to speak of the "knowledge of God" (*ma'rifat-i khudá*) as the first base of religion. Similarly, resurrection is a necessary consequence of the justice of God since "it is a corollary of justice that the obedient be rewarded and the unbelievers be punished."¹³⁸ In another sense, belief in the resurrection is necessitated by a belief in the Prophet and the veracity of his

words.¹³⁹ "Therefore, all five of the bases of religion are clearly affirmed in these three bases."¹⁴⁰

A fourth base or support (*rukṇ*) is added on the grounds that the bases of religion are those matters in which each individual believer must exercise his own initiative (*ijtihād*) and not rely on or imitate others (*taqlīd*). Karīm Khān maintains that the decision as to whether one is entitled to exercise *ijtihād* or must base one's actions on *taqlīd* to a scholar of the rank of mujtahid is in itself another area in which every believer must rely on his own judgment. The recognition of such a mujtahid (or 'ālim, faqīh, etc.) ranks, therefore, as a fourth support of religion. Karīm Khān also expresses the necessity of such a support in his short treatise *Rukn-i Rābi'* by saying that since all men believe in God and need a Prophet and, after him, a successor (*walī*), and since neither the Prophet nor his successor can exist at all times and in all places, transmitters (*rāwīyān*) of their words and teachings are needed as intermediaries between them and the believers.

In his *Risālay-i Sí Faṣl*, Karīm Khān devotes considerable space to refuting the charge that he regarded himself in any specific sense as the Fourth Support, or that the term could be applied to a specific person in any given age. "The Fourth Support of the faith consists of the scholars and elders of the Shī'ih faith, and they are numerous in every period."¹⁴¹ He also refutes the idea that Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī or Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī were the Fourth Support in their respective ages. In the general sense, he says, this is true, in that they each fulfilled the conditions necessary for a person to be imitated by others (*marja' al-taqlīd*), "but," he goes on, "God forbid that I should regard them as the specific Fourth Support for their ages."¹⁴² In this general sense also, Karīm Khān regarded himself as one who could be imitated after Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim.¹⁴³

It is clear, however, that Karīm Khān at one point did believe that certain individuals could become the "bearers" of the Fourth Support, and that Sayyid Kāẓim and, presumably, Shaykh Aḥmad before him, had been such bearers.

This would, in fact, appear to be almost exactly the same version of the doctrine as expounded by the Báb as late as 1846. In the commentary on the *Súrat al-Kawthar*, written that year in

Shiraz for Sayyid Yaḥyá Darábí, the Báb discussed the question of the Fourth Support (which he refers to as "the Hidden Support") for the benefit of Sayyid Yaḥyá, who was not a *Shaykhí*.

"Had you been one of the companions of Kaẓim," writes the Báb, "you would understand the matter of the Hidden Support, in the same way that you comprehend the [other] three supports."¹⁴⁴ The Báb argues that, "just as you stand in need of an individual sent from God who may transmit unto you that which your Lord hath willed, so you stand in need of an ambassador (*safír*) from your Imam."¹⁴⁵ If it should be objected that the ulama as a body fulfill this function (which is, as we have observed, what Karím Khán maintained by this date), the Báb would reply that the ulama differ in rank, some being superior to others. They are not even in agreement on all issues, as is evident from the variation in their words, actions, and beliefs. Now, if we accept the principle that certain ulama are superior to others, it becomes necessary for us to abandon one who is of inferior rank in favor of his superior—a process which must, in the end, lead us to the recognition of a single person superior to all others.¹⁴⁶ "It is impossible," the Báb states, "that the bearer of universal grace from the Imam should be other than a single individual."¹⁴⁷

It would seem that in the face of the Báb's insistence on the singularity of the Fourth Support and the explicit identification by his followers of the role of bearer of this Fourth Support with a claim to a station of *báb* or *ná'ib* of the Imam, Karím Khán found it expedient to alter the doctrine in a manner designed to bring it closer to orthodox *Shí'í* thinking and clearly opposed to that of Babism. Such a move would certainly be in line with his general policy in this respect, as we have observed earlier. Even though Bábí doctrine very soon abandoned the Fourth Support concept, it obviously held connotations for most *Shí'í* ulama, which made it essential for Karím Khán so to modify it that, in the end, it amounted to a straightforward expression of the orthodox position concerning the need for a *marja' al-taqlíd*. In the development of this doctrine we can, perhaps, see more clearly than elsewhere the nature of the *Shaykhí* response to Bábí doctrines from the earliest period onward.

Karím Khán's rejection and refutation of the Báb, his identification of the latter as a heretic, and his continued efforts to emphasize the validity of the Shaykhí school as a legitimate teaching order within the framework of strictly orthodox Twelver Shiism, made it difficult for the followers of the Báb to continue to describe themselves as Shaykhís without a considerable measure of confusion. Although the term "Bábí" does not seem to have been used until a fairly late date,¹⁴⁸ and the distinction between Shaykhís, Bábís, or even Karím Khánís was blurred for quite some time in the mind of the public,¹⁴⁹ it soon became almost as desirable for the followers of the Báb to dissociate themselves from the Shaykhí school as it was for the latter to disclaim any real link with Babism.

As early as 1846, in his commentary on the *Súrat al-Kawthar*, the Báb, in reference to the Shaykhís, spoke of the "falsehood of this sect" the followers of which had "committed what Pharaoh did not commit before this," and who were "in this day of the people of perdition." He takes pains, however, to point out that both Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim would agree that the Shaykhís had gone astray. At the same time, he makes clear his relationship to his two predecessors when he writes that "all that Kázim and Aḥmad before me have written concerning the truths of theology and sacred topics doth not match a single word of what I have been revealing to you." Similarly, he takes care to refute the charge that his Quranic commentaries were merely references to the words of Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim, maintaining that no one, not even these two, could rival him in writing, although their words were confirmed by his verses.¹⁵⁰

Continued opposition to his cause by the Shaykhí leadership seems to have hardened the Báb's position with regard to the school. In *Risála dar radd-i Báb-i Murtád*, written for Náṣir al-Dín Sháh in 1283/1867, Karím Khán (to make it clear to the king that the Báb was actually opposed to Shaykhism) quotes a passage from the Báb's writings on this topic. The passage in question, although not specifically identified as such, would appear—from its description as "concerning the knowledge of the [divine] name 'the Holy' (*quddús*), in the first stage

(*martiba*)"—to be one of several sections missing from standard texts of the Báb's *Kitáb al-Asmá*, all the sections of which are similarly headed. If this is the case, it corroborates the supposition that the passage in question is of late date since *Kitáb al-Asmá* was written during the Báb's confinement at *Chihriq*.

Kárim Khán begins by quoting the Báb's statement that "we have forbidden you . . . [to read] the *Tafsír al-Ziyára*,¹⁵² or the *Sharḥ al-Khuṭba*,¹⁵³ or anything written by either Aḥmad or Kázim. . . . Should you look upon even a letter of what we have forbidden you, even should it be for the twinkling of an eye or less, God shall, in truth, cause you to be veiled from beholding him whom He shall make manifest." He then proceeds to quote a statement from the same passage, in which the Báb says that "Aḥmad and Kázim and the jurists (*al-fuqahá*) are incapable of either comprehending or bearing the mystery of the divine unity, whether in their acts or in the core of their beings, for they are indeed the people of limitation, and their knowledge is as nothing before God." He finally quotes the words:

"O people of the Remembrance and the Bayán: we have prohibited unto you this day, even as we prohibited unto you the reading of the fairytales of Aḥmad and Kázim and the jurists, that you should sit down in the company of those who have followed them in the decree, lest they may lead you astray and cause you to become unbelievers. Know, O people of the *Furqán* and the Bayán, that you are, in this day, enemies unto those who have followed Aḥmad and Kázim, and they are enemies unto you; you have no greater enemy upon the face of the earth than them, nor have they any enemy greater than you. . . . Whosoever shall allow into his heart one seventh of one seventh of one tenth of one tenth of the head of a grain of mustard seed of love for these people, he whom God shall make manifest shall punish him with a painful fire upon the day of resurrection."¹⁵⁴

The Báb's attitude to Shaykh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kázim did not change fundamentally. At quite a late date, for example, he wrote a *ziyarat-náma* or "tablet of visitation" for Shaykh Aḥmad.¹⁵⁵ But it is clear that, toward the end of his life, he came

to regard the Shaykhí school, as represented by Karím Khán and others, to be not only misguided, but positively inimical to the true faith. This hardening of the Báb's attitude may well have been immediately occasioned by the actively hostile role of several leading Shaykhí ulama in his trial at Tabriz in 1848, but this would not, in itself, seem to be sufficient explanation for it. The Báb, by this time, was clearly moving rapidly away from any semblance of Islamic orthodoxy. He was now proclaiming himself to be the promised Qá'im and would soon adopt the role of an independent religious revelator. If it had been necessary for Karím Khán and other Shaykhí leaders to disclaim any relationship with the Báb or his ideas, it was now equally vital for the latter to dissociate himself from the Shaykhí school in order to avoid continued ambiguity concerning his role and station.

The subsequent abandonment of the Báb by the ultra-Shaykhí element within his movement, in Maraghá and elsewhere, left the intellectual leadership of the movement in the hands of those wholly dedicated to a major break with the past. By stressing at this point the alienation of the Báb from Shaykhism, his followers were able to focus more clearly the nature of their radical departure from Islam itself. In the total separation which we have thus seen develop between Babism and the Shaykhís, we can observe not only the beginnings of the process whereby the latter school effectively acquired a position close to that of an ecclesiola within the wider ecclesia of Twelver Shiism, but also, and perhaps more vividly still, the mechanics of the developments which transformed the Bábí religion from a tangential movement within the Shaykhí sect to a distinct sect of Shiism to, in the end, an independent religious movement in theory if not in practice.

NOTES

1. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Bátil*, p. 14.
2. Quoted in Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 510.
3. Ibid., p. 502.
4. Ibid., p. 510.
5. From an incomplete manuscript quoted in Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 55.

6. Nabíl (Zarandí), *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 47.
7. Ibid., p. 48.
8. Tanakábuní, *Qishaṣ al-'Ulamá*, p. 186.
9. Rashtí, *Dalíl al-Mutaḥayyirín*, p. 71.
10. Navá'í, *Fitnay-i Báb*, p. 232n (from a marginal note in Navá'í's copy of *al-Mutanabbíyyín* by I'taḍad al-Salṭana).
11. The Báb, *Kitáb al-Fihrist*, mss. 6003.C, p. 291; and 4011.C, p. 68.
12. Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 49.
13. Navá'í, *Fitnay-i Báb*, p. 232.
14. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 134-38.
15. Ibid., p. 137.
16. Sayyid Kázim had, it would seem, one daughter and two sons, Sayyid Ḥasan and Sayyid Aḥmad. The daughter was later married to Hájí Sulaymán Khán Afshar.
17. Chahárdihí, *Shaykhígari*, p. 266.
18. Ibid., p. 238. See also Áqá Buzurg Ṭihrání, *Nuqabá al-Bashar fi'l-qarni'l-rábi' 'ashar*, part 2, p. 102.
19. I'timád al-Salṭana, *al-Ma'áthir*, p. 184; Abú'l-Qásim, *Fihrist-i Kutub*, vol. 1, p. 123n.
20. Chahárdihí, *Shaykhígari*, pp. 39-40.
21. Numerous and conflicting accounts of this important tribunal have been written. See, in particular, Sipíhr, *Náskh al-Twárikh*, vol. 3, pp. 125-30; Hidayat, *Rawḍat al-Ṣafá*, vol. 10, pp. 118-21 (based on a report by Niẓám al-'Ulamá); Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. 277-90 (Note M); idem, *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*, pp. 133-38; idem, *Materials*, "Five unpublished contemporary documents, Persian and English, relating to the Bab's examination at Tabriz in 1848," pp. 245-64; Za'im al-Dawla, *Miftáh Bábi'l-Abwáb*, pp. 137-45; Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 314-20; Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 9, 10, 14-20; Tanakábuní, *Qishaṣ al-'Ulamá*, pp. 56-59.
22. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 509-10.
23. For details of Mámaqání and his sons, see Chahárdihí, *Shaykhígari*, pp. 176-98; Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 9; I'timád al-Salṭana, *al-Ma'áthir*, p. 161. Mámaqání died in 1268 or 1269/1851-2 or 1852-3.
24. Ibráhím Khán was the son of Mahdí Qulí Khán, a son of Muḥammad-Ḥasan Khán, a son of Fath-'Alí Khán Qájár (not to be confused with Fath-'Alí Sháh). Mahdí Qulí Khán was a brother of the first Qájár ruler, Áqá Muḥammad Khán. The latter put his brother to death and gave his widow and child (Ibráhím Khán) into the keeping of his nephew Bába Khán, the future Fath-'Alí Sháh. Ibráhím Khán's

mother had three more children by Fath-'Alí, these being two daughters, Zaynab Khánum and Khadíja Khánum, and a son, Muḥammad-Qulí Mírzá Mulk Árá (see 'Abd al-Husayn Navá'í, "Karmim Khán," pp. 112-13).

25. Raḍawí, *Tadhkirát al-Awliyá*, p. 56.

26. Sipíhr, *Násikh al-Tawárikh*, vol. 1, p. 354; Aḥmadí, *Farmándihán-i Kirmán*, pp. 12, 50, 55.

27. She is also known as Nawwáb Muta'álíyya and Dawlat Gildí: see Sipíhr, *Násikh al-Tawárikh*, vol. 2, p. 155; 'Iḍad al-Dawla, *Tárikh-i 'Iḍadí*, p. 316.

28. Rustam Khán was married to Sháh Gawhar Khánum, the nineteenth daughter of Fath-'Alí, and Naṣr Alláh Khán to Tájli Bigúm, the twelfth daughter (see Aḥmadí, *Farmándihán*, p. 50); Sipíhr, *Násikh al-Tawárikh*, vol. 2, p. 158; 'Iḍad al-Dawla, *Tárikh-i 'Iḍadí*, p. 319.

29. Bástání Párizí in Aḥmadí, *Farmándihán*, pp. 12-13.

30. Kirmání, "Ṭá'ifay-i Shaykhíyya," *Majallay-i Mardum-shinasi*, p. 252.

31. 'Abd al-Husayn Navá'í in 'Iḍad al-Dawla, *Tárikh-i 'Iḍadí*, p. 195n. Párizí gives 21 as the figure for sons (Aḥmadí, *Farmándihán*, p. 52n).

32. Raḍawí, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyá*, pp. 58-59.

33. Ibid., p. 64.

34. Ibid., p. 70.

35. Quoted ibid., p. 79.

36. Kirmańí, *Risálay-i Sí Faṣl*. The copy referred to by me was printed in Kerman in 1368/1949. The section in question can be found on pp. 86-93, and the original questions on pp. 11-12.

37. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 19-24, 416.

38. Qurrat al-'Ayn, letter to Mullá Jawád Wilyání, quoted in Mázarandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 493.

39. Ibid.

40. From a *risála* by an unidentified Bábí, ms. 6003.C, pp. 401-2, Bahá'í Archives, Ṭíhrán.

41. From another *risála*, also by an unidentified Bábí, ms. 6006.C, pp. 8-10, Bahá'í Archives, Ṭíhrán.

42. Browne, *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*, p. 100.

43. The Báb to Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan Khurásání, ms. 6003.C, p. 321, Bahá'í Archives, Ṭíhrán.

44. Browne, *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, p. 33.

45. Mázarandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 262.

46. Hashtrúdí, quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 117.
47. Quoted in Khan Bahadur Agha Mirza Muhammad, "Some New Notes on Babiism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, July 1927, p. 448.
48. Quoted in Browne, *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, p. 34.
49. Nicolas, *Seyyed Ali Mohammed*, p. 193; Faydí, *Ḥaḍrat-i Nuqṭa-y-i Úlá*, pp. 101-102.
50. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 30.
51. Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 42.
52. The Báb, *Risálay-i Sulúk*, mss. 4011.C, p. 127; 6006.C, p. 74; 6010.C, p. 483, Bahá'í Archives, Ṭihrán. See also, Mázandarání, *Asrár al-Āthár*, vol. 4, pp. 158-59.
53. The Báb, ms. 6005.C, pp. 5-6, Bahá'í Archives, Ṭihrán.
54. Mázandarání, *Asrár al-Āthár*, vol. 4, p. 369.
55. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 25-50; Samandar, *Tárikh*, pp. 16-17; Qazvíní, "Tárikh," pp. 463-64; Nicolas, *Seyyed Ali Mohammed*, pp. 191-95; Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 55, 97, 158, 458; Abú'l-Faḍl Gulpáygání and Sayyid Mahdí Gulpáygání, *Kashf al-Ghiṭá*, p. 57.
56. Quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 55.
57. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 104-105.
58. The Báb, *Persian Bayán*, 2:7, p. 30.
59. Quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 510.
60. Ibid.
61. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 66, 80-81.
62. The Báb, Prayer in reply to a questioner, ms. 6003.C, p. 188, Bahá'í Archives, Ṭihrán.
63. The Báb, *Qayyúm al-Asmá*, F.11, p. 1.
64. The Báb, *Ṣaḥífa Makhzúna*, ms. 5006.C, p. 284; 6009.C, p. 1, Bahá'í Archives, Ṭihrán.
65. The Báb, *Ṣaḥífay-i 'Adliyya*, p. 13; cf. p. 7.
66. The Báb, *Dalá'il-i Sab'a*, p. 29.
67. Quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 31-33.
68. See the Báb, *Ṣaḥífay-i 'Adliyya*, pp. 7, 11.
69. See the Báb, *Ṣaḥífay-i 'Adliyya*, pp. 5-6.
70. Quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 334.
71. The Báb, ms. 7009.C, p. 133, Bahá'í Archives, Ṭihrán.
72. Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 41.
73. Ibid., pp. 56, 58.
74. Samandar, *Tárikh*, p. 351. •

75. Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 511.
76. See Rawlinson to Canning, 8 January 1845, F.O. 248/114; quoted in Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 61.
77. Samandar, *Tárikh*, p. 347. Mázandarání quotes part of a second letter from the Báb to *Shaykh* Muḥammad-Ḥasan, written after the latter's rejection of Mullá 'Alí and his message (*Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 107).
78. On *Shaykh* Muḥammad-Ḥasan, see Khwánsarí, *Rawḍat al-Jannát*, p. 181; I'timád al-Saltána, *Al-Ma'áthir*, pp. 135–36.
79. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 90–91.
80. Baghdádí, *Risála Amríyya*, p. 106.
81. Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 512.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 514.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 515.
84. *Ibid.*
85. *Ibid.*
86. Rawlinson to Canning, 8 January 1845, F.O. 248/114, quoted in Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 62.
87. Rawlinson to Sheil, 16 January 1845, F.O. 248/114, quoted in Balyuzi, *The Báb*, p. 65.
88. Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 235.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
90. See the Báb's *Khuṭaba fí Jidda*, mss. 5006.C, pp. 332–333; and 3036.C, pp. 404–6; *Kitáb A'mál al-Sina* in ms. 5006.C, p. 270.
91. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 158. Hájí Sayyid Jawád met the Báb at Masqaṭ and returned with him to Búshíhr; he was then permitted to go to the 'atabát by way of Basra, and must certainly be the person who carried word of the Báb's arrival and the change in his plans (Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 100).
92. Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 503.
93. See al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbalá'í, in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 512; the Báb's *Kitáb al-Fihrist*, mss. 6003.C, p. 286, and 4011.C, p. 63.
94. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tadhkirát al-Wafá*, pp. 269–70.
95. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 271; Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 38, 244, 383; Samandar, *Tárikh*, pp. 135–36, 173.
96. See, for example, the extensive quotation from works of the Báb in *Shaykh* Sulṭán Karbilá'í's letter to Bábís in Iran, quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 245–59.
97. This would seem to be the first recorded instance of the recurrent phenomenon of excommunication on the grounds of "Covenant-breaking" (*naqd-i mítháq*) in Bábí-Bahá'í history. Covenant-breakers

(náqidín) are those who are deemed to have broken the "Covenant" into which every believer enters with the central authority of the religion—a concept not unlike that found in Shiism with regard to the covenant made by mankind with the prophets and the Imams.

98. Quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 520, 527.
99. Kirmání, *Al-Shiháb al-Thaqib*, p. 2.
100. Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3 p. 388.
101. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 280.
102. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 162; on the terms "Jibt" and "Taghút," see Qur'án 4:51. (The reference to Mullá Jawád as Baraghání in Nabíl, pp. 159 and 161, is incorrect.)
103. Prayer quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 275.
104. Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 388; al-Qatíl ibn al-Karbilá'í, in Mázandarání, p. 520; Qazvíní, "Tárikh," quoted in Samandar, p. 473. See generally, prayers of the Báb quoted in Mázandarání, pp. 269–70.
105. The Báb, *Tafsír Súrat al-Kawthar*, f.3a and f.3b.
106. In Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 484 ff.; cf. Browne, *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, p. 283.
107. Quoted in Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 485; also, pp. 489, 491–93, 495, 499; cf. pp. 121, 388.
108. Letter quoted *ibid.*, p. 274.
109. Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 100–101; Browne, *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, pp. 100–201. (There is, unfortunately, contradictory evidence which suggests that Mullá Šádiq traveled to Kerman in the summer of 1845, after his expulsion from Shiraz in June. The present reconstruction would seem to involve the fewest inconsistencies, however, and has been adopted to prevent confusion in a general paper.) Kirmání, *Risála dar Radd-i Báb*, pp. 27–28; see also p. 58.
110. Kirmání, *Risála dar Radd-i Báb*, p. 27.
111. Kirmání, *Al-Shiháb al-Thaqib*, pp. 25–27.
112. Kirmani, *Risála dar Radd-i Báb*, p. 58.
113. *ibid.*, pp. 44, 47–55.
114. Mázandarání, *Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, p. 400.
115. Karím Khan, *Risálay-i Sí Faşl*, pp. 34–35.
116. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 14, 107, 106.
117. Quoted in Ishráq Khávarí, *Rahíq-i Makhtúm*, vol. 2, pp. 309–310; cf. Kazem Kazemzadeh, "Two Incidents in the Life of the Báb," p. 23.
118. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, p. 106; cf. p. 175.
119. *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 111; Kirmání, *Tír-i Shiháb*, p. 242.
120. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 14–15.

121. Ibid., pp. 14, 107.
122. Ibid., pp. 15, 111; Kirmání, *Tír-i Shiháb*, p. 197.
123. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 15, 110–11; idem, *Tír-i Shiháb*, pp. 197–98, cf. p. 182.
124. Kirmání, *Tír-i Shiháb*, p. 194.
125. Kirmání, *Al-Shiháb al-Tháqib*, pp. 25–27.
126. See especially Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 18–75.
127. Ibid., pp. 80–103; idem, *Tír-i Shiháb*, pp. 201–210.
128. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 83–84, 88–90, 102–103; idem., *Tír-i Shiháb*, pp. 188–90.
129. Kirmání, *Tír-i Shiháb*, pp. 190, 199.
130. See ibid., p. 210, cf. p. 241; cf. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 82, 95, 107.
131. Ibid., pp. 92, 94–95; idem, *Tír-i Shiháb*, p. 212.
132. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 127–44, 164–73; idem, *Tír-i Shiháb*, pp. 195, 210.
133. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, pp. 82, 86, 97; idem, *Tír-i Shiháb*, pp. 192, 209.
134. Mázandarání, *Zuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 3, pp. 58, 165.
135. Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*, p. 107; cf. p. 10, where Sayyid Kázim is referred to as the “Lord of the Fourth Support” (*Ṣāhib al-rukni’l-rábi’*).
136. See Karím Khán, *Hidáyat al-Ṭalibin*, pp. 168–77.
137. See idem, *Risálay-i Sí Faṣl*, pp. 16–33.
138. Ibid., p. 22. On this basis, Karím Khán discusses resurrection after divine justice in the section on *tawḥíd* of his work *Fiṭrat al-Salíma* (sic).
139. On this basis, he discusses resurrection after prophethood in his *Irshad al-’Awwám*.
140. Kirmání, *Risálay-i Sí Faṣl*, p. 23.
141. Ibid., p. 29.
142. Ibid., p. 31.
143. Kirmání, *Risálay-i Chahár Faṣl*, pp. 1, 3.
144. The Báb, *Tafsir*, f.36a.
145. Ibid., f.36b.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid., f.37a.
148. *Ahl al-Báb* (the people of the Báb) does occur, however, in as early a text as the *Qayyúm al-Asmá*.
149. As late as 1307/1890, Hájí Muḥammad-Báqir Hamadání, the author of a little known but interesting work of *Shaykhí* polemic, the

Kitáb al-Ijtináb, was obliged to refute the claim that "the Bábí sect is accounted as belonging to the *Shaykhí* school." (*Kitáb al-Ijtináb*, p. 144.)

150. The Báb, *Tafsír*, f.6b, f.11b, f.24a, f.25a.

151. I have been unable to locate this section in any of the texts of the *Kitáb al-Asmá* available to me, all of which are incomplete. However, it may be hoped that it can be discovered and verified in another manuscript.

152. That is, the *Tafsír Ziyárat al-Kubrâ* of *Shaykh* Aḥmad.

153. That is, the *Sharḥ al-Khutbat al-Tutunjiyya* of Sayyid Kázim.

154. Kirmání, *Risála dar Radd-i Báb*, pp. 45, 46.

155. This *ziyárat-náma* can be found in the Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. Ms. F.20 f.85b-f.87b.